



Press Release

Immediate Release

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### **Widnes Hospital Receives 'Outstanding' Caring Rating by Care Quality Commission**

A specialist neuropsychiatric rehabilitation service in Widnes has been recognised for its "exceptional standard of care" after receiving a Good overall rating and Outstanding for Caring in its first Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection.

Cygnet Paddocks, on Wilmere Lane, was praised by inspectors who found patients felt safe, relaxed and able to build "trusted relationships with staff who treat them with kindness, empathy and compassion" and support them to achieve their goals and regain independence.

The 28-bed hospital for men with acquired brain injuries, which opened in July 2024, was inspected in October 2025 and the regulator said an "exceptional quality of care" was delivered at the hospital. The Cygnet Health Care service was rated Good in Safe, Effective, Responsive and Well-led, alongside Outstanding in Caring.

The report stated: "The evidence showed an exceptional standard of care.

"The service was exceptional at treating people with kindness, empathy and compassion and in how they respected people's privacy and dignity."

As part of the inspection, the CQC spoke with patients who gave positive feedback about the staff and their experiences at the service. The CQC said: "Patients described staff as supportive and kind and said that they felt they could speak openly with staff and formed trusted relationships.

"Patients we spoke with liked the staff and had confidence in them. We observed that patients were relaxed and at ease when moving between their private room and communal areas and they told us they felt safe.

"The atmosphere in the service was calm and relaxed."

Patients told inspectors they enjoyed accessing the community, with the CQC noting they "enjoyed accessing the local community and nearby town centre and visits to the wider Cheshire and Merseyside communities" and were able to pursue hobbies, interests and therapies.

Feedback from relatives was also very positive with families praising the communication from the hospital and saying they felt involved in their loved one's care. Families described staff as "skilled excellent staff, who were attentive to patient's needs and resolved concerns quickly and efficiently" and praised the "meaningful, enjoyable activities" available.

During the inspection, the CQC observed strong, compassionate relationships between staff and patients. The report stated: "Staff were knowledgeable about patients and had a calm, compassionate, respectful approach toward them." Commissioners also shared positive feedback, saying they had observed caring and supportive relationships developing between staff and patients, with patients becoming more confident since the service opened.

Praising the caring nature of staff, inspectors noted: "People were openly respected and valued as individuals; and encouraged as partners in their care in this service.

"The service has a strong, visible person-centred approach, demonstrating empathy in how they communicated with patients and described patient care."

Inspectors found the service treated people as individuals and tailored care to their needs and aspirations. The report added: "The service treated people as individuals and was exceptional in how they made sure people's care, support and treatment met people's needs and preferences.

"The service supported people to manage their health and wellbeing to maximise their independence, choice and control."

Staff used personalised 'About me' profiles developed with patients and their families, alongside communication passports, visual aids and easy-read materials to help people make decisions and express their views. The report noted that patients were supported to share and celebrate their cultures and backgrounds, including cooking cultural meals and taking part in events such as a Black History Month celebration. Inspectors added that staff were "empathic to the needs of the patients and sensitive to times when people need care and support," and adapted routines, communication and activities to meet each individual's needs, preferences and aspirations.

A strong culture of safety was also identified throughout the service. The CQC said: "The service had a proactive and positive culture of safety, based on openness and honesty." Inspectors found staff listened to concerns, investigated incidents and took appropriate action to protect patients from harm.

Staffing and teamwork were also stand-out areas noted by inspectors. The report read: "The service made sure there were enough qualified, skilled and experienced staff, who received effective support, supervision and development." Inspectors noted there was a low use of agency staff and that consistent staffing had a positive impact on both patients and staff.

Leadership at Cygnet Paddocks was highlighted as a key strength with feedback from staff saying they felt "respected, supported and valued" by management. The CQC said: "There was strong and effective leadership throughout the service.

“Leaders were inclusive, accessible and visible, with a clear focus on delivering high-quality, person-centred care and continuous improvement.

“The service consistently cared about and promoted staff wellbeing. Staff feedback was that managers demonstrated exemplary support and encouraged staff to strive to enable staff deliver person-centred care.”

Kiri Houghton, Hospital Manager at Cygnet Paddocks, said: “We are incredibly proud to receive a Good rating overall and Outstanding for Caring in our very first inspection. I am immensely proud of our whole team, who work tirelessly every day to provide the best support possible to each individual on their rehabilitation journey.

“Since opening in July 2024, it has been inspiring to see the progress our patients have made, building confidence, developing independence and working towards their personal goals. To see that recognised within this report is something the entire team should feel proud of.

“We are also grateful for the positive feedback from patients, families, commissioners and partners, whose views are central to everything we do. Their trust and collaboration mean a great deal to us.

“While we are delighted with this outcome, we remain focused on the future. We are committed to continually learning, improving and building on this strong foundation so that we can keep delivering the highest quality care and the best possible outcomes for the people we support.”