



Press Release

Immediate Release

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Cygnet Hospital Harrow Wins Two National Awards

Cygnet Hospital Harrow is celebrating national recognition after winning two awards at the Design in Mental Health Awards.

The hospital received both the Clinical Team of the Year award and the Project of the Year (Future Design) award in recognition of its innovative approach to supporting autistic people with highly complex needs.

The awards centred on the care and support provided to a young autistic man who had experienced years of instability in care before being admitted to the hospital. When he arrived, he presented with significant trauma, severe self-injurious behaviour and distress so acute that many previous services had struggled to support him safely.

Rather than focusing solely on containment and risk management, the team at Harrow developed a highly personalised, co-produced approach focused on understanding what he needed to feel safe, regulated and able to build trust.

A bespoke low-arousal therapeutic environment was created around his sensory and emotional needs, including dedicated sensory spaces, carefully controlled lighting and noise reduction, transitional spaces to reduce anxiety and access to private outdoor areas. The project demonstrated how trauma-informed environmental design can play a vital role in reducing distress and supporting recovery.

The design process began before admission, with occupational therapists and clinical teams working collaboratively to understand the young man's sensory profile, triggers, coping strategies and strengths. This knowledge helped shape both the physical environment and the care approach from the outset.

Alongside the specialist environment, the hospital's multidisciplinary team provided consistent, compassionate support every day, helping to build trust and create positive change over time. Staff worked closely with him to support emotional regulation, communication and independence, while ensuring his voice remained central to decision-making about his care.

The outcomes have been transformative. Long-term seclusion was eliminated, the use of restraint reduced significantly and incidents of self-injury dramatically decreased. He has also rebuilt meaningful relationships with others, reconnected with family members and is now able to access the community, including visiting cafés, barbers and other public spaces.

The awards recognise both the therapeutic design of the environment and the dedication of the clinical teams delivering care within it.

Cygnet Hospital Harrow manager Will Anderson-White said: "These awards reflect the passion, creativity and commitment of our teams. Supporting individuals with highly complex needs is challenging, but our staff consistently go above and beyond to deliver outstanding care and create environments where people can thrive.

"At Cygnet Hospital Harrow we have continued to improve, think differently and keep the people we support at the centre of everything we do.

"I would like to thank my entire team for their instrumental leadership, dedication to continuity of care and high standards which has been invaluable, and for always being solution-focused.

"We believed that with the right environment, the right relationships and truly person-centred care, positive change was possible. What has been achieved here is incredibly powerful. We have seen someone move from a life defined by restriction and distress to one filled with trust, progress and hope for the future. I am immensely proud of everyone involved."

The Design in Mental Health Awards celebrate innovation and excellence in the design of mental health environments and services across the UK.