



Press Release

Immediate Release

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Llandovery Residents Share Stories During Learning Disabilities Awareness Week

Clynsaer, in Llandovery, Carmarthenshire is a Cygnet Social Care specialist residential service, supporting adults with learning disabilities. As part of Learning Disabilities Awareness Week, residents Gary Cushen and Helen Brooks shared their thoughts on independence, inclusion, pride and what this week means to them.

Learning Disabilities Awareness Week is an opportunity to celebrate the achievements of people with learning disabilities and to ensure their voices are heard.

Clynsaer Cygnet Social Care manager Stacey James said: "Their responses provide a reminder that people with learning disabilities have their own interests, ambitions and perspectives, and that listening to those experiences is an important part of building more inclusive communities.

"I am really proud of Gary and Helen for being so open about their experiences and their ambitions for the future.

"Learning Disabilities Awareness Week is a chance to recognise the achievements, contributions and experiences of people with learning disabilities. Gary and Helen's reflections highlight the importance of listening to people, valuing their views and ensuring they have opportunities to participate fully in the things that matter to them."

For Gary, who is 56, some of the things he enjoys most are going on home visits arranged by his parents, taking part in residents' holidays, swimming and travelling on train trips to places such as Merthyr Tydfil. He also enjoys attending Coventry City matches. When asked what makes him happy, Gary spoke positively about living at the Cygnet Social Care service, Clynsaer, and being supported by staff and taking part in activities and trips.

He said: "I love living at Clynsaer, it's my home. The staff make me so happy."

Helen, 53, enjoys visiting botanical gardens, spending time in the workshop area at Clynsaer and adding to her collection of necklaces. She also spoke warmly about life at the service and the support she receives from staff.

"I like living here and I like the staff here", she said. "I am always happy, everything makes me happy."

When discussing what they wish more people understood about learning disabilities, both residents highlighted different aspects of their experiences.

Gary said that people with learning disabilities often want the same opportunities for independence as anyone else.

He explained: "Sometimes people with learning disabilities like to have their own time to go out and do things by themselves. It's not always easy but we are able to be as independent as any other adult. I would love to see that happen more.

"The staff at Clynsaer are amazing at giving us that safe freedom and allowing us to be independent, we are really lucky. I want everyone else with learning disabilities to be as lucky and have the same."

Helen spoke about the fact that emotions can sometimes change unexpectedly.

"Sometimes our moods can change quickly without us meaning for it to happen."

Both residents were also keen to talk about the things they are proud of. For Gary, that included Coventry City's success on the football pitch, the support he receives from his family and the contribution he makes around the home.

"I'm very proud of Coventry winning the league and going up to the Premier League. I can't wait to watch their matches next season.

"I like to help with jobs at Clynsaer, particularly with cleaning the kitchen."

When asked what being included means to them, both residents spoke about the importance of involvement and participation.

Gary said: "To me, being included means people listening to what you have to say and involving you in different things."

He added that being included is especially meaningful when people listen to his ideas.

"Being included makes me feel great, especially when it's things like trips that I have suggested."

Helen's definition of inclusion focused on ensuring that everyone feels involved.

"To me, being included means making people feel happy and making sure everyone gets involved."

Both residents also shared their thoughts on living at Clynsaer. Gary described it as "the best home ever to live in" and said that he feels safe and supported there.

I feel as if I'm in the right place and a safe place and I think it's the right sort of place for me to live in."

Helen described living at Clynsaer as "nice, amazing and cute" and said the best part is knowing staff are always there to support her.

"The best part about living here is that I can just chill out here and I know that the staff will always look out for me because they are sweethearts."

To mark Learning Disabilities Awareness Week, both residents shared a message they would like others to take away.

Gary's message was simple: "With a little bit of help, you can achieve anything."

Helen's message focused on the importance of learning and staying active: "Remember to read and keep your brain working."