



Press Release

Immediate Release

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After nearly 30 years in services, brain injury survivor prepares for a new chapter

To watch Laura's video, go to: <https://www.cygnetgroup.com/video/im-a-social-butterfly-lauras-story/>

After spending almost 30 years in care services, a brain injury survivor is preparing to move into supported living after making remarkable progress at a Middlesbrough hospital.

Laura sustained her brain injury in 1997 after complications from Type 1 diabetes caused her to fall into a coma for almost three weeks. Nearly 30 years later, she is finally ready to move into supported living after treatment she received at Cygnet Health Care service, Cygnet Newham House.

The specialist 20-bed neuropsychiatric rehabilitation service, on Hemlington Village Road, in Middlesbrough, supports women affected by acquired brain injuries to maximise their independence through person-centred care and rehabilitation.

Laura said: "Since my brain injury in 1997, I've been in many rehab places and support places and hospitals. I came here almost three years ago, and it's been the best place I've been in. I was in a coma with hyperglycaemia and cerebral oedema, high blood sugars which caused fluid on the brain and sent me into a natural coma for nearly three weeks."

When Laura arrived at Cygnet Newham House three years ago, staff recognised she faced complex challenges requiring a highly personalised approach.

Dr Matt Rowett, Consultant Neuropsychiatrist, said: "When Laura first arrived with us, she was very unpredictable. Very disinhibited. Quite impulsive.

"Now she is one of the most lively and engaging people you could ever wish to meet."

Catherine Ferguson, Highly Specialised Speech and Language Therapist, added: "It was quite difficult for her. It was a big transition. She's had a number of placements throughout her life."

One of the most significant breakthroughs during Laura's rehabilitation came when she received an autism diagnosis, helping both Laura and the multidisciplinary team better understand her needs.

Catherine added: "We've done lots of work helping her understand not just the brain injury, but her autism as well. That's made a huge difference in her kind of pathway to recovery."

Dr Rowett explained: "Having that wider understanding of Laura helps us adapt our approach and the world around her to be able to manage her."

"It's not simply about changing the individual. It's also about changing people's approach and the world around the individual. That's a big part of rehabilitation here."

Laura praised the support she has received, saying: "The team here have been so caring, understanding and have really helped me in general."

The team also focused on improving the management of Laura's diabetes, recognising the impact fluctuating blood sugar levels had on both her physical and mental health.

Dr Rowett said: "Her diabetes is a large factor, not just in terms of her physical health, but also in terms of her mental health as well. When her blood sugars vary widely, then she becomes more unwell in terms of her mental health. So we've really had to look at every aspect of Laura and her care in order to make sure that she is as settled as possible."

As Laura's confidence has grown, she has become increasingly active in the community.

She said: "I'm getting out, I'm exercising, I'm seeing people in the community that look after me now at least four times a week now. I'm a social butterfly."

Laura also volunteers with a local dog rescue charity and is now preparing for that next step into supported living.

She said: "I go to a dog walking charity called Maxi's Mates, where they rehome abandoned and unloved dogs and try and get them rehomed and put into a better place."

"Where I am now in my journey, it feels amazing. In supported living, I'll be at a place where if I need support, I can still get it. It will be my kind of forever home."

Reflecting on Laura's progress, Catherine said: "When you see how far she's come and where she's going, that really fills you with hope and encouragement."