



Press Release

25 September 2026

For Immediate Release

Cygnet Bury patient wins National Award for inspiring recovery journey

A patient at Cygnet Bury Hudson has been recognised with a National Lived Experience Award for the positive impact he has had on those around him.

Akinsola, known as Akin, was originally shortlisted for the Individual Progress Award and went on to win the Mark Britton Service User Choice Award at the National Lived Experience Awards, held at Statfold Country Park in Tamworth on Wednesday 23 September.

The award was decided on the day, with guests given the opportunity to vote for a runner-up in each category before six finalists were put forward for a final vote.

The National Lived Experience Awards, hosted by Cygnet Group, celebrate the achievements of people accessing, or who have accessed, inpatient mental health, learning disability and autism services, as well as residential care services across the UK.

The awards recognise resilience, creativity, determination and the positive difference people with lived experience make to themselves, their peers, their services and their wider communities.

Akin, who receives support on West Hampton Ward at Cygnet Bury Hudson, has made significant progress since first being admitted to the service.

His nomination said: "Akin has made amazing progress. The start of his journey was difficult but through his determination and engagement with his recovery, Akin has transformed his life and become a positive influence on those around him."

Music has played a particularly important role in his journey.

His nomination explained: "Akin loved music and used the power of music to build upon his journey."

He began taking part in regular sessions exploring music online, writing music and freestyling over beats. He also engaged with the multidisciplinary team and participated in psychology and occupational therapy, developing his social and coping skills and finding positive ways to focus his energy on the future.

Akin's passion for music continued to grow through Cygnet's Music 2 Empower initiative, with his nomination highlighting that he "continues to make videos and music" and has used his creativity to encourage others.

Speaking previously about the role music has played in his recovery, Akin said: "Writing is really important to me because it's my safe and happy zone. Coming to Cygnet has enabled me to relearn skills and perfect my craft when it comes to music. I've not been this well in years and it's all thanks to Cygnet and the staff that work here.

"Music is a fun place to be in. I find it breath-taking. Music has an impact on how I'm feeling, it brings me happiness. Whenever I listen to music, I'm in my happy place."

Akin has also become increasingly involved in improving the experience of other people at Cygnet Bury Hudson.

He has contributed to service user forums, helped with the development of the gym and Social Hub and worked with other service users on areas relating to CQC service development.

His nomination also highlighted the support he provides to his peers, stating: "Akin has made a massive impact to the service users around him too, supporting them with writing lyrics, keeping the to beat with using rapping and singing skills, being positive on the ward and feeding back within community meetings with his peers requests for service user forum."

Akin has also supported the service with filming for a presentation for the Quality Network for Forensic Mental Health Services and became involved with the Events Team Committee for the National Lived Experience Awards themselves.

The award he won is named in memory of Mark Britton, to commemorate the life of an individual who was key to the awards in previous years and who died in July 2019.

Reflecting on his achievement, Akin said: "It means a lot to me. I'm really proud of the progress I've made and my steps towards independence. The Cygnet staff team really enabled me to make my own decisions, to get involved and have a say in my care plans. They gave me the confidence to keep going."

Raf Hamaizia, Head of Co-production and Lived Experience, Cygnet Group, said the awards provide an important opportunity to recognise the many different forms that progress can take.

He said: "What makes these awards so special is that they are shaped by the talents, experiences and stories of people with lived experience. They allow us to recognise progress in all its forms, from the milestones that can transform someone's life to the everyday achievements that might otherwise go unseen.

"Lived experience reminds us that progress is deeply personal. It is rarely a straight line, and success can mean something completely different from one person to the next. These awards create a space to celebrate that individuality, while recognising the courage, resilience and determination behind every nomination."

"Akin's award is the latest recognition of a recovery journey in which he has used his passion for music to build confidence, develop new skills, contribute to his service and support other people with lived experience.

"Everyone at Cygnet Group congratulates Akin on his outstanding achievement."