



Press Release

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For Immediate Release

Macy rediscovers her confidence through school volunteering

A young woman supported at Gloucester-based mental health hospital Cygnnet Alders has spoken about how volunteering at a specialist school has helped rebuild her confidence and inspired her to pursue a career working with children.

Macy, 21, has been supported at the Cygnnet Health Care service, on Podsmead Road, for 18 months. As she prepares to move on from the service, she is looking forward to continuing her volunteering and, eventually, securing a paid role in a school.

From February to July, Macy volunteered regularly at a school for children with additional needs in Gloucester. Working alongside the teaching team, she read with the children, played with them and helped them learn new skills.

The placement was particularly significant for Macy because a difficult experience at a previous school had contributed to a decline in her mental health and left her questioning whether she could return to that environment.

She said it was encouragement from the team at Cygnnet Alders, which gave her the confidence to volunteer and staff at the school praised Macy for being attentive and highly attuned to the children's needs.

Many of the pupils were unable to communicate verbally, but Macy was often able to recognise what they wanted before they expressed it in other ways.

She said receiving such positive feedback had strengthened her determination to turn her passion into a career.

"It made me feel better and made me want to do it as a real job, get paid and do it full-time," she explained.

Macy's progress has extended beyond the school placement. During her time at Cygnnet Alders, she independently travelled to and from her volunteering days by bus, developed her cooking and daily living skills and became increasingly confident spending time away from the hospital.

She also attended a local college after deciding that gaining qualifications in Maths and English would bring her closer to securing paid employment. Macy successfully passed both subjects.

She explained: "I kept reminding myself that I could volunteer while I was here, but if I wanted a paid role at a school, I would need my Maths and English. I wanted to get ready for when I leave."

Macy credits the consistency and flexibility of her support at Cygnet Alders with helping her make progress. Her therapeutic sessions took place regularly and were adapted around her individual needs and preferences, including sensory support and female-only sessions where required.

She said: "The staff are trained to understand, be patient and make time to sit with you and talk about how your day has been. They accommodate what you need."

Over time, Macy has learned to speak up about the approaches that work best for her and has played an active part in shaping her own care.

Anna Doyle, Senior Support Worker at Cygnet Alders, said: "Macy has worked incredibly hard and her independence has grown enormously. She has learned to advocate for herself, communicate what support she needs and make brave decisions about her future.

"Returning to a school environment was a huge step, but Macy embraced the opportunity. She travelled there independently, built positive relationships with the children and received wonderful feedback about how attentive and attuned she was to their needs.

"Her determination to gain her maths and English qualifications alongside volunteering shows just how focused she is on achieving her goal of working with children. We are incredibly proud of everything she has accomplished and excited to see what she does next."

Reflecting on how far she has come, Macy admitted that she would not have believed 18 months ago that she would be preparing for discharge with qualifications, volunteering experience and a clear ambition for her future.

Her plan is to resume volunteering after leaving Cygnet Alders before applying for a paid position at a school.

Macy hopes her experience will encourage other people receiving mental health support to continue pursuing their own ambitions.

"You can still volunteer and go to college while you are in hospital," she said. "People might think that nobody will want them at work because of their mental health, but they shouldn't be afraid. You can still get a job."

Her advice to someone beginning their own recovery journey is to give treatment time and remain hopeful about how their outlook may change.

"Try not to worry too much about everything straight away," she said. "Do your therapy and talk about it. You might have a different mindset and decide that you do want to do those things."

As she looks forward to the next chapter, Macy also has a message for the team that supported her: "Keep being patient with people and keep supporting them when they feel like they want to give up.

"The staff were brilliant with me and made a massive difference, I really want to say thank you."