Press Release

Immediate Release

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Charity Partnership Helps Nature and Recovery Flourish at Derbyshire Hospital

A mental health hospital in Chesterfield has partnered with a wildlife charity to transform its outdoor space into a thriving haven for nature, wellbeing and recovery.

Located on Worksop Road, Cygnet Acer Clinic is a 28-bed service for women with personality disorders or mental health needs.

The Cygnet Health Care service has revitalised its garden space and boosted the wellbeing of service users through a partnership with Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.

The project kicked off at the start of the year as staff and service users met with the charity, bringing ideas on how the garden could be developed.

Explaining the service's keenness to get involved with the project, Occupational Therapist Jane Mosley said: "The aim was to bring nature and wildlife back to our environment here at Cygnet Acer Clinic. We also wanted an area that we could continue to enjoy year after year.

"We wanted colour and an array of different smells and textures to form part of a developing sensory space, whilst also encouraging pollinators and local wildlife."

Throughout the year, Jane and a member of the wildlife charity, as well as former colleague Paul, arranged a variety of sessions to help revamp the garden and create a space that service users could enjoy in a therapeutic way.

Lavender plants and bright summer flowers were planted around the Cygnet Health Care service's central Acer tree and service users were supported to build, paint and fill raised beds with plants that will encourage pollinators.

For those who didn't want to get their hands dirty, there was also a chance to bask in the sunshine and sketch the ever-growing garden.

The new space is positively impacting the wellbeing of service users, with Jane explaining how the area has "reduced feelings of stress and anxiety, provided a peaceful outdoor escape space, encouraged movement, created areas for social connection and supported recovery-focused care."

She added: "The garden area provides calm sensory experiences, safe interaction with plants, gentle gardening activities, opportunities for mindfulness and a space for quiet reflection.

“Horticultural activities have long been described as supporting physical, mental and social recovery so it was easy to see how this project would support patients and encourage the use of our environment.

“During the project, our service user engagement varied from curiosity, like asking questions, to socially engaging or even passively using the area.”

Reflecting on the positive partnership, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust said: “Together, we designed and planted a bespoke sensory garden tailored specifically for a clinical environment - ensuring every plant is completely safe (no toxic foliage or sharp thorns) while offering calming scents, rich textures, and vibrant seasonal colour for patients and staff.

“Beyond supporting wellbeing, this new green space acts as a vital stepping stone for Chesterfield’s urban nature, offering food and shelter for pollinators, bats, and birds and hedgehogs.”

The partnership is part of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust’s project Wilder Chesterfield, which aims to bring people closer to nature and rewild landscapes.