



Press Release

Immediate Release

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### **Durham Patients Bake Prize-Winning Christmas Cakes**

Patients from a mental health hospital in Durham have whisked, rolled and drizzled their way to victory in a Christmas baking competition.

Women from two wards at Cygnet Appletree, a 25-bed mental health hospital for women in Meadowfield, claimed first prize in the Cygnet Christmas Cake Off 2024, which saw patients and residents unleash their baking skills in a bid to produce the most impressive edible Christmas designs.

Entries were judged on originality of design, artistic ability and service user engagement.

Specialist Occupational Therapist, Sarah Lillico, submitted the entry for Bramley Ward, an acute service.

She said: "When we were planning our cake this year, we were inundated with ideas. Beautiful ideas, ambitious ideas and some of them thoughtful and poignant. But when it came down to it, the resounding thought was for something happy and fun, and who else to portray this effectively but Buddy the Elf.

"Service users were challenged in the kitchen to make our rich and festive fruit and spice cake. They worked as a team, demonstrating their creative skills to decorate and make Buddy and his friends as well as a hand painted New York skyline!"

Joanna Smith, Specialist Occupational Therapist for Pippin Ward, a specialist psychiatric intensive care unit, described their entry.

She said: "The Occupational Therapy team and service users came together to develop the idea of the 'Elf Workshop'. Service users were involved at every step of the process from developing the idea, baking the cakes and decorating the final product."

After hearing they had won first prize of £250, Joanna added: "We are over the moon we have won this year's Christmas Cake competition. We enter the competition every year but have never quite reached top spot.

“We really enjoy developing ideas and creating the cakes with our patients. Our team and patients put a lot of effort into making the cakes so we are really proud that the hard work has paid off this year.

“We have had a few ideas on how we might spend the prize money including developing our outdoor spaces in the hospital to make them more colourful and relaxing, develop our gym space with another piece of equipment, hire someone external to visit the site such as a massage therapist or music therapist.”

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