



Exeter-based mental health support provider wins Best Mental Health Service title at GHP Social Care Awards 2021

Exeter-based Independent Living West Country has been recognised for the huge difference it's made to the lives of individuals suffering from acute mental health conditions during the pandemic in this year's Global Health and Pharma (GHP) Social Care Awards.

Launched as a way of acknowledging the everyday achievements of those providing an outstanding quality of care, the GHP Social Care Awards recognises those who work not for the accolades, but to help all those who need it. As award winners, Independent Living West Country has been identified as among the unsung heroes of the healthcare sector, at a time when demand for social care and, in particular, mental health support has never been higher.

Taking home the title of *Best Mental Health Service in Devon 2021*, Independent Living has been commended for providing first-class care to clients struggling with mental health conditions including anxiety, depression, bipolar conditions, schizophrenia, PTSD and ADHD, among others.

The customer-first business, which was set up to help those contending with acute mental health conditions following MIND's closure in the region in 2018, has gone from strength-to-strength, helping individuals cope with the transition from formal support within the NHS, to living life in the community.

In the past year alone, Independent Living West Country has seen requests for its services rise by 256% since the first lockdown in March 2020. Now serving over 178 individuals, the surge in demand has led the Exeter-based mental health support service to increase its staff levels by 35%.

The friendly, caring and fully trained team of support workers offer care packages ranging from weekly in-home assistance and accompanied outings, to up to six hours of support and companionship per day.

Commenting on Independent Living West Country in The GHP Social Care Awards 2021, the organisation wrote: "Its services are comprehensive, empathetic and understanding, covering everything from washing up to cleaning assistance to shopping, mail and paperwork management.

"Its work with the Council and its Support Workers means that its work bolsters the effectiveness of this service, boosting the mental health support system in the UK across the board. It also provides support for those struggling with gender identity and sexuality. In this way, its services fill the gaps that prior to its founding saw patients fall through in the mental health service."

This is the second major accolade for the business, which last year won Best Start Up Business at the 373 Group Business Awards, which recognises unsung business heroes, small and large across Devon and Somerset.

Commenting on the award win, Marie Tolly, Founder of Independent Living West Country, said: "From when we set up the business three years ago, to now, our goal has always been to help individuals on their journey to greater independence, safe in the knowledge that they always have the level of support that they need on that journey, enriching their lives and building their confidence.

"Winning two awards in less than a year is a wonderful achievement, but this wouldn't have been possible without the work our amazing team who have been on the front-line throughout coronavirus, putting our clients first, keeping them safe and helping them on their continued journey to greater independence."

Having recently extended its services to North and East Devon Independent Living West Country has further plans to expand into East Cornwall, where a dearth stop-gap assistance exists for those suffering from mental health conditions. Independent Living hopes to provide support across the entirety of the South West in the coming five years and also has plans to set up a Respite home called the Safe Haven to reduce the number of clients being admitted back into hospital with mental health conditions.

If you, a friend, patient or family member is struggling with acute mental health conditions in lockdown, requiring in-home support to cope with the challenges of daily life, please call Independent Living West Country on 01392 467007 for details of how we can help.

www.independentlivingsw.co.uk