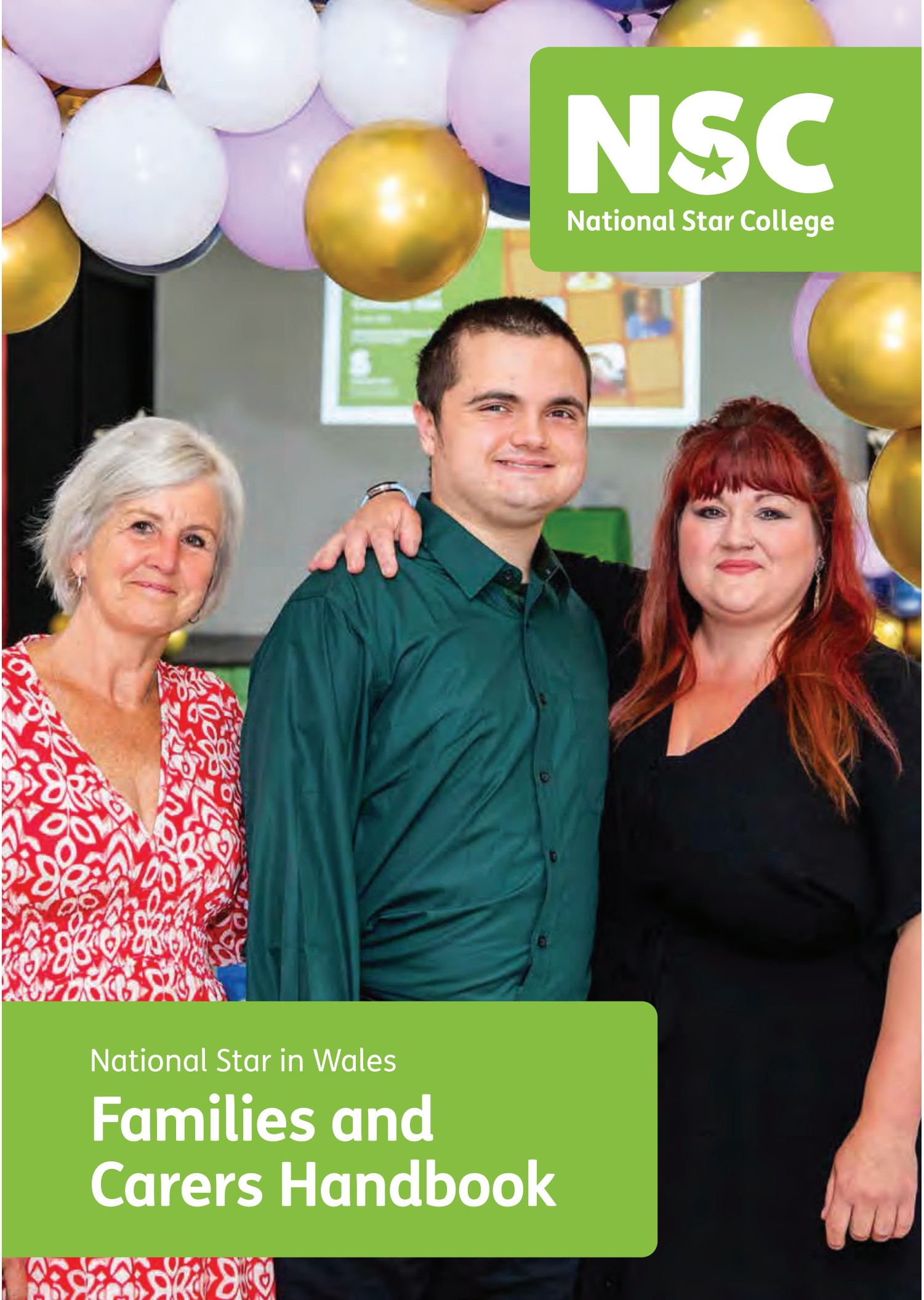

NSC
National Star College

National Star in Wales

Families and Carers Handbook

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TOTUM card (formerly NUS extra)



You can buy a TOTUM card for £14.99. This makes some things cheaper when you are shopping.

For more details ask your learner journey coordinator or visit www.nus.org.uk/en/nus-extra.



National Star College

Welcome

Hello!

To all families and carers of first–year learners I want to welcome you to National Star, and specifically to National Star in Wales. I am confident your young person will enjoy their time with us, achieve many great things and make lots of new friends. And to those who are returning, welcome back and well done on all of the great progress you made last year.

Starting a new college, and indeed returning after such a long holiday, can be a daunting experience for young people and likewise families and carers. However, there are a lot of people here to support. During your first week, you will meet many new people, including our learner journey coordinators, tutors, residential managers, therapists and learning support, all of whom you can go to if you have any worries or would like to ask any questions.

We want you to help us continue to make sure that National Star is a great place to live and learn. I look forward to meeting you all, and to seeing your young people progress, have fun and enjoy being a National Star learner.

Thank you for joining National Star.

Kingsbury-Elia

Joanne Kingsbury–Elia
Principal and Director of Learning Programmes

About National Star

Mission

To realise the aspirations of people with disabilities through learning, living and support services.

Vision

For a world in which people with disabilities are able to realise their potential as equal and active citizens in control of their own lives.

Values







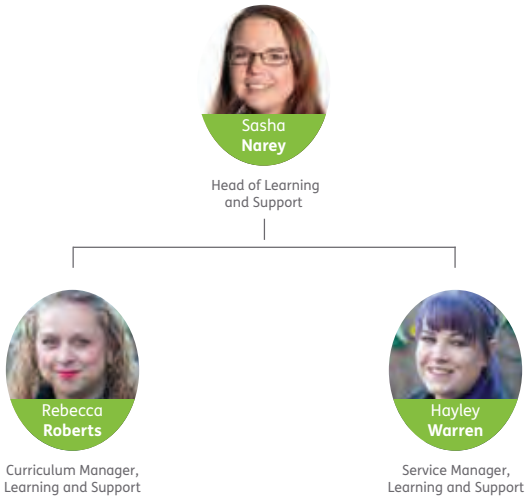




The Leadership Team



The National Star in Wales Leadership Team



Communication Pathways

At National Star, we work as one and strive for positive partnerships with everyone.

Our core values help us achieve this:

Respect (Listening and understanding each other)

We respect one another as everyone has something valuable to contribute, whether it is knowledge, skill, expertise, or experience. Valuing each other brings positive outcomes for all.

Integrity (Open and honest)

We are open and honest, and we acknowledge when things don't always go as planned. Learning from our mistakes and being transparent about our feelings, in a respectful way, leads to positive outcomes.



Collaboration (Working together)

You are the experts in your own experiences, and we want to work with you in a meaningful, open, and respectful manner. Developing and maintaining positive, professional relationships enables us to be effective and provide equity for all.

It is crucial that we develop positive, effective working relationships with you all so that we can quickly respond to your needs during your time here at National Star.

Ambition

We want everyone to be ambitious. There is plenty to be learned, social events to attend and many new opportunities to be had at National Star. Working together produces the best outcomes and experiences for the young people we support.

Learning

Learning Support Team

Responsible for:

- Timetable coordination – curriculum and therapy
- Progress in learning
- Teaching Life Skills
- Transition in and out of college
- Central point of contact for NS Multidisciplinary teams
- Stakeholders e.g. Social Workers

It is vital that you tell us of changes to your email address, home address or phone numbers. That way, we can keep communicating securely with you. Please let us know if any of your contact details change.

Collaboration

The organisational values are essential in how we work together. Through collaboration, we create a supportive and positive environment that fosters learners' successes. Your involvement is integral to the effectiveness of our young people's achievements.

We will work together to achieve the aspirations of your young person and foster positive working relationships.

We will always have professional and respectful communications and consideration for all.

We pride ourselves in being open and honest. When we don't always get things right, we are accountable and committed to learn from this. We value your contributions, patience and understanding whilst we work through these matters.

We strive to provide equitable standards of service to all our young people and families.



National Star Curriculum: Preparation for adult life

Community Inclusion:
Learners learn about self–empowerment and their place and role within their communities. There is regular exploration of leisure activities and developing relationships within college and wider social networks.

Employment / Meaningful Occupation:
Empower learners with the necessary skills and competencies required to succeed in their chosen fields e.g. work, leisure, personal interest, positive contribution, and citizenship.

Good Health:
A holistic provision will support both physical and mental health needs and develop strategies to engage in independent living skills and other meaningful activities.

Independent Living Skills:
Promote personal development by enhancing independence e.g. daily routines, money skills, mobility and health needs. Learners explore their strengths, interests, aspirations, and develop a positive mindset towards learning and future opportunities.

The three pathways

Click the links below to discover more about our pathways:

- Engaging with the world
- Personal development for active citizenship
- Personal development for positive contribution

Learners' rights and responsibilities at college

Collaboration:
Being on time, keeping safe, not being unfair, looking after the college (e.g. keeping it tidy), listening to staff, communicating, telling someone if you have a problem, speaking up / using your communicator.

Sustainability:
Not wasting food, electricity or resources and recycling.

Ambition:
Working hard, being prepared, joining in.

Integrity:
Telling staff what you want to achieve, speaking up, making decisions, and accepting help when you need it.

Respect:
Being friendly, looking after yourself, respecting other people's opinions and values, not being a bully, understanding personal space, giving time to others to communicate, being polite, not forcing someone to do something they don't want to do, and listening.

What your young person should expect from college

Collaboration:
Being listened to, being involved in what's going on, not being excluded, having things to do, being involved in making decisions, being kept informed, becoming more independent, staff giving time and being patient.

Sustainability:
Receive outstanding teaching, exceptional care, timetables or programmes that fit around them as an individual, good support, help from staff when needed, having a choice of healthy food options.

Ambition:
Becoming more independent, having access to a variety of activities and things to do.

Integrity:
Being listened to, being involved in decision making, freedom of speech, feeling safe and secure, and having access to safe IT systems.

Respect:
To be treated equally, but not the same, to be treated as an adult, to be allowed to make mistakes, have supportive friends, to have privacy, to be given time.

How you can support your young person while they are at college

- Be proactive in understanding what they are learning and support that learning while they are with you at home.
- Embrace National Star's values and work collaboratively with the multi–disciplinary teams, always treating them with respect.
- To support your young person's achievements at college, good attendance is imperative. Avoid taking your young person out of college** **Student exceptional leave | National Star | Learn with us**
- Be aware of National Star's policies and procedures – **www.nationalstar.org/privacy-notice**



Keeping you informed

Learning at National Star is part of that journey towards independence and life after college.

We encourage all of our young people to share updates on college with their families and carers. Our staff will support where required.

You will also receive termly newsletters from our marketing and communications team, highlighting the activities and achievements of the young people from the previous term.

The role of the multi–disciplinary team (MDT):

We offer a holistic learning programme, where our young people benefit from the skills and experiences of a breadth of professionals around them.

The opportunities available to learners include, but are not limited to, calculating the cost of a shopping list, undertaking a stretch programme while working with physiotherapists, or serving customers as part of work experience. A team effort contributes to a young person's overall success.

Within your young person's MDT there are several key staff members who you'll be in regular contact with:

Transition:

An important aspect of college is preparing learners for life after college from their first day at National Star. During their time with us, learners are supported in preparing to transition out of college and into the community. As they become more equipped with strategies to support them beyond college, we will also provide reports and connect with community services to ensure a smooth and successful transition from education into adult social care within the public / private sector.

Transition is at the heart of your young person's programme. We will start talking about this with your young person within their first term at college. This can include where and with whom they want to live and what they aspire to do post education, including activities and employment.



Education:

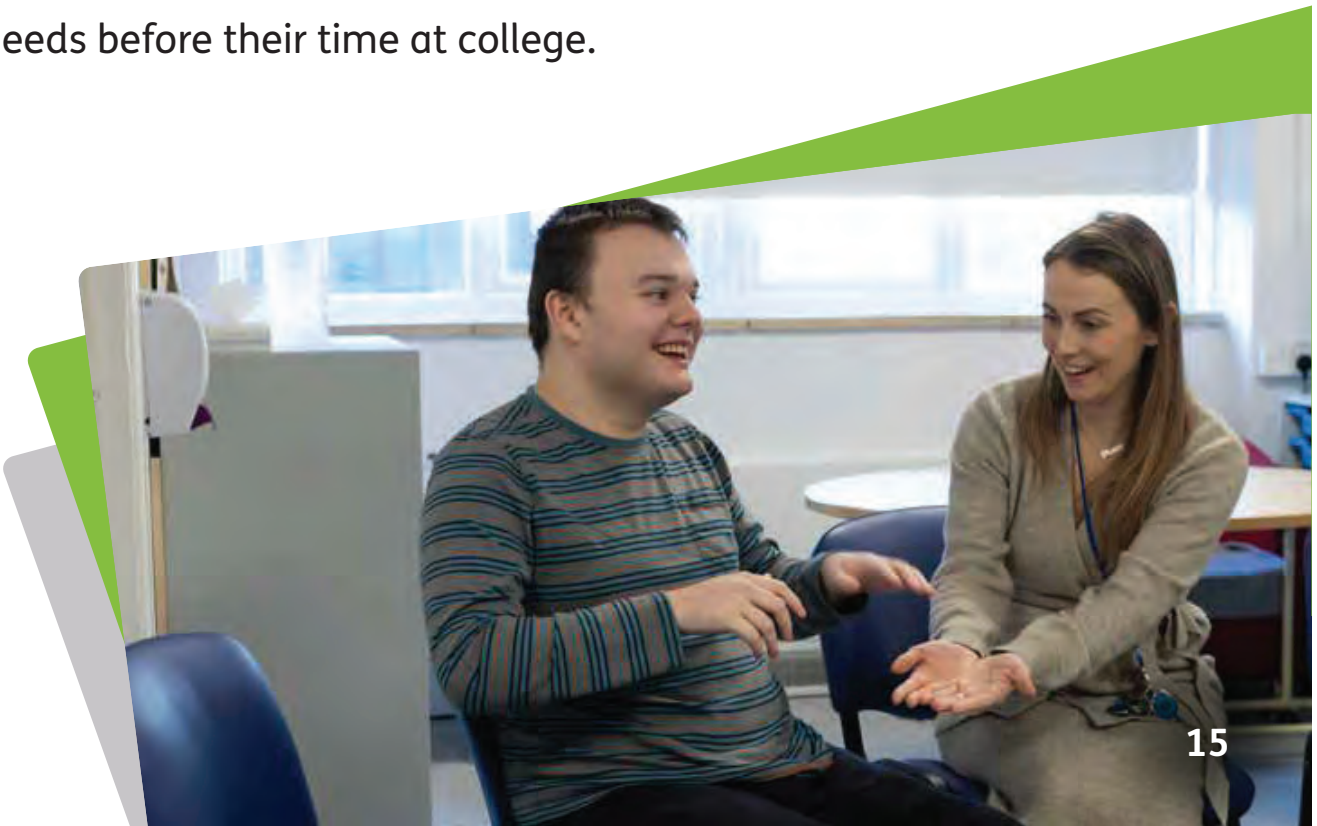
Learner journey coordinators: Our aim is for learners to become as independent as possible so that they can direct their own care and do things for themselves when they leave college.

As a result, we may suggest that your young person do more things for themselves. This may be difficult to begin with. Your young person's learner journey coordinator will have regular contact with you, keeping you informed and updated.

Therapies:

At National Star, we are dedicated to providing a comprehensive and specialised therapy service that supports the unique needs of our learners. Our team of highly skilled therapists work collaboratively with the learner journey coordinator to create inclusive and supportive environments, striving for each learner to reach their full potential.

The therapy your young person receives will be based on assessed needs before their time at college.



Therapy Specialists:

- Speech and Language Therapy: includes dysphagia management, bespoke language programmes, social communication group therapy, AAC (augmentative and alternative communications) technical support / troubleshooting and specific approaches such as intensive interactive and Makaton.
- Occupational Therapy: includes development of independence, including personal care, wheelchair mobility, meal preparation and accessing the community training (ACT). We also provide specialist programmes in sensory integration and 24–hour posture management, including assessment of specialised equipment.
- Emotional Wellbeing Services: include positive behavioural support, talking therapy, drama therapy, music therapy, dance movement, psychotherapy and clinical psychology input.



What you can expect from the therapy department:

Learner centred approach:

- Every person is different with different needs. Therefore, we are guided by the education, health and care plans (EHCP) to provide a person centred approach to meet their specific needs and goals.

Timely assessments and reviews:

- We will conduct initial pre–assessments prior to each learner starting with us and provide details of what therapeutic input they are likely to require. Once their place is confirmed, we will arrange and conduct an initial assessment when they arrive to understand each learner's abilities and challenges. These assessments will guide the creation of individualised therapy plans. Regular reviews and adjustments will ensure that therapy remains effective and responsive to any changes in the learners' needs.

An integrated approach:

- Our therapists collaborate with educators and other staff to integrate therapy goals into the classroom and daily activities where appropriate. This holistic approach ensures that therapeutic interventions are consistent and supportive across all learning and therapeutic environments.

Support with shared decision making:

- We believe that prioritising our learners' needs and involving family in therapeutic care is important to the success of our therapy programmes. You will be updated on your young person's progress at appropriate intervals determined by the named therapists. We may also provide resources and training to help you support your young person's development at home.

Group therapy and social skills development:

- In addition to individual therapy sessions, we also integrate group therapy and social skills development programmes to optimise the therapy experience. These sessions help learners practise communication, social interaction, and motor skills in a supportive group setting.

A focus on wellbeing:

- Our Emotional Wellbeing Service is a core component of our therapy provision. Our therapists work on building resilience, coping strategies, and emotional regulation skills to ensure learners feel supported both academically and personally.

What our therapists expect of you as families / carers:

- We believe that a strong partnership between the college and families and carers is essential to the success of our learners. Your involvement and support play a crucial role in your young person's time at college.

Communication:

- Our therapists will contact families / carers to introduce themselves at the start of the academic year, and continue to communicate with you throughout the year by email or phone call. We recommend that any additional queries you have are made via your young person's learner journey coordinator, who will support you in arranging any meetings or specific communications with the relevant therapists.

Through collaboration, we can create a supportive environment that fosters growth and success for your young person. Your involvement is appreciated and integral to the effectiveness of our therapy programmes.

Families and Carers Forum

We'd encourage you to join our Families and Carers Forum, which meets regularly on Teams to discuss topics of common interest to National Star families and carers. Topics discussed include nutrition and hydration, transition after college, options for long–term living, wills, mental capacity, healthy relationships, lasting power of attorney and deputyship.

For additional information, please contact: parentcarerforum-host@nationalstar.org

In addition, there are in person opportunities for parents to meet across an academic year.

Families and carers of learners at National Star will be automatically invited to future meetings. We hope you will choose to join us.

Dates for the next academic year can be found in the Families and Carers Zone of the National Star website: **Families and Carers Zone | Sharing knowledge | National Star**.

You may also wish to join the private Facebook group **National Star 'Life after College' Parent and Carers Network**. This Facebook group is monitored by our Transition Team, who will regularly post useful information. In addition, this is a private network to share and receive information with other National Star families and carers supporting their young people for life after college.

Zivver

National Star uses Zivver to securely send personal or commercially sensitive information by email. This way, we can guarantee that we send sensitive information using extra security and that only you can read the contents of the email. Not all our emails will by sent using this extra security, only messages that contain sensitive personal information about your young person.

How can you access a securely sent message?

You can open a message from us by clicking the blue link that says 'Click for message'. When you do, Zivver will automatically open. To access the message, you must insert an access code or an SMS code.

Opening a message with an access code

Our team will give you an access code via regular mail, by phone, or in person. Click 'Click for message' and insert this access code. You can now read the message. If you haven't received an access code contact the sender.

Opening a message with an SMS code

If you receive a message that is secured with an SMS code click 'Click for message' and then click 'Send SMS'. Insert the code that you have received on your phone. You can now read the message.

Want to respond to an email that was sent via Zivver?

If you want to respond to the message, click 'Reply'. You can type your message in the editor window. You can also add attachments if needed using the 'Add attachments' (paper clip) button. Click 'Send' to send your reply. When the recipient of your message responds, you will receive another notification message.

Stay up–to–date on social media

Discover the latest news and learner stories from National Star by following us on social media:

Facebook

www.facebook.com/nationalstar

Instagram

www.instagram.com/thenationalstar

LinkedIn

www.linkedin.com/company/national-star

YouTube

www.youtube.com/natstarcollege



Progress reports and review meetings

Your young person's learner journey coordinator will gather information from the learner, their course tutor, therapists, and others to write a report which will be discussed in the progress review.

For many learners, this will also be the review of their Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) / Learning Skills Plan (LSP) or Individual Development (IDP).

At the review, we will talk to you and your young person about what is going well and how they can learn things to help them in the future. In each review, we will also talk about where your young person would like to live and what they'd like to do when they leave National Star. You, your young person and the learner journey coordinator will attend all reviews. Other college staff, such as therapists, may attend if relevant. Our expectation is for external stakeholders to attend annual reviews, such as social workers and health professionals, to enable shared ownership towards your young persons' ambitions after National Star.



Complaints and Compliments

Complaints:

We are open and honest, and we acknowledge when things don't always go as planned. Learning from our mistakes and being transparent about our feelings, in a respectful way, leads to positive outcomes.

Very rarely, we may still not have got it right. If this is the case, you can contact someone about National Star. This could be:

- Ofsted for concerns about education and learning (**telephone 000 123 4234**).
- The Care Quality Commission (CQC) for care concerns (**telephone 03000 616161**).

Compliments:

We value your feedback. If you want to compliment us, please email **compliments@nationalstar.org** or leave us a Google review. And if given the chance, be sure to share the feedback directly with the individual or team.



Learner Voice at National Star

Learner Voice is known as ‘Your Voice’

We believe that inclusion is built on our ability to listen. The purpose of Your Voice is to bring the phrase, ‘Nothing about us, without us’ to life by embedding Your Voice into every decision and action taken at National Star that impacts those we are here to support. Our vision is for National Star to be the leading specialist college in the UK for integrating ‘Your Voice’. We will achieve this by championing and sharing the wisdom and insight of users by locking their voices into the daily college life, driven by the people we are here to serve.

Your young person will have the opportunity to take part in National Star in Wales’ Student Parliament.



Keeping your young person safe at National Star

We want your young person to be happy and safe while they are in our care, and that's why we take safeguarding extremely seriously at National Star. We do not tolerate bullying and harassment of any kind and will ensure that your young person has the confidence to report any bullying, harassment or safeguarding concerns to us.

We have a robust approach to equity, diversity and inclusion and will not tolerate discrimination of any kind.

Familiarise yourself with the **safeguarding and anti-bullying policies**.

If you have any safeguarding concerns, please speak to a member of our team or speak directly to our safeguarding team on **01242 339 997** or by emailing **safeguarding@nationalstar.org**.



Acceptable use of social media

Lots of learners at National Star use social media to share news and keep in touch with family and friends. Below are a few guidelines we ask families and carers to discuss with their young person around the appropriate use of social media:

- Learners' social media accounts are their platforms, so we encourage them to keep images that they post of themselves, where possible.
- If a learner wants to post a picture of someone else, especially a fellow learner or staff member, they should always check permission first.
- They should always give another person the opportunity to check the photos, even if they give consent for their image to be used.
- Don't use the full names of fellow learners or staff in any social media posts.
- Don't share confidential information about learners or staff.
- Respect people's privacy; another learner's social media account may be private for a reason.
- If your young person thinks a post may be inappropriate, they should not post it.

National Star also requests that all learners complete a **photo consent form** for marketing purposes. Please note, they can opt in or out of photo consent. Please return all completed forms to **team-communications@nationalstar.org**

College essentials

Food:

Nutrition and hydration for learners with disabilities requires a personalised approach.

We encourage learners to eat healthily and to drink plenty of water where possible throughout the college day.

Food is not provided for learners at National Star in Wales and learners should bring in their own lunch and any other food that they may wish to eat during the college day.

Our life skills kitchen is equipped with a microwave, oven, air fryer, kettle, and toaster, which learners can use to prepare their lunch with support where necessary. We also have a fridge where learners can store lunch items brought in from home.

Throughout a learner's programme, there will be varied opportunities for food preparation and skills development.

Wherever possible, learners are encouraged to practise their food preparation skills in life skills sessions as part of their education timetable.

Money

Prepaid Cards:

We prefer learners to bring prepaid cards. This can then be easily topped up from home when required. Alternatively, learners can bring a small amount of cash.

In life skills sessions, learners can often visit local shops and cafés to practise their numeracy and money recognition skills.

Benefits:

For information about what will happen to your young person's benefits, please contact the Department for Work and Pensions. Additional information can be found in Appendix A.



Bringing personal possessions into college

Personal possessions brought from home, especially electronic equipment such as mobile phones and tablets, need to be insured. Please check that your home insurance policy will cover these items, so your young person does not need to take out a separate policy.

It is helpful to have items clearly labelled with your young person's name in the event they are misplaced during their time at college. We recommend you work with your young person to complete an inventory list of all items you bring to college and identify the serial numbers of electronic devices.



Transport matters

If your young person is a day student at National Star in Wales and transport is provided by a third-party organisation, it is your responsibility to ensure that the driver and transport provider is adequately vetted, trained and insured to transport your young person to college.



Enrolment pack

Prior to starting at National Star please complete the following forms. Passwords for these forms have been sent via email.

Insurance of personal possessions:
www.nationalstar.org/sharing-knowledge/knowledge-hub/the-parent-zone/the-welcome-hub/

Use of privately owned devices on the National Star College computer network:
www.nationalstar.org/sharing-knowledge/knowledge-hub/the-parent-zone/the-welcome-hub/



Absence policy and term dates

Please click here to view our term dates – **Wales term dates | National Star**

Learner absence:
For learners to make the most of their time at National Star, we expect them to have full attendance at college. However, we do understand that due to illness or exceptional circumstances, parents or carers may need to request time away from college for their young person.

Authorised absences from college can include medical appointments and admissions, illness, and significant special occasions, such as a family wedding (a holiday is not a reason for an authorised absence).

Requests for authorised absences will be considered on an individual basis, considering previous absence and the reason for the request.

Learner absence from college requires at least three days advance notice except in emergencies, which may be approved. Parents and carers are now expected to make absence requests via the form on the National Star website at **Student absence | National Star | Learn with us**

Parents and carers have been advised to contact a learner journey coordinator team if they need help completing the form.

Funding and absences:

Your funding authority realises that some absence from college may be unavoidable (such as a hospital admission). However, regular or repeated absences may affect your funding and could affect your placement.

Exceptional circumstances:

We recognise that there may be other instances when an absence from college might be unavoidable. Please discuss and negotiate this with your learner journey coordinator. These absences must be approved.



Medical matters

The health and well-being of National Star college learners is important to us. Your support needs are unique to you, and below you will find guidance to help our team provide the best possible support.

Please follow the procedure below to ensure we can care for your young person while they are studying.

Sickness absence

If your young person is unwell and unable to attend college, please contact as soon as possible and leave a message on our voicemail advising us of the reason the learner is unwell and when they are likely to return to college. As part of our infection control procedures if your young person has an episode of sickness and diarrhoea, we ask that they remain at home for 48 hours, after the last episode before returning to college respectively. If your young person becomes unwell during the college day, we will contact you and may advise you to seek a medical appointment.

Medication and medical supplies

All personal medication required by a learner while at college needs to be handed to a member of staff at the start of the college day and not left in a learner's bag. An update needs to be provided as to the last dose taken.

All personal medication needs to be clearly labelled with a pharmacy label showing the learner's name and the dosage instructions. It must also be in the original unopened packaging. Loose tablets or medication decanted into alternative containers **will not** be accepted.

Medication will be handed over to a carer / parent at the end of each college day.

If a learner is prescribed short-term medication for a particular issue, for example antibiotics, please phone National Star in Wales and advise us in advance that your young person will be arriving at college with the medication so that a care plan can be created by our team.

Other equipment

Continence products: Learners should bring their own supply of continence products to college.

Gastrostomy: Learners should bring all of their gastrostomy equipment with them – such as pump, giving sets, feed, spares and printed instructions.



Visiting National Star in Wales

If we can help when you are making your travel plans, please get in touch.

National Star
Realising the aspirations of people with disabilities

By train and taxi

Pontypool and New Inn railway station is approximately a 46-minute walk from National Star in Wales, and there are generally taxis available at the station.

By road

M5 Junction 18a via M49, M4 and A4042.

Entrance and parking

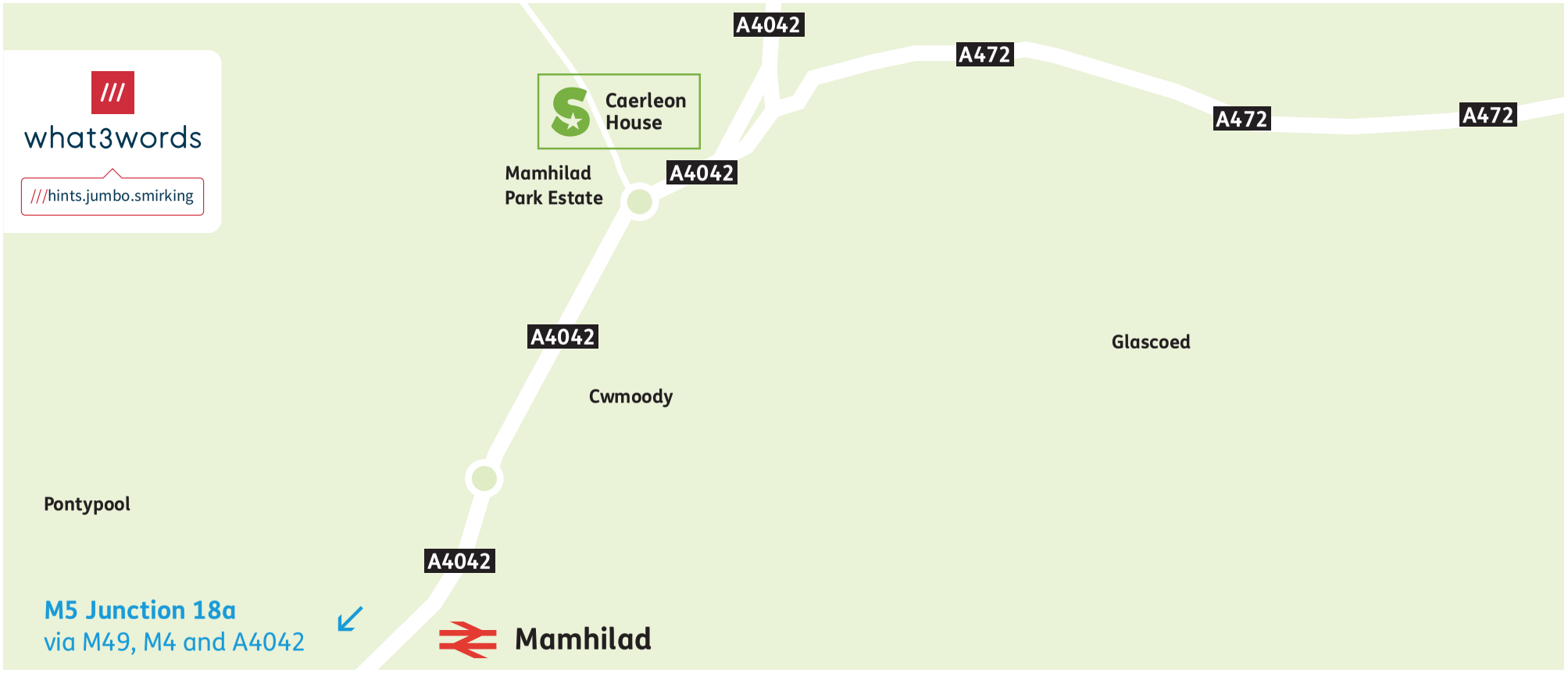
To enter the car park, report to **Gatehouse** so that access can be gained past the barrier. Turn right once past the barrier, driving to the top of the car park on the left. National Star in Wales is opposite the top car park.

Our postal address

National Star in Wales
Caerleon House
Mamhilad Park Estate
Pontypool
Torfaen
NP4 0HZ

Email enquiries@nationalstar.org
Tel 01495 361040

www.nationalstar.org



Key contacts

Joanne Kingsbury–Elia – Principal and Director of Learning Programmes
Email jkingsbury-elia@nationalstar.org
Tel 01242 504360

Sasha Narey – Head of Learning and Support
Email snarey@nationalstar.org
Tel 01242 384472

Rebecca Roberts – Curriculum Manager, Learning and Support
Email rroberts@nationalstar.org
Tel 01242 504395

Hayley Warren – Service Manager, Learning and Support
Email hwarren@nationalstar.org
Tel 01242 504380



Directors and Head Contact Details

Adam Pearce – Head of Health Care and Support

Email apearce@nationalstar.org

Aubrey Nkata – Director of Clinical Services

Email ankata@nationalstar.org

Claire Townshend – Head of Health Care and Support

Email ctownshend@nationalstar.org

Dave Hansell – Head of Learning and Support

Email dhansell@nationalstar.org

Gillian Cameron – Head of Learning and Support

Email gcameron@nationalstar.org

Hayley Allard – Head of Health Care and Support

Email hallard@nationalstar.org

Sasha Neary – Head of Learning and Support

Email sneary@nationalstar.org

Jo Middleton – Head of Service – Social Enterprise and Events

Email jmiddleton@nationalstar.org

Joanne Kingsbury–Elia – Director of Learning and Support

Email jkingsbury-elia@nationalstar.org

Joanne Waite – Head of Learning and Support

Email jwaite@nationalstar.org

Kirby Shepherd – Head of Deployment and Support

Email kshepherd@nationalstar.org

Megan Rogers – Director of Services

Email mrogers@nationalstar.org

Zoe Barnett – Director of Services and Registered Manager

Email zbarnett@nationalstar.org



Appendices

Appendix A:

Wales – what's included in funding

Included

- There is a weekly budget for snacks and drinks during the timetabled day.
- There is an amount that can be used as a contribution towards the cost of refreshments when out in the community. This must be pre-authorised by management team in advance.
- Transport in locality of campus for facilitating educational activities.
- All utilities and estate costs are included in funding.
- Internet connectivity via WiFi within buildings is provided.

Not included

- Midday meal.
- Supplementary snacks and drinks from shops or cafés need to be paid for personally.
- Transport to and from college. Transport to any educational activities outside of the local area is not included.
- Any holidays or trips away are not included in funding whether organised by the college or personally.
- Any activity requiring additional staffing above funded ratio would require prior agreement and incur an additional charge.
- Cost of tickets or admission for any activities, such as external visits are sometimes not included even if organised by us.

- Any personal items your young person needs during your college day, such as personal care items are not included.
- 5G or other mobile data connections costs are not included.
- Please see section on page 31 on personal insurance.

Financial support for costs not covered by funding

We may be able to help with some additional costs that your young person may not be able to afford through a discretionary bursary. The request has to be for things that will help with their learning, such as equipment, the cost of trips, activities and transport, where they are not covered by statutory funding. If you request a larger bursary, normally over £150 a year, we will need information about your financial situation so we can be sure we share the money we have fairly. We will explain this more if you make an application.

If your young person is living in Wales you may be able to receive money from the Welsh Government from the Education Maintenance Allowance or Welsh Government Learning Grant schemes, depending on the learner's age and financial circumstances. More information is available at: **www.studentfinancewales.co.uk/fe.aspx**

You can talk to your young person's learner journey coordinator or the Bursary team at any time during the year. If you need more information please contact us on telephone number **01242 527631** or **email bursary@nationalstar.org**.



Caerleon House, Mamhilad Park Estate,
Pontypool, Torfaen, NP4 OHZ
Email enquiries@nationalstar.org
Tel 01495 361040

nationalstar
thenationalstar
national-star
natstarcollege

www.nationalstar.org

National Star
Realising the aspirations
of people with disabilities

National Star and National Star College are working names of National Star Foundation which is registered in England and Wales, company number 00522846, charity number 220239.