



StarNews

Bringing you the latest news from National Star



National Star

Realising the aspirations
of people with disabilities

Welcome to StarNews



Our 50th Anniversary celebrations have drawn to a close and what a year it has been. During the past 12 months we have received double Outstanding ratings for

our services from both Ofsted and the Care Quality Commission, a reflection of our team's commitment to the young people we support.

We held FestABLE, the UK's first National Festival of Specialist Learning, bringing together professionals, young people with disabilities and their families.

The Anniversary year culminated in a Fundraising Gala Dinner at Gloucester Cathedral, an appropriate ending as it focused on our wonderful supporters who, for the past five decades, have enabled us to support so many young people with complex disabilities.

We have opened a new facility for our day learners here at Ullenwood, the Summerfield Centre. This is the first project in a major multi-phased redevelopment of some of our facilities to support the ever

increasing medical, therapy, learning and support needs of the young people we work with.

As I reflect on our beginnings in 1967 when National Star supported a handful of young people and look at the breadth of our current services and facilities, I am in awe of the continued support from the community, organisations, trusts, individuals and businesses.

National Star is a great place to work and we are always looking for people to join the team. Together we have achieved so much and, as a result, make such a difference to the lives of so many young people with complex disabilities.

There remains a great deal to be done. The demand for our specialist support is growing and our challenge is meeting that demand and enabling young people with complex disabilities to realise their aspirations.

I do hope you will continue your incredible support for National Star and feel inspired to be part of our next 50 years. We need you now more than ever.

David Ellis

Chief Executive, National Star



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National Star is a working name of National Star Foundation which is registered in England and Wales, company number 522846, charity number 220239. Registered office Ullenwood Manor, Ullenwood, Cheltenham, Gloucestershire, GL53 9QU

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We're leading the way

National Star continues to lead the way by launching the first National Festival of Specialist Learning.

Hundreds of parents, young people with disabilities and professionals participated in discussions and workshops during FestABLE. The event also included all the usual festival activities - live music, games and chill-out rooms - with the difference that it was all fully accessible.

Sally Phillips, the well-known British writer, actress and parent of a child with a disability, spoke at the festival. Parents, young people and professionals including Nigel Ellis, Chief Executive of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and Nigel Evans, who recently retired as the national lead for learners with high needs at Ofsted, were among those who spoke.

'This was an absolutely fantastic event which brought together people without any barriers,' said Mr Evans.

'I got the sense that everybody was here because what they want is the best for young people with disabilities and learning difficulties. If we could harness the power of this event then we have a real force to be reckoned with.'

Miss Phillips said having a child with special needs enables parents to understand and appreciate the important things in life.

'All the things that mindfulness is bringing to the forefront we already know,' she said. 'We already know about colouring a page very, very slowly and the conversations you can have while that's happening. It doesn't appear to have a value but it has a deep value and brings health to the soul.'

'We already know if you walk slowly through a field you see more than if you drive through.'

FestABLE was the first event of its kind in the UK. The next one will be held in Summer 2020.

To watch videos from FestABLE visit www.festable.org

Rhys' incredible opportunity

A former National Star student is proving disability need not be a barrier in the financial world by landing a job with St. James's Place Wealth Management.

Rhys Joyce, who left National Star in July 2018 after completing his three-year BTEC Level 2 Sport programme, which included a focus on work skills, has a one-year paid contract at the Cirencester-based company.

The incredible opportunity all started with a casual conversation about the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme.

Rhys met Jonathan McMahon, Joint Chief Operating Officer of St. James's Place Wealth Management, during a function at National Star.

'We talked about the Duke of Edinburgh Awards and I explained that I had

completed my Silver Award. Mr McMahon suggested I shadow him for a day at work, which I was honoured to do,' said Rhys, who has Duchenne muscular dystrophy which affects his mobility.

Rhys then decided to approach St. James's Place about opportunities with the company and, following an online interview and two face-to-face interviews, he was accepted on a one-year contract at their head office.

'I couldn't believe it when they told me. It has been a big inspiration of mine to be like everyone else and to have a job so that I didn't have to take money off the state,' said Rhys.

St. James's Place has been a long-standing supporter of National Star.

'For a number of years now, the team at St. James's Place, and myself personally, have



It has been a big inspiration of mine to be like everyone else and to have a job



witnessed the incredible achievements of the young people at National Star,' said Mr McMahon. 'The charity is passionate about enabling young people with disabilities to realise their aspirations, and this is something we fully endorse.'

'I've been fortunate that St. James's Place has seen the person and not the wheelchair,' said Rhys. 'It's a great opportunity and I am grabbing it with both hands.'



The fantastic support we receive from corporate partners like St. James's Place is crucial in enabling us to provide young people like Rhys with the opportunities they need. We are always looking to establish new partnerships with companies who would like to support our work through fundraising and the offer of work placements. If you are able to help please email

information@nationalstar.org



To find out more about National Star's personalised learning programmes email admissions@nationalstar.org, call **01242 534928** or visit www.nationalstar.org/learning-programmes

Kyle's dream theatre job

Kyle Thornton had something extra special to celebrate at National Star's Leavers' Award Ceremony – a job to go to after college.

It's an achievement he never dreamed would be possible when he joined National Star four years ago. At the age of three Kyle experienced serious physical injuries and a severe brain injury in a car accident.

As a residential student at National Star, Kyle learnt to live independently, do his own shopping and improve his mobility.

Now he has been offered a paid part-time job with Birmingham Repertory Theatre. And it's all thanks to the practical work experience he gained on National Star's Skills for Work programme.

'I have learnt good cooperative skills and I've developed my motivation and determination,' said the 23-year-old, who undertook work placements at Gloucester Cathedral and National Star's **StarBistro**.

In his role Kyle will be working with the communications and front of house teams, updating their Twitter feed and selling tickets.

For Kyle, who wants to be an actor, the opportunity feels like a dream come true.



Enjoy a fun and relaxing holiday

StarBreaks at Ullenwood

These four-night breaks are available to people with physical and learning disabilities or acquired brain injuries. They offer fully accessible accommodation, specialist facilities and a variety of exciting activities, including swimming, shopping and bowling.

StarActivities at Mamhilad

Join our fun and interactive activity days in Wales, available to 16 to 25-year-olds with physical and learning disabilities or acquired brain injuries. Each day runs from 9am to 5pm.

Book your break

Tel 01242 534928

Email starbreaks@nationalstar.org

Web www.nationalstar.org/starbreaks

www.nationalstar.org/activitydays

 StarBreaks

 StarActivities

‘
Completing the award has helped me develop my independence skills.’



Georgie goes for Gold

Georgie Williams became one of the first National Star students in almost a decade to achieve a Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award.

The 22-year-old received her award from the Countess of Wessex at a special ceremony at Buckingham Palace.

Georgie, who uses an electronic communicator to speak, said: ‘Completing the award has helped me develop my independence skills.’

She achieved her Bronze and Silver Duke of Edinburgh Awards while at school in Scotland. During her three years at National Star, Georgie decided to aim for Gold.

As part of the Gold programme Georgie successfully completed a four-day expedition in the Forest of Dean.

Every day Georgie and her fellow students had to cook breakfast, use a map and compass to visit an orienteering site and assess it for accessibility, return to camp and cook dinner.

The purpose of the team’s expedition was to assess accessibility of orienteering sites within the region to enable National Star to create a permanent orienteering course at its campus and grounds.

Georgie, who has cerebral palsy and uses a power wheelchair, has returned home to Scotland after completing her programme at National Star. She now has a volunteer role with a local hospital radio team.

‘My time at National Star has helped me to be more confident and achieve so much more than I would have done without the college and all their support,’ said Georgie.

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Max is ready for the future

When Max Batten-Foster was born doctors struggled to diagnose his condition, let alone his chances of survival and whether he would ever achieve any sense of independence or walk.

His grandmother, renowned journalist and broadcaster, Baroness Joan Bakewell, recalls how Max's birth made disability a personal concern for her, which until then was simply an issue she reported on.

'One day I got a phone call. It was from my daughter in the maternity ward, and what she told me changed my life,' said Baroness Bakewell. 'When Max was born it was clear he had disabilities, very clear, but we didn't know what they were.'

Max has Profound and Multiple Learning Disabilities. He uses a wheelchair, is tube fed, has limited communication and has complex behavioural issues.

Max finds social environments difficult, which affects his behaviour, so he moved into Lake House. It houses those students who benefit from smaller residential environments, require one-to-one support from staff at all times and appreciate routine and consistency.

His parents, Harriet and Andy, believed National Star's high level of medical care and the integrated therapies would provide an environment where Max could develop and grow.

And they have been proved right. They say Max has made 'unbelievable leaps' since coming to National Star in 2016. For the first time Max has a sense of himself as an individual and his place in the world.

The extensive physiotherapy and occupational



‘
For the first time Max has a sense of himself as an individual and his place in the world.’



therapy has enabled Max to develop his strength and to walk independently. National Star has worked with Max to develop his sociability and to cope with new situations. In July 2018 Max joined fellow students at the Summer Ball – a first for Max.

Max's mum Harriet can see the enormous difference the charity has already made to Max. 'When we came to collect him to go home, Max had packed all the things important to him - iPad and DVDs - into his backpack in anticipation without being asked.

'For such a long time Max was so passive. Now he is much more like a 22-year-old and he has clear ideas of what he wants to do - and what he doesn't want to do.

He walks everywhere and has a much greater level of independence.'

Thanks to National Star, Max has also learned how to manage his behaviour and to calm himself down.

'National Star has made a tremendous difference in helping Max grow into a full person,' said Baroness Bakewell. 'He is an outgoing, happy person and that bodes well for his future.'

His parents agree. 'We are so grateful that Max has had the opportunity to be supported by the charity. It has changed Max's life, our lives and the lives of so many families like ours.'

To watch a video by Baroness Bakewell about Max and other young people supported by National Star visit www.nationalstar.org/max



Max with his grandmother, Baroness Bakewell

The demand for our specialist support is growing and our challenge is meeting that demand. With your help we can provide the best opportunities, specialist environments and equipment that are vital for enabling young people like Max to realise their aspirations.

There are lots of ways you can support us. From leaving us a gift in your will to taking on an epic sporting challenge, organising a cake sale or making a donation, please help us make a real and lasting difference. Find out more by contacting the Fundraising team at fundraising@nationalstar.org or visit www.nationalstar.org/get-involved

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Breaking barriers with OrcheStar

‘...the interaction and guidance from the students was a breath of fresh air.’

National Star’s Orche**Star** musicians visited a residential care home to share and make music with its elderly residents.

Frazer Peters, Hannah Cope, Thomas Langston-Deadman and Ed Scipio delivered the 45-minute workshop at Nazareth House in Cheltenham. After a music performance they invited their audience of 30 to join in by interacting with some of the instruments they had brought.

‘Some of the connections made were beautiful,’ said Paul Tarling, **StarArts** Coordinator at National Star.

‘They had one-to-ones, chatted to each other, demonstrated how they play and encouraged residents to have a go. It was very moving.’

Tim Drywood, Activities Manager at Nazareth House, said that the visit was an enriching experience for all of the residents.

‘The music was stunning, diverse and experimental. It broke many a barrier and the interaction and guidance from the students was a breath of fresh air.’

Orche**Star** aims to break down barriers of verbal communication and enable students to express themselves through collaborative music-making. The musicians use tablets and bespoke instruments that enable them to play sounds by moving their eyes, face or feet, as well as modified traditional instruments such as keyboards, guitars and drums. The ensemble, which numbers 30 to 40 musicians at any one time, creates recordings for dance and theatre groups and performs live at special events.

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National Star student Jason Felce with Lucy Hawking and Major Tim Peake

Trio honour Prof Hawking

Three National Star students joined celebrities, politicians and renowned scientists at a memorial service for Professor Stephen Hawking.

For Jason Felce, Jack Smith and Rose Brown the service at Westminster Abbey had a very personal meaning. All three use electronic communication devices to enable them to speak, just as Professor Hawking did.

The National Star ambassadors met British astronaut Major Tim Peake, actor Benedict Cumberbatch and scientist Brian Cox at the Westminster service. They were interviewed by BBC TV, Channel 5, The Guardian and Swiss TV among others.

‘Professor Hawking was the first person I ever saw using an electronic communication device,’ said Jason, who controls his communication device with his eye movement.

‘He has inspired me to be the best that I can be and not let anything - including my disability - hold me back.’

Rose Brown, aged 20, is studying drama at National Star. In 2009, at the age of 12, Rose was hit by a drink driver who mounted the pavement she was walking on.

‘I got a brain injury following a hit and run accident,’ she said. ‘I can’t walk and talk. I communicate using a computer which I control using a switch and moving my head.

‘I am going to be an actress. Everybody who



He has inspired me to be the best that I can be and not let anything - including my disability - hold me back.



puts their mind to something gets to be it. Stephen Hawking proves this more than anyone.'

Jack Smith was seven when he was struck by a car on a crossing, receiving a brain injury. His family were told that it would be a miracle if he survived, let alone achieve anything in his life.

The 21-year-old uses an electronic device to speak which he controls by typing with his hands. He is in his second year at National Star studying sport.

'Professor Hawking was most famous for his science and the fact that he used a communicator is second,' said Jack. 'He's been a huge inspiration to me.'

National Star has had a strong connection with Professor Hawking since 2007 when a small group of students met the physicist and his daughter Lucy as part of National Star's 40th Anniversary celebrations. The following year Lucy became a Vice-President of National Star, visiting its

Ullenwood campus in 2008 and in 2009 and meeting students.

'The opportunity for students and staff to attend the memorial of Professor Hawking was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity,' said Emily Harris, Speech and Language Therapist at National Star.

'He was a role model and advocate for people with disabilities, and specifically people using communication devices. He is a positive example for us all of how you can contribute to society in a positive way, be a pioneer and leader in your field regardless of disability.'

Did you know...

22% of young people supported by National Star use a communication device?

See the BBC News report of the National Star students:



www.nationalstar.org/stephenhawking

Picture: Mark Weeks



National Star students Jack Smith and Rose Brown being interviewed by BBC News at Westminster Abbey

New garden stimulates the senses



A dazzling new sensory space is providing National Star students with a place to de-stress and process thoughts outside of the classroom.

The Rainbow Garden, based at National Star in Ullenwood, offers a tranquil environment where students can interact and engage with a range of sensory activities.

It features a water fountain, grass covered benches, a bubble mirror, a ball roll game and a wall that displays a range of interactive objects, such as zips and buttons. Its multi-coloured roof makes the area weather proof and provides a distinctive rainbow hue. Like other sensory spaces at National Star, the garden encourages exploration and reflection, all while supporting the development of fine motor skills, verbal and non-verbal communication and social interaction.

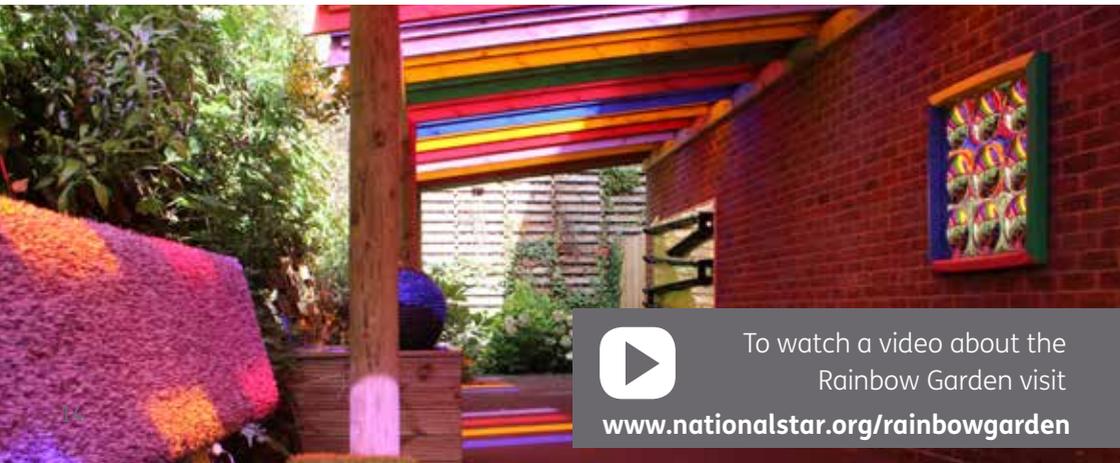
‘There are seven senses that help us to

process information about our bodies and make sense of the world in which we live,’ said Suzanne Pollard, Occupational Therapy Manager at National Star.

‘Sensory spaces are here to enable students to have some time out so they can process and regulate sensory input. It also gives them the opportunity to explore and develop.’

Developments like the Rainbow Garden are made possible with the generous fundraising support of individuals and companies.

To support the fantastic work of National Star and make developments like the Rainbow Garden possible, make a donation by visiting www.nationalstar.org/donate



To watch a video about the Rainbow Garden visit

www.nationalstar.org/rainbowgarden

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 **You can also donate online at www.nationalstar.org/donate**

 Fundraising, National Star, Ullenwood, Cheltenham, GL53 9QU

We would like to send you our newsletter and occasional appeals to support National Star's incredible work with young people with disabilities.

Please tick the boxes below if you would like to hear from us by:

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You can opt out at any time by emailing

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Thank you

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- **LiftTraining** – learning independence for travel
- Assistive technology assessments
- Adult learning courses
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