

Stargazer

Issue 24 Summer 2011

National Star College Newsletter

Celebration Edition



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Welcome from the Student Union



Hello and welcome to this extra special edition of Stargazer which celebrates our new Star Appeal development which has totally transformed the National Star College and the facilities we have here: I hope that you will enjoy reading it.

My name is Alex Giles and I am this year's Student Union President at the National Star College. I am in my third and final year studying Sports Exercise.

This is a very special Stargazer for a number of reasons. Personally it is important to me because it is the last one I will write in as a National Star College student. I have had an amazing three years here and feel, thanks to the College and everything that I have learnt and experienced, that I am going to move on to even bigger and better things.

Secondly, what's really important about this edition is that it celebrates us finally completing the Star Appeal development at the College.

You will find out, as you read the next few pages, about the fantastic new facilities we now have. This is thanks to all of our dedicated supporters who have really amazed us all with their commitment and determination to help us put these vital facilities in place.

You will see throughout Stargazer some of the students wanted to say a more personal thank you to you all.

I hope that you will enjoy reading this edition of Stargazer and feel proud to be a part of what is now a truly amazing College.

Alex Giles,
Student Union President

A brief history of the National Star College



How it all started... the Star Centre

On 10th May 1967 the Star Centre, as it was then known, opened its doors for the first time with 10 students and 26 members of staff.

The Star Centre was originally established as a charity to offer support and education to children whose lives had been affected by thalidomide - a drug that was used to prevent morning sickness but caused serious side effects.

During the 60s opportunities for further education and vocational training didn't exist for disabled teenagers leaving school so it was decided that the College would be solely for post 16s, which has continued through to today. The mission of the Star Centre was 'To heal, to educate and to help to overcome difficulties and frustrations which beset physically disabled children and young people.'



In 1970 the Star Centre became the National Star Centre for Disabled Youth to reflect the fact that students came from all over the UK and then in 2002 it was renamed the National Star College, which it is known as today.

Now... the National Star College

Advances in medical care over the last 45 years have meant an increase in the survival of premature babies, and more children surviving major illness and accidents, which often causes lifelong severe disabilities. There has also been improved integration of students with less severe disabilities into mainstream educational provision, meaning National Star College has moved towards even more specialist provision.

Most of the students at National Star College today require very high levels of personal support, 80% are wheelchair users, over 50% require

speech and language therapy, 20% use a communication aid, and 13% have a life-limiting condition.

The changing and more complex needs of the students meant that the College needed to change and grow. A development plan to expand and improve all of the College's facilities through a combination of new buildings, conversion, and refurbishment was put into place and in 2007 the College launched the £7.7 million 'Star Appeal'.

After many setbacks and obstacles along the way the vision to transform the College with amazing new facilities for its current and future generations of students has finally been realised.



Ullenwood View, our new student residence



Access to life-skills facilities within a specialist residential setting enables severely disabled young people to achieve increased independence and more control over their lives, now and in the longer term.

For some severely disabled young people life-skills can be challenging, and this can impact on their opportunities and future lives.

With appropriate life-skills training, many severely disabled young people can overcome these challenges and live more independently.

The need...

Within the College's existing accommodation many residential students had shared rooms, and in some residences up to five students shared toilet and bathroom facilities.

Due to the increasingly complex personal care, medical intervention and therapeutic support needs of our

Life-skills are the skills we use every day and often take for granted - managing money, washing, dressing, shopping, cooking a meal, washing up, personal hygiene, catching a bus, and expressing our personal choices.

students, the use of shared rooms and facilities was no longer appropriate. There was also a lack of communal space for students to socialise in and kitchen and laundry facilities were either restricted or non-existent.

The solution... Ullenwood View

Ullenwood View is now home to six of our students in single en-suite study bedrooms and four students in independent living studio flats.

The six-bedroom residence has a large communal lounge and dining area to help students develop social skills within a small group setting, an accessible laundry and specially adapted life-skills kitchen. There is also sufficient space for large electric wheelchairs, and 'enabling technology' in some of the bedrooms.

The fantastic new studio flats offer students the opportunity to try out how it feels to live with minimum support, and is particularly useful for students aiming to live independently when they leave College. The studio flats are self-contained, with their own bedroom, living and kitchen area, and en-suite bathroom.

The studio flats empower our students to develop practical skills, such as budgeting, cooking, shopping and dressing, and more personal skills such

as assertiveness, and managing and directing their care support.

Zoe Rodway who will be managing Ullenwood View said:

"The students are really excited about moving into Ullenwood View, especially as they have been actively involved in the planning and design of the building. The accommodation has a warm homely environment, with great colour designs and state-of-the-art facilities.

The new facilities range from fully adjustable kitchen units, to environmentally controlled bedrooms meaning students with communication devices can independently control their curtains, light switches and doors through their communicator. The benefits our new residence has to offer are endless and will be observed through student enjoyment and progress."

'Enabling technology' means students who use communication devices, and who have limited mobility, can take control of their personal environment through simple one touch commands using their communicator. They are able to control lighting, open and close doors, windows and curtains, operate TV's, CD players, and radios independently.

Therapies Centre

Therapy provision plays an important role in the lives of each of our students, not only whilst they are at College, but in equipping them for life after they leave.

All therapy programmes at the National Star College are individualised. Students take ownership of their programmes and manage their own therapy requirements to maintain their health, enhance their independence and lifestyles, and improve their capacity to access education.

The need...

Two small physiotherapy rooms, a small multi-sensory room which was in constant use and the shared use of the College's swimming pool to deliver hydrotherapy sessions meant that that College really needed new therapy facilities.

The solution.... A new Therapies Centre which includes...

A large physiotherapy suite – students are able to work in small group classes, have one-to-one support and also daily drop in sessions. Floor level activities and specialist equipment aid walking, improve posture and co-ordination, increase strength, and improve overall organ function.

A large multi-sensory suite with three separate multi-sensory rooms – equipped with a variety of specialist audio, light and touch, and rough and tumble equipment, including colour change lights, projectors, responsive bubble tubes, clambering wedges, rebound therapy trampoline, hoists to lift students from wheelchairs, and interactive equipment.

These rooms and this type of therapy will equip more students with relaxation techniques and pain management strategies that will give them long term benefits for their life after College.

A specialist hydrotherapy pool – enabling us to offer more hydrotherapy sessions to a greater number of students. Hydrotherapy can impact significantly on and improve students' health and well-being. Benefits include relief of pain and muscle spasm, greater freedom of movement and strengthening of weak muscles.



The Therapies Centre is priceless in terms of the benefits it will give to our students.

Creative & Performing Arts



Creative Arts

Creative Arts have a strong enabling power to transform the lives of severely disabled people.

Students with complex disabilities are able to express themselves and communicate through art, using images and shapes, whilst also working towards a formal qualification.

Creative Art enables students to give opinions and ideas and make informed decisions and choices through a rich variety of creative media whatever their sensory, physical or cognitive ability.

The new Creative Arts Centre has large, light and open teaching and exhibition spaces, including an art and craft area and a pottery and ceramics zone with a kiln room.

The new Centre will mean:

- More opportunity to open up art courses to a greater number of students, including increased provision of day time courses for disabled adult learners.
- The additional space will enable the creative arts curriculum at the College to be developed.
- All students will be able to access the new Pottery and Ceramics area.
- The new exhibition space will enable us to exhibit and celebrate the work of our disabled artists, and help to foster tolerance and understanding of difference through art.

Performing Arts

Producing and performing in drama and musical projects builds students' confidence, and gives them the valuable experience of having worked on a project from concept to realisation.

Performing Arts courses at the National Star College include the production of original plays, music and dance which provide a vehicle for creative expression and therapy.

A holistic approach by the staff at the College, coupled with creative and varied activities, enables performing arts students to achieve their full

potential in an enriching and stimulating environment whilst learning to develop positive working relationships with peers and self confidence through their performance work.

As a result of the Star Appeal the College now has:

- A new Dance and Drama Studio which will provide dedicated dance and educational drama space together with an accessible props store and backstage facilities.
- A new main entrance to the Performing Arts Centre with a gallery foyer to display student art work and performances.
- A Box Office area for ticket sales providing students with real life work experience.



The Anderson Centre is named after the former National Star College Chairman the late Dr Keith Anderson.

The Anderson Centre

The 'Anderson Centre', which is the College's new work-skills area, forms the new face of the National Star College.

It is designed to provide students with a real working environment and the local community with a new Bistro.

Located in the entrance building to the College, the new Centre includes a range of facilities and resources which provide real and practical working environments for our students, helping them to gain essential work-skills, knowledge and understanding.

The Anderson Centre will facilitate a move away from a more traditional classroom setting towards

learning work-skills in real working environments.

For many of the College's students this style of learning, which takes place by carrying out an activity in a real context rather than being told how to do it or watching a demonstration, is the most effective. In the Anderson Centre students will take on a 'front of house' role within the College with the new facilities including:

- **A new College reception** area giving students customer service experience.
- **A working office** providing students with administration, IT, and reprographics experience.
- **A small shop** offering snacks, student made products and other select items. The shop will

provide students with experience of ordering and managing stock, retail and customer service experience, and opportunities for business and enterprise skills development.

- **A Bistro**, open to the public, with a serving counter and seating area, offering good quality meals from locally sourced produce which will give students hospitality and catering skills.
- **A kitchen alongside the Bistro** with a food preparation area providing food for the Bistro.

The Anderson Centre will enable our students to apply the essential skills they have learnt to everyday situations beyond a work environment, which in turn will help them to improve their long term transition outcomes and the

quality of their lives as independent and active citizens. This will increase their independence, personal fulfilment, enjoyment and enrichment of life.



Our new Centre includes a range of facilities and resources which provide real and practical working environments for our students

Starfish Learning Technology Centre



Technology is embedded in teaching and learning right across the College

Used effectively and creatively, technology makes a real difference to the lives of disabled people.

The new Starfish Learning Technology Centre will enable the National Star College to expand and develop its use of technology to support and empower the College's students.

As a 'Technology Exemplar', the National Star College is constantly striving to be innovative and creative in its use of technology and this new Centre will facilitate that exciting work.

The Technology Centre will provide a dedicated space for students, staff and also external users to find out what technology is right for them, develop and pilot new technologies, provide a space to carry out assessments, and train staff on the use of a range of technologies.

David Finch, Director of College Development, said about the new Technology Centre:

"The Starfish Technology Centre will showcase what the National Star College stands for – expertise through

dedicated support in a high quality and inspirational environment. We are recognised nationally for always being on the cutting edge of technology and the new Centre will enable us to carry this on and also allow us to do so much more."

Technology is embedded in teaching and learning right across the College. It is used every day to support and significantly improve outcomes for our

students, in particular for those with complex physical disabilities.

Each young person at the College is assessed to match up technology to their learning needs for their personalised learning programme. Students use a range of mobile, assistive and environmental technologies to aid memory, practice skills and improve communication, mobility and control.

- Features of the new Centre...**
- Fully wireless**
 - Microsoft & Apple technology**
 - Plasma screens**
 - Interactive White Boards**
 - Docking stations**



The Starfish Learning Technology Centre is named after the Starfish Trust who funded the new area.