

# NEWFRIARS CHRISTMAS NEWSLETTER 2025!

Designed by Alana ICT





# FESTIVE MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

*Rob Millington, Executive Principal*

As we approach the festive season, it brings us great joy to reflect on the remarkable achievements of our students and staff.

As we wrap up the first term at Newfriars College, we want to take a moment to reflect on the incredible journey we've shared together. It has been a term filled with growth, success, and memorable experiences for our students, and we are delighted to share some of these highlights with you.

This Christmas newsletter celebrates and shares our success stories, our determination, our triumphs and our special memories. It is impossible to cover everything we do because we simply do so much!

None of the activities or individual achievements and successes would be possible without the dedication and support of our amazing staff, the encouragement from parents and carers, and the enthusiasm of our wonderful students. You are the heart of Newfriars College, and we are so proud of what we've achieved together.

This year we were nominated for the National Diversity and Community Organisation Award for Disability 2025. We had over 200 nominations and we were truly inspired by the comments received. The comments overwhelmingly praise Newfriars College for its exceptional commitment to inclusion, diversity, and support for students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).

## **Key themes include:**

- **Inclusive Education:** The college provides personalised learning pathways, a broad curriculum, and vocational opportunities tailored to individual needs.
- **Community Engagement:** Initiatives like Shopping Buddies, community café (Community Junction), and partnerships with local organizations (e.g., NHS Project Search) help students gain real-world experience and foster independence.
- **Life-Changing Impact:** Families and staff highlight significant improvements in students' confidence, social skills,



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independence, and employability.

- **Staff Dedication:** Staff are consistently described as caring, passionate, and going “above and beyond” to support students and their families.
- **Celebration of Diversity:** The college embraces students from varied backgrounds, ensuring equality, respect, and opportunities for all.
- **Opportunities & Experiences:** Residential trips, internships, volunteering, and community projects enrich students’ lives and prepare them for adulthood.
- **Positive Culture:** The college is portrayed as a warm, friendly, and supportive environment where students thrive and feel valued.

Overall, the comments reflect deep appreciation for Newfriars College’s role in transforming lives, promoting diversity, and building inclusive communities.

We are one of the biggest specialist colleges in the country and we do our very best to give everybody the best possible preparation for adulthood sprinkled with wonderful experiences and adventures along the way. This term we have opened a New Trade Centre and Print shop and as we look forward to the New Year, we’re excited to continue building on this strong foundation and creating even more opportunities for success in 2026.

Wishing you all a joyful Christmas and a Happy New Year!

From Rob Millington and everyone at Newfriars College



# Farewell to Our Inspirational Deputy Headteacher

After six transformative years at our College, we recently said a heartfelt goodbye to our Deputy Headteacher, Jay, who has moved on to an exciting new role at Natspec—the national membership association for specialist further education providers supporting students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

Jay joined the College in 2019 and quickly became a cornerstone of our leadership team. Her unwavering dedication, visionary leadership, and compassionate approach left an indelible mark on our college community. From navigating the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic to driving forward inclusive education and high expectations, Jay consistently placed the wellbeing and success of our students at the heart of every decision.

Her influence helped shape the College into the thriving, supportive environment it is today. Jay's legacy is evident in the culture of care, ambition, and resilience that continues to grow across our campus. While words cannot fully capture the journey we shared or the milestones we achieved together, it is clear that her contributions laid strong foundations for our future.



# Newfriars College Learners Shine at National Natspec Conference!



## Learners from Newfriars College

Vocational Pathway proudly represented our college at the 27.11.25 National Natspec Conference via Zoom, taking part in an inspiring discussion about Specialist Further Education (FE) and its impact.

Our learner ministers and representatives are:

- Alana – Inclusion Minister
- James P. – IT
- James B. – Infrastructure
- Oli – Education (Deputy P.M.)
- Revan – Health & Care (P.M.)
- Sam – Culture
- Jordan – Employability

## What Did They Discuss?

The learners explored key questions about their college experience and aspirations:

### How is college working for you?

- “College treats me like an adult and gives me lots of free agency. They crafted support for my physical needs – for example, by giving me a 1:1.”
- “I feel like college is a home from home – my friends and teachers are like family.”
- “I enjoy the work; it’s challenging without being too hard.”
- “I like how relaxed it is and that I can be myself.”

### How is college helping you achieve your aspirations?

- “I’m building confidence by speaking to people I’ve never spoken to before.”
- “My goal is independence – I do travel training, cooking lessons, and learn about budgeting.”
- “College has helped me grow into adulthood and feel less daunted about living independently.”

**We unlock education**  
**We transform lives**  
**We create lasting impact**



# Celebrating the Power of Specialist FE



and spoke up for the importance of inclusive education. Across the week, learners and staff showcased activities that highlight why specialist FE matters—from creative projects to community experiences like the Supported Living Pathway trip to Trentham Gardens. These opportunities help learners grow, connect, and achieve their goals.

From 1–5 December, Newfriars College proudly joined Natspec's national campaign, The Power of Specialist FE, shining a spotlight on the incredible achievements of learners with SEND. This week was all about showing how specialist further education transforms lives —building confidence, independence, and skills for the future.

In preparation, our vocational pathway learner parliament representatives took part in a national Zoom conference with other specialist colleges. They shared ideas, celebrated success,



# Safeguarding News and support over the Christmas break

Here at Newfriars College, safeguarding our learners is a daily priority. All of our staff have undertaken safeguarding training this term to help them to identify and deal with safeguarding concerns.

Educating our learners to keep themselves safe is as much a priority as staff training and to this end we have a programme of Personal and Social Development, Relationship and Sex Education, Prevent education and On-line safety education as well as the weekly reminders of how to be safe in the community through community visits and travel training sessions. The students can also self-refer for support and advice for safeguarding matters through accessing a referral form via the QR code below...



It is vital for us to work in partnership with parents and multi-agency teams such as social services and the police where necessary. If you do have any concerns of a safeguarding nature, please contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead at the college or email

[SafeguardingTeam@newfriarscollege.org.uk](mailto:SafeguardingTeam@newfriarscollege.org.uk) (these will be actioned during college hours only).

If you are concerned that a young/vulnerable person is in immediate danger, please call the police straight away on 999.

Importantly we want to help parents and carers to understand the potential risks to young people using social media and the internet, especially around Christmas time when our learners might be spending more time on on-line gaming platforms and using social media to keep in touch with friends. For parent/carer friendly on-line safety guides for many social media and internet platforms please visit the [National Online Safety website](#) and check out the WakeUpWednesday guides.

# Safeguarding News and support over the Christmas break

The Christmas break often a time for late nights and parties; below is some information for female students and parents/carers on how to keep safe when attending party venues...

## **Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) and Safer Nights**

VAWG and Safer Nights campaigns to help everybody stay safe whilst enjoying the Christmas period. The Safer Nights campaign addresses multiple audiences to encourage a fun night out while raising awareness of spiking, preloading, helping to educate a safer night's environment. The campaign aims to raise awareness of support networks, technology and safe zones available within the night time economy. The aim is to highlight behaviour and encourage change, provide insight into those who have experienced this abuse, and empower people to make a change to their habits and help others without putting themselves at risk.

The NSPCC logo is displayed in a large, bold, green font.The ChildLine logo features the word "ChildLine" in a black, rounded font inside a white speech bubble. Below it, the number "0800 1111" is written in black, and a small icon of a telephone handset is visible to the right.The SAMARITANS logo consists of the word "SAMARITANS" in a bold, green, sans-serif font, enclosed within a white rectangular border that has a slightly distressed or hand-drawn appearance.The citizens advice logo features the words "citizens" and "advice" in a white, sans-serif font, stacked vertically inside a dark blue speech bubble.The StepChange Debt Charity logo features the word "Step" in a large, bold, purple font, followed by "Change" in a smaller, orange font. Below this, the words "Debt Charity" are written in a smaller, dark blue font.

# Safeguarding News and support over the Christmas break

## Support over the Christmas break:

Staffordshire Families Integrated Front Door (SFIFD) if you have concerns or are worried for a child and wish to make a referral: 0300 111 8007

OR...

Stoke on Trent Safeguarding Children 01782 235100 (opt 2)

NSPCC Helpline Call 0808 800 5000 or email [help@nspcc.org.uk](mailto:help@nspcc.org.uk) if you're worried about a child.

[NSPCC Christmas](#)

[Support\[nspcc.org.uk\]](http://support[nspcc.org.uk])

Childline Free, confidential support for children and young people: 0800 1111 or [childline.org.uk](http://childline.org.uk)

Samaritans

116 123 [samaritans.org](http://samaritans.org)

Citizens Advice Staffordshire – Debt, benefits, budgeting  
0808 278 7874

StepChange Debt Charity – Free debt advice  
0800 138 1111

Meal Vouchers:

Meal vouchers are available for students who get free meals in college.

Parents should contact the LA for the different funding options or if you have any queries.

Stoke-on-Trent

There is a household support fund which gives £30 vouchers to parents over the Christmas and £50 vouchers over the summer Holidays

Application and info: [Household Support Fund | Household Support Fund | Stoke-on-Trent](#)

Staffordshire

There are lots of options here for vouchers and support during the year

[Household support fund - Staffordshire County Council](#)

Please contact the college using [helpline@newfriarscollege.org.uk](mailto:helpline@newfriarscollege.org.uk) if you require further support

# Students Turn Ideas into Published Articles!

This term, our ICT group took on an exciting challenge: creating the college newsletter! Many learners had fantastic ideas to share, but writing them down can sometimes feel like a big hurdle. That's where technology stepped in to help.

We introduced a new tool called Contextualised Speech - to-Structured-Text AI (CSST-AI). It works like this: students speak their thoughts out loud, and the AI turns those words into clear, structured text. No more worrying about spelling or typing—just sharing ideas with confidence! The best part? The final article still sounds like the students because it uses their own words.



This approach has been a game-changer for accessibility. Learners who face literacy barriers were able to see their ideas published in print for the very first time. It was a proud moment for everyone involved! Staff made sure everything was checked and accurate, so the process stayed safe and supportive.

We're just starting to explore how this technology can transform SEN education—and the future looks bright!

Thank you to all the students who made this newsletter possible. We can't wait to see what amazing ideas you share next term!



# Christmas Fair Brings Joy and Generosity!

On December 5th, Newfriars College was alive with festive spirit as we celebrated our annual Christmas Fair. This much-loved event brought together learners, staff, parents, carers, and friends of the college for a morning of fun, creativity, and community. It was a wonderful way to kick off the holiday season and showcase the talents and teamwork that make Newfriars so special.

The fair featured a fantastic range of stalls and activities. Visitors could browse and buy handmade gifts, upcycled crafts, and beautiful Christmas keepsakes created by learners. The Print Shop impressed everyone with their custom mugs and festive designs, while the Junction Café team served delicious refreshments that kept the crowds happy and warm. There was a huge queue outside Santa's grotto to meet the big man throughout the morning. Everywhere you looked, there was something exciting to see and do, and the atmosphere was full of laughter and smiles.

One of the biggest highlights was our Mega Raffle, which proved to be a huge success! Thanks to the incredible generosity of local businesses and supporters, we were able to offer some truly amazing prizes. These included:

- Port Vale Hospitality Package for Four
- Signed Port Vale Team Shirt
- Tour of Middleport Pottery
- Tickets to the New Vic Theatre
- Dining vouchers from Simply Thai and Chipalicious

The raffle was hotly contested, with many people buying multiple tickets to increase their chances of winning. Learners were thrilled to take home some of the top prizes,

including the Port Vale hospitality package and signed shirt—a real treat for football fans! The excitement didn't stop there; the raffle was drawn live on Facebook by Julie, who led the event with enthusiasm and energy.

## **Julie summed up the success perfectly:**

*"The raffle was fantastic this year! We really appreciated everyone buying tickets. Thank you to all the businesses and supporters who made this possible."*

Thanks to everyone's efforts, the raffle raised an impressive £256 for the college. This achievement shows what we can accomplish when our community comes together. Every ticket purchased and every donation made helped create a memorable event for learners and visitors alike.

The Christmas Fair is always a highlight of the year at Newfriars College, and this year was no exception. It was a celebration of creativity, generosity, and festive fun—a true reflection of the spirit of our college.

**Thank you to everyone who joined in the fun—see you next term for more exciting events!**



# Interns Shine in First Placements



A big highlight was the first Employment Planning Meeting. Interns reflected on their first placements, shared what they learned, and set goals for their next roles. This process helps everyone focus on progress and prepare for future success.

This term has been fantastic for our Project SEARCH interns. They have completed their first work placements and achieved so much. Interns took part in mandatory training and enjoyed trips that helped everyone build friendships and confidence.

Our interns worked in a wide range of roles, including admin, gardening, maintenance, patient catering, ward assisting, and domestic services. We also introduced a new placement as a diversional therapist. These experiences taught practical skills like timekeeping, communication, and teamwork. They also helped interns grow in confidence and independence. Managers, supervisors, and mentors have been amazing, offering guidance and encouragement every step of the way.



# Interns Shine in First Placements



Thank you to all staff and partners who make this programme possible. Your support is helping interns take big steps toward independence and work readiness.

We can't wait to share more success stories next term—thank you to everyone involved!

We also celebrated individual achievements with "Intern of the Month." Congratulations to Megan (October), Logan (November), and Nicole (December) for their hard work and dedication. Their success shows what can be achieved with effort and support.

One message stood out this term: "The more we do something, the better we get." This is true for life skills and job skills. Practice may feel hard, but it builds strength and confidence. Every task completed brings interns closer to their employment goals.



# Learners Shine in Work Placement

This term, our learners have been busy gaining real-world experience through exciting work placements across the local community. From libraries to retail and care settings, they've shown incredible commitment and professionalism.

David has excelled at Newcastle Library, mastering the task of sorting books by genre and earning glowing feedback from staff. His success has even led to a voluntary role in the New Year—well done, David!

Jack has been a star at Screwfix, working in the warehouse with enthusiasm and reliability. His positive attitude and strong work ethic have made him a valued team member, and the skills he's learning will support his future career.

Several learners have also contributed at Belong Retirement Village, taking on roles in reception, maintenance, activities, and housekeeping. Their independence and dedication have impressed everyone.



Meanwhile, James and Jacob have been gaining retail experience at Tesco in Hanley. They've handled tasks like stock returns and recycling with care and professionalism, earning praise from staff.

## **Donna, our job coach, shared:**

*"I'm so proud of how every learner has embraced these opportunities. They've shown confidence, independence, and a real willingness to learn—fantastic progress all round!"*

It's fantastic to see all our learners growing in confidence, building skills, and preparing for adulthood through these placements.

Thank you to everyone involved—here's to more success next term!





# Sports Update!

This term all 3 pathways have been taking part and enjoying sports both on site and out in the community.

SLP groups have been working really hard on their Boccia and Table Cricket skills. It has been great to see the progress in terms of both engagement and enjoyment of both of these accessible sports. Look out for future SLP teams representing the college in these sports!

Our Sports Leaders from the Vocational Pathway have made a fantastic start to their course, delivering sessions involving a wide range of sports including Dodgeball, Tennis, Hockey, Cricket, Table Tennis and Football. The group have also supported local sports events at venues such as Northwood Stadium where they applied their leadership skills to help Year 7 and Year 8 classes with their activities during the events, gaining valuable experience and giving an excellent account of themselves.

Finally, we also have had success on a competitive front this term. Our ILP Table Cricket team travelled to Watermill School in early December for this year's Staffordshire Table Cricket competition. During the event they played a total of 4 matches against other teams from around the city. All the practise in the weeks beforehand paid off for the team as they scored a total of over 200 runs on the day and finished an outstanding 2nd place overall, very narrowly missing out on being crowned Staffordshire Table Cricket Champions! Well done and congratulations to all the team.

We will keep you updated on more sporting opportunities, stories and successes in the New Year. Merry Christmas...!

# Nurture Group Spreads Christmas Joy!



Everyone took turns choosing items they believed would bring happiness. Finally, the gifts were packed and returned to Dunelm, ready to brighten someone's Christmas. It was a wonderful way to show kindness and teamwork!

Thank you to everyone involved—let's look forward to more amazing projects next term!

This term, our Nurture group joined the Dunelm "Delivering Joy at Christmas" appeal. With help from Laura in Finance, learners visited Dunelm to choose gift tags from the Giving Tree. Each tag represented someone in need, and the group carefully picked which ones to fulfill. They spent time planning what to buy, then headed to the shops to select thoughtful gifts



# ICT Learners Shine with Graphic Design!



This term, our ICT Pathway learners have been busy exploring the world of graphic design, and their creativity has been incredible! Working closely with the college print shop, the group has designed eye-catching projects that have been used across the college. From Halloween Enterprise posters to sports leaders' uniforms, Skill Builder resources, and even logos for MasterChef, their designs have made a big impact.

The learners have shown fantastic teamwork and dedication. Many have gone the extra mile by

completing work in their own time, proving just how passionate they are about design. Their efforts have helped bring college events and projects to life, and every piece reflects their hard work and imagination

As their teacher, I feel privileged to work with such an enthusiastic group. Their energy and commitment make every lesson a pleasure. And the best part? This is just the beginning! The ICT team has lots of exciting projects planned for the New Year, so watch this space.

Thank you to everyone involved—let's look forward to more amazing designs next term!



# Travel Training Success at Newfriars!

Since September, our travel training programme has been making fantastic progress! Petra, one of our dedicated travel trainers, has been supporting learners to build confidence and independence.

One learner who works at the junction and the print shop has achieved an amazing milestone—she now travels home on her own! This is a huge step forward, and her family has shared lots of positive feedback. We're so proud of her determination and growth.

Other learners are also doing brilliantly. One student in ILP has just started travel training and is already showing great promise. With continued effort, it won't be long before she becomes an independent traveller too.

Travel training is all about breaking down barriers and giving learners the skills and confidence to travel safely and independently. Seeing this progress is incredibly rewarding for everyone involved!

**Petra says:** *"Watching learners grow in confidence and achieve independence is the best part of my job. It's amazing to see what they can do!"*

Thank you to all learners and staff for your hard work—let's keep building independence next term!



# Groundworks Success at Silverdale Country Park

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Andy Hunt, Site Manager at Silverdale Country Park, for his ongoing commitment to providing outstanding opportunities for our learners. This term has been no exception – learners have enjoyed a fantastic start, building fences, enhancing wetland habitats, planting trees, and even mastering tools they had never encountered before!

It is this hands-on work that contributes to improving conditions for local wildlife and enriching the experience for the many visitors who enjoy the park.



# Gardeners Update!



information about how it is run. In the new year we will be completing some market research to find out what people would like to purchase by sending out a survey to you all in January.

We have been Making Christmas wreaths to take home using college sourced Willow and foraged ever greens and berries.

We have been developing our gardening skills through completing seasonal gardening jobs including dead heading, seed saving, planting acorns to grow Oak trees for planting out in a year or 2.

We have been planning and researching setting up our own plant nursery which will be called "The Plant Potters Nursery" as part of our research we visited a local plant nursery to find out



# Learners Shine in New Employment Programme



This term, upper college learners have started an exciting new Preparation for Employment programme. The focus has been on building key skills for the future, such as teamwork, problem-solving, and understanding personal strengths and next steps.

Learners have taken part in creative business enterprise projects, including a ticketed Halloween Movie Morning. They worked together to plan and run the event, selling merchandise and even designing their own products like Halloween mugs—all with the goal of making a profit!

Alongside these projects, some learners have enjoyed personalised work experience placements, including opportunities with the Indi

Club. Others have completed online courses to support their individual goals for adulthood. Internal work experience has also helped learners grow their confidence and prepare for the world of work.

Thank you to everyone involved—here's to more amazing achievements next term!



# Learners Take the Wheel!

Our VP learners enjoyed an exciting day focused on confidence, independence, and new experiences! Julie, Janice, and Evelyn's class welcomed Scott from My Time To Drive, who gave a safety briefing and shared tips for driving with a disability. Learners then stepped into a dual-control car to try driving forwards and backwards—a fantastic achievement and a big step toward independence!

In the afternoon, learners tackled the Hazard Perception Test and a Mock Theory Test using laptops. Everyone showed great focus and enthusiasm. Special shout-outs go to Arif for asking brilliant questions, Keeley for superb communication, Jack for calm confidence, Revan for natural driving skills, Z for excellent self-awareness, Leo for adapting brilliantly, and Alana for strong observations and leadership potential.



This day wasn't just about driving—it was about building life skills, confidence, and teamwork. Learners left feeling proud and motivated for what's next!

**Thank you to Scott and all our learners for making this day unforgettable—roll on next term for more exciting opportunities!**



# Print Shop Sparks Creativity at College



Since September, our new print shop next to the Junction Café has been buzzing with activity! Learners have worked hard to produce fantastic items, including mugs, aprons for Art Enterprise and MasterChef, and hoodies for the Trades department. Staff and students even joined in the festive fun by creating personalised Secret Santa gifts.

The print shop is more than just a creative space—it's helping learners build important skills for adulthood and employment. They've learned how to use specialist equipment, manage temperatures and timings for different fabrics, and work as a

team to complete real projects. These hands-on experiences give learners confidence and prepare them for future opportunities like supported internships and jobs.

There were a few technical challenges at the start, but the team worked together to overcome them. Now, the print shop is shaping up to be an exciting part of college life. Learners have shown great commitment and pride in their work, and the results speak for themselves!

We can't wait to see what amazing projects come next term!

For any printshop queries please email:

[Printshop@newfriarscollege.org.uk](mailto:Printshop@newfriarscollege.org.uk)



# Print Shop Team Gears Up for Success

Since September, our Junction Print Shop has been buzzing with activity! Learners have been getting hands-on experience with exciting equipment like the garment press and printers. They've learned how to set times, manage temperatures, and even troubleshoot tricky issues. It's been a fantastic journey of teamwork and growth.

Each learner brings something unique to the team, creating a strong sense of camaraderie. Together, they're mastering new techniques and building confidence for the future. The goal is clear: prepare everyone for adulthood and the world of work. With coaching and support, the team is shaping up brilliantly and ready to shine.



One learner summed it up perfectly: *"I love learning new skills and working as a team. It makes me feel ready for a real job!"*

We're thrilled about what's ahead and can't wait to open the Print Shop to the community. This is just the beginning of something amazing!

**Watch this space for more exciting updates next term!**



# Malaika Shines at Junction Café and Printshop



Since September, Malaika has been busy learning new skills at Junction Café and the Printshop. She's taken on a variety of tasks, from printing designs on mugs and fabrics to creating transfers for college projects. In the café, Malaika has served customers and worked in the kitchen, gaining valuable experience in customer service and teamwork.

Her journey has been full of hands-on learning. At the Printshop, Malaika mastered techniques for printing on different materials and worked on real orders for college staff. In the café, she learned how to prepare food, serve customers, and keep everything running smoothly. These experiences have helped her grow in confidence and independence.

Staff have praised Malaika for her strong work ethic and ability to pick up new skills quickly. She's shown great timing and technique and has become an important member of the team. The advice from her mentor? "Be loud and proud—you've got the skills, so use your voice!" Malaika is ready to take that advice forward as she looks to the future.

## **Quick Chat with Malaika**

**Q: What have you enjoyed most about your work?**

*A: Learning new things and trying different jobs.*

**Q: How do you feel about yourself now?**

*A: I feel more confident.*

**Q: What are you looking forward to next term?**

*A: Getting more work and getting stuck in!*

**We can't wait to see what amazing things Malaika achieves next term!**



# Owen's Creative Print Shop Journey

Since September, Owen has been busy learning new skills in the college print shop. He's designed and printed colourful mugs and T-shirts using specialist printers and heat presses. Owen has also explored creating designs on Canva and transferring them onto products using sublimation techniques.

One highlight for Owen has been making personalised Christmas gifts for customers, including a special mug for his mum! He's even taken part in emailing designs to customers for feedback, showing great professionalism and attention to detail.



Owen says, "I really enjoyed creating designs and sharing them on social media." His teacher is proud of his progress, noting how well he has settled into the group and developed his employability skills. Owen hopes to use these experiences to move towards an office-based role in the future, where he can continue working with computers—something he's passionate about.

We can't wait to see what Owen achieves next term!



# Print Shop Goes Digital!

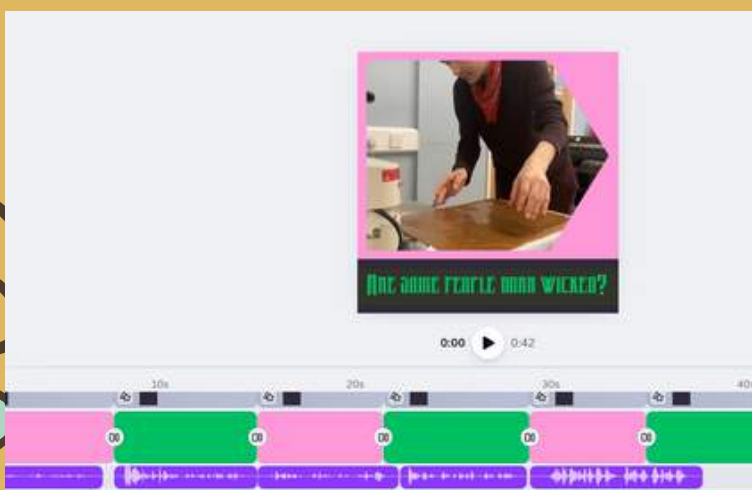
This term, the Print Shop team and Graphic Design learners have been busy creating short, engaging videos to share their amazing work online. They've learned that in today's world, businesses need a strong online presence—and they've stepped up!

Alongside printing on fabrics, ceramics, and other materials, learners explored how to make eye-catching social media content. Using Facebook Reels insights, they tracked engagement and improved their videos over time. Projects featured included Skill Builder mugs, Halloween enterprise designs, and even sports leader activities.



Learners also supported other groups, like those at Newcastle-under-Lyme markets, showing teamwork and creativity. These skills aren't just fun—they're real employability skills for the future!

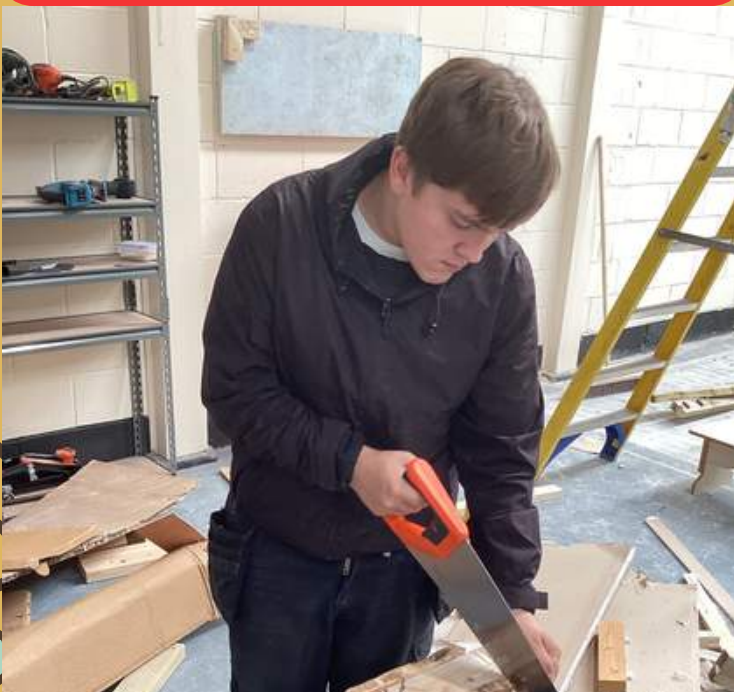
We can't wait to see what exciting projects come next term!



# Building and Fixing: A Hands-On Start

This term, our Trades/Mechanics learners have made a fantastic start! They worked together to refresh a new unit space into a classroom, painting walls and develop the displays to create a bright, welcoming area for learning. Alongside carpentry, learners also explored basic mechanics skills—understanding tools, practising safe handling, and learning how different parts fit and work together.

The group focused on practical tasks like measuring, marking, sawing and identifying the right tools for each job. They learned how to prepare surfaces for painting and wood for carpentry and how to check mechanical components for safety and function. These activities helped learners build confidence and problem-solving skills while working as a team.



By combining carpentry and mechanics, learners discovered how these skills connect in real-world settings. They showed great pride in their progress, supporting each other and staying positive when tasks felt challenging. The result? A functional, well-prepared classroom and a group of learners ready to take on more practical projects.

Thank you to everyone involved—get ready for even more exciting hands-on learning next term!

# Santa Brings Joy to Junction Café!



Santa made sure everyone felt included. He used a microphone with subtitles on screen, AAC with widget symbols, and even added some Makaton signing. This thoughtful approach meant everyone could join in the fun and feel part of the celebration.

The feedback was fantastic—everyone had a great time, and the atmosphere was full of smiles and laughter.

Santa summed it up perfectly: ***“Ho Ho Ho! See you next year!”***

We can't wait to welcome Santa back next year for more festive fun!

On 8th December, the Junction Café hosted a magical Breakfast with Santa event. Learners and visitors enjoyed a tasty breakfast and a special visit from Santa Claus, who brought gifts and festive cheer. Groups booked in advance, and the café welcomed guests from Water Mill and other local groups.

# Busy and Bright at the Junction Café



George, our Kitchen Manager, shared her excitement: *"It's been wonderful seeing students learn new skills and grow in confidence while having fun!"*

It's been a brilliant start to the year, and we can't wait for more fun and learning next term!

Thank you to everyone who made this term so special—see you in the New Year!

Since September, the Junction Café has been full of energy and learning! Students have been busy baking delicious cakes and taking part in exciting activities. Every Tuesday brings "Life Works," Wednesdays are packed with creative sessions, and Fridays are all about craft club.

The café team also had a stand serving refreshments at the College Christmas Fair that kept everyone buzzing for two hours! Next up, students will prepare and serve a special Christmas dinner for their peers, with Project Search joining the celebration.



# Conservation Group Celebrates Pied Flycatcher Success

The Newfriars Conservation Group has continued its vital work alongside the RSPB to improve woodland habitats for Pied Flycatchers at Consall Wood. This term, Paul Bennett, RSPB Regional Manager, confirmed that spring and summer surveys recorded eight breeding pairs using nest boxes in the very section of woodland our learners have been nurturing for the past three years.

This remarkable achievement makes our area the most productive site in the region, a clear testament to the dedication and hard work of our learners. The conservation team at Newfriars remains committed to supporting these beautiful birds, ensuring their habitats thrive year after year.

For those unfamiliar, the Pied Flycatcher is a small summer visitor to the UK. Males are striking, with glossy black upperparts, white underparts, and a bold white wing patch, while females are softer brown. After breeding in western woodlands, they migrate to spend the winter in West Africa.



# Exciting News from Newfriars Frenzy!



We're thrilled to share that Julie's group - Newfriars Frenzy proudly opened its stall at Hanley Market on 25 November 2025, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM!

Our talented learners showcased amazing handmade products, crafted with care and creativity. Mugs from the print shop sold as did arts and crafts from Karen's groups.

The first 50 customers were treated to a FREE gift as a thank-you for their support - this included wristbands and cookies!

Plus, visitors had the chance to WIN a magnificent hamper, beautifully prepared by Carolyn and her learners—just by stopping by and making a purchase.

Missed us? Don't worry! We'll be back at Hanley Market on 20<sup>th</sup> January 2026. Come along, shop local, and support this fantastic initiative that helps our learners build confidence, communication skills, and real-world experience.

Let's make the next event even bigger and better!



# Lorna Shines with Independence!



This term, Lorna has amazed everyone with her growing independence and positive attitude. She is completing her work with fewer prompts and showing that she can remember and use her knowledge in new ways. Lorna is also a fantastic friend and role model, always ready to join in conversations, work as part of a team, and try new skills. Staff and family are proud of her progress, especially her confidence and ability to follow instructions the first time.

Well done, Lorna—you're inspiring us all!



# Canal & River Trust Project Flourishes

It's been another busy and rewarding term for our Canal & River Trust team at the Harecastle site near Tunstall. Despite a series of storms that brought down several trees, our learners stepped up to clear pathways and restore access for the public.

They also carried out important restoration work around a listed footbridge and helped preserve the site's charm by maintaining its key features. Their efforts ensure that Harecastle remains both functional and beautiful for all who visit.

We would like to thank Simon Taylor, Volunteer Leader at the Canal & River Trust, for his continued support and opportunities.



# Tesco Interns Shine This Term!

This term, the Print Shop team and Graphic Design learners have been busy creating short, engaging videos to share their amazing work online. They've learned that in today's world, businesses need a strong online presence—and they've stepped up!

Alongside printing on fabrics, ceramics, and other materials, learners explored how to make eye-catching social media content. Using Facebook Reels insights, they tracked engagement and improved their videos over time. Projects featured included Skill Builder mugs, Halloween enterprise designs, and even sports leader activities.

One highlight was their enterprise project. Interns wrote letters for donations, made tasty chocolate treats, and ran a stall at the Christmas Fayre. Thanks to Tesco's support and family contributions, they raised an incredible £81.06 in one day! What a fantastic achievement.



This partnership has shown our interns that the world of work can be friendly, supportive, and full of opportunities. They've gained skills, made friends, and created memories that will last a lifetime.

Thank you to Tesco for making this term such a success – we can't wait for more exciting opportunities next term!

# Tesco & Newfriars: Growing Together, Celebrating Success!



They've joined in charity events, packed festive gift bags, and taken part in daily Christmas activities – from mince pie eating competitions to gingerbread house decorating and even the hilarious chocolate unicorn challenge! They also helped transform the colleague room for the Christmas countdown.

And that's not all – our interns even launched a small enterprise project! They wrote letters to request donations, created delicious chocolate treats, and ran a stall at the Christmas Fayre. With generous support from Tesco (including donated items for the stall), and contributions from Tesco Colleagues and interns' families, they raised an amazing £81.06 in one day! What a fantastic achievement and a real confidence boost.

This term has been an incredible journey for our interns thanks to the amazing partnership between Tesco and Newfriars. Confidence has soared, skills have flourished, and friendships have blossomed!

Our interns have had the chance to experience life in three key departments – Dot.com, Fresh, and Groceries – learning what happens behind the scenes in a busy store. They've discovered that employment expectations can be challenging, but with a supportive team, success is absolutely achievable.

It hasn't just been about work skills. Interns have built soft skills, grown in confidence, and most importantly, had fun along the way! Tesco welcomed them into the heart of their team, including staff celebrations like the Christmas Party.



# Discovering Christmas Magic at Trentham Gardens

Learners from our Supported Living Pathway's Discover session stepped into the festive spirit with a wonderful trip to Trentham Gardens. They explored the sparkling lights, enjoyed the sounds of the Christmas shop, and even visited Santa's Grotto!

The group didn't just watch—they got involved. Learners used their communication devices and switches to activate equipment, making the experience interactive and fun. This outing was a fantastic way to build confidence, practice communication skills, and celebrate the season together.

A big well done to the SLP team for creating such an inclusive and joyful experience!

We can't wait to share more exciting adventures next term—stay tuned!



# Striking Fun at the Bowling Alley!

Our SLP group celebrated the end of term with an exciting bowling trip this morning. Everyone gave it their best shot and showed amazing teamwork. The lanes were full of cheers as students enjoyed their well-deserved reward.

Thank you to all who took part—here's to more fun next term!



# Puff Pastry Wins the Festive Bake-Off!

The Upper College cookery team got into the Christmas spirit with a fun mince pie challenge! Two teams worked together to cut out bases, lids, and decorative toppings. They filled their pies generously and baked them to perfection while keeping the kitchen spotless.

Afterwards, everyone enjoyed tasting their creations to the sound of carols. The verdict? Puff pastry was the winner!

Thank you to everyone for making this such a festive and tasty activity –roll on next term's culinary adventures!



# Art Enterprise Shines at Newcastle Market

Sue and Karen's Art Enterprise team wowed the crowds at Newcastle Market last week! On Wednesday and Friday, learners stepped into the role of market traders and absolutely smashed it. The community spirit was incredible, and the feedback was heartwarming.

A huge thank you to the market managers—Nick, Andy, and Greg—for their support. Shout-out to Hazel and Sandra from Sans Funky Kitchen for the hot drinks and chairs, and for spending big at our stall! Ben and Courtney from Sweet Hub UK also made the day sweeter with kind words and treats for students.

Our learners were exceptional, representing their families and the college with pride. Together, they raised an amazing £272 over two days, which will go towards student reward days.

Thank you to everyone who made this event a success!

Look out for more exciting community projects next term!



# Discovering Confidence and Fun!

Our Discover with SLP sessions have been all about exploring new places, activities, and experiences. Learners didn't just discover exciting things—they discovered themselves! They learned they can make choices, enjoy learning, and feel confident even in busy, noisy environments.

These sessions proved that learning can be fun and full of surprises! Thank you to everyone who joined in—get ready for more adventures next term!



# Cooking from Scratch Success!

Learners have been busy building life skills through cooking! They turned recipes into shopping lists, explored supermarkets to find ingredients, compared prices, and used self-scanners before storing items back at college. The following week, they cooked delicious dishes from scratch, enjoying the fresh flavours and scents of their hard work.

We can't wait to see what's next in the kitchen next term!



# Around the world



Learners in College Project 'Around the World' have been cooking up a storm, shopping for ingredients each week to prepare and taste food from different countries. They even visited Manchester Airport to get some inspiration, using Flight Tracker to find out where all the aircraft were flying to!

# Festive Tunes at Tesco!



coming together to celebrate the season. Everyone involved showed great energy and enthusiasm, making it a performance to remember.

Thank you to the Newfriars Singers for sharing their voices and holiday spirit with the community!

We can't wait to see more amazing performances next term!

The Newfriars Singers brought Christmas cheer to Tesco Hanley with a wonderful mix of singing, dancing, and signing. Their lively performance filled the store with festive spirit and smiles all around. Shoppers stopped to enjoy the music and join in the fun, making the day extra special.

The group didn't just spread joy—they also raised money for our college! This event was a fantastic example of teamwork and talent



# More Tesco Tunes Spread Christmas Cheer

Lauren's enrichment group brought festive joy to Tesco Hanley with a wonderful carol singing session. Learners sang their hearts out and raised an amazing £75 for charity! Customers and staff loved the music, and the group enjoyed being part of the community and sharing the Christmas spirit. Parents and carers even joined in, making it a truly special event.



The hour was filled with smiles, music, and togetherness. Everyone worked as a team, showing confidence and kindness. This activity helped learners build communication skills and feel proud of their achievements. Tesco Hanley's warm welcome made the day even better, and the support from families showed how much these events mean to everyone.

We're so proud of the learners for making a positive difference and spreading joy during the festive season.

We can't wait for more exciting activities next term—stay tuned!



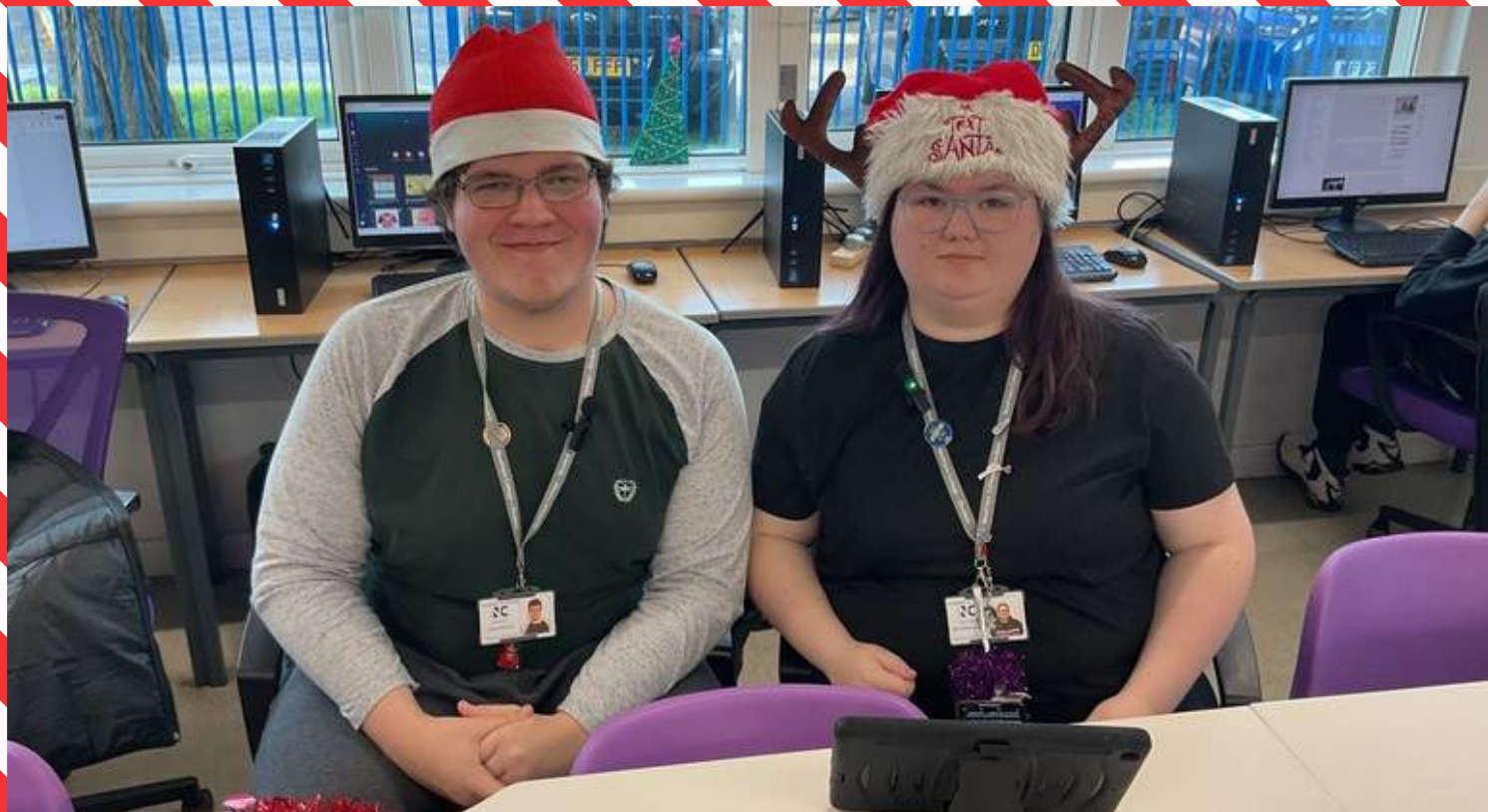


## Positive Steps

It's been another incredibly busy and rewarding half term for the Positive Steps team at Newfriars! We've loved having the opportunity to work even more closely with the students who joined us this year and getting to know them better. Watching their confidence grow, celebrating their achievements, and supporting them as they take steps towards their goals and greater independence has been truly inspiring. We've had the pleasure of seeing so many students develop new skills and shine in their own unique ways—and we couldn't be prouder of all their hard work.

As the term comes to a close, we hope everyone enjoys a magical Christmas break filled with rest, fun, and well-deserved relaxation. We can't wait to return in the new year, refreshed and ready to continue supporting our fantastic students on their journeys! ✨🎄





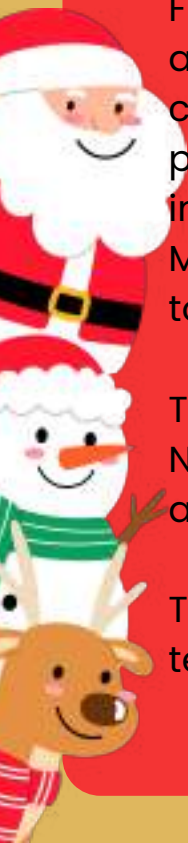
## Students Shine in Festive Video Project!

Learners at Newfriars College have brought Christmas cheer to life with a creative twist! Alana and James B, led the idea to make a special student Christmas video, giving everyone the chance to join in the fun. Inspired by the classic "12 Days" theme, the video celebrates college life with a festive countdown of activities and achievements.

From fresh pencils and lucky friendships to ICT lessons, sports leadership, and GCSE success, each day highlights something unique about our community. Learners also showcased skills in performing arts, photography, cooking, gardening, and travel training. The project involved a fantastic group of students, including Gabby, Nikayla, Poppy, Malaika, James B, Thomas, Jack, Oli, Declan, and many others, all working together to spread joy.

This creative collaboration shows the talent and teamwork that make Newfriars College special. It's a wonderful way to celebrate what we've achieved this term and share the festive spirit with everyone.

Thank you to all who took part—get ready for more exciting projects next term!



# Christmas Stockings Competition

Our Preparation for Employment group hosted a brilliant Design Your Own Stocking competition. There were loads of creative entries, and learners worked hard to pick a winner for each pathway. The results were fantastic—three amazing designs came out on top!

Thank you to everyone who joined in the festive fun. We're looking forward to seeing more creative ideas next term!



# Christmas Magic!

Yesterday is history  
Tomorrow is a mystery  
The present is a gift  
As precious as a kiss.

So celebrate the life you're living  
The joy of kindness and of giving.  
Make the most of every second  
A bright and hopeful future beckons.

Christmas time has come around  
The snow lies fresh upon the ground.  
Diamond lights shine in the sky  
A distant sleigh goes flying by.

So take a moment to look up  
To see the reindeers giddy up  
Never lose your childhood dreams  
Just have the courage to believe!

By Julian M & John F



# Lee's Christmas Crackers!



**Why did Santa go to music school?**

Because he wanted to improve his "wrap" skills.

**What do you call an old snowman?**

Water.

**Why did Santa go down the chimney?**

Because it soot him!



**What do you call a reindeer who tells jokes?**

A "comedi-deer."

**Why was the turkey at the Christmas party so proud?**

Because it was stuffed!

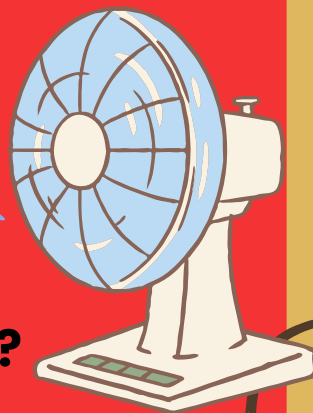
**What do you call Santa when he acts up?**

Krisp Kringle.

**Why did the elf go to school?**

To improve his "elf-abet."

Dad Joke  
Fan



**What do you call a snowman with a six-pack?**

An abdominal snowman.

FROM EVERYONE AT  
NEWFRIARS COLLEGE,  
WISHING YOU A  
FANTASTIC 2026

