

NEWFRIARS EASTER NEWSLETTER 2026





EASTER MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Rob Millington, Executive Principal



As we come to the close of our Spring Term, I want to take a moment to reflect on what has been a truly memorable term—complete with every kind of weather the British skies could offer! From snowy days to windy mornings and rainy afternoons that had us all holding onto our umbrellas, we've certainly experienced it all.

Yet, just like the ever-changing weather, our college community continues to adapt, grow, and shine through every challenge and opportunity. As we look towards the Summer Term, we're all hoping for some well-deserved nice weather to support our outdoor learning and community activities.

This newsletter showcases the very best of Newfriars College. Our hard work, our enthusiasm, our creativity, our teamwork, our togetherness.

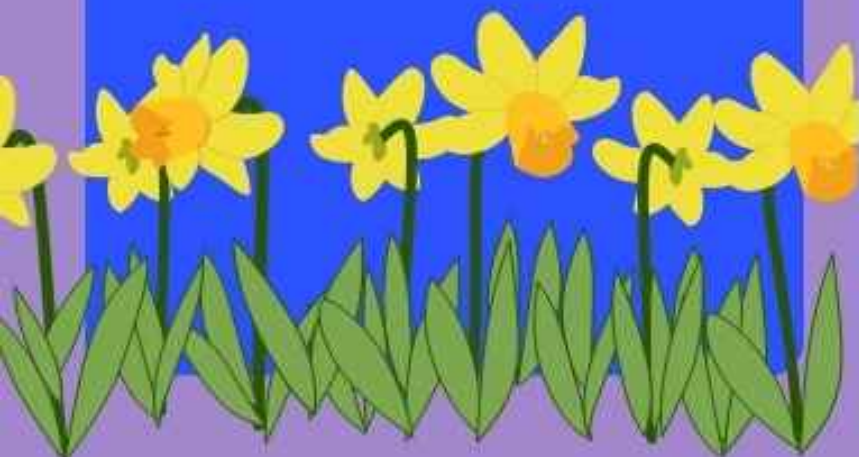
☀ Celebrating Our Community

This term has been filled with incredible achievements, inspiring moments, and wonderful opportunities for our learners. Whether through educational experiences, visits, enrichment activities, or personal milestones, every success—big or small—has contributed to the vibrant spirit of our college.

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to:

- Our learners, whose enthusiasm, resilience, and curiosity inspire everything we do.
- Our staff, who consistently go above and beyond to create a supportive, engaging, and empowering environment.
- Our parents and families, whose partnership and encouragement play such an essential part in our shared success.

Together, you make this college the exceptional community it is.





EASTER MESSAGE FROM THE PRINCIPAL

Rob Millington, Executive Principal



🦋 Embracing Change

This term has also brought exciting developments for our college. I'm delighted to share the appointment of Tracy Gillett as our new Director of Education. Tracy brings a wealth of expertise, passion, and dedication to her role, and we are thrilled to welcome her to our leadership team. Her insight and vision will play a key part in shaping the continued success of our learners and our provision. Please read Tracy's welcome in the newsletter.

🌸 Looking Ahead to Summer Term

As we step into the Easter break, I encourage everyone to take the chance to rest, reflect, and recharge. When we return, we look forward to:

- New learning opportunities and completion of a wide range of courses, exams and personal targets

- Summer projects, residentials, enrichment and celebrations
- Events that showcase the remarkable talents and achievements of our learners
- Transition for new learners and goodbyes to many of our inspirational young people who are leaving for a wide range of new adventures and new beginnings
- Hopefully... plenty of sunshine! ☀️

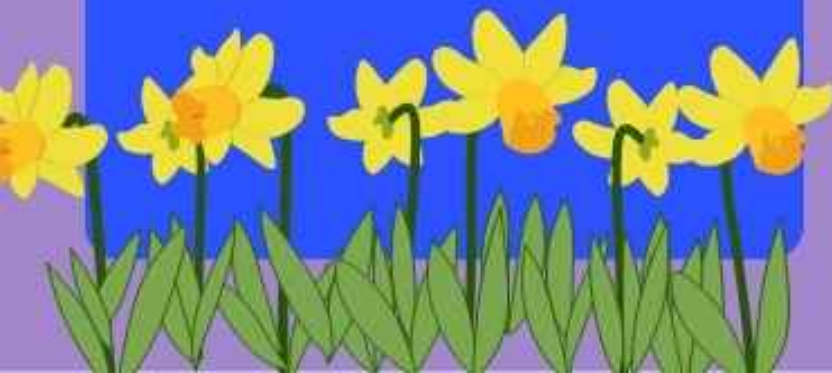
Thank you once again for your commitment, energy, and support throughout this term. I'm incredibly proud of everything our college has accomplished and excited for all that lies ahead.

Learners return to College on Tuesday 14th April.

Wishing you all a peaceful, joyful, and restful Easter break.

Together we raise aspirations and Transform Lives

Warm regards,
Rob Millington





WELCOME TO OUR NEW DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION



We are delighted to welcome Tracy to Newfriars College as our new Director of Education. Tracy brings over 27 years of experience in specialist further education, and this is the third specialist FE college where she has held a leadership role. She also holds a master's degree in Special Educational Needs and Inclusion, giving her a strong understanding of how to support learners with a wide range of needs.

Tracy began her career as a Drama tutor, but she soon expanded her teaching to include communication, employability, life skills and work experience. Over the years, she has supported learners with autism, profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), sensory impairments and complex needs. Her passion has always been to make sure every young person has access to a personalised, high-quality education.

Alongside her new role at Newfriars, Tracy is the Vice Chair of Natspec, the national organisation for specialist FE colleges. She also serves as Natspec's Policy Director for Quality, helping colleges across the country strengthen their teaching and learning. One of her proudest achievements is leading her previous college to an Ofsted Outstanding rating.

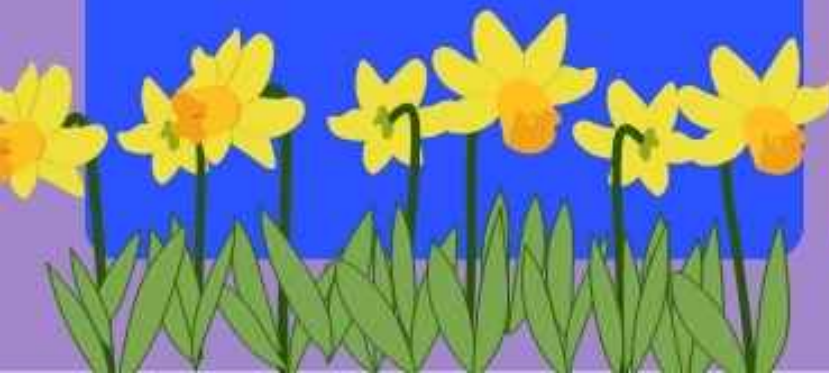


Tracy says she is excited to join Newfriars as the college's first ever Director of Education. She is looking forward to working with Rob and the whole staff team as we begin the next chapter in the college's journey. With her experience and enthusiasm, she is ready to support learners, families and staff to reach new heights.

Outside of work, Tracy enjoys exploring the UK in her motorhome, gardening, reading and swimming. She also loves cooking and spending time with her six chickens – especially when she can have a sunny day barbecue!

We look forward to working with Tracy and seeing all the positive changes ahead!

W E L C O M E





MEET TRACY: NEWFRIARS COLLEGE'S NEW DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION



Bringing enthusiasm, warmth, and a deep commitment to supporting young people, Tracy has joined Newfriars College as our new Director of Education. In a learner-led interview hosted by James and Alana, she shared the journey that brought her here, her passion for inclusive education, and a few fun details about her life outside of work.

A Role Inspired by Purpose

James and Alana began by asking what first attracted Tracy to the position. She explained that the role came onto her radar through colleagues who spoke very highly of Newfriars College. Their positive experiences encouraged her to explore the opportunity further.

After meeting Rob and Jay, she connected immediately with their vision for the college and felt excited by the direction Newfriars was heading.

She also took time to browse the college website, where she was impressed by the range of courses and learner pathways available. But one moment stood out most:

"When I came for my interview and met the student panel, I knew this was the right place for me," Tracy told James and Alana.

A Career Built Around Learner Support

Tracy brings extensive experience from specialist colleges and further education settings, where she has dedicated her career to supporting learners with learning difficulties. Helping young people grow, build confidence, and recognise their strengths has always been her driving force.

"Supporting learners to achieve and believe in themselves has always been at the heart of my work," she said during the interview.

Her values align seamlessly with Newfriars' learner-centred approach.



Quick-Fire Questions with James and Alana

James and Alana also asked Tracy some fun questions to get to know her better—and her answers gave us all a lovely glimpse into her personality:

- Favourite Food: Italian food, especially anything with cheese.
- Favourite Season: Spring, when her garden comes back to life.
- Top TV Choice: Strike, the detective drama based on J.K. Rowling's Cormoran Strike novels.
- Favourite Places to Travel: She loves Egypt, and her best-ever trip was a safari in Tanzania. She hopes South Africa will be next.

Life Beyond the College

Outside of work, Tracy enjoys reading, gardening, and heading out on camping trips in her motorhome. She also loves spending time with her chickens, who she says have "big personalities."

Looking ahead, she hopes to take on two new hobbies: learning Italian and playing the piano.

A Warm Welcome from Us All

A huge thank-you to James and Alana for conducting such a thoughtful and engaging interview. And of course, a warm welcome to Tracy—we're excited to see the brilliant things ahead as she begins her journey with Newfriars College.





CELEBRATING LEARNER VOICES IN OUR NEWSLETTER



This term's newsletter has been a fantastic achievement, filled with powerful learner voices and real stories from across the college. One of the biggest highlights has been the amazing number of learner-written articles, interviews, and reflections. Many learners shared what they've enjoyed this year, what they've achieved, and what they hope to achieve next. Their confidence and pride shine through every page.

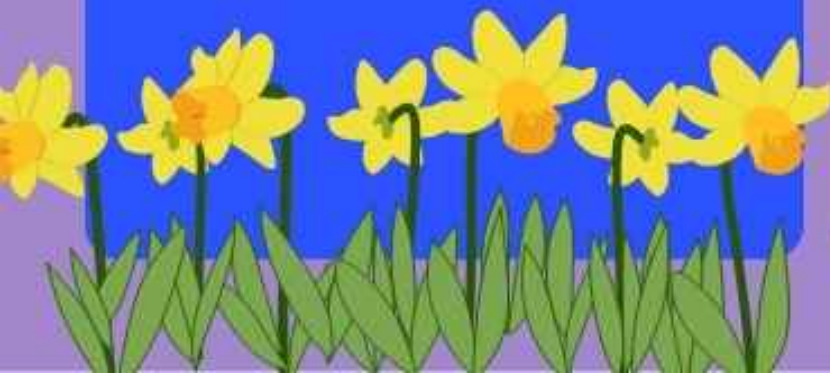
Learners didn't just write for Newfriars—they also travelled to SLP to support other learners in planning and writing their own articles. This peer support shows how far our students have come in their communication skills and in their ability to work as part of a team. A standout moment was an interview with our new Director of Learning, Tracy. Learners asked thoughtful questions and created a warm, insightful piece about her background, her hopes for the future, and her vision for the college.

Behind the scenes, something very special has been happening too. More learners than ever are using voice typing and AI tools to help them express their ideas. This technology removes barriers, boosts confidence, and helps learners focus on their message rather than worrying about spelling or typing. For many, voice typing has been a game-changer. It allows learners to communicate more naturally and independently, especially those who may have struggled with low confidence in the past.



As someone who proudly describes himself as a "technology pragmatist," I'm thrilled to see learners using digital tools in meaningful, purposeful ways. Technology should always serve learner needs first—and this term, it truly has. Voice typing and AI have helped unlock voices that might otherwise have been lost, and the results shine through in this newsletter.

Thank you to every learner, staff member, and supporter who helped bring this edition to life. We're already looking forward to creating an even bigger and brighter summer edition!





CELEBRATING ACCESSIBILITY IN OUR COMMUNITY



This term, the ICT team worked closely with the Supported Living Pathway to gather stories for the newsletter. One strong message stood out: accessibility in our local community still varies a lot. Some places do fantastic work to include everyone, but others could make small changes that would make a big difference.

A simple ramp can help a wheelchair user get through a door. An accessible table can help someone feel welcome. These changes don't have to cost much, but they open doors—literally and figuratively—for people with SEND.

By working with the Supported Living Pathway, we were reminded how important it is for businesses to think about everyone who might want to visit them.

Thank you to all learners and staff who helped shine a light on accessibility this term—let's keep pushing for positive change!





SAFEGUARDING NEWS AND SUPPORT OVER THE EASTER BREAK



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.

Our Safeguarding Team:



Stacey Oakley
Designated Safeguarding Lead
Stacey.oakley@newfriarscollege.org.uk
01782 987180



Sue Salt
Deputy Safeguarding Lead
Sue.salt@newfriarscollege.org.uk
01782 987180

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 (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





SAFEGUARDING NEWS AND SUPPORT OVER THE EASTER BREAK



Importantly we want to help parents and carers to understand the potential risks to young people using social media and the internet, especially during the holidays 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.

Mental Health Ambassadors:

We are delighted to announce the appointment of 9 Student Mental Health Ambassadors. These students have applied for the role as they wish to support other students who are struggling to seek appropriate help and support for mental health concerns. Our Mental Health Ambassadors will begin training after the Easter break and will be on-hand to offer support during the Summer Term.





SAFEGUARDING NEWS AND SUPPORT OVER THE EASTER 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 if you're worried about a child.

[NSPCC Christmas](#)

[Support\[nspcc.org.uk\]](#)

Childline Free, confidential support for children and young people: 0800 1111 or childline.org.uk

Samaritans

116 123 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 if you require further support





PROJECT SEARCH



Project SEARCH

What a busy term it has been!

We want to start with some AMAZING news, Dave has gained paid employment at the UHNM within the maintenance department. Congratulations Dave- Your hard work, growth, dedication have been truly inspiring. We are so proud of you!

Dave says "I am over the moon and pleased that I took this opportunity. I cannot wait to start. Never give up and chase your dreams."

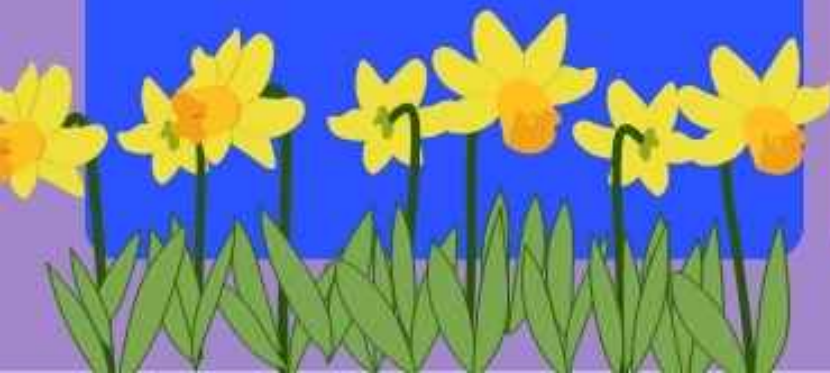
Project SEARCH interns are now coming to an end of their second placements. Roles have been in various departments including working in, maintenance, gardening, portering, catering, pathology and domestics. Interns have learnt job specific skills, independence, time management, punctuality, problem solving and communication skills. It's fantastic to see how much they have progressed already, they are so engaged and enthusiastic to learn as much as they can.



We would like to thank the UHNM and Sodexo for their continued support with the programme.

We ended the term with interns delivering their Employment Planning Meetings (EPM) as it is a key part of our Supported Internship Programme. These meetings review the interns progress, recognize support needs, and talking about career goals. All interns did a fantastic job preparing and delivering their presentations.

Placement three is soon approaching and we have so much to look forward too. We are thrilled to be part of their journey and can't wait to see all the incredible things they will accomplish.





PROJECT SEARCH





BECOMING PART OF THE NEWFRIARS STORY



Walking through the doors of Newfriars on my very first day felt less like arriving somewhere new and more like coming home. I was immediately struck by the warmth, positivity and genuine sense of community that fills this college. From day one, every greeting, every smile, and every interaction made it clear that Newfriars is a truly special place. The staff have been incredibly helpful, supportive and welcoming, making it impossible not to feel part of the team straight away.

My connection to the college goes back many years. Growing up, I was often involved in Newfriars performances—teaching dances to staff and students, joining in onstage, and even being thrown into a show as a last-minute fairy with absolutely no idea what I was supposed to be doing! These memories were shaped not only by the joy of performing, but also by watching my mum, who has worked here for over 25 years and still does today. Seeing her commitment to the students and the community made Newfriars feel like a second home, and I always hoped that one day I would join the college myself. When the opportunity came up, it was something I knew I had to go for.



My experience so far has been nothing short of amazing. The students have been wonderfully welcoming, full of personality, creativity and humour. In just a short time, we have already achieved so much together. I've seen confidence grow, voices strengthen and enthusiasm shine through every session.

We have a lot to look forward to, too—an upcoming episode of The Assembly, our performance of Cinderella on Trial, and the excitement of the Newfriars Summer Festival all on the horizon. I'm thrilled to be part of a journey where students can express themselves, take risks, and celebrate their talents.

I'm so grateful to be here, and I can't wait to see what we will continue to create together.





A BRIGHT AND BUSY TERM AT THE JUNCTION



This term has been full of exciting activities and special moments at The Junction. Our learners have taken part in a wide range of events, showing confidence, teamwork, and great enthusiasm. One highlight was welcoming 30 pupils from Harpfields Primary School for a tour. Our learners spoke proudly about their work experiences and what it feels like to be part of The Junction team.

We also marked several celebrations together. For Mother's Day, learners baked fresh scones, practising kitchen skills and teamwork. St Patrick's Day brought friendly Irish-themed competitions, and for Eid, learners helped make tasty samosas and curry, sharing food and culture with one another. These activities helped everyone try new tasks, build confidence, and learn about different traditions.



A big change this term was the fresh new look of The Junction Café. After being painted, the space now feels brighter and more welcoming. Our learners have adapted brilliantly as the café gets busier. They continue to show flexibility, kindness, and a positive attitude every day. Their hard work has helped create a warm, happy place for all our visitors.

Thank you to everyone who has visited, supported, and shared a smile with us this term. We can't wait to see what next term brings!





PROUD MOMENTS IN NCFE MOCK INTERVIEWS



This term, our learners stepped confidently into their NCFE Mock Interviews, looking absolutely interview-ready and showcasing just how much they've grown.

From the moment they arrived, their professionalism, preparation, and positive attitudes reflected the progress they've made throughout the year.

Using the Essential Skills from the Skills Builder Accelerator Programme, our students excelled, demonstrating not only focus, communication, teamwork, and self-management, but also resilience, active listening, and problem-solving. These skills came to life in a real-world interview environment, allowing learners to prove just how capable and adaptable they are when faced with new challenges.



At Newfriars College, the Skills Builder programme empowers our learners to build the foundations they need for adulthood and future employment. These mock interviews are a vital stepping stone, helping them recognise their strengths, understand employer expectations, and gain confidence in presenting themselves professionally. Yesterday was a fantastic reminder of just how far their hard work, practice, and determination are taking them.

We are incredibly proud of every student who participated—each one showed courage, growth, and ambition.

They've all got the **MOCK JOBS!**





WILDLIFE CHAMPIONS HELPING NATURE THRIVE



Learners in the Conservation and Wildlife group have been working hard across several local nature sites, including Silverdale Country Park and nearby RSPB woodlands. Their main goal this term has been to protect local wildlife as we move into the busy nesting season. The group has carried out important habitat management work, and this has already made a real difference. The area they support is now one of the key breeding sites for pied flycatchers in the whole of the West Midlands. Even better, the bird boxes that learners built and installed are now being used regularly by these beautiful birds.

The group has also started an exciting new project. Learners are building tawny owl boxes and swift boxes, which will soon be installed around the conservation sites and shared with the local community. These will help more birds find safe places to breed.

Their work with Groundwork UK has also grown this year. Learners planted elm trees to help attract the rare white-letter hairstreak butterfly. They also learned new outdoor skills, including how to plant wildflowers, repair fencing, and even try some dry stone walling.

This term has shown how much the group can achieve when they work together to support nature.

Look out for more amazing conservation work from our learners next term!





BUILDING BETTER PATHS AT THE CANAL & RIVER TRUST



Learners in John Mathis' group have had a busy and productive term working with the Canal & River Trust. Their main project has been improving a local wildlife path that many people in the community use. The group resurfaced the entire path, rebuilt damaged banks, and even installed a brand-new bench so visitors can sit, relax, and enjoy the canal.

The team has also been learning a wide range of practical outdoor skills. They have used tools such as lawnmowers, strimmers, hammers, and drills, all while practising safe site maintenance. By working together, they have helped make the canal area safer, cleaner, and more welcoming for everyone.



These real-life projects help learners gain confidence, teamwork skills, and hands-on experience they can use in future work opportunities.

We can't wait to see what this hardworking group achieves next term!



**Canal &
River Trust**

Making life better by water





THE JUNCTION WELCOMES HARPFIELD PUPILS



Learners at The Junction enjoyed a very special day as they welcomed Year 1 pupils and staff from Harpfield Primary Academy as part of the school's Employability Week. Our learners took great pride in greeting their visitors and showing them around the centre. They demonstrated the confidence, communication skills, and professionalism they have been working hard to develop.

Throughout the visit, learners supported activities, answered questions, and shared what life is like at The Junction. Staff from both settings were impressed by how warmly and respectfully our learners represented Newfriars College. The Harpfield pupils enjoyed exploring the space and learning more about different pathways and opportunities for older students.



The visit was such a success that Harpfield have already asked to make it a yearly event. They also hope to return for parent coffee mornings in the future. This positive feedback is a huge achievement for our learners, who helped create a welcoming, friendly, and informative experience for everyone involved.

Events like this help build confidence, strengthen community links, and show just how much our learners can achieve when given the chance to shine.

Well done to all learners and staff involved—your hard work made the day truly memorable!





LEARNERS GET HANDS-ON WITH CAR ENGINES



Our Mechanics group has had an exciting and productive term as they explored how real car engines work. Learners began by focusing on the cooling system, finding and naming key parts such as the radiator, water pump, thermostat, and hoses. This helped them understand how a car stays at the right temperature during a journey.

They then moved on to the engine's internal parts. Working directly with a real engine, learners identified components like the crankshaft, pistons, valves, connecting rods, oil pump, camshaft, and flywheel. Seeing these parts up close made it easier for them to understand how they work together to power a vehicle.



These practical sessions helped learners build confidence and mechanical knowledge. They also developed important skills—such as problem-solving, teamwork, and careful observation—that will support them in future learning, training, or work in the motor industry.

Every learner has shown great enthusiasm and determination, and their progress this term has been fantastic to see. We look forward to seeing even more amazing progress from our Mechanics group next term!



SHANNON SECURES PAID EMPLOYMENT!



Shannon has worked incredibly hard - growing in confidence, building strong customer service skills, and showing brilliant initiative. Thanks to her dedication, and the commitment from the Brisk Coffee Co team, Shannon has now secured paid employment! 🎉🌟

This amazing achievement was also supported by the transferable skills she gained during her first placement at Tesco Extra Hanley. A big thank you to the Tesco team for their support and encouragement - it really helped her succeed.



Shannon said: "I really enjoyed my placements. The staff are so nice and supportive and I've learned a lot from them. Thank you!"

Huge thanks to both employers for helping Shannon achieve such a positive outcome. 🌟

#SupportedInternship
#PositiveOutcomes
#Abilitynotdisability
#EmployabilitySkills
#BriskCoffeeCo
#TescoHanley #Proud



A GOODBYE, A HELLO, AND A BRIGHT NEW CHAPTER



A Goodbye, A Hello, and a Bright New Chapter

We all know that change can be a funny old thing! On one hand, it can bring challenges and fears; like a journey into the unknown. On the other hand, it brings us new opportunities and a fresh point of view. Change is exciting and scary all at the same time! I think I can safely say that there have been a few changes at Newfriars College over the past year and one of them affected me directly, both professionally and personally. My colleague and good friend of 20 years left, having contributed hugely to college life and created some magical memories for students and staff alike. I felt incredibly grateful to have experienced all of that, but also I missed my friend and felt uncertainty about the future. I know that others felt the same way.



However, In January a new teacher breezed through the college doors with a big smile, a positive attitude and an enthusiasm that was contagious. Yasmin has a true passion for our learners and an energy that keeps things moving. She felt like part of the team within days and is constantly coming up with new ideas. Suddenly, change felt like something I could cope with and even embrace. If we keep our minds open and accept that life moves forwards, with or without us, we can look back with fondness and look ahead with excitement. So, I'd like to welcome Yas to the Newfriars family and we will make it our mission to create new memories for our learners to cherish.



ICT PATHWAY DELIVERS STRONG DESIGN WORK



#It has been a very busy and rewarding term for our ICT Pathway. Learners have worked hard on both their accreditation and their graphic design skills. They explored how colours, text and layout work together, and they showed a strong understanding of how to create clear contrast between backgrounds and text. Their focus and creativity have been excellent, and the whole team has really impressed with the effort they put into their work.

A major highlight was the newsletter cover project. The group produced the strongest set of designs we have seen in years. To keep judging fair, we held a blind vote with no names attached—just letters. Every design received votes, showing how high the standard was. One design stood out as the clear winner, and that is the design chosen for this term's newsletter.

The group also took on other design challenges. They created a wildlife-themed conservation logo based on the pied wagtail, designed a bright and visual menu for the College Tuck Shop, and produced a set of café-style posters with positive, emotive quotes to brighten the Junction Café. After Easter, the learners will begin creating more design pieces for the Junction Print Shop and Junction Café. If anyone in college needs graphic design support, the ICT Pathway can help—they are enthusiastic, creative, and can produce several versions of a design for you to choose from.



Another exciting project this term involved interviewing our new Director of Learning. James and Alana recorded the interview using speech-to-text features in Microsoft Word, then polished the transcript using a custom AI workflow that removed pauses and filler sounds. This helped the group develop confidence with digital tools, communication and real-world media skills.

The learners have shown fantastic progress, especially in their use of soft pastel colours to reflect Easter and spring. Their dedication, teamwork and pride in their work have made Thursdays a real highlight.

****We're excited to see what new creative projects the ICT Pathway will bring to life next term!****





SHANNON'S JOURNEY TO SUCCESS



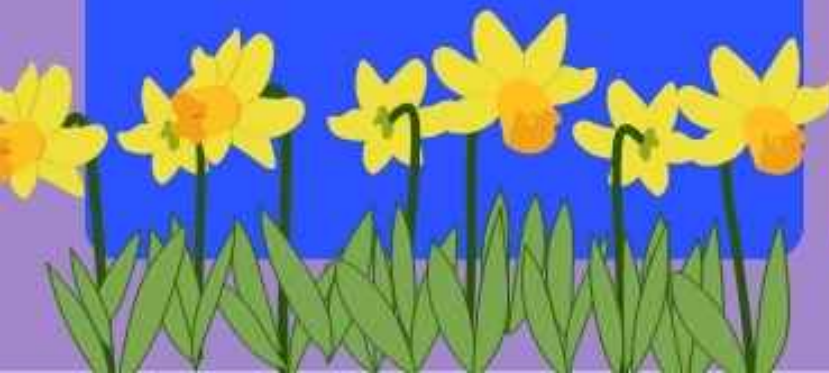
Shannon has been on an inspiring journey at Newfriars College. She began as a learner, moved into a supported internship, and has now proudly achieved paid employment. Throughout her time with us, Shannon worked hard to build her confidence, especially when meeting new people. She learned to speak up, share her ideas, and become more independent.

A key part of Shannon's success has been the support around her. She wanted to recognise the people who helped her believe in herself and guided her along the way. One of these people is her job coach, Gemma, who supported her during her internships. Gemma helped Shannon prepare for interviews, apply for jobs, and grow her confidence step by step.



Shannon is especially proud to have secured a job right here at Newfriars College as a Lunchtime Supervisor. She shared how thankful she is for everyone who encouraged her, believed in her, and helped her reach her goals. Her journey shows what can be achieved with hard work, support, and self-belief.

Thank you to everyone who has supported Shannon—and look out for more learner success stories next term!





CHINESE NEW YEAR FEAST AT COLLEGE!



Kris and the team cooked a delicious Chinese menu to help everyone celebrate Chinese New Year. 🍴🥡

Learners loved seeing — and tasting — all the amazing dishes. Everything looked colourful, tasty, and full of festive fun! 😊👏

We can't wait for more fantastic food celebrations next term!





LEARNERS SHINE AT BERRY HILL RETIREMENT VILLAGE



Our learners have been doing fantastic work during their placement at Berry Hill Retirement Village this term. They have taken on a wide range of responsibilities, including helping with cleaning tasks, supporting afternoon activities, assisting after busy mealtimes, selling bingo tickets, and even planning and hosting their own raffles. Every task has been completed with confidence, enthusiasm, and big smiles.

This week's Easter-themed raffle was a huge success. With brilliant prizes, beautifully arranged hampers, and handmade flower bouquets created by one of our talented learners, the residents were delighted. Over the weeks, our learners have become familiar faces around the village, and the residents always look forward to seeing them.



We are incredibly proud of the hard work, kindness, and positive energy our learners have shared during their placement. They have brought real joy to the residents and shown just how capable and creative they are.

Thank you to everyone involved—we can't wait to see what our learners achieve next term! 🌟





EASTER MUG COLLABORATION: BRINGING SPRING CHEER TO NEWFRIARS



It has been a busy and exciting time for our learners working across the Newfriars Frenzy Stall and the Junction Print Shop. One of this term's most successful collaborations has been the creation of a special collection of Easter-themed mugs — complete with egg-cellent puns!

The Frenzy Stall team asked the Print Shop for 30 Easter mugs to sell at their pop-up stall in Hanley Market. Learner Malanka jumped straight into action. She worked on the design, printing and final assembly of the mugs, following a professional visual blueprint called The Spring Ceramics Collection. The Frenzy team then added the finishing touches — cellophane wrapping, bows and chocolate eggs — creating perfect gift-ready products for Easter.

The mug collection included eight colourful designs, each with its own theme, mood and playful spring pun. From "Have an Egg-ceptional Day" in bright sherbet colours to the softer, pastel "Some Bunny Loves You", every design was created with a unique style and message. The collection also explored typography, colour palettes, layout choices and mood boards, helping learners practise real industry-style design skills.

This partnership gave learners the chance to experience the full creative process — from concept to finished product — while also contributing to a real college enterprise. Their hard work has helped support the Frenzy Stall and brought plenty of springtime smiles across the college. We can't wait to see what creative projects our learners cook up next term!

SOME BUNNY
LOVES YOU...



a much greater understatement

SOME BUNNY
LOVES YOU...



a much smaller understatement

YOU
CRACK
ME UP

YOU
CRACK
ME UP



BE HOPPY



BE HOPPY

HOppy
VIBES
ONLY

HOppy
VIBES
ONLY

The mug collection included eight colourful designs, each with its own theme, mood and playful spring pun. From "Have an Egg-ceptional Day" in bright sherbet colours to the softer, pastel "Some Bunny Loves You", every design was created with a unique style and message. The collection also explored typography, colour palettes, layout choices and mood boards, helping learners practise real industry-style design skills.

This partnership gave learners the chance to experience the full creative process — from concept to finished product — while also contributing to a real college enterprise. Their hard work has helped support the Frenzy Stall and brought plenty of springtime smiles across the college. We can't wait to see what creative projects our learners cook up next term!

HOW MANY EASTER EGGS HAVE YOU EATEN?

About

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PRINT SHOP LEARNERS SHINE THIS TERM



This term has been an exciting and successful time in the Newfriars College Print Shop. Learners have been growing in confidence, developing important life skills, and gaining hands-on experience in real workplace tasks. Since September, staff have seen a clear boost in maturity, independence, and teamwork across the group.

One of the highlights of the term was a fantastic visit from Heartlands Primary School. Their Year 1 learners were full of energy and curiosity as they explored the Print Shop. Our students made a brilliant impression by showing professionalism, kindness, and great communication. The visiting teacher shared very positive feedback and said they would "definitely like to come again," which was a huge achievement for everyone involved.

Learners have also continued to strengthen their partnership with M3 Marketing. They worked hard to print T-shirts, hoodies, and high-quality designs on vacuum flasks for an upcoming event. The company praised the group for their excellent customer service and the professional finish on every product. This real-world experience helped learners understand deadlines, quality checks, and the importance of meeting customer needs.



Collaboration across college has been another big success. The Print Shop teamed up with the Preparation for Employment group to create Easter mugs filled with chocolate eggs for their Easter sale. Learners designed, printed, and prepared 30 mugs in just one day—showing great focus, creativity, and teamwork. They were proud to hear that the mugs are expected to sell out quickly.

The team has also produced travel trainer hoodies for the Travel Trainer team and completed repeat orders for a regular café customer who often comments on the group's friendly service and high standards. Every order brings new skills and more confidence.

With Father's Day, the summer holidays, the World Cup, and new enterprise ideas on the horizon—plus a new partnership creating merchandise for an eBay shop—the Print Shop team is ready for an exciting summer term ahead.

We can't wait to share even more success stories in the next newsletter!



FLYING HIGH IN THE CLASSROOM



Learners in our “Around the World” project took off on an exciting journey this term—without ever leaving the classroom. With support from their teacher, Emma, who is a former cabin crew member, the group enjoyed a full first-class flight experience that felt as close to real travel as possible.

The session began with everyone “boarding the plane” and settling in for their adventure. Learners explored real in-flight safety materials, including pre-take-off safety cards, and took part in a genuine-style safety briefing just like the ones delivered on a real aircraft. Emma’s professional background made the experience extra special, as she guided learners through the procedures she had performed thousands of times in her cabin crew career.

The group also had the chance to try on an authentic steward’s hat and learn about the different roles of staff on board a plane. They even sampled typical in-flight food, giving them a fun taste of what air travel is really like.



Their destination for the day was Jamaica, and once “in the air,” learners enjoyed listening to reggae music to help them imagine the culture, sounds, and atmosphere of the island. They were fully engaged throughout the session, asking questions, joining in with activities, and showing great enthusiasm for every part of the experience.

Overall, this immersive activity gave learners a valuable insight into air travel in a safe, comfortable environment. It helped build confidence, encouraged curiosity about the wider world, and—most importantly—gave everyone a chance to have great fun while learning.

We can’t wait to see where the learners travel to next term!





BUILDING ESSENTIAL SKILLS FOR BRIGHT FUTURES



At our college, the Skills Builder Programme forms a core part of how we develop students' Essential Skills for Employment and Preparation for Adulthood. As a college proudly holding the Silver Award (Level 2) from the Skills Builder Partnership—and currently working towards the Gold Award—we embed these universal skills across all Careers, Employability, and Preparation for Adulthood lessons. Students progress through Steps 1-16, building confidence and mastery in each skill, guided by the six Skills Builder principles: Keep it Simple, Start Early and Keep Going, Measure It, Focus Tightly, Keep Practising, and Bring It to Life. These principles ensure every learner has meaningful, consistent opportunities to grow the essential capabilities they need for independence, adulthood, and successful future employment.

Students apply these skills in practical, real-life ways across college, including:

- **Listening:** Following multi-step instructions in cooking lessons, engaging with employer talks, and taking part in mock interviews.
- **Speaking:** Sharing ideas during PFA sessions, practising telephone communication, and presenting products in enterprise activities.
- **Problem Solving:** Planning travel routes for independent travel training, adjusting recipes, or working through challenges in workplace tasks.
- **Creativity:** Designing posters, creating enterprise items, or generating new solutions during team challenges.
- **Staying Positive:** Managing setbacks in work experience, reflecting on progress, and setting achievable personal goals.
- **Aiming High:** Preparing CVs, identifying stretch targets, and taking on new responsibilities during placements.
- **Leadership:** Acting as Class Rep, leading small group tasks, or supporting peers during shared projects.
- **Teamwork:** Working collaboratively in the kitchen, completing group assignments, or contributing to enterprise events.

Essential Skills



Every half term, students complete a Skills Builder baseline, take part in targeted activities, and make links between their developing skills and their wider learning. This ongoing cycle allows them to reflect on progress, recognise strengths, and identify next steps. Achievements are celebrated through rewards, certificates, and a strong sense of personal accomplishment, helping learners understand the value of their Essential Skills and take pride in their growth.





COMMUNICATION SKILLS GROWING ACROSS THE TEAM



The Communication Team has had a very positive and exciting term. Learners have been getting more confident with their communication tools, and it has been wonderful to see how quickly their skills are developing. Several students are now using iPads with communication apps, and these are helping them share their ideas more clearly. SLP has made great progress and is using the iPad very well during sessions.

The group has also been working together more during activities. Students are starting to watch each other's communication models and copy them, which is helping everyone build confidence. Jack has shown fantastic improvement—he is now tapping through his communication choices with growing independence.

Quote from Jill:

"It's going really well at the moment. Students are using their iPads with communication apps brilliantly, and it's wonderful to see how confident they're becoming. The communication is just flowing! Jack is getting ready to use his device more independently, and you can see him clicking through now."



The room now feels lively and full of communication, with learners practising their skills, supporting each other, and growing in confidence every session.

We're excited to keep building these fantastic communication skills next term!





OWEN'S JOURNEY IN THE PRINT SHOP



Since joining the print shop in September, Owen has grown in confidence, skill, and professional focus. He has worked hard to stay on task, build his concentration, and take pride in every project he completes. Throughout his journey, he has shown a real desire to do well and prepare for future employment.

Owen has learned how to design and print a wide range of products, including mugs, T-shirts, hoodies, and water bottles. He enjoys developing his practical skills and was especially proud to design a Mother's Day mug that received wonderful feedback. Creating items that make people happy has helped him feel more confident in his abilities.

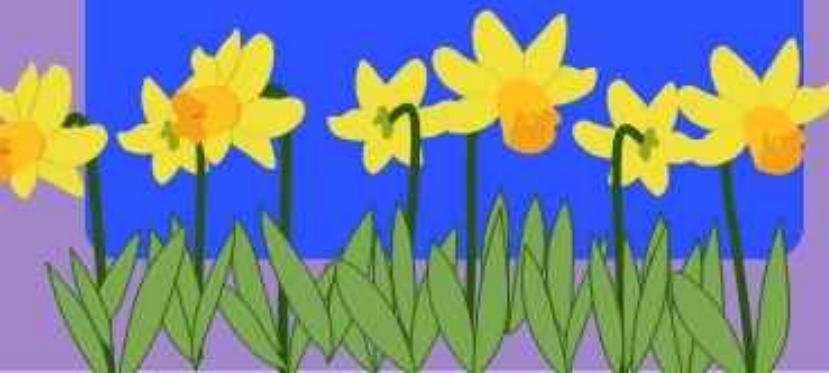
One of Owen's biggest achievements has been improving his professionalism. He has learned the importance of first impressions and enjoys speaking with customers. He understands that good customer service encourages people to return and helps the print shop grow. His friendly manner and positive attitude have helped him build strong relationships with regular customers.



Owen also enjoys the social side of the print shop. Working closely with others has helped him build strong friendships and develop his teamwork skills. Being part of a supportive group has boosted his confidence and helped him stay motivated. He says that having good friends at work makes it easier to learn new things and stay focused.

Owen has also shown a growing interest in social media and understands how important it is for a business in 2026. He knows that posting engaging content helps a company get noticed, and he is keen to develop his skills in creating online content. His progress shows how hard work, support, and a positive attitude can lead to real success. The print shop team is proud of how far he has come.

We look forward to seeing even more fantastic progress from Owen next term!





PEDALLING TO INDEPENDENCE AT WESTPORT LAKE



At the start of the spring term, some learners in Sam's Healthy Minds and Healthy Bodies group had never sat on a bike before. For many, the idea of riding felt new and a little scary. But they showed brilliant determination, listened carefully, and supported one another each week.

Very quickly, their confidence began to grow. Learners practised balancing, braking safely, and steering around simple obstacles. As the weeks went on, they pushed themselves further, showing real teamwork and resilience. Staff noticed big improvements in their focus, coordination, and physical confidence.



By the end of the term, every learner in the group was able to ride around Westport Lake completely independently—braking, steering, and navigating the paths with control and pride. This amazing progress shows just how much can be achieved with patience, encouragement, and a positive mindset.

We are so proud of the whole team for working hard, trying new things, and believing in themselves.

Well done everyone—bring on more exciting challenges next term!





TRAVEL TRAINING BUILDS CONFIDENCE AND INDEPENDENCE



This term, learners in our Travel Training programme have been working hard to build the skills they need to travel safely and confidently in the community. They have practised using money, reading timetables, planning routes, and using public transport to get around independently.

Learners have taken part in real-life journeys across the local area, gaining hands-on experience with buses and other transport. These trips have helped them develop stronger time-management skills and understand how to navigate different places safely. Many learners are now feeling much more confident travelling between home, college, and the wider community.

Travel Training has also helped learners take part in everyday tasks such as shopping, going to appointments, and enjoying social activities like cinema visits. These experiences support learners to become more independent in their daily lives.



Importantly, the programme also builds key employability skills. By learning to manage their own journeys, learners are better prepared for work placements, volunteering roles, and future jobs. Travel Training supports independence, builds resilience, and helps every learner take positive steps towards adulthood.

We are incredibly proud of the progress learners have made and the confidence they continue to show each week. We look forward to sharing more learner achievements in next term's newsletter!





SANTANDER VISIT: LEARNING ABOUT MONEY IN MATHS PFA



On 18th March, our Wednesday morning Maths PFA class welcomed a special visitor, Lisa from Santander. All six students in the group took part in the session, and each of us asked at least one question. The visit helped us learn more about banking, money management and how to keep our money safe.

Lisa began by explaining the different types of bank accounts we might need in the future. We learned about:

- Current accounts - where wages or other money we receive can be paid in.
- Savings accounts - where our money can grow over time.
- High Street banks - the banks you can walk into, like a shop.
- Online banks - banks you access on the internet.

We also talked about what to think about when choosing a bank account. Lisa reminded us that it's not something we have to do all by ourselves. Trusted adults like parents or carers can help explain things, and if we ever need more support we can always visit a High Street bank and speak to staff.



During the session, Lisa also spoke about some of the mistakes young people can make with money. She reminded us how easy it can be to spend money quickly at the start of the month and then have very little left. She talked about the importance of budgeting and planning ahead so we don't run out of money before the end of the month.

Another important part of the visit was her warning about scams and how to keep our accounts safe. Lisa explained that a real bank will never phone or text asking someone to move money urgently to another account. If anyone ever says this, it's almost certainly a scam. We also learned how to find our bank's real phone number - it's printed on the back of a bank card, or we can find it on the bank's official website. At the end, we chatted about what we might do when opening our own bank accounts in the future. I shared that I would ask my parents to help me, and Lisa agreed that this is a great idea.

Our whole class enjoyed the visit, and we learned useful skills that will help us feel more confident and safe when dealing with money in the future.



SPORTS UPDATE



As ever, our fantastic students have enjoyed accessing a range of different sporting activities this term, both on college site and out in the community.

Our Vocational Pathway Sports Leaders have continued to excel this term. In January they were invited to lead a range of different sports to different groups of Year 7 pupils from local high schools at an event at Northwood Stadium. The group grasped this opportunity with both hands and did an excellent job. They were professional, remembered all of their learnings from their course at college and put on a fantastic Sports Day for the youngsters who came to the event. The feedback they received was brilliant from the organisers, and really did themselves and the college proud. It was great to see both their teamwork skills whilst working together, as well as applying their developing leadership skills as individuals, out in a community setting. Since that day they have continued to work brilliantly as a group and are nearing the end of their course, in which they are all on track to achieve their goals and accredited courses.

ILP groups have also been representing the college out in the community, and applying their sports specific skills, as well as social and communication skills at a local Padel club this term. Our Friday morning sports group have been taking part in this up and coming sport and their skills are really progressing well. As always its great to see our students enjoying a range of different sports and sporting/leisure environments out in the community. Our ILP footballers also have been progressing well on Friday afternoons with our coach from Stoke City, as are the VOC group.

Last but definitely not least we have as usual been doing lots of sports and exercise in our SLP Pathway. In SLP-02 we have been taking part in Table Cricket sessions, SLP-04 have been footballing with Bee Active, and SLP-05 have continued to develop and improve their Boccia and Winter Olympics inspired Kurling skills. It has been great to see the improvement in independence in terms of taking part in these accessible sports, as well as increased accuracy and consistency as the weeks have gone on. A special mention again to SLP-05, who have also been taking part in weekly Cardio Drumming sessions - with Eye of the Tiger and Another One Bites the Dust being particular favourites!

Lastly a big thanks to our friends at Bee Active, who have helped to put on our Annual Bee Active WOW days, including Glow Disco for SLP groups, and Sumo Gladiators for our ILP groups - who even had the Spring Sunshine for their day! Have a fantastic break, and keep an eye out for more sports during Summer!

SPORTS UPDATE

A FANTASTIC TERM OF ACTIVITY!

VOCATIONAL PATHWAY SPORTS LEADERS <ul style="list-style-type: none">January: Led sports for Year 7 at Northwood StadiumProfessional & received brilliant feedbackDeveloped teamwork and leadershipOn track for accredited course completion	ILP COMMUNITY SPORTS <ul style="list-style-type: none">ILP Friday mornings: Padel ClubProgressing in a local club settingFriday Football Training with Stoke City coachesVOC group and ILP progressing well
SLP PATHWAY ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none">SLP-02: Table CricketSLP-04: Football with Bee ActiveSLP-05: Boccia & Winter KurlingImproved independence, accuracy, and consistency	SLP-05 CARDIO DRUMMING <ul style="list-style-type: none">Weekly Cardio Drumming sessionsFavourites include 'Eye of the Tiger' & 'Another One Bites the Dust'
THANKS BEE ACTIVE! <ul style="list-style-type: none">Annual Bee Active WOW Days:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Glow Disco for SLP groupsSumo Gladiators for ILP groupsSpring sunshine for fun activities	
HAVE A FANTASTIC BREAK! KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR SUMMER SPORTS!	



JAMES REFLECTS ON HIS FIRST YEAR AT NEWFRIARS



James has had a positive and welcoming first year at Newfriars College. He shared that the staff have been friendly and supportive, making him feel right at home—almost like a family. Even though he has been recovering from back surgery, he has stayed upbeat and involved in college life.

This year, James took part in ICT, swimming, and drama. He said he is really glad to be here and has enjoyed getting stuck into different activities. His sense of



humour also shines through, especially when he joked about wanting “peace and quiet” in a busy college! James ends his first-year journey proud of what he has achieved and ready for more.

We look forward to seeing what James will do next year at Newfriars!





REBOUND SESSIONS BRING JOY AND CONFIDENCE



This term, Supported Living Pathway learners have been taking part in Rebound sessions with staff member Lily, and the results have been fantastic. Rebound takes place on a large trampoline in the college gym. With trained staff and specialist equipment, learners with PLMD can safely experience movement, bounce and sensory input that they would not usually be able to access in the community.

Each session focuses on what learners need most: communication, sensory regulation, physical development and making choices. The trampoline helps support their bodies and gives them gentle movement that can improve strength, balance and posture. Learners follow their individual physical management plans, and every activity is adapted so that everyone can join in at their own level.

Lily shared that her favourite part of Rebound is seeing the learners' happiness. Many learners show clear signs of enjoyment as soon as they get onto the trampoline. Some smile, some vocalise and others relax completely. These reactions help staff understand what learners like, helping them make meaningful choices.



The sessions also help with communication. Learners are encouraged to show preferences, ask for "more" or "stop" in their own way, and engage with the staff supporting them. Over time, Lily and the team have seen learners grow in confidence and respond more strongly to the movement and interaction.

Another important part of Rebound is accessibility. Lily explained that many of our learners would not be able to use trampolines in the wider community because most spaces are not designed for wheelchair users or individuals with complex needs. This highlights how vital it is to have trained staff and specialist equipment in college so that learners can experience something both fun and therapeutic.

Rebound has been a real highlight this term, giving learners joy, movement and meaningful moments of connection.

We are excited to see even more progress and smiles in next term's Rebound sessions!



HELPING HANDS IN OUR SHOPPING BUDDIES PROJECT



Learners in Esther's Shopping Buddies ILP group have been working hard each week to support residents at The Oaks. Every Wednesday morning, the group visits the residential home to chat with residents and collect their shopping orders. This friendly time together helps build confidence and strong communication skills.

In the afternoon, learners head to Tesco to buy the items on each list. They practise finding products on the shelves, comparing prices, and handling money. After the shop is complete, the team returns to The Oaks to deliver everything back to the residents. Learners work together to check the bags, talk through what they have bought, and make sure everyone receives the right items.



Through this project, learners are developing real independence. They are improving their teamwork, communication, and money-handling skills, while learning how to use a supermarket safely and confidently. Esther shared that learners enjoy meeting the residents most, and they especially like helping people in the community.

The Shopping Buddies group is making a positive difference each week—and having great fun along the way.

We look forward to seeing even more teamwork and confidence from Shopping Buddies next term!





GROWING TOGETHER IN THE SLP GARDEN



Learners in the SLP Grow Project have been busy this term, working with Claire and the team to grow bulbs, flowers, and even their own lettuces. The group has been learning how to care for plants, water them, and spot the signs of each new season. In December, learners planted hyacinth bulbs and carefully checked them every week. Last week, they proudly took the finished plants home as Mother's Day gifts, complete with hand-painted pots decorated with butterflies, ladybirds, or bumblebees.

During Grow sessions, learners also develop their communication skills. They use switches and symbol cards to make choices about colours, designs, and the plants they want to grow. This gives everyone a chance to express their ideas and be part of the process. Claire shared how much the group has enjoyed choosing between different symbols and watching their bulbs turn into bright, healthy plants.



This term, the group has also been exploring the seasons. On their recent Spring Walk, learners looked for birds, daffodils, new buds on trees, and changes in the weather. Spring is Claire's favourite season because it brings new growth, warmer days, and more time outside in the garden. Learners agreed that planting bulbs has been one of their favourite activities, especially watching the hyacinths bloom.

The Grow Project is helping learners build practical skills, communication confidence, and a real sense of pride in what they have achieved. We can't wait to see what the Grow Project plants—and discovers—next term!





DISCOVER LEARNERS EXPLORE THE COMMUNITY



This term, our Supported Living Pathway learners have been taking part in the Discover Course. The focus has been on giving learners rich experiences in the community while building confidence, communication and independence in ways that suit each individual.

Learners have been practising essential travel routines, such as getting on and off the bus safely, using ramps, and fastening seat belts with support. These steps help students take part in journeys more confidently and give them meaningful opportunities to engage with the world around them. Staff have seen real progress as learners respond to new environments, work together and enjoy shared experiences.

The group has also been visiting local community spaces to develop fitness and communication skills. Even small moments – like reacting to the weather, feeling different textures under wheels, or noticing sounds in the park – have become valuable learning opportunities. Tutor Lynn shared that watching learners express preferences, make choices and show growing awareness of their surroundings has been one of the most rewarding parts of the term.



Accessibility continues to be a challenge. Some community spaces still lack ramps, smooth paths or wheelchair-friendly equipment. These barriers can limit what learners with PLMD can access, and they remind us how important inclusive design is for everyone. Staff also work hard physically, especially in outdoor spaces where the terrain is uneven, but they remain dedicated to giving learners the best experiences possible.

Despite these challenges, the Discover Course has been filled with joyful moments. Learners have shown curiosity, confidence and strong engagement, and the whole team is proud of how much they have achieved. We are excited to see what new experiences the Discover group will enjoy next term!



SLP GROW LEARNERS GET GREEN-FINGERED!



This term, learners on the Supported Living Pathway Grow course have been taking part in exciting gardening activities led by Lindsay. The group has been developing their communication, teamwork and practical skills by working together outdoors in the college grounds. Gardening has given learners a chance to explore nature, follow instructions and help look after growing plants.

Each session encourages learners to use both fine and gross motor skills as they handle tools, plant seeds and care for the garden beds. They also practise sharing equipment, taking turns and using their communication skills to make choices about what to plant or which job to do next. Being outside has been a big part of the experience too. Learners enjoy the fresh air, sunshine and the sense of achievement that comes from helping things grow.

Lindsay explained that one of the biggest challenges this year has been the weather. Heavy rain, snow and cold days during the autumn and early spring meant the group couldn't always get outside as much as they wanted. There have also been some accessibility issues, such as limited adaptive benches for wheelchair users and a shed door that fell off and needs replacing. These challenges highlight the importance of accessible outdoor spaces and equipment so all learners can take part fully.



Even with these obstacles, the highlights have been clear. Lindsay proudly showed how tiny pea seeds planted earlier in the year have grown into healthy plants. Watching learners care for the garden and see real results has been a joyful part of the course. The group is also passionate about pushing for better accessibility in the wider community. Lindsay hopes to build a link with a local garden or allotment so learners can practise their skills beyond college and experience gardening on a larger scale.

We're excited to see what the Grow group plants — and grows — next term!





SLP LEARNERS SHINE IN BIG CHARITY BAKE



SLP Learners Shine in Big Charity Bake

This term, two Supported Living Pathway groups joined forces for a special project led by Nic Smith. Together, they organised a Big Bake to raise money for a brain tumour charity that is very close to Nic's heart. Learners from both the "Be" and "Create" courses came together to work as one team, combining their strengths to make something meaningful for the whole college community.

The project helped learners build a wide range of skills. They used communication devices to invite staff and students to the event, made choices about what cakes to prepare, and worked on reading, writing and teamwork while planning the sale. Learners also helped run the stall on the day, greeting visitors, sharing information about the charity and helping to handle donated cakes. The experience gave everyone a big confidence boost and created moments they will remember for a long time.

Nic shared that one of the biggest highlights was the amazing amount raised – £180 – all through baking, selling and teamwork. The group were extremely proud to know that this money will support research into brain tumours and help families facing a very difficult experience.



**THE
BRAIN
TUMOUR
CHARITY**

A CURE CAN'T WAIT

There were challenges too. SLP does not currently have its own kitchen area, which made baking on site difficult. Staff and families helped by preparing cakes at home, showing wonderful community spirit. Nic explained that having an accessible kitchen space in SLP would make activities like this easier and more inclusive for learners who use wheelchairs.

Looking ahead, Nic and the learners are excited about future collaborations. They hope to link with the college's summer art exhibition to create tote bags, mugs and other items featuring learner artwork – all to help raise even more funds for SLP projects.

We can't wait to see what creative idea the Big Bake team take on next term!



CELEBRATING SKILLS FOR LIFE AT NEWFRIARS!



Learners at Newfriars College recently enjoyed a fantastic day celebrating their progress in the Skills Builder programme, along with taking part in an exciting Guinness World Record attempt. The whole event was designed to help learners practise key life and work skills in a fun, hands-on way. These included teamwork, staying positive, problem-solving, creativity, and communication.

Throughout the day, learners took part in a range of activities that encouraged them to work together, share ideas, and challenge themselves. Classrooms were full of energy as groups supported one another and pushed themselves to try new tasks. Staff saw brilliant examples of learners helping their peers, staying focused, and showing real determination. It was clear that everyone was proud of what they were able to achieve.



The Guinness World Record attempt added an extra layer of excitement. Learners showed great enthusiasm as they worked towards a common goal, demonstrating how well they can collaborate and stay motivated. The sense of achievement across the college was inspiring. Many learners commented on how much they enjoyed trying something new and being part of a whole-college event.

The day was a wonderful celebration of progress, confidence, and growing independence. Events like this show just how far our learners have come and how ready they are for future challenges.

Thank you to everyone who took part—let's look forward to even more successes next term!

Essential Skills





KINDNESS SHINES ACROSS NEWFRIARS COLLEGE



Learners at Newfriars College have been spreading joy through a special Random Acts of Kindness task, and the results have been truly heart-warming. As part of the activity, learners created beautifully wrapped surprise gifts, taking great care in choosing items, preparing the packages, and making each one look thoughtful and inviting. This preparation helped learners build confidence and practise important skills such as organisation, teamwork, and following steps in a task.

Once the gifts were ready, learners set out across the college to share kindness with others. They quietly visited staff rooms, offices, and classrooms, leaving surprises for people to discover throughout the day. Many staff members were touched by these thoughtful gestures and shared how much the gifts brightened their mornings. Learners enjoyed seeing the positive reactions and took pride in knowing they had made someone smile.



The activity also encouraged learners to use communication skills in real-life situations. They spoke with staff, delivered messages, and worked together to decide where the gifts should go. The sense of community grew stronger as everyone took part in spreading positivity. Learners showed empathy, care, and real enthusiasm, proving that even small acts can make a big difference.

This celebration of kindness has been a great reminder of the warm and supportive community we have at Newfriars College. It was wonderful to see learners taking the lead, showing compassion, and building strong relationships across the college.

Well done to everyone involved—your kindness helps make Newfriars College a happier place every day!





NEW SKILLS AND BIG CONFIDENCE ON SUPPORTED INTERNSHIPS

Learners on the Supported Internship programme have been working hard this term, and they have a lot to celebrate. Job Coach Gemma has been supporting the group as they tried new tasks, met new people, and grew in confidence at their work placements.

This year, interns took on three brand-new placements: Brisk Coffee Shop, The Entertainer, and Brewers Fayre. Each site offered something different, and learners showed great determination as they built real work skills.

James shared his experience from Brewers Fayre, where he learned how to serve customers, clear tables, wash pots, and help with the changeover from breakfast to lunch. He even learned how to use the dishwasher and follow instructions to make puddings as part of the kitchen team. At first he was nervous about talking to customers, but with support, he soon grew more confident. By the end of the placement, he was happily checking if guests needed anything and helping with their questions. Some customers even gave him tips to say thank you for his great service!



When asked about his highlight, James said he enjoyed “meeting new people and being in a nice environment.” He also said he feels much more confident now and is even thinking about whether hospitality could be a future job option for him.

Alongside their placements, interns have also been learning job-searching skills. applied for the Stronger Starts programme and made it all the way to the final stage out of more than 4,000 applicants—an amazing achievement. Another learner, Shannon, has secured a job as a lunchtime supervisor and will start after Easter. The final intern is still exploring options and attending interviews.

Every learner has taken positive steps forward this term, and their progress shows what hard work and the right support can achieve. We can't wait to see what our interns accomplish next term! Gemma has helped them practise applications and interview techniques. James





KALEB'S BIG STEP INTO THE WORKPLACE



Kaleb Hughes has had a busy and exciting term as he completed his work experience at Tesco. His placement gave him a real look at what it is like to work in a large supermarket, and he enjoyed learning new skills while meeting new people. From the start, Kaleb felt welcomed by the staff, who helped him settle in and feel confident in his role.

One of Kaleb's main tasks was helping in the Dotcom department. This is where staff pick items for online orders. Kaleb enjoyed this job and liked the responsibility of moving Dotcom trolleys safely around the store. He worked hard to stay focused and keep up with the fast pace, and he was proud of how well he adapted to the role.

Kaleb also spent time working in the dairy section. This area was more challenging for him, but it became an important part of his learning. During one shift, a dairy trolley was left out for too long, meaning the products had to be thrown away. Kaleb felt disappointed, but he took responsibility and used the moment to learn an important workplace lesson about time management and attention to detail.



Reflecting on his placement, Kaleb said the experience helped him understand what employers expect and how important teamwork is. He also shared how much he appreciated the friendly atmosphere at Tesco, as the supportive staff made a big difference to his confidence.

Kaleb's experience shows how real-world learning can help young people prepare for future jobs and develop strong employability skills. His positive attitude and willingness to learn have made this placement a great success.

We look forward to seeing what Kaleb achieves next term!





NEWFRIARS FRENZY STALL BRINGS CREATIVITY TO THE COMMUNITY



Alana and Julie have been explaining about the Newfriars Frenzy Stall a vibrant and exciting part of our community events. The idea began when Alana noticed how fantastic our learners' GCSE Art and Photography work looked. She thought it would be a brilliant opportunity to showcase and sell this creative work, along with mugs from the Print Shop. Their Easter stall was especially popular, with Easter-themed mugs filled with chocolate treats.

Julie explained that the Frenzy Stall is built on two important ideas. First, it gives learners a chance to act as advocates for Newfriars College. When they go out into the community, they talk to people about the wonderful things that happen here—our artwork, our Print Shop, Community Junction café, and all the opportunities learners have at college. Second, the stall gives learners valuable real-life experience. They practise using money, speaking to customers, and working as part of a team. They also develop their travel training skills by using buses to collect supplies and travel to events. As Julie said, "We hit a lot of targets!"

The name Newfriars Frenzy Stall was chosen through a student vote. One learner, Leo, came up with the winning idea, and everyone agreed it was the perfect fit. The stall has sold many exciting items, but the most popular by far have been anything related to the Potteries. Limited-edition prints of bottle kilns and local views have been a huge hit with shoppers.

For Alana, one special item stood out—a clay model shaped like a huge African mask, which sold quickly and brought plenty of smiles. The stall has also grown online, with Facebook Live events run by learners. They presented raffle draws and spoke to a wider digital audience, helping build confidence and celebrate their achievements. Thank you to Alana, Julie, and all the learners for bringing the Frenzy Stall to life—everyone is excited to see what you create next!





JACK SHARES HIS JOURNEY IN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE



Jack joined the Health and Social Care group in September, and he has enjoyed learning new skills and exploring different areas of care. This term, he has learned about supporting elderly people, including the challenges they may face with mobility, using wheelchairs, and recovering from surgery. Jack has also begun learning about child development as part of the childcare course.

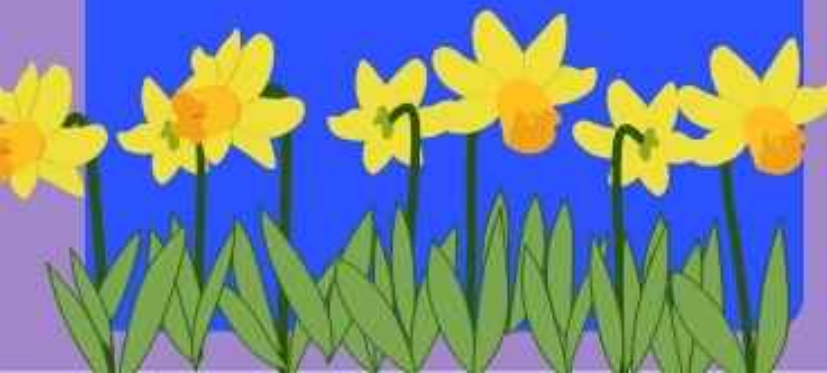
One of Jack's favourite parts of the course is working with his tutors, Lynda and Ange. He says they make lessons fun and have a great bond that keeps everyone smiling. Their support has helped Jack feel confident in his learning and enjoy each week in the classroom.

Jack explained that some tasks can be challenging, but he always feels well supported by the teaching team. He is proud of the progress he has made and is excited to keep building his skills.



For new learners thinking about joining Health and Social Care next year, Jack has some advice: give it your best. He explains that you learn about the body and how to help people, and that the course can open doors to future jobs—like working in a hospital or supporting children.

We can't wait to see where Jack's hard work and positive attitude take him next term!





A WARM & WONDERFUL SLP COFFEE AFTERNOON



We had an amazing time at our SLP Coffee Afternoon this week. With more than three photos capturing the smiles, conversations, and shared moments, the pictures truly tell the story of a relaxed and friendly afternoon. Families, carers, and staff came together to chat, enjoy refreshments, and celebrate the strong community spirit we are so proud of at Newfriars College.

The atmosphere was full of warmth and support as parents and carers connected with one another and with our team. It was a lovely opportunity to share experiences, ask questions, and catch up on all the great progress learners have been making this term. Thank you to everyone who joined us—wishing you all a happy half term, and we look forward to welcoming you back for another brilliant term ahead!





ADVENTURE AT PEAK WILDLIFE PARK!



Our ILP Nurture Group enjoyed an exciting adventure after reading the sensory story *The Polar Bear Lost*. Inspired by the tale, the group set off to Peak Wildlife Park to help “find” the missing polar bear—and they didn’t just find one, but two! Along the way, they also discovered lots of other wonderful animals.

Just like in the story, the group had to brave their own “Arctic weather,” with snow, blustery winds, and icy temperatures adding to the experience. Despite the chilly conditions, everyone had a fantastic time exploring the park and bringing the sensory story to life.

What an unforgettable day for our learners!





CHOCOLATE FACTORY FUN TAKES OVER NEWFRIARS!



World Book Day 2026 at Newfriars College was full of laughter, creativity and a lot of chocolate. Inspired by Chaos at the Chocolate Factory, learners and staff joined a college-wide challenge to design their own wild and wonderful chocolate bars. Groups mixed surprising ingredients, shared ideas and worked together to create their most imaginative treats yet.

The real challenge wasn't the reading — it was trying not to eat the creations!

Thank you to everyone who joined in the fun — we can't wait to celebrate together again next term!





WORLD BOOK DAY CELEBRATION BRINGS CREATIVITY, COSTUMES, AND QUESTIONABLE CHOCOLATE!



This year's World Book Day proved to be a wonderfully memorable event, filled with imagination, laughter, and a touch of culinary chaos. Students and staff came together for a fun-filled celebration that combined creativity with an unexpected—and hilarious—challenge.

Instead of making delicious treats, participants were tasked with crafting the worst chocolate creation possible. From bizarre flavour combinations to truly questionable ingredient choices, everyone embraced the challenge with enthusiasm. The results were equal parts inventive and alarming!

Once the unconventional chocolate “masterpieces” were completed, four courageous volunteers stepped up to taste each creation. Their reactions—ranging from laughter and surprise to near-gagging—had everyone in stitches. After sampling each bizarre blend, they crowned the worst chocolate creation based purely on taste (or lack thereof!).



Adding to the vibrant atmosphere, students arrived dressed in a range of wonderful outfits. From beloved book characters to creative homemade costumes, the effort and imagination shown by the students were outstanding. The colourful array of costumes brought even more excitement to the day and helped set the tone for a fun celebration.

The activity was entertaining, imaginative, and full of good humour. It brought students and staff together in a shared spirit of creativity—exactly what World Book Day is all about. The combination of costumes, laughter, and culinary experiments made this year's celebration one to remember.





WEDNESDAY GARDENERS SHINE IN THE SPRING SUNSHINE



The Wednesday Gardeners enjoyed a bright and busy day in the polytunnel, making the most of the sunny breaks between the showers. Learners worked together with enthusiasm and pride as they took on a range of gardening jobs. They began with a litter pick around the college grounds. Learners

aid this helped keep the space welcoming for everyone and made them feel responsible for their environment.

Next, they sowed sunflower seeds that will later be sold at a Wednesday market in Newcastle or Leek. This hands-on job helped learners build their gardening skills and understand how plants grow.

The group showed great teamwork throughout the session and were proud to say, "teamwork makes the dream work!" Well done to all our Wednesday Gardeners – we can't wait to see your sunflowers next term!





CELEBRATING SPECIAL PEOPLE IN SLP



Learners in our Supported Living Pathway have been busy practising their skills to follow instructions, make choices, and use different tools. They worked together to make beautiful gifts for their mums, nans, and other special people. Everyone showed great focus and creativity, and the results were brilliant!

Well done, Team SLP — we can't wait to see what you create next term!





GROWING CONFIDENCE IN COMMUNICATION SKILLS



Learners at Newfriars College have been making brilliant progress in their communication sessions, and Sam and Teddy are a great example of this success. This term, they have focused on learning how to clean and take care of their own hearing aids. With support from staff, both learners have grown more confident in managing their equipment and understanding why regular cleaning is important.

As their skills have developed, Sam and Teddy have also begun supporting one another. They talk through each step, offer help when needed, and celebrate their progress together. This teamwork has helped them build independence, communication skills, and trust in their own abilities. Staff have been proud to see how well they work as a team and how much ownership they now take over their equipment.

These sessions have helped all learners in the group practise speaking, listening, problem-solving, and following simple routines—skills that will support them both in college and in everyday life.

Well done to everyone involved—your hard work and teamwork are truly inspiring!





HEARING AID TECH MADE EASY



One of our brilliant deaf students has been showing everyone just how simple—and impressive—it can be to connect hearing aids to a phone app. She began by switching on Bluetooth, opening the hearing aid app, and within seconds the device appeared on screen. With one quick tap, she could adjust the volume, change listening modes, and even check the battery level. Her confidence with the tech was amazing to see, and she explained each step clearly.

To help others, she also created a helpful PowerPoint guide so students and staff can remember the process. She shared how much easier this makes life around college, especially when moving between classrooms or busy corridors. Another exciting bonus? She can even listen to her music through the hearing aids when connected.

This simple skill has given her more independence and control, and she hopes others will try it too. If any learners would like support with their own devices, Becky and the Communication Team are always happy to help.

Thank you for inspiring us all—here's to even more tech confidence next term!





A WONDERFUL START TO OUR COFFEE MORNINGS



Learners from across different pathways came together for our first Thursday Ladies Club/Deaf Group Coffee Morning—and what a fantastic start it was. The room was full of smiles, laughter, and a warm sense of community as students relaxed and enjoyed time together.

Everyone chatted, signed, and connected over hot drinks and tasty treats. It was lovely to see learners mixing with new friends, supporting one another, and taking part in conversations with confidence. The calm and friendly atmosphere helped everyone feel welcome, and the group quickly settled into a lovely rhythm of sharing stories and enjoying each other's company.

Moments like this show just how special our college community is and how important it is to create spaces where learners can communicate freely, build friendships, and feel proud of who they are.

Thank you to everyone who joined in—here's to many more wonderful mornings ahead!





PRINT SHOP SUCCESS: AUSTYN SHARES HIS JOURNEY



Learners in the Newfriars College Print Shop have been working hard this year, and Austyn was excited to share his experience of how far he has come since September. He talked with real pride about the projects he has worked on, including designing and printing Canal & River Trust hoodies, creating Easter mugs, and preparing T-shirts for groups across the college. He enjoys seeing the finished items on display and loves the enterprise side of the work, especially when products are ready to go on the shelves.

Austyn explained that he has developed many important skills during his time in the Print Shop. He spoke about becoming more professional, improving his focus, and building strong teamwork habits. He said he now stays on task more easily, acts with maturity, and contributes confidently to group projects. Staff have noticed this too, and say that Austyn has played a key part in creating a positive, supportive atmosphere in the workshop.

He has also made great progress with his graphic design and ICT skills. Austyn can now set dimensions for posters, hoodies, mugs, and T-shirts, making sure each design is

This year, James took part in ICT, swimming, and drama. He said he is really glad to be here and has enjoyed getting stuck into different activities. His sense of accurate and ready for printing.

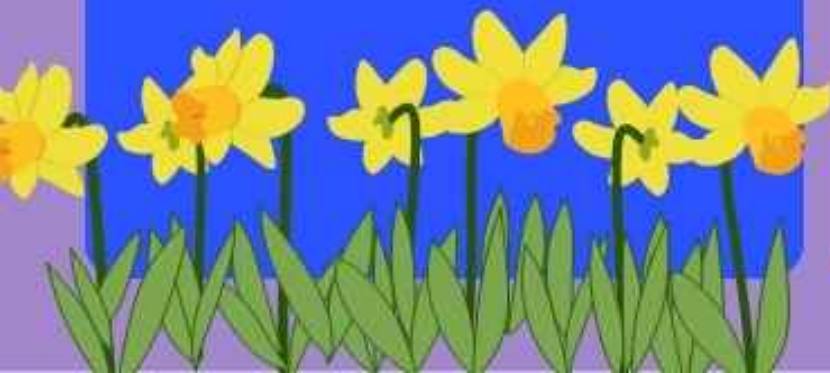


These technical skills have boosted his confidence and helped him work more independently. He shared that these improvements are helping him prepare for adulthood and future employment.

When asked about challenges, Austyn explained that he has faced many since September, but each one has helped him grow. His favourite moments have been printing hoodies and designing mugs, especially when he sees the finished products ready to be used or sold. He also shared how skills from the Print Shop have even helped him in his martial arts training—especially taking tasks step by step, paying attention to detail, and building confidence.

Austyn finished by offering advice for future Print Shop learners: follow expectations, work hard, and embrace challenges, because they help you grow.

Thank you, Austyn, for sharing your journey—your progress is something everyone at Newfriars College is proud of!





EASTER CARVERY DELIGHT!



Kris and Steph treated everyone to an incredible Easter Carvery this week. Learners and staff enjoyed tender roast lamb, crispy potatoes, tasty vegetables, and a creamy cauliflower bake. The meal finished with a delicious Biscoff cheesecake that was loved by all!

It was a wonderful way to bring everyone together and celebrate the end of term.

Looking forward to more tasty events next term!





POSITIVE STEPS



This spring term has been a fantastic opportunity for the Positive Steps team at Newfriars to continue supporting students in their development and wellbeing. It's been a joy to see students settling into routines, engaging in sessions, and embracing new challenges with confidence. We've focused on creating supportive, personalised sessions that encourage each student to progress at their own pace. From developing physical skills to building confidence in movement and independence, it's been great to see such positive engagement across the board.

One of the most rewarding parts of the term has been watching students grow in confidence and take pride in their achievements. Their enthusiasm and resilience continue to make our work so meaningful.

We're looking forward to another exciting term ahead and continuing to support the students as they progress on their individual journeys.





SEASONAL COOKING CREATIONS FROM SAM'S CHEFS



This half term, Sam's ILP cooking group has been busy making a range of tasty seasonal treats. Learners followed simple recipes to create chocolate, cream, and strawberry hearts for Valentine's Day. They also made Easter nests and warm hot cross buns to celebrate Easter. Each session gave learners the chance to build confidence in the kitchen while practising teamwork and independence.

Bon appétit—and we can't wait to see what they cook up next term!





JAMES SHINES AT COMMUNITY GROCERY



James has been busy gaining fantastic work experience at the Community Grocery in Burslem. He first heard about the placement from Donna, our Work Experience Lead, who knew how well he had done at Tesco in Hanley last year. James was excited to try something new and continue building his skills.

At the Community Grocery, James took on a range of important tasks. He helped restock freezers, organised items in the storage container, and added labels to products so customers could find what they needed.

He worked closely with different staff members, including another volunteer named Lewis. James enjoyed being part of a friendly team and said it was great to meet so many new people.

Travelling independently was a big part of the experience too. James planned his route carefully using several local buses. He showed confidence and flexibility, choosing different routes depending on the time of day. This helped him arrive safely and on time for every shift.

James' favourite part of the placement was meeting the customers.

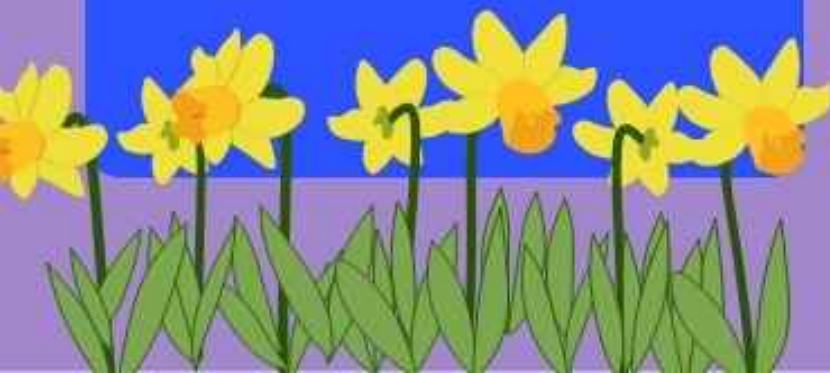


He loved greeting people, offering help, and making them feel welcome. Even though he wasn't serving on the till, he enjoyed talking to shoppers and letting them know he was happy to help.

This gave him a real sense of pride and confidence. When asked if he would return to the Community Grocery, James didn't hesitate—yes!

He said it is a great place to volunteer, meet new people, and be part of the local community. He hopes to return again in the future.

Thank you, James, for sharing your brilliant experience—keep up the great work!



LOOKING AFTER OUR MENTAL HEALTH



At times, life can feel busy and overwhelming. Around the world, there are conflicts, rising living costs, and many changes that can make people feel stressed or worried. On top of this, everyone has their own challenges at home, at work, or in daily life. The mental health charity Mind explains that 1 in 4 adults will experience a mental health difficulty in any year, which shows that this can affect anyone.

That's why it is so important to look after our mental wellbeing. We all have different ways of doing this. Some people enjoy exercising, gaming, reading, or going for a walk. Others prefer gardening, being outdoors, or spending time with friends. Over the Easter break, taking time to do the things that help you relax can make a real difference to how you feel.

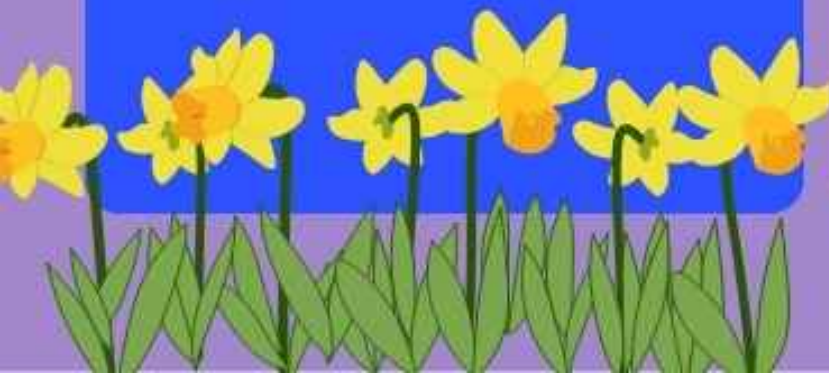
Sometimes, mental health can become harder to manage. When this happens, it is important to seek help. Support can come from professionals, charities, helplines, or someone you trust. Asking for help is a strong and positive step.



It is also important to check in on the people around us. Friends, colleagues, and family members might be struggling even if they don't show it. Often, when someone is asked, "Are you okay?" they may automatically reply, "I'm fine." Asking twice can give them the chance to open up and share how they really feel. Encouraging someone to get the help they need can make a huge difference.

Looking after mental health is just as important as looking after physical health. If you break your arm, you would see a doctor for treatment. In the same way, if your mental health is suffering, reaching out for support can help you heal, cope, and feel better.

Let's all take time this Easter to care for ourselves and each other.





LOOKING AFTER OUR MENTAL HEALTH



Where to Get Help

If you feel really overwhelmed and need someone to talk to, here are some places you can contact in the UK:

- Samaritans: Call 116 123 for free support anytime.
- Mind: Visit mind.org.uk or call 0300 123 3393 for help with mental health.
- Childline: If you are under 19, you can call 0800 1111 for support.
- Shout: Text "SHOUT" to 85258 for help by text message.
- Papyrus: Call 0800 068 4141 if you need support about feeling suicidal.

Remember, it's okay to ask for help. You are not alone, and there are people who want to support you during Easter holidays.

YOUNGMINDS

NHS

childline

SAMARITANS

shout
85258

mind



Your Doctor





THANK YOU TO TESCO HANLEY!



A huge thank you to Yvette, Community Champion at Tesco Hanley, and her wonderful colleagues for their generous donation of 12 Easter Eggs for our end-of-term Easter Egg Hunt. Their kindness helped make our celebration extra special and put big smiles on our learners' faces.

We truly appreciate your support and community spirit!



OUR VISION

"We INSPIRE every learner at Newfriars College to shape a future in a community that celebrates every voice, and enables opportunities and possibilities for every young person."

OUR MISSION

"To provide personalised pathways and vibrant partnerships, enabling each learner to achieve their full potential and develop essential skills for advocacy, inclusion and achievement."

OUR VALUES — I · N · S · P · I · R · E

I

Inclusion & Belonging

Every individual is welcomed, respected and valued regardless of background or ability. Inclusion is a cornerstone of progressive education, valuing every voice creates a stronger community and supports wellbeing.

N

Never Give Up

Resilience, perseverance and positivity are core traits encouraged in all learners. SEN success stories often hinge on resilience; integrating this fosters grit and a growth mindset.

S

Support Each Other

Teamwork, empathy and relationship-building are prioritised in daily practice. A positive, collaborative environment boosts social and emotional learning, a major driver for life readiness.

P

Personalisation

Teaching and support are tailored to the unique strengths and aspirations of each student. Bespoke pathways meet every learner's needs, reflecting sector-leading guidance on differentiation.

I

Innovation

Commitment to creative strategies and new technologies drives ongoing improvement. Innovation signals forward-thinking leadership, crucial for staying at the forefront of SEN provision.

R

Readiness for Life

Practical life skills, communication, independence, self-care and employment are central. Families and authorities demand real-world outcomes; addressing readiness anchors Newfriars' offer.

E

Empowerment

Students are given voice, agency, and decision-making power over their education and growth. Meaningful empowerment transforms compliance into ownership and pride.

**WISHING
EVERYONE
A HAPPY EASTER**

