

National Star Foundation

National Star College - Ullenwood

Inspection report

National Star College
Ullenwood
Cheltenham
Gloucestershire
GL53 9QU

Tel: 01242527631

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Ratings

Overall rating for this service	Outstanding 
Is the service safe?	Outstanding 
Is the service effective?	Outstanding 
Is the service caring?	Outstanding 
Is the service responsive?	Outstanding 
Is the service well-led?	Outstanding 

Summary of findings

Overall summary

The National Star College is a charity which is registered to provide accommodation for up to 88 men and women with a physical disability and/ or learning disability or autistic spectrum disorder. The college also offers short breaks during college holidays to people with a physical and/or learning disability. At the time of our inspection there were 77 people staying at the college.

The inspection took place on 27, 28 and 29 November 2017. This was an unannounced inspection. The service was last inspected in June 2015 and was rated 'Outstanding' overall. At this inspection the service has again been rated 'Outstanding' overall. Our inspection looked at the residential accommodation, healthcare provision and the care and support for students outside their educational curriculum. Across the college campus there are seven residential units which were accessible to people who use wheelchairs. The college was also registered to provide the regulated activity of personal care. At the time of our inspection no one living in their own home was in receipt of personal care from the college.

There was a registered manager in post. A registered manager is a person who has registered with the Care Quality Commission to manage the service. Like registered providers, they are 'registered persons'. Registered persons have legal responsibility for meeting the requirements in the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and associated Regulations about how the service is run.

The National Star College is an outstanding service. It is focussed on the individual needs of the people. The service ensured that everyone received good quality, care regardless of diagnosis, age, ethnic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability or social circumstances.

The vision of National Star Foundation and the National Star College was to promote "A world in which people with disabilities are able to realise their potential as equal and active citizens in control of their lives". All staff and senior management demonstrated this clear vision and a highly positive person centred culture was seen throughout. Staff had set high standards for themselves and this promoted an exceptionally positive culture which challenged disability perceptions and had improved the confidence of people and the opportunities available to them.

People were supported to focus on making a positive contribution to others, the college and the community and achieve their potential. We saw examples of young people coaching school age students, showcasing work skills in several of the provider's social enterprises and external work placements. Young people had been supported to actively campaign to improve rights and entitlements for people with disabilities. Throughout the inspection, we found young people and staff were motivated and passionate about equality and empowering people to live the lives they want.

People and carers spoke overwhelmingly of the positive support, guidance and healthcare interventions people had received. They were full of praise for the staff in terms of their kindness and compassion. People were 'very happy' with the service they received. We received positive comments about their views and

experiences. People told us they felt safe because the staff were "Caring and enjoyed what they did". People and their families viewed the staff as experts in their knowledge and skills when supporting people with complex health needs.

Outstanding safeguarding systems and processes had been implemented to ensure the safety and well-being of the people using the service. People's risks were continually assessed, identified and managed exceptionally well and their care needs were met to a very high standard. The provider encouraged and empowered students and staff to have the confidence to suggest innovative and creative solutions to manage risk and keep people safe so they could live their lives as they chose. Staff promoted a culture that anything was possible within the framework of assessing risk, without being risk averse.

Where possible, people were involved in the planning of their care. If this was not possible, people's representatives were encouraged to be involved. People's care plans were detailed and personalised which helped staff deliver the support people wanted and needed. For a large number of people, this had resulted in improvements to their health, wellbeing and abilities which in turn had meant people had become more independent. People had very good access to health care professionals when required and their medicines were managed well.

People were cared for by staff who knew them really well and who had been exceptionally well trained to support people. Staff were very well supported and valued by the provider who invested well in their training and welfare. The service had developed very thorough training programmes for their staff. These were bespoke to the people living at the College and ensured staff were extremely well skilled to meet the needs of the people living at the College. The training systems developed had received local and national recognition. There was a strong sense of "family" and team work. Staff were proud of the work they did and were fully committed to ensuring people were at the centre of everything that took place at National Star College.

People and relatives we spoke with told us staff were outstandingly caring. They used words such as "Compassionate", "Caring", "Excellent" and "Highly motivated" to describe the staff. People and their families spoke of a service that was tailor-made for them and their families saying that staff went 'the extra mile'. Care staff spoke highly about the service provided. One said, "I love working here". Another person said, "I am proud to be working here". People told us they would recommend the service to others. There was a genuine sense of fondness and respect between the staff and people.

Staff were constantly looking for ideas on how to improve people's quality of life. Assistive technologies were used creatively and innovative technologies were developed with young people to enhance their communication and independence. People's aspirations were explored with them and developed. Staff worked hard to make sure, that where it was possible, people had opportunities to lead as full a life as possible. They made sure daily activities were tailored to meet people's individual needs, preferences and abilities. Staff made sure people had opportunities to enjoy themselves. People's suggestions and ideas were sought and valued when it came to planning these activities.

The registered manager and extended leadership team offered exceptional leadership and had a clear vision about the direction of the service. They were highly committed to improving people's lives and ensuring people had the best care they could receive, and expected the same high standards from the staff who were also committed to these shared values. The management team were very much part of the overall care team at National Star College. They were very involved in people's care, visible and approachable. Staff at National Star College clearly understood their role and worked hard to promote a homely atmosphere in the service.

There was a robust quality assurance system in place to ensure people received the best possible service. The registered manager worked closely with partner agencies and services to promote best practice within the service and make a positive impact to people's lives. The service was constantly striving to innovate to ensure they were providing the best possible care and support to the people living at National Star College. The registered manager had developed a strong leadership team within the service to ensure the high standards implemented were sustained in their absence.

The five questions we ask about services and what we found

We always ask the following five questions of services.

Is the service safe?

The service remained outstandingly safe.

Staff had an enabling attitude and had through positive and creative risk taking encouraged young people to live the life they wanted.

People were given many opportunities to understand and learn how to deal with discrimination and to recognise and report suspected abuse. Creative strategies were employed to keep people's human rights at the forefront of everyone's daily practice.

Robust recruitment procedures ensured there were sufficient staff with the right skill mix, aptitude and insight to help people identify and manage risks effectively.

Medicines were effectively administered and managed at times when people wanted them. People were supported to look after their own medicines as safely as possible.

Outstanding 

Is the service effective?

The service was exceptionally effective

The college contributed to the development of best practice in the sector and offered accredited training opportunities to ensure staff know how to support people with disabilities.

The college made exceptional use of and developed innovative assistive technology to enable students to express their views, control their living environment and to maximise their independence.

There was focus on young people's consent to their care and support. Where appropriate, staff were confident to take account of the legal requirements concerning people who lacked capacity to consent based on detailed guidance.

People experienced a high level of care and support that promoted their health and wellbeing. Staff had worked closely with health professionals to ensure people received a highly

Outstanding 

personalised service.

People's living environments were highly personalised to ensure they were safe and appropriate to people's individual needs.

Is the service caring?

The service was extremely caring.

Creative methods of communication enabled people, no matter how complex their needs, to be involved in their care and support. People felt involved and empowered to learn and try new things.

People were able to test and try new opportunities to explore areas of independence they had previously not considered.

The registered manager and staff were committed to providing the best possible care. There were excellent relationships between staff and young people with staff putting people at the centre of their care.

Outstanding 

Is the service responsive?

The service remained outstandingly responsive.

The college had an outstanding approach to equality, diversity and inclusion. They had developed an innovative Sexual Orienting programme. The college employed a Multi-faith Worker who had developed a range of excellent cultural and faith resources which had been positively received by young people.

Each person had their own detailed care plan which was extensive and clearly reflected their preferences. The care provided to people was very person centred and clearly reflected individual needs and preferences.

Staff made sure daily activities were tailored to meet people's preferences and abilities. Staff made sure people had opportunities to enjoy themselves.

The service listened to the views of people using the service and others and made changes as a result.

End of life care plans were developed where required.

Outstanding 

Is the service well-led?

The service remained outstandingly well-led.

Outstanding 

There was excellent leadership. The provider had developed and sustained a positive culture encouraging staff and people to raise issues of concern and to be actively involved in improving the college.

Staff had high standards and expectations of both themselves and young people and this promoted an exceptionally positive culture of challenging disability perceptions which had improved young people's confidence and opportunities.

The provider had a clear strategy for developing and improving the college over time. The college worked in partnership with other organisations to make sure they were following current best practice and providing a high-quality service. They strived for excellence through consultation and reflective practice. We saw evidence of the college sustaining their outstanding practice and improvements over time.

National Star College - Ullenwood

Detailed findings

Background to this inspection

We carried out this inspection under Section 60 of the Health and Social Care Act 2008 as part of our regulatory functions. This inspection was planned to check whether the provider is meeting the legal requirements and regulations associated with the Health and Social Care Act 2008, to look at the overall quality of the service, and to provide a rating for the service under the Care Act 2014.

This was an unannounced inspection which was completed on 27, 28 and 29 November 2017. The inspection was conducted by three adult social care inspectors, a pharmacy inspector, a specialist advisor and an expert-by-experience. An expert-by-experience is a person who has personal experience of using or caring for someone who uses this type of care service.

The previous inspection took place in June 2015; there were no breaches of regulation at that time.

Prior to the inspection we looked at the information we had about the service. This information included the statutory notifications that the provider had sent to CQC. A notification is information about important events which the service is required to send us by law.

Before the inspection, we asked the provider to complete a Provider Information Return (PIR). This is a form that asks the provider to give some key information about the service, what the service does well and improvements they planned to make. We received this on time and reviewed the information to assist in our planning of the inspection.

We contacted five health and social care professionals to obtain their views on the service and how it was being managed. This included professionals from the local authority and the GP practice.

During the inspection we spoke with 27 young people using the service and looked at the records of 15 people and those relating to the running of the service. This included staffing rotas, policies and procedures,

quality checks that had been completed, supervision and training information for staff. We also attended one young person's transition review.

We spoke with 26 members of staff and the registered manager of the service. We spoke with eight relatives to obtain their views about the service.

Is the service safe?

Our findings

The college continued to embed and develop their outstanding approach and practice when keeping young people safe. All the young people we spoke with told us they felt safe. One young person said "I love the college." Another told us "I feel it is a safe environment." The relatives we spoke with all told us that their loved one was safe at the college. One relative said "I have full confidence in the staff to keep my son safe. They take the utmost care to manage his needs." Another relative told us "He (son) is very safe. I have no concerns of him coming to any harm."

The provider encouraged and empowered young people and staff to have the confidence to suggest innovative and creative solutions to manage risk and keep them safe so they could live their lives as they chose. Staff promoted a culture that anything was possible within the framework of assessing risk, without being risk averse.

Staff had a 'can do' approach and worked creatively to overcome obstacles and hazards to enable young people to pursue their dreams and aspirations. In 2016, some young people wanted to go skiing in Andorra. In order to achieve this and mitigate risks, the young people were supported to fundraise and staff had identified a resort in Andorra which provided British Adapted Ski Instructors meaning they met the health and safety level expected in the UK. They also spoke English and were able to use basic Makaton therefore reducing communication difficulties. The registered manager told us following the success of the first trip, subsequent trips took place in 2016 and 2017 and one was planned for 2018. We heard an example of one young person whose mobility needs put them particularly at risk when travelling and accessing a new environment. With the support of the multi-disciplinary team, the young person was able to safely ski using their arm to choose direction, maintain balance on a central ski and go down the slopes as quickly as they liked.

Another young person who had a life-limiting condition was supported to attend the ski trip despite the high risks associated with their health. . The service worked in close co-operation with the acute hospital team, the long-term consultants and family to implement a robust risk protocol to support the young person and family's wishes to attend the ski trip despite the risk to their health. During the skiing holiday, the young person received continual one to one support including repositioning every twenty minutes throughout the night to remain safe. Young people had described the ski trips as 'A trip of a lifetime'.

Activities and holidays were extremely person centred and young people were consulted throughout the process in how the risks of these activities could be managed and agreed the level of risk they were prepared to take. One young person who had no independent mobility told us how they loved hot air balloons. They told us how staff spent time with them to identify companies who could enable them to safely take their wheelchair into the hot air balloon. A comprehensive risk assessment was completed prior to this activity. The young person told us how they had been on hot air balloons numerous times since they had arrived at the college. The staff told us this activity was one of the most important things to this person and the opportunity to go into hot air balloons had made a 'massive' impact on this person's well-being. When we spoke about this with the young person, they became very animated and it was clear they had a great love for the activity and it made them very happy.

The provider was particularly aware of the risk of young people becoming isolated if they could not use public transport safely to access work placements, social activities or friends. The college offered young people 'LiftTraining' which was the provider's travel training programme. This training enabled young people with complex disabilities, acquired brain injuries and learning difficulties to use public transport independently. This project was run in partnership with Gloucestershire Police and Crime Commissioner Office and BBC Children in Need. We saw positive feedback from relatives about the impact this has had on young people and one relative noted "my son had few friends and spent most of his day in his bedroom. Now he has made friends and they travel all over the place. The training has made a huge change to his life".

Risk assessments were present in young people's care files. These were comprehensive, clearly identifying hazards and how these would be minimised to enable young people to go about their daily lives as safely as possible. Assessments of risk, included risks associated with supporting young people with personal care, moving and handling and risks associated with specific medical conditions. Staff told us they had received training around risk assessments and felt confident to assess risk. Staff told us risk was continually assessed and plans were updated regularly. For example, one young person was at risk of developing pressure ulcers. Their risk assessment contained clear guidelines for the staff on how to support this person and to minimise the risk. The risk assessment also detailed what support the young person would require if they developed ulcers. It was evident this risk assessment had been reviewed as the young person's needs and circumstances had changed.

Young people were protected by exceptional systems to recognise and report suspected abuse. Safeguarding procedures were based on national guidance such as the governments' guidance "No Secrets" and "Safeguarding children and young people". Prompts around the college and individual residences kept the profile of safeguarding visible to staff and people.

A safeguarding guide had also been produced as a prompt for staff. Staff had completed training in the protection of children and adults and had an excellent understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They described the types of abuse they might come across and how they would raise concerns to senior staff and the safeguarding lead. Staff described what they would do to 'comfort', 'protect' and 'keep' the students safe. The safeguarding lead told us they were confident that staff would raise any issues regardless of how insignificant they may seem. Staff told us they were confident to raise concerns under the provider's whistleblowing procedure and knew management would respond appropriately.

Young people were supported to learn how to deal with discrimination and to develop the skills and confidence to respond to bullying. This included training and strategies to be able to understand and prevent radicalisation in accordance with the Home Office's Prevent strategy. E-safety advice has been introduced onto all computers as a screen saver promoting positive approaches for young people to keep themselves safe on line. They knew how to differentiate between the type and level of concern and how to report concerns about harassment or suspected abuse. Young people completed safeguarding training and discussed how to stay safe in their individual residence meetings. They told us they had received excellent support through training and from staff on how they could keep themselves safe at all times. Where people were subject to any form of bullying, they had access to comprehensive college counselling and advocacy services to help them explore and understand their experiences. Previous students had been employed to help deliver these services enabling them to view people's issues from a student perspective. One young person told us, "Any concerns we raise are always dealt with."

Young people told us they felt secure whilst at the college. They had secure facilities in their rooms to keep money, valuables or medicines safely. If required, they were supported to safely manage their personal

finances. Young people had been given information about how to stay safe both on the college campus, using the internet and when out in the local community. Their individual awareness of safeguarding procedures was reinforced through individual meetings with their personalised learning mentors, at house meetings and at student forums. Safeguarding information was displayed around the college in accessible formats using plain English, large print, pictures and symbols as well as in the residences where young people lived.

Young people could raise concerns directly with staff in their residence or by contacting the safeguarding team face to face, by email or telephone. Support was available 24 hours a day. The safeguarding support provided by the college had been awarded an 'outstanding' rating by Ofsted.

The college had an excellent working relationship with their local police service to enhance the support provided to young people. For example; the college delivered autism awareness training to the police to develop their skills when working with people with autism. A group of autistic young people had also been invited to visit the new police interview rooms in Gloucestershire to give advice and feedback on any adjustments that might be needed to ensure suitability for young people with autism and/or sensory processing difficulties.

Young people were supported by sufficient numbers of staff who had the appropriate skills, experience and knowledge to support their needs. Staff worked on a rota basis covering the various shifts required throughout the day and night. We discussed staffing levels with the registered manager who told us the staffing support required for each young person was determined during the assessment process when they first moved to the college. Throughout the inspection, we observed a very strong staffing presence and most people received one to one support. The registered manager also told us there was an on call system to respond to emergencies and cover emergency staffing shortages.

The registered manager understood their responsibility to ensure suitable staff were employed and young people were supported by staff who had been through a robust recruitment and selection process. Comprehensive records were in place to evidence the character and competency of new staff. Gaps in employment history were investigated and previous employers were asked to confirm the reason applicants left their employment. Disclosure and barring service (DBS) checks were completed. A DBS check lists spent and unspent convictions, cautions, reprimands, final warnings plus any additional information held locally by police forces that is reasonably considered relevant to the post applied for. Staff were not allowed to work until all relevant documents were in place.

The registered manager told us to ensure they were recruiting suitable staff to work at the college, students were asked to participate in the recruitment process by providing feedback on an applicant after they completed an activity with them. This had included pre-work with young people to have their choice of questions programmed in advance in their communication devices and support was available during interviews to ensure they could make a meaningful contribution. This gave an opportunity for recruiting managers to observe how applicants interacted with young people and provided insight into whether they would be suitable for the people living at the college. Young people who had been involved in the recruitment process told us they found this to be a reassuring process as it gave them the confidence suitable staff were being recruited. Young people also told us they found the process of being involved in the recruitment process to be empowering as it made them feel their opinion was valued by management. Staff confirmed disciplinary procedures were in place to identify and challenge unsafe practice.

Medicines policies and procedures were available to ensure medicines were managed safely. Staff had been trained in the safe handling, administration and disposal of medicines. Staff who gave medicines to young people had their competency checked annually to ensure they were aware of their responsibilities and

understood their role. The service had recently transferred to a system called 'eMAR' (Electronic Medicine Administration Records) to ensure young people's medicines were recorded more accurately and electronically so they could be accessed from all areas of the college without the need for people to carry physical MAR charts. We looked at these records and saw the administration of medicines had been recorded by staff. Where appropriate, young people were supported to gain independence in self-administering their prescribed medicines. The college had implemented a robust process to ensure this process was managed safely. We were shown how young people were shadowed through this process from initial prompting to ordering and collecting their own prescriptions.

Health and safety checks were carried out regularly. Environmental risk assessments had been completed, so any hazards were identified and the risk to young people was either removed or reduced. Checks were completed on the environment by external contractors such as the fire system. Certificates of these checks were kept. Fire equipment had been checked at the appropriate intervals and staff had completed both fire training and fire evacuation (drills). There were policies and procedures in the event of an emergency and fire evacuation. Each young person had an individual evacuation plan to ensure their needs were recorded and could be met in emergencies.

All of the residences were clean and tidy and free from odour. The registered manager told us cleaning was carried out by dedicated housekeeping staff in each residence. Staff were observed washing their hands at frequent intervals. There was a sufficient stock of gloves, aprons and hand gel to reduce the risks of cross infection. We observed staff wearing gloves and aprons when supporting young people with their care. The staff we spoke with demonstrated a good understanding of infection control and prevention procedures.

It was clear throughout the inspection that the college continuously strived to improve and provide a safer service to young people. Where accidents or incidents had occurred, these had been reviewed and prompt action had been taken to address any issues. It was evident from looking at the accident and incident records, learning had taken place to minimise the risk of future incidents. For example, there was one incident when a young person became aggressive with a member of staff. Following the incident, support had been sought from relevant professionals to manage this behaviour and the staff member had received a debrief session with their manager to reflect upon any improvements which could be made to provide a better service to this person.

Is the service effective?

Our findings

Young people and relatives told us they felt the staff were highly skilled and had received excellent training to fulfil their roles. One young person used their communication aid to confirm this. One relative told us, "I feel they receive excellent training and are very skilled." Another relative commented on how they felt the staff were highly skilled in their role.

Staff received exceptional training. The National Star Foundation had established their own training department which was accredited by City and Guilds. In addition to completing training the provider considered as mandatory, staff also had access to bespoke training delivered by health professionals employed by the college and external training agencies. For example, physiotherapists and occupational therapists provided personalised training for people with complex moving and handling needs and the behaviour support team provided staff with individualised training to help staff support young people to manage their emotions. The training team said this benefitted young people as training could be delivered promptly to respond to any changes in their needs. An example of this was seen when one person had become aggressive towards a member of staff. This was addressed quickly and the behaviour support team had delivered training to staff within two days of the incident and had developed new behaviour support plans for this person which had led to a marked improvement in their behaviour and emotional well-being. The training lead told us how they would continually review staff feedback and make adjustments to staff training to ensure it met the needs of the young people living at the college. For example, care staff were supported to undertake educational training so they could provide a better level of support to young people when they were attending classes.

The exceptional training offered at the college had been recognised by other stakeholders and the college had been commissioned to deliver various training courses. Gloucestershire County Council had commissioned the college to be their lead trainer for safeguarding, moving and handling and medicines. The college had also been awarded the South West Region National Award for Large Organisations for their Disability Confidence training which was delivered to other professionals who were working with people with disabilities. The training lead told us how the college was delivering autism awareness training to the Police to develop the skills of the Police force in relation to working with people with autism. The college was delivering training to trainee GP's to support them to develop their skills in relation to working with young adults with disabilities. The training lead told us how young people were involved in these training courses and this had resulted in improved levels of self-confidence and sense of well-being for the students involved.

The induction programme was vital to establishing a staff team who had the skills and knowledge to carry out their roles and responsibilities effectively. After feedback from staff, the induction programme was adjusted to offer a "blended approach" enabling staff to learn new skills in a classroom environment and then work alongside colleagues in residences to reflect how their knowledge would be put into practice. Staff would receive a minimum three week induction during which they received high levels of mentoring and supervision from managers and senior staff. Elements of the induction training was also delivered by young people. New staff commented on their induction, "It was amazing and the support throughout was

excellent", "My induction was fantastic, I was always encouraged to ask questions and received excellent support" and "Having a mix of classroom days and shadowing days really made me understand everything I learned." Staff received ongoing support, supervision and annual appraisals to assess their competency and training needs. They were rated in key areas and supported to explore career options within the college.

The training lead told us that they had developed a bespoke training course for all agency staff who were required to work at the college. The training lead and registered manager told us this was done to ensure there was a consistent approach across all staffing groups and ensured agency staff had been sufficiently trained to work with the people living at the college. The training programme for agency staff consisted of a two day training programme which incorporated both classroom and practical approaches. The service had won the Prince's Trust Award for innovation in training and learning in relation to their induction programme.

All students at the college received an IT access assessment. The purpose of this assessment was to put in place the required hardware and software solutions to enable each young person to access computing in the most appropriate way. This involved the provision of appropriate keyboard and mouse alternatives and could involve the use of on screen keyboards that were accessed via eye-gaze or head mouse technologies that allowed young people with complex communication needs to take control of a mouse pointer using their eye or head movements. The assistive technology system was designed to allow young people to access computers as easily and as independently as possible in order for them to use these technologies for the purposes of communication, education and enjoyment.

The college made excellent use of technology for young people outside of the classroom time whilst living at the college, including access to loan equipment to practice and test pre-ordered bespoke items for effectiveness. Young people were very confident in using a variety of assistive technologies on their own terms to develop their independence and autonomy in areas such as self-care, domestic tasks, mobility, communication, leisure, sensory and other therapeutic activities. The provider had invested significant resources in the establishment of a dedicated technology development team and we found this had resulted in outstanding outcomes for young people. For example, sensory equipment had been individualised to ensure it met the needs and development outcomes for each young person. We heard how light beams had been reconfigured to support one person to enter the swimming pool. These accessible sensory kits had been trialled and tested rigorously by young people to ensure they would be fit for purpose. The technology team had ensured sensory equipment would be easy to use so that all staff could use the equipment with minimal guidance. This had resulted in a significant increase in the use of sensory activities by the residential staff during evenings and weekends. We also found a wider use of the 'smart chair' system which had enabled more young people to develop independent mobility skills.

The technology team sourced commercially available products for young people to use to manage and control their home environment. Through use of environmental controls young people could open their curtains, doors, listen to music and turn lights on and off and order a pizza. This meant staff could support them to develop life skills at the 'right time, right place' which enhanced confidence and learning. The technology team explained by using commercially available products instead of specialist products it increased the opportunity for young people to continue using these types of products when they left the college and thereby maintain their skills and independence. We also found an increased number of residential areas had been fitted with environmental controls which enabled young people to maximise their independence.

Students had been actively involved in developing and trialing new innovative products for young people with disabilities including a task-based learning system for work activities as well as the development of a

one handed wheelchair lap belt. These developments relied on excellent team working across all areas of the college. For example, one young person needed support from staff up to 11 times a day to support with the unfastening and refastening of their wheelchair lap belt. The physiotherapist working with them recognised how much more independent and less reliant on support they would be if they could operate their wheelchair lap belt on their own. The technology team worked with an external company to submit a proposal and was chosen as a finalist for the Inclusive Technology Prize and they were awarded a grant to develop a prototype. Five young people helped the designers to shape the final product based on their user experience. After trialling the prototype belt for two weeks the young person noted "this lap belt is life changing. I now have total independence and dignity from such a simple but hugely effective idea". This product is now being manufactured and made available to the general public. Young people had also developed a system that allowed them the freedom to access any computer regardless of location because they could change the accessibility settings to enable their individualised use.

National Star College is situated close to Cheltenham. The college was suitable for the young people that were accommodated and where adaptations were required these were made. Each room was spacious and had sufficient room for any specialist equipment and for young people to move around if they used a wheelchair. Each young person was given the opportunity to personalise their living space. For example, one person was a keen musician and had several keyboards and mixing stations in his room.

The registered manager told us how they would review what had and hadn't worked in previous residences, when designing a new build residence. Each residence was tailored to the needs of the people living in them. For example, one residence had been designed to maximise the independence of the people living there to enable them to live their life with minimal support. The registered manager told us how the independence and needs of the individuals had been identified during their assessment so that the four of them could live together and 'run a home'. People and their relatives confirmed they felt their accommodation had been designed to meet their individual needs.

The college was situated in spacious grounds which were fully accessible to young people. The college's 'Big Ideas' programme had resulted in low cost mobility aids being stocked in the college shop to further enhance young people's access to equipment. The college also encouraged young people to contribute to improvements in the wider community. We saw young people's views had been sought by the local authority when they re-developing a local recreational area as well as reviewed the pavement accessibility in the city to ensure changes would meet the needs of people who used wheelchairs and had limited mobility.

There was evidence of strong team working between therapy and residential care staff to ensure young people's changing needs were met in their living environment. One member of staff told us how the physiotherapy assistant worked alongside them to enable a young person to complete their exercises. The staff member told us how this had resulted in a significant improvement in the young person's ability and also enhanced the staff member's knowledge. To further ensure young people would receive the support they needed the provider had employed occupational and physiotherapy assistants who would work alongside care staff in the residences to support them to quickly develop their skills in the use of young people's specialist equipment. .

Young people were supported to manage their own health care needs wherever possible. Comprehensive care plans provided personalised guidance about their care and support needs in respect of their health and well-being. Young people could make appointments with a GP who held surgeries at the college and with a range of health care professionals such as a speech and language therapist and physiotherapist. Young people retained some services from their home for instance dentists or opticians. These services could be

arranged by the college if needed. Staff maintained close links with external social and health care professionals involved in young people's care. Examples were given of working with tissue viability nurses, the enteral nutritional team and continence nurses to make sure the best possible care and outcomes were attained for young people.

The registered manager told us how staff worked closely with people to build upon people's skills and knowledge in relation to their health. Students, whilst supported by staff used medical websites and other resources to develop a greater understanding of their condition. This intensive support had helped students to come to terms with their condition, understand more about the clinicians involved in their treatment and had resulted in students being notably more relaxed about what to expect if and when there was a deterioration in their health. Care staff also attended a health skills training session to ensure they were skilled in recognising early warning signs of deterioration in people's health and respond appropriately, seeking relevant support from the medical team. This had resulted in consistent approach across the organisation and better outcomes for students.

We saw from the training records that staff had received training on the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005 and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS). The Mental Capacity Act 2005 (MCA) provides a legal framework for making particular decisions on behalf of people who may lack the mental capacity to do so for themselves. The Act requires that as far as possible people make their own decisions and are helped to do so when needed. When they lack mental capacity to take particular decisions, any made on their behalf must be in their best interests and as least restrictive as possible. People can only be deprived of their liberty to receive care and treatment when this is in their best interests and legally authorised under the MCA. The application procedures for this are called the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS).

We checked whether the service was working within the principles of the MCA. Staff we spoke with demonstrated a good understanding of the principles of the MCA and were confident to carry out assessments of young people's capacity. Where required, young people had assessments regarding their capacity to make decisions and these were clearly recorded in their care files. If people lacked mental capacity and were being deprived of their liberty, the relevant DoLS applications had been made.

Young people's nutrition care plans clearly detailed whether they had any allergies or special dietary requirements. The cook and their team took great pride in preparing food for young people who needed meals produced in line with their religious or cultural beliefs. We spoke with one person who told us they had full confidence in the kitchen staff to provide meals in accordance with their religious beliefs. The registered manager told us how they had worked closely with a number of students and their families to identify suppliers for food items which met the requirements of their religious beliefs.

Staff had an excellent understanding of any special diets young people needed and made sure any soft diets were produced to look appetising. The cook was very knowledgeable about young people's nutritional needs and how to encourage them to eat healthily or to maintain their weight. Some young people had complex dietary needs and systems were in place to make sure their nutrition plans were routinely followed. Food supplements were provided where required. Young people receiving nutrition via a percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy tube (PEG) (a way for people to have their nutritional needs met when they are unable to orally) were given tasters of food or drink if it was safe to do so. Food and fluid charts monitored young people's intake and concerns were raised and action taken when they dropped below recommended levels. Young people at risk of weight loss or weight gain had their weight monitored closely, with their permission. People and relatives confirmed they had enough to eat and their meals met their requirements.

Is the service caring?

Our findings

All staff we spoke with were passionate about communication being key to young people's independence, autonomy and happiness. One staff member told us, "It is all about supporting people to find their voice. Once people can let you know what they like and how they want to live their life they can take control of their lives". Young people benefitted from teams within the college who could assess their communication needs and offer or develop a range of systems, devices or strategies to enable them to have their voice heard.

We found a very wide range of individualised communication aids being used effectively. This ranged from the simple but creative use of pictures and photographs to the use of a variety of electronic multi-sensory communication devices and tablet computers. For example a piece of equipment called Eye Gaze was available for use both in and out of the classroom. This was an eye-operated communication and control system that empowered people with disabilities to communicate. By looking at control keys or cells displayed on a screen, a young person could generate speech either by typing a message or selecting pre-programmed phrases.

Staff worked creatively with young people on subjects they enjoyed to support them to remain engaged and motivated to persevere with their communication. Throughout the visit, we saw all staff consistently encouraging people to use their communication devices. Young people's communication devices were constantly reviewed to ensure they were still meeting their needs. For example, one young person used a touchscreen communication device but due to its size, they were unable to take it with them into the community which severely restricted their ability to communicate when out. Staff were working with the manufacturer to develop a more portable device which would enable the young person to communicate more effectively and easily. For another person an innovative solution was found when they could not use technology that tracked their eye movement because of their visual impairment. The therapist and technology team worked together to develop a method of communication that worked by them controlling their blinks. This enabled them to clearly express their choices through yes and no answers.

Staff were highly sensitive to students' emotional well-being and were creative in finding solutions to support them to manage their anxiety and distress. One person told us "They always pick up when I am not feeling hunky-dory, then they always help me feel better". We heard of examples where staff supported young people creatively through use of social stories to develop their understanding and express their emotions when they had experienced a bereavement. The Talk2Team (Behavioural Support Team) shared with us how the use of Social Stories had resulted in a significant improvement to people's well-being. For another young person staff ensured their sofa travelled with them during college holidays as they could become anxious if it could not be used. Another young person was supported to manage their anxiety during a recent ski trip by staff supporting them to use specialist communication software to enable them to engage with less familiar people when accessing the community.

The clinical psychologist from the Talk2Team told us how they had supported one person to manage their anxiety. They told us the person was anxious about how they would manage when they left college. The

Talk2Team had worked closely with their local mental health staff, their GP and new support staff to develop a strategy for when they moved to their new residence. They told us how this person was settled and worked confidently with their new support team. The college used Intensive Interaction techniques creatively and we found all staff to be skilled and consistently used the guidance provided by the Talk2Team. We observed how this supported people through for example, a sensory walk with residential staff, to be better prepared for their day. Intensive Interaction is a practical approach to interacting with people with learning disabilities who do not find it easy communicating or being social. The approach helps the person and their communication partner to relate better to each other and enjoy each other's company more.

Staff were exceptionally skilled in supporting young people's cultural, gender and spiritual needs in a caring and compassionate way. For example, we spoke with one young person who was Muslim and prayed five times a day. The young person required full support with their personal care needs and told us staff would support them to wash and prepare for their prayers five times a day. The person told us how staff had taken the time to learn how to support them to wash in accordance with Islamic requirements and the staff were confident when explaining the process of washing for this person. The young person told us how staff would be ready to support even when prayers were in the early hours of the morning or late at night. The person went on to tell us how they would be supported to fast in accordance with their religious beliefs and staff would ensure they had a fresh meal in the early hours of the morning and late in the evening despite this not being normal meal times for the rest of the people using the college. The person went on to tell us how they felt extremely confident in practicing their religion as every effort was made to enable them to do so.

There were lots of different ways in which young people could express their views and they said they were involved in the planning and review of their care. Young people were consulted and involved in devising the leisure timetable to ensure it met their needs and interests. They evaluated activities and clubs and fed back on changes required. They were consulted through residence meetings about how they would want their accommodation to run, house rules, expectations and how they wanted to spend their time during weekends and evenings. Young people were encouraged to book a community centre at an off-site college residence just as local groups did to increase their communication skills, confidence and prepare them for life post-college

Young people knew how to contact their student representatives to raise issues about their individual care. The college's advocacy service was run by previous students who could relate to the experiences of people attending the college. Learner involvement co-ordinator led peer advocacy services for young people and 13 young people benefitted from the service in the past year. The Officer had also been proactive in developing student voice opportunities at campaigning events and staff had benefitted from targeted advocacy training.

Throughout this inspection it was evident that young people were cared for with compassion and kindness and the actions of staff showed that people really mattered. Staff at every level wanted people to be happy and live a life that was meaningful and fulfilling. All of the young people we spoke with told us the staff were caring and dedicated, and went over and above what was expected of them. One young person explained to us how a member of staff had spent 14 hours with them when they were in hospital and anxious about what would happen to them. The young person explained this was on top of the hours the member of staff had already worked as part of their shift.

Relatives we spoke with informed us the staff showed a high level of compassion towards the young people they supported. They used words such as "Compassionate", "Caring", "Excellent" and "very motivated" to describe the staff. One relative told us "They (the staff) genuinely care and go over and above what is

expected of them. They treat my son like he is their own family." Another relative said "Not only are the staff always concerned about our son's welfare, they are always conscious about our piece of mind and always keep us in the loop about what is happening. We can't ask for more." Another relative commented "I wish our son could stay at the college because the staff are personal heroes. I don't think we will ever find staff like them anywhere." All of the health professionals we spoke with told us they felt there was a very strong and caring relationship between the staff and people living at National Star College.

We observed positive interactions between people and staff. There was a genuine sense of fondness and respect between the staff and young people. Young people were given the information and explanations they needed, at the time they needed them and in a manner they would understand. For example, where young people communicated through assistive technology, staff would use this to explain to them what would be happening during the day. People appeared happy and relaxed in the company of staff. People we spoke with told us staff were caring. The college also supported young people to develop caring, considerate and empathic relationships with their peers. Two young people expressed their concerns about their friend not being able to find their way around the college independently due to their sight difficulties. They were supported by the technology team to build a creative small 3D model of the campus which their friend could read by touch and use as a guide.

Care records contained the information staff needed about young people's significant relationships including maintaining contact with family. Young people had visitors at times they wished them to visit and when they did not disturb their daily routines. Staff described how they kept in touch with anxious parents and promoted positive relationships with them. Young people had access to the internet to keep in touch with parents through visual communications as well as over the telephone. Relatives told us they were able to visit when they wanted to. One relative confirmed "there have never been any restrictions on visiting".

Is the service responsive?

Our findings

At our previous inspection we found the college to be outstandingly responsive to the needs of young people. At this inspection we found the college had further developed their responsiveness by working in a highly person-centred way to meet the needs of young people from all equality groups. We found equality; diversity and human rights were promoted across the college and the staff worked innovatively and passionately to enable young people from different groups to have equal access to all parts of the college and their local community.

All staff had received training in equality and diversity. They creatively supported young people to develop an understanding of their own and other's social, cultural and sexual diversity, values and beliefs in order to know how they would want to be supported. The 'Talk2Team' also counselled and supported young people on an individual basis through specific issues such as sexuality, faith and relationships.

Throughout our inspection we heard comments from young people about their future aspirations and the support staff gave them to achieve these. These included "I did not know all the things I could do till I came here", "I have developed from the first day I arrived. I am so much more independent than when I first arrived", "The support I get is remarkable", "Staff are always looking at ways to support the things we want to do", "We do so much to make others aware that people with disabilities can do anything" and "I am very excited about starting my new job".

Staff met young people's individual needs relating to their protected equality characteristics and their values and beliefs creatively. For example, the college had developed and piloted an innovative Sexual Orienteering programme. Creative, age appropriate activities and resources had been developed to support young people with learning disabilities to gain a better understanding of their sexual orientation, to recognise diversity and to make informed choices about their own sexuality and relationships. These included 'Diverse City' – a simple game that allowed discrimination and sexual orientation to be considered, 'Blurred Lines' - a set of images on mugs which challenged stereotypes and a film young people made about hate crime. We saw that young people evaluated the programme very positively and made suggestions on how this could be further developed. For example, young people said they would like more opportunity to talk about sexual relationships and the programme lead told us how their request had been incorporated in the revised programme.

Young people had opportunities to practice their own beliefs and religion as well as explore different religions and cultures to develop greater tolerance and to be able to make a positive contribution to their community. The college employed a Multi-faith Worker who had developed a range of excellent cultural and faith resources which had been positively received by young people. One such creative resource was 'Faith in a Box' kept in the college's multi-faith space 'The Retreat' room. These boxes could be picked up by staff at any time and included accessible information and activities staff could complete with young people about different religions to increase their understanding. The Multi-faith Worker also led a weekly faith group which hosted speakers and arranged visits to different spiritual places. In the past year, two young people undertook a joint schools visit to Auschwitz and attended Holocaust Memorial services. Individual young

people were supported to attend faith venues of their choice and this was detailed in their care plans.

The college was also one of the main venues for Gloucestershire's Black History Month workshops. Through their Creating Communities project, international links had also been developed enabling young people to partake in joint projects and gain a deeper understanding of other cultures. One parent said "My son cannot go out and see the whole world but, National Star College brought the world to him." Students from Greece and Germany participated in a student exchange programme. FestABLE, the first National Festival of Specialist Learning, will be hosted at National Star in June 2018 to look for solutions to current issues facing young people with disabilities in specialist learning.

Young people spoke positively about these experiences. We found them determined to challenge stereotypes and were passionate about promoting disability issues and challenging stereotypes. Young people encouraged the college to take part in BBC3's Disability Season which resulted in three one hour programmes about the young people called 'the Unbreakables'. The positive feedback identified how people can challenge their own thinking and views of young adults with disabilities. We heard how young people gained hugely from this experience growing in confidence and actively seeking new ways to sustain the impact this programme had. This included one young person setting up their own 'Don't Call Me Special' campaign and others doing talks at local schools.

The college's focus on challenging expectations had led to an increase in the number of young people gaining work. Following our previous inspection, the college had evaluated their work placement programme and found one of the challenges young people faced was finding work placements when they moved back home to another part of the country. To address this concern, they had worked creatively in partnership with larger corporations with branches nationwide and had been successful in supporting young people post-college to move their work placements with them when they returned home. This ensured ongoing learning and independence.

Transition to and from the college remained excellent with the college increasing the number of visits arranged to destination providers to support young people to make meaningful choices post college. We heard many examples of how effective working between Job Mentors, education, residential, transition and therapy teams had led to increased awareness and support to young people to develop core life skill competencies via work placements. A young person told us, "I am being supported to work in the bistro so I receive work experience which will help me get a job when I leave". The college's specialist housing and career staff supported young people to secure social work support and appropriate accommodation post college. The transition review we attended highlighted how multi-disciplinary transition planning of care would support the person's next placement and were aimed at maintaining continuity, independence and autonomy for this person. The college had also hosted a Transition Event whereby over 35 organisations attended to offer support, advice and guidance for options post- college. This event received positive feedback with one visitor noting "Bowled over that the college would go to such lengths to put on an event like this for students/parents/carers, amazing".

Young people interested in attending the college could access information on line, through a video made by and with young people at the college and in a handbook to help them make their choice. The registered manager told us staff visited people in their own homes, schools or other placements to assess their personal needs. This enabled staff to work alongside young people to gain an insight into their preferences and interests. This was vital for young people with an autistic spectrum disorder who liked to have very strict routines or young people who had very complex health needs. Staff told us this process also helped parents with the transition of young people to a more independent lifestyle. The assessment process allowed young people to build relationships with staff so when they came to college they had someone they knew. One person told us "The assessment process was amazing. I got to see all of the facilities and meet all of the

staff."

Prospective young people also undertook an overnight stay so they could experience 'college life' and receive a multi-disciplined assessment from the various professionals based at the college. A person confirmed, "Before making a decision I had a one night trial. This was really good as I got to really feel what life would be like here." Relatives told us how they had felt the assessment process was thorough and reassured them that their young person would receive a very high standard of care when they moved to the college.

Personalised care plans were developed from the knowledge gained during the assessment process and other information provided from health and social care professionals. Young people were involved in monitoring and reviewing these wherever possible, so they reflected young people's current routines, likes, dislikes and aspirations. Young people had worked creatively with staff in preparation for their annual review. Some young people had produced a video to illustrate their care plan and the progress they had made. Young people's activities were based on their preferences and included activities inside and outside of the college. Young people were also supported to go on holiday if they wanted to.

The registered manager told us that although the main focus of the trips was to provide a social activity to people, they also learnt invaluable life skills such as managing foreign currency, using various forms of transport and interacting with young people from other backgrounds. For example, one young person who would never independently order a drink went into a shop and asked for a 'coke'. Another young person had never spoken Spanish since their brain injury. However, when they heard Spanish being spoken during the ski trip, they started speaking fluently in Spanish.

The young people we spoke with indicated they were happy with the staff who supported them and felt they could raise any concerns they had. One person said "I will tell the staff if I have any concerns or will talk with the manager. There is always somebody to talk to". Another person said "They (the management) listen to me and will take action to resolve any issues quickly".

Complaints and compliments were managed well. The service had received three complaints in the last 12 months and these had been dealt with effectively in accordance with the provider's complaints policy and had resulted in positive outcomes for people. The registered manager was able to demonstrate the learning which had been gained through these complaints. The college had also received compliments. One person stated "It was a truly eye-opening experience looking around Star, as far as I am concerned, it is the only specialist college that provides a curriculum of choice and interest in an environment that is catered for individuals with severe and complex needs. I was so impressed by the opportunities Star offers young people and the general positivity and confidence given out by the young students over there." One student had commented, "Before I came to college, I felt very disabled but now I don't have any disability and I want to say thank you for having me. I want to thank you all for your hard work through preparation and during the induction period. I'm sure that you will all agree receiving a comment like this makes it all worthwhile and is motivating. Huge thanks to all of you."

Staff members we spoke with informed us feedback received from young people was shared with them and they found this to be motivating as it reassured them they were doing a good job. Staff said they used any complaints as part of their personal development to ensure they took learning from issues raised in order to provide a better service in the future.

The service was providing end of life care. Where relevant, young people's needs and preferences regarding this had been clearly recorded in their care files. Young people and their relatives told us they had been

involved in developing these plans.

Is the service well-led?

Our findings

The vision of National Star Foundation and the National Star College was to promote "A world in which people with disabilities are able to realise their potential as equal and active citizens in control of their lives". All staff and senior management demonstrated this clear vision and a highly positive person centred culture was seen throughout. Staff had high standards and expectations of both themselves and young people and this promoted an exceptionally positive culture of challenging disability perceptions which had improved young people's confidence and opportunities. One member of staff said "We do our best to maximise opportunities for every individual. Seeing people take part in new experiences makes us all very proud." One young person told us "I am a very high expectation person, I got a staff mentor to help me and I am doing more thing every day".

Young people were supported to focus on making a positive contribution to others, the college and the community and achieve their potential. This was demonstrated by outstanding examples including young people coaching school age students, showcasing work skills in several of the provider's social enterprises and external work placements, the high percentage of young people taking on representative roles, young people's appreciation of diversity, participating in the development of innovative technology and actively participating in recycling and energy reduction projects promoting sustainability. Young people had been supported to actively campaign to improve rights and entitlements for people with disabilities for example, being actively involved in the 'A Right not a Fight' campaign and working with Natspec to influence the high needs thematic review. Throughout the inspection, we found young people and staff were motivated and passionate about equality and empowering people to live the lives they want.

The registered manager monitored these values and the delivery of their vision for young people through personal observations, feedback from people and staff. They had an in depth knowledge of people living at the college, their goals and aspirations and how far along they were to meeting these. The registered manager endeavoured to play a central part in the review of young people's care and support. They worked tirelessly and creatively on behalf of people. For example, representing people who had been refused funding for another year at college to enable them to maximise their potential.

Young people were extensively involved in promoting the college and were viewed as its greatest ambassadors. For example, OrcheStar (college orchestra) activity had included interactive workshops with local businesses and schools, performance and demonstrations at recruitment events and performance during the July 2017 Expressive Arts Week at the college.

Young people were highly valued and their views were central to the development of the organisation. The Senior Personalised Learning Co-ordinator very effectively lead students' approaches and involvement strategies. These included a cross-college Student Union and Student Parliament as well as residential student representative meetings. Student Governors attended pre-meetings to ensure they could meaningfully contribute to the meetings. The college had established an 'Advisory Board' of people with learning disabilities to support the two Student Governors, provide advice, challenge and develop link roles. The college was also developing an 'experts by experience' programme to monitor provision across sites

and feed directly into Governors and Trustee Boards and the Senior and Operational Manager for action.

Young people had contributed to both internal development activities and national consultations. We found these student involvement strategies were highly effective and heard many examples of how young people's views had influenced change and improvement at the college as well as the wider care sector and their local community. For example, young people were delivering a presentation at the upcoming Natspec conference to share their views on what good care looked like for them. Natspec is the membership association for organisations which offer specialist further education and training for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Young people from the Student Parliament had visited local employers to assess the working environment to advise on how practical changes could be made to ensure the work space would be more accessible for people with disabilities. Young people were consulted in the development of their new college accommodation. They met with the architects, decorators and designers and told us they were very happy with how their views had been incorporated. Young people had also written the new staff disability awareness induction training and delivered this to all new staff. They also supported a university by partaking in their induction days for nursing students as well as newly qualified GPs.

The registered manager promoted an open culture of transparency where lessons could be learned to drive improvements. Staff were encouraged to raise concerns openly and without fear of recrimination. We saw examples of this in the implementation of the accident, incident, safeguarding and complaints procedures. Where appropriate, staff had been enabled through closer support and offer of additional training to ensure consistent high quality care for people using the college.

The registered manager and senior management team understood the improvements that needed to be made across the college. Strong risk and compliance measures were in place, including a detailed risk register and assurance framework. For example, this supported the monitoring of the new eMAR system and identified areas for improvement and practice development. The college had an array of systems for auditing and reporting to ensure a high quality service delivery. This included, but not limited to, student safety and quality, medicines management, reports to the board of trustees and audit committee. We had sight of the minutes and reports which demonstrated how the service was scrutinised and how safety was being monitored and reported effectively. This showed a transparent organisation that had clear links of accountability from the 'floor to the board'. Information on matters such as infection control, falls prevention, medicines incidents, staff recruitment/competencies, complaint management, safeguarding and finances were known about by those responsible and accountable within the organisation. Effective methods of communication were in place as well as systems to address any matters arising. For example, staff used an assigned email address for each young person to communicate any changes or risk. This meant all staff working with a person across the site had up to date information about emerging risks and concerns.

The provider had a clear and ambitious strategic plan for the college which was shared and developed with staff, young people, Governors and Trustees. This strategy was highly effective at meeting the need of current and future young people as well as ensuring the college remained outstandingly well-led. The provider had undertaken a large scale review of all technologies being used and had identified that those available to young people were not always sufficiently individualised to meet their needs. They had invested significant resources to develop an internal technology development team and we saw throughout our inspection how this development had led to exceptional outcomes for young people. Training and workforce planning had been completed pro-actively to ensure the college could meet the anticipated needs of young people with more complex needs. The residential, therapy, technology and educational teams had very successfully become increasingly integrated with residential learning ensuring young people practise skills in real settings which accelerated progress towards life goals. Therapy assistants had been

introduced to support people's therapy in the residential settings. A pilot was being undertaken to fully integrate education and residential staff for people with complex needs and learning disabilities so that for example, people with autism could benefit from a small consistent team approach. Transition planning to and from the college remained excellent.

We found outstanding partnership arrangements with local and national organisations and saw how this had added significant value to the leisure, work and development opportunities for young people. The provider was a member of 18 national organisations to support their understanding and implementation of current legislation and good practice. We found examples of how the provider's passion to continually improve their service had led to the development of innovative practice for example in relation to the sourcing of work placements and development of innovative technologies. The provider continuously evaluated these projects and fed back to other members to ensure learning could result in wider improvement.

The leadership of the service was exceptional. It was evident the registered manager offered strong and experienced leadership and had a clear vision about the direction of the service. They were highly committed to improving young people's lives and ensuring young people had the best care they could receive, and expected the same high standards from the staff who were as committed to these values as the registered manager was. The management team were very much part of the overall care team at National Star College. They were very involved in people's care, visible and approachable. Staff at National Star College clearly understood their role and worked hard to promote a homely atmosphere in the service. They spoke positively about the provider's recent staff well-being consultation to promote staff health and well-being and reduce staff absence and sickness. The college offered staff a variety of well-being activities.

The registered manager was supported by managers who had responsibility for the residences, a deputy manager of residential services, a lead nurse and a senior management team to oversee such areas as human resources, training, quality and behaviour support. They were supervised and supported by a representative of the provider. The registered manager was aware of their responsibilities with respect to being registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Staff spoke positively about management and the college. One said, "I love working here". Another said, "I am proud to be working here". Another member of staff said "This is the most rewarding job I have worked. It is an honour to work here." The registered manager was keen to ensure staff were well supported and a high level of service was provided to people. People living at National Star College spoke positively about the registered manager. One person said "I can speak to her (the registered manager) about anything as she will always listen." Relatives and professionals also spoke positively about the registered manager. One relative said "The manager is a great person. They are excellent at their job". Another relative said "The manager is fantastic. They work very hard to make National Star a great place to live and learn".

Staff told us they felt they could discuss any concerns they had with the registered manager. Staff used words such as "Approachable", "Brilliant" and "Compassionate" to describe the management team. One person said "The students have a great relationship with the manager and that is very important". Despite the large number of people living at the college, the registered manager knew everyone by their first name and excellent knowledge about people's individual needs. The registered manager spent significant time with people to get to know them. All of the students were confident in the presence of the registered manager. We saw people were always happy to see the registered manager and were happy to spend time talking to them.

The staff described the registered manager as being "hands on". We observed this during the inspection as

the registered manager would regularly attend to matters of care throughout the day. Staff we spoke with told us they felt morale amongst staff was high and this was down to good leadership from the registered manager and provider. Staff stated they felt the recognition from management of good practice helped maintain the staff morale. A number of staff commented on how some of the managers had started as care staff before being appointed to more senior positions. The staff said "They know what the job is all about and this really helps them understand and support you."

The provider had a clear contingency plan to manage the service in their absence. This was robust and the plans in place ensured a continuation of the service with minimal disruption to the care of people. In addition to planned absences, the registered manager was able to outline plans for short and long term unexpected absences. The registered manager also detailed how members of the wider management team would cover for them if needed.

The college had obtained a number of achievement awards and accreditations. For example they had met the QC Management Cyber Essentials Standard 2017 which evidenced that the provider had implemented controls to mitigate the risk from common internet based threats. Their StarBistro had also won a Gloucestershire Social Enterprise Business Award. The provider had won several technology awards for products that were being commercialised. Funding was also awarded by the Equality Challenge Unit to work in partnership with Gloucestershire College to build specialist resources to support people with learning difficulties to gain a better understanding of sexual orientation and sexual identity.