

# Camtree Digital Library



## Innovative strategies to support employment: National Star College

Title	Innovative strategies to support employment: National Star College
Publisher	nasen and Education Training Foundation
Publication date	2026
Download date	2026-03-05 12:08:56
Item License	<a href="https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/">https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/</a>
Link to Item	<a href="https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14069/1136">https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14069/1136</a>



## Innovative strategies to support employment: National Star College

**(FE) ETF Employer Spokes Events:** Employer Spokes foster partnerships between FE providers and employers that evidence best practice in meaningful employment for people with SEND.

### Introduction

National Star College is a large independent specialist residential and day college for students with high needs that is part of the National Star registered charity. The college recruits students from 48 local authorities and has sites in Cheltenham, Hereford and Wales. The organisation currently provides education and support to over 200 young people attending the Cheltenham and Hereford sites. Students are aged 16 to 25. Students at National Star College have complex physical disabilities and medical conditions, including autism spectrum disorder and other learning, behavioral, sensory or physical disabilities. All students have SEND support requirements and the majority have active EHCP's.

Looking for work can be daunting for anyone, but couple with having some barriers to learning and work, plus the impact of a global pandemic and the challenge becomes even greater. The number of disabled people in work since the COVID-19 pandemic has dropped according to the latest Government figures. Only 4.8% of adults with a learning disability are in employment (NHS Digital, 2022).

### Implementation

National Star is always looking at ways to support students in new and innovative ways. Students attending National Star receive support in a range of ways, and develop their own self advocacy skills, supporting them to interact with unfamiliar people. These are skills that take time to develop and for students with learning/physical disabilities, mental health conditions like anxiety can take longer. What we instill in our students is the art of the possible, trying new things and supporting them to understand the ways they can use their skills and talents for the future.

Acknowledging the ongoing challenges facing young people with disabilities looking for work and National Star's experience of working with young people, they partnered with the National Careers Service to develop a jobs fair with a difference. People with disabilities are historically referred to as needing support, need intervention, needing guidance. National Star wanted to work with a much more strengths-based model and create a positive networking and marketing environment where young people could showcase their own skills, talents and expertise and connect employers who have current vacancies to a new pool of talented and committed young people who were looking for work. The reverse jobs fair gave students the chance to showcase their talents to local employers in Gloucestershire who are looking to take on new staff.

The approach provided an accessible recruitment event, giving young people the confidence to experience talking to employers about their career aspirations and goals.

## Implementation (continued)

National Star invited employers from a range of businesses across the county. Employers were asked to attend and actively participate with the fair. In a change from the usual way of sharing information, students put themselves forward, creating boards and marketing tools that showcased their skills, talents, expertise and areas they wanted to find work in. As employers accessed the fair, they moved around the students' stands, talking to people and getting to know more about them. This informal, participative approach enabled both students and employers to meet and communicate in a less threatening environment. Employers were encouraged to speak to each student in turn to find out more about their skills and future aspirations at the Reverse Jobs Fair.

---

## Outcomes

- Broad impact on young people – knowledge gained from the experience of preparing for the event, feedback from employers, increased confidence, working with a strengths-based model, demystifying the process of recruitment
  - Employment outcomes – one student gained paid employment and is still there now, others made solid connections for placements.
  - Ongoing work with providers who are offering placements to current cohort.
  - Developing and building on relationships with local employers.
  - National Star have mentored another provider to carry out their own successful reverse jobs fair.
- 

## Impact, Next Steps and Key Learning

National Star will be building on the success of the first event and hope the follow-up event will be even more successful.

National Star will share the success of this new initiative with partner organisations, local authorities and other providers through networks with a view to other organisations working in a similar way.

National Star will develop the 'Community of Practice methodology with those participating employers and engage in follow up activities. National Star is clear on the benefits of this initiative on students and young people, however the impact on employers and their local work force development is also emerging.

