**National Lottery Funding – Community Support Stop**

How you spent the funding:

The funding we received was dedicated to supporting University of Salford students during the Cost-of-Living crisis. The primary aim was to alleviate the financial pressures and strain students face by providing them with essential resources such as hot meals, toiletries and hygiene and sanitary products, which would help improve their overall wellbeing.

To achieve the aims, the funding was used in a variety of different ways to support Salford Students. The creation of the ‘Community Support Stop’ (CSS) events was one of the main focal points of the project and where majority of the activity took place. The CSS events which took place each week during University of Salford teaching weeks from the week commencing 15th January 2024, totalling 14 events. At these weekly drop-in events, Salford students received free cost of living support from a USSU Advisor, engaged in wellbeing activities ran by Rafiki, received a free hot meal and a free self-care pack. To accommodate the varied students’ timetables, the events ran over a mixture of timings including breakfast, lunch and afternoon. The lunch drop ins were the most highly attended events where the food offerings needed to be increased to accommodate the attendance from 50 a week to 75 per week.

After receiving feedback from Salford Students that they were struggling to afford meals due to increasing prices, were missing meals and that affording food was an area they were most concerned about the main area of focus for the Community Support Stops was to provide free food. We wanted to ensure that the food was nutritious, met the dietary needs of students and was a hot substantial meal. Each meal was £8 per head which included the qualified staff members to also serve the food to ensure health and safety was maintained. A total of £6600 was spent on the Community Support Stop hot meals which provided 825 meals. As loneliness is the biggest barrier to learning at the University of Salford, we wanted to ensure we provided a service where students would ‘Dine In’ so therefore used the Students’ Union Warm Space as the location for the events. We also provided free Advice to students as well as a weekly wellbeing activity that was ran by the peer-to-peer support service Rafiki. These interventions ensured students stayed and engaged in the activity rather than used the space as a grab and go for free food.

To ensure that students felt supported and had the opportunity to ask questions and seek advice where they needed it, the Community Support Stop events also acted as a drop in event for students to attend. The advisors were on hand to deliver academic advice around University of Salford policies and procedures, housing advice and welfare advice including food bank referrals. As well as advice, students could access wellbeing activities that were ran by the Rafiki team. The wellbeing activities encouraged the students to take some time to engage in self-care activities away from the busy stressful lives of their studies.

The self-care packs were made up of 3 or 4 different toiletry items. The Help Your Self Shelf was available and accessible to students during the opening hours of the Wellbeing Hub, so students were able to access the self-care packs outside of the Community Support Stop events. This allowed students to be able to take what they needed, when they needed it and allowed for students who were engaging with the Advice Centre and needed additional support to access this support during their appointments. A total of £1544.36 was spent on toiletries which made just over 700 self-care packs.

Sanitary products were distributed throughout the toilets on campus and were available for students to take as and when they needed them. This came following the success of previous campaigns to reduce period poverty on campus among Salford students. Nearly 10,000 products were ordered which came to a total of £2524.60. Figure 2 shows a breakdown of the products ordered using the funding.

During the assessment period, when we know that students have more academic worries and prioritise their self-care less, have less time to take on parttime work and therefore have less money for essentials. Following the success and the positive feedback that the free hot meals had on students, a big focus of support around the assessment period was providing students with a free breakfast. As students have less time to socialise during assessment period a grab and go model was adopted and a central location (the library) on campus was used so we were delivering where students were rather than expecting them to come to us. To deliver a total of 1660 breakfast bagels across a 2-week period the total cost was £5000.

To ensure that the funding was being utilised a much as possible to support students through the cost-of-living crisis we wanted to use student staff as much as possible. Student staff were used to prepare the hot meals as well as serve these out to students. Student staff were also utilised to run and deliver the wellbeing activities and provide peer-to-peer support for students.

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|  | Amount | Cost |
| Hot Meals | 825 meals | £6600 |
| Toiletries and Hygiene items | 2128 items | £1544.36 |
| Sanitary products | 9272 items | £2524.60 |
| Assessment support | 1660 breakfast bagels | £5000 |
| Rafiki student staff | 28 hours | £336 |

Table 1. Table to show a summary of budget spent.

Figure 1. Graph to show the breakdown of toiletries that were purchased using the funding.

Figure 2. Graph to show the breakdown of sanitary products purchased.

If you have any funding that you’ve not spent:

Some of the funding did go unspent due to the budget being planned for the full academic year from September-August. As we received the funding in December, this allowed for us to begin to deliver activity to students from January 2024 after they had returned from the Winter Break. This meant that the time we had to deliver activity reduced by 12 weeks, so the time we delivered activity reduced from 25 to 13.

When calculating the original budget, the items for the self-care packs were priced using wholesale prices. Through conversations and connections, we made from receiving the funding, we were made away of the organisation ‘In Kind Direct’. In Kind Direct provide charitable organisations with products to ensure that everyone has access to products to keep them clean, safe, and well. This allowed us to order more products to distribute to students for a fraction of the budgeted price.

The number of people your project directly supported:

The funding for this project has been able to support 2485 students with hot meals and self-care packages during the cost-of-living crisis. Most of the students who utilised the services provided by the project were international students. Due to limited financial support international students are able to receive from the university compared to home students, international students actively seek additional support which is not financial or has monetary value. Due to the recent cost-of-living crisis, international students also do not have up to date information on how much it cost to live in and around Manchester and Salford, so are unable to effectively budget before arriving in the UK.

Due to the period products being distributed in toilets around the university and being available for students to take as and when they need them, it is difficult to track how many students directly receive support via this service.

Impact the project has had:

Students accessing the Community Support Stop events, free hot meals, free self-care packs and advice, overall found the support offered extremely helpful. Students gave Community Support Stop events an average of 7.6/10 (where 1 was ***Not at all:****The Community Hub has not helped me cope with the challenges of the cost-of-living crisis* and 10 was **Extremely:** I can't imagine coping without the Community Hub; it has been incredibly helpful) for helping them to navigate the cost-of-living crisis. On average out of 10 students gave the support services offered by USSU Advice Centre and Wellbeing services a 7.5. Finally on average the students gave the self-care packs from the Help Your Self Shelf a 8.6/10.

Students also shared feedback on how the support offered has helped with their wellbeing, how it has impacted their daily life as well as helped with their academic studies and improved their overall university experience.

Students overall felt that the support offered at the Community Support Stop events helped with their wellbeing. This was physical wellbeing, financial wellbeing and social wellbeing.

sharing feedback such as ‘I feel encouraged to eat healthier’ and that they found it ‘very helpful and it helped me for my financial stability' as well as said that the events were ‘great for connecting with people. As well as helping with students’ overall wellbeing the Community Support Stop events helped students on a daily basis as well. Students shared that they felt supported daily by being able to ‘Cuts down grocery costs for the week’ and that it ‘made it easier’ whilst they were at university.

All of this positive support and feedback helped students feel that they also performed better academically and that it had helped improve their student experience. Following the Community Support Stop events students felt that they were ‘able to concentrate on [their} studies way far better’ that they felt they could ‘better performance in class’ and some felt although the support itself may not have helped to improve performance of their studies that it did ‘give [them] more time to stud[y] as [they didn’t] have to cook for that specific day.’ 35% of students who shared feedback about Community Support Stop events said that the support offered had some positive impact on their academic performance.

Students also shared that it helped to improve their ‘soft skills’ as well. Students felt that the event ‘improves our confidence levels’ as well as having their ‘Communication skills improved’ as well as ‘helped make new friends in events’. Although these outcomes do not link in with the main aim of the Community Support Stop events, they are hugely important to the development of students at Salford as well as helping them to find their communities at university. Even though students were not asked explicitly to share feedback on how the Community Support Stops helped them make connections, over 10% of students who shared feedback mentioned the Community Support Stops were a place to meet friends and connect with new people. This was mainly mentioned when students were sharing examples of how the Community Support Stop events impacted their university experience.

A full report for the impact the Assessment week food giveaways had can be accessed here - [Assessment Week Food Giveaways](https://testlivesalfordac-my.sharepoint.com/personal/m_foster12_salford_ac_uk/Documents/2023-2024/Impact%20reports/Assessment%20food%20giveaways.pdf)

The number of volunteers you worked with on this project and the number of hours they spent on this project

The Community Support Stop and Assessment Support activity has not had any volunteers take part in this project. Although USSU does utilise many volunteers across other parts of the organisation such as school and course reps within Student Voice and committee members to lead Sports and Societies, the Advice and Wellbeing department does not utilise volunteers to run and deliver their services.

The number of your staff who worked on this project and the number of hours they spent on this project

Overall, this project has had many different staff members from different teams coming together to deliver this project. To set up for this project there has been one manager (Head of Advice and Wellbeing) who has had overall oversight and responsibility for setting up and delivering the project. The setting up and organising of the Community Support Stop events took around 8 hours which has included organising food delivery, ensuring there was suitable support available and ordering and creating the self-care packs.

At each of the Community Support Stops there were 4 staff members present, 3 student staff members and 1 professional advisor. 2 of the student staff members were from Atmosphere Bar and Kitchen who were trained and qualified to serve the hot food to the students. The third Student Staff member was from Rafiki the Students’ Union wellbeing team who delivered a wellbeing activity during the Community Support Stop events. The professional advisor was available for the Community Support Stop events to provide advice to students. Although the main area of advice was Cost-of-Living support, the advisors also delivered academic and housing advice.

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| Staff member | Hours |
| Head of Advice and Wellbeing | 8 hours |
| Campaigns and Liberation Coordinator | 2 hours |
| Rafiki student staff | 28 hours |
| Atmosphere student staff | 56 hours |
| Advisor | 28 hours |

During the Assessment support period, due to Atmosphere utilising students for their services and the students having limited capacity to deliver this project, a grab and go model was adopted. This meant that any staff member was able to hand out the breakfast bagels. Over the 2-week assessment period a total of 7 staff members gave their time to hand out the bagels to students over a total of 15 hours.

Throughout the project, as the career staffing costs were already budgeted and paid for from our main funding the overheads of their time were not included within the project budget. However, as the Student Staff working on the project are paid hourly and the project was in addition to the work and responsibilities the student staff already have, their hourly pay was paid for from the budget.

To estimate what the above numbers would have been for your existing services if you had not got this funding (from date of offer letter 08 Dec 2023 to 31 March 2024).

The funding has allowed for USSU Advice and Wellbeing services to expand and deliver a drop-in service which we have not been able to deliver previously. Although day to day Advice and Wellbeing activity would have been able to continue, we have been able to support an additional 2485 students. Appointments for Advice usually happen on a 1-to-1 basis and there are a limited number of appointments available every day. Wellbeing does host regular activities for students every month and have hosted around 8 wellbeing activities since January where there are on average 12 students who attend each session. So without the funding the estimated number of students supported would have been around 96. The funding has allowed us to increase our reach of support to students by providing them with additional support such as free food, toiletries and sanitary products which has not been available to them before through the wellbeing activities we already provide.