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| Activity name | Pre-16 Student Life & Budgeting |
| Date | 24 individual dates delivered throughout Tranche 6 (September 2021 to June 2022) |
| Total number of students | 2277 |
| Total number of target students | 724 |
| Institutions involved <i>* Institutions that completed surveys</i> | Atlantic Academy, Bideford College, Brannel School*, Chilton Trinity School*, Coombe Dean School*, Great Torrington School, Holsworthy Community College, Honiton Community College, Millbay Academy, Paignton Academy, Redruth School*, South Dartmoor Community College*, St James School*, Teign School, Teignmouth Community School, Tiverton High School, UTC Plymouth* |

Introduction

This report outlines the impact of Student Life & Budgeting sessions delivered by Next Steps South West (NSSW) staff. These sessions took a light-touch approach to introducing students to student life and budgeting, involving a budgeting game designed to be fun and hands-on and student ambassadors sharing their experiences of university. It was an opportunity for students to consider Higher Education (HE) for the first time in most instances.

The sessions were delivered to students from Year 9 up to Year 11 across 17 NSSW target schools and colleges throughout the 2021-22 academic year; the Tranche 6 (T6) period for NSSW. Sessions were delivered in person.

Aims

The Student Life & Budgeting sessions aimed to help students better understand student life, explore the diversity and breadth of HE experiences and to consider how they would budget their money whilst studying at HE. These aims align with two of the key barriers to HE progression identified by NSSW: *Knowledge of HE* and *Finance*. Table 1 details the anticipated outcomes of the Student Life & Budgeting sessions.

Table 1. Anticipated outcomes of the Student Life & Budgeting sessions

| Barrier to HE | Short-term outcomes | Indicators |
|------------------------|--|---|
| <i>Knowledge of HE</i> | Increased understanding of the wider benefits of HE study | Students indicate that they understand the social, academic and career benefits of HE study |
| | Increased understanding of student life and what to expect | Students can identify key elements of student life |



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| <i>Finance</i> | Increased awareness of the reality of financing student life | Students can recall key information relating to financing student life |
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Evaluation Design and Data Collection

The Student Life & Budgeting workshops were evaluated using anonymous post-activity evaluation surveys, including quantitative and qualitative questions. The surveys were designed to evaluate the short-term outcomes by using the indicators as outlined in Table 1.

Results

This section presents the analysis of findings gathered from 434 student surveys collected throughout T6, and the impact these sessions had on addressing the barriers to HE progression.

Students were asked how much they knew about four key aspects of HE study following the session (see Figure 1).

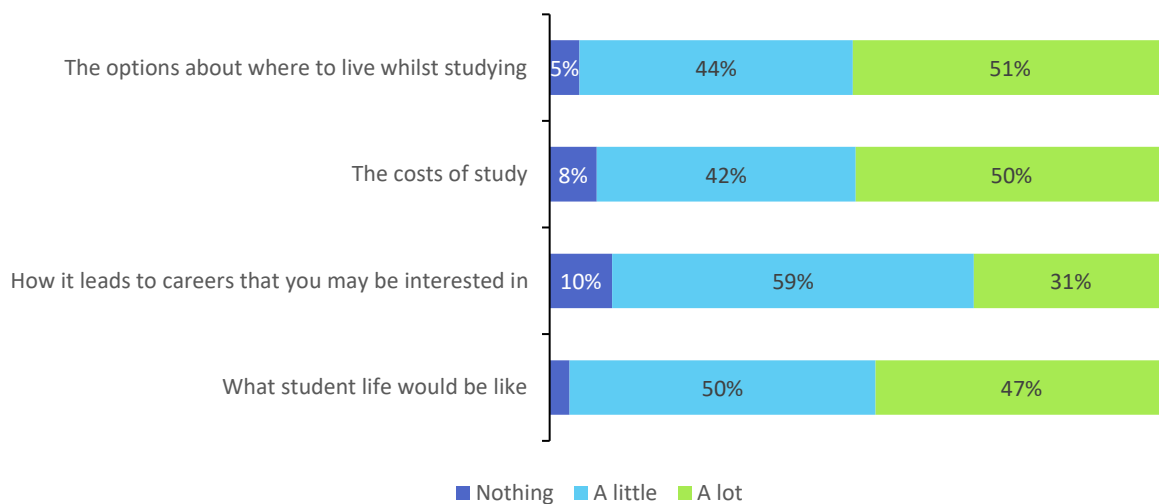
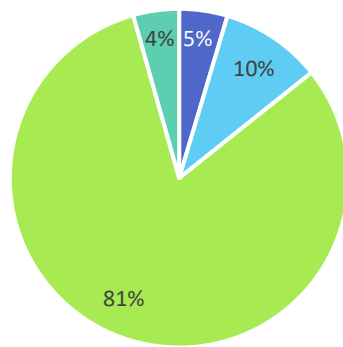


Figure 1. How much students knew about aspects of HE study following the session.

At the end of the session, 95% of students reported they knew about the options of where to live whilst studying, with 51% reporting that they knew *a lot*; 92% said they knew about the costs of study, with 50% saying they knew a lot. 90% of students said they knew how HE study leads to careers that they may be interested with 31% saying they knew a lot. 97% said they knew what student life would be like, with 47% saying they knew a lot. These results show that the session has had a positive impact on raising students’ knowledge of HE and student finance.

To test the students’ knowledge on the content of the activity and to provide evidence to validate self-reported data, students were asked to select one of four definitions that best describes a ‘*Freshers’ Week*’ (see Figure 2).



- A week of holidays at the beginning of each term
- A week of activities and social events to help you decide on your accommodation
- A week of activities and social events to meet new people and find societies to join
- A week of exams to decide with subject you will study

Figure 2. Students' understanding of 'Freshers' Week'.

Figure 2 shows that 81% of students chose the correct definition of a Freshers' Week; A week of activities and social events to meet new people and find societies to join. This shows that the majority of students have gained knowledge of student life from the sessions.

Students were asked their level of agreement with five statements about different aspects of HE study (see Figure 3).

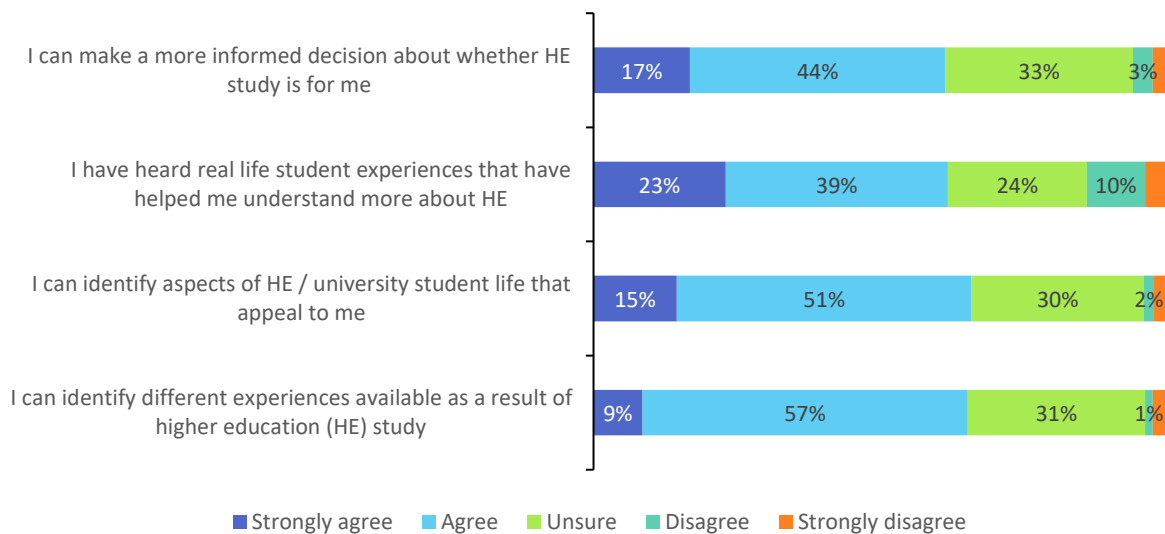


Figure 3. Statements about aspects of HE study.

Following the session, 61% agreed or strongly agreed that they can make a more informed decision about whether HE study is for them; 33% said they were unsure. 62% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they had heard real life student experiences that have helped them understand more about HE; 24% said they were unsure; and 14% disagreed or strongly disagreed. 66% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they could identify aspects of HE/university student life that appeal to them; 30% said they were unsure. 66% agreed or strongly agreed that they could identify different experiences available as a result of HE study; 31% said they were

unsure. This intervention is an introduction to HE for many students so taking part in other NSSW activities might provide more clarity about HE study for those students who said they were unsure or disagreed. However, the results show that for majority of students, the sessions have had a positive impact on increasing their knowledge of HE and raising their aspirations for HE.

Students were asked for two key points that they had learnt relating to Student Life and Student Budgeting/Finance. 66% of students were able to give two points, 30% gave one point and 3% were not able to give any points. Figure 4 shows the type of comments students gave.

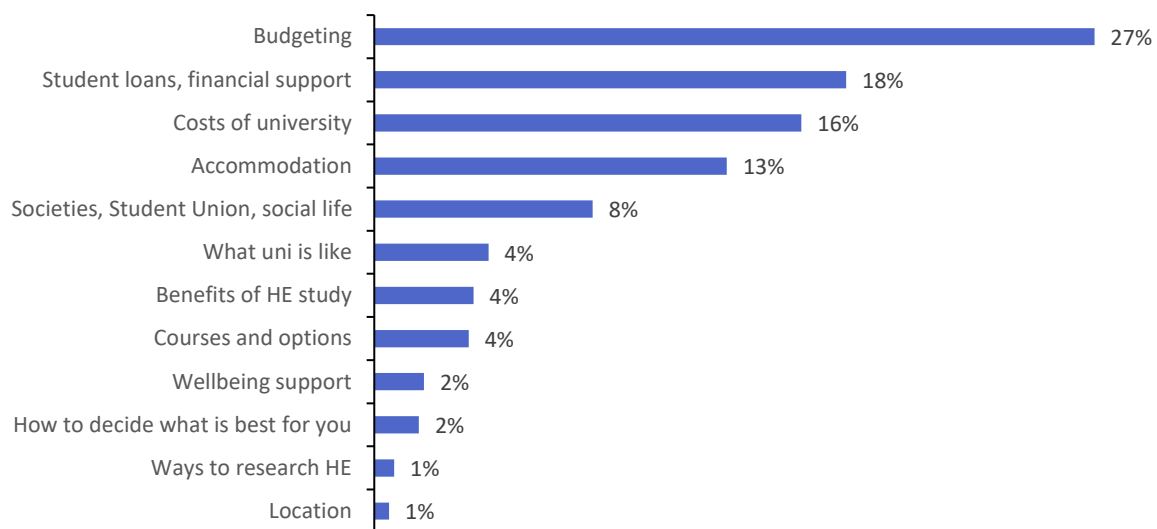


Figure 4. Key points students learnt from the session.

The four most popular type of points given by the students were around budgeting, student loans and other financial support, the costs of university and accommodation. Students gave responses such as;

“Don’t spend all your money on take away and maybe open up a savings account.”

“Student loan is paid when you are earning enough to be able to. You need to budget your spending.”

“You are given a student loan to help with finance. You can live with other people in dorms.”

The comments given by the students show that they gained insight into a number of aspects about student life and budgeting from the sessions.

Students were asked what they would still like to know about student life and budgeting. Figure 5 shows the areas students wanted to learn more about and a breakdown of the answers given by the 273 students who responded to this question.

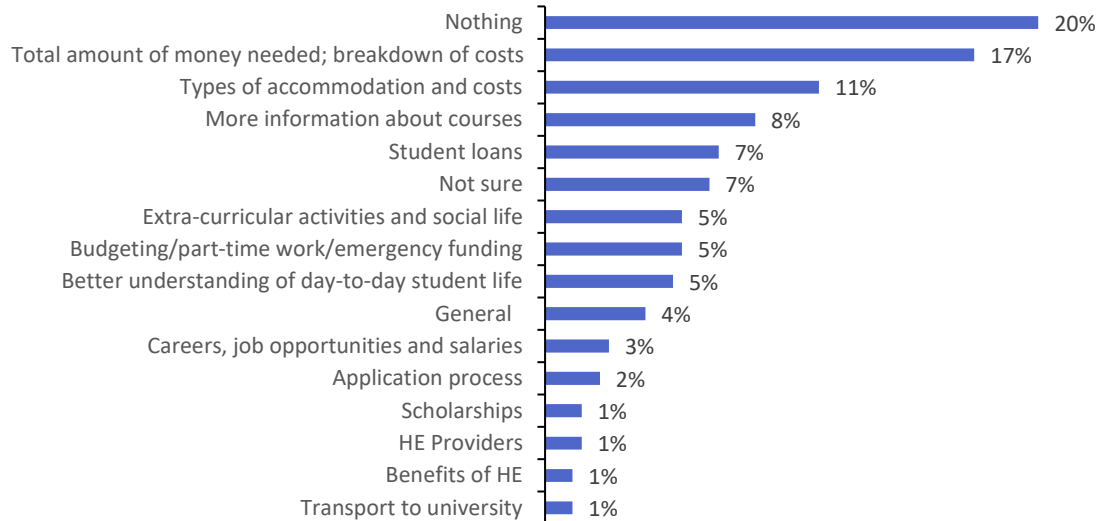


Figure 5. Areas that students would like to know more about.

Figure 5 shows that, apart from 20% of students who said there was nothing more that they wanted to know about student life and budgeting, there are many different areas around student life and budgeting that students would like further information on. The three most popular responses were questions around the costs of university, accommodation and courses.

Conclusion

To monitor the success of the Student Life & Budgeting sessions, results were evaluated against short-term targets and outcomes as presented in Table 2. The table illustrates that all three targets were achieved, indicating that the sessions were successful in increasing students’ knowledge of HE, increased their understanding of the benefits of HE study and increased confidence in their ability to financially access HE.

Table 2. Student Life & Budgeting sessions – Outcomes achieved in T6

| Barriers of HE | Short-term Outcomes and Targets | Indicators, we are able to report: | Evidence | Target Outcome |
|------------------------|--|---|--|-----------------|
| <i>Knowledge of HE</i> | Increased understanding of the wider benefits of HE study for more than 70% of students | Students indicate that they understand the social, academic and career benefits of HE study | 90% of students report they knew a little or a lot about how HE study leads to careers that they may be interested. | Achieved |
| | Increased understanding of student life and what to expect | Students can identify key elements of student life | 97% said they knew a little or a lot about what student life would be like. | |



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| | for more than 70% of students | | Target 70%: T6 achievement 90% and 97% | |
| <i>Finance</i> | Increased awareness of the reality of financing student life for more than 70% of students | Students can recall key information relating to financing student life | 92% of students said that following the session they knew a little or a lot about the costs of study. Target 70%: T6 achievement 92% | Achieved |