

Changemakers: Creativity and Value Creation

Workshops For Independent Living & Wellbeing
On Campus.

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Workshops For Independent Living & Wellbeing On Campus.

Abstract Idea

I've decided to investigate the benefits of having free workshops provided to students to assist with living independently in university and sharing spaces with others. When leaving home for the first time, a variety of duties are involved such as cooking, cleaning, even socialising etc, which might be intimidating for some people, including myself. Before starting University, I would hear tales from individuals about the difficulties of sharing accommodation with strangers who don't respect communal areas or clean after themselves. I found it bizarre that people would take food from others, not clean, argue and cause disruptions between flats.

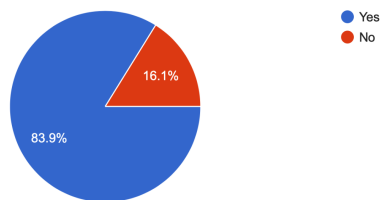
These problems affect not just the individual but also other students and maybe the university's property. Knowing how to properly clean the oven and other appliances helps prevent them from breaking and requiring repair. Students shouldn't have to rely on cleaners or other people to clean up after them, especially given the fact that every student is 18+. I'm taking into consideration that mental health plays a big factor in staying on top of tasks like cooking and cleaning so thinking of ways to help but not force people is key. My suggestion is to offer free workshops to students in person or online to help them transition to independent living and address issues like cooking, cleaning, laundry, shared spaces, etc. These workshops would have to be fun and entice the target audience (students) to join in and help out.

I will hopefully explore the best ways to tackle these issues, get first hand research and see how students relate to said experiences. I will do this by sending out a survey with a variety of open and closed ended questions and find second hand research to reinforce my idea and hopefully bring new perspectives to my proposal that I hadn't thought of beforehand.

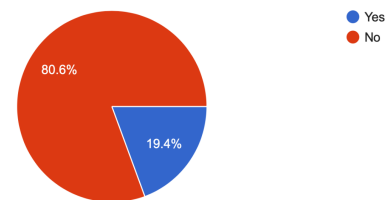
Primary Research

Before starting my idea I wanted to ensure that my idea was beneficial and luckily I'm surrounded by students in University, both in Carmarthen and at home in Cardiff. In order to gain feedback I spoke verbally and online and sent out a survey with a variety of different questions to scrutinise what the main issues were and how I could possibly resolve this with a workshop. In my survey I had 31 responses, I had to make sure my survey was short and snappy whilst also getting as much information as possible as I wouldn't want them to lose interest. By doing so I used a variety of open and closed ended questions, too many open ended questions will alienate your audience and ask too much of them, resulting in them to lose interest. I asked if the people answering had experienced living independently before coming to uni or as a student before.

Have you lived independently as a student before?
31 responses

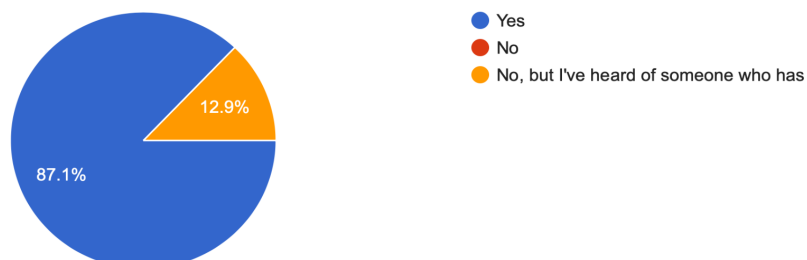


Have you lived independently before coming to university?
31 responses



From these two questions they're very similar in responses, I could easily tell that the majority of people who answered had yet to live independently without their parents before coming to University, of course that doesn't mean they aren't independent people so I had to investigate in more depth, hence my variety of open and closed ended questions. The next question I asked was to see if they had experienced issues of their own. Not one person answered no, they had either explained that they've had issues or knew someone that had.

Have you had cleanliness issues in shared spaces before such as dishes not being done, bins not being taken out?
31 responses



If answered yes, what issues did you experience?

25 responses

Flat mate wouldn't take out the bins, wouldn't wash up and would steal my plates/cooking utensils without asking. Bin situation got so bad that pigeons starting coming in through the window to find food.

Dirty dishes being left out for days - experienced this only in my first year.

Dirty dishes. Others not wanting to put bins out. Filling the sink with dirty dishes

The bins get left til they are overflowing, the food bin especially. Dishes get left covering the size as well as pans left on the hob even when not being used.

Dishes, bin duty, playing music too loud, forgetting to lock doors etc

dishes not being washed, surfaces dirty, mouldy food

Complete incompetence from my flat mates

Dishes not done, bins not taken out, maggots, dirty surfaces, food left to go out of date

If answered yes, what issues did you experience?

25 responses

Raw meat left on the side, cooked food left in a pan on the side, flies, maggots in the food waste.

the pips where broken for a month and the land lord did nothing

bins not being taken out

People not cleaning their dishes for a whole week, leaving laundry on the floor, leaving stains in the kitchen etc

maggots in the kitchen due to a messy house mate.

Flatmates leaving dishes and not cleaning causing a fly infestation

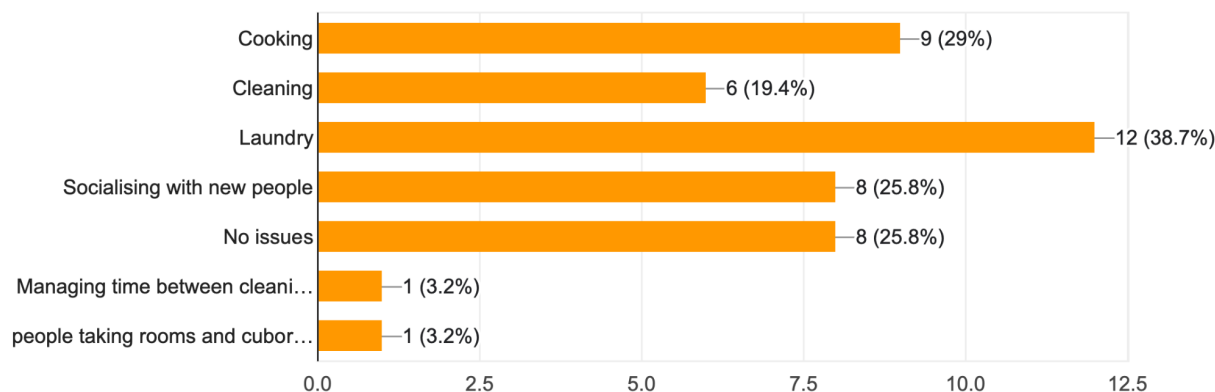
Food safety issues

Bins always overflowing, fly infestation, unwashed dishes, food left on surfaces and dirty sides

As you can see expanding my previous question I asked people to go into detail about the experiences they've had/heard of. I got 25 responses overall which reinforces the fact about people losing interest when they have to write responses themselves. However the open ended responses were very beneficial as they mentioned maggots, food hygiene being poor such as "raw meat left on the side" and "food left on the side for weeks", incompetence, dirty laundry, fly infestation, bins not being taken out etc.

Do you/did you find it difficult to adjust, living independently with cooking, cleaning, laundry etc?

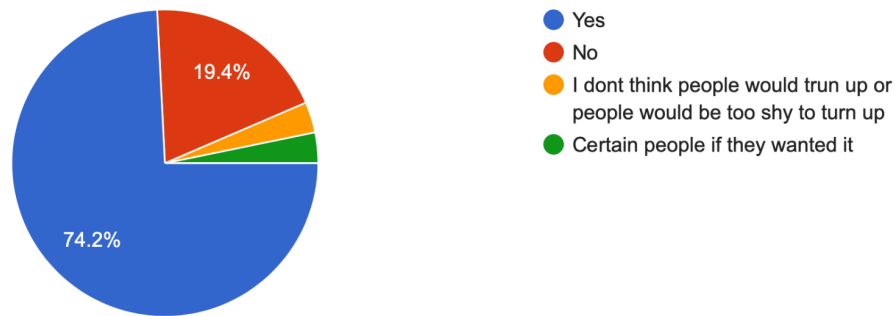
31 responses



People ultimately admitted to finding it difficult to adapt living independently with tasks listed above, it seemed many people (38.7%) struggled with doing laundry but in a sense of not knowing how to use the machines on campus as it's quite complicated at first on the phone as opposed to actual hygienic issues.

Do you think workshops on campus would be beneficial for students to learn how to adjust to independent living and respecting shared spaces?

31 responses



The majority said yes to have workshops. A few said no which is why I added an additional last open ended question to see if anyone wants to clarify and determine whether the concept was strong or not.

In your own words, please state your opinion for having workshops on campuses to help with these issues.

27 responses

I think it would be highly beneficial to have workshops like this on campus to help reduce problems with students and accommodation

I think it would be very beneficial for people who have not lived independently before

I think people who aren't gonna clean know they should and will never be the person who cleans so workshops won't help bc they already know they should be

You shouldn't need workshops, people 18+ should have been raised to tidy after themselves. However as this isn't always the case, a workshop could be beneficial. I don't think people that need to go would bother to attend.

They just need to convey that it's important to take care of your own mess so others don't have to deal with it.

Cooking, cleaning, laundry, self care

Cooking, cleaning, laundry, shopping, self-care

In your own words, please state your opinion for having workshops on campuses to help with these issues.

27 responses

I think it may help some be more considerate of others they are living with, perhaps reducing opportunities of conflict.

i think it would be useful for people to understand how being extremely unhygienic affects others

Sounds like a good idea but it's ridiculous that people need to be taught how to clean up after themselves when uni students are 18+.

I think people still would have these issues even if being told what to do, other factors may need to be considered

It would give everyone a confidence boost and skills they can take into their future of owning properties

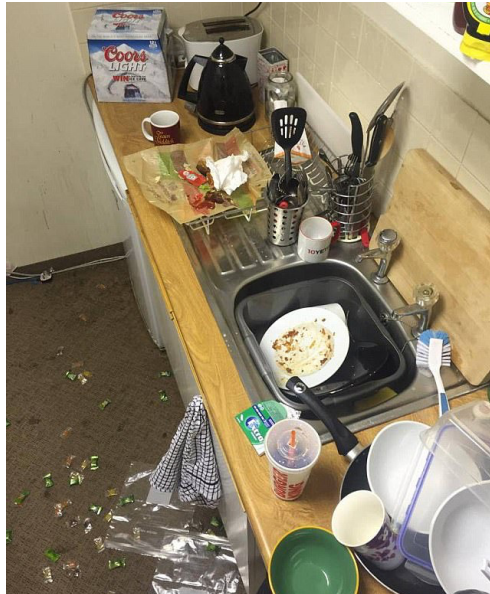
Personally I've had a god experience with my flat so i don't feel the need for a workshop, but would understand people who have struggled needing one.

My opinion on workshops like this is that they would be helpful with where to buy food and how to budget effectively. However I don't think it would help make anyone cleaner lol

Some responses clarified that other issues like money budgeting would be more useful and some stating that the people who actually need to go, wouldn't.

Secondary Research

An article I found diving into conditions students are living in (mailonline 2017) showing images of shared accommodation and the issues they're dealing with, students not



doing dishes, not cleaning and respecting the shared spaces. "Undergraduates from across the country have been taking pictures of their filth-ridden homes filled with mountains of dirty dishes, half-eaten snacks and rubbish strewn across the floor." I myself have experienced environments in real life similar to this. The photo also reinforces what a lot of the responses in my survey say about dishes not being done. It makes me question whether it's a case of laziness or genuinely never being shown but at 18+ should people really need to be shown step by step how to wash a dish or put their personal belongings away?

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-4367264/Students-share-images-unhygienic-accommodation.html>

The Student Room is a website where students come to share experiences and ask for support advice. I found a lot of students mentioning dishes not being done, it seems these are the main issues regarding shared spaces. The student goes on to mention how the person they lived with kept using their things and not cleaning them properly or asking. "Also some of my stuff ends up back in the cupboards still dirty which means I have to rewash them when I want to use them." (Annoyedstudent91 4 years ago)

<https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/showthread.php?t=5689234>

An article that dives into the severe cases of unhygienic behaviour, due to students knowing the cleaners will "clean up after them". (theguardian 2013) "Emma says that when students know someone will clean up after them, it encourages them to be reckless with their surroundings" The articles go onto mention how students would defecate onto walls and urinate down stairwells, which of course is a case of extreme scenarios compared to just dirty dishes but own them. "For most students, university means leaving home for the first time. For some, that will also mean a first serious encounter with antibacterial spray and a mop." It just goes to show the majority of the behaviour is laziness and inexperience which is something I'd always wonder about.

Obviously students are very busy with uni work and that can have an effect on completing household tasks.

<https://www.thestudentroom.co.uk/showthread.php?t=5689234>

There are some websites that offer help and suggestions on how to stay on top of things by creating a rota or “working as a team” however some flat dynamics just don’t work like that with conflicting schedules etc. “Rotas are a simple way to ensure everyone is contributing to keeping the flat clean by picking who will do which task, while also motivating flatmates to get it done.” (Sharna Y - UniteStudents 2020). I’ve personally seen people try and stick to rotas like a ‘bin rota’ but unfortunately it just doesn’t work as students either won’t contribute/will be busy. It would be useful if people could identify that the bin is full and take it out.

<https://www.unitestudents.com/the-common-room/student-living/how-to-avoid-arguments-about-cleaning-and-deal-with-them-when-they-happen>

I also found an article published by UCAS on their website stating tips on how to clean and tidy, which is probably helpful for learning tips and tricks for the odd individual but like the responses in some of my surveys said, the people who actually NEED to see these tips and advice, simply will not. I personally didn’t know all these Universities such as UCAS and Unite Students had these sections of advice but after reading them they seem a bit unrealistic and artificial as having a “flat meeting” probably won’t resolve the mountains of dirty plates that have been left festering for over a week.

Students' mental health is a huge factor in becoming demotivated and staying on top of other things such as cleaning etc. If their workload is so demanding they might not be motivated enough to go in and do their dishes or even have the time to, so finding that balance and communication is vital. According to prospects.ac.uk “University students are at a high risk of developing mental health problems, are less likely to seek help, and even if they do they face challenges due to the lack of available support.” (Smith 2023). Being quick to point a finger and blaming someone for being lazy isn’t always the case as you never know what people are going through and all they really need is help, encouragement and motivation.

Proposal

My proposal has been strengthened as a result of reviewing my primary and secondary research on the topic of holding a workshop to assist students with problems related to living independently. The workshops I'm proposing will cover everything from cooking and housekeeping to money management to merely socialising. Additionally, these workshops would give on-campus students the chance to volunteer and instruct some of the sessions, such as cooking or sharing tips and tricks. Making some of these proposals mandatory would be effective since it'd be crucial that they reach the people who need them. For those who can't attend, some of the workshops might be streamed or posted online, this might also be useful for those who are nervous/shy to go in real life and would rather learn in the comfort of their own flat. Wellbeing and Mental Health would be a major factor considered when running these classes, taking into account what people might be feeling and going through.

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