

Changemakers Proposal

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Proposal Introduction

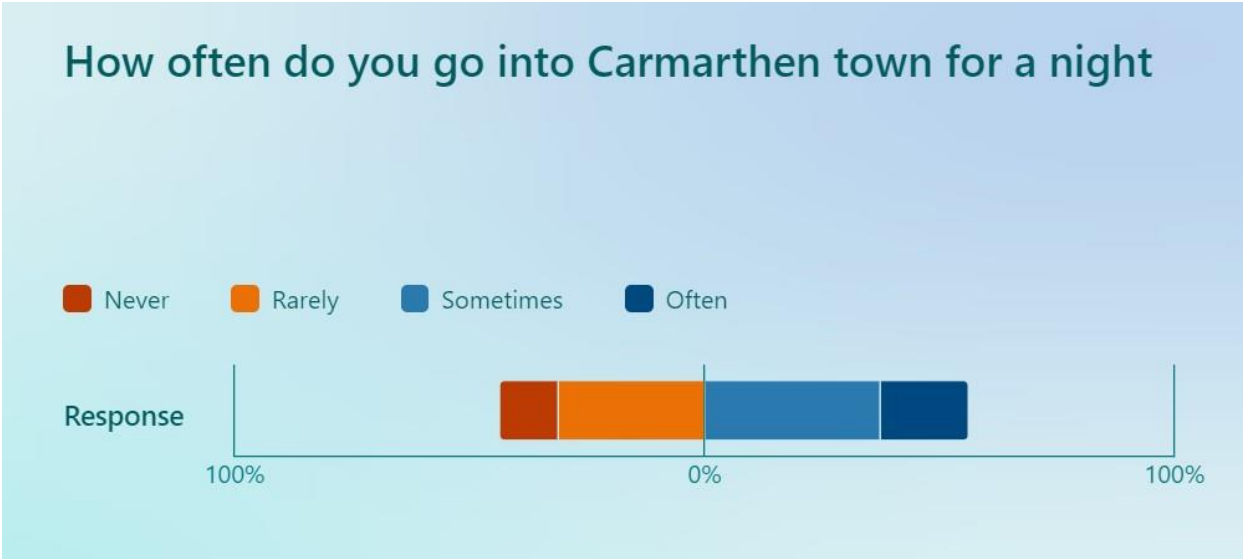
For my changemakers project, I have decided to look into ways of increasing student safety when walking home after a night in Carmarthen town. I have researched this idea but also sent out a survey to get primary research that is specific to our university students. When creating my project, I decided to think of an idea that would benefit students at our campus and also one that could be expanded to the other campuses of UWTSD and even to other universities throughout the UK. The goal of my proposal is to create a safe way for students to walk home together after a night out in Carmarthen Town. When I talk about preventing people from walking home alone, the assumption is that I am talking about people being attacked; however, there are many reasons why it's not safe to be alone after drinking. These can include hypothermia, depressive episodes and blacking out, which can lead to asphyxiation. I have included more information about these reasons in my secondary research.

My proposal to increase student safety is to create a meeting point in town where students can gather to walk home together. This could be used by students if they have been left on their own or in smaller groups and want to feel more secure. It could also be used to aid students feeling unwell or lost. The idea would then be to have a designated time to leave, for example, every hour, and everyone would walk back to campus together.

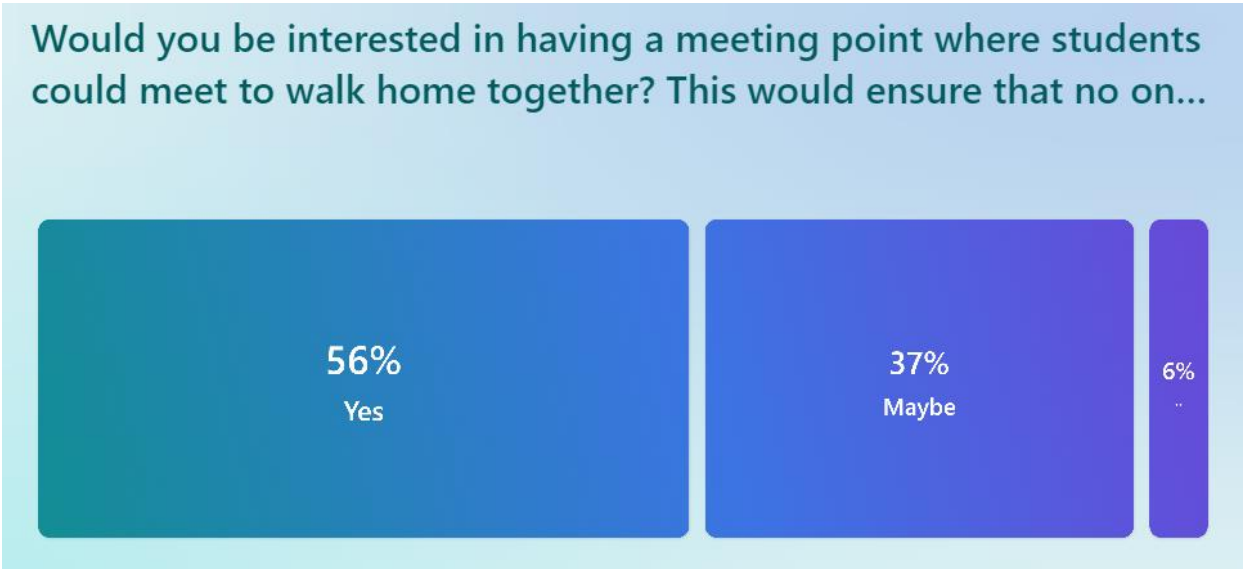
For primary research, I created a survey that was distributed to my target audience. This allowed me to gain key insights into how my target audience would feel about my idea and help me to adapt my plan to meet the student's needs. I decided to target my survey at current students. I could've included former students, but I want to know if my idea is relevant now. I decided to include all students in my survey and not exclusively those living on campus because I know that a lot of students stay with friends. There is also local student accommodation which could be included in the proposed route.

Primary Research

To see if my idea would be relevant for students based at our campus, I first wanted to see how many students currently engage with the town. I chose to use a closed question for this as I wanted to gain an idea of numbers rather than ask for personal opinions. The results show that 87.5% of students said they engage with the town to some degree. Due to this, I feel confident that my idea can be taken forward.

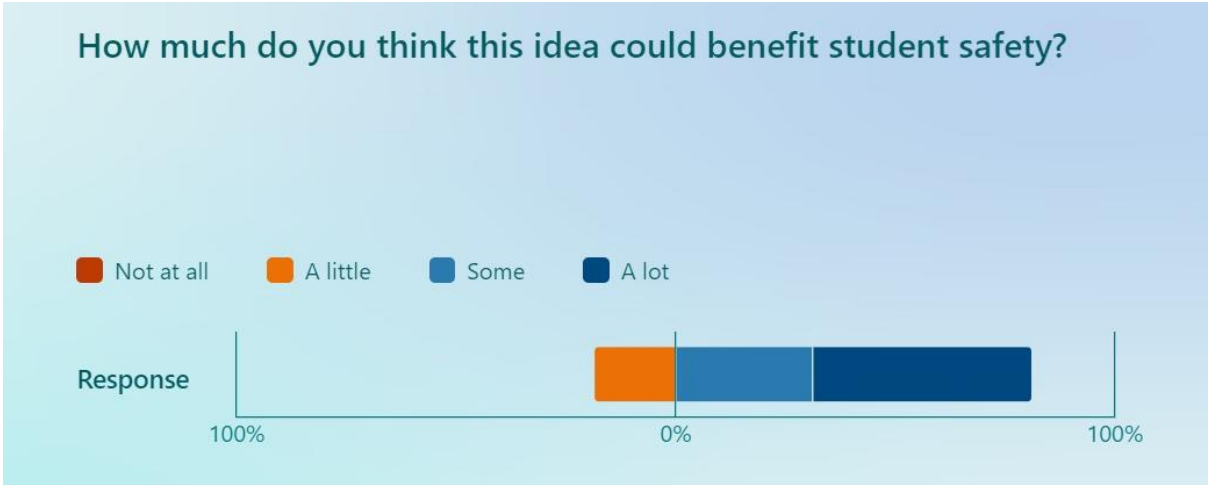


Now that I know that my idea is relevant to my target audience, I asked another closed question to see if my proposal of a safe meeting point would interest our students. 94% of my responses said that they might or would be interested. I think that for a first survey with limited information provided, this is an extremely good response.



Primary Research

As my main goal with the proposal is to increase student safety, I decided to ask this as one of my primary survey questions. All my responses agree that this idea will increase student safety to some degree. 50% of answers have stated that this idea will increase student safety a lot. This response has further increased my confidence that this idea will have a positive impact on student safety and well-being.

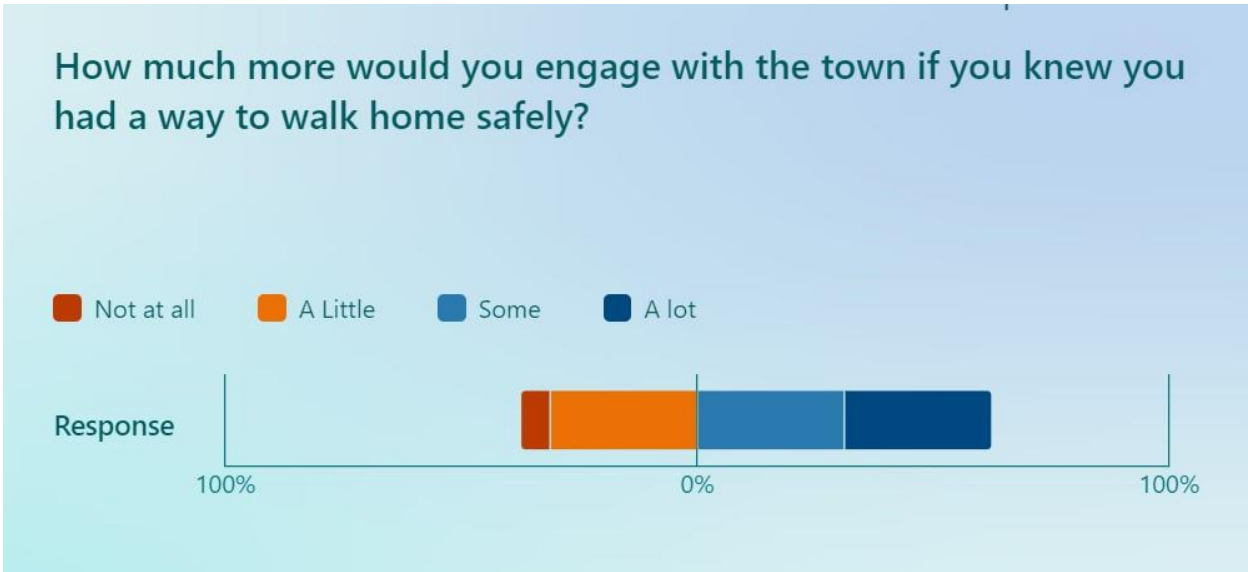


The primary goal of this proposal is to increase student safety; however, I would also like to increase the engagement students have with the local community. Due to this, I asked a closed question of how much more students would engage with the town if my proposed idea were in place. 93.7% of respondents say that they would be more likely to engage with the town, varying from a little to a lot.

According to (Ryan, 2023) “Community engagement can have many benefits for universities and colleges. It boosts knowledge sharing, provides opportunities for mutually beneficial partnerships, and creates better learning experiences”.

Another additional goal that I believe I can achieve through my idea is to offer a new place where students might make friends, and this will have a positive impact on their emotional and social well-being. I believe that by offering students a way to travel to and from town safely it would encourage students to get out more and then meet new people on these walks.

“Although colleges and universities are often seen as small communal cities, isolation still occurs within these environments among students with lower self-esteem, lower self-confidence or even just a lower propensity for connecting in a traditional way”. (Anderson, n.d.)



Primary Research

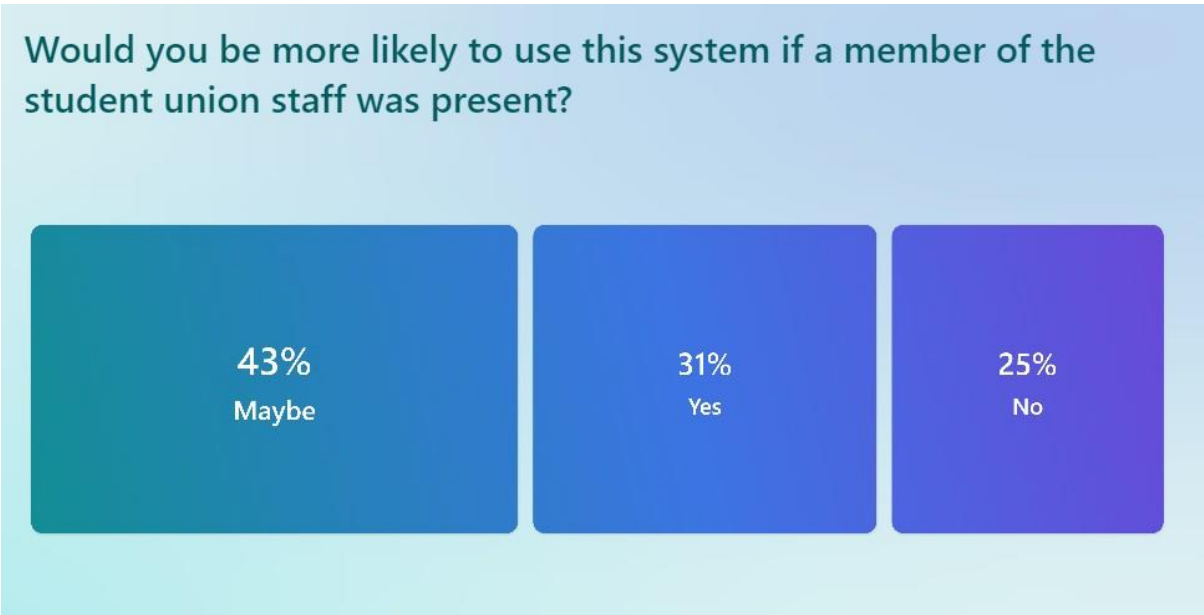
Now that I have my basic idea, I decided to think more about the practicalities. One thing that I need to consider is where the meeting point would be. It needs to be somewhere in a well-lit and busy area to ensure maximum security. It also needs to be a place that is easy to find or well-known, as we are trying to reduce the risk of people getting lost. As someone who doesn't go into Carmarthen town too often, I thought that my peers might have better location suggestions. Due to this I created an open survey question which allows my peers to type their answers without being influenced by options I might have chosen.

6 respondents (30%) answered **Cofio Lounge** for this question.



Due to differences in spelling, the accurate result is that 50% of people suggested Cofio Lounge as the best place. Most of the other suggestions are also in the same area, so I feel confident moving forward with this location as the proposal.

Another element that I need to consider is the fact that we need at least two people to be there all the time to ensure that there is never one person walking back and forth alone. I first thought of the idea of having student volunteers; however, this could be too much of a responsibility for someone who is not trained. I then had the idea of having specially trained members of the student union staff. These staff members would be trained in first aid and handling intoxicated people. I proposed this idea as a closed question in my survey and 75% of people thought it could be or was a good idea.



Secondary Research

Now that I have explained my proposal, I would like to explain some further points on why I think that this idea is relevant and important.

Firstly, students have a reputation for drinking alcohol and for drinking excessively. Whilst this does not apply to every student a study by Student Drinking Statistics UK has found that “76% of university students feel that getting drunk is expected of them, and 79% see it as part of the University culture”. University is also a time when students may be out drinking for the first time, as a lot of students start university at the age of 18. Due to this, students are not always aware of how much they are able to drink and may have gone from not drinking at all to drinking regularly. The beginning of term is often a challenging adjustment period for new students and can leave them feeling under pressure to impress people and form friendships. The same survey by Student Drinking Statistics UK found that “70% of students said that they drink in order to fit in with their peers” (MacKey, 2021)

Secondly, although I would like to have my idea seen as a positive step for the university, the circumstances surrounding it are unfortunate. “An intoxicated person is liable to fall, drown, be assaulted, lose his way and freeze to death, or be hit by a vehicle”. (Birkenshaw, 2016)

Secondary Research

Walking home from town has various risks, especially at night. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2021, 77% of pedestrian deaths took place when it was dark. (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, n.d.) My proposal would ensure that students would not be walking alone at night.

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, “Alcohol makes it harder for the brain areas controlling balance, memory, speech, and judgment to do their jobs” (National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, 2022). This means that there is a greater risk of falling and being injured after consuming alcohol. With local businesses shut at night and fewer people walking around, it could be difficult to get help if you fall and injure yourself whilst walking home alone. My proposal would ensure that at least 2 people would be there to aid or get help. A part of my survey that received a great response was the idea of having a trained member of staff to lead the walks. Having someone who is trained in first aid and handling intoxicated people would again decrease the risk of serious injury and would ensure that the correct help is received.

As explained above, your brains judgement is affected by alcohol. “Alcohol can impair decision making and delay reaction times, making crossing the road a dangerous task”. (Street Smarts, n.d.). Although Carmarthen is quiet on the night with minimal traffic, it’s not completely without this risk. My proposal would ensure that no one is crossing roads alone whilst drunk. The walk home would be planned out in the safest way using the correct crossings. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, it’s believed that “30% of deadly pedestrian crashes in 2021 involved a person who was drunk and walking”. (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, n.d.)

Secondary Research

Alcohol can also have a direct impact on your mental health, and this can make it dangerous for people to be alone after drinking. According to the Mental Health Foundation, “Alcohol is a depressant, which can disrupt the balance of neurotransmitters in your brain and affect your feelings, thoughts and behaviour. (Mental Health Foundation, 2022) this means that someone who is already struggling with mental health can become dramatically worse under the influence of alcohol. My proposal would ensure that someone would always be near to aid students in a depressive episode and stop things from escalating uncontrollably.

Another risk that can occur from drinking is asphyxiation. A study by the National Programme on Substance Abuse Deaths in London found that “23% of all overdose deaths are caused by asphyxiation”. (Hartney, 2023) This is relevant to my proposal, as alcohol can be a large cause of asphyxiation. The same survey by the National Programme on Substance Abuse Deaths found that “between 12% and 22% of all overdose deaths involved alcohol”. (Hartney, 2023) My proposal would not stop students from drinking, but it would ensure they have someone with them to get them home safely and get them the help they need. People are much more likely to die from alcohol overdoses if they fall asleep alone; therefore, my proposal will increase student safety by having a designated person ensure that students get to the safest place and are looked after.

A further area to consider in my proposal is making it as disability friendly as possible. End Violence Against Women released an article titled “New data shows extent to which women feel unsafe at night” (End Violence Against Women, 2021) and this study revealed that “Disabled people felt less safe walking alone in all settings than non-disabled people” (End Violence Against Women, 2021). Unfortunately, the way home from town can be steep and is mostly uphill. It’s also very slippery when icy, which can easily cause injury. My plan would involve researching the safest route possible. I would also find the most accessible route for everyone. This area of my proposal needs some further development. I will need to do some more primary research to work out where to start with this development. I plan to do this by speaking to people with disabilities to see which ways they would recommend and other ways that I could help.

Secondary Research

To round up my proposal I wanted to include a couple of ideas that I have had for enhancing my project.

The first idea is to have materials at the meeting point to help students get support. These could be related to alcohol but could also include mental health services and places in Carmarthen to go to for help.

The second idea is to create an app that allows people to find a safe group to walk home with after a night in town. The idea for this would be that verified students register where they are on an app and what time they are planning on leaving and people who would be walking home alone could request to join them.

I have done some research into other apps, and although I can't find one which is the same, I have found a highly recommended similar app. This app is called WalkSafe, and it can be personalised to individual universities. It allows students to share locations with security teams and family, find safe spaces and see where to get help. It can also send out alerts if students haven't arrived home.

Finally, Thank you for reading my proposal, and I look forward to answering any questions during my presentation.

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