

Introduction

This research focused on the impact of the cost of living on students’ lives, to see the extent to which Hallam students are feeling the impact in the rise of costs, whether there are differences in impact by key demographics, and most importantly, to find ways the university and the students’ union can work together to mitigate some of the impact and expense for these students.

Ethical approval was obtained for this study by the Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Committee, Ethical approval number: **ER53139115**.

The short online twelve-minute survey was open during the second semester 2022/2023. The survey was filled out by 1512 students. Any significant differences reported are at a 95% confidence level. Throughout, any subgroup differences listed are considered meaningful and relevant.

Demographics

The survey was skewed in several ways when compared to the overall SHU student population. There were significant differences in gender (more women respondents than in the general student population (68% female respondents vs 57% whole student population), more disabled students (30% respondents vs 20% whole student population), more international students (30% respondents vs 19% whole student population), and more postgraduate students than in the whole student population (40% vs 32%).

Findings and Key Themes

Students were asked to rate the level they have been impacted by rises in the cost of **healthcare, travel, rent, socialising, energy, and food**; food was shown to be where students are hardest hit.

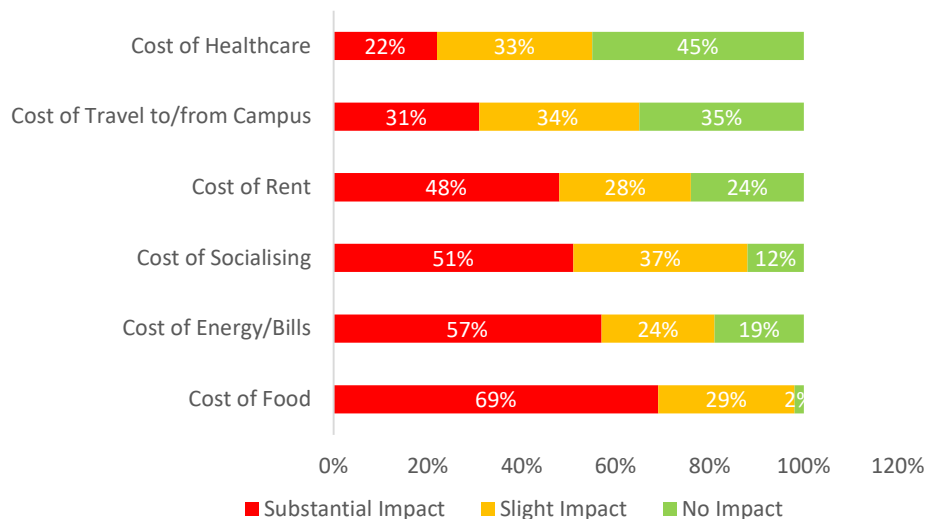


Figure 1: Extent to which respondents have been personally negatively impacted by the following in this academic year, (n=1479).

The NHS mitigates the negative impact of healthcare, but qualitative responses showed a deep impact of the waitlists for NHS dentists, cost of private dental care, and eye care. The full report analyses the above areas and their impact on students, as well as the impact of the increasing amount of paid work students are taking on in addition to their studies. Although half of respondents listed the **cost of rent as having a substantial impact**, the majority of comments listed rent as eating up the majority of students’ maintenance loans or pay.

Some colleges were harder hit by costs in different areas, such as HWLS students' finding the cost of travel harder to deal with than those in SSA or BTE.

Students were asked to tick boxes related to provisions they would take up if offered by SHU or SHSU. Nearly all respondents wanted some form of discount on food, and many wanted access to more funding, and discounts on travel arrangements.

If nothing else is taken away from this report, it should be that students first and foremost want and **need help with rising cost of food.**

Recommendations

Support related to food:

1. Work with local supermarkets to **offer discounts to students on groceries.**
2. Continue and where possible, extend the £1 Wednesdays on different days of the week.
3. Offer hot water facilities at all main buildings and campuses. Create a microwave map to highlight where the options are on campuses.

Support related to housing:

1. Create a holistic and integrated city-wide and multi-university partnership approach to housing, such as the **partnership housing strategy** in Nottingham, which considers affordability for students, diversity of student need (such as family housing, single housing, etc). This offer should seek to keep rent costs down.
2. Support students with finding and evaluating non-student housing with **virtual advice appointments**, especially where student housing applications have been denied.
3. The hardship fund should include increases in bills to help students with the rising costs of bills, which are themselves exceptional.

Support related to travel:

1. Work with SYMCA, University of Sheffield, and SHU to create a **ZOOM mature student pass** (22+) for all students across South Yorkshire.
2. **Raise placement mileage reimbursement** for HWLS from 28p to 59p per mile for the first 3,500 miles and 25p thereafter NHS standard (RCN, 2023).

Support related to work:

1. All SHU and SHSU **job descriptions** need to **include the minimum number of hours** and the **hourly rate** up front, and on Handshake. We recommend that all student jobs are paid at the living wage, regardless of applicant age.
2. Handshake should include a **filter for part-time roles by the number of hours.**
3. Where possible, SHU and SHSU should evaluate where they can offer more part-time student roles. Moreover, as international students can currently only work up to 20hrs a week, it is suggested that a review of part-time roles offered by SHU and SHSU ensure that no student roles are more than 20hrs to allow all students to apply.
4. SHSU should investigate lobbying to **raise the international student hour cap.**
5. Evaluate practices around student employment at SHU and SHSU. This could involve signing up to and working with **the good student employment charter** (Hospitality Now and the University of Lincoln, 2023).
6. The Careers and Employability team at SHU should evaluate the offer for **in-study work support**, including promotion of the current offers.

Support related to socialising:

1. Create a robust **business partnership to offer discounted events** and activities for SHU students.
2. Revisit **use of the Hubs for events**, especially for offering drop-in events for student groups where free tea, coffee, or food is on offer (ex: Tuesdays at 12-2pm come to the Hideout for Parent's Lunch).

Support related to healthcare:

1. Support students who have moved to Sheffield with accessing an **NHS dentist**.
2. Work with local community to **offer discounts to students for private healthcare**, mainly dental treatments and eyecare.