

Manchester international student safety campaign

Manchester Student Homes, Manchester University and Manchester Metropolitan University

Background to the project

The Manchester International Student Safety (MISS) campaign is designed to educate, inform and support international students on the issues of personal safety, household security, health and wellbeing. The MISS Campaign was created in response to ongoing concern about the vulnerability of international students studying in Greater Manchester. This project, delivered by Manchester Student Homes (MSH), received funding of £2,000 from UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) which was match-funded by Manchester City Council's Community Safety Partnership. The campaign was delivered in conjunction with various stakeholders operating in the City and is student-led to ensure messages are meaningful and relevant.

Project overview

MSH is a jointly-funded department of both The University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University, with service level agreements with the Royal Northern College of Music, The Manchester College and the University of Salford. MSH has been supported in the delivery of this campaign by external agencies such as Greater Manchester Police, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service and The International Society. Further support has been secured through students' unions, international departments and Residential Life teams across The University of

Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University.

The campaign was initiated following receipt of several case studies and anecdotal reports provided by international students relating to their experiences of living and studying in Manchester. There are approximately 20,000 international students studying in Manchester, from over 160 countries and there was unified consensus across the partnerships that international student safety was an area requiring increasing focus. As a result, a series of focus groups were held with international students, facilitated by MSH Community Cohesion Interns to gauge how they felt a campaign could effectively support and educate them to enhance and support their student experience. 10 students were involved and, at the outset, researched leading best practice on student safety from both the UK and America in order to develop ideas for the campaign.

Feedback from students resulted in the creation of several mediums to ensure a multi-faceted approach:

1. An **International Student Safety Guide** containing specialised safety, security and wellbeing advice from Greater Manchester Police, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue, NHS and other partner organisations. Additionally, this includes information regarding health and wellbeing, budgeting advice and signposting to local community groups. The guide includes a removable postcard for students to



International Student Safety Guide

send to their families and friends in their home countries and a passport containing a safety checklist for the students to use upon their arrival. To supplement this, an International Student Safety flyer was created which provides a synopsis of key safety messages featured in the fuller International Student Safety Guide. (See 'Useful links' at the end of this report to view the guide and the flyer).

2. A **safety message tea towel**, which contains a map of Manchester's places of academic and social importance, such as the universities and the International Society building.



Milena Pretko, Project Lead (Manchester Student Homes) showing off the MISS tea towel



Still from animation created by students studying Film at Manchester Metropolitan University

3 **An online student safety video** (see Useful Links at the end of this report) designed in the style of 'Studio Ghibli', popular with many international students. The animated video was created by students studying Film at Manchester Metropolitan University and follows the day in the life of an international student, highlighting a number of safety scenarios. The video was launched in 2016. In order to maximise views, there will be further targeted campaign from September 2017. Partnership agencies will be provided with a social media toolkit to effectively disseminate the campaign.

Dissemination of the project

The MISS campaign is promoted on an ongoing basis at various events held both on and off campus, aligned to an academic partnership calendar of events and the student lifecycle.

These events have facilitated discussions and enabled advice and support provision to over 2,700 students in 2016-17. All aspects of the campaign are co-delivered with partnership agencies and via various social media channels including specialist platforms such as WeChat. The project was disseminated through the following channels:

- Facebook
- University communications departments
- Twitter
- International Society website and Facebook group
- At international students welcome week and induction
- Safety talks by Greater Manchester Police
- International Student Ambassadors
- Sabbatical officers at the students' unions
- Tutors, mentors, heads of departments
- Manchester Student Homes website
- Volunteering departments
- Resident Associations
- Manchester Student Homes accredited landlord communications
- Residential Life (a programme operated across both The University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University to provide support to students living in halls of residence)
- National Community Conference Steering Group
- International Town and Gown Association

Linking to wider aims

The development of the campaign compliments the wider work of Manchester Student Homes to support international students from a housing perspective. The International Friendly Standard initiative (https://www.manchesterstudenthomes.com/Pages/International_Friendly_Standard) developed by MSH in 2014 requires accredited landlords, private halls of residence and agents to

provide fair and transparent housing services to international students. There are over 6,000 students each year that will have access to this enhanced service via their private halls of residence provider.

The MISS campaign further complements other MSH-led strategic initiatives relating to student safety such as Hate Crime Awareness and the MSH WOLF (Wary of Light Fingers) campaign.

Evaluation

The campaign has been project managed by Community Cohesion Interns, with ongoing support from the Off Campus Student Affairs Officer based at MSH. Officers presented the initiative at the 2016 UKCISA Members' Forum. This has ensured the tone of the project is appropriate as well as providing on-going personal development opportunities for the lead officers. The continuing success and relevance of the campaign is supported by International Student Safety Ambassadors who act as a 'critical friend' on all aspects of the initiative through designated email and focus groups as well as supporting MISS events through volunteering opportunities. The project has been evaluated on a quarterly basis in terms of numbers of students engaged with via various strands of the campaigns.



International students giving their feedback on MISS as part of the ongoing evaluation of the project

The campaign has received widespread support both inside and outside the higher education sector. In May 2017 MISS was shortlisted for a CUBO (College and University

Business Officers) Award 2017 under the category of Innovation Award for Excellence in Student Experience. The project has also been cited as best practice by the USA-based International Town and Gown Association (ITGA) (<https://www.itga.org/>) which brings together networks of colleagues working in off-campus management across North America. The project has also been shared more widely with the UK Town and Gown Association (UKTGA), a UK network of 200 colleagues considering best practice for off-campus student experience. Internally, MISS has been promoted in staff publications as well as through the International Society and Residential Life teams, and featured in arrival guides for Manchester Metropolitan University 2017-18. MSH has also developed a social media campaign with specific hashtags relating to International Student Safety:

#MSHMISS
 #Man_Student_Hme
 #Halls2Home
 #GNT (Good Neighbours Team)
 #WOLF (MSH's other safety campaign, stands for Wary of Light Fingers)
 #International
 #StudentSafety

<https://twitter.com/hashtag/MSHMISS?src=hash&lang=en-gb>

Challenges in delivery

There were no discernible challenges with regards to timescales and budget. However, there were challenges in recruiting focus group participants. This may be due to the timing when students could have had too many academic commitments. Students were offered dinner as an incentive to attend. Volunteer advertisements were created and sent to the volunteering teams at both The University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University. The advertisement was also highlighted in the International

Society's Newsletter and students were provided with a mock draft of the safety guide to Issuu (a free-to-read publications website) which was sent out to students directly. MSH Interns also attended Accommodation Fairs and university events to recruit students which resulted in the recruitment of 10 volunteers. In order to ensure the ongoing and effective recruitment and retention of focus group participants and MISS Ambassadors, MISS staff will attend events as well as liaise closely with international departments and the International Society.

There were slight delays with the video production, although this was still delivered on time. The experience with making videos was useful for the officers involved in this aspect of the campaign – next time, they need to be realistic in what can be produced with video on a small budget. Manchester Student Homes will build on the established social media campaign and the bank of assets to ensure an increasing awareness of the campaign in 2017-18.

Recommendations for other institutions

1. If you are going to run focus groups, plan how to recruit students and how long this will take.
2. Try be realistic about how much can be achieved with video in the time allotted. The initial concept for this project was much more detailed than the funding would allow. For example, we had hoped for an interactive choice-based approach involving different scenarios. However, this led to time delays and we revised the approach to the videomaking.

Next steps for 2017-18

In summary, the participants recognised that the project has been hugely successful. The project is sustainable, given the ongoing support

across the Student Safety Partnership for the campaign and the established social media presence. To ensure students continue to be at the heart of shaping this project, the continued recruitment of MISS Ambassadors is essential. This will also be useful for ongoing evaluation of the project. MSH have already begun liaising with university colleagues and partners with the International Society to ensure that the campaign is promoted effectively in 2017-18. A summary of the 2017-18 campaigns associated with MISS is detailed in the Appendix below. MSH recognises that ongoing support for wider colleagues to promote MISS effectively is fundamental to the ongoing success of the campaign. To this end, MSH will develop a stakeholder communications toolkit to ensure consistency of messages and more accurate tracking of social media analytics.

In order to make this project accessible, the project was a generic international student safety campaign. However, there is an appreciation that there is a particularly high percentage of international students from China studying in Manchester, with whom there are associated vulnerabilities in terms of personal safety. To this end in 2017-18 a funding bid will be submitted to the Student Safety Group to reprint the safety flyer but with key words highlighted in the relevant language. This is chaired by Manchester City Council and has representation from the Council, Greater Manchester Police, University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University and their associated students' unions. Each year the group has a pot of money for which partners can submit bids for safety-related activity.

Further funding has been secured via the Student Safety Group to purchase software to host a specific online quiz. The quiz was created by the MSH Intern, herself an international student. The quiz will be live from September 2018 and will be posted on the

Manchester Student Homes website. MSH has also applied to the Community Safety Partnership to secure additional funding for MISS to fund fortune cookies containing safety messages.

2017-18 will see greater work with the alumni of the universities as part of this campaign. For example, alumni writing articles to their younger self and possibly requesting support for funding.

Useful links

- Manchester Student Homes https://www.manchesterstudenthomes.com/Pages/Community_H2H_Safety_Intl (this includes a link to the magazine format of the guide for students and the project video 'Mei's Day Out')
- Mei's Day Out video on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBnu-UCQrl8&feature=youtu.be>

Further information

The project was led by Poppy Humphrey, Off Campus Student Affairs Officer, on behalf of The University of Manchester and Manchester Metropolitan University Manchester Student Homes

Contact: poppy.humphrey@manchester.ac.uk, tel:0161 275 0750

Appendix

MISS 2017-18 campaign plan

Month	Key message	Activity
September	Orientation	Stalls held on campus Information provided to private halls Social media campaign Work with international departments & International Society for Welcome week
October	Hate crime awareness week (national)	Stalls on and off campus Social media campaign Information provided to private halls Fortune Cookie campaign
November	Dark nights - property security and personal safety	Social media campaign Partnership messages, eg, police Information provided to private Halls Fortune cookie campaign
December	Dark nights- property security and personal safety	Social media campaign Partnership messages, eg, police Information provided to private halls
January	Love your stuff! Orientation (Erasmus students)	Social media campaign Partnership messages, eg, police Stalls held on & off campus Information provided to private halls
February	Hate crime awareness week (Manchester) Chinese New Year	Stalls on and off campus Social media campaign Information provided to private halls Fortune cookie campaign
March-June	Links with WOLF	Stalls on and off campus Social media campaign Information provided to private halls Fortune cookie campaign Link in with partnership agencies