

New masterclass to prepare students for independent living

New workshops will be available from September to support schools and colleges teach young people about living independently.

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Young people will be put through their paces by their college or sixth form to prepare them for independent life after school, the Education Secretary has announced with the launch of new courses today (10 July).

Leapskills workshops, developed by student accommodation provider Unite Students, will offer schools and colleges resources to teach Year 12 and 13 pupils about independent living, managing money and dealing with conflict.

Schools, colleges and sixth forms will be able to put on the optional Leapskills sessions from September, using specialist resources developed by Unite, which cover areas including:

- Independent living
- Managing personal finances
- Developing and maintaining relationships
- How and where to access support

The sessions act as an innovative digital interactive masterclass to enhance how schools and colleges teach young people about what to expect and how to prepare for the leap of living away from home for the first time.

Education Secretary Damian Hinds said:

For young people leaving school, starting the next chapter of their

life should be a positive life-changing experience – but we know that many people struggle with the pressures of moving away from home and living independently for the first time.

A huge part of education is preparing young people for adult life and it is right that we teach them what to expect for life after school, whether that's at university, work or an apprenticeship.

Whilst the majority of that focus is on the knowledge and skills needed to get qualifications, it is also important that we teach our young people the life skills they need like managing finances and understanding healthy relationships, as well as helping them to build character and resilience to be equipped to cope with the everyday challenges in life.

Unite Students offer schools and colleges free resources for teachers to deliver the Leapskills workshops, which use video content and a digital game to present a number of student life scenarios that simulate shared living, problem solving and conflict resolution.

Across the country, 1000 students have already benefited from the Leapskills workshops through a 18-month trial, with survey feedback showing 96% of students were engaged during the session and 91% of teachers would recommend it to a colleague.

Unite Students CEO Richard Smith said:

Every year we welcome over 50,000 students into their new home as they make the leap to university. For many this is one the most important and exciting moments in their lives but it's also a time of uncertainty. We see first-hand the challenges they experience as they make this important transition.

We believe that resilience is vital in young people and that given the right opportunities and experiences, young people can build resilience. The better prepared young people are for the transition to university, the easier they will find managing the highs and the lows often involved in this leap.

That's why we feel so strongly about creating the Leapskills programme and offering it for free to schools across the UK. Building resilience in our young people is crucial to their experience of university and their life beyond. We welcome the Secretary of State's support for Leapskills and the part we are playing in providing all students with the opportunity to thrive.

Natalie Corriette, a teacher at St Bonaventure's 6th Form in Forest Gate who took part in the workshop said:

We were keen to offer our Year 12 students this opportunity as students can sometimes feel anxious and unsure about what to expect when living away at university. These sessions afforded them the ability to reflect on university life and to consider how they can best prepare for university life in terms of establishing support networks and fostering social relationships and friendship groups.

Our survey indicated that students' confidence levels in terms of their knowledge and understanding of university life more than doubled by the end of the session. I would recommend Leapskills to other schools as it really helped to empower the students and allay any concerns they might have about living away from home.

James Appiah, Year 12 student from St Bonaventure's 6th Form, said:

The Leapskills University Workshop was my first real taste of university life. The tour around the university accommodation and the real life problems we were given to solve helped to make me really feel mentally prepared for university.