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The impact of the cost-of living crisis on students – both in terms of income and expenditure.

4. As a result of rising living costs, students have indicated a need to adjust their financial behaviour to ensure they have a sufficient budget while at university. In a weighted poll of around 1000 students carried out by Savanta ComRes on behalf of UUK, 96% of respondents said they would need to make changes to their finances in the autumn semester of this academic year. The poll found that 53% envisaged needing to look for or increase their part-time work; 49% cutting back on expenditure when seeing family and friends; and 45% using less gas and electricity due to high costs.
5. The recent ONS survey reveals similar concerns for students. The survey found that 92% of students said the cost-of-living has increased compared to a year ago, with 91% being worried or very worried about the rising cost-of-living in the last two weeks.
6. The same survey found that student behaviours have changed to respond to the cost-of-living crisis. 64% of respondents noted using their savings or credit more than usual; 48% of respondents have been making energy savings; and 7% have been using support from charities or foodbanks.
7. With student maintenance loans being the lowest level in seven years according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, many students are struggling . The findings from the recent ONS survey further demonstrate the worrying impact of the cost-of-living crisis on students' income. 30% of respondents noted they have taken on a new debt in response to rising living cost; an increase of 25% from November 2022. For 71% of these students, they have acquired a new debt due to their maintenance loan being insufficient in supporting their living costs.
8. Anecdotal concerns about students being able to make payments for expenses have been gathered by our members, and the main areas of concern include:
 - a. **Course-related expenses.** For some students, additional costs are incurred as part of their programme of study; particularly for students on health- or education-related courses. Students are expected to fund these costs upfront and claim expenses after, however some have indicated significant delays to having expenses reimbursed from the NHS.

- b. **Energy and food bills.** The rising costs of basic food items and energy bills has led to students raising concerns about their ability to pay for these; for example, 64% of respondents to the recent ONS survey said their energy bills have increased in the last year, and 94% said their food bills have also increased. Some students have self-declared using food vouchers and food banks that are run by their university, including the Keep Me Going emergency food support at the University of Cumbria. Anecdotally, this is particularly true for mature students and those with dependents.
- c. **Fuel and transport costs.** Students on placement and those who

with caring responsibilities, mature students, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students

- c. **Mature students:** many institutions have identified mature students in relation to those incurring course-related costs as part of health courses, in addition to mature students who have dependents and incur additional food and childcare costs.
23. The recent ONS survey findings highlight the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on disabled students and those with caring responsibilities who are significantly more likely to have financial difficulties. The survey reveals that 63% of students who care for children under 18 and 58% of students who care for adults have experienced a decrease in their income in the last year, compared to 48% of students with no caring responsibilities.
24. There is a dearth of evidence about the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on these specific student groups. Institutions have identified these students through internal evidence gathering, however we strongly believe that more specific data collection would allow Government and institutions to understand the extent to which these students are impacted and target support accordingly.

What further action might be taken this academic year to support students impacted by ongoing financial pressures.

25. As cost-of-living pressures intensify, it will become increasingly apparent where some groups of students are missing out on support and where there is a need for extra support. Universities are operating with a severely stretched funding base due to the tuition fee freeze in England, and so Government and universities will need to work together to assess how increased support is given to those who are most in need through:

Targeted government hardship funding for UK students

The reinstatement of maintenance grants for those most in need. In 2022/2023 maintenance loans are at their lowest level in seven years, and due to the freeze in parental earnings thresholds, many students will be only eligible for smaller maintenance loans

Action to ensure that support for students is protected against inflation

Reviewing of existing sources of Government support to students, particularly postgraduate researchers

Ensuring that any Government action to support people with rising costs, such as energy, can be accessed by students across the UK, including those in halls.