

THE
MONEY
DOCTORS

information | advice | education

cfeb consumer
financial
education
body

Evaluating the impact:

the Money Doctors approach to
student financial guidance.



‘I think Money Doctors has been the most comprehensive attempt to address student financial guidance...If Money Doctors didn't exist, we'd have to invent it.’

National stakeholder

‘I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for them [Money Doctors]. I can honestly say that. If I didn't get their advice then I'd be pulling my hair out somewhere.’

Student

Introduction

Money Doctors is the higher education project of the Consumer Financial Education Body.¹ The programme equips student money advisers within universities and students' unions with the knowledge, skills and resources to take a proactive and educational approach to student money guidance. The aim is to help students to address money issues before they get into financial difficulties, and to help them become confident with personal finances.

Why does student financial capability matter?

To enable widening participation

The profile of people attending higher education has changed over the past few decades. Participation has widened and a diverse student population is now the norm; old stereotypes of the 18-19 year old young person supported by a middle-class family no longer apply. The reduction of student grants, and the introduction of student loans and upfront tuition fees in England, means there is greater financial pressure on students than ever before. Indeed, many young people that choose not to enter higher education cite fear of debt as one of the factors behind their decision.

1 - The Consumer Financial Education Body took over the responsibilities for the National Strategy for Financial Capability from the Financial Services Authority in April 2010.



To benefit the student experience

Universities are under increasing pressure to improve the student experience but with limited resources, they can find this difficult. At the same time, one factor of the student experience - meeting living and educational expenses - is heavily reliant on students being financially aware and able to manage their finances.

To improve student wellbeing

FSA research in 2009 found that increased financial capability resulted in an increase in psychological wellbeing. Students with money issues and debt worries tend to be too concerned about these to focus on their studies, and their performance suffers as a result. There is also a link between money problems and mental health issues.²

To improve student retention

Money problems have been identified as one of the top three contributing issues to students leaving university.³ A recent study found that of the 30% of students who were considering leaving university, 46% cited money worries as the main reason.⁴

'You're in it so deep that you think, "I've only got one alternative, to stop my academic studies."'

Student

'It's your whole wellbeing, you dread it, you get the knots in your stomach, you're thinking about it, you're dreaming about it, every day you think - is this the day that the bailiffs are going to come and take my stuff?'

Student

2 - The relation of depression and anxiety to life-stress and achievement in students', Andrews, B and Wilding, JM, British Journal of Psychology, November 2004; 'FSA Occasional Paper 34: Financial Capability and Wellbeing: Evidence from BHPS', May 2009; 'In the red - Debt and Mental Health', Mind, 2008.

3 - 'Staying the course', National Audit Office, July 2007.

4 - Sodexo University Lifestyle Survey 2010.

The research



CFEB commissioned an external evaluation of the Money Doctors project from FDS International to assess the impact of the project. The fieldwork for this research project was carried out across the UK in late 2009 and involved questioning:

- over 20,000 students from universities who do and do not participate in the Money Doctors programme;
- 122 student money advisers at both participating and non-participating universities; and
- key stakeholders - a selection of twelve national bodies, such as the National Union of Students and government departments, and nine local institutional leaders such as university Vice-Chancellors and Directors of Student Services.



The findings in summary

The findings show that the Money Doctors approach of providing proactive and educational student money advice has been successfully adopted within most participating universities but to varying degrees and in a multitude of ways.

The Money Doctors programme has successfully equipped student money advisers with the skills and tools to proactively educate students to tackle money issues before they get into financial difficulties, and help students become financially confident – a skill for life.

- Money Doctors has already been adopted by over half the universities across the UK.
- So far, we estimate that 58,000 students have been helped by the service.

The impact on students

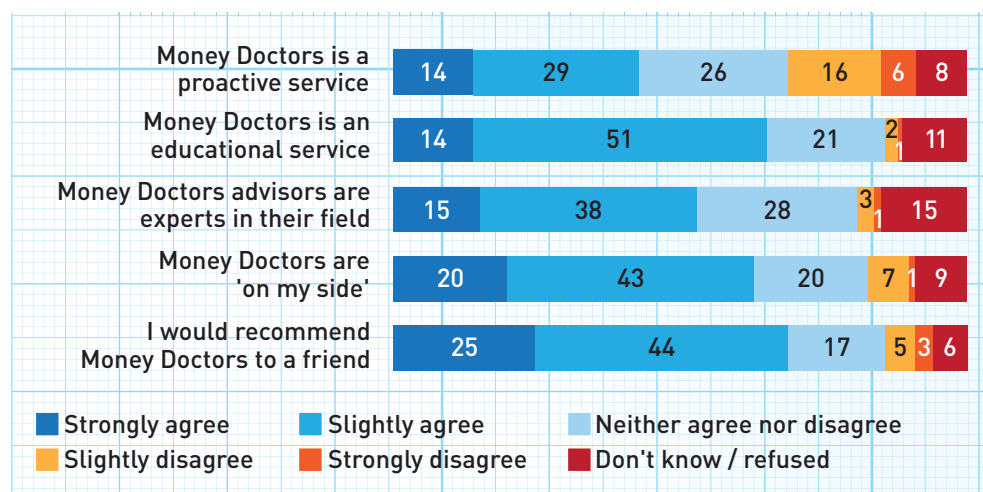
There is a higher awareness of financial guidance amongst students at universities with Money Doctors than at universities not participating in the project. **Student usage of financial guidance is 50% higher at universities using Money Doctors.**

- **80%** of students surveyed who had used the service rated it as extremely, very or fairly good;
- **30%** of these students said that Money Doctors had actually helped them 'afford to stay at university'.

Of the students who used Money Doctors:

- **69%** would recommend it to a friend;
- **63%** considered the Money Doctor advisers to be 'on my side'; and
- **52%** agreed that the advisers were 'experts in their field'.

Students perception of Money Doctors

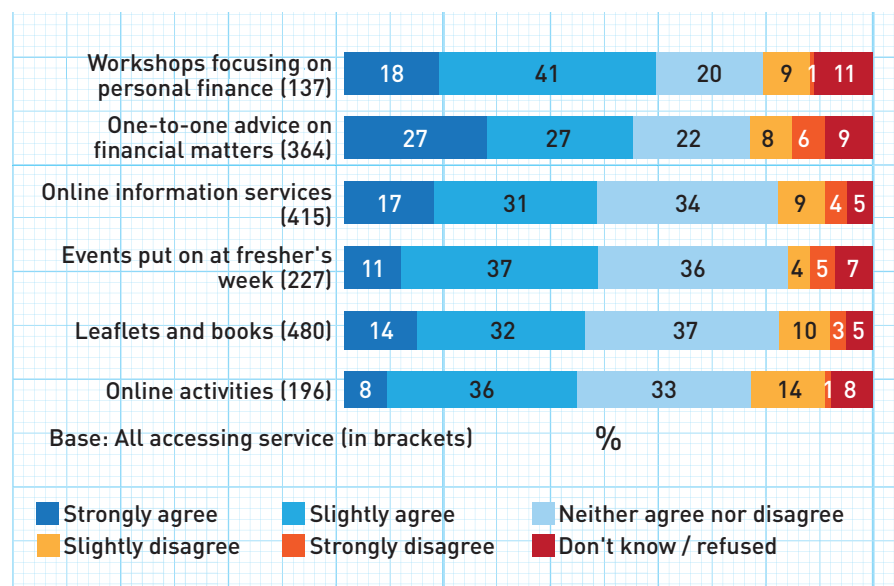


Student money advisers deliver the proactive and educational approach supported by the Money Doctors project in the way they feel is most appropriate for their resources and students' needs. In assessing the project a variety of delivery mechanisms were identified and we asked students if they helped them to feel more in control of their finances.

'Fourth year is the hardest so far, but I don't really think about the [money] problems I have had. I never worry about that now; I just get on with Uni.'

Student

Whether Money Doctors information services increased students' feeling of control over finances.



'It has just made me think more and it's now not affecting my academic studies. If there is a problem, I can see it, and usually if I can see it, I can budget for it.'

Student

'It's a transferable skill...It's made a big impact on me, as far as the future goes. I'm definitely going to keep to this kind of accounting in my life.'

Student

Of the variety of Money Doctor activities available for students:

- **63%** said they have taken, or plan to take action, as a result of a one-to-one financial advice session;
- **59%** said that a financial capability workshop made them feel more in control of their finances; and
- **55%** said they have taken, or plan to take action after using the online information services provided.

A large proportion of the Money Doctors service users came from groups considered to be non-traditional students. Users of the service were more likely to be mature students, working during term-time, married or separated and to have a disability.

The students that tended to use Money Doctors were found to have more difficulty in making ends meet than those who do not use it, and were less likely to be able to draw on support from their family or from savings to finance their studies.



‘Students have come to us and specifically asked for help with making ends meet and planning ahead, which they never did before we started running and advertising the Money Doctors service.’

Adviser

‘We have noticed an increase in the number of students coming to us for budgeting advice. Outreach events have been successful in raising awareness of the Money Doctors service and the help available to students’.

Adviser

‘It has enabled us to develop and provide a service which did not really exist prior to joining the Money Doctors scheme.’

Adviser

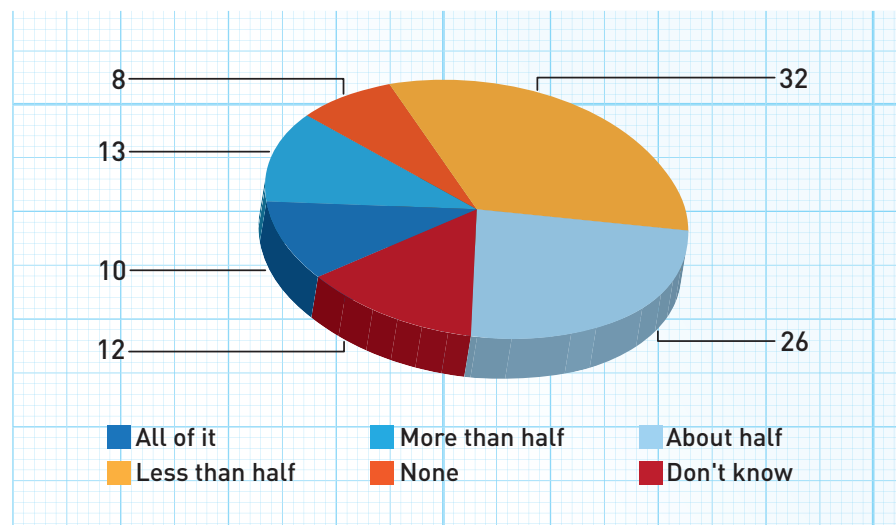
The impact on student money advisers

- **64%** of advisers joined Money Doctors because they felt it would offer a good way to engage with students, overcoming the barrier of low student engagement.
- **72%** of participating advisers say that they believe that Money Doctors has a positive impact on their students’ abilities to make ends meet and plan ahead.

Advisers said Money Doctors had a positive impact on their service delivery:

- **88%** that it has enabled them to deliver a more proactive service;
- **75%** that it enabled them to deliver a more educational service; and
- **79%** that it changed the way they delivered financial guidance.

Percentage of financial guidance offered under Money Doctors at participating universities.



‘[We] try to focus on preventative stuff now, and getting out there, hitting the students on their territory and trying to get academics on board rather than mopping up the crisis.’

Adviser

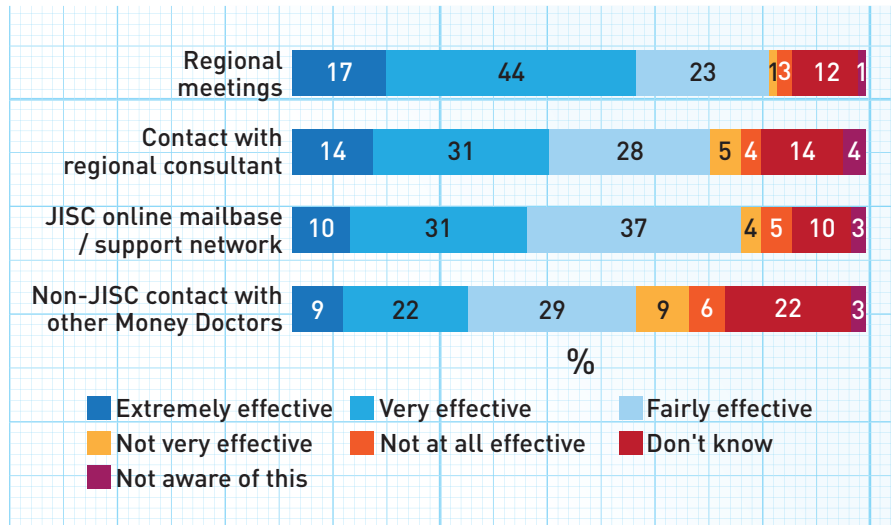
The Money Doctors programme is flexible. Advisers are able to adopt the approach to the level most appropriate to their institution.

At the heart of the Money Doctors project is the work to support student money advisers to provide a proactive and educational approach to student money guidance. The support provided to student money advisers aims to build on their existing skills and knowledge and encourage the sharing of good practice.

Advisers identified these other benefits:

- the programme and its supporting regional meetings and training events gave them a sense of community and working together, and able to share ideas, resources and solutions;
- it generated closer working relationships with academic departments and courses; and
- the programme is flexible, allowing advisers to select and use the resources and materials that best fit their students.

Adviser evaluation of ongoing support



'The training, resources and shared experience of other HEIs has helped in the preparation and delivery of workshops and financial capability events.'

Adviser



'We thought we would get involved with Money Doctors mainly because we wouldn't have to re-invent the wheel - there were resources out there we could use and adapt for our own purposes.'

Student funding manager



‘There is a perception that being involved with the project will be a particularly onerous task and add to the workload, but in reality I think it just alters the way in which you work.’

Adviser

Joining the Money Doctors programme

The advisers we spoke to told us that there could be barriers to overcome when joining Money Doctors. This could explain why 76% of advisers at non-participating universities are aware of Money Doctors, but they have not yet joined. Difficulties related to gaining sufficient resources to support the project were identified as the main barrier.

More specifically, the advisers said that the barriers they faced were finding the time (65% of advisers), student apathy (60%), and finding the funding (37%). Building Money Doctors into university policy would help to alleviate these barriers and allow the benefits of a consistent and collaborative approach to student money guidance.

The impact on other stakeholders

There is evidence of good awareness of Money Doctors among national stakeholders, with many having contact with the Money Doctors team at events and conferences. Senior local stakeholders such as university Vice-Chancellors are far less likely to be aware of, and understand, the programme, which potentially leads to limited implementation in their institutions.

Money Doctors was valued for providing a consistent national approach to student financial guidance, facilitating cooperation between institutions, and consolidating moves towards a more proactive financial guidance service. This network and the ability to share resources were believed to be beneficial.

Although the sector is under increasing financial pressure:

- almost all (91%) participating advisers expect their institution to remain in the Money Doctors programme for the foreseeable future; and
- 90% would recommend Money Doctors to other institutions.

I think the main benefit is to actually direct students to good sources of advice, and to make them think more broadly about how they're going to manage their money effectively, not only while they're at university but in the longer term. It's about improving their educational knowledge and their financial capability.

National stakeholder



Evaluation recommendations

The report makes a number of recommendations. As a result, this is what we are doing to further develop Money Doctors:

Recommendation: Create a minimum level of Money Doctors delivery for participating institutions, centred on the core aims for the programme.

Action: This approach is currently under consideration. It could aid evaluation of up-take and impact at a national level.

Recommendation: Provide additional training, tailoring it to the needs of advisers.

Action: We have already begun to make these changes.

Recommendation: To further engage students.

Action: We have created additional Money Doctors promotional items and made these available for participating institutions to use. To support advisers, we are looking to develop our online materials and are investigating new ways to reach students. In addition, we are considering new ways to build financial capability into the curriculum and national stakeholder policy.

About the Money Doctors programme

Half the universities across the UK have already adopted the Money Doctors approach. The programme equips advisers with the skills and tools to:

- proactively educate students to tackle money management before they get into financial difficulties; and
- help students become confident with personal finances so they can deal with financial issues as they move into employment, further study, and for later in life.

The Money Doctors project is part of the National Strategy for Financial Capability from the Consumer Financial Education Body (CFEB). This independent body aims to help everyone have the financial knowledge and confidence required to manage their money, plan for the future and make informed decisions about financial products.

There is no charge to join Money Doctors. And all training and resources are provided to members at no cost.

**Find more about Money Doctors at www.cfebuk.org.uk
Or contact us at ya.learning@moneymadeclear.org.uk**

We are grateful to the institutions and individuals within them that have helped us to develop this work. We look forward to bringing Money Doctors to many more students in the future.