

# THRIVING UNDER PRESSURE

## Northumbria University and Sodexo

Working together to enhance the wellbeing of students, support their needs, make them feel safe and provide practical advice for life within and beyond the university halls.



# HEALTH, LIFE SKILLS AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS

SODEXO SUPPORTS STUDENTS AND STAFF OF  
NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY WITH WHAT MATTERS MOST:

**Making** a positive difference to physical and mental health.

**Providing** meaningful support for students before,  
during and beyond their arrival.

**Adapting** to offer practical and virtual support during  
isolation and lockdown.

**Creating** an environment where students can thrive,  
and want to stay longer.

**Shaping** new services to reflect new ways  
of living and working.



The health and wellbeing of students and staff.  
Delivering a positive social impact. Driving  
operational efficiency. Whatever matters most  
to you, your students and your colleagues,  
Sodexo has the knowledge, resources,  
experience and skills to help you support  
your people and make a positive impact  
on their quality of life.



**PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH ARE CENTRAL TO A STUDENT'S ABILITY TO SUCCEED. AS IMPORTANT AS ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IS, THE FOUNDATIONS FOR HOW WELL AN INDIVIDUAL CONNECTS WITH THEIR UNIVERSITY, AND HOW WELL THEY TRANSITION INTO UNIVERSITY LIFE, ARE LAID OUTSIDE THE LECTURE HALL.**

**25%** of students who show signs of mental health problems leave university early, compared to **9%** of those without mental health problems.

Healthy Minds Network

Mental health was already a major concern before the pandemic, and Office for National Statistics research shows students are more likely to suffer from anxiety than the wider population.

This is exacerbated by the fact that not all students have a network of family or friends nearby who can support them on their university journey, which is especially true of international students.

Many struggle to find the confidence and the skills to navigate their way through. However, for students of Northumbria University, and several others across the UK, Sodexo is always on hand to provide practical advice and emotional support in whatever way they might need.





**Student accommodation providers and universities need to work together to really deliver an environment where wellbeing and mental health are prioritised for the student."**

George Marston  
Pro Vice-Chancellor Northumbria University



# A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO WELLBEING

WITH ALL THE PRESSURE, DISTRACTIONS AND COMPLICATIONS OF THE MODERN WORLD, STUDENTS CAN'T BE EXPECTED TO SUCCEED IF THEY ARE NOT MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY HEALTHY.

Success, of course, is not measured simply in terms of academic achievement. Around 75% of a student's time is spent within their accommodation and if they aren't happy there, social engagement and preparation for life beyond the campus are bound to suffer.

As a key partner of the university, we need to do more than just put a roof over students' heads. Sodexo has been working with Northumbria since 2014, developing and refining a strategy to support students in every aspect of their lives. We've conducted research alongside University College London to inform this strategy, and understand how we can best contribute to the success of everyone we come into contact with.



**Student wellbeing should be put first in everything. They are your clients. They know what they want, and what's going to be best for their wellbeing. Without them, you're just building a space, not a home."**

Sarah West  
Head of Marketing, Communications  
and Experience, UCL





**The answer is simple - put wellbeing first.  
How to do that is the tricky part.**

Our accommodation and facilities teams are trained in mental health first aid so they can identify signs of distress, with clear procedures for escalation where appropriate.

We have also introduced a range of initiatives designed to help individuals look after their physical and mental health.

Each of these services is adapted in collaboration with the students themselves to ensure they - and we - continue to thrive no matter what the academic year brings.

# EMBRACING THE CHALLENGES OF UNIVERSITY LIFE

FOR MANY STUDENTS, THE START OF A UNIVERSITY CAREER REPRESENTS THE FIRST EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME THEY HAVE SPENT AWAY FROM HOME. THAT'S WHY THE SUPPORT THEY RECEIVE FROM SODEXO AT NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY BEGINS BEFORE THEY EVEN STEP FOOT ON CAMPUS.

We phone every new student ahead of the new term, giving them a personal touch despite the large numbers. **We let them know what they can expect when they arrive and introduce them to the various support services on offer.**

Our flatmate finder system helps identify suitable matches for shared accommodation, while virtual introductions allow students to connect before arrival - taking some of the social anxiety out of the experience.

**“When they come to the accommodation, they learn a lot more about themselves. They learn how to cook independently. They learn how to budget for themselves, and how to live with others.”**

Tom Martin  
Head of Residency Living  
Sodexo







Expert advice is then on hand throughout the academic year, as students adapt and learn to live independently.

Sodexo chefs offer cooking classes to establish some basic skills and knowledge, tailoring the lessons to the level of those taking them.

Budgeting courses also help grow financial acumen, preparing students to manage their money throughout their university years and beyond.

### NU THINKING - A REVOLUTIONARY APPROACH TO HEALTH AND WELLBEING



The NU Thinking programme, launched by Sodexo ambassador (and Rugby World Cup winner) Matt Dawson, provides support for Northumbria University students and staff.



It emphasises the importance of a healthy diet and its impact on overall wellbeing.



The programme is tailored to the needs of individuals, especially people with mental health problems. Personal training sessions and nutritional advice are complemented by regular meetings to discuss goals and progress.



# INNOVATION THROUGHOUT ISOLATION

THE PRINCIPLES AND VALUES OF EVERY UNIVERSITY WERE PUT TO THE TEST IN 2020 AND 2021, AS LOCKDOWNS AND A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS UNLIKE ANYTHING IN RECENT MEMORY PUT EXTRAORDINARY STRAIN ON BOTH PEOPLE AND RESOURCES.

Northumbria University and Sodexo responded by ramping up support and finding innovative solutions to ensure everyone was looked after throughout the pandemic.

Services were moved online, with virtual fitness and cooking classes on offer to all students, along with Q&A sessions and advice on ways to cope with self-isolation.

The team partnered with Morrison's to make sure quality food was delivered directly to halls of residence, at a time when many were not allowed to leave their homes and delivery slots were hard to come by.

The meals met the dietary requirements and preferences of every student, including meat-free and vegan options, and the scheme was also extended to those living in private student housing.



## TAKING THE RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE TO A NEW LEVEL:



24/7  
SUPPORT



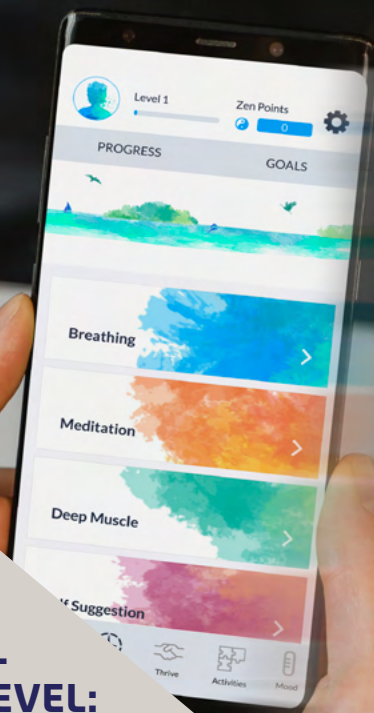
GROCERY  
SHOPPING



ARRANGING  
GIFTS



TRAVEL  
ARRANGEMENTS



Sodexo also collaborated with Thrive, the only NHS-approved mental wellbeing app, to adapt its services specifically for university students. The app helps to monitor a person's mood and recommends relaxation and meditation techniques, with the aim of preventing and managing stress, anxiety and related conditions.

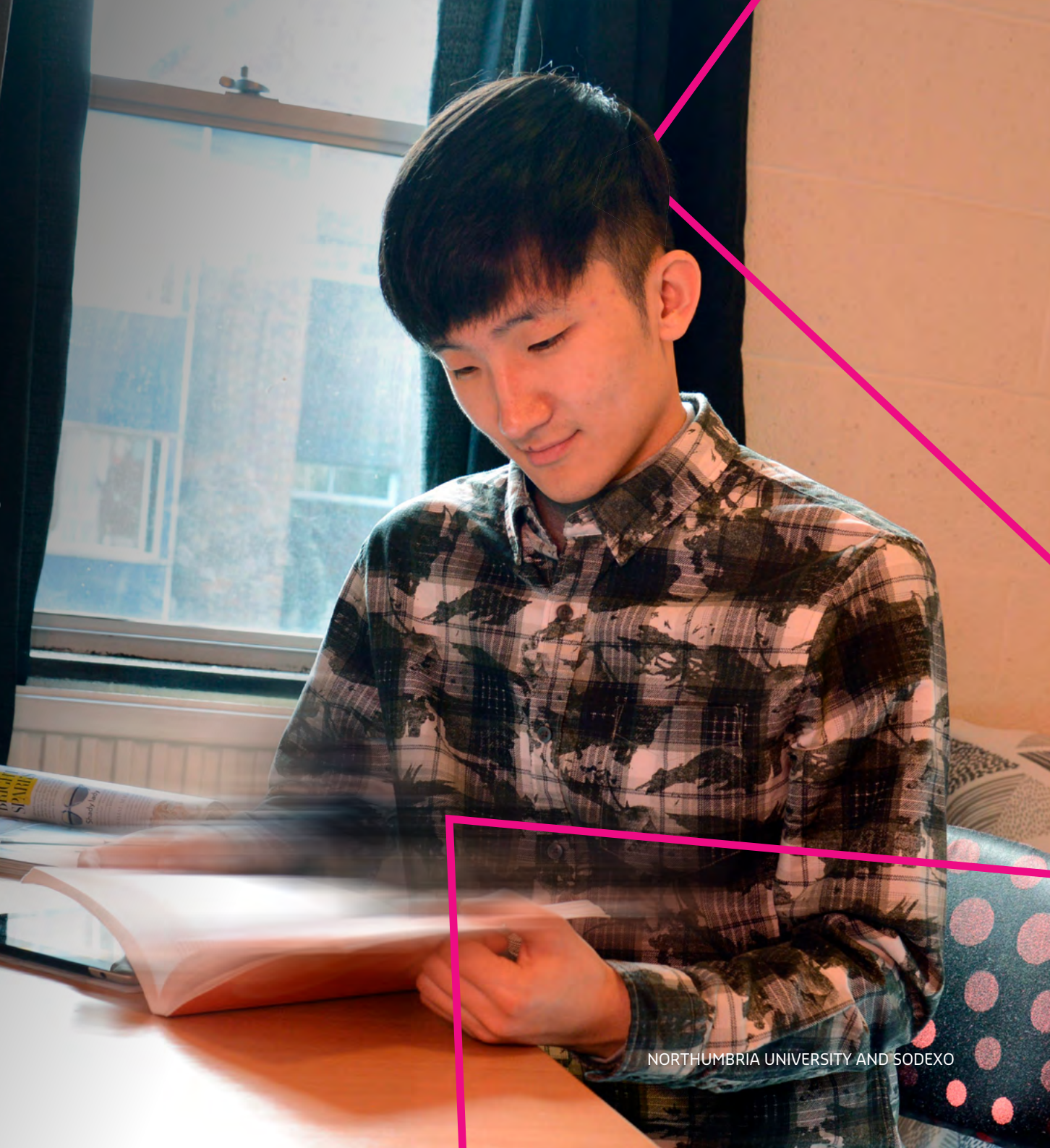
And Northumbria was one of two universities to benefit from the addition of **Circles, the groundbreaking Sodexo concierge service**. Designed to take away the burden of everyday life admin, Circles is free to students and offers a helping hand that means they can concentrate on their studies and other things that matter most to them.





I think Sodexo has been fundamental in supporting the most vulnerable students. We prioritise the health, wellbeing and safety of our students, and it's great to see that Sodexo shares those values."

Sue Broadbent  
Assistant Director  
Student Support & Wellbeing  
Northumbria University





# A PLACE TO EXCEL, AND A PLACE TO STAY

THE SUCCESS OF ALL THESE INITIATIVES IS MOST APPARENT IN THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS WHO WANT TO STAY ON IN UNIVERSITY ACCOMMODATION. NATIONALLY, MOST STUDENTS MOVE INTO PRIVATE RESIDENCES AFTER THEIR FIRST YEAR. BUT NORTHUMBRIA HAS OBSERVED AN INCREASE IN STUDENTS RETURNING TO CAMPUS ACCOMMODATION IN THEIR SECOND, THIRD AND FOURTH YEARS.

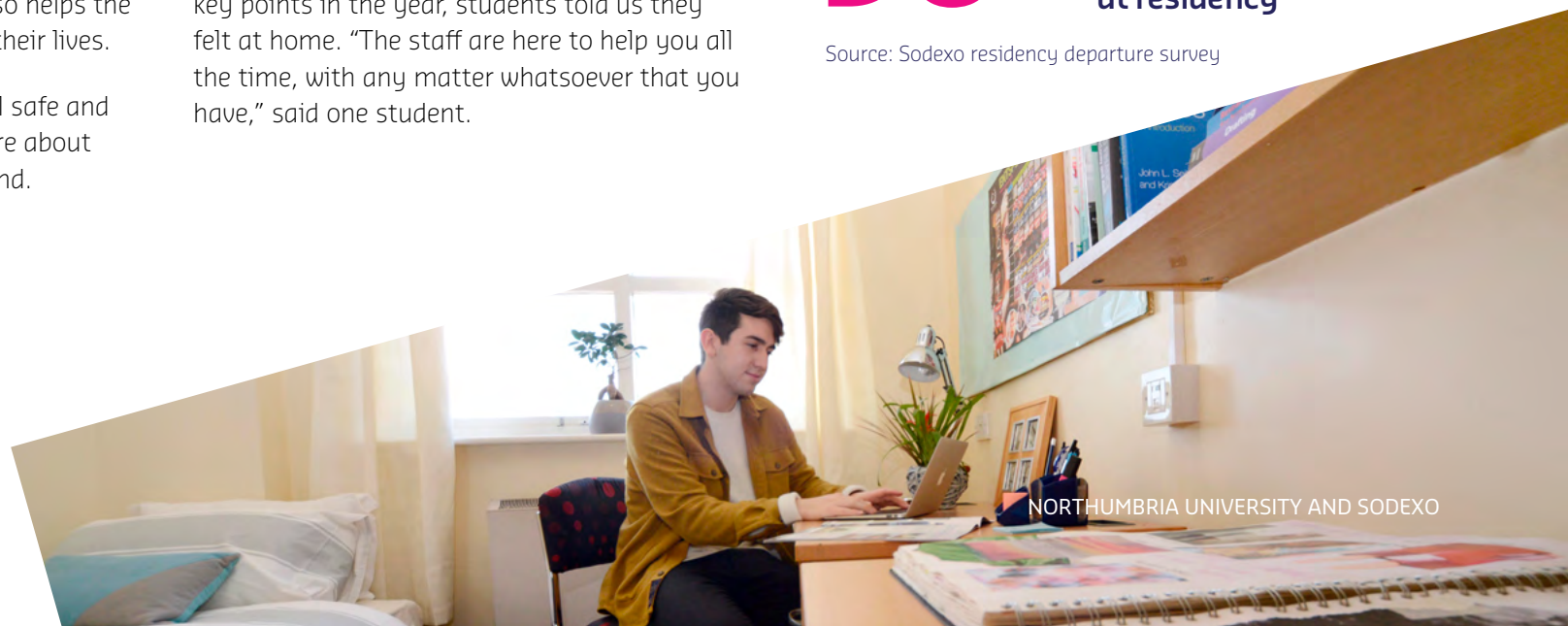
Creating an environment in which people genuinely want to spend their time not only brings commercial benefits to the university, by maximising occupancy levels, but also helps the students succeed in every aspect of their lives.

Northumbria University students feel safe and supported by staff who genuinely care about their wellbeing and are always on hand.

Despite the unprecedented challenges of 2020 and the effects on those who were unable to return to their families at Christmas and other key points in the year, students told us they felt at home. "The staff are here to help you all the time, with any matter whatsoever that you have," said one student.

**96%** of students would recommend staying at residency

Source: Sodexo residency departure survey







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“After my first year at Trinity Square, I decided to renew my tenancy and stay for an additional year. The entire staff makes an effort to get to know students and security is onsite 24/7, making Trinity Square a very safe place to live.”

Sacha Russel  
Third-year nursing student  
Northumbria University

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From simple services such as fixing locks and removing rubbish, to food deliveries and the more complex admin help provided by Circles concierges, Sodexo and Northumbria University provided the support that mattered most, when it was needed most.

Against a backdrop of a mental health crisis, and with the Higher Education Policy Institute warning that a single student leaving their course costs a university £28,000 over the three years of their degree, small things can make the biggest difference.

**By focusing on what matters most - the health and wellbeing of students - Northumbria University and Sodexo will continue to thrive no matter what pressure they are under.**

**91%** said their stay was either good or excellent

Source: Sodexo residency departure survey

## OUR SOCIAL IMPACT PLEDGE

IN 2021, SODEXO PUBLICLY COMMITTED TO MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF OUR TEAM, THOSE WE WORK WITH AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY. THIS SOCIAL IMPACT PLEDGE GUIDES OUR EFFORTS TO SUPPORT:

**Our people,** by looking after their health and wellbeing and helping them to fulfil personal ambitions.

**Our planet,** by respecting the resources our future depends on.

**Our places,** by playing an active role in the community and supporting local businesses and suppliers.

**Our partners,** by collaborating to enhance skills, capacity and effectiveness, so we can grow together.



# SOCIAL VALUE

*sodexo*



# WHAT MATTERS MOST TO YOU?

SODEXO IS COMMITTED TO MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT ON OUR PEOPLE, OUR COMMUNITIES AND OUR PLANET. WE ARE A GLOBAL BUSINESS WITH MORE THAN 50 YEARS OF EXPERTISE AND INSIGHT, BUT ARE STILL FAMILY-OWNED - DRIVEN BY THE VALUES OF OUR FOUNDER AND A COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE.

The universities we partner with share that commitment, and we help them deliver what matters most to students and staff alike.

Get in touch to discuss how we can work with you to drive cultural change through truly Integrated Facilities Management.

[uk.sodexo.com/your-industry/universities.html](https://uk.sodexo.com/your-industry/universities.html)

Contact us

