



Inspired ideas from the sharp end

a knowledge sharing event



CSGUK Ideas from the Sharp End

Teesside University, 12th April 2024

Event report by Neal Harper

“Inspired ideas from the sharp end” is a series of events from Customer Services Group UK which focus on projects presented by staff who work in Library Assistant (or equivalent) roles in customer service teams across the UK HE Library sector, giving the chance to promote some of the great work going on, sharing best practice and networking with like-minded individuals.

We had a brilliant day on the Friday at the end of the Spring Break where we welcomed staff from across the UK HE sector to Teesside, with people coming from as far as Exeter in the south and Edinburgh in the north! We sold 17 tickets for the event. With facilitators and free places included, there were a total of 25 people in attendance.

Delegates were welcomed into The Curve with a coffee & pastries selection. Everyone seemed to have no issues with travel and were settled in easily! Kay and Jackie from the senior leadership team opened the day with some welcoming remarks.

We created a hashtag for Twitter (X) for the day and advertised this to the delegates at the start – you can search **#csgukevents** to see a few photos (mostly from me!) and updates from the day.

The University of Liverpool presented first, with details of their “Student Partnership” project. There’s was a very interesting presentation describing how they’ve recruited a team of students to work alongside their customer services team. Some of the Assistants here have been uplifted with additional responsibilities to manage the student team. Students work broadly in 3 different areas across their working week – project work, customer services and “cohort” activity. There have been a number of different projects, led by staff & teams from the library services department. They described over a dozen examples of projects across a variety of areas that the student partners have been involved in. They wear a distinctive orange uniform which helps customers to identify them. Whilst working in customer services, they work across desks and roving support. They have also run a number of engagement activities, including coffee & chat, surveys and know-how sessions, as well as running the library’s social media feed. For staff, this has been a great opportunity to uplift and take on additional responsibilities, including managing staff (students) and other projects.





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Aston University were next up presenting on the subject of “Leveraging FAQs to enhance service”. This was a very engaging presentation which took a very academic approach, including describing the theory behind proactive vs reactive service models, why self-service matters, why you should have a knowledgebase and building FAQs. Aston used analytics from their enquiry system to decide which FAQs to prioritise and promote these via their website. Some challenges and limitations were identified in keeping content relevant, fit-for-purpose and up to date. The team use a continual improvement model to review their enquiries, further develop FAQs and monitor how their customers interact with the service and updates.

A very nice buffet lunch was provided with a selection of hot and cold food (Bolognese pasta being the favourite!), which left everyone very well filled, with lots of networking and talking going on. Everyone was then ready to take on the afternoon sessions.

The University of Birmingham presented a very hard-hitting talk on the subject of “Wellbeing support from Library and Learning Resources”, and the development of the service they provide. This wasn’t afraid to cover difficult subjects including mental health crises and suicide. Frontline staff here are trained in handling wellbeing and welfare situations and can handle soft interventions with students. There is an escalation point from here direct to the mental health specialist team, should this be needed. They have “Wellbeing Champions” who ensure the staff handling these situations are cared for and training kept up to date. They also run events which promote activities and environments to foster the importance of good mental health. They have specially designed spaces in their library buildings to promote wellbeing. Like our Brengle, they also use therapy dogs, woof!

Our final presentation of the day was from Royal Holloway, University of London, on the subject of “How do students use the library?” This talk was about using UX methodologies to understand how their library spaces are being used. They took the decision to engage in this work following feedback from students on behaviour concerns in their library spaces, plus wanting to find any opportunities for improvement of the spaces. They asked students to write on a printed map of the library as to how they used the space. They put out some Lego and asked students to build a small model of what their ideal library would look like! Using Card Sorting techniques, they then analysed the results and placed these loosely into categories. This then resulted in a number of actions which were implemented in their spaces. They described in their reflection how students like being asked their views and seeing changes implemented as a result of this, plus how good UX is at helping to identify these improvements.

It’s worth mentioning that some of the presenters told us they had never presented before to a group, so big kudos to all the facilitators for doing such a great job of conveying their ideas to everyone.





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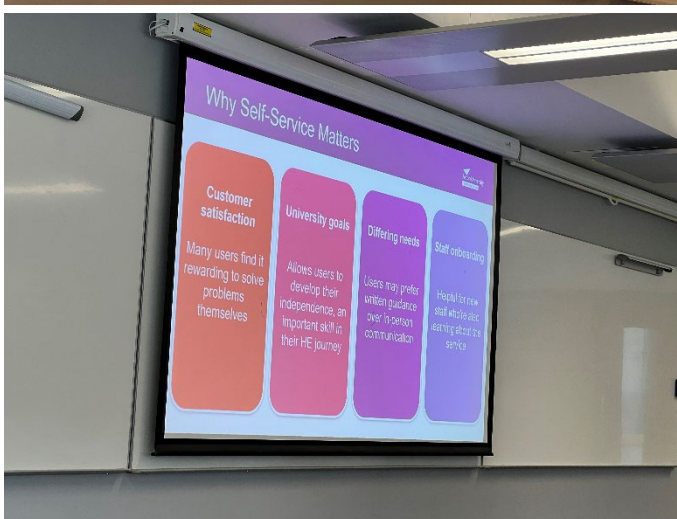
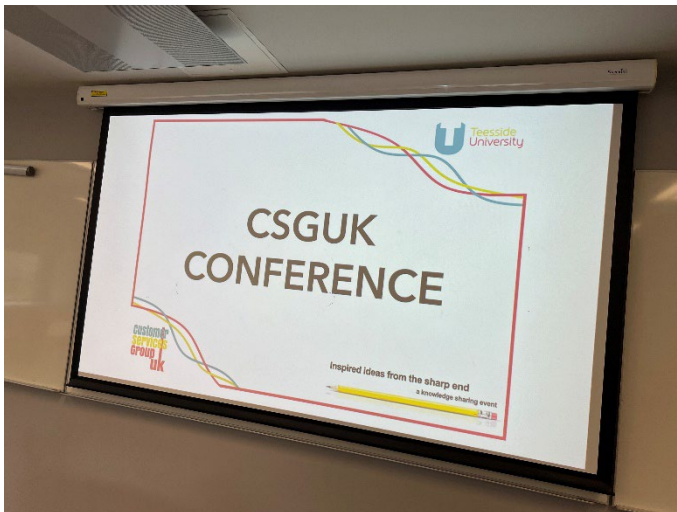
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Kay & Jackie returned to finish off the talking with some closing remarks and expressions of thanks to the delegates for travelling and joining in.

The day culminated in us carrying out two tour groups. One led by our very own Katie Burton focused on just the library building for those that only wanted to view the library. The other tour ran by our Happiness Azu took delegates on a tour of the Student Life building, then Buttery and finished back at the Library.

Everyone departed the event, with many good wishes and thanks for a great day. We also received some comments via email after the event from attendees expressing how much they had enjoyed the day and, in particular, the interactions they had with others from different institutions.





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