

# Ravensbourne Students' Union

## Green impact award

### Case Study

Our project focused on the importance of sustaining positive mental health and wellbeing in a sustainable environment. We focused on ways to promote sustainability at home alongside self-care tips during the lockdown period.

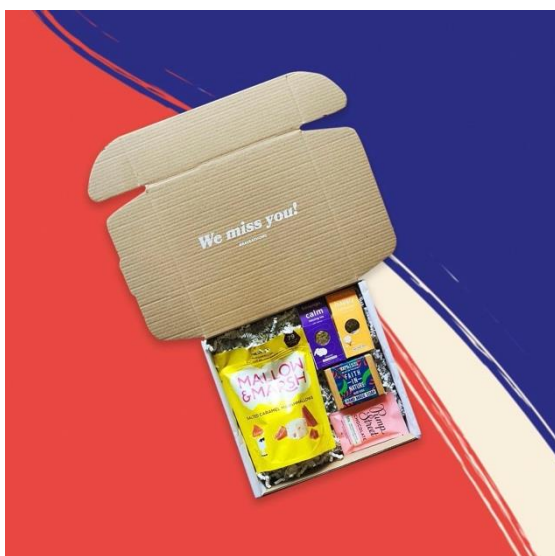
What we did:

The original focus of our project, had we been in the building as usual, was to promote the reduction of everyday waste. After going into lockdown due to the global pandemic we decided that our main priority needed to be the wellbeing of our students and we began to look at the meaning of sustainability in relation to welfare.

We decided to create a home handbook that offered tips and guidance on how to be more sustainable at home as this is where they would be spending most of their time for the foreseeable future. This was important as we know a healthy environment contributes to a healthy mind and body. The handbook also offered advice on self-care and how to stay mentally and physically healthy during this time. Speaking to our student services team, it became very clear that many students were struggling with loneliness, stress and anxiety and could benefit from some extra support.



We also decided we wanted to ensure our students knew they were not alone, and that support is here for them. We partnered with a brand called Karibu and created a gift box with hand-picked products from our team. The boxes included a range of snacks and care products all from sustainable and ethically sourced companies. The boxes were also entirely recyclable. We added a postcard with a message from the team and information card with student services contact details and advice on where to access help if necessary. The boxes were an excellent way to show students how much we care even when we are not around to engage with them in the way we normally would.



Some positives and outcomes:

As we are so used to interacting with our students on a face to face basis, the adjustment to working from home and still providing support was difficult. The gift boxes were a way to show students we were thinking of them and still aiming to create a positive experience. We encouraged students to share on social media when they had received their boxes, we had a great response from this. Some examples are shown below.

Karibu also agreed to donate £7 from each box to a foodbank charity, helping the SU to support and sustain our local environment.

Following the release of the digital handbook, we saw a great number of students download and interact with it. We also kept regular communication with student services and were happy to hear that some pressure had been lifted from them as students began utilising the resources shared and contacting the relevant channels of support rather than going through the overwhelmed student services department first.

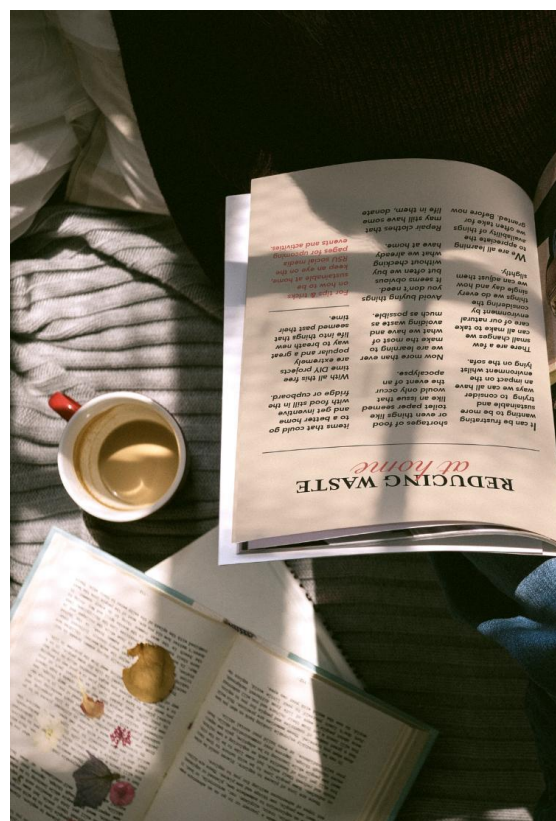
Plans to move forward:

The current team that have worked on this project are now coming to the end of our tenure as the students' union. However, as we begin the handover period to the new team, we are encouraging the continuation of positive projects like this one. Our first step has been to hand over assets of the handbook and encourage and discuss plans of continuing to create something similar in relation to the ongoing situation. There are no current plans to reopen the building as of yet and this may be a great opportunity to provide support and introduce the new team.

We are also providing contact details for companies we have worked with such as Karibu. We believe it could be great to offer some sort of gift box to first year students after enrolment to welcome them into Ravensbourne and having made a good relationship with the company, this is very achievable.

Recommendations:

During a very unusual and often overwhelming time, coming up with a project that was both relevant and useful to our students that we could run from home was difficult. However, prior to lockdown the team had not considered mental wellbeing as an angle of

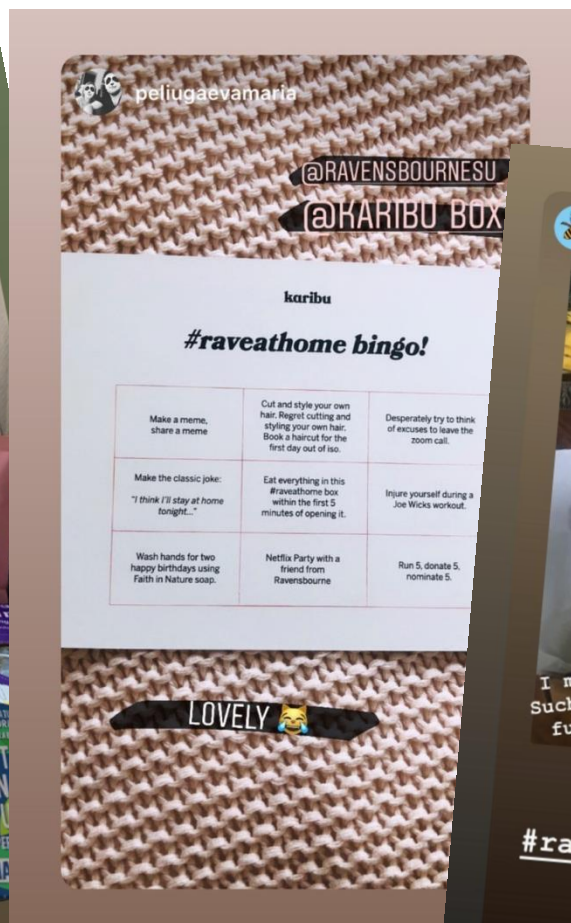


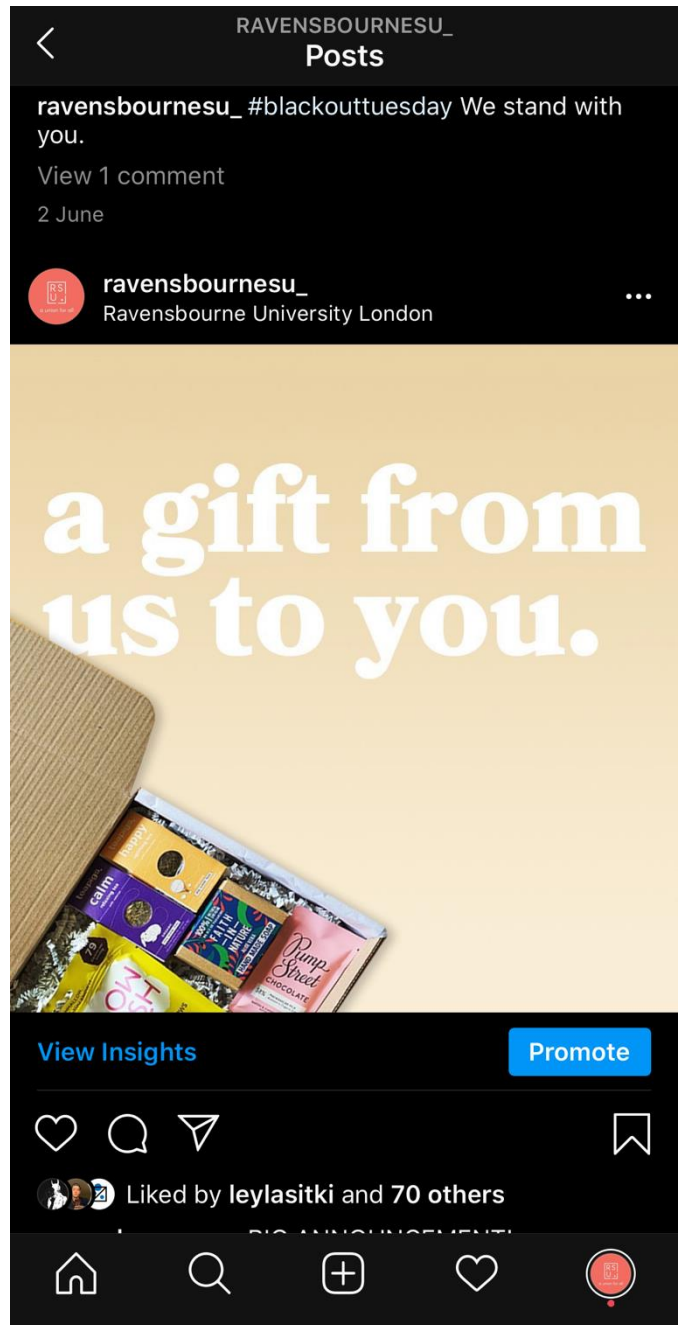
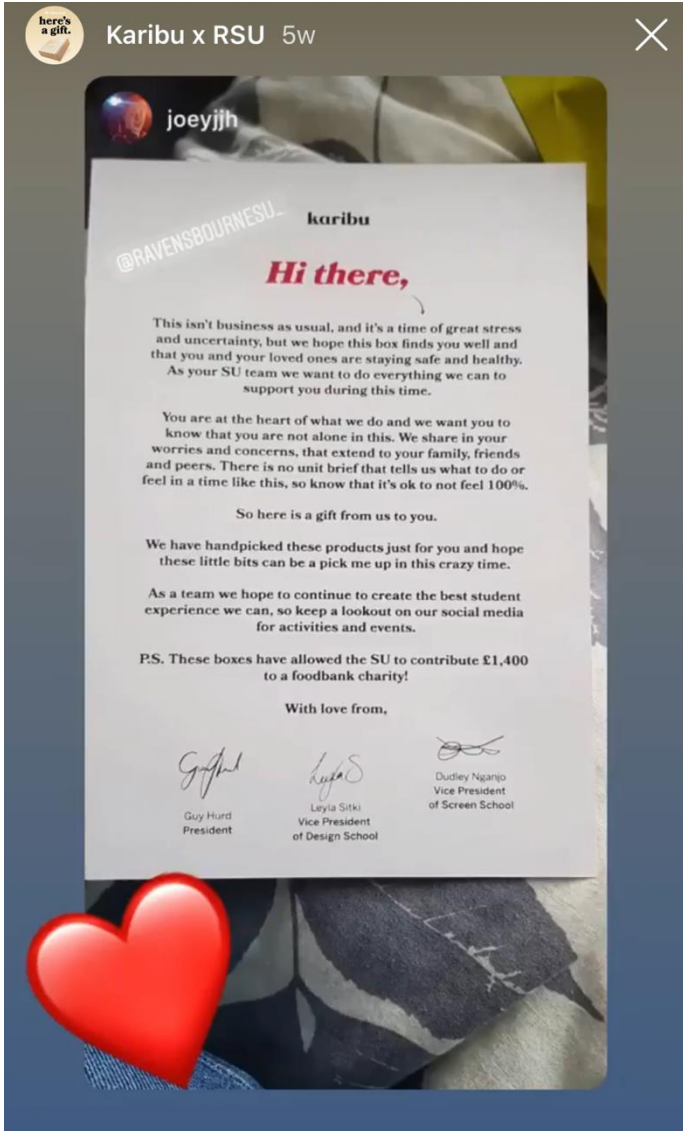
sustainability as we generally associate it with issues concerning the environment. I would encourage other teams to consider alternative ways to look at the issue of sustainability in relation to their student body and current issues.

I would also recommend working on a project that allows yourself and the team to connect with your students on a personal level. We found that students responded far better to this project than they did to our plans for our previous project. It was something that was very important to us and motivated us to create a project that not only tackles an issue of sustainability but also provides a positive and memorable student experience.



Social media response:





More images can be found on our Instagram page: @ravensbournesu\_