

WELFARE OFFICER'S REPORT TO COUNCIL 2.2.10

Dear Council, if anyone is interested in standing for the position of Welfare Officer, wants to chat about it or wants help with their manifesto, I'm happy to help!

Community Representatives

I have written and circulated (via email to all students and the website) the details of a trial Community Representative Scheme to run between February 15th and the end of June. There will be eight Community Representatives – ambassadors for the positive role students play in the local community, who will promote positive relations between students and local residents – in total, 2 in each of the following areas: Fallowfield, Moss Side/Hulme, Rusholme and Withington. This is outside of my remit, but I believe it will be a positive thing for the Students' Union, and it's about time we caught up with the many other Unions who have made community issues a big campaign focus.

Disabled Students

I have helped SKILL (National Bureau for Students with Disabilities) promote a focus group to our students. I have aided students who contacted me requesting to be registered for NUS Disabled Students Conference. I have also had a meeting with Emily Randall, now working for MENCAP (learning disabilities charity) about ways we can work together.

I have spoken to the RNID (Royal National Institute for the Deaf) about their Don't Lose The Music Campaign, and ways to support what I think is a really good idea. Possibilities include distributing attenuating earplugs, that turn the volume of music down while maintaining the quality and are fairly discreet too.

Fees

I will be one of the students meeting the Browne Committee who are looking at Higher Education funding. In line with my manifesto commitment, I will as ever be putting forward the position for free education.

Free Speech Week

I have contributed towards Free Speech Week (15th-19th Feb) by compiling information on freedom of speech in China and Iran for use on posters.

Holocaust Memorial Day

I have worked with the Jewish Society to promote Holocaust Memorial Day, helping with posters and other promotion, making a display board, providing a copy of The Pianist and organising a vigil.

Housing

I have worked with Manchester Student Homes (jointly owned by the University) to promote the February 1st list of accredited housing. I have also written a guide to house hunting with a handy checklist for Student Direct: Mancunian Edition.

Mental Health

Since the previous Council Meeting, I have held a Procrastination Workshop, which was attended by eighty students. I have distributed information on coping with procrastination to a further forty students who requested advice, but were unable to attend the workshop. I have seen several students about exam-related issues over the past weeks and given an interview on student depression to the Manchester Evening News.

I have registered myself for a meeting on Mental Wealth projects in Sheffield at the beginning of February. Sabbatical Officers and activists from across the north of England will attend this meeting, so it should be a good opportunity to see what can be done towards a better and more active mental health campaign here in Manchester.

Other

I have attended meetings with the rest of Executive on Rant Week and Union Propaganda (a newspaper about the Students' Union). I contributed to the Union Propaganda.

Owens Park

I have been working in close collaboration with those involved in pastoral care in Owens Park, advising, aiding and providing resources for campaigns around alcohol, drugs and sexual health. I ordered extra leaflets from the NHS containing information on the relationship between excessive alcohol consumption and sporting performance for the halls' sports and fitness facilities. My Safer Sex Quiz, which last term was taken by around 400 students, has been turned into a bar quiz for use at Owens Park.

Safety Bus

I found a driver for the Safety Bus over the exam period. I took the possibility of the police contributing funding to the Local Area Partnership (which looks at ways the police and the Universities can cut crime). I messaged all NUS lists to find details of Universities that fund Night Safety Buses themselves. Hazel will be drafting a petition to lobby the University with, and I'll be helping collect signatures.

Sexual Health

I have organised two more mass Chlamydia testing events with a Valentine's Day theme (suggestion of NHS RUClear scheme). The first will take place in the Students' Union foyer on February 12th; the second will take place in Owens Park on February 15th. The University of Manchester Students' Union tested the greatest number of people in a single event in the whole of Manchester last year, which is something I want to achieve again.

I have organised a team of condom fairies (who will also give out "Spikeys", anti drink spiking devices) at Pangaea, and worked with Jacques on a piñata full of condoms.

The day after this report is submitted, I will be attending a full day annual Condom Seminar, which is a requirement of the Students' Union remaining part of the NHS free condoms scheme.

Student Loans

Since the previous Council Meeting, I have appeared on BBC Radio Manchester and Channel M to discuss the students' loans crisis. When it emerged that there were students who had still not received tuition fees payments (at least one student was threatened with expulsion) I sent a letter to Pat Sponder, Head of Student Support who forwarded it to the Head of Student Services. It looks like the problem has been temporarily resolved with students' payments being deferred.

Student Safety

I have had a meeting with the University's Crime Reduction Advisor to discuss ways of working together. I have promoted student safety and bike marking stalls, and contributed student safety information resources to the University's campaign in halls and on campus. Prior to the holidays and following on from a violent crime, I produced a safety message that was set as the Message of the Day for the remainder of term.

I brought the information on where students feel unsafe in Manchester compiled by Hazel (originally as part of Reclaim the Night route planning) to the Local Area Partnership, liaising with police, the council and a government representative. The information went down well, so I'm going to work with Hazel to compile a more detailed look at where the problem areas are for students.

I have also attended the University's Health and Safety Committee, where I committed the Students' Union to involvement on the Fire Safety Committee, which deals with such incidents as malicious setting off of fire alarms in Halls.