

## OFFICER REPORTS – STUDENT COUNCIL

### Vice-President Welfare Officer Report

December 2019 Student Council

Katy Baker

### Summary

Over the past few weeks, I have been getting involved with different initiatives with the University and been organising campaigns on issues that affect students. As well as supporting student-body as a whole but also supporting students 1:1 with accessing the Emergency Hardship Fund and supporting students with their mental health with mental health first aid where necessary.

### Key Talking Points:

- Wellbeing steering group

I am part of the Wellbeing Steering Group at the University with pulls together different departments and expertise to come up with a wellbeing strategy to hopefully become the most wellbeing friendly campus in the country. In order to gather together all of our resources, the steering group has been split in to three stands: mental health, physical health and the environment. I am co-chairing the mental health strand by working with the other chairperson and looking at what the University and Students' Union currently offers while identifying the gaps. I am also bringing student concerns to the steering group and feeding in where wellbeing can be improved.

- LGBT halls

Having designated halls of residence for students who identify as being in the LGBT community is something that myself and the LGBT PTO Paul have been campaigning for and now that there is more 'hate crime' being heard of, we want students to feel safe. I have been working to escalate this to the University to express how much this is needed. Therefore, I have contacted Sheffield University to see how it has worked for them and the process they went through when campaigning. Myself and Paul hope to report back at next council about getting this accommodation ready for the next student intake.

- EHF and MHFA

I have been approached by students needing the Emergency Hardship Fund due to a range of struggles such as mental health and not getting their student finance until later in the term. I have worked hard to make sure each student was being listened to and to signpost to the most appropriate services both at the University and externally.

- Sexual Health Awareness Day

On Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> I organised and held a sexual health awareness day on campus. Staff from Northampton General Hospital sexual health outreach team and Boots graduate scheme were on hand to support students with how to have healthy relationships, provide sexual health testing, c-card samples and signposting to clinics around Northampton. I felt this was a really

important campaign because it increases education around the topic as well as awareness and tackling the stigma in getting treatment for your sexual health.

- Tea and Talk

Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> saw the University Learning Hub hold a Tea and Talk event, a national event to talk about mental health and tackle the stigma. I joined Jo Lester (Counselling and Mental Health team leader), lecturers and other student support staff in organising the day and which external services we were going to invite. On the actual day, I was there on behalf of the Students' Union to promote our societies to share that being part of a group who share a common interest is really important. It can also reduce loneliness and isolation in students, allow them to make new friends, try something new or improve at a skill.

## Report

### Manifesto Pledges

**Hold mental health panels led by lecturers & charities and to train the residential life team in mental health first aid.** Emma Dillon from the faculty of health, education and society works hard to train members of staff in mental health first aid and I am always communicating with her to see where there can be more opportunities for this. **Myself and Tom (PTO Sports Officer) are looking at organising an event where local elite sportspeople come in and share their experiences with students.**

**Provide healthy recipes which are easy & cheap to make; create a food bank for students to swap perishable foods with other students.** For a few weeks, I have been into the Mob Kitchen website and shared some recipes which can support student welfare. As well as healthy and on-budget recipes, it can reduce isolation and loneliness amongst students. I am currently in conversation with Tim Curtis about having cooking demonstrations and having a community fridge **as well a couple of sports teams being interested in having a donation box whereby students drop off their left over food to give to a food bank.**

**Support international students with adapting to the Uni and the town. Help them engage with the Students' Union & hold events for them.** Gemma, Ryan and Tre organised and held a 'welcome to Britain' party however I am looking at holding a Christmas party for the students.

**Meet regularly with the UoN Police team to make sure all students feel safe across all campus'** I have met with the police team a few times to discuss the most pressing issues on campus. I have also run an anti-spiking campaign with them to raise awareness of the dangers of spiking but also making sure students know the safe route home. I am often in contact with them to see how we can work together more. I am currently in talks about holding an amnesty day and going out with them on shift to get an insight on what happens around campus.

**Have weekly drop-in sessions so students can come to me with any concerns e.g. housing, budgeting, mental health or welfare in sport.** I am running the drop-in sessions twice a week, once in the Engine Shed and once in the Learning Hub to increase presence across campus. This is being used as a signposting tool so students are directed to the right services if they are concerned about

any welfare matters. **All of the sabbatical officers are now doing drop-in times and are holding forums to hear student concerns and to escalate them so they can be sorted.**

### **Setting students up for the next step e.g. guidance on housing and mental health early**

**intervention.** I am focusing on private-sector housing and health promotion as part of my role this year because I have heard from both students and landlords how important it is to feel safe and happy in your accommodation but also how this can affect your welfare. I sit on the Northampton Borough Council board where there are also some local landlords to discuss the issues that both landlords and tenants face. I am currently creating a site where students can 'rate their landlord' and 'rate their property'. In terms of setting students up for the next stages in terms of mental health, I am hoping that students reaching out and attending the mental health fair can help students. **I have been involved with other campaigns such Tea and Talk and organising a sexual health event.**

### **Making sure every student is heard across all campus' and all demographics engage in the**

**Students Union.** I have created a new wellbeing day called Togetherness Tuesday which has introduced a variety of activities to cater for students. October is being used as a trial month so from November there will be a proper timetable but if students have any ideas, I am more than welcome to try them.

I have also tried to reach out to different demographics during freshers by hosting a mocktail night with Gemma. This was held during one of the nights of freshers so there was a choice for students.

## **Other Activities**

### Mental Health Network

Each month I meet with members of University mental health team, Mental Health Nursing Lecturer, HR and external services supporting students e.g Northampton Healthcare Trust, Northamptonshire Young Carers and other members of NHS such as IAPT and Listening Post. Here we discuss different ways students are being supported and new initiatives to help those with ill-mental health even more. This meeting requires a Students' Union update at each meeting about the different activities we are doing as a Union but also any concerns about wellbeing in students too. This group now feeds in to the Wellbeing Steering group.

### Access audit

A few students have voiced concerns about inaccessibility on Waterside Campus particularly at the McColls shop due to not being able get in without assistance when a student or member of staff is in a wheelchair. In light of the concerns around different areas of the campus, Access Able are on campus to look at the changes which need to be made. I have been involved with sharing the concerns and expressed where the biggest changes need to be made.

## **Mandates**

N/A

**Declarations**

N/A

[END]