

Queen's Students' Union: Full-Time Student Officer Report

Role: Student Officer Welfare

Name: Jess Hindley

Period Covered: July 2024

Introduction

As the Welfare Officer, my role is to represent the interests of students in all matters related to their welfare. This is a broad remit which includes improving issues related to housing, accommodation, student safety, physical health, sexual health, mental health, and wellbeing. To achieve this, I lobby relevant departments and people within the university and government; engage with external and internal groups; and lead the Drug and Alcohol Impact (DAI) programme

My main priorities this year are drug and alcohol harm reduction, the Belfast Student Housing Co-Operative, and improving student safety. Due to the intensity of running the DAI programme, I have listed all of its related activities under a separate section of these reports.

General meetings and activities

- **New Team welcome and new term preparation**– The first month of the new officer team includes many welcome and introductory meetings with various teams across the union and university. This included meetings with the Bar Manager, Head of Campus Food and Drink, Queen's Sport. We also finalised the induction process. Although I am a returning officer, these meetings and trainings were useful to refresh my knowledge and connections in key areas of the university.
- **Interviewing Mind Your Mood Co-ordinators** – I was on the panel involved in the shortlisting, interviewing and selection of the Mind Your Mood Co-ordinators who will work within the Union's Mental Health and Wellbeing team.
- **Swapshop planning** – Initial discussions about the second ground floor unit began. The idea of a swap shop was progressed and discussions of how it would work were started
- **REBOOT** – We were able to tour REBOOT and discuss with the manager about future collaborations between REBOOT and the Students' Union.
- **Onboarding and Welcome** – Introduced to the proposed final onboarding/pre-entry portal. I asked questions regarding the inclusivity of the content and made suggestions about subtitles and transcripts for videos and podcasts
- **Due Diligence** – Meeting with a member of the SU Advice team to discuss issues regarding students being sent conduct letters (including reference to potentially serious consequences) for actions which they were accused of by people external to the university without sufficient evidence provided. Plan to discuss these concerns with the complaints team and determine what guidelines exist for determining if complaints against students from outside of the university are legitimate or not.

Drug and Alcohol Impact programme

- Chaired a meeting of the Drug and Alcohol Impact Steering Group discussing how different departments involved in the programme are furthering their criteria.
- Met with the appeals, conduct and complaints team to discuss potential changes to the conduct regulations to make the approach taken to student drug-related offences more in line with the principles of the drug harm reduction programme

- Attended a workshop hosted by SOS-UK on how to engage Clubs and Societies in alcohol awareness and harm reduction
- Monthly support call with SOS-UK to discuss potential improvements to our disciplinary processes regarding drug and alcohol use; the use of the Drink Aware drink-checkers; criteria regarding staff resourcing, training and collaboration between institutions; and planning for the on-site support day next month.
- Met with the Welfare Officer from UCD to discuss the DAI programme and how they can get involved with harm reduction initiatives.
- Meeting with the academic members of the DAI Steering Group to discuss their ongoing role in the programme; trends regarding drug use in Belfast; reliable sources of information and local drug and alcohol services; and production of a valuable harm reduction statement

Events

- **Convocation Dinner** – Meeting with the members of the Convocation Committee to discuss collaboration between the Students' Union and Alumni.
- **Pride** – Marched in Belfast Pride along with the Student Officer teams from QSU and UUSU, NUS-USI, and many Belfast-based students.
- **NUS Lead and Change** – Attended and participated in Lead and Change (3-day student officer training/conference organised by NUS). Met and built relationships with returning student officers from across the UK, sharing ideas and learnings from our first year in office; providing advice to first year officers. We learnt about the different roles that exist within the student movement and how we can use each of them in combinations to achieve our goals; effective organising tips within the student movement and effective lobbying tips within the university setting. We also shared ideas across unions for actions to take regarding the cost of living and support for trans students.