

EXECUTIVE OFFICER REPORT



Report Information

Officer Role:	Disabled Students Officer
Officer Name:	Kirstie Pope
Date of Meeting:	12/11/2020
Date of Previous Student Council:	15/10/2020

Reporting

Summary

In the past month my key initiatives have been continuing to raise awareness and access to the Sunflower Lanyard for those with hidden disabilities and hearing impairments. The scheme is now fully rolled out across campus. This has involved making a blog post for the SU website, sending information out via UNify and their social media channels. So far 48 lanyards and cards have been distributed and the feedback, from both staff and students, has been positive.

The key thing I have been engaging with over the past few weeks is my BSL training for frontline staff. This is a course that runs 3 times per week over 4 weeks. The weeks cover the BSL alphabet (or finger signing), key question words, basic pleasantries and standard signs and University specific signs. Most sessions have had around 6 staff members in attendance. I am running these as a priority in terms of accessibility. The idea behind this is, it will better support our hearing-impaired students, due to the difficulties they are having associated with lip reading and mask wearing. I'm hoping to do another 4 week block for staff in the new year and will offer alternative sessions for students as well.

The third thing I have been working on is training Carers' Champions. This is something I started as a student before taking on this role, however being in this role has facilitated my access to staff and spaces. The goal of this is to make our campus more carer aware. The scheme involves myself and the Northamptonshire Young Carers' Service Manager training up to 50 university staff members as our Carers Champions. The training aims to promote awareness and surrounding the challenges Young Carers face here and explores how they can be best supported. Becoming a Carers' Champion does not add to their job role as such. Once trained, much like with the Mental Health First Aiders, they will be given a badge and have their photo/details shared on the (up-and-coming) carers page of the Student Hub, as well as in the booklet I am creating. This will make them identifiable and recognisable. I feel this is of huge importance, as according to The Carers Trust, over 75% of Young Carers tell their university about their role, however almost half felt that it has been pointless, as there was nobody there to recognise or help them. As a Young Carer myself, although I have received incredibly support at UoN, I can identify with having nobody to turn to specifically in relation to my caring

role. I now want to give Young Carers coming here the support and facilities I didn't have when I first arrived. It took me over 5 years to find myself the right support at the university and within Northamptonshire in relation to my caring role. I don't want other Young Carers to feel as lost and as overwhelmed as I did.

I realise in the past Young Carers have not been included within the 'disabled students' bracket, however I disagree with this. It does 'disable' and disadvantage these young people and that is why I have chosen to adopt it within this role. There is no other service or role that encompasses them. As I already have the knowledge and experience, I felt like it would be appropriate. The first group training took place on 5th November and the second will be 24th November.

I have also recently been having conversations with Susie surrounding the Campaign to Change and trying to make the campus more accessible for students on the spectrum and those with sensory needs. At the moment I am trying to put together more staff training, consider reasonable adjustments and begin creating an Autism Advisory Panel. This is going to be a big project, but definitely worthwhile and should prompt some necessary changes as well as raise a lot of awareness. It will also lead nicely into my Autism Pride event next year.

I have continued to meet with staff and students to discuss accessibility issues. I went round all of the disabled toilets on campus and presented photographic evidence of the inequalities to the university in comparison to the other toilets. For example, some of the LH disabled toilets don't have mirrors and there was one without a sanitary bin. The bin issue has now been sorted, the mirrors are a work in progress. That is not as quick a fix.

I also started discussions at the Disability Coordinators meeting about life priority cards and 'clinically vulnerable' badges. I will continue to follow this up. I am still following up on updates regarding the sensory room weekly as well. In order to keep student feedback as paramount in these meetings, I have been trying to record student experiences online and have offered drop ins as well. These have specifically been centring around disabled students' experiences this term and how accessible they have found their classes or the university services.

Finally, I (virtually) met with last year's Accessibility Officer from the University of Leicester. That role is their equivalent of the Disabled Students' Officer. She gave me a lot of tips and ideas. She also sent me her end of year report and I am going to use some of those points to guide a few of my ideas for next term.

Manifesto Pledges

What have you done in this reporting period (between the last Council meeting and now) to get you closer to achieving your manifesto pledges?

Manifesto Point	Progress Since Last Meeting	RAG Rating
5 – Make sure mental health conditions are considered as equal to physical disabilities	Continued - The Sunflower Lanyard Scheme is all about promoting hidden disabilities and ensuring that students are treated accordingly. This includes mental health conditions and neurodevelopmental conditions, such as Autism. The training I have been doing with staff is also centring on more hidden disabilities – like hearing impairments too.	
4 - Ensure that every student with a disability is listened to and given the correct support.	I have been doing a lot of signposting in relation to services and DSA. I have also chased applications and asked questions on the behalf of students. I have been trying to collect the opinions and experiences of disabled students this term as well to feed back how accessible services and lectures are.	
3 – Facilitate conversations through running drop ins and hosting events	I have been hosting numerous events/training this month, mainly to engage with staff in order to promote a better, more inclusive and understanding environment for students. These have facilitated conversations around hearing impairments and what it means to be a young carer.	
2 – Support students to disclose and seek help for hidden disabilities.	Again, the Sunflower Lanyard Scheme has been a driving force in this. I have supported students to disclose to ASSIST and the Mental Health Team, as well as to their tutors and residential life staff.	
1 - Promote a better sensory experience and more inclusive environment for students with Autism.	This is the work I am currently doing in relation to Campaign for Change and with Susie's support. We have the up-and-coming sensory room, but (in my opinion) that is not enough. The wider campus needs to be more accessible overall. This is why I am implementing the new training and the Autism Advisory Panel. Then the planning of Autism Pride next year.	

Mandates

What have you done in this reporting period (between the last Council meeting and now) to get you closer to completing your mandates?

Mandate	Date of Mandate	Progress Since Last Meeting	RAG Rating
	MM/YY		
	MM/YY		
	MM/YY		
	MM/YY		
	MM/YY		

Other Items

Please highlight any other notable actions since the last Council meeting.

Issue/Action	Progress Since Last Meeting

Declarations

Please highlight any gifts or benefits received as part of your role in the reporting period.

Gift/Benefit	Value	Reason
N/A		

Meetings

Please list all meetings you have attended in your capacity as a student representative during the reporting period. In the update section, please focus on the issues discussed and how you represented student views in that meeting.

Meeting Name	Date	Length of Meeting (Hours)	Update
	DD/MM/YYYY	HH:MM	
Met with Louise Kirby	19/10/2020	01:00	We talked about reasonable adjustments on campus and Autism training for staff.
Met with LLS Team			Discussed both the BSL training and the Carers' Champions Team. As key members of frontline staff I wanted to ensure that the maximum number of individuals would be able to attend. I also gathered their feedback on what they thought would be most useful. We spoke about opening hours and weekend access as well.
Disability Coordinators Meeting	26/10/2020	00:45	Discussed the Sunflower Lanyard Scheme, the BSL training and Carers' Champion training. Also raised issues with accessibility on campus – including the toilets, lifts and mask wearing.
Exec Committee	27/10/2020	02:00	Gave an update of what I have achieved, as well as discussing plans for the coming month and looked through proposals.
Met with Jenny Townend	28/10/2020	00:50	Discussed masks, accessibility and the upcoming training. We also spoke about plans for the next month in relation to Autism awareness and sensory difficulties.
Met with Susie	29/10/20	00:45	We discussed Campaign for Change and accessibility on campus. I came away with a plan of how I am going to approach the next stages of supporting a better environment for those on the spectrum and how I can go ahead with staff training. We also discussed potential pledges and areas for the university.
Met with Natasha K	31/10/20	1:00	We spoke about what she implemented at the University of Leicester and her end of year report. She gave me a lot of ideas and pointers. I plan to implement some of these next term and alongside the Campaign to Change.

Timesheet

Please list your work hours during the reporting period and your main work location for that day.

	Week 1: 19/10/2020						Total Hours: 13:00
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
In	9:00	11:00	11.00	10.00	9:00	-	-
Out	12:00	1:00	2:00	11:00	12:00	-	-
Total	4:00	2:00	3:00	1:00	3:00	-	-
Location	Home	Home	WS	WS	Home	-	-
	Week 2: 26/10/2020						Total Hours: 15:30
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
In	10:30	5:00	9:30	10.30	9:00	8.30	-
Out	2:30	7.00	12:30	3:00	10:00	9.30	-
Total	4:00	2:00	3:00	4:30	1:00	1.00	-
Location	WS	Home	WS	WS	Home	Home	-
	Week 3: 02/11/2020						Total Hours: 14:00
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
In	12:00	11:00	9.00	1:00	9:00	-	-
Out	3:00	1.00	12.00	6:00	10:00	-	-
Total	3:00	2:00	3.00	5:00	1:00	-	-
Location	Home	WS	WS	WS	Home	-	-
	Week 4: 09/11/2020 - ESTIMATED						Total Hours: 13:30
	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
In	12:00	11.00	9.30	10.30	9:00	-	-
Out	3:00	1.00	12.30	3.00	10:00	-	-
Total	3:00	2:00	3:00	4:30	1:00	-	-
Location	WS	Home	WS	WS	Home	-	-