

AGM Report For LGBTQ+ Officer

Name:

Jesse Phillips.

Role:

LGBTQ+ Officer

Progress on Manifesto Pledges:

In my manifesto, I made 5 key promises to Lancaster University Students:

1. *Raise awareness of transphobia in our University (and in academia in general), and what we as students (and as members of a Students' Union) can do to combat it.*

During my time in office, I (along with a multitude of trans+ students and staff members at the University) joined in the consultation to get a Trans Inclusion policy in place at Lancaster University. This was implemented last autumn, to make our University a safer place for trans+ students. Although it's far from perfect and we still have work to do, we're in a much better position to tackle institutionalised transphobia within our University now than we were one year ago. I had hoped to do more, with the help of the LGBTQ+ Forum to run events on campus to raise awareness of the issues trans+ students face in academia, but this has – unfortunately not been possible to do safely due to COVID-19.

2. *Reform the “welfare hour” system our welfare officers use to make them more inviting (as people often don't know about them or are scared to visit), following a consultation with the forum. As a part of this reform, I will personally hold at least two dedicated welfare hours per week in a safe space for people to come and talk, to give everyone a voice. A part of this reform will be increasing the advertising of welfare hours to the forum, so people know when and where they are.*

Both for myself and the other LGBTQ+ Forum welfare officers, this year has presented unique challenges that we didn't expect when I wrote the manifesto. The majority of us have been holding dedicated and regular welfare hours in the Forum's Discord server throughout the year, as well as hosting additional ad-hoc welfare support sessions where needed in response to recent events. Although we haven't seen the sweeping reforms we'd hoped for, I'm incredibly proud of the whole team for every bit of support we've been able to offer throughout the pandemic.

3. *Remove the “mystery” associated with exec meetings by ensuring minutes and agendas are published for the forum to see, as well as inviting members of the forum to have input on what topics are discussed.*

With the support of Sophie (our Students' Union LGBTQ+ Officer-Elect, and current Vice-Chair of the LGBTQ+ Forum), and Luke (LGBTQ+ Forum Faith Officer), as well as the backing of the entire Forum Executive Committee, we've been able to achieve this goal. All of the relevant documents are available on the Students' Union website, and are regularly updates, as well as being posted to the LGBTQ+ Forum's Discord server for discussion and scrutiny by the membership. This year has also seen a couple of items brought to the committee by non-executive members of the Forum, a trend which I look forward to seeing grow and flourish to ensure greater democracy and better representation for all LGBTQ+ students over the coming years.

4. *Reach out with LGBTQ+ awareness campaigns which reach further than our university by working with other universities across the country and across the world.*

COVID-19 has again made this a difficult venture, but we have persisted. As well as having been a guest speaker at events run by the LGBTQ+ Forum, by Lancaster University, and by the University of Cumbria, talking both about my own experiences, and about the experiences of LGBTQ+ students at Lancaster University, I've been engaging with the NUS' "LGBT+ Student Campaigners Network" and "Trans Student Campaigners Network" to ensure Lancaster is represented in National campaigning.

I hope to go continue to push our campaigning work outside the University, and I'm currently in talks with activists from other worth-western Universities about a potential future campaign surrounding access to and awareness around trans+ healthcare. I've also been personally involved in the national campaign to ban so-called conversion "therapy" and am hoping to work with the LGBTQ+ Forum to further that campaign in Lancaster.

5. *Ramp-up cross-campus activities to support the LGBTQ+ community with other forums, societies, sports clubs, and colleges. This will include building up a safe space for LGBTQ+ people of faith, ensuring that society and sports club branded clothing have people's pronouns, and working with FTOs and staff to ensure the Students' Union becomes a safe space for LGBTQ+ people of all backgrounds.*

This has been the largest part of my work this year, having started to lay the groundwork back in spring of 2020 to ensure the LGBTQ+ Forum supports LGBTQ+ students of faith with a dedicated welfare officer and safe space for them to express their faith and their identity without fear of repercussion. This was approved by the Forum Executive Committee in the summer and voted on by the Forum in the autumn.

I worked alongside Paul and Amy in December on Stonewall's annual Rainbow Laces campaign to tackle bullying and prejudice against LGBTQ+ people in sport. Although I haven't been able to achieve everything I would've liked to do to further inclusivity in our sports teams, I'd like to congratulate both Paul and everyone who's played any part in ensuring that Lancaster's sports teams are more inclusive now than ever before, and I hope that this will carry on into the future.

I also wrote the Students' Union's Safe Space Policy, which seeks to ensure that our Students' Union is an environment in which any student can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, by instituting regulations designed to encourage students to converse freely about difficult topics in a manner which is consensual to all parties to promote the welfare of all students. This was passed by the Students' Union Executive Committee in the Autumn.

Whilst it's safe to say that very little this past year has happened as I intended when I wrote my manifesto, primarily due to the unprecedented situation in which we find ourselves, I am glad to have managed to achieve or partially achieve all five of my manifesto promises, and will endeavour to continue to work on them throughout the summer term.

Other Projects I Have Been Working On:

Various reports over the past years have shown an increased gap in the support available to students at universities, and for members of minority communities, this is doubled. I've been privileged to combat this by working alongside the LGBTQ+ Staff Network and the EDI Team in the University to set up a Staff LGBTQIA+ Ally Network, with staff in all departments around the University volunteering to offer their support and a listening ear to LGBTQ+ Students in need. I've had the privilege of being one of the Ally Network's guest speakers, as well as helping them as they

begin their work to better support LGBTQ+ Students. I'd like to thank Bella, Amy, Terry, Giuseppe, Ann-Marie, and all of the volunteers for all of the work they've put in to making this vision a reality.

During LGBTQ+ History Month in February, I was privileged to work with the Library on their various campaigns and projects to celebrate LGBTQ+ History, as well as to assist them in running a "meet the author" session with Damian Barr, which was well-attended by both staff and students. I also had the honour of being a panellist and speaker at the university of Cumbria's "A Life Worth Living" event, talking about the experiences of LGBTQ+ students, and of LGBTQ+ people of faith, as well as highlighting the work we're doing here at Lancaster University.

This spring, I worked with the Students' Union Executive Committee and LGBTQ+ Forum to support a number of trans+ students experiencing targeted abuse and transphobic hate speech online. I worked with the LGBTQ+ Forum to run campaigns around tackling transphobia online and to run welfare sessions in the wake of the incidents. Whilst this issue is still ongoing, and minority groups will likely always face discrimination, the LGBTQ+ Forum and Students' Union are in a far better situation to tackle it now than ever before.

This year has been difficult for us all, and as a minority community, LGBTQ+ people have been both disproportionately affected by the pandemic, and by the ever-increasing rate in hate crimes around the world. I'm eternally grateful for the support I've had from Kara in the Chaplaincy, Terry and Giuseppe in the LGBTQ+ Staff Network, and Luke and TJ in the LGBTQ+ Forum in working together to organise vigils for both the Trans+ Day of Remembrance and the Pulse Night of Remembrance to remember and pay respects to our friends and family who have unfortunately passed away. It's been an honour to be able to share that space, albeit via Teams, with so many other students in our hour of need.

Priorities for the remainder of the year:

For the rest of the year, I have four main priorities, which are as follows:

1. To work with the LGBTQ+ Forum in supporting the nationwide campaign for a legislative ban on conversion therapy.
2. To continue to offer support and help to victims of transphobia and hate crimes against trans+ individuals within our student body.
3. To provide a smooth transition and adequate handover to my successor, Sophie, so that they can hit the ground running when they take over from me this summer.
4. To ensure that the Students' Union, LGBTQ+ Forum, and University make adequate provisions to support LGBTQ+ students during pride month.

Officer Budget Expenditure:

So far this year, I have spent £62.51 on flags for the LGBTQ+ Forum to use in their campaigns throughout LGBTQ+ History Month, and in other campaigns in the future. I have also spent £24.60 on printing for the LGBTQ+ Forum's Poster campaign for LGBTQ+ History Month. This totals £87.11.

The main reason for this underspend has been that the LGBTQ+ Forum usually reserves a large amount of the funding to aid in running trips to Canal Street in Manchester, which have not gone ahead this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I intend to spend more of my budget on campaigns throughout the summer term, as well as on running Pride Month events for LGBTQ+ students in June.