

**Men’s Officer Proposal**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Contact details** | |
| Your name (Proposer of the policy) | William Styles |
| Your email | [william.styles@students.plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:william.styles@students.plymouth.ac.uk) |
| The name of a person who supports the policy (Seconder of the policy) | Saffron Deemer Daniella Marley  Isabel Saxby |
| Seconder’s email | [philippa.deemer@students.plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:philippa.deemer@students.plymouth.ac.uk) [daniella.marley@students.plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:daniella.marley@students.plymouth.ac.uk) [isabel.saxby@students.plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:isabel.saxby@students.plymouth.ac.uk) |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Student Impact** | |
| Have you consulted students about your proposal? Please explain how many students you have engaged with and how. | All original consultations around this role’s creation were relevant and pertain to this motion, that being 202 sample students 2020  113 self-identified male students 2019 |
| How does your proposal impact the students at the University of Plymouth, what difference will it make to students? | -Strengthens existing designated role for issues and campaigns  -Be an unambiguous signpost for male issues  -Allow simple groupings and collaborations |

|  |
| --- |
| **Policy Proposal** |
| **The Union Notes** (Facts) This section should include facts, not reflection or opinions. Please provide references where possible. |
| 1. The existing Men’s Welfare Part Time Officer is not a mandated, designated role within any sub committees with other demographic roles due to lack of an equalities mandate and not belonging to the group operating within the category known as liberation as established by the NUS before UPSU became disaffiliated. 2. The identification as a “Welfare” role without comparison suggest it is a sub-category of the Welfare role creating disjointed thinking and broken collaboration between other demographic roles. 3. There has been much confusion among Students around the name of this role with such misnaming as “Men’s Health Officer”, “Deputy Welfare Officer” and “Men’s Mental Wellbeing Officer”. 4. Where “Men’s” roles exist in other universities, there is no distinction between them and the other roles with the UWE Men’s Welfare Officer being a liberation category role. |
| **The Union Believes** (Opinions/Beliefs) This section requires reflection on the facts stated in ‘The Union Notes’ |
| 1. Our Part-Time roles need to be clear, and transparent in their objectives and structure for ease of understanding and ease of locating the correct contact point. 2. It would be beneficial to mandate the engagement of the men’s role in the equalities, diversity and inclusion sub-committee to support and deliver the objectives therein for all students. 3. As with UWE, it would be beneficial to have a clear structuring to our Part-Time Officer roles. |
| **The Union Resolves** (Actions) Here you will describe the action you want to be taken, be specific. |
| 1. A name change of the “Part-Time Men’s Welfare Officer” role to become “Part-Time Men’s Officer” to be identified within 2.1.3 of UPSU Governing Documents Union Council Bye Law. 2. The role to include an equalities mandate. 3. To be mandated to run all campaign for its first year of existence under this new name in collaboration with at least 1 of the following: the Part-Time Transgender & Non-Binary Officer, Part-Time Women’s Officer or Part-Time LGBT+ Officer. This is to promote a high standard and set a precedent year of collaborative action. |
| **Appendices/supporting information** Please include any supporting information relevant to your motion, this could include; consideration of how you would achieve any points in ‘The Union Resolves’, links to news articles or online publications |
|  |

**Excerpt from minutes of meeting 31st March 2022**

|  |
| --- |
| Men’s Officer Proposal |
| Will Styles – PT Men’ Welfare Officer, gave an overview of the proposal  The Chair clarified the UWE is University of the West of England  Owain Gullam – PT Societies Officer, noted he was on Union Council last year and one of the reasons that he voted for the role was because it was a Men’s Welfare Officer role. Having looked at the position in UWE, which came under a lot of criticism, in 2018, the second year of its existence, no-one stood for the role. In the second year of the existence of the Men’s Welfare role at Plymouth, no-one has stood for it. The current role is Men’s’ Welfare Officer and that position protects the post holder from the abuse that the Men’s Officer suffered at UWE.  Will questioned if the concern was that the post holder would be abused.  Owain replied that is what previous experience has shown. There is no previous experience at Plymouth but elsewhere has shown that. Plymouth does not need a Men’s Officer but does need a Men’s Welfare Officer, there is an important distinction to make between the roles.  Saffron Deemer – PT Women’s Officer pointed out that every other group has an officer, the only group not represented by a part-time officer technically is heterosexual, CIS gendered men under the age of 25. That’s quite a lot of the population of the university. There is the Men’s Welfare Officer but there should be representation in a non-exclusionary way.  Mads Morton – VP Activities, questioned Will Styles, current post holder of the Men’s Welfare Officer role, as to what work they have done since the start of the year and asked how would changing the name make a difference to what can be achieved.  Will commented that he had been told that the remit is only welfare and they are not permitted to pursue anything outside of that remit. So things like students being sexually harassed on nursing placement and it not being dealt with, that is an issue of discrimination and not welfare.  Mads asked if there had been any students approach them with specific welfare issues as they haven’t seen any campaigns. Will noted that the work is detailed on the [Mens Welfare Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/upsumensofficer/) page  Joyita Ashton-Simon – School of Psychology Rep noted that it was not so easy to hear online but asked for clarification on their understanding that the change in name is to boost engagement with students.  Will clarified that that was not entirely correct, that it was not about engagement, it was about broadening the role so that they can cover everything.  Mads reiterated the question about which campaigns have been done. Will noted that they could not help but feel that the question felt like an attack on what they have been doing this year. Mads explained that it was not attack, it was just a question about what has been done this year and what might that look like next year if the role changed.  Will acknowledge that it is not for them to say what might happen next year. Will continued to explain that the student at UWE got the support they needed and that in their opinion the backlash was against it being the first nationally. Whereas Plymouth created the Men’s Welfare role first. If any of the Part-time Officers experienced abuse there are systems and support in place to deal with that.  Lucy Metaj – School of Society and Culture Rep asked how the title of Men’s Welfare Officer limited the role and asked what the change would mean.  Daniella Marley – PT Welfare Officer, noted that the main things are that the use of the Men’s Welfare title has led to a lot of confusion and students have been calling it Men’s Health Officer, Deputy Welfare Officer and a lot of male students still don’t feel represented because the role is not clear in what it is doing. The role is not currently representing men, its representing men’s welfare which is something different and it doesn’t feel as inclusive or representing to the men whom have given feedback.  Daniella also add that the remit is much smaller than it could be, as Men’s Officer you can deal with discrimination against men whilst as Men’s Welfare Officer, you can only deal with welfare concerns which whilst important, does limit what can be worked on.  Mads questioned why the role can’t help with other issues impacting men. Will explained that the remit boundaries are that they are not allowed, they can help welfare but not other issues.  Mads asked how they could then help if the role was Men’s Officer. Will responded that they could then lobby and work with a students’ course, for example.  Charlie Atkinson – VP Education highlighted that the proposal is not just seeking to change the name of the role, it is also calling that the role is eligible for self-identifying males only. Also in the union notes, it says that the last time students were consulted about this was 2020, Charlie questioned where the feedback for the policy proposal came from.  Will explained that in 2020 they discussed the matter with 250 students face to face whilst collecting signatures for a petition.  Charlie highlighted that a significant proportion of student body has changed since then and asked where the feedback about the role being misnamed had come from. Will acknowledged that this was only this year.  Mads added that as the argument of misnaming is being used as evidence, it should be more evidential than anecdotal, they added that they have never heard of the role being misnamed.  Daniella explained that Will was being vague as the feedback came from the Welfare Wednesday, led by the Welfare Officer. There was a takeover in collaboration with the Men’s Welfare Officer, there were 20 students that came into the SU and a few online. It was through that that students asked what the Men’s Officer is. It was not formal feedback but is it from this year and it is recent.  Owain Gullam – PT Societies Officer, commented that there was no reason why school reps and other people in other positions could not lead on those campaigns and in some ways they would be better equipped to do so. For example, the situation of a male nursing student could be dealt with by the relevant School Rep. Also, the point about not having representation for heterosexual, CIS gendered, males under the age of 25. Owain noted that as someone who identifies with every single one of those categories, they did not feel the need for the role because the issues highlighted are represented elsewhere.  Owain added that the UWE role has gone back to being a Men’s Welfare role after the abuse they suffered. Will commented that all the UWE roles are called xxx Welfare Officer, so Men’s Welfare Officer, Women’s Welfare Officer etc. and they are all liberation roles. So their Men’s Welfare Officer would be the equivalent of what our Men’s Officer would be.  Owain pointed out that the proposal seeks to give an equalities mandate so that it is protected from people who are not self-identifying as being male from running. Protecting it from what happened last year when someone that did not identify as being male stood for the role. This created a considerable backlash, more than would have been expected for a role created last year for a role that has not been filled this year. Owain added that in their opinion, the need for this role has so many question marks over it.  Will questioned what the point of that comment was. Owain responded that the point was that the role has not been filled, this conversation is now about a role with no-one in the seat that has already suffered backlash.  Will added that the role would not start until next year and it is rare for all roles to be filled at this juncture. Owain pointed out that Part-time Elections happened last week. Will explained that they were going to run but did not in the end.  Will noted that they believe there is a structural issue as to where the role belongs as it does not belong with the demographic roles but it is does not technically belong with the Welfare role either because that suggests that there are other roles within the welfare catergory.  Will added that with the person that ran last year, they spoke against the proposal at Union Council and quite clearly ran as a protest campaign, doing the role a dis-service. Will felt, if anything, that is a strong reason for why it needs to be protected to prevent anything harmful happening to the role.  Mads questioned if Will thought that person would do that. Will said they have evidence to suggest that is the case.  Owain noted that was not the point they were making, if it was the case that that person did run a protest campaign, they did not receive no votes, the votes they received were then people that joined them on their protest which is fair enough. Now the role has not been filled so that is a good reason not to open the role to more abuse and not self-define it.  Will commented that the proposal is to remove one word from the post name, its not a big deal. Mads questioned why its being done if it’s ‘not a big deal’. Will clarified that it is not a big a deal as a structural change that allows the role to do more. Will questioned if that is not what everyone wants from the roles.  Daniella suggested that the protest vote could be seen as a protest vote but they joined the university this year and saw the two manifestos and they were both great manifestos and if they did not know the other candidate personally and did not know they were running as a protest, the manifesto was written as if it was a legitimate manifesto and so that is why they would have voted for it. So a lot of people were not protest voting. The abuse cannot be measured as if the protest votes were protest votes, based on how the candidate ran their campaign.  Daniella also added that they did not think the name should be kept as Welfare based on the abuse that they may receive. You could say that about any role, the SU do protect the roles against abuse.  Charlie reiterated that it is not just one word that is being changed, there are other changes as part of the policy. Charlie questioned what the reason for the third clause was and why have students asked for it (The role to be “self-identified male” only with all members being eligible to vote.)  Will responded that it is very odd to think of a men’s role where there is not a male in it. As a student interacting with the role, you would expect a man to be talking about men’s issues. This is recognised in therapy when assigning individuals to speak to, so it definitely has value  Mads noted that there are things in place to support students already, course and school reps as well as other officers. Mads asked what a part-time Men’s Officer would do that is not already being done  Will explained that it was mentioned in training that no single issue is addressed by one single role, there is always collaboration, including the Sabbs who collaborate on everything, so this is just another thing to collaborate on. There are things that they are not able to collaborate on.  Owain pointed out that there was nothing in the mandate that said they could not collaborate on. Will noted that they had received an email from Tracy (Representation and Democracy Manager) about it.  Lucy Metaj suggested that where it was noted that there is confusion for students and after looking at the instgram mentioned, it may be helpful to have a resource included to explain the remit and the role.  Richard Stanton commented that the issue with the role as it currently is are the niche pockets that are not covered, like the one which they found themselves in. Richard noted that Will had helped as much as they could but then reached the end of their remit. The uni helped as much as they could but they reached the end of their remit . There are areas where there are overlap but there are bubbles missed entirely.  Richard added that by extending the remit of Men’s Welfare Officer to Men’s Officer, it would cover those bubbles. This would help protect all of the students from all of the issues, other than being welfare based.  Tracy Priestman clarified that she has discussed with Will about the appropriateness of activities undertaken by a Part-time Officer, as opposed to giving advice and approaching support services on behalf of students. Will noted that was a recent conversation, there was another conversation that took place either at the very start of this year or at the end of last year.  Tracy added that everyone has a remit to the role they hold and everyone is expected to run campaigns and carry out activity in line with a manifesto. Tracy explained that there is also a degree of collaboration between roles. Tracy was unsure of the conversation Will was referring to.  Daniella acknowledged that there is a remit for each role and that there are appropriate places to go for each role but there is no one to go for male discrimination. Women can go to the Women’s Officer about discrimination  Charlie highlighted that if there are issues of discrimination, for any role, the best thing to do is to signpost to the relevant services. Please do not give advice, there are experts who are insured and qualified, this protects both reps and students. There is a [speak up tool](https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/student-life/services/student-services/speak-up#:~:text=Use%20our%20Speak%20Up%20repor,relationship%20or%20domestic%20abuse) within the university and the SU Advice Centre can always support.  Owain referred to Charlie’s comment and suggested that Will could quite easily have signposted any of the issues they were unable to deal with to professionals, who are paid for their expertise. There is always a bigger fish to deal with the issues where the Part-time Officer mandate ends.  Will noted that he can, and has, signposted but then did reach brick walls which is why the role needs to step in and run campaigns to fix those structural issues. By changing the role, it can be more, and Will wanted the role to be more so that more can be done. Will added that there is no harm in a role that can do more.  Charlie acknowledged what Will said about wanting to do more with the role but it is making a role that fewer people can stand for, thereby limiting the life experience and approach taken being brought to the role. The self-identifying clause was of concern to them personally.  Charlie proposed that Union Resolves point 3 was removed   1. The role to be “self-identified male” only with all members being eligible to vote.   As the amendment was not accepted by the proposer, a vote was required  The Chair asked for votes to remove Union Resolves point 3 only  For: 7  Against: 3  Abstention: 0  It was noted that Saffron had left at the point of voting  As the meeting was not quorate, votes from absent members would need to be sought before the votes for the motion in its entirety are sought, this will be via email  Final voting numbers for the amendment, including email votes  For: 13  Against: 4  Abstentions: 1  The amendment passed and voting on the amended proposal took place via email. At the close of voting the votes were tied with 10 for and 10 against, therefore, as per the Union Council Bye-law the Chair had the casting vote.  Final voting numbers for the amended policy were;  For: 11  Against: 10  Abstentions: 0 |