

Contact details

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Student Impact

Have you consulted students about your proposal? Please explain how many students you have engaged with and how.	202 sample students 2020 113 self-identified male students 2019 294 sample students 2016 Surveys conducted on top of SU at lunch times (pre-covid)
How does your proposal impact the students at the University of Plymouth, what difference will it make to students?	-Affords designated role for issues and campaigns -Be a signpost and beacon for recognition of male wellbeing -Improve reporting, monitoring, and campaigning on welfare issues

Policy Proposal

The Union Notes (Facts) This section should include facts, not reflection or opinions. Please provide references where possible.

1. Research shows that men can face specific challenges in terms of mental health.
2. Men are two thirds less likely to report difficulties and access help than women. Cultural stigma is cited as the leading cause of male silence.
3. Male University attendance in Plymouth and Nationally has been dropping (by percentage) across the last decade, as has attainment, while drop outs and male students' suicides continue to rise.
4. Male domestic abuse statistics show a rise across the nation currently at 22% (23% in Devon & Cornwall)
5. of 203 Plymouth Students (2020);
-99% of male presenting students support the creation of a Part-Time Men's role
-100% of female presenting students support the creation of a Part-Time Men's role
6. of 113 Plymouth Students (2019);

- Plymouth male students are unsure if their wellbeing is valued.
- Plymouth male students feel men's mental health is overlooked.
- While over 85% of Plymouth male students have recognised poor mental health in a fellow male student, only two thirds felt the person recognised it within themselves with 1 in 5 not knowing anything that could be done.
- 20% of Plymouth male students have been victims of domestic abuse

7. of 294 Plymouth Students (2016);
- 96% of female presenting students support the creation of a Part-Time Men's role
 - 99% of male students presenting support the creation of a Part-Time Men's role

The Union Believes (Opinions/Beliefs) This section requires reflection on the facts stated in 'The Union Notes'

1. Men on campus are in need of long term, dedicated and targeted action to address the lack of engagement and reporting to student services.
2. Men on campus are in a declining state of wellbeing and in need of considerable support and help to address current trends both in their own wellbeing and in the wellbeing of those their behaviour effects.
3. The stigma issues are largely cultural and will take large-scale long-term activity to shift.

The Union Resolves (Actions) Here you will describe the action you want to be taken, be specific.

1. An addition of the role "Part-Time Men's Welfare Officer" to 2.1.3 of UPSU Governing Documents Union Council Bye Law
2. To be of non-liberation format such that any and all students may occupy the role and vote on matters.
3. To be mandated to run all campaign for it's first year of existence in collaboration with at least 1 of the following; the Part-Time Transgender & Non-Binary Officer, Part-Time Women's Officer, Part-Time LGBT+ Officer, and the Part-Time Welfare 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

- <https://www.mankind.org.uk/statistics/>
- <https://www.studentminds.org.uk/mensmentalhealth.html>
- <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6560805/>
- <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/talking-about-men/201808/mens-mental-health-campus-breaking-the-silence>
- <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1h8IdleBMz7Td92HcEom9oZ1MOU0g4UpXtB7prNUmjQ/edit#gid=0>
- https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/uploads/production/document/path/13/13913/Annual_Equality_Report_201718.pdf
- <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/gender-gap-university-applications-high-men-women-ucas-figures-students-a8191491.html>

[Engaging men to stand up to violence and harassment \(endvawnow.org\)
jrssa2001.pdf \(warwick.ac.uk\)](https://endvawnow.org/jrssa2001.pdf)

EXCERPT FROM MINUTES OF 20TH APRIL AND 5TH MAY 2021

Men's Wellbeing Policy - Appendix 1

Will Styles, Part-time Postgraduate Officer gave the speech for the Men's Wellbeing Policy Proposal. Will explained that the proposal is to address issues of welfare with a targeted approach towards male and male associated identities and that it is not a liberation platform. This means that any students can occupy the role and get involved.

Will noted that the Part-time Women's, Trans and Non-Binary and LGBT+ Officers were involved in discussion about this proposal which includes a clause in the resolves; that at least one of those role would need to work in collaboration with the Men's Welfare role on campaigns for at least the first year. It is hoped that this will set a precedent of strong collaboration between the roles and to define the remit and scope for the role.

Will referred to a talk he gave titled 'Working together for Success' which explained how it is only through collaboration we can achieve lasting social change. Will noted that there has been a significant amount of student support, input and feedback into this policy proposal, in addition to a survey conducted last year with the former VP Wellbeing and Diversity Sabbatical Officer which is linked in the references.

Will acknowledged that there is still some debate on how best to address men's issues and where the source of those issues lies, which is beyond the scope of this discussion, but it needed to be recognised that there are issues which affect male identities and that there is an opportunity for students to campaign against these issues, whatever they may be.

As engaged student representatives Will asked Council members to think about the impact one role can have and he would welcome the opportunity to discuss any concerns.

Maeve Hoey, School of Nursing and Midwifery Rep, asked how this role differs from the Welfare role that currently exists.

Will Styles responded that this role is about targeting issues affecting males and male identities. One of the main outputs from the survey conducted last year was that male students feel that issues impacting them were often overlooked and that perception needs to be tackled head on.

Taku Mawera, Part-time BAME Officer agreed with the policy proposal as these issues do need tackling but noted, as pointed out by Maeve, there is already a Welfare Officer role and if anyone is able to be elected to the role, what stops a women from speaking on these targeted male issues. There is already a Women's Officer position and a male currently holds the Welfare role.

Will agreed that there could be women students who have a lot of input to have on men's welfare issues which is why this proposal allows for a woman to stand for the role and that input is embraced.

Owain Gullam, Part-time Welfare Officer explained that there is nothing mandating the Welfare Officer to do the work mandated by this role, should it be passed. Owain noted that they work within their manifesto and with what their predecessor did. Attending the meetings that they are invited to and speaking on the things that both they and the students that speak to them would like them to raise. The things in this policy do not always come up. If this was introduced in a liberation format, it would stop any student from standing for the role but it is not.

Verity Lemm, VP Activities agreed it is a really important subject that needs to be addressed and dealt with properly, that is not in dispute but wondered why it doesn't fall within the Welfare role. This raises the question if all of the roles functioning as they should be. It is not sustainable to keep creating new roles if existing ones are not picking up what should be part of their remit. There are many groups of students that need welfare support and new ones cannot keep being created.

Will Styles responded that it is an important point to raise and explained that one of the strengths of the welfare role is that it is so broad and it has been identified that this is an issue that often slips through the net. When it is addressed it is largely the whim of whoever occupies the welfare role that could address it. Students have highlighted that they would like more than just a whim, they would like a targeted, dedicated role to consistently address these issues and that's where the gap is and this role fills that gap perfectly.

Martin Nicholls, Part-time Mature Students Officer explained that as Will was writing this they were also looking into writing the same proposal and speaking to people about why women and trans and non-binary people need this role.

Martin understood the idea of why people are questioning why it is not the remit of the Welfare role and noted it is very specific, targeted idea which needs an individual to consider issues that affect a number of demographics. Martin said that many of the trans and non-binary people that they had spoken to wanted a men's officer role because they believed that there are issues that affect them and they don't have anyone to go to on the Union Council that might represent them as an individual.

In response to the question of why do we need to create another role, Martin questioned what would be lost if another role was created, it is more representation for students, they are a volunteer and not paid, more representation is only a good thing.

Maeve Hoey noted that, in a time where women are currently dying on the streets and there are people having to fight for women's issues, they did not think that right now was the right timing for the creation of a men's officer and queried how it will go down with the general population of the university. They understood why it is needed and acknowledged that men's mental health is a massive issue, they are currently training to become a mental health nurse, but at the current time, society needs to be considered and the number of people that could be offended by mandating a men's officer when there are so many women's issues currently happening in the world.

Will Styles agreed that there are some very important women's issues going on, particularly now and they are glad there is a dedicated, liberation, women's officer to promote these.

Regarding how it would be perceived within the student population, the feedback has been overwhelming positive, in the region of 99.9% approval of those students canvassed, with over 500 students canvassed so far.

Will did not see that there would be a significant backlash and referenced the success of the Men's Welfare role at UWE for proof of success. The role at UWE is now in its third year of running. The role was a two year trial which has been extended and it has been successful in supporting men's mental health. Will noted that there are a lot of issues and it is important that we do not detract from women and it is an important distinction that this is not a liberation role.

Gem Evelyn, Part-time International Students Officer commented that the fact that people can see that there is much to gain by having the role is enough to push it through. In terms of it being a specific role that students can go to as they feel more comfortable going to that person, through shared characteristics or experience is more beneficial. The more opportunities that there are for students to have several options of who to approach with their issues is beneficial so they can connect with who they feel comfortable to approach. Women have a specific role to progress their issues but at the moment there is not a specific role for men.

Viv Hocking, School of Computing, Engineering and Maths explained that this is an issue that has come up at Union Council previously and, for whatever reason, prior Union Councils keep batting it away. Viv thought that was a mistake and the fact that it keeps coming up shows that within the community is a need and a desire for this role.

Viv added In order to bring this proposal to Union Council there were a required number of signatures, in excess of 180, to enable it to be discussed at Union Council, 1% of the students population have said, unequivocally that they want this role.

Viv also noted that the members of Council are elected to represent students and not their own person views and by giving their signatures, students have told Union Council what they want, they want the role. Will pointed out in the chat there were 270 signatures on the current petition.

Viv continued to say that outside of the university if someone accesses counselling, the first question that they get asked is if they would like to speak to a male or female counsellor. So it is recognised that someone seeking support needs to speak to somebody that they identify with or that they feel comfortable with. Within the current system, to the best of their knowledge, there are no male counsellors or Advice Centre workers. As a university there are no avenues for male students seeking support that they can identify with or relate to and that needs to exist.

Viv noted that they had discussed this with their housemate who questioned why there is not a men's officer if there is a women's officer as the whole point of feminism is to be equal. It is not just men that are signing that petition. Viv responded to the question of who will be offended by having the role and asked who would be offended by not having the role, it works both ways.

Will Styles responded to the comments about male counsellors. There is a male counsellor and they are lovely, however there were previously two and that allowed the facilitation of the men's discussion group which was launched after the success of the women's group. Unfortunately it is not possible to run it with only one counsellor. The lack of males in those roles is in part due to only a small number of men choosing that career pathway.

Will agreed that there are a lot of concerns and acknowledged that it is a contentious issue. Will welcomed amendments to the proposal so that it can work for everyone. It is what level that happens at, or the specific nature of the role, which is up for debate and Will considered the current suggestion of a Men's Welfare Officer to be a nice middle ground. It's not a Men's Officer, it is not a liberation role, but it is something and it offers a way to see if it could work.

Taku Mawera noted that previous Union Council members have batted the idea away on the basis that men are not a protected group under the Equalities Act and in 2017 Lowri Jones, previous UPSU President, said that the idea of what is being discussed at Union Council, a men's forum, was a group of men that are gathering to discuss sick ideals of what it means to be men, according to an article in Huffington Post.

On this basis Taku questioned what would happen if whoever was elected to the role had a political ideals that were not desirable and started discriminating and unsightly ideologies were perpetuated by that individual. What vetting methods can be used to ensure that this does not happen?

Tafadzwa Nyambuya, School of Psychology Rep reminded Union Council that just because there are elected liberation officers in the SU it should not be assumed that their voices are being heard as they should be, across the university there is still a lot of work to be done. This is a great idea to represent men but there are existing roles that can lobby to ensure that men's voices are being heard, to campaign and advocate for men to be open and to speak about their issue. The wider implications of the additional role need to be considered.

Will Styles answered that other roles covering the responsibility for men's welfare relies on those individuals to take an interest and this cannot be depended upon each year. The only way to consistently target an issue is to have a mandate for a role to do so. Will did not think that this role would detract from any others and considered that it actually seeks to keep those other roles on a pedestal.

Will commented that the best way to open up and allow men to share their thoughts is to give a platform to these issues. The former university men's discussion group felt that they needed permission to open up and to speak about their issues and struggles. Men typically open up when and atmosphere is created to do that and someone opens up first and expresses that vulnerability. The male psyche generally seems to feel like it needs permission and this is an opportunity to address that.

Will added that regarding unsafe views or unsavoury ideals, there are mechanisms within the SU to deal with this and those systems are robust. Will did recognise that concern which is why the clause has been added that, for the first year, all campaigns need to be run alongside the listed roles.

Jess Andrews-Smith noted, as mentioned a few times, the role will be open to both men and women to run for. Viv touched on that men need someone to talk to about their concerns and having a male in this role would be beneficial.

Having also spoken to a few people about the role, they said they would be a lot more comfortable if it were a male in the role, than a female. Although, a woman may still have the exact same concerns and same passion, having a male in the role, males would be more likely to open up and discuss their concerns.

Martin Nicholls pointed out that the issues that this role would be addressing are personal things. Martin assisted in setting up one of the first Andy's Man Clubs in the UK, a place where men can meet talk about issues experience by men. Martin explained that there is a reluctance by men to discuss mental health which is feeding into the current mental health crisis. One of the Andy's Man Clubs Martin was aware of was headed up by a woman and none of the men attending those sessions cared she was a woman, all they cared about was the fact that she deeply cared.

Martin added that there are comments about why this is not already being done, which is a great question. People get defensive when you put man in front of something which is a fair point. This role is a men's welfare role, it is solely dedicated to the wellbeing of men. Union Council have the opportunity to say that we care enough to create a role specifically designed to look after you and pave the way for other universities to do the same thing.

Will Styles gave a closing statement. Will pointed out that male students are more likely to gravitate towards that position and it would be likely, more often than not, that it will be filled by a male students. However, Will did not think it would be a good idea to exclude non CIS males and other broader definition males from running for that role, as other identities have a lot of input on these issues from all perspectives.

Will acknowledged that there are concerns and is open to amendments to address them. Support from students has been immense in the past and Will wanted to do right by those students who expressed an overwhelming agreement for this role.

The Chair explained that as the meeting was not quorate they were happy to take votes from absent members by email after the meeting.

For: 8

Against: 3

Abstentions: 9

Absent Union Council members were given 5 working days to cast their vote via email, final voting numbers reached quoracy.

For: 11

Against: 3

Abstentions: 10