



## Communities Committee Meeting - 15/10/2024

Attendance: DM (President), CR (VP and Interim Chair), CJ (SwD), ST (LGBTQ+), SS (Assistant International), MM (Local), HT (International), RC (WCS)

Apologies:

Absent:

Location: Bailey JCR

### Freshers' Week Reports

MM: Not much to report- they were not met many local students but I know they are about. Nobody attended the coffee morning but I should've got the JCR instagram to repost about the coffee morning.

CR: The dreaded zero turn out. It's a very difficult audience to cater to and identify.

MM: I should maybe branch out to local postgraduate students and there's not many "local" students in college but Northern students have really appreciated that I have a position. So I may interact with Northern students more in future.

CJ: Early arrivals were good fun and a success. Everyone was lovely and talkative. It's nice to let them know that autistic students do exist in the uni. Matriculation was tricky due to the change of exit. I had people who would've benefited from a quieter route but I only discovered after that I could've taken them through the cafe. Next year I'd need to communicate with the College where the exit will be. No one came to meet me but had engagement during early arrivals, Freshers' Fair and move-ins. Freshers' Fair was just me and HT but I had interest in assistant reps.

CR: As for the event, why don't you think we had an engagement ?

CJ: I maybe should've made a post instead of just having it on my story. I've had decent engagement with my instagram so far.

ST: I was kinda disappointed with my own performance. I had to show up late and then couldn't come to the silent disco because I was sick. The time I was there: last year there was a groupchat made and the gay students were found but I did not do that. I didn't know how! How do you find gay people? My paint night two people showed up and left saying they would come back later but I had to leave my event early to facilitate the race awareness workshop. The room was a mess and they were using dried up paint and cardboard but the



gay bar crawl last night was a great success. It was mostly freshers, I made my group chat and it was a success!

CR: Late start but killing it now. I love the tie-in with MM's Fruity Mondays and that'll be a focus for this year: how do we integrate our communities into the local community. Is there any way you would have conducted it differently? Would having more people around you be a good idea? I'm thinking specifically about the Freshers' Fair- when we couldn't find someone to fill in for you- you're in an interesting position as president of LGBTQ+ society, how are you finding that?

ST: I don't think freshers know about the society, maybe it should be built up before and at the bar events if it was being discussed more. Putting up informational posters, things like that.

DM: POI- MGRs do have societies attached to their roles though most of them have died as people in the past have prioritised their officer work over their role as president of their respective society. I've spoken to RC about not having to create a society, you just have to hold an AGM. It may be an idea to make sure the MGR runs the AGM before the end of the year so the society has the exec roles so you would have people to attend the Freshers' Fair. The MGR role has a lot of work attached which you feel obliged to do to represent your community but may not feel comfortable doing. It would be great to be able to delegate down and so best practice as a marker of the beginning they run the AGM. If you have less pressure, you will have an easier job.

CR: ST- you have a society that attracts second and third years from the get-go so you may have an easy time holding your AGM.

HT: We have loads of events from the 24th till move-in weekend. This is one of the most successful- having a carousel that everyone goes through even early move-ins and we had a sheet to join the whatsapp group and follow the instagram. For some reason, this year we have 15/20 people coming to the ISA silent disco instead of 1 which we had last year. I have more info as well like the timetables and training so I didn't have to cancel any events. Logistics wise it was smooth. I held a board game afternoon and 6 people showed up. Overall, it was a dream.

CR: How do you think that feeds into InternationalComm?

HT: We've got 6 applications and so with SS and I (and if we get a PG International Rep) we will have 9 people in the committee.

RC: I had a great time frepping as you all know. I spoke to some freshers and they were like "Wow! You exist!" which was quite good. I'm in contact with the other colleges' reps but did have to miss an event they held. I plan to do more in the future. I'm looking into the society as last year the AGM failed so I'm trying to get interest before so that doesn't happen.

CR: Why do you think the AGM last year failed?

RC: I think 'Working Class' is not people's main identity and specifically Durham.



CR: Is it something that's moving people away from you? Are people approaching you as the 'Working Class Rep'? Do people approach you and want to talk about it?

RC: People were keen though they didn't go out of the way. I think once you go home you think about that identity less as well. If I get the society set up it'll be easier than if I try to get others to build it. It would've been good if the MGRs got to speak at the Calman Talk. I should've attended the Freshers' Fair but that's my bad. It would be better with the rugby tops to have 'Working Class Students Rep' instead of just 'WCS Rep' because what does that even mean? You would only know if you know.

CR: That's definitely true and the same with SWD.

DM: Which colleges are you talking to at the moment?

RC: I'm talking to Chads, Castle, Mary's, John Snow and Mildert. I'm trying to get Hatfield involved.

## Advertising Assistant Roles

CR: Obviously this is not applicable to everyone as HT you already have SS and MM you don't have an assistant. We'll go around- what are you thinking you'll have your assistant do? How do you plan to advertise?

RC: A wall to bounce ideas off and collaborate with and potentially get them training for drop-ins so they can fill in for me as suggested by LN. Acting as a support pillar for me.

CR: I understand having the assistant be on a similar level to you so they can substitute where need-be. Have you had any interest?

RC: Not explicitly but a few people I've spoken to I can see being convinced. As for advertising- the instagram which I would like crossposted with the JCR, maybe a poster in the JCR or dining hall.

HT: We have a Cuth's Communities instagram account- do we have access to it? Should we crosspost to it? We did show it off at the Freshers' Fair.

DM: It's interesting about crossposting because it should be about increasing traction and the Communities instagram has no following. That's a fundamental issue. Is it worthwhile or just another account people won't follow?

CJ: It feels redundant. We were only showing it because it had all our @s in the bio.

DM: It's come about because the CommsComm Chair had no instagram. It's a good hub but is it? Is it necessary?

CR: It starts to feel like a sharepoint page where we're just tunnelling. We could get rid of it. How would people feel about that?

*Unanimous agreement to delete @cuths.communities*



SS: I was disappointed during International Week but what works for Harry and I is that I do the remote work- canva, bouncing around ideas and the nits and grits. That really works for us. I don't think I could substitute the main reps role. HT takes on a lot more work. I don't think it is possible! It would make sense if that was in the role description but as of now you are not that front facing. It will depend on workload. Sometimes it's 70/30, 60/40. It's dynamic.

ST: I think the most important part of the assistant role is that it is an introductory role into the JCR. If it becomes an understudy role it may be more intimidating whereas right now it's an apprentice role where someone is guiding you.

CR: Should it be like that?

ST: Yes in my opinion. I found the JCR really intimidating and I would've let people down had I been expected to act as an understudy

SS: I was publicity officer for Cuth's International last year and I think it was a big step up to become assistant rep.

RC: I think the Assistants should have the option to do more training- being an assistant may not feel like you're signing up for that but if you would like to you should be allowed.

CR: Not written into the role but you have the choice. The entry level aspect is integral but that could be resolved by building your societies. HT's committee is a great way to get involved and then you become an assistant which should be a jump.

CJ: I think this is something that we could assess next year because if we try to establish a society and it doesn't work we'd be stuck.

SS: I'm pro doing everything else but drop-ins because I don't think it's a job a fresher can take.

CJ: I've had a meeting with a fresher who was asking about what to put in their speech and the workload.

CR: Commitment was a big fear around Freshers' Week!

CJ: I'm hopeful that someone will run.

CR: We have multiple interests in PoC Rep and all positions in CommsComm I believe which is super exciting.

## Trans and Non-Binary Representative

CR: My opinion is that the Trans and Non-Binary Rep should be a Method I position and the same level as every MGR. I think it represents a distinctive enough community from yours, ST, but how do you feel?



ST: I don't think I can fairly represent the Trans and Non-Binary community so it would be good to have someone of equal power. I think the LGBT Cuth's instagram would be a good way to get the word out because we have a good amount of engagement.

CR: I think for EDI and Welfare Comm- to have a trans or NB voice on a higher stage would be brilliant. Is there any objection to that? Do we need an assistant?

ST: I think we can share an assistant and if we have a society it will be enough support.

## Drop-ins

CR: Everyone received the messages from DM and LN and it will be discussed at Welfare Comm. Basically, there's concerns around drop-ins and peer-to-peer support across the university. So the case is how do we handle the MGRs who have very limited training- I'm sorry if the training made you feel very capable but it is only an hour and not everyone was in attendance.

DM: As president this year I've been doing a lot of work on the Mental Health Charter: a charter done by StudentMinds, the university applied for accreditation from them, like Ofsted but for mental health. Last year, they did the assessment across the JCRs, SU and societies. The outcome was that clause 15 peer-to-peer support was not safe and not cohesive across the university. From different colleges to sports it was all different. We have had meetings with SD (Director of Student Support) and RE (Deputy Director of Student Support) where we talk about the future of peer-to-peer student support. My main concern is standardisation and the lack thereof. I've done data collection on what happens in other JCRs and it's shocking. We are the fore-runners, to be a welfare officer at Cuth's you have to attend the SU training, nightline training and keep up with relevant training. Whereas in a lot of the JCRs people are simply trained by their predecessor as you were with LN. I'm allergic to the fact that people should accept responsibility for drop-ins so what do we do in the meantime? In CommsComm we would be hypocritical to have you hold drop-ins. The Non-Academic Misconduct Policy is changing- in DU if you get a disciplinary it comes under Central like EDI issues. Right now you have Cat. 1 or Cat. 2 depending on severity, Cat. 2 being more serious. They want to get rid of those and it would place a lot more pressure on MGRs to report. People would disclose to you and you are not trained to deal with that. In my opinion, we pause drop-ins until you are trained. We have a Michaelmas Nightline training and a SU training session. You would have the exact same training as the welfare officers but it is completely up to you. Some people may only want to do campaigns and may feel obliged to do drop-ins but you don't have to. We don't want to be hypocritical.

### *Unanimous agreement*

SS: On the assistant's part they couldn't do that to their peers as freshers.

DM: I would like to create a DU recognised and external qualification to say you can hold welfare drop-ins. Hopefully you will have a requirement to be a welfare officer. For safeguarding reasons, we don't want people to feel uncomfortable. However I want to make



clear you can still have meetings with students but you have to be very clear about your boundaries as officers. If a conversation becomes a drop-in you need to be able to ask them to talk to the welfare team. If you can't do that, speak to them online so you have that barrier. It's not a case of 'you feel bad', it's a case of 'I'm not going to be able to give you the respect you deserve'. Know your personal boundaries and I will try to leave you with the expectation of the personal boundary.

CR: I 100% agree. It was an issue with the timetable being shared alongside the welfare officers when the training is not at all comparable. I would heavily encourage you to attend the training and develop those skills. Think about the drop-ins and know about your own timetable if you are to hold regular drop-ins. Also, know that people would come to you as a figure of a community to report hate crime which will be tough. Consider what people will say when they come to you and make sure you are comfortable with every aspect of that.

DM: I agree. The Non-Academic restructure has not gone through yet but I will liaise with you guys to let you know how you will work under the policy.

## Campaigns for this year and Associations and Collaborations

ST: Trans and Non-Binary formal is coming up and I'm very confused about what to do. Last year what I did was put up balloons and design a notecard. I don't know who to talk to and it's coming up on the 14th November.

HT: Most stuff was done by BT last year. My formal is put on in February and the date and your formal menu will be set.

DM: What I can tell you, ST, is I'm trying to have JC as the head of the formal (as she heads the pride forma;). You have the date and I'll ask you who you want on high table but the question is do you want anything extra in terms of ents?

ST: Can I have a speaker? I have no idea what the interest level is.

DM: It's open to all colleges and we'll liaise with other reps so they can advertise as well. If you want decorations or a speaker contact JC to see if you can get any money from the EDI budget.

ST: Should I message the other colleges to see if the Trans and Non-Binary Reps of other colleges want high table?

DM: You can but you should ask how many places you have first. Probably 3-4. Ask out of your number if those people count and remember our own officers.

HT: Last year I got half and JC got half. If you want to speak make sure you get your speech pre-approved.

DM: I've got you all on high table at some point throughout the year.



ST: I wanted to do a Rocky Horror Picture show movie night near Halloween. What are the logistics of that?

CR: Historically, movie nights have not been a great success but it depends what you do around it.

MM: I know in Newcastle people go and dress up. Making it interactive and a bigger event.

DM: I'll have a look at the licensing.

SS: Can we do something for Diwali? We held something last year.

HT: We only posted a campaign last year and it is on the same day as Halloween.

DM: Create new content as it adds something to our calendar.

SS: If people want to do something for it, I think we should put on something nice. I know the Hatfield International Rep and we could look to collaborate.

DM: I think having an event in college which leads into a wider university experience is always good.

SS: We could hold a Henna night but we'll talk more about it on InternationalComm.

CJ: We should have a CommsComm calendar!

CR: Let's have the calendar for us and we should think about a wider JCR officer advice.  
DM's just set up a great calendar system.

HT: I was planning to do a panel discussion with the PoC rep.

SS: I know someone interested in doing so. I think we should also hold a lot more of the International events at Brooks because we have a bigger community there.

DM: I agree and the same with the PG community who are mostly international. We should be catering to that audience.

CJ: I want to create an accessibility document for Cuth's because AccessAble does not have the correct information on it. I talked to JC about meal plan delivery for people with physical disabilities. The disability rooms are in Brooks but it can be difficult to cook with a physical disability who would find it difficult to come to the Bailey twice a day. I don't know how feasible it is but it's in the works.

DM: That's a brilliant idea. Work with SC who knows everything about accessibility. We will be doing our model for accessible toilets and this alongside that will show how inaccessible the Bailey is. They can use that as a tool towards the university.

CR: An inventory of the accessibility.





DM: Ensuring productivity is so key. This is something we can attain this year. I can take this to college management if you like and we can pilot it with catering alongside JC. Email SC asking for accessibility information and I think she'll be really complaint.

HT: Are we doing the 'Study with Cuth's'?

CR: I wanted to mention this. For those who don't know it was the first entirely intersectional event and what birthed the cuths.committees account. My issue with the Study Group scheme is that- people don't attend. The Study Buddy scheme meanwhile has legs but the Study Group was not worthwhile. Do you think the International Study Buddy scheme works?

HT: We had 20 signups last year but that was in Epiphany so I want to push that to Michaelmas.

DM: What does the Study Group scheme provide?

CR: A space to study? It was supposed to promote intersectionality but it was mostly for the reps.

DM: We have to be careful of tokenising ourselves. We should make sure that the work we are doing is for everyone and not just each other.

CR: I would rather be productive intersectionality. I think panel discussions are a good idea and if we are coming together to think about and discuss something that is productive. When everything is online it can kill a lot of the energy that you have right now.

## Branding

CJ: I want to make SwD as broad as possible and representative of the community. Lived experience is what's important.

DM: What's your push in terms of branding?

CJ: I think I need to talk to more people about it. We have discussed changing it to 'Disabled Students Rep' and to add a 'Careers Rep'.

DM: This has been ignited by the SU's association name change from SwDA to DACA.

ST: Wouldn't it make more sense to be 'Disabilities Rep'?

CJ: It doesn't roll off the tongue and I think that puts pressure on to represent every disability instead of disabled students.

CR: MM you've said you're relatable to a Northern community. Is there power in broadening your community?

MM: I was thinking about that.

ST: Can I change to Queer Rep?





CR: I think it's a term that some people see as negative. We just have to make sure our branding is as inclusive and welcoming.

DM: I think we need to ask if we are dividing a community like in the case of the northern and local students.

CJ: I think Careers Rep should happen.

CR: I would like the Careers Rep to be defined and its responsibilities. Is it an assistant role? Questions like that need answered.

*Meeting adjourned*