

**VOTING OPEN THURSDAY AND FRIDAY:  
YOURUNION.NET/ELECTIONS**

# **MANIFESTO**

**For Experience  
For Support  
For Equality**



**VOTE ANNA-RUTH**

**FOR DIRECTOR OF WELLBEING**

I'm Anna-Ruth and I am excited to be running for Director of Wellbeing this year! I've really enjoyed being in St Andrews, but like many students, I have unfortunately had to deal with being unable to access the support I needed, and instances of harassment and discrimination. I'm passionate about making our student experience the best it can be, regardless of background or circumstance, and ensuring no student has to deal with the difficulties I had again.

I'm really enthusiastic about wellbeing and equality and I hope my experience and the ideas in my manifesto will get that enthusiasm across and that you will consider voting me your Director of Wellbeing this year!

## Experience

For the past year, I have been the Disability Officer on the Students' Representative Council where I had the opportunity to work on projects spanning from feedback for Student Services, to mental and physical health, and the elections review.

- **Founded the Disabled Students' Network**, a subcommittee that represents disabled students, and runs events and campaigns that amplify the experiences of disabled people.
- **Sat on Equal Opportunities Committee and Wellbeing Committee**
- **Introduced Disabilities Reps to each academic school and sat on the Schools' Wellbeing Advisory Group**, who have helped the University take into consideration the experiences of disabled students and have combated welfare issues more broadly.
- **Have worked to bring in a review of our elections**, writing the survey on the elections that ran last year.
- **Created St Andrews' first Disability Pride Week**, which featured a series of informative events and publicity, as well as social events.
- **Created the Accessibility Pledge and Guide for student groups**, which has **made student events more accessible**.
- Working to **add information about support available in each school** to their websites.

Before I was Disability Officer, I also sat on Debates Committee and worked on student campaigns and wellbeing projects, including:

- **Founded the Students for Lecture Capture campaign** to push for an opt-out lecture capture policy.
- **Created a support group for disabled students** and ran events themed around disability.
- **Created a comprehensive online guide to all the support available for disabled students** in St Andrews.
- Was **Equity Officer for the Scottish Students' Debating Council** and worked to make debating more accessible and improve welfare across Scottish debate societies.

All this work gives me experience in every area the Director of Wellbeing touches and – I hope! – demonstrates my passion for improving student welfare and inclusion at St Andrews.

## Tackle inequality and discrimination

The role that the Director of Wellbeing plays in leading on equality and diversity initiatives is often overlooked; it isn't in the job title! However, recent events - like Black Lives Matter, transphobia in our community, and COVID-19 - have shown that we need to take a stronger stance on equality issues in St Andrews. As Disability Officer I worked to tackle disability discrimination across student life, so I am familiar with how the Union addresses these issues and where this work can be improved.

My key policies here are:

- Make the Union's Equal Opportunities Committee, which the Director of Wellbeing chairs, a more effective place for us to present and discuss equality initiatives by:
  - **Encouraging intersectional collaboration between different groups** (like the BAME Students' Network, Disabled Students' Network, Saints LGBT+, Lifers).
  - **Running campaigns focused on equality and inclusion in St Andrews** (for instance, advertising the Support & Report tool, and campaigns to tackle hate crime and exclusion).
  - **Use the Equal Opportunities Committee as a place where representatives can have regular forums with University staff**, so that they can be more involved with policy changes.
- **Review the Union's [Zero Tolerance Policy](#) to harassment and discrimination**, including the reporting process and the training given to staff and societies.
- **Run StAnd Against Hate:** a campaign to draw attention to experiences of discrimination in St Andrews and university life and what people can do to intervene and support their fellow students.
- **Create the position of International Students Officer** to focus on the issues they experience, like settling in, welfare of those who must stay in St Andrews during the break, and issues like Brexit and travel.
- **Establish a Gender Equality Forum** to bring student groups together to discuss the wide range of gender equality issues in St Andrews, increase representation for trans and non-binary students, and support collaboration.
- Encourage societies to use Societies Committee grants to **make more of their events free, or to cover the cost of expensive activities for low-income students** (e.g., to buy consumable materials, cover travel costs, run more Give-It-A-Go events, etc.).
- Support the work of our student equality groups, including **seeking the implementation of the BAME Action Plan and goals from the Disabled Students' Survey**. As Disability Officer, I was able to make significant advances with Student Services and other parts of the University and I want to use that experience to support other groups to do the same.

## Improve student support

Student Services can and do provide much needed support to many students. However, it is important to recognise the negative experiences many people have. From the lack of knowledge of the different types of support available, to the long wait-times, to complaints about not getting the appropriate support, there is clearly a need for change.

My key policies here are:

- **Encourage the University to subscribe to [TogetherAll](#)**, a 24/7 online service ran by clinicians which includes a safe and professionally monitored peer support community and a wide range of self-help resources and courses that is already used by other universities and the NHS. The service could be used by students waiting for an appointment and to reduce waiting lists by providing resources for students to turn to when they first start struggling and before they reach a crisis point.
- **Work with Student Services to improve their website** so students have a better understanding of who they can turn to if they need help.
- See the **range of support available advertised to students during matriculation** so students know the support available from day one, before they need more intensive or urgent support.
- Work with student groups to advertise the recruitment of Peer Support volunteers and **focus on building a more diverse set of Peer Supporters so that students can get support from people with similar experiences to them** (e.g., a trans student can ask to be matched with another trans student).
- **Improve the feedback mechanisms for Student Services so that students can raise issues, be listened to, and see change.** This needs to be tackled both when looking at wider issues affecting lots of students and for difficulties individual students may have.
- **Add a Men's Representative to Wellbeing Committee** to focus on tackling wellbeing issues that affect men most and encouraging engagement with wellbeing resources in St Andrews. I will also **run awareness campaigns that tackle issues like men's mental health, body image and physical fitness, and alcohol consumption.**

## Support students through COVID-19

COVID-19 has impacted students in a variety of ways, including social isolation, financial and academic difficulties, and exacerbating mental health problems. Hopefully, the need for social distancing will come to an end however the after-effects will still be with us. We need to support students through the pandemic and out of it.

My key ideas here are:

- Work with Hall Committees and societies to **put together more activities and social opportunities for students who are isolating** through activity packs and online events.

- **Advertise and work with Peer Support to provide support and social opportunities for students experiencing loneliness**, and to help support students anxious about getting back into activities post-COVID.
- Work with the other Sabbs to **adapt traditions like May Dip and Raisin so that students can get involved if they missed out last year.**
- Ensure students have **appropriate academic support and leniency in their studies** when needed and that the University takes account of the continuing difficulties students will have post-COVID (e.g. with difficulty transitioning to in-person teaching, or travel for international students).
- Provide **resources and discussion groups for students experiencing things like bereavement, health anxiety, or isolation.**

## Tackle sexual violence

Sexual violence has been a big issue in St Andrews for a long time, but groups like St Andrews Survivors have shown how pervasive the issue is. We have heard more about the difficulties students have getting support from Student Services, the lack of information available for survivors, and the difficulty we have tackling cultures of harassment. Tackling these issues are a top priority for me, so my key ideas here are:

- **Add information to the Student Services website that clearly explains what happens when you approach them about sexual violence.** This information will describe the different processes for reporting that students can choose between, the kind of support the University provides, as well as information and support available from external services.
- **Improve safety on nights out by introducing a quiet room in the Union.** Students can use this as a safe space to get away from difficult situations and sober up.
- **Provide training to society committees explaining how to deal with instances of harassment in their society.** This includes the processes for reporting people, removing people from societies or events, and supporting students who have experienced harassment.
- **Provides resources to students on what healthy and consenting relationships look like**, and how to recognise and support people in unhealthy relationships.
- **Improve the experiences of students who approach the university to report or seek support for sexual violence** by investigating the training staff receive and the processes students must go through and see how they can be improved.

## Encourage alcohol and drug safety

One of the major safety issues facing students is alcohol and drugs, which many students may not previously have encountered before university. I want to adopt a focus on harm reduction and safety, like training on how students ought to act when people are too drunk or might have overdosed.

My key ideas here are:

- **Promote basic alcohol and drug first aid** through signage in the Union and University spaces, training sessions in halls, and an online campaign with Got Limits.
- **Provide advice and resources on drug safety with a focus on harm reduction** (like [this webpage](#) by Leicester Union) and include information for those struggling with addiction, what to do in emergencies, the law, and safety.
- **Introduce a quiet room in the Union for nights out** to provide a space for people who need to take a break or sober up.
- **Work with the Union staff to find safer ways of dealing with people who are too drunk** and might not get home safely, like providing a safe space to sober up away from the bars, or ensuring students are put in a taxi or on the night bus.

## Promote sexual health

Lots of students come to university under-educated on sexual health issues like STIs, and contraception. Even those who have had a comprehensive sex education do not know how to access sexual health services or where to find free condoms. This, compounded by the strain on the NHS Sexual Health service in St Andrews, makes sexual health education even more important.

My key ideas here are:

- **Run workshops and provide resources on sexual health, how to access sexual health services, and healthy relationships** for students. I would work with groups like Sexpression and Got Consent to do this.
- Include **advertising materials in the Union and University spaces on sexual health and free contraception** (e.g., in the bathrooms, in halls, etc.) and advertise sexual health resources more regularly through the Wellbeing Committee's social media.
- Have **free condoms available to collect instead of forcing students to ask a member of staff or the DoWell**, which can be awkward and off-putting. I will also have more events and stalls where people can collect condoms throughout the year.

## Improve training and support for societies

Societies play a huge role in most students' social lives at St Andrews. Societies can be the places where students unfortunately experience harassment, and they can also be the friends that people turn to for advice in a crisis. It is important that societies know what to do when these situations arise to prevent much more harmful situations from occurring.

My key ideas here are:

- **Produce a signposting guide for student groups** (like [this one by Durham SU](#)) to explain the different support services students can suggest. I see this having a specific focus on referring people to services like Nightline and

Student Services and dealing with instances of harassment and discrimination in your society.

- There has been an increase in the number of welfare-themed workshops available, including training from Peer Support, Got Limits, and the DSN. I want to **put these workshops together (alongside other opportunities) into a welfare-strand of the PSC** to encourage people to take up these workshops and make them easier to find.
- **Provide training for elected representatives on dealing with sensitive conversations** (like discussions of hate crime or welfare issues), **boundary and expectation setting, and appropriate signposting.**

## Address issues with the elections

Last year I passed a motion to have a review of the elections with the goal of making them more engaging and less stressful for voters and candidates. The motion called for a survey - which I ran last year - and a working group to research and propose changes to the elections process (which unfortunately was not able to be implemented). I am **committed to addressing the results of the survey** properly this year by:

- **Establishing a committee to research and propose much needed changes to the elections rules this semester** - as set out in my motion last year. This will ensure we listen to the experiences of unsuccessful candidates and voters - not just Councils.
- **Simplifying the election rules** to make them easier for candidates to interpret and equally enforce. We must remove inconsistencies and repetitive rules and make issues like joint and negative campaigning easier to understand.
- **Running workshops and producing online guides to running in the elections**, the rules, and campaigning.
- Creating **more opportunities for prospective candidates to engage with current position holders** in the run up to elections.
- **Organising events with subcommittees where students can engage with non-sabbatical candidates** if they are interested.

## Transparency and Accountability

Unfortunately, there currently exists a disconnect between many of our Union representatives and the wider student body. I want to work to make Councils more accountable and to offer students more opportunities to engage with the Director of Wellbeing.

My key ideas here are:

- **Continue providing weekly updates on social media**, as I have done in my role this year, and **introduce monthly updates on what the Sabbs and councils have been doing** on the Union's social media.
- **Run Office Hours each week.**