29 April 2016

Cardiff & Vale College, City Centre Campus

NUS Wales Women's Conference 2016

Motions Document

Os ydych angen y ddogfen hon mewn ffurf arall cysylltwch ag UCM ar 0845 5210 262 neu e-bostiwch events@nus.org.uk

If you need this document in another format contact NUS on 0845 5210 262 or email events@nus.org.uk

The Gender Pay Gap

Proposed by: University of South Wales Students' Union

Conference believes:

1. Women in Wales earn substantially less than men. Figures from Wave Wales show that in November 2014 there was an 8.4% or £12.29 vs. £11.26 per hour difference in the average pay of men and women working full time.
2. The gender pay gap brings up issues to do with occupational segregation, the unequal impact of women's family responsibilities and pay discrimination.

Conference further believes:

1. Women in Wales are being crowded into female-dominated occupations and industries which limit their access to the broader range of male dominated areas which are often much better paid and have stronger career development plans that would allow women to earn more.
2. The Welsh Government need to do more to ensure that women are supported in business, and are not discriminated against.

Conference resolves:

1. The NUSW Women's Campaign will work with the Welsh Government to combat the gender pay gap, by more women to enter non-traditional career paths, and provide them with career development plans.
2. That NUSW Women's Campaign will launch a campaign encouraging women in College and University to apply to sit on Boards of charities they are passionate about to give them experience and confidence in their future careers, and ensure gender equality in Welsh business.

Inclusive Sex Education

Proposed by: University of South Wales Students' Union

Conference believes:

1. Welsh students are not receiving a sex education that is inclusive and comprehensive as part of their curriculum.
2. Currently the curriculum does not provide any discussion around body positivity, masturbation, different genders and sexual orientations, emotions or consent.
3. For young people experiencing uncertainty around their sexuality and gender this lack of conversation often leads to a loss of identity which should not be happening in the era we live in.

Conference further believes:

1. Our attitudes towards periods are "bloody" ridiculous, it is extraordinary that in 2016 a woman's natural cycle still holds such a stigma and embarrassment.
2. During sex education genders are often separated. It is just as important for males to learn about female sex education and vice versa, educating girls and boys on what each other are experiencing could reduce misunderstanding and embarrassment.
3. Sex Education in Wales is also failing young people by not covering consent. This is leading to an increase in problems disproportionally affecting women such as sexual harassment and assault within Wales.
4. This problem is very prominent on University campuses as a report by NUS found that 68% of female students have been a victim of one or more kinds of sexual harassment. Therefore, not only does school sex education need to include discussion about emotions that come with sexual relationships and consent; the conversation needs to be present in Universities too.

Conference resolves:

1. The NUSW Women's Campaign will launch a campaign aimed at the Welsh Government to ensure that all education providers in Wales provide a sex education that is inclusive and comprehensive of all genders and sexualities and as part of the curriculum.
2. This will include a "Period Positivity" Campaign across schools in Wales, and a lobby to stop gender segregated sexual education.
3. The NUSW Women's Campaign will fight for consent to be included in the curriculum, and work alongside student Unions to provide consent training for students entering higher and further education.

What are we doing for student parents?

Proposed by: University of South Wales Students' Union

Conference believes:

1. Many pressures are put onto student parents, of which the majority are mature students and female.
2. Childcare can be a huge burden for student parents as University academic calendars do not recognise half term, and child care is expensive.
3. Often student parents who are not in the financial position to fork out for expensive childcare have to put themselves at a disadvantage by missing lectures, or relying on friends or family members.

Conference further believes:

1. Universities are often not child friendly environments; most University campuses do not provide areas where students and their children are welcome, such as eateries or social areas, or libraries.
2. Research has shown that most University bathroom facilities do not provide baby-changing facilities.
3. Student parents feel ostracised from student life and are more at risk of dropping out of University.
4. Research by NUS "Meet the Parents" suggests that student parents show a high positive attitude towards their work and attend University with the aim to achieve their best possible grades. Student parents are at University to improve themselves and their work prospects, and they should be supported.

Conference resolves:

1. The NUSW Women's Campaign will conduct research into the struggles of student parents in Wales, and how they can be supported as they face these pressures.
2. From this research NUSW Women's Campaign will launch a campaign to support student parents.

Save the NHS Bursary

Proposed by: NUS Wales Women's Committee

Conference believes:

1. The Westmister government announced, as part of the Autumn Statement, that the NHS bursary is to be abolished and replaced with loans
2. The NHS bursaries support midwifery, nursing and other health students while they study and undertake placements
3. Nursing students spend half of their year on unpaid placements, with a heavy workload and other commitments to balance
4. Unison has estimated that nursing students graduating in 2020 could leave with debts of more than £50,000, but would start on a salary of under £23,000
5. Though the Westminster government's decision will not directly affect NHS Wales bursaries, it will undoubtedly have trickle-down effects in terms of Barnett consequentials and on students from England who come to study in Wales – as well as setting a precedent that the Welsh Government may choose to follow in the face of cuts to the Welsh budget.

Conference further believes:

1. The scrapping of NHS bursaries will disproportionately impact women, particularly those from working-class backgrounds and non-traditional students: the majority of NHS funded students are women, working class, mature students and students with caring responsibilities, many of whom could not have even contemplated their course without the bursary
2. The removal of the bursary would force prospective nurses and allied health professionals to effectively pay to work – forced into debt for a course where they spend 50% of their time in clinical practice, working directly with patients

Conference resolves:

1. To fight against any proposed cuts to NHS bursaries in Wales
2. To join the calls for an equality impact assessment of the Westminster government's proposals
3. To work with organisation such as the Royal College of Nursing to oppose these cuts and support nursing and healthcare students in Wales to mobilise against any cuts

Work, study, childcare

Proposed by: NUS Wales Women's Committee

Conference believes:

1. Student parents in FE in Wales currently rely on the Financial Contingency Fund, though a childcare scheme (mirroring England's Care2Learn scheme) which is currently being piloted, albeit very slowly.
2. Student parents in HE can receive a Childcare Grant which covers up to 85% of their childcare costs – though students often receive much less than 85%. Funding is also complicated by whether you apply through Student Finance Wales, Student Finance England, or through another body.
3. The Labour Party recently pledged to provide up to 30 hours free childcare per week for 3 and 4-year-olds to parents working more than 15 hours a week if they are re-elected in May's Assembly Election – this pledge did not extend to students.
4. Some countries, including Norway, provide universal childcare for citizens, which results in a much lower gender pay-gap, a more educated population, and high productivity levels among workers.

Conference further believes:

1. One of the biggest burdens that student parents often face is the cost of childcare
2. That childcare is vital work, that has traditionally been hugely undervalued because it is considered "women's work"
3. That prioritising childcare for workers over childcare for students sends the message that students are less valued
4. That education benefits not only the individual, but society as a whole, and as such students should not receive less childcare funding than workers
5. That prioritising childcare funding for workers in this way will discourage parents from re-entering and staying in education if they cannot afford childcare
6. Universal childcare would create a more equal society, and would enable thousands of parents to re-enter work and study

Conference resolves:

1. To lobby political parties to support the provision of adequate childcare funding in Further and Higher Education
2. To ensure the voices of student parents are heard by NUS and by politicians in the debate
3. To support the long-term goal for free, universal childcare for all

Sexual Harassment in Academia

Proposed by: NUS Wales Women's Committee

Conference believes:

1. Over the past few years, the Women's Campaign has undertaken significant work focussing on the issues of sexual harassment and assault at educational institutions
2. This work has been incredibly important, however it has generally focussed around Lad Culture, and on fellow students as the perpetrators of this harassment and violence
3. There has been little research or work into the issue of lecturers and academic staff as perpetrators of harassment and violence
4. The issue has made headlines, with academics such as the philosopher Colin McGinn resigning from his position at the University of Miami last year, after a student complained the university had mishandled her sexual harassment complaint. A number of other complaints of alleged sexual harassment and assault by academic staff from across the globe have also surfaced.
5. Earlier this year, Goldsmiths University hosted a conference entitled "Sexual Harassment in Higher Education" which highlighted and explored many of the issues surrounding the topic

Conference further believes:

1. That women are generally unlikely to report sexual assault and harassment to their institutions or to the police, and this is only made worse when the perpetrator is in a position of responsibility
2. Institutions are often unwilling to accept that there is a problem, as they fear their reputation suffering – however, anecdotal accounts suggest that sexual harassment in academia is a systemic problem which is present in all institutions
3. That reporting structures for sexual harassment and violence are often poor, difficult to navigate, not transparent, and leave students feeling even more disempowered
4. That some post-graduate students arguably face even larger barriers in reporting sexual harassment, as their studies rely on a smaller field of specialists, and they may fear their reputation being smeared in their research community if they make a complaint
5. All students deserve to feel safe and free from the fear of harassment during their studies and institutions must do more to tackle academic staff who abuse their power in this way

Conference resolves:

1. To undertake research into the experiences of students facing sexual harassment and assault from academic staff
2. To support Students' Unions to help students report sexual harassment from academic staff and to lobby their institutions to improve reporting structures and practices
3. To release a report and recommendations from the research which will paint a clear picture of the problem and how institutions, Students' Unions, and policy-makers should tackle it

Emotional Abuse and Control

Proposed by: NUS Wales Women's Committee

Conference believes:

1. Welsh Women's Aid defines domestic abuse as "the actual or threatened physical, emotional, psychological, sexual or financial abuse of a woman by a partner, family member or someone with whom there is, or has been, a close relationship."
2. The Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse, and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act was signed into law in 2015. The Act covers all forms of Violence Against Women (VAW), including domestic abuse. Domestic abuse covers not just physical violence, but emotional, psychological, financial.
3. Statistics from the Welsh Government showed that 75% of young women have experienced some form of emotionally abusive behaviour from a partner.
4. There is very little research nationally on the rates of incidents of domestic abuse for students, and the specific impact on students.
5. NUS research found that only 1/3 of university students had learnt about consent during their sex education in school, with less than half learning about relationships. Instead, 60% used porn to find out more about sex, despite 75% agreeing it provided unrealistic expectations.

Conference further believes:

1. Domestic abuse is often represented in the media in purely physical manifestations.
2. Emotional abuse and coercive behaviour often comes hand in hand with physical abuse, but not always.
3. These mainstream perceptions of domestic abuse (e.g. being hit by a boyfriend) don't always tie into the realities of emotional abuse – which may include your partner constantly criticising you, stopping you from seeing friends, controlling your money or what you wear, or obsessively texting or calling.
4. In fact, many abusers attempt to spin these behaviours as 'proof' of their 'love' – e.g. telling you they want you all to themselves, just wanting to know where you are because they care.
5. Because of this, many people who are in abusive relationships struggle to spot the signs if there is no physical violence.
6. Sex and relationship education is in an appalling state, meaning young people aren't learning about healthy relationships, consent, domestic abuse, coercive control, etc.

Conference resolves:

1. To continue to fight for healthy relationship and consent education to be included into the national curriculum.
2. To campaign to educate students on what healthy and unhealthy relationships and emotional abuse look like and to fight to ensure the Welsh Government continues with initiatives like Live Fear Free.

Let’s get Cliterate

Proposed by: Bangor University Students’ Union

Conference believes:

1. Our society (in particular our media) over-sexualises women’s bodies yet women aren’t being given the information they need to feel empowered about their bodies
2. Sex education isn’t framed in a way that talks about consent, respect and pleasure
3. The discourse around sex is all too often about men ‘giving’ and women ‘taking’ with no discussion about mutual pleasure, multiple partners or non-heterosexual relationships
4. The clitoris isn’t discussed because women’s pleasure and vaginas are too often seen as taboo topics (the same is true of female masturbation)

Conference further believes:

1. People with vaginas deserve to fully understand their own bodies
2. Women should be empowered to feel that they are in control of their sex lives
3. Pleasure shouldn’t be a taboo topic
4. Sex and relationship education that is inclusive is crucial
5. A society that doesn’t sexually empower women not only strengthens rape culture and the concept that no doesn’t really mean no but also means that women don’t always feel comfortable saying no

Conference resolves:

1. To lobby the government for inclusive and comprehensive sex and relationship education at every level of education
2. To encourage SU’s to lobby HEI/FEI to provide sex and relationship education that discusses women’s bodies, consent, pleasure etc

Gender Equality in Sports at University Events

Proposed by: University of Wales Trinity St David Students' Union

Conference believes:

1. That students of all genders participate in sport at the college and university level, including both competitively and for leisure.
2. That often men's teams receive greater recognition for their achievements than women's teams in university events, (like Varsity, where most main matches are men's teams).
3. That in professional sport, women are significantly undervalued. Women's sports receive less broadcast time and less prominent spots; salaries and prize money for women athletes are often far less than their male equivalent.

Conference further believes:

1. Universities and colleges should be supporting all their students to engage in extra-curricular activities and should reward them based on merit, not gender.

Conference resolves:

- For NUS Wales Women's Campaign to help Students' Unions combat the sexism that exists within sports in universities and colleges

Undeb Cenedlaethol y Myfyrwyr
2il Lawr, Adeiladau Cambrian
Sgwâr Mount Stuart
Caerdydd CF10 5FL
t 0292 0435 390
www.nusconnect.org.uk

Am ymholiadau cyffredinol ynglŷn â'r digwyddiad cysyllwch ag:
e **events@nus.org.uk**

Am gynnwys y gynhadledd, trefniannau democrataidd ac ymholiadau etholiadol cysylltwch ag:
e **conference@nus-wales.org.uk**

National Union of Students Wales
Second Floor, Cambrian Buildings
Mount Stuart Square
Cardiff CF10 5FL
t 0292 0435 390
www.nusconnect.org.uk

For general event enquiries contact:
e **events@nus.org.uk**

For content of the conference, democratic procedures and elections enquiries contact:
e **conference@nus-wales.org.uk**

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