



# SOCIETY & CITIZENSHIP AND WELFARE ZONE CONFERENCE REPORT

<b>For the attention of:</b>	Executive Committee	<b>Taking place on:</b>	09/12/15
<b>Name:</b>	Sophie May	<b>Action:</b>	To note

**Summary:** *This paper provides an overview on the conference attended by the Executive Committee member*

## Conference purpose(s)

I went to the National Union of Students' Welfare and Society and Citizenship Zones Conference on 29<sup>th</sup> October for two days. The purpose was to educate us on what NUS are working on in these areas and the wider political landscape and how it affects students.

## Feedback on the session(s) attended

### **Liberating Citizenship Education #whitecurriculum**

This session focused on the compulsory key citizen values teaching in secondary schools. This was eye-opening for me as this policy came in after I left school so I wasn't aware of it. The issues with it are that it focuses very much on white westernised cultures, history, and values, leaving BME students separated and receiving the implication that they are not 'true citizens' in Britain.

This session also discussed the problems with the Prevent anti-terrorism policy which encourages education institutions to report suspicious activity or signs that students may be being 'radicalised'. A 10yo boy has been reported and interviewed (read: interrogated) after asking his school if they could create a prayer room. He was asked if he identified more as 'British' or 'Muslim', implying that he couldn't be both. A 3yo child was also reported, after saying at nursery that he thought he could hear 'a big bang'.

### **Fighting the Housing Crisis**

This session was led by officers from University of Manchester union and Warwick University union on how they are tackling housing issues in their areas, much like we are with WMRW. Ideas included working with community groups, church poverty action, religious groups, working families, young professionals and the elderly as they too are affected by the housing crisis; and developing a rent setting committee with the university to 'turn a line in the sand into a line in concrete' to ensure that there is accommodation that is affordable on student finance.

When I told other unions about our WMRW campaign, another union asked if they could join the campaign. I was excited that our campaign is popular but said that we need time to get it off the ground here before we can expand it to other unions.

### **Prison Education System**

I learnt lots of interesting stats about learning in prison:

Each week in prisons across the country:

4-5 people die (one or two self inflicted deaths)

500 self harm incidents

More than 300 assaults

40 serious assaults using blunt instrument or blade

70 assaults on staff, including 9 serious assaults

86000 people in prison in UK

Overcrowded every year since 1994

46% of adults reconvicted within a year of release

67% of under 18s reconvicted in a year

80% had some form of qualification

45% had GCSEs

20% had A levels

Can only start studying a course in prison within 5 years of release date so people on life sentences have no access to education

Prisoners restricted to just 7 books each and friends and family cannot bring in books

Only course you can't study with a criminal record is law but universities can use their discretion when taking applications and many applicants with criminal record are missing out on university educations

Matters for the attention of the Executive Committee to note from this conference

As Grace highlighted in her report:

Each zones conference elects eight people to be part of one of five Zones Committees, which work with the President or Vice President on NUS' responses/campaigns on national education issues. They also elect members to be a part of the National Executive Committee, which is NUS' version of us! NEC has frequent meetings to vote on emergency policy and the stance of the NUS on national issues.

The new members of each zones committee can be found here: <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/shape-our-work/who-we-are/committee-members-directory/zones>

The new members of the NEC can be found here: <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/shape-our-work/who-we-are/committee-members-directory/national-executive-council>

The policies submitted for discussion at the next NEC can be found here: <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/nec-meeting-motions-and-amendments-2-december-2015>