

“MEANINGFUL MENTAL HEALTH CAMPAIGNS” POLICY

Title:	Meaningful Mental Health Campaigns	Date of Student Council:	25 th April 2018
Proposer name:	Laura Douds		Vice President (Science & Technology)
Seconder name:	Luca Girardi		LGBT+ Students’ Rep (Cambridge)

Union Notes:

- ‘Puppy Rooms’ and the like are a growing trend in UK Universities.
- Anglia Ruskin SU has had therapy animals for large groups of students in 2017 and is intending on bringing them back during de-stress fest 2018.
- These sessions cost the Union hundreds of pounds – the estimated cost for de-stress fest this year is £500.
- The Let’s Be Honest report showed that 70% of ARU students suffer from stress.
- The evidence to suggest that animals help with student stress levels in the long-term is dubious at best [1]
- At NUS National Conference 2018, delegates voted to pass a motion called ‘Meaningful Mental Health Campaigns, not Puppy Rooms’. [2]

[1] <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/jclp.22410>

Union Believes:

1. That using animals may temporarily alleviate the stress some students are feeling.
2. That therapy animals on a **one-to-one basis, in the long-term**, can be good for people.
3. That money used on these sessions would be better used elsewhere.
4. Other activities such as yoga or meditation sessions with qualified coaches can teach people how to de-stress themselves and given them the tools to continue doing that rather than relying on another being.
5. That too much emphasis is placed on short-term, ‘sticking plaster’ solutions rather than real change.
6. That if students’ mental health issues were addressed at the root cause, then temporary solutions such as puppy rooms would not be needed.
7. That stress is not and should not be an inherent part of the university experience, and it should not be treated as such.
8. That there is a competitive culture brought on by capitalism and the marketization of education through measures such as the TEF, and the growing competition in the graduate job market.
9. That it is this culture, promoting competition to unhealthy levels and subsequent pressure to do well, that causes a significant amount of this stress, not necessarily something inherent to the assessment process.
10. That the students who are the most in need of help with overwhelming stress levels at any time of the year, including this time of year are typically from minority groups [1] [2]

[1] <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2007/aug/31/schools.uk1>

[2] <https://www.independent.co.uk/student/student-life/health/mental-health-depression-anxiety-at-university-affecting-female-lgbt-students-a7184816.html>

Union Resolves:

1. The Union will not use animals for therapy purposes going forward (any events for the current academic year that have already been booked will be honoured).
2. To continue to stand against the marketization of higher education.

3. To continue to lobby our mental health services to be made better. This **may** include but is not limited to:
 - a. Culturally competent counselling, so that our services are truly accessible to **all** students, but especially those that most need our help.
 - b. Increasing our provision of counsellors to the HEPI recommended minimum of 1 counsellor per 1,358 students.
 - c. Anything else that has been raised in the Let's Be Honest report that is relevant.

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