

# VOTE JESS FOR WELFARE

**MANDATORY CONSENT TRAINING**

**FIGHT FOR STUDENT RENTERS**

**MORE MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING**

**STI AND DRUG TESTING**



# VOTE JESS FOR WELFARE

## ABOUT ME:

I'm Jess, a master's student at Queen's studying Conflict Transformation and Social Justice. During my undergraduate at my previous university, I helped to lead a successful rent strike that saved students over £1000 on their rent. I fought for students there and won - now I'm running to be your next Welfare Officer because I want to fight for you too.



In the aftermath of Covid, and in the midst of a Cost of Living crisis, the role of a Welfare Officer could not be more important. The Students' Union has failed to cultivate a student community and repeatedly lets down the students who it is supposed to represent. It's time to change that.

## MANDATORY CONSENT TRAINING AND REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE

### Consent

Consent is mandatory yet we let training be optional. Rates of sexual harassment and assault remain high at universities including Queen's. Inclusive and comprehensive consent training is the first step in tackling sexual violence - this should be mandatory. Many universities across Britain and Ireland already conduct this training - Queen's is behind, and it is the students who are suffering because of it.

Information for students on how to report sexual misconduct should be easily available. Importantly, students should be supported throughout the whole reporting process because recounting abuse is often a traumatising event in itself.



### Reproductive Justice

I am firmly pro-choice and have been an active member of Project Choice since I started at Queen's. I will continue to support their campaign to provide abortion pills at the SU sexual health clinic. Advice and information on abortions should be readily available to all students through the sexual health clinic so that students can make informed decisions about their own bodies.



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## FIGHT FOR STUDENT RENTERS AND WORKERS

### Student Renters

Put simply: students are exploited by their landlords. Over the Christmas holiday, university management voted to increase accommodation fees. When the cost of living is rising but wages and student loans remain stagnant, this is a disgrace I have campaigned as part of the Solidarity Action Network to oppose this. If university management do not reverse this rent rise, I will be leading a rent strike until they are forced to. I know when to take radical action to get the results that students need.



Students in private rentals face landlords who provide inadequate housing, fail to conduct repairs quickly and misuse the deposit system. My experience with renters' unions has taught me that it is much harder to exploit people when they know their rights. The Students' Union should provide comprehensive training for students in their rights as renters and offer advice on how to avoid dodgy landlords.



Renters' rights are my area of expertise. As your Welfare Officer I will provide personalised support and guidance in addition to this training through regular drop-in sessions.

### Student Workers

Currently, the QWork system is needlessly complex and stressful. Student workers are not being paid on time and they must navigate an increasingly complicated process just to get paid a living wage. As Welfare Officer, I will work to reform the system so that it is fairer and easier to use.

## DRUG TESTING KITS

Students should not be demonised for their drug use, instead the university should undertake a harm reduction approach. This approach starts with educating students during freshers' week and should continue until they leave university. The Students' Union should work with organisations such as The Loop to teach students about safe drug use and drug awareness; drug testing kits can then be provided discretely and anonymously through the Students' Union clinic. Drug testing kits should be as easily accessible as contraceptives.



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## INCREASED MENTAL HEALTH FUNDING, SUPPORT AND EDUCATION

Mental ill-health has always been a concern among university students, and this has been amplified by the Cost of Living crisis. It is more important than ever to have robust mental health services within the university.

### Mental Health First-Aid Training

All student officers and school reps should have mental health first aid training and know where to direct students in need of help – but there's no point being directed to services if those services are ineffective.

### Increase Mental Health Funding

The waitlists for university counselling and diagnoses are ridiculously long. I have spoken to students on those waitlists who have considered dropping out of university because they can't access the support they need. This is a disgrace. I would advocate for these students on a personal level by providing support throughout the process and on an institutional level by fighting for more funding to be set aside to reduce these waitlists.

Many students first discover their neurodivergence while at university, I would make resources available so students can easily access diagnoses and support mechanisms.

I know from my personal experience with OCD that a lack of awareness can make an already challenging mental illness even more difficult. As your Welfare Officer I would work to raise awareness and provide information on often overlooked mental illnesses such as eating disorders, OCD, and substance addiction.

### Increase the Hardship Fund

The Cost of Living crisis is having a serious negative impact on the wellbeing of students. Recent research suggests that students could effectively lose £1,500 as inflation increases but student loans do not. The financial support offered by Queen's needs to expand to reflect this increased need.

## WORLD RECORD STI TESTING

Four years ago, during Freshers' Week, the Students' Union attempted to break the world record for the highest amount of STI tests in a single day. Although they didn't beat the record, this event was a massive success. It helped to break the stigma surrounding STI testing, educated students on sexual health and likely reduced the spread of STIs throughout the student community. I would replicate this event for a new cohort of students – this time we will beat the record!

