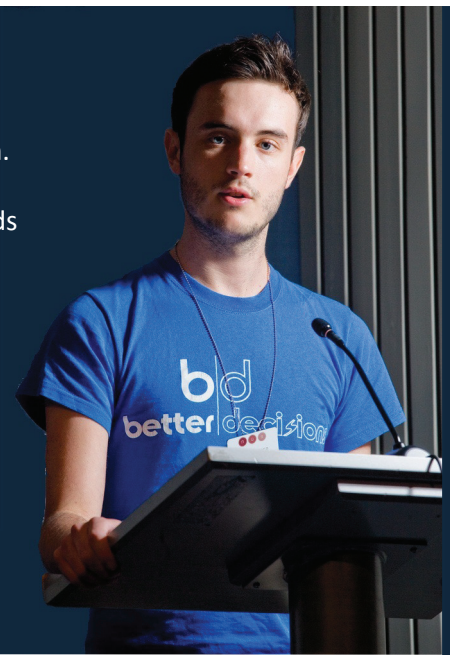


MERCER4WELFARE.COM

# MERCER FOR WELFARE

"A year ago I stood on a platform and promised to give the welfare zone teeth. This year, I've worked to give a firm direction for welfare, based on the needs of our students."



I've demonstrated that I have the conviction to take a principled stance on a number of issues, but I've also not been afraid to talk about the elephant in the room and unearth the tricky questions that face the future of our movement. The attacks keep coming thick and fast; but if re-elected, I will continue to stand in their way. And under my leadership, I will continue to bring people together, expose the facts and have the conversations that will lead to us to a progressive education system that stands proudly on principles of equality and positive wellbeing. Students inspire me – that's why I strive to fight for our rights and *that's why I won't let you down.*"

## Fighting Student Hardship

For the first time, NUS has taken steps to address the inequalities and inadequacies in our modern student financial support landscape, through FE and HE, with the Student Support Commission and the Pound in the Pocket research. I'm taking action on what is finally being acknowledged as a national scandal. That the government is cutting student support to lessen the burden on the treasury, at a time when living/study costs are at an all-time high, is a *disgrace*.

Further cuts to ALF, the national hardship fund administered by universities, is a direct assault on our most disadvantaged. Attacks on FE students, who have not only had EMA and ALG removed, are having local travel subsidies removed left, right and centre. And the assumption that postgrads don't need any financial support is a shameful barrier to education. We have a real opportunity for make an evidenced-based case for the investment in student maintenance and a strong vision for how students should be supported.

*"Pete has worked tirelessly this year to protect students' rights in welfare. He's inspired thousands of students in FE to get campaigning and has an incredible understanding and empathy with students on the ground."*

Toni Pearce - NUS VP Further Education

### This year I have:

- Produced the Pound in the Pocket survey, with nearly 22k initial responses
- Initiated a sector-wide literature review
- Commissioned micro research projects for students' unions to take ownership of specific focuses
- Saved Care To Learn funding for young parents in FE
- Reported to the Low Pay Commission
- Launched the Get On The Bus campaign across the UK
- Laid the smack-down on #Wronga and any other irresponsible lender that tries to target students

### If re-elected I will:

- Win students more financial support, and where it's needed most: that's my promise
- Push to reinstate student support in FE and lobby for statutory funding for postgrads
- Produce comprehensive research results in a report on the experiences of students and finance
- Argue the case for age equalisation of minimum wage
- Work with current campaigns against legal loan sharks to end the unethical lending



#TweetAtPete  
@MercerPete

on.fb.me/  
MERCER4WELFARE

pete.mercer  
@nus.org.uk

*"Pete is simply the best person for VP Welfare. He has shown commitment and passion to ensuring every student has the best possible experience."*

Matt Denton - Welfare Officer, Sheffield SU

**"I want to forge a credible and arresting vision for the future of education - one that doesn't revolve just around education funding; but one that runs much deeper, one that taps into the needs and dreams of a failed generation, and one that leads the way to true social justice."** *Pete x*

Many of the current changes in both FE and HE will have a disproportionate negative impact on the vulnerable. The threats to our identities, mental health and safety are very real. As the coalition drives through a two tier market in HE, many of the vital services that students depend on in cash-strapped WP universities could start to be viewed as “peripheral” and even “expendable”. In FE, the vast cuts to enrichment budgets means that many of the activities and services that develop, guide and support our students will be discarded.

The Welfare Bill will result in benefits being removed from those students that need it most, those with disabilities and illness; whilst the government’s obsession with localism will allow even more anti-student agendas to emerge. Wherever these attacks appear, we need to be ready to face them down with a disarming and united anti-cuts coalition. I’m a believer in the state: all the structures that we hold dear are being systematically torn to pieces and we must stand up and stop it.

## Protecting Our Students

### This year I have:

- With the Disabled Students Campaign, produced a mental health toolkit/training, and worked with Time To Change
- Working with liberation, produced the hate crime reports
- Produced a Localism guide and Student Safety Net app
- Delivered bar crawl guidance and lobbied Local Authorities up and down the UK on commercial bar crawls

### I will:

- Unite with the liberation campaigns to build an anti-cuts model that feeds into the wider education agenda
- Produce emergency Save Our Services resource hub
- Work with the Fair Necessities campaign and the Healthy FE Programme to forge a vision for support in FE
- Launch campaigns against cyber-bullying websites and Stop and Search reforms in the Education Act
- Promote Time To Change in students’ unions encouraging them to take a stand against mental health discrimination
- Undertake research into experiences of students as carers

## Our Homes, Our Rights

### This year I have:

- Protected the code of standards for private builds to maintain standards
- Changed deposit protection legislation to cover students’ backs
- Launched national accreditation scheme
- Supported SUs on Article 4 Direction

### I will:

- Undertake a 2012/13 Accommodation Cost Survey and launch campaign
- Lobby to enforce affordability quotas in planning as part of local WP strategies
- Ensure institutions and private hall providers consult with SUs in planning
- Work with the nations to ensure standards are being upheld across the UK
- Develop the national accreditation scheme and promote to push up standards
- Continue support to SUs that are threatened by regressive planning, eg. A4D

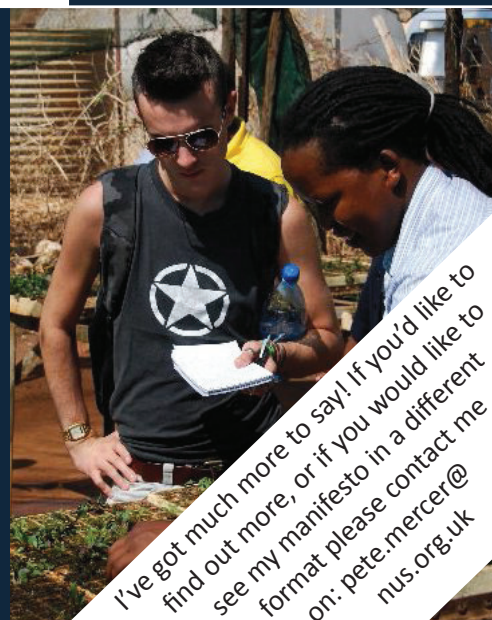
Access to decent and affordable accommodation is not only a basic human right, but also central to the student experience. When the cost of institutionally-owned builds is rising at an average rate that’s 17% above inflation – *you know you have a national problem*. It’s imperative that Local Authorities and institutions come together, under students’ union instruction, to tackle what is quickly becoming an affordability crisis. And as pressure mounts on the Private Rented Sector, off-street housing standards are becoming all the more vulnerable. I won’t stand by and let students be exploited.

*“I’m proud to be supporting Pete for re-election - his passion and enthusiasm is just what the welfare zone needs.”*

Louise Goux-Wirth - Welfare & Community Officer, UWE SU

## Bringing People Together

For many people, college or university is the first and one of the only places where in a controlled context they can discuss social, cultural and political differences. This is healthy and shouldn’t be restricted. And, true, with difference sometimes comes discord. But I’ve been clear that this is often overplayed, that many issues we face don’t have to be divisive and that together, we can have dialogue and debate in a safe environment. This year, I’ve publicly and directly opposed Prevent, the government’s counter-terrorism strategy: it encourages prejudice, turns communities against each other and condemns individuals before they’ve done anything wrong. But through consultation, I’ve managed to get the Home Office committee to admit that their tactics have been *wrong* – that only through a process of engagement, not alienation, will we bring society together – and I have led the way: providing appropriate guidance to SUs and organisations, facilitating meaningful dialogue and promoting social cohesion. Re-elect me and I’ll continue this breakthrough.



I've got much more to say! If you'd like to find out more, or if you would like to see my manifesto in a different format please contact me on: [pete.mercer@nus.org.uk](mailto:pete.mercer@nus.org.uk)