CARE+ CAMPAIGN ACTION GUIDE FOR STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

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Contents

Introduction

The [Students Union's LGBT+ campaign](#) and the [LGBTQ+@Cam research group](#) are collaborating on a campaign to make Cambridge a more caring and inclusive community for LGBTQ+ people. Because Cambridge is a collegiate university, this means much of the change has to happen within the Colleges – through action by students, Junior Common Rooms (JCRs), Middle Common Rooms (MCRs), staff, administrative committees and more. This guide is meant to help you get involved. It provides a clear set of steps we can all take to push for positive change: to ensure that better support systems are in place, that this support is more visible, and that Colleges are active in demonstrating that LGBTQ+ people are valued and cared for in their communities. These actions are intended to dovetail with our university-wide campaign, which is based on a clear set of demands. We would love for you to also be involved in this wider effort.

At the SU and LGBTQ+@Cam, we have each conducted extensive research in the last few years which forms the basis of our proposals. LGBTQ+@Cam published a [report in 2019](#) which demonstrated the wide range of experiences faced by LGBTQ+ people in Cambridge. This indicated that many LGBTQ+ people experience Cambridge as a supportive place to work and appreciate efforts at inclusivity which have been made. However, it also found that a significant number did not share this view–who experienced distressing levels of discomfort, disapproval and unease. This was particularly true for trans, non-binary, BME and disabled LGBTQ+ people.

Meanwhile, the SU's LGBT+ Campaign has conducted several surveys over the past year. In December 2019, the Big LGBT+ Survey echoed LGBTQ+@Cam's work, indicating that a worrying number of students had been put in uncomfortable (or even hostile) situations. Though many felt included in Cambridge, there was a common sense that people were being made to feel they didn't truly belong because of their genders and sexualities, whether that was due to a lack of representation, others' behaviours, explicit prejudice or the effects of policies. Again, this was especially true for trans, non-binary, BME and disabled people.

The Campaign has carried out two surveys since the COVID-19 crisis hit in March 2020. These established that our LGBTQ+ communities have been significantly impacted by the policies which the University and Colleges have implemented, from the initial decision to force students from accommodation in March to the stringent rules imposed in October. Despite the rapid changes in situation, these results demonstrated a pattern: LGBTQ+ people's specific needs and vulnerabilities were not being taken into consideration, whilst the resulting policies had disproportionate impacts on people's wellbeing and safety. Sadly, these impacts were often predictable. They were due pre-existing vulnerabilities–harassment, microaggressions, stress, household security–which collided with the lack of support and representation our research had already established. And once again, trans, non-binary, BME and disabled LGBTQ+ people have been worst affected.

The measures we are calling for are intended to be the first steps towards changing this situation. They are meant to be straightforward. Moreover, the actions we are proposing are clear and specific. They are meant to create the foundations for better support and representation to begin a long-term shift. We hope that by being involved, you can help us make Cambridge's culture better for everyone.

Action toolkit

This plan is based around the findings of LGBTQ+@Cam, from which we produced a set of specific steps you can take. These are ordered below in a loose timeline. The SU LGBT+ Campaign will also be campaigning in the central university, and are always happy to support you! The demands of the central campaign are intended to be ambitious, but also to follow naturally from the initial steps outlined here.

Key Actions

1. Identify student and staff LGBTQ+ representatives in every College, preferably including a named Fellow

2. Create a prominent LGBTQ+ tab or link on your college website

3. Provide links to the main LGBTQ+ networks at Cambridge and our reports

List of Actions

1. Set up your College campaign

   Let people in your college know about what you're doing and invite them to take part. Set up a group chat, for example, where you can organise your work. If you want, create a social media presence.

2. Get in touch with the SU LGBT+ Campaign and the University's LGBTQ+ Staff Network

   Establishing these connections will be very helpful for everyone involved: when together, we are better able to share our knowledge and support. The LGBT+ Campaign plan to facilitate meetings between the college campaigns where we can share information and strategise the campaign.

3. Choose someone to be a student representative for your campaign, to work with the LGBTQ+@cam and SU's campaign

> This could be your JCR or MCR LGBT+ officer. Let us know who your representative is and how long they'll be available for.

4. Identify a fellow or staff member who might be a staff representative, to work with the Q+@cam and SU campaign, and get them involved

> Having a non-student representative is also crucial for the long-term goals of our work: they should provide a point of contact for students and staff, working to ensure that they feel seen and supported. This is meant to be a long-term role with some key responsibilities, so it is important that any potential representative is made aware of this.

> In addition to providing a point of contact, having a member of staff–especially a fellow–will help considerably in furthering our other goals. They will be able to help put weight behind our recommendations when they are presented College authorities and committees, even if they are not in these kinds of positions themselves.

> Q+@Cam have contacts in every college who can help with this. Be sure to also work with any supportive staff you already know.

5. Consider passing motions in support of the aims of our work in your JCRs and/or MCRs

> Doing this will help you engage your colleges through the normal institutional pathways. It will also mark your student bodies' commitments to the aims and values of the campaign.

The SU Campaign are drafting a template motion for JCRs and MCRs, which will outline the key actions listed here, as well as some broader goals for the campaign. We will be in contact about this shortly.

6. Consider setting up a college LGBT+ society which is inclusive of both students and staff

Creating a permanent college society would help formally establish a space for LGBT+ people. Often, LGBT+ communities in colleges are dependent on the work of student representatives; they tend to be based around social media group chats and vary considerably year on year. This can mean they fluctuate, both in terms of who is involved and the degree to which they provide places people can turn to for support. They can be felt to be exclusionary, especially for staff and graduate students.

A college society would help to distribute the work taken on by JCR and MCR officers. It could hold events and facilitate discussions, beyond the welfare work that student officers are usually focused on. It could also provide a space for allies to listen to people, so we can share our experiences of what it means to be LGBTQ+. Moreover, it would show potential applicants that the college is a welcoming place with a strong support network.

7. Get your college's decision makers to create a prominent LGBTQ+ tab or link on your main college websites

Updating college websites is both a symbolic and a practical act which would promote a culture of care in your college. First, it would send a clear message to people who are part of your college community and to people considering joining. It would show your college's commitment to LGBTQ+ people. Visibility is incredibly important.

Second, it would direct people to resources which support their identities and experiences. Tabs on college websites should connect people with: the SU LGBT+ campaign (https://www.lgbt.cusu.cam.ac.uk), LGBTQ+@Cam (https://www.lgbtq.sociology.cam.ac.uk/About), the LGBTQ+ Staff Network (https://www.equality.admin.cam.ac.uk/diversity-networks/lgbt-staff-network), and the LGBTQ+ Alumni Association (https://www.alumni.cam.ac.uk/group/cambridge-lgbt-alumni). They should also highlight the support and communities your college already has in place. By placing an LGBTQ+ tab on every College website which connects these networks, we can deliver a step change in our ability to welcome and support LGBTQ+ staff and students at Cambridge.

We will discuss this proposal in more detail below.

8. Present the findings of LGBTQ+@Cam and the SU LGBT+ Campaign's research to college decision makers

It is critical that those with authority the Colleges are aware of the experiences of LGBTQ+ people and take these into consideration in their actions. You can make it clear to them that this will not just benefit our LGBTQ+ communities: it would uplift your college as a whole.

9. Push for your college to make a public statement of support for LGBTQ+ people, in recognition of these findings

Public recognition from colleges of the specific and differential welfare issues faced by LGBTQ+ people is positive both as a spur to action for college administrators and the community as a whole and as a way of holding colleges accountable for responding to LGBTQ+ people's needs. A statement should also address the need for an LGBTQ+ community in the

college generally, and outline the college's support for that community.

10. **Discuss and strategise in case colleges put up resistance**

Having an action plan of your own, tailored to your college's environment, will be very helpful. Colleges can resist change for a variety of reasons. Indeed, this is often to be expected. No-one wants to escalate our actions, but it is important to have a strategy in case this is necessary. We have outlined some arguments colleges could make and ways you might respond to them below.

11. **Discuss how to make this an ongoing project which outlasts these specific proposals, to work towards changing college cultures and attitudes as a whole**

Student activism has a tendency to forget easily and work on short cycles: try to build resilience in your campaign by having a good archive you can pass on to future members, and by making the campaign the responsibility of collective groups (like your college society) rather than one or two individual representatives.

Proposals for changes to college websites

Below are some options for changing websites: ideally, all of the options below would be implemented together, however if this isn't possible, we've listed them in a rough preference order.

1. ## Making a community statement for the college

   As we said above, this is a powerful sign of support, and listing it permanently on the website only makes it more so. It also sets a standard to which colleges can be held to in the future.

2. ## Adding a section to your college's 'About' tab

   Most colleges have an 'About' tab on their main website header, which provides general information about the college. These represent the public face the college wishes to project. The content of these pages vary greatly-from discussions of college histories to ethos to clocks and artwork. But there is a clear lack of representation and statements of inclusion for marginalised people within colleges' communities across the board.

3. ## Creating an LGBTQ+ specific subsection within the college's welfare section

   This solution is less than ideal. It would be harder to find and therefore has less symbolic weight (in essence, by marginalising LGBTQ+ issues to welfare problems). It would also limit the subjects which can be addressed.

Possible motion to pass in your JCR/MCR

A motion would codify your JCR or MCR's commitment to the campaign. Please see [this document for a suggested motion](#).

Possible statements for colleges to make

These would be statements of welcome, talking about values that colleges hold which support LGBTQ+ people and the kinds of community they are, distinct from welfare needs.
Please see this document for a suggested statement.

Ways of persuading colleges and countering resistance

Common ways that colleges resist these kinds of change

1. Saying that changes are not necessary or dismissing the need to consider them at all. For example, colleges might say that they are already tolerant and point to examples of work they already do.

2. Saying that the work to make changes would be too difficult, be too costly or take too much effort. In other words, claiming that the costs outweigh the benefits. In the case of most colleges, with the extraordinary resources they own, this is often disingenuous.

3. Citing external factors and priorities which mean changes are problematic for them. For example, talking about development opportunities and the way changes might affect alumni relations (and the fundraising these produce).

4. Empathising with people's concerns, but saying they have other more important priorities right now expecting that, in time, the pressure will go away.

5. Listening to people's concerns whilst dragging their feet on making changes. For example: by predicating them on slow committee and working group processes, or simply letting them slide once the immediate pressure has gone away.

6. Using vagueness and the opacities in their procedures to make it hard to know what is possible and what is not, or what action is actually being taken.

7. Colleges often want to avoid setting precedents which could put pressure on other colleges. They tend not to like being the first to do something. This has been seen, for example, with college divestment policies. Once one college was public in their decision, many others began to follow suit.

Arguments you can make

1. Point out that this is actually a development opportunity, not a threat for fundraising. There are many alumni who had very negative experiences and would like to see a change. They may be silent, but they are there. The LGBTQ+ Alumni Network can help you put this case across.

2. Point out that there is a misconception that being pro-active can be bad PR: for example that it can be seen as 'virtue signalling' or pandering. In fact, cases of public statements can be the reverse, as has been seen regarding some colleges to the decolonisation and Black Lives Matter campaigns. Taking progressive steps is a very good PR move and will help bring in more applicants.

3. Point out that, right now, colleges are looking to show they care, especially due to coronavirus. It's in their interest to further this for LGBTQ+ people.

4. Point out that historically, colleges have been remembered based on their acts of inclusion, most notably the years they became co-educational. Those reputations have lasted over 30 years since those events. They affect how applicants perceive them and make their judgements. It's in colleges' interests to present themselves as welcoming in this way, as this is how history will remember them. History matters a great deal in Cambridge.

5. Point out the significant harms which college policies have been involved in, especially recently, even if they have done so inadvertently. It is important to do this in a non-accusatory way,

as these kinds of effects can be unintentional. But their effects are felt, nonetheless, and must be redressed.

6.   Point out that people's trust in their Colleges and University are at an absolute low right now. Making these changes could help repair these relations.

7.   Point out that, due to the nature of this campaign, their failure to meet your requests is itself evidence that they do not care enough about LGBT+ people. These demands are basic, targeted and straightforward to achieve. Colleges already have the means to realise them; they only need the will.

Further actions to counter college resistance

We sincerely hope that none of the actions listed below will be necessary. Our campaign aims are targeted and easy to achieve, so long as colleges have the will to carry them out. Nevertheless, we have provided these as contingencies. These are listed in order of the degree of escalation they involve:

1.   Sustain your demands on college officials and committees, for example through emailing them directly and repeatedly.

2.   Write open letters which demonstrate broad support across your college.

3.   Ask for the SU to get involved directly. The LGBT+ Campaign doesn't have the mandate to direct its efforts towards specific colleges unless students from a college express a need for them to do so.

4.   Make public statements. Colleges are incredibly averse to negative publicity. Their reputations are vital for their continued success and income.

5.   Make publicity stunts, which attract media attention, for the same reason: negative press attention is a powerful tool against colleges.

6.   Engage in forms of passive civil disobedience, such as protests on college grounds.

Contacts and conclusions

Thanks for reading!

We hope that you've been inspired by this to take part in our work. We would love to have you onboard!

These changes are targeted and well-researched. We believe that they could have incredible benefits in the long-run, creating space within colleges for people to feel more supported and able to express themselves. They could lead to opportunities for further policy changes, making LGBTQ+ people's lives in Cambridge better for years to come.

Contacts

If you have any questions, feel free to send them to Rowan or Jamie at the SU LGBT+ campaign: lgbt-campaigns@cusu.cam.ac.uk

LGBTQ+@Cam's website can be found here: https://www.lgbtq.sociology.cam.ac.uk/About.