Supporting Student Carers

What we will do:

1. Campaign for the university to provide bursaries for student carers.
2. Campaign for the University to better use the data it collects on the number of student carers to more effectively provide support, and to include them in its widening participation effort.
3. The University has now employed someone within their Widening Participation team to act as a named contact for student carers at the University and we would also like this person to undertake the following: administering the above bursaries and collecting data on student carers, as well as:
   a. Providing information and advice to student carers.
   b. Working with the university to ensure their policies and practices are supportive and compliant to the needs of student carers.
   c. Organising social and networking events for student carers, and ensuring Students’ Association events and societies cater to student carers are open as far as possible to them.
   d. Organising taster days or appointments for prospective carers to receive information, however, noting that a strong first step would be drop-in sessions during existing days.
4. Lobbying the university to complete the Checklist for Going higher for student carers: Recognition Award launched by the Carers trust Scotland.
5. Lobby the Scottish government, whom now have the powers over Carers’ Allowance in Scotland, and the Westminster government to make Carers’ Allowance available to students in full time education.

Background to this:

1. A carer is defined as ‘anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.’ (Carers Trust)
2. Student carers often struggle with a different set of commitments than other students at the university, such as increased need to travel to support others, increased responsibilities to look after the person or people they are caring for and pressure to balance a caring role and academic work.
3. The documents “Time to be heard for Young Adult Carers, Bridging the Gap: Young Adult Carers in Scotland” (2015) produced by the Carers trust Scotland and “Learning with care” (2013) produced by the NUS provided more information about the demographics and issues faced by student carers at university.
4. Student carers are four times more likely to drop out of college or university than students who are not carers.
5. 39% of student carers surveyed by Carer’s trust rated their physical health as ‘just ok’ or poor and 45% reported mental health problems.
6. 45% of carers surveyed said that there was no-one at university who recognised them as a carer and helped them.
7. In April 2017, the ‘Going Higher for Student Carers: Recognition award’ scheme was launched by Carers trust Scotland with a checklist and guidelines for measures and services that universities can put in place to facilitate better support for student carers.
8. These measures include and highlight the above actions proposed by the previous ‘supporting student carers’ motion such as implementing a support group for carers.
9. However, actions such as including stronger widening participation measures at the university are yet to be fulfilled.

Beliefs and motivating actions:

1. Student carers with the motivation to seek opportunities in Higher education face large challenges and providing steps to break down these barriers can only be a good thing for increasing diversity among the student population.
2. Increasing diversity amongst the student population can lead to discussion and participation for people of all walks of life and can benefit the whole student body by learning from each other.
3. Care work is work, related emotional labour is labour and should be valued and subsequently rewarded as such. In our society it is the reality that care from family and friends is expected, but carers suffer negatively financially for providing this support.
4. Care work and especially unpaid care work disproportionately affects women, and as a form of labour often perceived as feminine it, and carers are further devalued by an unequal society.

Submitted with 20 Student signatures.