Hello Readers!
Allow me to introduce myself. I’m Matty. I have just started my MA Gender, Sexuality and Culture at the University and so far am also getting involved with the LGBTQ* Campaigns group, the Sexpressions society, and I am just about to start working with LGBT North West. My undergrad was in Youth Studies and since graduating I have spent 5 years working to earn enough money to do my masters (SO excited to be here!).

I would love to become your liberation officer in order to bring my experience and knowledge to the role, but I am genuinely excited to work with the campaigns group regardless and help to implement positive change to our university.

Here are some of my thoughts on how to go about this:

Let’s Get Together (Yeah, Yeah, Yeah)
Collaboration and working as a community to affect positive change is the key to success. We need to utilize the diverse skills set that we can put on the table when we all come together to develop creative strategies for tackling the issues that we identify. I would propose that the LGBTQ* campaigns group could act as a base for this collaboration. If you were to vote me as your liberation officer I would see it as my role to advocate for the group direct to the institution and to use the role to access resources.

Broad Goals:
The broad goals I would like to address are improving the visibility and accessibility of the LGBTQ* community and I will propose two ways in which we should tackle this:

*Education, Education, Education!*
Firstly I propose that we develop awareness sessions that we could offer to other societies, university staff, and services. The sessions could be tailored to the needs of the audience and range from a more informal 1-2-1 conversation to a workshop or presentation. The aim of the sessions would be to make the audience aware of LGBTQ* issues and the steps they can take to promote inclusion. I truly believe that if such a campaign picked up steam it could help to break down barriers and promote a more inclusive environment for everyone.

*Strength in numbers*
Secondly I believe that we need to work more closely with other liberation groups to promote shared values, but also to share knowledge and resources. By banding together to identify common goals we would be coming at oppression in much greater numbers and in a form more identifiable to the majority of the student population. In addition it is important to support causes that are not our own to show solidarity. So let’s get together!

Specific Goals:
I would like specific campaigns to be born out of the interests of the community. I will however highlight three areas that emerged out of the LGBTQ* campaigns group:

*Ode to a Gender Neutral Toilet*
I have stolen this title from StormMiguel Florez who wrote a love letter to a gender neutral toilet which I recommend you all run off and read immediately if you haven’t already! For those of you still reading this I am of course referring to putting the need for gender neutral toilets on the agenda. By not providing safe bathrooms for all its students the University of Manchester is limiting people’s ability to move around the campus sphere, subjecting people...
to gender policing, and reinforcing the problematic belief that gender is binary. If you were to vote me as your LGBTQ* Liberation Officer I would propose we start conversations with the big hitters in the University to see if we affect change from the top. Simultaneously I would propose developing a creative and fun campaign that would bring awareness to the issue and reinforce our conviction.

*Because healthcare is Fundamental!*
Current health and counselling services’ ability to meet the needs of LGBTQ* users could be described anywhere between hetero/cis-normative and at worst downright dangerous. This becomes all the more important when you acknowledge the prevalence of mental and physical health needs in the community. I would propose that this needs to be put on the agenda and am keen to work with you all in order to figure out the most effective strategy.

*Reclaim our history*
It is a beautiful but unfortunately rare thing to have an LGBTQ* person or issue taught in class. There is however no reason to exclude our community from the curriculum both in the University and in schools, so it’s down to us to convince them! In addition to lobbying relevant academic staff I would propose we could also celebrate our community’s past and achievements our own way. During a meeting of the LGBTQ* Liberation group someone came up with the idea to create artistic displays specific to faculties to celebrate key people in the field who are also LGBTQ*, and I think it’s a brilliant idea.

My Experience
As an undergraduate I held various positions in the university (Course Rep, Society President, Nightline Counsellor, and Peer Mentor) and I have also worked in University Student Services. These experiences have given me an understanding of university institutions from different perspectives, and I feel confident communicating with students and staff alike. I have run a youth campaign which was called the THIS (Tackling Homophobia In Schools) Project, however I will not claim to be a campaigns expert. In order to improve my skills I have been attending the Skills For Change programme.

Final Words…
As a relative newcomer to the University of Manchester I find the steps it has taken towards promoting the needs of its LGBTQ* community exciting. However it’s exactly this perception that can often lead to complacency. As an undergraduate at a different University I had to fight against a policy there which allowed LGBTQ* students to be turned away from societies on the basis of their identity, and it took nearly two years to get the union to agree to a one-off LGBT night in the SU.

While these issues may seem fairly disconnected to the situation at Manchester the approach is the same:

* A determination that we deserve better and we can affect change.*

Thank you for taking the time to read my manifesto and I hope to meet you properly in the LGBTQ* Campaigns group sometime soon.

Please get in touch if you have any questions, comments, ideas or to just say hi on my facebook page:
https://www.facebook.com/mattyLGBTQ

(On a side note anyone interested in the LGBTQ* Campaigns group please get in touch and we can add you to it)