



Department
for Education

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2nd November 2019

Re: Mrs Dilks,

Thank you for the letters from your office of 12 December 2018 and 4 February 2019, and the associated Regulation 28 report relating to Edward Farmer.

In your report, you asked that consideration be given to a national campaign addressing the risks of alcohol consumption within a short period, how to identify persons at risk, the importance of timely medical intervention and the inherent risks of initiation events.

Your letter of 4 February supported the proposed action detailed by the former Education Secretary in his letter to you of 15 January, namely that government departments and bodies from the education and health sectors would work together to design the measures most likely to achieve the desired outcome of preventing future such tragedies as the death of Edward Farmer.

The outcome of that action is the comprehensive guidance published on 23 September by Universities UK and Newcastle University, *Initiations at UK Universities*, to raise awareness of the dangers of initiations and excessive alcohol consumption among students (see: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/news/Pages/New-advice-for-universities-and-students-on-dangers-of-initiations.aspx>)

The launch of this guidance was publicised by national media, including BBC Television News, BBC Online and the *Times*, the *i*, the *Guardian* the *Metro* and the *Independent* newspapers.

The guidance includes:

- Higher education institutions' duty of care and other statutory obligations to students
- Recommendations to the higher education sector in 10 areas including staff training, disciplinary processes, reporting systems, focusing on prohibited behaviours, and

awareness raising. This includes how training activities should point out the signs of dangerous consumption of alcohol.

- Advice that interventions should be developed and administered at key points in a student's time at university (e.g. UCAS application, open days, induction days, enrolment and re-enrolment).
- Information on the National Union of Students' 'Alcohol Impact' campaign, which is a whole-institution programme to create the conditions for a social norm of responsible alcohol consumption by students
- A suite of initiatives for tackling initiations in student sport, designed by British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS) - the national governing body for higher education sport in the UK
- Signposting to the UK Chief Medical Officers' Low Risk Drinking Guidelines which provide information about the health risks associated with different levels and patterns of drinking to enable the general public, including students, to make informed choices about their drinking.

The above has been achieved through a determined collective effort by stakeholders across the higher education sector and government to take fully considered action to mitigate the risk of a similar such tragedy happening again.

Yours sincerely,
Chris Skidmore

THE RT HON CHRIS SKIDMORE MP

