

07 FEB 2019

30 January 2019

Mrs Karen Dilks
HM Senior Coroner
Newcastle upon Tyne Coroners
Civic Centre
Barras Bridge
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8QH

Dear Mrs Dilks

Re: Investigation into the death of Edward James Farmer

Thank you for your letter of 12 December 2018.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my condolences to the family and friends of Edward following the tragic events on 12 and 13 December 2016. Any life cut short is one too many, and I am sure the circumstances relating to Edward's death make it even more difficult to come to terms with.

As you may know, NUS is a confederation of students' unions, comprising c98% of all further and higher education students' unions in the UK, totaling 538 students' unions. Through our representative structures we are the collective voice of seven million students. We work to promote and defend the student interest across all aspects of society. The behavior change campaigns we run are primarily delivered to individual students through our work of developing their respective Students' Unions.

Before I respond to your proposal for a new national campaign, I will outline our work to date on the issue of promoting responsible consumption of alcohol by students.

1. Campaigns work

We have been publicly opposed to initiation ceremonies for many years and sought to highlight the issue through the student voice of our full-time student officers. In addition, we have produced training resources on the development of students' union rules, procedures and systems that address contentious issues, including initiations (<http://studentopportunities.nus.org.uk/2014/06/05/the-unions-rules-systems-procedures/>).

In 2013 we published guidance on bar crawls, both for students' unions and the police (see two attached documents: '*Guidance notes for students' unions - commercial bar crawls*' and '*Guidance Notes for Law Enforcement Officers - Bar Crawls*'), so that students' unions could intervene when commercial bar crawl companies were not meeting their legal duties. The guidance underlines our opposition to that kind of activity.

Our work on tackling the lad culture, which substantively started in 2014, has extensively cited the initiation ceremonies and irresponsible consumption of alcohol as key issues. This includes our report '*That's What She Said*' ([www.nus.org.uk/PageFiles/12238/Thats%20What%20She%20Said%20-%20Full%20Report%20\(1\).pdf](http://www.nus.org.uk/PageFiles/12238/Thats%20What%20She%20Said%20-%20Full%20Report%20(1).pdf)), which later featured prominently in discussions at our Lad Culture summit. This work led to various resources and tools for students' unions to

help them develop policies and procedures to tackle issues pertaining from lad culture (www.nusconnect.org.uk/liberation/women-students/tackling-lad-culture), and at a national level was the impetus for further work by UUK (www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2016/changing-the-culture.pdf), BUCS (www.bucs.org.uk/athlete.asp?section=18767§ionTitle=%23TakeAStand) and others. It is a matter of regret that much of the media coverage characterises our work as being the fun police or snowflakes.

2. Best Bar None

Best Bar None is an accreditation scheme, supported by the Home Office, which promotes responsible management and operation of alcohol licensed premises. The scheme includes questions in the prevention of crime and disorder, public safety, prevention of public nuisance, protection of children from harm, social responsibility and a large section on training which ensures all venues are training their staff in key areas. Entrants are required to show a raft of documentation and policies that cover things like safe alcohol retailing, challenge 25, conflict management and dealing with customers who are vulnerable. The entrants go through a four hours assessment which is both a review of documentation but also a chance for the assessor to check staff members understanding, through speaking to staff and asking them questions.

This work has been ongoing for a number of years. As early as 2004 we led on taking the regional police-led pilot in Manchester to scale nationally through our members students' unions. This academic year we have 55 students' unions working towards their annual accreditation. Last academic year a similar number took part, with 37 achieving gold level accreditation, and all students' unions that entered gaining accreditation.

We proactively support entrants on an ongoing basis through a Facebook workplace page and run communities of practice sessions throughout the year. Participating students' unions can assess the Drinkaware library of resources.

There are four criteria, all of which are mandatory for accreditation, that are particularly relevant to your enquiry: *E46 - Drinks Promotions / Mandatory Code*; *E47 - Drink Promotions - Risk Assessment*; *E17 - Responsible Alcohol Retailing*; *E18 - Duty of Care Policy / Safeguarding*. More information on the criteria, and national scheme, can be found here: <http://bbnuk.com/>.

3. Alcohol Impact

We established Alcohol Impact as a partnership with the Home Office four years ago, through an £80k grant for one year, and now run it as a self-funded programme, funded by universities, supported in a non-financial way by the Home Office. Alcohol Impact seeks to reverse the social norm of irresponsible alcohol consumption by students, especially first years. It is a supported accreditation programme which brings the students' union and university together as a partnership through shared actions to change norms and behaviours.

Alcohol Impact does have a mandatory criterion on initiations: *IN039: The partnership has taken action to moderate or prevent alcohol-related initiation ceremonies*. All partnerships also must carry out an annual innovative intervention, and these can, and sometimes do, relate to preventing initiation ceremonies.

To date thirty-one universities have / are taking part in Alcohol Impact, delivering a broad array of actions that collectively help to change student attitudes and behaviors on alcohol consumption. We have substantive evidence that the programme has led to reductions in alcohol-related incidents on campus, as detailed under the summary reports section of our website (<https://alcoholimpact.nus.org.uk/research>). We are also in the process of publishing a new detailed report showcasing outcomes and case studies from the last few years of the Programme, which will be released in February 2019.

It should be noted that, Newcastle University Students' Union disaffiliated from NUS and is not currently a member. As with all our programmes, Alcohol Impact is only formally open to students' unions that are members of NUS. Newcastle University Students' Union would need to reaffiliate to NUS to formally take part. They can, however, freely access the criteria, and our extensive resources, as they are all openly published on our programme website: <https://alcoholimpact.nus.org.uk/about>.

As part of Alcohol Impact we run our annual Students and Alcohol Survey (<https://alcoholimpact.nus.org.uk/research>), which provides a national snapshot of how students think about, and consume, alcohol and provides us with baselines of attitudes and behaviours that we are working to change, and evidence of change at participating institutions.

We also run an annual Students and Alcohol Conference which, this year, is happening on Wednesday 27 February in Manchester (www.cvent.com/events/students-and-alcohol-2019/event-summary-acb21a2c18cc4503838c1baba3b6834e.aspx). It is a showcase event for participants to present their innovative interventions and find ways to collaborate on this agenda. You are very welcome to attend the event if you would like to find out more about the programme. If you could put me in touch with Edwards family I will extend an invitation to them as well.

4. Drink Rethink

Our new pilot, Drink Rethink, funded by the BUPA Foundation, is a preventative approach which aims to reduce high-risk drinking behaviour among students by training student ambassadors to use an evidence-based behaviour change tool (Identification and Brief Advice - IBA) to deliver an alcohol intervention on campus. This academic year we recruited and trained twenty-one student ambassadors to engage their fellow students and oversee the completion of the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (AUDIT), followed by the provision of brief advice through leaflets appropriate to the level of risk identified by the AUDIT. The ambassadors delivered a total of 250 hours of engagement across three weeks, at sites across the University of the West of England and Keele University. A total of 576 students were engaged in completing the AUDIT and receiving brief advice through specific leaflets appropriate to their risk level. 149 students who opted not to participate in the AUDIT received general information leaflets, meaning a total of 725 students engaged at some level. The end of funding report from our pilot can be viewed [here](#).

In relation to your proposal for a campaign, our portfolio of activity has together generated significant interest, support and momentum on the issue of responsible alcohol consumption by students. In part, we believe this is because NUS is student-led, which helps build partnerships on this work between student representatives and students. Similarly, the structure of Alcohol Impact creates partnerships between students' unions and their institutions on responsible consumption. This partnership working is coupled with an evidence-based and strategic approach to reversing the social norm of irresponsible consumption, which is grounded in academic theory, which is well received by universities.

As such, rather than create a new national campaign, our preference would be to re-engage sector stakeholders on our existing work in this area, predominantly through Alcohol Impact, as a national campaign overarching our other initiatives, as it clearly has momentum and wider support, is proving to be impactful, and is very much in the student interest.

I am aware that the Department for Education have responded requesting time to prepare a sector response. To progress this, we would welcome a high-level meeting, at the earliest opportunity, with the Home Office, Department for Education, Public Health England, Universities UK and the Office for Students to explore how we can work together on this important issue and will look to convene such a meeting before the end of March 2019.

We will use the meeting to explore what others are doing, or planning to do, on responsible alcohol consumption, and assess the appetite for us to work together on this, ideally by collectively rallying around Alcohol Impact so we can take it to scale, engaging other universities, such as Newcastle, in this agenda. As part of any sector-wide partnership on responsible consumption, we would welcome discussion and action relating to the specific issues you raise around increasing the awareness of risk and provision of advice. I am aware that the Department for Education have responded

Yours sincerely,




Acting Chief Executive