



Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State

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Sinead Lester, Partner, BDB Pitmans LLP

7th January 2022

**Re: Inquests into the deaths arising from the attack at Fishmongers' Hall
on 29 November 2019**

Dear Sinead,

I am responding to your letter dated 3 November 2021 regarding the inquests into the deaths arising from the attack at Fishmongers' Hall on 29 November 2019.

Thank you for bringing these findings to my attention. I am committed to working with colleagues across Whitehall and the higher education sector to ensure these tragic events are not repeated. My sympathies are with the families of the victims of the attack, Saskia Jones and Jack Merritt, and all those affected.

I have taken note of the recommendations addressed to me in the Coroner's Prevention of Future Deaths (PFD) report and accept them in full. I have responded in detail below.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Nadhim Zahawi MP
Secretary of State for Education

Annex – Secretary of State for Education response to Prevention of Future Deaths (PFD) report recommendations

MC1 – Addressed to the University of Cambridge, Learning Together, the Secretary of State for Education and the Office for Students: *Significant academic events and courses held outside of university premises should be subject to proper formal risk assessment, especially if they take place in environments with particular risk (such as prisons) and if they are attended by individuals who pose particular risks. It is a matter of concern that there was no such risk assessment for Learning Together events as set out above. The University of Cambridge and those responsible for guidance to UK higher education institutions should consider whether further steps can be taken to encourage the making of such risk assessments.*

Secretary of State for Education response: Accept the recommendation in full

- I accept this recommendation in full.
- I will engage with colleagues in the higher education sector to encourage action be taken to implement this recommendation.
- Higher education providers are independent autonomous institutions and therefore responsible for their own governance and risk management.
- My officials have spoken to colleagues at the Office for Students to encourage them to take action and I welcome their intention to write to all English higher education providers to draw their attention to the report and its recommendations, to encourage them to ensure significant academic events and courses held outside of university premises should be subject to proper formal risk assessment, especially if they take place in environments with particular risk (such as prisons) and if they are attended by individuals who pose particular risks.
- Furthermore, my department is working closely with colleagues at the Home Office on the development of legislation (the Protect Duty) to improve the safety and security of public venues.

MC2 – Addressed to the University of Cambridge, Learning Together, the Secretary of State for Education and the Office for Students: *It is a matter of concern that a major event could be held by a University at a livery company hall in London without clear communication of the fact that it would be attended by serving and recently released serious offenders. Consideration should be given to guidance requiring higher education institutions to inform host venues of high-risk features of events, including for instance the attendance of such persons.*

Secretary of State for Education response: Accept the recommendation in full

- I accept this recommendation in full.
- Higher education providers are independent autonomous institutions and therefore responsible for their own governance and risk management.

- I will engage with colleagues in the higher education sector to encourage action be taken to implement this recommendation.
- My officials have spoken to colleagues at the Office for Students to encourage them to take action and I welcome their intention to write to all English higher education providers to draw attention to this recommendation, with the aim of encouraging them to consider effective communications between event organisers and host venues as part of their event and risk management procedures.

MC5 – Addressed to the Secretary of State for Justice, the Secretary of State for Education, the Office for Students, the University of Cambridge and Learning

Together: Consideration should be given to whether further measures of risk assessment and management can be introduced for any higher education programmes running in prisons which involve continued contact with offenders after their release into the community.

Secretary of State for Education response: Accept the recommendation in full

- I accept this recommendation in full.
- My officials have engaged with colleagues in Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS) and I welcome the planned work to design a new framework to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of prisons and higher education providers when they work in partnership to deliver learning where students study alongside serving prisoners or those released on licence. This will include reference to risk assessment guidance that has been developed for partner organisations who hold events where prison leavers may be invited to attend. I have asked my officials to continue engaging in this process.
- My officials have spoken to the Office for Students and I welcome their intention to write to all English higher education providers to draw attention to this recommendation.