



Michelle Donelan MP
Minister of State for Universities

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Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP
Chair, Education Committee
House of Commons
London
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21st October 2020

Dear Robert,

EDUCATION COMMITTEE ACCOUNTABILITY HEARINGS: 6 OCTOBER 2020

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss a range of important issues at the Committee on the 6th October 2020.

Outbreak data

Firstly, I would like to provide the additional information which you requested. According to direct communication from providers to DfE received as at 5pm on October 16th, there had been 8,700 cumulative (reported in the last seven days) cases of Covid-19 among students and there were 48,300 students known to be self-isolating (all figures rounded to the nearest hundred). Please note that data on cases is based on completed returns from 71 providers, and data on self-isolation is based on completed returns from 60 providers.

To support the information already received through Public Health England and from universities, OFS will this week begin capturing enhanced data through a new portal which universities can input to directly, to ensure that we have a clear, shared understanding of a wider range of information, including on the university's response to any outbreaks.

Geographic distribution of Northumbria cases

Secondly, during my appearance at the committee I provided the following statement regarding cases at Northumbria University:

'Just to be clear, that figure was misreported in the media. The figure was for those who had contracted Covid from August, not over the weekend or in the last few days, and it also included their London campus and their campus in Amsterdam as well. The real number was only just over 200, although when I say "only" that is still 200 students who are infected and I fully appreciate that fact.'

This information came from a report by my officials of a conversation between the

PHE Incident Coordination Centre (ICC) team and the Director of Health, Safety and Sustainability at Northumbria University. Following this conversation, my officials informed me that the term started from August rather than September, and that the figures related to all campuses, including those outside Newcastle. However, we now understand that Northumbria University clarified on their website on 2 October that the figures were indeed cumulative, but that this dated from the university re-opening in September, not August, and covered all campuses across Newcastle, but did not include the campuses elsewhere.

Therefore, my statement on the Northumbria outbreak should have been that on 2 October, Northumbria University confirmed that the 770 cases were cumulative from mid- September and confirmed that there were 78 cases reported as symptomatic on 1 October.

Please accept my apologies – our new reporting system via the OFS will ensure that we always obtain accurate information going forward.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michelle Donelan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Michelle" and the last name "Donelan" clearly distinguishable.

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