

## Information sharing with trusted contacts

**A guide to what a trusted contact is, when we may share information about a student, and detailed guidance on the process for information sharing.**

This guidance is informed by national best practices, including the Universities UK framework Suicide-safer universities ([Suicide-safer universities](#)), and aligns with sector-wide approaches to supporting student welfare and managing risk.

### 1. What is a trusted contact?

A trusted contact is someone the School can contact if there are serious concerns about a student's health or wellbeing. They are someone the student nominates, whom they trust to handle sensitive information about them. The trusted contact may need to work with us and statutory or emergency services, such as health services, to act in the student's best interests, for example if they become unwell.

### 2. Providing and updating trusted contact details

Students are invited, on registration each year, to provide consent in advance to the School informing a nominated trusted contact if there is serious concern about the student's health or wellbeing. This information is held on the School's student record system, in accordance with the [Student Privacy Notice](#) and current UK data protection legislation.

Students can nominate anyone they choose to be their trusted contact. We expect that for the majority of students this will be a parent or guardian. However, this may be anyone that a student feels comfortable with and who they would like to be contacted if there were serious concerns about their safety or mental health.

Students should ensure that the trusted contact is aware that they have been nominated and that their contact details will be given to the School. Students should also ensure that the trusted contact has given permission to be a trusted contact. Students are also encouraged to provide any relevant language preferences or communication needs for their trusted contact, to help ensure effective communication in the event that contact is required.

Students are asked to keep these details up to date and to notify the Registry team of any changes by emailing [Registry@nfts.co.uk](mailto:Registry@nfts.co.uk).

### 3. Information sharing with consent

Students have the right for their sensitive personal information to be kept confidential unless there is reason to believe that doing so may create or exacerbate a risk of serious or lasting harm to themselves or another person.

- The School will be transparent about any use of trusted contact information provided. Our [Privacy Notice](#) clearly state the School's position about how we will use student data.
- When students use services, such as the Student Support and Wellbeing Service, we will always try to engage them in conversations about any information sharing.
- The School will endeavour to maximise student autonomy and all decisions about the need to share information are made on a case-by-case basis.

- Decisions use an evidence-based assessment and consider the student's current and, where appropriate, previously expressed wishes about the use of their trusted contact's details.

Where students do not wish to involve trusted contacts in their care, staff will seek to understand the reasons for this. The student's decision will be respected unless appropriately qualified staff perceive that to do so would place them or another party at risk of serious harm.

#### **4. Information sharing without consent**

Where there are concerns for a student's welfare, personal information may be shared with parties outside the School in the absence of a student's consent only in exceptional circumstances (for example to prevent serious or lasting harm to self or others, or where required by law). Such information sharing would only happen following an appropriate risk assessment and case review by senior staff.

Consideration will be given to:

- the level of risk identified and the ability of the School to mitigate that risk itself with the student.
- who is best placed to receive this information to mitigate the identified risk most effectively.
- whether contact with a party other than, or in addition to, the trusted contact is the most appropriate risk mitigation (e.g. the student's GP or statutory mental health services).

The final decision about sharing information in the absence of consent will be taken by the Registrar, or in their absence the School's Director.

In these circumstances, Student Support and Wellbeing staff will, wherever possible, make every effort to engage the student in a dialogue about how and when further information may be shared moving forward.

The School may need to share the details of a student's trusted contact with an external agency at the request of the third party, where consent cannot be obtained, because the student cannot be contacted (for example in the event of a student being admitted to hospital, or being identified as a missing person). Such information sharing would only happen when evidence-based risks have been identified and disclosed by an external agency to the School. It would be noted to the emergency services that the trusted contact listed by the student may not be their legal next of kin.

#### **5. Information sharing without consent in medical emergencies**

In situations such as medical emergencies, all staff may share information with relevant third parties (for example emergency services staff) where this is deemed necessary for the immediate preservation of the student's vital interests.

For example, if a student collapses and is unresponsive, staff must inform Security and attending medical staff of a known medical condition and disclose relevant personal information (for example personal details stored on the student record system).

#### **6. Information sharing without consent scenarios**

While this list is not exhaustive, it provides some guiding thresholds as to the nature and severity of risks that may be identified in relation to a student and how/when the use of trusted contact information may be used to support the safety and wellbeing of an individual.

The School would only ever share information without consent in high or urgent risk situations.

### ***High-risk scenarios***

Consent should be discussed with students in advance of any use of trusted contacts, where possible, and where consent is not given, the procedure for sharing without consent should be followed accordingly.

Possible scenarios:

- If a student ceases to engage with their studies and/or professional support and/or does not respond to a reasonable number of attempts to contact them.
- If we have been made aware a student has an ongoing serious illness (physical or mental), and/or there is evidence their health may be deteriorating.
- If a student has not been seen recently and are not responding to repeated contact attempts.
- If a student has been a victim of a serious crime.
- If a third party has reported significant concerns and we are not able to contact the student to establish their safety and wellbeing.
- Where a student needs care or support and the lack thereof is affecting their wellbeing.
- Where a student is at risk of harm or neglect or is experiencing harm or neglect

### ***Urgent risk scenarios***

If possible, student consultation about consent will take place. In these situations, it is generally expected that contacting a student would not be possible, therefore decisions are likely to occur without a dialogue about student consent.

Possible scenarios:

- Where we become aware a student is (or will be) hospitalised due to an emergency.
- Where we become aware a student has suffered a serious injury (this could include self-harm; or use drugs and/or alcohol in high-risk amounts or combinations).
- Where there is a risk to the student concerned, or someone else from that student, and the student concerned; cannot physically or legally give consent.
- Where there is evidence to suggest that a student is experiencing a mental health crisis, of a nature and degree that warrants third-party intervention.
- If we think a student cannot protect themselves against harm, neglect or the risk of it.

## **7. Procedure for information sharing with or without student consent**

- The School becomes aware of a significant welfare concern for a student.
- In all cases, information needs to be shared with the Student Support and Wellbeing team and the Registrar (or in their absence, the School's Director).

- The Student Support and Wellbeing Manager and Registrar will assess the concerns, which may include an advisor contacting the student where possible to identify the support currently in place and further information about the student's circumstances (in this engagement the student will be advised about the confidentiality policy and engaged in a discussion about trusted contact use).
- Where there is evidence that a risk of harm could occur to self or others, the Registrar will review who, if anyone, that risk information should be shared with to support the student and mitigate against the identified risk. The student will be asked if we have consent to share the information with an external party where possible (including a trusted contact).

**If consent is given:**

- Contact will be made and the relevant information shared.
- A record of sharing with consent will be kept in the student's case notes on the student record system.

**If consent is not given (including where it cannot be given):**

- A case review and risk assessment will be undertaken between the Student Support and Wellbeing Manager and the Registrar.
- Unless the risk assessment identifies otherwise, the student will be informed of the decision and given an opportunity to be involved in information sharing.
- Contact will be made and the relevant information shared.
- A record of sharing without consent will be kept in the student's case notes on the student record system.

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