

STUDENT WELLBEING & DISABILITY SERVICES: CONFIDENTIALITY, CONSENT AND INFORMATION SHARING POLICY

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that information held by the Student Wellbeing & Disability services, is managed appropriately and consistently. Student Wellbeing & Disability Services are confidential services. Staff are committed to ensuring that personal information is protected in line with this policy and GDPR regulations. This document should be read alongside the University's Data Protection Policy and privacy notices.

2. About our student records

Students' personal data is held within our Student Wellbeing & Disability Service record system and can be accessed by staff, within the service, as necessary to carry out their duties which include provision of information, advice, guidance support and arranging adjustments to enable access to learning. The record system may hold information provided by the student and/or third parties. In addition, Student Wellbeing & Disability staff have access to information held in the University student record system.

[Find out more about how we handle student information](#) across the University.

3. When might we share your data?

Generally speaking, the Student Wellbeing & Disability Service will not share a student's data without their consent. However, there are occasions where it may do so, for example if it has assessed this sharing is necessary to protect either the student's own vital interests, or those of third parties. The service may also share information about students they consider to be at a significant risk of harm. Set out below is some further information on how we manage data in practice.

4. Sharing with consent

A student can request information to be shared with a third party; this decision will be explored by service staff and the student; any consent must be given by the student themselves and will be documented in the student case record. Any consent to share will be situational specific and evaluated when any further need to share arises. The service ensures that the information is shared in line with the documented consent and that it is shared securely.

5. Information sharing within the university

Wellbeing information

Information held within the Student Wellbeing Service may be discussed within the Student Wellbeing Service for purposes of supervision and coordinating support for students.

Student Wellbeing will not share information about a student with any other University of Huddersfield department without the student's consent. However, where consent cannot be gained and there is a cause for concern, then limited, factual, information may still be shared. Normally this is limited to where concerns are identified related to:

- Fitness to Practice and Fitness to Study procedures;
- attendance and engagement where the service will confirm only if a student has or has not accessed the service and would seek consent for any further disclosures;
- and/or where there are risks of harm to self or others.

Disability information

Information held within the Disability Service may be discussed within the Disability Service for purposes of supervision and coordinating support for students.

Disability Services will share relevant and limited information about a student's support needs with relevant university staff. The purpose is to ensure the necessary support and adjustment are in place to engage in studies. Consent to share is sought when registering with Disability Services and includes an option to share an *Assessment of Needs* with specialist staff providing support.

6. External information sharing

Where possible we seek to gain a student's consent before discussing their support with any external agency or third party. However, there may be occasions when we recognise that a student is in a health crisis and it is in their best interest for the external sharing of information to take place, even if consent cannot be gained.

Any disclosure of confidential information will be restricted to relevant information and conveyed only to appropriate people, for appropriate reasons for example:

- If we have information indicating a serious risk to a student or others, we may contact health and emergency services.
- If there is a risk to a person who is under the age of 18 or an adult with care and support needs, we have a duty to make a safeguarding referral.
- If we are legally obliged to disclose information.

7. Information sharing and suicide prevention

The University of Huddersfield data sharing practice is in line with the principles of the Department of Health and Social Care's [Information Sharing and Suicide Prevention Consensus Statement](#).

Any staff member concerned that a student is at risk of suicide should refer the matter to Wellbeing Services. Wellbeing Services work collaboratively with individuals who are at risk of suicide, to identify those people or services that are best placed to support and keep them safe and when beneficial we support individuals to make contact themselves or seek consent to make contact on their behalf.

We will only contact people or services, without a person's consent, when there is a significant safety concern, and it is believed that this action will protect the person or others from risk of death or serious harm.

This relies on working with each individual case, to identify the appropriate service/person, who are best situated, to protect them from risk of death or serious harm.

The decision to share data, without consent, will be made in consultation with a Student Services registered professional (BACP, NMC, HCPC, SWC) and approved by the Student Wellbeing Manager and/or Disability and Inclusion Manager and/or Director of Student Services.

Decisions will be recorded and will consider each individual's circumstances, why consent has not been provided, capacity to consent, the best interests of the individual, the risk of both sharing and not sharing information. A standard set of questions to structure and record the situational assessment is detailed in [appendix one](#).

8. Emergency and Trusted Contact - sharing information to prevent harm

All students are asked at enrolment to provide a name and contact details of a person to be contacted in the event of an emergency an *Emergency and Trusted Contact*. We explain to students that the:

Emergency and Trusted Contact is the person you would like the University to contact in the event of any emergency where you may be at immediate risk of serious harm or have been seriously injured. These are used in emergency situations where it is in your vital interests to share information with those you have nominated and to secure their support for you.

Normally, the University will engage you in discussions about arrangements to keep you safe and confirm your consent to contact your Emergency and Trusted Contact. However, in some circumstances, when there is a significant safety concern, and it is believed that this action will prevent risk of death or serious harm we will consider contacting the student's Emergency and Trusted Contact without consent.

In urgent situations where vital interests are at risk, operational staff attending the incident may contact Student Records to agree sharing of Emergency and Trusted Contact details with emergency services in attendance.

In other circumstances where there is a perceived or impending risk of harm or death, a contemporary situational assessment will be undertaken by Wellbeing and Disability Service professionals in line with the [Student Wellbeing & Disability Services: confidentiality, consent and information sharing policy](#). This will identify individuals able offer appropriate and timely support.

Any staff member concerned that a student is at risk of suicide should refer the matter to Wellbeing Services. In urgent situations where there is an imminent risk of harm to life staff attending the incident may contact Student Records to agree sharing of Emergency and Trusted Contact details with the emergency services in attendance.

9. Data sharing agreements

To prevent harm and suicide the University may enter into Data Sharing Agreements with third party organisations such as residential accommodation providers, health care providers and emergency services.

10. How can students access their records?

Students' have a right to access information stored about them. The only exception to this is if the disclosure of information would be likely to cause serious harm to physical or mental health or would breach the confidentiality of another person and the University's policy is to try and facilitate access to a student's own personal data whenever possible. If the University considers there is a risk of harm, we may put in place measures to protect students, for example by saying records can only be accessed with an appropriate member of staff present. If the Data Protection Officer makes the decision to withhold information this will be explained to the student and a justified reason put forth by a registered professional within Student Services will be recorded.

If a student wishes to have access to the information stored about them or they wish us to share information with a third person they may, but do not have to discuss this with a member of Student Wellbeing.

To find out how to request a copy of your own personal data visit out [data protection pages](#).

We will not provide access to our records if requested by other parties unless there is a clear legal basis, or the student has provided consent to share.

APPENDIX ONE: SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

Staff Completing Assessment:	
Name of Student(s) at risk:	
Date of Assessment:	

Summary Situation

- What is the situation facing the student and what is the risk and likelihood of harm to self or others?
- How have we become aware of the risk of harm facing the student? (Uni referral, External agency, concerned family member or friend)

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Service and Support Engagement

- What is the pattern of engagement with their studies and broader University life?
- Which university services has the student engaged with?
- Has the student not engaged or ceased engagement with any University services? Do we understand why?
- Are we aware of any additional needs, vulnerabilities or extraordinary circumstances related to the student?
- Do we have any insight from accommodation providers or others?

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Network of Support and Trusted Contact

- What network of support has been identified and what consent to engage/contact them has been secured?
- Who is NOK / Trusted Contact in the Student Record?
- Have we got contemporary consent to contact? If not, what do we understand the reasons for non-consent to be?
- Have we had any earlier contact or consent to contact a Trusted Contact or supporter? Has anything changed?

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Contemplation to disclose without contemporary consent?

- What information are we proposing to share without consent, with whom and why?
- What are the benefits and risk of disclosing concerns?
- Are there other supporters in their network better placed to respond?

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Summary of Decision

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APPENDIX TWO: FURTHER READING & REFERENCES

In preparation of this document the University has considered the following guidance and standards:

National Institute of Clinical Excellence, (2019), <i>Suicide prevention, Quality standard [QS189]</i> ,	https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs189
Department of Health and Social Care, (2021) <i>Guidance from the Zero Suicide Alliance on using DHSC's consensus statement and engaging with patients when discussing confidentiality and consent to share information.</i>	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/share-consent-confidentiality-and-information-sharing-in-mental-healthcare-and-suicide-prevention
Department of Health and Social Care (2021) <i>Information sharing and suicide prevention: consensus statement</i>	https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consensus-statement-for-information-sharing-and-suicide-prevention/information-sharing-and-suicide-prevention-consensus-statement
ICO, (2021), <i>Blog: Sharing personal data in an emergency – a guide for universities and colleges</i>	Blog: Sharing personal data in an emergency – a guide for universities and colleges ICO
ICO, (2021), <i>Data Protection Code of Practice</i>	<p>General Ref https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/ico-codes-of-practice/data-sharing-a-code-of-practice-1-0.pdf</p> <p><i>Pp 66-67 Data sharing in an urgent situation or in an emergency</i> https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/ico-codes-of-practice/data-sharing-a-code-of-practice/data-sharing-in-an-urgent-situation-or-in-an-emergency/</p>
UUK, (2022), <i>Suicide-safer universities: sharing information with trusted contacts</i>	Suicide-safer universities: sharing information with trusted contacts (universitiesuk.ac.uk)

POLICY SIGN-OFF AND OWNERSHIP DETAILS

Document name:	Student Wellbeing & Disability Services: confidentiality, consent and information sharing policy
Version Number:	1.0
Equality Impact Assessment:	
Approved by:	A) Version 1.0 Senior Leadership Team and University Council B) Subsequent Versions to be considered by Information Governance Group
Effective from:	Trusted Contacts Data Collection: Sept 2023 Situational Assesment: Feb 2023
Date for Review:	Triennial Review: Spring 2026
Author:	Matt Mills, Director of Student Services
Owner (if different from above):	Emma Carpenter, Student Wellbeing Manager Jo Mitchell, Disability and Inclusion Manager
Document Location:	
Compliance Checks:	Update on operation and statistical report on number of cases where information sharing without consent has been contemplated and summary outcomes to be included in Annual Safeguarding Report.
Related Policies/Procedures:	Student Privacy Notice

REVISION HISTORY

Version	Date	Revision description/Summary of changes	Author