

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Trusted Contact Procedure

This procedure seeks to provide guidance on the provision of, and updating of, Student Trusted Contact details. It will summarise the circumstances under which the University of Bolton would make use of a student's trusted contact details and identifies the University staff that would use the trusted contact in the event of a concern relating to a student experiencing a mental health crisis, if there are serious concerns about a student's safety or mental health and in an emergency. The aim of this procedure is to provide clear and concise information for staff, students and nominated trusted contacts, to ensure the University takes appropriate action, in the event of a crisis, in a timely and co-ordinated manner to facilitate support and mitigate risk.

This is now a **mandatory process** for all students entering or re-entering the University of Bolton. All students who study, or are set to commence their studies, at the University of Bolton (including Bradford and Petroc College partners) will be invited to provide details of a trusted contact at the point of enrolment or re-enrolment, though students are able to update their trusted contact details at any other time for the duration of their studies at the University. Students can provide this information in the My Details section of the Student Portal, which can be accessed here: https://evision.bolton.ac.uk/urd/sits.urd/run/siw_lgn.

The University of Bolton will record the details provided by students on the student records system, in accordance with its legal responsibilities pertaining to confidentiality and data protection. The details supplied by students will be available to nominated staff only; staff who work within the Life Lounge or their managers.

What is a Trusted Contact?

A trusted contact is also referred to as a 'responsible adult' and is someone who can be contacted in the event of an emergency or serious concern about a student and/or other's mental health, wellbeing or safety. Students should ensure that the trusted contact they nominate has agreed to be a trusted contact and has been made aware that their contact details will be shared with, and stored by the University in accordance with the University's legal responsibilities pertaining to data protection.

A trusted contact is someone who is:

- known to the student
- a UK resident (and be readily contactable)
- NOT a member of University staff

Students may choose to nominate a parent or family member as their trusted contact, but they may nominate any responsible adult that does not relate to their legal 'next of kin', such as a close friend.

Students will be asked to provide the following information regarding their trusted contact:

- full name and relationship to the student
- a mobile phone number (or primary telephone number, such as a landline)
- permanent home address

For students who are unable to identify a responsible adult in the UK, they should contact the Life Lounge directly on 01204 903565 or by email at lifelounge@bolton.ac.uk where a member of the Life Lounge team will explore alternative options with the student and the limitations of the procedure if the responsible adult resides outside of the UK.

By providing a trusted contact the student is also providing consent for the nominated University staff, in the event of a serious concern or emergency, to establish contact with the students' identified trusted contact.

Students will be required to keep details of their trusted contact up to date and will be able to change these and other personal details by logging onto their student record, as above. The University may need to use the information without first consulting with the student so it is vital that students review and regularly maintain an accurate, up to date record of these details.

As the obtaining of trusted contact details is now a mandatory procedure at the University of Bolton, students are no longer able to opt-out and withdraw this information from the University. The purpose of this data collection is set out to ensure the University can effectively adhere to its duty of care practices, mitigating risks and safeguarding concerns for our student cohorts.

Deciding to contact the trusted contact:

This guidance sets out the circumstances in which the University would engage with a trusted contact and the processes by which this would occur in order to ensure that the University takes appropriate action in a timely, co-ordinated and supportive manner. If any member of staff considers it necessary to engage with a student's trusted contact, they should refer the case immediately to the Life Lounge, where experienced colleagues can conduct a risk assessment of the situation.

University staff referring a case to the Life Lounge should attempt to contact the service by telephone in the first instance, on 01204 903565. If a call cannot be made, the staff member should email lifelounge@bolton.ac.uk with the subject header 'Trusted Contact: Student Concern' to ensure priority is given to the message.

Life Lounge staff that process any referrals (henceforth known as a 'nominated recipient') will then take further action as necessary. If you are a staff member referring a concern it is essential to include the following information when contacting the Life Lounge:

- The name and student number of the person you are concerned about;
- Any alternative contact details you have for this student;
- Details of your concerns and the steps you have already taken;
- Details of any risks disclosed by/about the student;
- Your contact information so the concern can be discussed further with you (if possible please provide a mobile telephone number).

Please note, the Life Lounge core working hours are 8.45am – 5pm. The Life Lounge inbox and telephone line are not monitored outside of these hours. If you are a staff member contacting the Life Lounge outside of these hours and you believe the person of concern is at immediate risk of harm to themselves or others, please contact emergency services immediately (999) and keep a record of this with your referral.

The nominated recipient will review the referral details and action any further contact with relevant staff members in order to better understand the circumstances impacting the student and to ascertain their level of risk. The nominated recipient will apply their professional judgement to determine whether or not a trusted contact should be telephoned.

Based on the information gathered about the student of concern, the nominated recipient may decide to contact the trusted contact if there are sufficient risks or concerns associated with the student's health, wellbeing or safety. In this instance, the nominated recipient should first make full attempts to contact the student directly and establish lines of support. If the student does not respond to these contact attempts or if the response received by the student does not lower the concerns or risks identified, then the nominated recipient should notify the student their trusted contact will be telephoned, and provide the reasons why. This is to promote a culture of transparency and collaborative practice with regards to decision making and support.

However, there may be occasions where it is not possible to contact the student ahead of reaching out to their trusted contact. This will usually relate to a situation deemed high risk i.e. where the nominated recipient believes the student is a risk to themselves or others or when the nominated recipient believes the mental capacity of a student is noticeably impaired, an example would be when a student does not respond to any attempt made to contact them and has expressed ideations of suicide, or if a student has disengaged from their studies and cannot be contacted to verify their wellbeing.

Prior to contacting the trusted contact, the nominated recipient should inform the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Manager or Senior Wellbeing Coordinator of their rationale for doing so. Where a need is identified, the nominated recipient will share trusted contact details with appropriate external emergency/support services, for example ambulance crews, police, social services or A&E staff, to inform their support. Where it is necessary to share information, the nominated recipient will determine, based on their professional judgement, what information is appropriate and/or necessary to disclose.

There may be occasions where a nominated recipient deems it not appropriate to initiate contact with a named trusted contact. Such as, if the student in question is under the age of 18 or when the nominated recipient applies their professional judgement to determine if the level of risk of harm to the student is significant enough to facilitate direct contact with the student's Next of Kin (NoK). See [Procedure](#) for the support of students under 18 years of age.

If the nominated recipient deems it not appropriate to contact a trusted contact they should:

- Consult with the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Manager or Senior Wellbeing Coordinator to review their decision;
- Keep a written record of their rationale for not contacting a trusted contact;
- Advise the staff member who made the referral of the decision and reasons for this;
- Provide information to the referrer about additional support and signposting options;
- Seek approval by the University to contact the student's Next of Kin.

In the event of a suspected or confirmed death of a student, the University will pass the trusted contact and/or Next of Kin details held to the emergency services to support them in their role of notifying appropriate individuals. The Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Manager oversees the Death of a Student Procedure at the University and will manage all internal processes at the University regarding this procedure.

Record Keeping

A full written record must be kept of all steps taken to initiate the Trusted Contact Procedure. The nominated recipient must provide a clear and concise summary of their decision making including relevant staff members consulted and a timeline of any contact made/attempted with the student. The nominated recipient should also collate all information related to the referral and store all documents in the student's file in the private Life Lounge network drive. A record of the case should also be added to the student's SITS record, along with details regarding their trusted contact.

Following engagement with a trusted contact or established contact with the student of concern, the nominated recipient may refer the case to the Life Lounge internal risk monitoring process to foster a consistent, inter-disciplinary approach to all future decisions pertaining to the student's support.

The University supports the aims of the [Department of Health Information Sharing and Suicide Prevention: Consensus Statement](#) (Published 26 August 2021) to improve information sharing and support for families concerned about a relative who may be at risk of suicide and to better support those bereaved by suicide.

The University supports the aims of the [Student Mental Health Charter](#) and [#stepchange](#) framework and [Suicide Safer Universities](#) sharing information with trusted contacts to foster an evidence based whole University approach to student support.

Nominated Recipients

Any staff member in the following posts are deemed Nominated Recipients and can make the decision to contact a trusted contact:

- Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Manager
- Senior Wellbeing Coordinator
- Wellbeing Coordinator
- Mental Health Advisors
- University Counsellors

For further information regarding the University Trusted Contact Procedure please contact the Life Lounge directly on 01204 903566 or by emailing lifelounge@bolton.ac.uk

The University recognises that students expect their information will be held securely and remain confidential. Wherever possible, the University will try to obtain the student's permission before engaging with a trusted contact. However, data protection legislation permits the University to share personal information where necessary including to protect an individual's vital interests (or those of another person) where it isn't possible to gain permission.

[Data Protection Policy](#)

[Student Privacy Notice](#)