

Information sharing protocol in relation to significant student mental health concerns

Sharing information with external parties

When a student contacts BU's student support services they will be made aware of the University's Student privacy notice – [Sharing your Data with Third parties](#), which sets out what we do with any information they disclose, including the sharing of information. Information sharing is also discussed in the first meeting a student has with the service and should be regularly checked subsequent meetings to ensure we hold accurate information.

All information about a student is held in confidence within the team and will only be shared with other external services or third parties under certain circumstances. These include:

- The student requests that information is shared with a third party.
- The student gives their consent for information to be shared with a third party to ensure that appropriate and consistent care and support can be offered to the student.
- The student presents with a significant and imminent risk to themselves or others and the disclosure is classed as being in their 'vital interest', or as being necessary to prevent a crime, under GDPR/Data Protection law and guidance.
- The disclosure is required by law, e.g. by court order or statutory obligation.

As part of their first meeting with a student, an adviser or counsellor will discuss risk factors and protective factors with the student and where appropriate will create a personal coping plan with the student to help manage any identified risk. Discussions regarding protective factors include the benefits of including a trusted named contact (e.g. family member) in their support network. If the student does wish to include a trusted contact in the discussion, the adviser will clarify with them specifically what information they are happy to be shared. If the student states that they do not wish information to be shared with a family member or any other trusted contact, this will be respected. Staff have internal procedures setting out when and how student information can lawfully be shared with external parties if consent has not been obtained.

Should a third party make contact with the University to express any concerns about a student, we would listen to those concerns and take appropriate action but we would seek the student's permission in the first instance before disclosing any information to that third party. As a student's preferences may change over time, the adviser or counsellor regularly revisits the conversation regarding sharing information with a named contact in their interactions with the student and record any confirmation or changes.

Safeguarding Risk

If the student discloses information which indicates that they may be a risk to themselves or others, a staff member, who has appropriate training, will assess the level of risk based on the information available. The staff member will inform the student that they have a responsibility to share this information with relevant external services and will let the student know who the information has been shared with. This will usually be with the student's GP or other relevant emergency services. The priority at all times is the safety of the student and the University community. Hence, although the agreement of the student to share information would normally be sought, a risk-based decision could be taken to contact relevant third parties, as described above, without the student's knowledge or consent. In these circumstances, the Head of Student Support and Wellbeing, or the

Student Services Executive member on call will have been consulted and the action taken, including the reasons for the decision, will be carefully documented.

Information Sharing Agreements and External Referral Pathways

Student Services has agreed processes in place to share information with appropriate, clinically trained partner professionals via our referral pathways and our SoC/SAR meetings. These include:

- The BU Medical Centre
- Our out of hours mental health support provider Health Assist
- Our partner accommodation providers
- Our NHS commissioned Student Wellbeing service
- Community Mental Health Teams

This current protocol is consistent with [BACP/UMHAN document](#), which was published in the summer 2022.

Further information for staff regarding supporting students is available on the [staff portal](#) and [Student Health and Wellbeing webpages](#)