

Trusted Contacts Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy establishes the situations in which York St John University (YSJ) will seek to make contact with a student's named Trusted Contact. This policy is designed to implement an aspect of the Universities UK and PAPYRUS guidance relating to preventing serious harm and suicide, providing a framework to enable universities to respond swiftly and effectively to significant and serious concerns relating to student safety and wellbeing.
- 1.2 This policy applies to all students studying at the York or the London campuses.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 Trusted Contact: a person nominated by a student that the university can contact in the event of significant safety or student wellbeing concerns. Contact may take place if the University believes that contact will reduce risk, or establish the current wellbeing of a student.
- 2.2 Emergency Contact: a person nominated by a student that the University will contact during a student emergency or where a student is deemed by the University to be at immediate risk of harm. Contact with an Emergency Contact can be made without student consent, to share information where there is a risk to life, or a significant adverse event has taken place which has incapacitated the student.

3. Nominating a Trusted Contact

- 3.1 Students are strongly encouraged to provide the University with both an Emergency Contact and a Trusted Contact.
- 3.2 Students will be asked to provide an Emergency Contact and a Trusted Contact during the enrolment and re-enrolment processes.
- 3.3 Students can update Emergency Contact and Trusted Contact information at any time on the University's student record system. If a student comes into contact with Wellbeing or Welfare Services during their time at the University, they will be asked to confirm and/or review their Trusted Contact information. If the student has not nominated a Trusted Contact they will be invited to do so.
- 3.4 When nominating a Trusted Contact, the Student should advise the person that their details have been provided, and what the role entails. It should also be made clear that the University will not share information with a Trusted Contact except under the circumstances outlined in this policy, and will not discuss student matters with a Trusted Contact in other circumstances.

4. Who can be a Trusted Contact?

4.1 A Trusted Contact should be:

- someone well known to the student (e.g., have some knowledge of their history, behaviours, and any professional support received). This can include a parent, guardian, partner, spouse or other close family member or friend;
- someone the student trusts and is comfortable sharing information with;
- able and willing to act in the best interests of the student;
- a person who respects privacy and understands the responsibility of the role; and,
- over the age of 18.

4.2 Other important matters are:

- Trusted Contacts can be the same person as the Emergency Contact, but do not have to be;
- a Trusted Contact should not be a York St John staff member, unless they are also the parent, guardian, partner or close family member of the student;
- a Trusted Contact can be someone based internationally, as long as the criteria under Item 5 are met; and,
- if a Trusted Contact contacts the University with concerns about a student, the University will follow its standard processes for investigating those concerns but will not discuss the outcomes of that investigation with the Trusted Contact unless the requirements of this policy are met.

5. Contacting a Trusted Contact

5.1 The thresholds for contacting a Trusted Contact are lower than for an Emergency Contact. Every situation is different therefore it is impossible to provide an exhaustive list of when the University might contact a Trusted Contact. Some non-exhaustive examples are provided in Appendix 1.

5.2 The University will always aim to gain a student's consent to speak to a Trusted Contact. However, where this is not possible, the decision to contact a Trusted Contact will be made by Senior University Staff who work in a Wellbeing or Safeguarding capacity.

5.3 The decision to contact a Trusted Contact should not be made in isolation. Where at all possible a discussion should take place between two of the following staff:

- University Secretary and Registrar (also University Safeguarding Lead and Major Incident Team Lead)
- Director of Student Success and Learning Services (also Deputy Safeguarding Lead)
- Head of Wellbeing, Disability and Inclusion
- Head of Disability and Inclusion
- Wellbeing and Inclusion Complex Case Lead
- Senior Wellbeing Practitioner
- Specialist Disability Practitioner
- Welfare Team Lead
- Deputy Major Incident Team Lead
- Named nominees of University Safeguarding Lead

If it is not possible to discuss with two of the above, the reasons for this should be documented.

5.4 The discussion will consider:

- current concerns and potential risks to the student, members of the university community, or the public;
- medical and mental health history;
- previous engagement with university support services;
- previous known relevant risk factors (detailed in mental health risk assessments);
- concerns from third parties, where relevant; and,
- alternative options to contacting the Trusted Contact.

5.5 A Decision to contact a Trusted Contact should be clearly documented in the Wellbeing Caseload Management System and/or the Safeguarding Log, along with details of the rationale for making the contact. The nature of the information shared should also be documented.

5.6 Information shared with Trusted Contacts should be provided on a need-to-know basis. Respecting the confidentiality and privacy of the student remains a priority, therefore only information necessary to manage risks and ensure the immediate safety of the student should be shared with the Trusted Contact.

5.7 If the decision has been made to contact the Trusted Contact but we have been unable to establish contact, or the Trusted Contact is unable to provide relevant information regarding the student, the decision makers will formulate an action plan to respond to student safety and wellbeing concerns. Action plans may include contacting the Emergency Contact, emergency services (e.g., the police) or mental health Crisis Services.

5.8 The University will endeavor to respect student confidentiality and to remain compliant with Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR and Human Rights Legislation. The University may share Trusted Contact details without consent where there is an imminent risk to the life of the student, or the life of others. Trusted Contact details may also be shared if this may be helpful to emergency services for the purpose of admission to hospital, or if this is requested as part of a police investigation.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Examples of when Trusted Contacts may be contacted

1. Where a student is considered to be missing. When the University has been unable to contact a student and they have not been seen on Campus or in their accommodation. Action should be taken before considering a student to be missing e.g., carrying out security checks, checking for contact with academic staff by email or in person, checking online engagement with Moodle/Blackboard. Attempts should be made to contact the student via a number of methods (phone, email, text) prior to contacting the trusted contact.
2. Where a student has an ongoing serious illness that appears to be getting worse.
3. Where a third party has reported a significant concern and the University has been unable to make contact with the student to establish their safety or wellbeing (third party information should be verified wherever possible).
4. Where a student is behaving in a way that might pose a serious risk to their own safety, or the safety of others.

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