

## **FOI 056-21 Response**

Following a spate of sudden student deaths in 2018, an 'opt-in scheme' was pioneered by the University of Bristol as part of a set of measures aimed at preventing suicide. In 2019, a coroner wrote to the Department for Education and Minister for Suicide Prevention suggesting that these measures might be shared throughout the sector. I am now seeking to establish the extent to which 'opt-in' has been subsequently adopted and/or utilised.

The 'opt-in' or 'consent at registration' scheme implemented by Bristol University comprises an additional personal information sharing agreement that supplements when information might be shared. It gains consent at annual registration for the university to contact a 'safe and nominated' parent, guardian or friend in situations that are not emergencies, but where staff have serious concerns that something bad might happen to an enrolled student, and/or where their health, wellbeing or welfare could be affected. Essentially it involves lowering the bar at which parents or nominated others could be contacted by a designated professional at the university, from 'vital interests' to 'serious or significant concerns'. It could for example apply in cases of trauma or distress associated with suspension / expulsion / non-attendance / mental health issues etc.

To qualify as 'opt-in' a scheme must be optional and additional to the regular emergency contact protocol. The latter is compulsory and typically restricted to serious incidents and/or emergency situations, that may present an imminent threat to a student's vital interests. Further particulars can be found at:

<http://www.bristol.ac.uk/contacting-people/parent/>

<https://thetab.com/uk/2018/09/20/these-are-the-unis-with-policies-to-tell-parents-if-students-are-suicidal-81552>

<https://thetab.com/uk/bristol/2019/10/31/93-of-new-bristol-students-opt-in-to-mental-health-scheme-37916>

This important scheme has been implemented at a number of universities, and perhaps at your institution as well. If so, please provide me with the following information as absolute numbers and percentages.

For each academic period (2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21) and year-of-study (e.g. 1st year, 2nd year, 3rd year) sub-division:

- How many students opted-in at registration?
- How many students subsequently rescinded their consent?
- How many times was the opt-in consent used to contact somebody?
- How many times was use of the opt-in consent considered, but with you deliberately choosing not to contact a parent or nominated individual?

Edinburgh Napier University has not adopted the 'opt-in' or 'consent at registration' model. However, the University has recently approved a Suicide Prevention Action Plan and has an objective to assess the value of such a model in academic year 2020/21.

Information about the variety of support services available to our students via the Student Wellbeing & Inclusion team can be found online at:  
<https://my.napier.ac.uk/Wellbeing-and-Support>

