



9 April 2021

Email: request-734786-cd506971@whatdotheyknow.com

Dear Gillian Green,

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUEST

Thank you for your request for information received on 9 March 2021 about opt-in schemes to share personal information. I apologise for the delay in responding to this request.

The University's response is provided below.

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:

<https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.bristol.ac.uk%2Fcontacting-people%2Fparent%2F&data=04%7C01%7Cfoi%40uwe.ac.uk%7Caa31579accd847aec41b08d8e2f8968f%7C07ef1208413c4b5e9cdd64ef305754f0%7C0%7C1%7C637508904596253917%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLjBtIl6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000&data=MloO%2FfpQVfDxoblpRfR43waJ2KsMzfWHYE%2FPR5zaRSc%3D&reserved=0>

<https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fthetab.com%2Fuk%2F2018%2F09%2F20%2Fthese-are-the-unis-with-policies-to-tell-parents-if-students-are-suicidal-81552&data=04%7C01%7Cfoi%40uwe.ac.uk%7Caa31579accd847aec41b08d8e2f8968f%7C07ef1208413c4b5e9cdd64ef305754f0%7C0%7C1%7C637508904596253917%7CUknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTil6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sd=QTszT2EjueoQjv%2FGgkoZfilesBI9ShyWvEyZD5CcXMT0%3D&reserved=0>

<https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fthetab.com%2Fuk%2Fbristol%2F2019%2F10%2F31%2F93-of-new-bristol-students-opt-in-to-mental-health-scheme-37916&data=04%7C01%7Cfoi%40uwe.ac.uk%7Caa31579accd847aec41b08d8e2f8968f%7C07ef1208413c4b5e9cdd64ef305754f0%7C0%7C1%7C637508904596253917%7CUknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTil6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000&sd=q%2FhUf%2F0ShEHYbIS1XKcsfvNFP%2FLX%2B5TfP8rFrQ2SCo%3D&reserved=0>

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?**

The University does not operate an opt-in scheme as described above. Please see information on our website for parents and supporters of students which includes details of how to get in touch with any serious concerns and the circumstances in which the University would contact a student's emergency contact: <https://www.uwe.ac.uk/life/preparing-and-arrival/information-for-parents-and-supporters#section-1>

- **How many students subsequently rescinded their consent?** N/A as per above.
- **How many times was the opt-in consent used to contact somebody?** N/A as per above.
- **How many times was use of the opt-in consent considered, but with you deliberately choosing not to contact a parent or nominated individual?** N/A as per above.

If you are dissatisfied with the way in which your request has been handled, you may request an internal review and should contact me again in the first instance.

If you then believe that your request has not been dealt with properly, you may apply to the Information Commissioner for a decision at: The Information Commissioner's Office, Wycliffe House, Water Lane, Wilmslow, Cheshire SK9 5AF.

Yours sincerely

J Anstee