

## Trusted Contact and Significant Concerns

At Northumbria, we believe that good health and wellbeing play an important part in academic and personal success. To help us support our students there may be times when we need to speak to someone outside of the university if we have a significant concern about their safety or wellbeing. We call the person who fulfils this role the Trusted Contact and this is different from the Next of Kin, though the same person may fill both roles. You may have been nominated for one or both of these roles.

A student's Trusted Contact should be a responsible adult they know and trust, someone they would be comfortable for us to speak to about their welfare or wellbeing who may or may not be a relative of theirs. We recommend that students speak to their nominated person to make sure they are comfortable with the university having their contact details. The Next of Kin is the student's closest living relatives through blood or legal relationships, such as a parent or spouse, and is someone who can, if necessary, make decisions on behalf of the student or take legal responsibility for them. In most cases the same person will fulfil both roles but where students choose to separate the roles, they have the choice to do so.

When students enrol for the start of a new academic year, they will be asked to provide us with contact details for both a Trusted Contact and a Next of Kin. Contact details for both will be recorded on our system but can be changed at any time by the student after enrolment. It is important that students keep the details of their Trusted Contact up to date.

Northumbria University has a Duty of Care to all who study and work with us. We believe that students should be at the centre of decisions about their care, including who they want to be involved when there are serious concerns about their safety or mental health. Having a nominated Trusted Contact is an important part of this responsibility as it means we can better support them during their studies.

Families, carers, and trusted contacts can play an essential part in supporting a student who is at risk or about whom there may be serious concerns. Referred to as the triangle of care, this asserts that care is best delivered when trusted contacts, students and professionals/practitioners work together to ensure the best outcome.

### **How and when we will use Trusted Contact details**

Firstly, it is important to say that we would always try to speak to the student first before involving their Trusted Contact and would be guided by their wishes. If, however, we felt that their vital interests were at stake (such as in an emergency or life-threatening situation) we would contact them, or their Next of Kin, without their consent. If we have concerns based on the outcomes of a conversation with the student and where they have said we should not contact their Trusted Contact, or if we have not been able to speak to the student within an agreed timeframe, we will share our concern with the Trusted Contact without the student's consent.

We would assess the need to involve the Trusted Contact in the following situations.

- Where a student has been admitted to hospital with serious injuries or health condition. Where these are life-threatening or life changing, we would contact the Next of Kin,
- Where there is good reason to believe a student may be missing,
- Where concerns have been raised that a student's behaviour is out of character,
- Where we feel that a student's mental health has deteriorated to the extent that they are unable to keep themselves safe from harm
- Where a significant concern about a student's wellbeing or safety is disclosed either by those who know them or another professional (health, police etc) inside or outside of the university.

Please note, these examples are not exhaustive and there may be other situations where we would want to speak to the Trusted Contact.

If a student has chosen not to nominate a Trusted Contact, we will contact their Next of Kin in any of the above cases.