



Parent and Carer Engagement Guidance Policy

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Equality Impact Assessment	
Student Friendly Version	

Revision history

Version	Type (eg replacement, revision etc)	Date	History (reason for changes)
1	Revision	May 2020	Updates to legislation

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team every 2 years.

Summary

This document offers guidance to college staff around protocols for engagement with the parent(s) and or carer(s) of Bradford College students.

Introduction

This guidance seeks to clarify best practice with regard to communications with the parents and or carers of students. Misunderstandings as to the respective rights of students, parents and carers in regard of information sharing can arise. Parents may be unaware, for example that the statutory duties which oblige schools to provide parents with information about the children in their care do not apply to colleges. Likewise, colleges may assume (incorrectly) that student information must always be shared with parents where the student is under the age of 18 years.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

It is important for all college staff to be mindful of the diversity of family structures and care arrangements across our college cohort. References to parent(s) and carer(s) should be kept gender neutral in the first instance. Some families may have only one parent rather than two. Some families may have two parents of the same gender. Some families may consist of a number of carers for example grandparents and siblings, or extended family. Some students may live across two households and perceive each parent or carer as having equal status. In addition to this some students may themselves have caring responsibilities, all of which should be considered.

Data Protection

Colleges must ensure that their processing of students' personal data complies with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) distinguishes between personal data and sensitive personal data.

"Personal Data" is defined as any information about an identifiable living individual which relates to their personal, private, business or professional lives.

"Sensitive Personal Data" is defined as personal data on ethnic origin, political opinions, health, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, trade union membership or criminal offences (including allegations).

Accordingly, and by way of illustration, all attendance, behaviour and progress information about identifiable individual students will be personal data, but may also contain sensitive personal data. Colleges must therefore be very careful when making decisions about the disclosure (in whole or in part) of these types of information.

Students Aged 18 Years or above and Higher Education Students

This group of students are legally adults. No parental permission is necessary in relation to any college activity. Where staff members wish to contact parents or carers of students aged over 18, the explicit permission of those students must be sought and given.

Where the College is approached by a parent requesting information about a student's progress or whereabouts, or indeed whether they are a registered student at all, the student's right to confidentiality must be protected. Parents should be treated with respect and the rights of the student be communicated to them carefully.

It is appropriate to inform the student that the parent has contacted the College but no personal information can be disclosed without the explicit permission of the student concerned. **This includes indicating whether the individual is even known to the College.** Note, however the comment about 'opting-in' to emergency contact below.

Parental contact is necessary for some students with disabilities aged over 18. The principle of obtaining the student's permission still applies and a record should be kept within the Department. Where students are supported by the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and Additional Learning Support Department, the need for parental contact post 18 will be noted on the Learning Support Agreement or Education Health and Care Plan.

With regard to the welfare and wellbeing of both adult and Higher Education students, and in particular their mental health, this group will be given the opportunity to 'opt-in' to parent and or carer contact. We require all students to provide the details of an emergency contact when they register for their programme of study. This may be a parent, guardian or other responsible individual. We will use emergency contact details in very serious situations when it is in the student's interest that we do so. The College's "opt-in" option gives consent for the College to inform a student's emergency contact **when there are serious concerns about their wellbeing.** (See section 7).

Requests for information from all third parties including parents, other family members or friends will be refused unless the student has given explicit consent in advance, and this is formally recorded.

Students Aged Under 18 Years

It is our normal practice to invite parents and carers to our open events and to contact them if we are concerned about student attendance, progress or behaviour.

Some students from this group may express concerns around contact with parents and carers. College staff who are worried about any issue in relation to their contact or discussions with parents, should not hesitate to discuss these concerns with their Line Manager or the Assistant Principal or Head of Department of Student Services in the first instance. The aim of such discussions should be to establish what course of action is in the best interests of the student. Where there are specific concerns around a student's safety or wellbeing in relation to any engagement with parent(s) or carer(s) these should be raised with the Safeguarding and Wellbeing team **in advance** of any contact being made. The team will work with the student to establish whether or not parent or carer contact will present any risk of harm or abuse to the student and act and advise accordingly.

Many students aged under 18 will be living in the parental home. It should be remembered however that some may already have left home and some may be in care. Many students may be living with one parent

only. In relation to young people under the age of 18 who are in care, parental authority is vested in the social worker.

Where after discussion with a personal tutor, it is agreed that the College will not contact parents; the personal tutor should note this on the tutorial record. It is important to remember that students' personal circumstances may change, and that they may leave home whilst they are at college. Personal tutors should ensure that their records are kept up to date.

The guiding principle is the personal safety of the student and their right to control the disclosure of information about themselves.

Off-site Activity

Parent or carer consent must be obtained for any off-site activity where the students are aged under 18 years and the relevant documentation, e.g. risk assessments, should be completed.

Emergency Contact Information and 'Opting-in'

Whether or not parental contact is to be made, College should hold at least two emergency contacts for their child. This information is provided by the student at enrolment, and it is the responsibility of the student to update the College with any changes to this contact. At this point, students aged 18 years or above should be asked whether they are 'opting-in' to contact should the College deem that their wellbeing or safety is at risk in some way.

Related Documents

- Safeguarding Policy and Procedures
- Attendance Policies
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Policy and procedures
- Positive Behaviour Policy and Discipline procedures