Accommodation Office
Housing Advice Service Confidentiality Policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with the University’s Student Data Policy(a) and Data Protection Guidelines(b)

1. Students should feel assured that they can seek confidential, professional advice from the Accommodation Office Advice Service. Confidentiality is held with the particular service, not the individual: the advisor routinely discusses student cases with the Head of Accommodation Services in order to inform best practice.

2. All personal information will be used legitimately with good reason, on justifiable grounds and in accordance with the Data Protection Act. Records will be kept and stored securely, and only accessed by staff of that individual service when required or by an AQS auditor for the sole purpose of quality auditing.

3. Information previously shared as part of the application to study process, for example on UCAS forms, is not deemed confidential to the Accommodation Office.

4. In order to support students there will be instances where information will need to be shared with colleagues within the Division. This sharing will be undertaken after informed consent is gained from the student. This may be as part of the initial signup with the service, or when a specific circumstance arises where sharing of personal information would allow the University to provide the best possible level of service for a student.

5. There will be occasions when Housing Advice Service staff will need to liaise with University colleagues outside the Division, for example selected staff in academic schools to arrange a particular form of support, on a need to know basis. **This will be explained in advance of any disclosure.** There is an expectation that colleagues in academic schools will share information with the Accommodation Office, so that this sharing works in both directions.

6. The Accommodation Office routinely works with external bodies such as the local authority, local landlords and accommodation agents. The same principles of sharing information apply; students will normally be asked to provide their consent in advance. External professionals will be expected to share information guided by their own policy and practice where it is thought to be in the best interests of the student.

7. If students refuse to give consent for information to be shared then the consequences of this will be clearly explained. In some cases this could mean that support cannot be arranged.

8. Requests for information from parents, other family members or friends will be refused unless the student has given their consent.
9. If a member of the Accommodation Office takes the view that a student is at risk of harming themselves or others then they can make a decision to break confidentiality without consent. In such a case the member of staff involved will consult with the Head of Accommodation Services or, in their absence, the Director of Residences who will take the final decision in consultation with other officers of the University as relevant. Attempts will be made to gain consent from the student whenever possible.

10. There may be circumstances where the law requires disclosure for the prevention and detection of terrorism(c) or where non-disclosure is likely to prejudice the prevention or detection of crime.(d)(e)(f)

11. There may also be circumstances where the law requires disclosure of information as is necessary for actual or prospective legal proceedings, or for obtaining legal advice.(g)

12. Requests for information from the Police will be routinely referred to the University Secretary’s Office.

13. Students may request copies of the records held about them.(h)

   a) University of Bristol. Student Personal Data Policy. Available from www.bristol.ac.uk/secretary/dataprotection/studentpolicy.html
   c) In accordance with Section 19 Terrorism Act 2000 (as amended by the Counter Terrorism Act 2008)
   d) In accordance with Section 29 Data Protection Act 1998
   e) In accordance with the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002
   f) In accordance with child protection legislation (including but not limited to the Children Act 1989)
   g) In accordance with Section 35(1) Data Protection Act 1998
   h) University of Bristol. Subject access request procedure. Available from http://www.bris.ac.uk/secretary/dataprotection/individ/subjectaccess.html

The contents of this fact sheet are for information only. You should consult the Accommodation Office or an advice centre such as the CAB before taking any action.