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Developing an emergency contact scheme for student wellbeing.

HENDERSON, S. and FORBES-MCKAY, K.

2022

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ENHANCING FOR

IMPACT

RGU'S ANNUAL LEARNING AND TEACHING CONFERENCE

DEVELOPING AN EMERGENCY CONTACT SCHEME FOR STUDENT WELLBEING

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STUDENT WELLBEING AND SUPPORT NEEDS STUDY

BACKGROUND

- There is concern over the levels of wellbeing and mental health issues experienced by university students (Auerbach et al., 2018; HESA, 2022)
- This has been exacerbated by COVID-19 and the resultant lockdown (Sahu, 2020; Kafka, 2020)
- Yet students often do not access support for mental health issues (Rosenthal and Wilson, 2008)

AIMS

- To measure levels of mental wellbeing and social support amongst University students
- To explore their views on an opt-in emergency contact scheme, the current provision of wellbeing support, and the barriers to accessing such support
- To develop a wellbeing strategy to help support students, build resilience and improve the student experience

EMERGENCY CONTACT SCHEME

- A university emergency contact scheme may be an effective safeguarding tool that is generally acceptable to students (Neves and Hillman, 2019; Linton et al., 2022)
- Would this be effective in RGU?

AIMS

- To explore student perspectives on the introduction of an emergency contact scheme
- The format the scheme should take
- The circumstances in which it should be used
- The reasons why students would be uncomfortable engaging with the scheme.

METHOD

Design: An online Survey design was employed and distributed via JISC.

Sample: 113 students from SASS, RGU

- 14 (12.4%) male, 95 (84.1%) females, 2 (1.8%) Selected “Prefer not to say”, 1 (0.9%) identified as other and 1 nonresponse.
- 77 (68.1%) undergraduates and 36 (31.9%) postgraduate students
- 56 (49.6%) from BA (Hons) Applied Social Sciences, 32 (28.3%) MSc Applied Psychology, 15 (13.3%) Social Work (BA FT/DL), 7 (6.2%) unknown UG degree, 3 (2.7%) prefer not to say/nonresponse
- Aged between 17 to 60 (Mean 28.18, SD 11.14)

Materials:

- *Questions on* current support and opinions on an emergency contact scheme

RESULTS

DO YOU THINK THE SCHEME IS A GOOD IDEA?

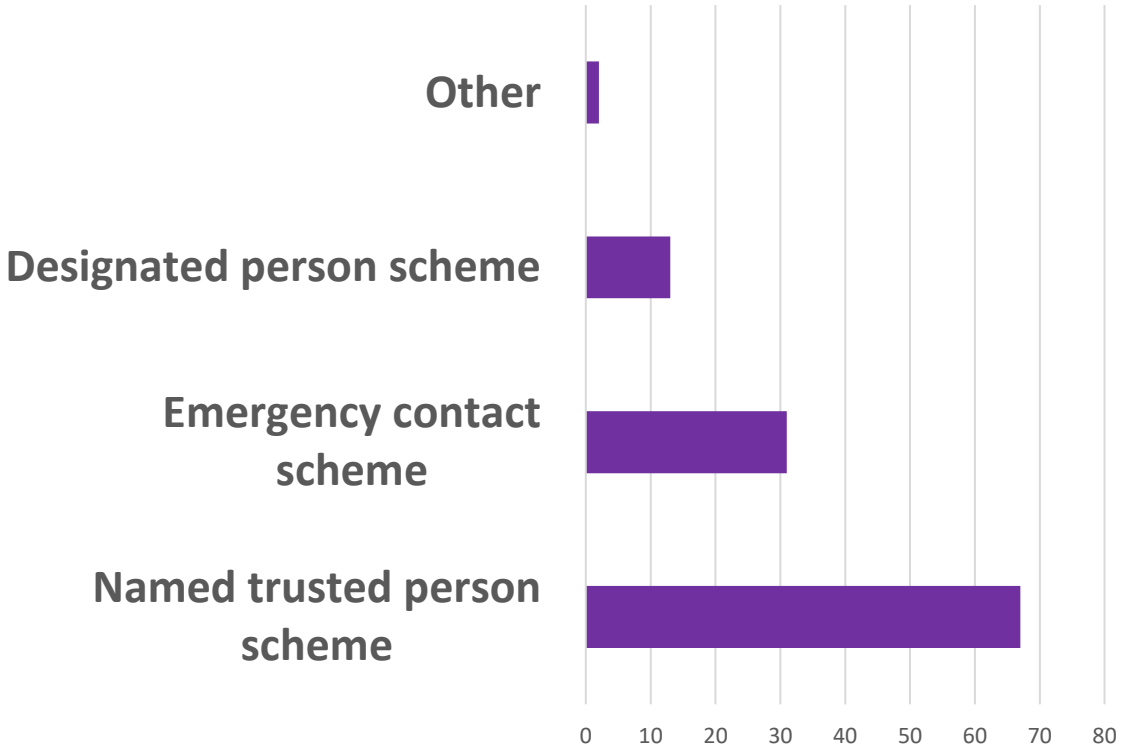
- 108 (95.6%) students were in favour of the scheme
- Of those opposed; 3 (2.7%) were undergraduate students, 2 (1.8%) were postgraduate

REASONS FOR OPPOSITION

May cause more problems
Removes agency/infantilising
Named person may not be helpful
Wants to be contacted first
Lack of named person

RESULTS

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHEME BE CALLED?



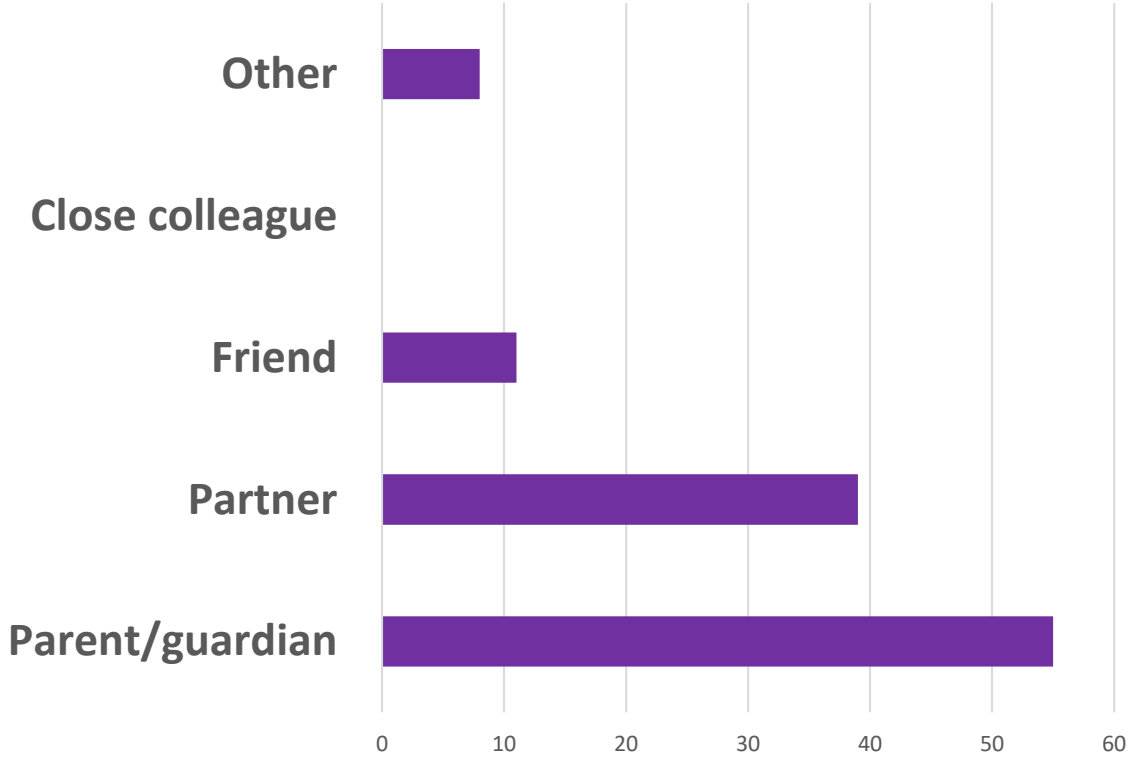
OTHER

Unsure

“nobody i have nobody”

RESULTS

WHO WOULD BE THE BEST PERSON TO CONTACT?

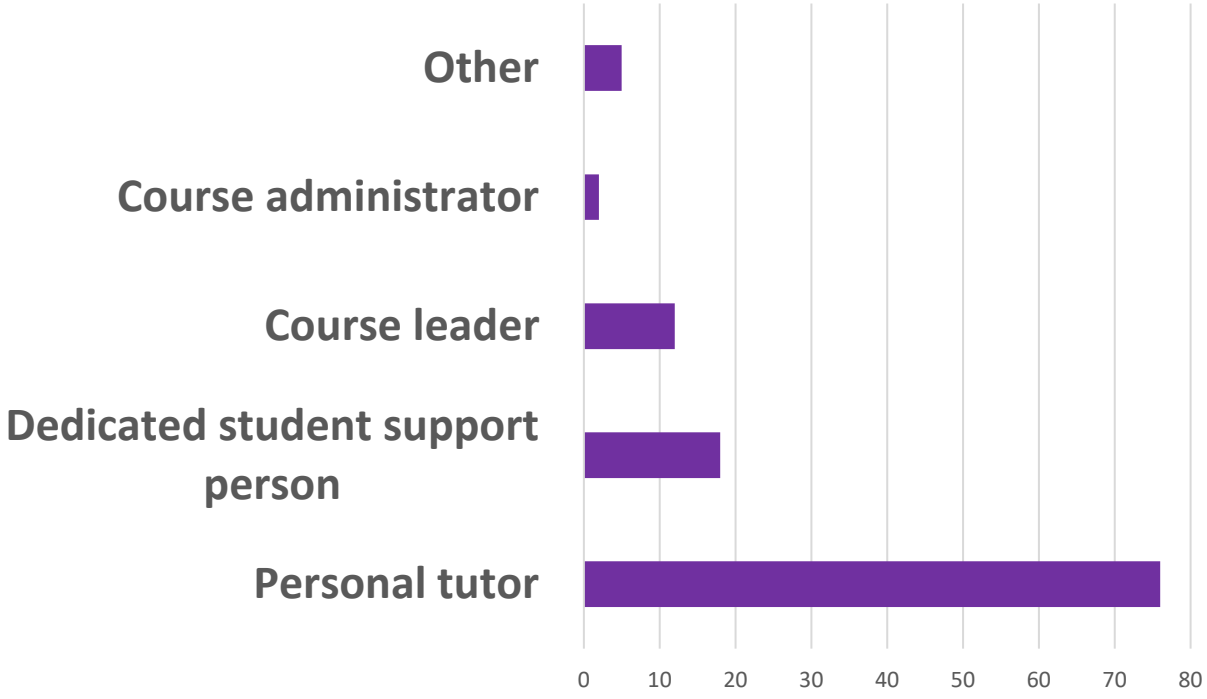


OTHER

Allow more than one choice
Sibling
Did not agree with scheme

RESULTS

WHO SHOULD BE THE CONTACT PERSON?

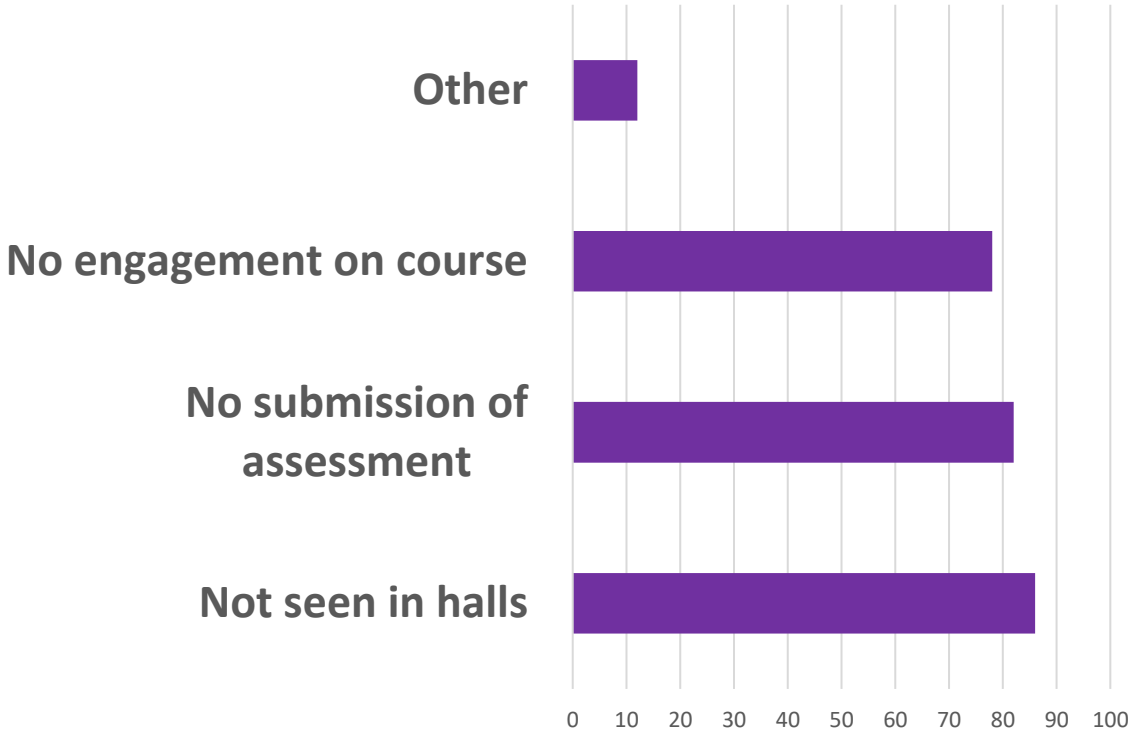


OTHER

Student choice
Any of the above
Mental health officer
Did not agree with scheme

RESULTS

UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD CONTACT BE MADE?



OTHER

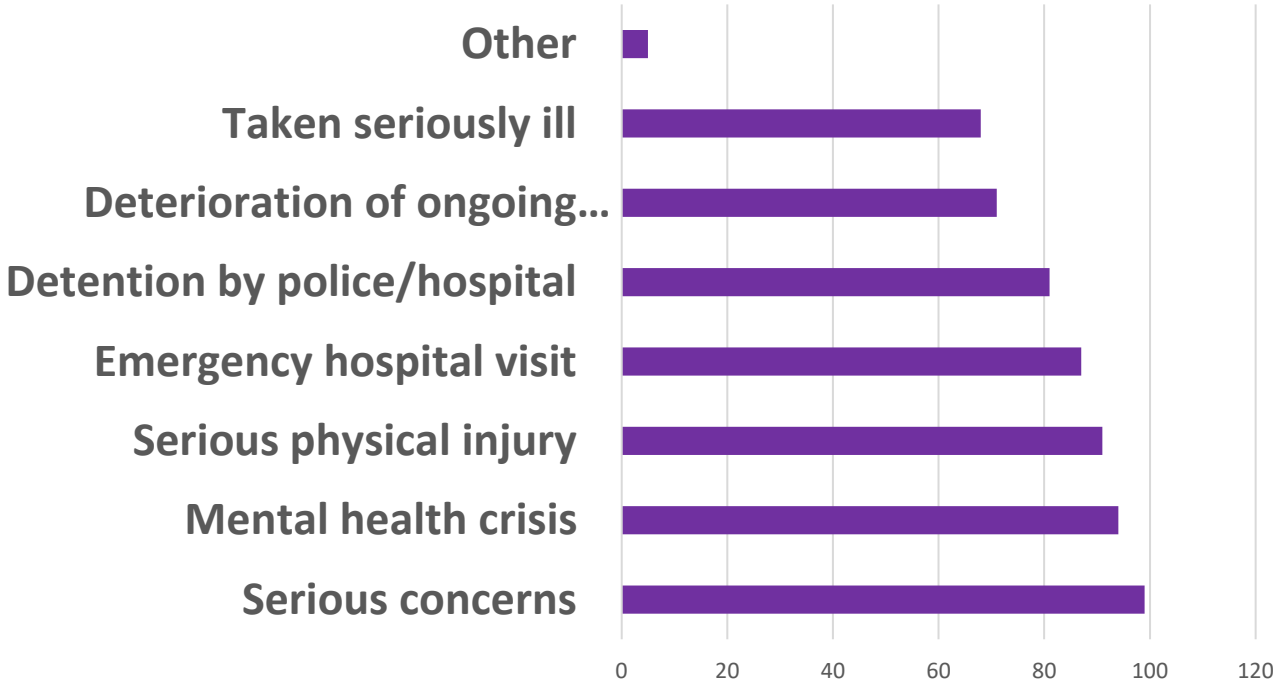
Taken ill/emergency on campus

Concerns raised by others

Combination of factors

RESULTS

UNDER WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES SHOULD CONTACT BE MADE, WITHOUT SPEAKING TO THE STUDENT FIRST?



OTHER

If risk to self or others

Incidents agreed upon with student

Student should always be contacted/permissions previously agreed

RESULTS

OTHER SUGGESTIONS ON MONITORING STUDENT WELLBEING

Staff should contact students
Frequent 1:1 check-ins
Meetings on-campus, not remotely
Reminder of support available

NEXT STAGE

ON COURSE

- Named Trusted Person scheme rolled out across BA (Hons) Applied Social Sciences and MSc Applied Psychology
- Feedback on this will be taken each semester
- Enhance student help-seeking behaviours
- Normalise support schemes and discussion of mental health
- Integrated self-directed programme
  - Use of existing online sources
  - Ongoing self-directed wellbeing exercises

PROJECT

- Extend research and implementation across the University

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