



Data Protection (GDPR) Guidance



BRISTOL SU
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I am a student leader, what do I need to know about handling data?

As a society leader, network chair, or elected officer you might need to handle personal data. **Anyone who handles or processes personal data needs to do so in line with the law.** This includes making sure you know the basic principles of the General Data Protection Act (GDPR). **As a student leader, you are responsible for ensuring that your network, committee or club act in compliance with the law.**

What do you need to know to comply?

Personal data relates to any information that relates to a living individual who can be identified. This means that things like: name, email address and phone number would all be personal data. But also where you collect other information alongside these things, like someone's religion or health status, that may also count as personal data if the individual these relate to could be identified. You need to be very careful when you handle someone else's personal information as misuse or sharing could put this person or their privacy at risk.

Our biggest tip is that you should try to avoid collecting personal data: As all students purchase membership for societies or register for networks through the Bristol SU website, as a student leader you can contact your members straight through the website. We would highly recommend that you use this function, as it means you will not need to transfer data – this will lower your risk around handling data.

But we recognise there might be times where that's simply not appropriate. For example, you might be a Society President who is taking their society on a canoeing trip. You might need to download a copy of your member's emergency contacts to ensure safety. That's fine. **But you must make sure that you use this data, or any other data you collect, responsibly.**

Any time you use or collect personal data, you must:

- **Be transparent:** make sure people know what you're collecting or using their information for, where you'll hold it, and when you'll delete it. You should make this clear any time you ask someone to give you their data. This also means you should not share data with other people or groups, unless your member has explicitly given you consent to do so.

- **Only collect the data that you need.** In most cases to do your job well, all you need is a member's name and email address so that they can reap the benefits of your society or network. GDPR specifies that you should only collect the information that you need to perform necessary functions. There might be other things that you think would be interesting to know i.e. what proportion of your members identify as LGBT+, but you must not collect data just because you're interested. If you did want to know about the demographic make-up of your society you could ask the SU to give you a demographic report of your membership. This will give you a picture of your members but won't make any individuals identifiable.
- **Only use data for the purpose it was collected for.** You might have asked your members for phone numbers to use in case of an emergency need on a society outing, this does not mean you can use their phone-number to then contact them about your next event – unless, of course, they have said they're happy for you to do so.
- **Set out when you will get rid of it, and actually get rid of it.** GDPR says that you can't hold someone's personal information indefinitely. To make things easy we'd recommend keeping data no longer than the end of the academic year. We even have confidential waste bins you can use in the SU office to safely destroy old data.
- **Look after any data you hold –** When someone gives you access to their personal information they are trusting you with the responsibility to look after it. That means you should make sure it is stored safely and confidentially. You shouldn't for example share a list of member contact details with other society members, unless you have been explicitly permitted to do so. Whenever you send any email you should make sure emails are sent as BCC (to prevent sharing contacts), and ensure you give details on how to unsubscribe.
- **Rules for sharing data –** you should not share data with any other organisations unless you have consent or a legal basis to do so. This means if your society is affiliated to a National Governing Body and you need to share your membership data with them, make sure you let your members know at the point of collection!
- **Let us know if something goes wrong!** It is probably easier than you'd think for data to end up in the wrong place. For instance, you might forward a spreadsheet of your members details to the wrong person, or you might leave a file full of student information in a café. It's really important that you contact someone at the SU if this happens, so we can assess any risk and make sure the right action follows. You should contact the Student Services Team on bristolsu@bristol.ac.uk or 0117 331 8600.
- **If you're unsure: Ask!** We're here to support you, so if you have any questions about data protection please do get in touch.