Welfare Policy

1. Introduction

Balliol College is a diverse community that is committed to promoting equality and avoiding discrimination; maintaining a working, learning and social environment in which the rights and dignity of all members are respected; ensuring students' fitness to study, and helping them towards a successful university experience.

The College seeks to nurture a supportive and healthy environment that supports the wellbeing and welfare of our whole community. We have a dedicated Wellbeing and Welfare Team that includes support staff and health professionals.

2. Background

The Welfare Policy defines the welfare support available for our student members, in alignment with the University's Joint Student Mental Health Committee's A Common Approach to Support Student Mental Health guidance. Balliol College has a specific legal responsibility towards students who have a condition that falls within the definition of "disability" under the Equality Act 2010 and subscribes to The Common Framework for Supporting Disabled Students, endeavouring to ensure that the best University of Oxford experience is available to all its students.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all individual studying at Balliol College (undergraduates and graduates) and includes students studying abroad.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- A Common Approach to Support Student Mental Health and A Common Approach to Student Mental Health Student Version
- College Handbook (which includes Fitness to Study)
- Harassment Policy
- Prevent Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Guidance on Confidentiality in Student Health and Welfare
- Student Mental Health Policy

4. General wellbeing support available

During term time many of the diverse challenges encountered by Balliol College student members can be addressed by talking to:

- Peers
- JCR/MCR Welfare Officers

- Peer Supporters
- Student groups and societies
- The Student Union
- Other members of Balliol College (Tutors, Personal Tutors/College Advisors, support staff)
- Contacts at the students' departments/faculties (which includes Tutors and Supervisors)

A wide range of activities and events are offered by these communities that are designed to support students' wellbeing and belonging, and may provide friendship, stimulus, and stability.

In addition, a wide range of welfare and wellbeing services are available through the University of Oxford's Student Welfare and Support Services. These include the Disability Advisory Service, Counselling Service, Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service, Harassment and Conflict Support, and Health Advice.

The College Welfare Team informs students at the start of each academic year of the support available to them and sends termly reminders via the Balliol Student Welfare & Wellbeing and Student Support Newsletter.

5 Wellbeing and Welfare support

5.1 Balliol College Support

Balliol College has a nominated Welfare Lead, who is responsible for the oversight of all aspects of welfare support in the College and is the contact person for the rest of the collegiate University. The Welfare Lead's role includes acting as the Wellbeing and Welfare Officer, meeting with students for confidential discussions, supporting on all welfare matters, providing information, advice and guidance, and signposting to appropriate services.

The Welfare Lead has line management responsibilities for the Junior Deans who work across the College's three accommodation sites, and works closely with the Student Finance and Support Administrator (who also acts as Balliol College's Disability Coordinator and liaises with the University's Disability Advisory Service (DAS)), the College's Harassment Advisors, as well as Tutors and Personal Tutors/College Advisors who also understand the Oxford academic environment. Although some of these staff are Mental Health First Aiders, they are not mental health professionals, so cannot offer formal counselling or mental health advice and, in an emergency, they will provide initial support for people experiencing signs or symptoms of mental health issues, until the required external emergency service arrives.

The College does not, and it not expected to, provide a 24/7 emergency service for students with mental health difficulties.

Balliol College's Wellbeing and Welfare Officer will take the lead on any student who self-refers, or who is referred via the welfare@balliol.ox.ac.uk email, working closely with the College Nurse and Student Counsellor to make appropriate referrals and ensure these are followed up in a timely manner.

5.2. Mental health professional support
Balliol has a College Nurse, who provides a link with the nominated College Doctors, and an onsite Student Counsellor, who both work in term time, between 0th – 9th weeks. The Student Counsellor works one day per week at the Broad Street site and is contracted through the University's Counselling Service. Students who require counselling will be referred to the Student Counsellor or the University Counselling Service depending on the student's preference, needs and availability.

The Student Counsellor and the Counselling Service offer brief and focused therapeutic interventions. If a student needs longer term support or more specialised therapeutic treatments to help address psychological difficulties then students will need to be referred to the appropriate NHS medical, psychological, and psychiatric services.

The DAS have trained Mental Health Advisors, one of whom is allocated to work with Balliol.

Specialist mental health mentoring may be supplied to a student after they have applied for the Disabled Students Allowance.

It is recommended that all Balliol College students register with the College Doctors at the 19 Beaumont Street Surgery to ensure they can access appointments when needed. The College Doctors (GPs) help students to manage their health and prevent illness. The College Doctors do not provide an emergency service. They can arrange hospital admission and referrals to specialists and link with secondary and community services about a student's care.

5.3. Emergency support
Emergency support for students is available from external services and organisations including hospital services (psychiatric support is provided at the John Radcliffe Emergency Department), and the Oxfordshire and Oxford City Adult Mental Health Teams, which are available 24/7. This can also include organisations like the Samaritans and other 24/7 telephone services for those experiencing suicidal thoughts.

For emergency incidents that occur at Balliol College sites out of office hours the Night Lodge Porters should be informed immediately. They and the Junior Deans (who, for undergraduate students' resident in term-time, are on-duty between 19:00 – 08:00 in 0th – 9th Weeks and, and for graduate students living on-site, throughout the year) provide a first point of contact for emergency wellbeing and welfare issues, and will aid students to access appropriate, external emergency support as required. This can include administering basic first aid, calling the appropriate emergency service, or Adult Mental Health Team, ordering a taxi for an emergency hospital visit, or accompanying a student to the hospital, if the student is alone and this is the triaged action recommended via 111. Once a student is in the care of the emergency services the Junior Dean will be relieved of their responsibility so they can continue to be available to offer support to students on-site. The student will be informed that they can call the relevant Lodge Porter who will call a taxi, on account, to ensure that they can return to

their college accommodation safely once they have received the required treatment.

5.4. Specific support for students who have experienced sexual harassment, sexual assault, or sexual violence

Balliol is committed to supporting students who have been impacted by sexual harassment or violence either recently or in the past, to help them to access appropriate specialist support. Members of the Wellbeing and Welfare Team will always listen to, and support, students without judgement and can help individuals to access further, relevant services. The Wellbeing and Welfare Team can support students by making a referral or signposting to the University's Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Service (SHVSS) which has a team of specialist caseworkers who can provide a tailored approach based on individual needs and choices. SHVSS offer free, confidential support and advice for any students impacted by:

- Sexual violence
- Sexual harassment of any kind
- Domestic relationship abuse
- Stalking

There is also further information about additional, relevant support services available to students through the following webpage: Sexual Violence and Assault | Balliol College.

6. Welfare financial aid available directly from Balliol

Balliol College provides welfare financial aid that is available to current students. Grants are awarded based on financial need due to unexpected circumstances.

7. Limits of reasonable provision

The University and Balliol College want to create an environment that supports good mental health and are committed to taking reasonable steps to ensure the wellbeing and welfare of their student members. However, the collegiate University is an academic institution and there are limits to reasonable provision of mental health services in this context. Students will always be signposted to external resources as appropriate, but their needs will always have to be considered in the context of the College and University communities as a whole, and may involve Fitness to Study which is covered in the College Handbook 2.7.

The University's Common Approach to Support Student Mental Health specifies that:

- College staff who are not professionally trained or qualified should not attempt to offer professional services or support beyond their expertise.
- Colleges are not responsible for funding external interventions to address mental health issues.
- The collegiate University is an academic institution, not the NHS, and is not responsible for providing mental health treatment. As with other health conditions, the role of the University is to provide support and reasonable adjustments and to work collaboratively with NHS services in order that students can successfully complete their academic studies.

- For individual students who present as being at risk of serious self-harm, the collegiate University cannot create a risk-free environment but should collectively adopt a proportionate response to mitigate risk together with external specialist services, which may mean minimal additional response.[1]

Balliol College welcomes the fact that many students wish to support their peers, either as friends, or in the capacity of JCR/MCR welfare representatives or through a trained, peer supporter role. However, the College does not expect students to provide a level of support to others which goes beyond that of a friend, impacts on their own welfare or academic work, or which substitutes for medical care and supervision. All students are encouraged to seek the support and advice of the Wellbeing and Welfare Team if they are struggling with supporting peers.
Balliol College does not usually provide welfare support for students outside of Full Term. Undergraduate students given permission to reside in College during vacations are advised that the absence of welfare support must be considered when applying for vacation residence.

In general, the full range of services that the College provides cannot be guaranteed outside of term and this is also the case for services offered by the Wellbeing and Welfare Team. The Undergraduate Junior Deans are on duty from 0th – 9th week as are the College Nurse and Student Counsellor. The Welfare Lead is available 0th – 10th week each term, and 25 other days throughout the year. The graduate student Junior Deans are available year-round, subject to holidays. The Wellbeing and Welfare Team will inform students where alternative support can be accessed during the vacations.

8. Confidentiality and reporting
The Wellbeing and Welfare Team encourages students to disclose and share any relevant information relating to disabilities, health issues, neurodiversity or specific learning difficulties, with relevant staff members at Balliol College and the University in order to facilitate appropriate arrangements and reasonable adjustments which enable students fully to access and participate in their studies and university experience.

We also encourage students to speak to their Tutors or Supervisors if they find that their welfare and wellbeing is being impacted so that they can support students

[1] The College will seek advice from medical professionals and the Student Welfare and Support Services in the case of high-risk students. When considering the risks, the college will also take into account the impact of a student's mental state and behaviour on other students, as well as their Fitness to Study. Where students present to medical professionals (e.g. at A&E or GP surgeries) as at risk of serious self-harm or suicide, those professionals will make a judgement of risk. Some students will be discharged to their accommodation despite being at on-going risk of self-harm, where the professional opinion is that, as adults with capacity, the risks are difficult immediately to modify and cannot be eliminated. The medical professional assessing should provide the student with a personalised plan outlining the support available, and what the student can do to reduce their risk of self-harm. Students should be encouraged to share their personalised plan with the college Welfare Team to ensure there is a shared understanding in relation to risk management and ongoing support. In such circumstances the College will need to determine as part of Fitness to Study whether a student in this situation is fit to remain on course and/or fit to be in residence or to remain in college accommodation.

and make appropriate arrangements. Tutors and Personal Tutors/College Advisors can support students to reach out to the Balliol Welfare Team.

The University provides specific guidelines on confidentiality in respect of student health and welfare. These embody the general principle that consent should be sought before information is shared, with very rare exceptions in the student's vital interests. Any decision to break confidentiality should be made at the appropriate level.

Students are always asked for their permission with regard to sharing any relevant information outside of the Welfare Team, so as to provide them with access to the best support while they are a student member at Balliol College. However, in exceptional circumstances, if there is a real concern regarding a risk of serious harm to the student, or others, or if the student lacks capacity to give consent and needs intervention from medical professionals, confidentiality cannot be protected, although information would only be shared in the best interests of the student to support their welfare.

Students have access to professionals such as doctors, nurses, counsellors, and chaplains who are required to observe confidentiality in accordance with strict ethical codes.

All staff within the collegiate University are bound by Data Protection legislation under which all data related to a person's mental health is regarded as sensitive personal data. There is an obligation to ensure such data is kept securely.

The Welfare Team maintains a written record of students contact with the Service which will be held securely. This record is intended to support the safety of students and ensure any referrals have been followed up in a timely manner by the relevant Wellbeing and Welfare Team member.

The Welfare Team will use statistical information for reporting purposes without revealing the student's identity.

Welfare Information will be retained in line with the College's Data Retention Schedule.

The Welfare Lead sits on Academic Progress Committee and Fitness to Study panels and will confirm if the Wellbeing and Welfare Team are supporting student cases to better support decision-making and ensure that additional support or reasonable adjustments are considered for individual students, in their best interests. The Welfare Lead can also present welfare information that a student has requested to be shared, which is relevant to their case.

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