Lone Working Policy

Policy Statement

Balliol College takes the health and safety of all members of our community seriously. We also have a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of our employees whilst at work.

Aim and Scope

This policy is designed to alert you to the risks presented by lone working, to identify the responsibilities each person has in this situation, and to describe procedures which will minimise such risks. It is designed to provide a framework for managing potentially risky situations.

It is recognised that lone working is commonplace among Academics and some points included in this policy apply to non-academic staff only. Individuals should select the relevant advice and terminology according to their role.

Related Policies and Procedures

- Lone Working Risk Assessment
- Lone Working Procedures – department specific

Related Legislation

- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999

Context

Balliol College has a legal duty to ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees while at work. At any given time, you may be alone, either in our premises or when operating on our behalf externally. We are responsible for assessing the risks to lone workers and taking steps to avoid or control the risks where necessary. We all have a responsibility to take reasonable care of ourselves and others in lone working situations. Lone working is not inherently unsafe, and taking precautions can reduce the risks associated with working alone. This policy is designed for those who either frequently or occasionally work alone and it refers to both high and low risk activities.

Definition

The Health and Safety Executive defines lone workers as those who work by themselves without close or direct supervision. For example:

- People working separately from others in a building.
- People who work outside ‘normal’ hours.
- People who work away from their fixed base without colleagues.
- People who work at home other than in low risk, office-type work.

The definition covers staff in situations with varying degrees and types of risk. It is important to identify the hazards of the work and assess the risks involved before applying appropriate measures.

Potential Hazards of Working Alone

People who work or volunteer alone will of course face the same risks in their work as others doing similar tasks.

However, additionally they may encounter the following:

- Violence or the threat of violence.
- Stress and mental health or wellbeing issues.
- A person's medical suitability to work alone.
- Accidents or sudden illnesses may occur when there is no-one to call for help or first aid available.
- Fire.
- Lack of safe way in or out of a building for example, danger of being accidentally locked in.
- Attempting tasks which cannot safely be done by one person alone.

College work, buildings and lone working

Lone working is a part of many people's working life at Balliol. The design of our College buildings and staircase layout means that many offices are single-occupancy and situated on different floors. Individuals must ensure that their manager or the appropriate College Officer is aware of any specific needs or vulnerabilities they have so that appropriate control measures can be put in place (for example, if you are at increased risk due to a medical condition, returning to work following injury, or if your work involves manual handling or working at height).

Extra care must be taken when moving around the buildings and on the stairs. You should always have your Bod card/keys and a mobile phone with you so that you can make contact should you need to. If you have any concerns, you should inform the Porters' Lodge.

Non-academic staff – if you are in College and working alone outside your normal office hours, you should bear in mind the associated risks and consider letting the Lodge know of your whereabouts. You must also comply with any department-specific control measures in place, whether on or off-site.

Measures to reduce the risk of lone working

To reduce the risk for people working alone we carry out a risk assessment of the following issues, as appropriate to the circumstances:

- The environment – location, security, access.
- The context – nature of the task, any special circumstances.
- The individuals concerned – indicators of potential or actual risk.
- History – any previous incidents in similar situations.
- Any other special circumstances.

All available information is considered, and risk assessments are updated as necessary or during the annual review. Where there is any reasonable doubt about the safety of a lone worker in a given situation, arrangements are made to mitigate the risk.

In any situation where you are working alone and feel unsafe, you must remove yourself from that situation immediately and seek assistance from the most appropriate of the following: the on-duty porter, University Security Services, the Line Manager or Department Head, the Emergency Services or the agreed upon process for your department or subject. The incident should be fully reported/documented and then reported on to your Manager, Department Head or the relevant College Officer.

In any situation where you are working alone and an incident occurs, you must report it to your manager, Department Head or College Officer as soon as possible. An incident is any situation where the health and safety of the individual is compromised such as an accident, fire, violence or threat of violence, etc.

Supervision (non-academic staff)

Lone workers are, by definition, not under constant supervision. We ensure that you understand the risks associated with your work and the relevant safety precautions.

- You will be given training that covers lone working where appropriate during your induction.
- Those new to a role where they may be lone working may need to be accompanied initially, usually this will mean shadowing another employee for a period of time.
- Regular contact by phone may be appropriate and we ensure that those carrying out duties alone have a mobile phone available at all times to enable them to contact relevant people in the event of an emergency.

Accidents and Emergencies

Lone workers should be made aware of the correct process for responding to emergencies and are responsible for adhering to security and fire regulations.

Conclusion

Establishing safe working conditions for lone workers is no different from organising the safety of other staff, but the risk assessment must take account of any additional risk factors.

Balliol College ensures that measures are in place to reduce risk and that expectations have been communicated to those working alone and appropriate training provided.

We are all, including lone workers, responsible for following safe systems of work and should take simple steps to reduce the risks associated with carrying out our normal duties.

Approved by Health and Safety Committee, June 2025

Review Due: June 2027