

Support and Supervision Policy

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Guidance

Defining Policy, Process and Procedure

	Definition	Purpose
Policy	An overall approach or principle of action in relation to a specific issue	Describes <i>why</i> this document is required
Process	Provides a high-level view of how the policy is implemented	Outlines <i>what</i> tasks should be performed, <i>when</i> , and <i>by whom</i>
Procedure	Detailed step-by-step instructions on how to do parts of that process or specific tasks	Details <i>how</i> the steps of each task need to be performed

Background

Volunteering for Nightline involves dealing with vulnerable people and listening to distressing material. We also recognise that many people wish to volunteer with Nightline because they have current or previous experience of mental health challenges. We always put our volunteers first, and ensure that their welfare is protected.

Supporting its own volunteers is clearly a moral duty of any helpline and it is important not only for the welfare/support of the volunteers themselves but also for ensuring a high standard of service provided. In order for Nightline to function properly, it is essential that all volunteers are properly supervised and supported.

Resources and Research

Documents used to draft this policy:

- Good Practice Guidelines version 4
- Safeguarding Policies and Procedures (including the Safer Recruitment Policy).
- Abusive Callers Policy and Guidance

- Suicide Caller Policy

Good Practice Guidelines

The Good Practice Guidelines version 4 (GPG v4.1)

 Nightline Quality Standards (GPGs) v4.1.pdf has a section regarding support and supervision. You can obtain the full document from the GPG Team (gpg@nightline.ac.uk).

The latest version of the GPGs state that:

GPGs relating to policy

Nightlines must:

- Nightline's are legally required to have explicit authorisation from their parent body to accept volunteers under the age of 18. This explicit authorisation must be demonstrated for GPG accreditation.
- Nightline's are legally required to follow any policies set out by their parent body regarding volunteers under the age of 18. Allow volunteers to talk through a call once it has been completed.
- Have at least two volunteers on duty at any one time.
- Allow volunteers to take a break from answering the line if they have taken a difficult call.
- Support should be offered to volunteers during and after calls
- Have two volunteers on duty at any one time.
- Have clear guidance about volunteer's contacting a sister nightline for support and any limits on discussions.
- Check that your sister Nightline has a compatible confidentiality policy.
- Highlight external support services to volunteers sufficiently.
- Encourage volunteers to access support after shifts.
- Ensure there is support provided for support volunteers themselves.
- Accommodate the impact of life events and health difficulties on volunteers.
- Make volunteers aware of support systems in place during training.

Nightlines should:

- You may also have a more structured support system while on shift; for example, a phone-buddy, pager or support officer who will check up on the volunteers on duty at a particular time.
- It also can be useful to have support available during a call.
- If you allow volunteers to call your own Nightline, you will need to consider issues around confidentiality and anonymity.
- If setting up an arrangement for volunteers to contact external support services, it can be helpful to have a written agreement with the service.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Support	The process of debriefing which takes place immediately after calls or shifts.
Supervision	The ongoing process of monitoring the service and checking the continued impact of calls on volunteers.
Calls	Contact made with Nightline through all channels, including email and instant messaging
Volunteer	Anyone who has successfully completed training and signed the Nightline Volunteer Agreement.

Purpose

This guidance allows for Nightlines to have a policy and procedure that ensures volunteers receive sufficient support and supervision from their Nightline and external support services throughout the duration of their volunteering.

Scope

This policy applies to all Nightline committee members and volunteers.

Policy Considerations

When creating a policy, these are the aspects you should consider...

- Sources of Support
- Barriers to Support
- Safer Recruitment Policy
- Inclusion of welfare into training plans
- Support during training
- Support before, during, and after a shift
- Abusive calls
- Suicide calls
- Safeguarding
- [Mentor/ welfare system]

Nightlines may choose the structure of their mentor or welfare system

- ➔ If your Nightline chooses to set up a mentor/welfare system, there should also be a clear procedure for protecting the welfare of mentors/support volunteers themselves.

- There must be signposts to external support, such as university counselling, so volunteers and support mentors can access support outside [X] Nightline should they prefer.

Roles and Responsibilities

The following roles are responsible for embedding the Support and Supervision policy:

- Welfare/Support Coordinator - if your Nightline chooses to recruit for this specific role. Else, responsibilities will be held across committee members.
- Training Officers
- Support Mentors - if the Nightline chooses to implement a mentor scheme.
- Certain responsibilities may already lie under the Safeguarding Lead's role set out in your Nightline's Safeguarding Policies and Procedures.

This policy should ideally be reviewed every 2-3 years. The person reviewing it should be named by their title. For example, Chair or Welfare Coordinator.

Legal Considerations

[The legal considerations for Nightlines may vary between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Please include any legislation that is relevant to your country, editing as needed.]

Nightline Support and Supervision policies must align with legal frameworks set by the UK Government for **England/Wales/Scotland/Northern Ireland** *[Delete as applicable]*. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Equality Act 2010
- UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- Data Protection Act 2018
-   Care Act 2014 and associated statutory guidance
-  Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 and associated code of practice

Contact

Query	NLA Contact	E-Mail Address
Any questions relating to this policy	Policy Team	policy@nightline.ac.uk
IT questions and issues	IT Department	it@nightline.ac.uk
Training advice	Training Team	training@nightline.ac.uk

Support and Supervision Policy

Policy approved	Month YYYY <i>[add details of relevant committee members, etc. if required]</i>
Policy review due	Month YYYY
Any other info?	

Definitions

Term	Definition
Support	The process of debriefing which takes place immediately after calls or shifts.
Supervision	The ongoing process of monitoring the service and checking the continued impact of calls on volunteers.
Volunteer	Anyone who has successfully completed training and signed the Nightline Volunteer Agreement.

Purpose

Volunteering for Nightline involves dealing with vulnerable people and listening to distressing material. Supporting its own volunteers is clearly a moral duty of any helpline and it is important not only for the welfare/support of the volunteers themselves but also for ensuring a high standard of service provided. In order for Nightline to function properly, it is essential that all volunteers are properly supervised and supported.

This policy outlines what [X] Nightline must do to ensure all volunteers receive sufficient support and supervision throughout the duration of their volunteering.

Scope

This policy applies to all [X] Nightline volunteers across any method of contact. Support and supervision procedure covers all welfare support provided to volunteers during their time at [X] Nightline.

Detailed procedures regarding data protection, recruitment, safeguarding, and suicide is beyond this policy's scope and should be established in other policy documents: 'Data Privacy Policy', 'Safeguarding Policies and Procedures' and 'Suicide Caller Policy'.

Policy statement

[Please note that different Nightlines do this differently - example below]

This policy covers:

- Committee members' roles and responsibilities
- Barriers to support
- Safer recruitment policy
- The support available within and outside [X] Nightline.
- Support before shifts, including during training.
- Support during shifts, such as when a Nightliner has taken an abusive or suicide call.
- Supervision after shifts, including one-on-one support and regular meetings for support mentors.
- The right to withdraw from volunteer or support mentor positions
- Safeguarding provisions

Roles and Responsibilities

Below is an example list of what roles and responsibilities each committee member and volunteers of the Nightline should have. Edit this as deemed necessary.

Welfare Officer	• Ensure Support and Supervision policy and procedures are being effectively implemented; • Liaise with stakeholders about any changes to practices or support and supervision systems; • Review and monitor the effectiveness of the Support and Supervision policy and its implementation <u>every 4 years at a minimum</u>. • Raise awareness among volunteers of the support and supervision provisions in place. • Co-prepare training materials regarding the support available and the importance of looking after your own mental health. • Supervise training sessions to ensure volunteer welfare is adequately covered and to answer any questions that arise. • Work with the Safeguarding Lead to implement Safer Recruitment practices to ensure that all volunteers are suitable for their roles, and that volunteering will not put them at risk of harm. • Arrange additional support with sources outside [X] Nightline, such as university counselling or with a 'sister Nightline'. • Promote a culture where volunteers feel empowered and able to say no if they are not physically or mentally well enough to be on shift, including taking breaks during shifts. • Develop a strategy for improving support and supervision systems in the future.
Training Officer	• Co-prepare training materials regarding the support available and the importance of looking after your own mental health. • Carry out and maintaining training of all [X] Nightline volunteers and mentors, correctly signposting all support and supervision systems available; • Ensure volunteers and mentors are prepared to look after their wellbeing whilst dealing with vulnerable people and listening to distressing material.

	Promote a culture where volunteers feel empowered and able to say no if they are not physically or mentally well enough to be on shift, including taking breaks during shifts.
Support Mentors	- Attend all training sessions as required to become a support mentor. - Be 'on call' during shifts to support volunteers - this responsibility is to be shared among Support Team members on a rotating basis. - Follow up any post-shift phone calls / email replies from volunteers and be available to have a support meeting if any issues have arisen. - Act as volunteer's first port of call for any Nightline related needs, attending the new volunteers first few shifts, and ensuring that they are not suffering any harm to their mental wellbeing as a result of volunteering. - Promote a culture where volunteers feel empowered and able to say no if they are not physically or mentally well enough to be on shift, including taking breaks during shifts. - Ensure that volunteers do not do more than one shift in any 7-day period (with a longer period following particularly difficult calls such as those relating to suicide). - Look after their own mental health throughout their role, utilising the support available or, if needed: - Take a break from the mentor scheme - Reduce the number of volunteers they mentor - Reduce the number of shifts they supervise
Volunteers	- Attend all training sessions as required to become a [X] Nightline volunteer. - Look after their own mental health throughout their volunteering, utilising the support and supervision available or, if needed: - Taking a break from Nightline - Reducing the number of shifts they undertake - Switching to a listening role on shift

Legal considerations

[X] Nightline's policies must align with legal frameworks set by the UK Government for England/Wales/Scotland/Northern Ireland *[Delete as applicable]*.

All volunteers have a legal right to support and supervision no matter their age, disability, gender reassignment, sex, race, religion, or sexual orientation. As stated under the Equality Act 2010.

Volunteer data must be kept confidential and stored securely as outlined under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

All volunteers at risk or volunteers handling callers at risk must be safeguarded and have access to support and supervision, as outlined in the 2014 Care Act 2014 for England and Wales and the 2007 Adult Support and Protection Act in Scotland.

Reviews and amendments

List any changes to this policy that need to be recorded for historical purposes.

E.g. May 2021: changed wording on ____, updated definitions

Support and Supervision Procedure

Not all Nightlines will follow everything listed below, so please adapt the lines in red to fit your organisation

Procedural Steps

Volunteers Joining [X] Nightline

Safer Recruitment Policy

[The following considerations are taken from the Safer Recruitment Policy section in the Safeguarding Policies and Procedures guidance. Details of your Nightline's Safeguarding procedures should be provided in a separate Safeguarding policy. If your Nightline does not already have a safeguarding or safer recruitment policy in place, please email policy@nightline.ac.uk.]

[This policy is designed for Nightlines with a parent body. If you are an independent Nightline, and your Board of Trustees / Safeguarding Lead would like more information on taking recruitment decisions, please ask them to contact us on safeguarding@nightline.ac.uk

Some people may not be suitable due to conduct and/or values that are not in line with what we expect of Nightline staff and volunteers. We also have a responsibility to ensure that a volunteer does not pose a risk to service users, other volunteers, or themselves. Given this, during recruitment, [X] Nightline will:

- Ask potential volunteers about their motivations for volunteering, to ensure that they are volunteering for the right reasons.
- Ask for two references from all potential volunteers before they are formally accepted. The referees must **not** be family members or close friends of the applicant. If a referee indicates that there is a reason that the applicant would not be suitable, this will be referred to the Safeguarding Lead, who will contact the referee to discuss this.
- Ask all applicants if they have any unspent convictions, conditional cautions, and any ongoing criminal investigations as part of the application process.
- Give additional consideration to any potential volunteer who has experienced serious or acute mental health difficulty in the past 6 months (e.g. trauma, bereavement). Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.
- Provide a list of all new volunteers to the parent body before they are formally accepted. This is so that the parent body can check if they are aware of any reason why a particular volunteer is unsuitable for volunteering with Nightline.

The volunteer training plan will include:

- The importance of being a supporter on shift:
 - ◆ Writing notes/looking up information
 - ◆ Debriefing after a call
 - ◆ Being sensitive following a particularly difficult call
- Support services available for volunteers including:
 - ◆ [Buddy/Mentor]
 - ◆ Dedicated support officer
 - ◆ Committee members
 - ◆ Counselling service
- The importance of looking after your own health including:
 - ◆ Taking a break from Nightline
 - ◆ Who you can speak to

For further information and guidance on training, please contact the Training Team at training@nightline.ac.uk.

Support during training

- Warn trainees that Nightline training covers many difficult issues which will affect them all differently
- Officer should keep an eye on how trainees are reacting to the training sessions and take trainees aside for a chat if they appear distressed
- Make sure that you have enough breaks between sessions
- Have a 'quiet room' during training with one volunteer who can support trainees if they step out of lectures/ small group training.

Volunteers who are new to [X] Nightline

- New volunteers should be offered a tour of [X] Nightline's office before their first shift, so that they can become familiar with the setting, such as how the phone lines work or where to find the signposted on-shift support.
- New volunteers will be matched with a **Support Mentor**. The **support mentor** will check in during the volunteer's first three shifts to offer ongoing support and answer any questions that arise.
- Volunteers are considered 'new' or 'inexperienced' until they have experienced three full shifts (minimum). Until they become experienced, new volunteers must be paired with a volunteer who is 'experienced' on shift.
- **Volunteers will be given a training plan.**

Taking Shifts

Support before a shift

- A member of the **support mentor team** will welcome volunteers to the Office and will ensure that there are no immediate problems.
- The attending **support mentor** is expected to set up the office and check that all volunteers are still happy to be volunteering for that shift.
- The **support member** will **stay for an hour/ be available to contact** to oversee the first few phone calls and ensure that the volunteer is settled into their first shift
- The **support member** will go through the support policy and what to do if there are any issues during the night

Support during a shift

- There is always a minimum of two volunteers on shift. Additional volunteers may be present to answer Instant Messaging, emails, or other phone calls. No duty is allowed to be carried out alone.
- At least one volunteer must be free (i.e not taking a phone call) at all times so that if a problem arises they are free to help/provide support.
- All calls are noted immediately after the call ends on Portal (or your own call logging software)
- Without disclosing any details of the call, volunteers are encouraged to talk with the other volunteers on shift about how they are feeling once a call has finished.
- Volunteers are given the contact for their support mentor or the **Lead Support Mentor** if they wish to discuss a difficult call.
- If a Nightliner has taken a difficult call, they are able to take a break from answering calls that night **if the other person on duty is happy to cooperate with this**. If the other shift volunteer does not want to cooperate, the Nightline can pause taking calls or close the service for the night - depending on capacity.
- There are reserve volunteers who can be called in to take over a shift if one volunteer would like to end early.

The contact details for the support team are clearly displayed in the main room and volunteers should be aware that they can get in touch with the team at any point during or after a shift. The details of the rest of the committee are also displayed in the office should a volunteer wish to discuss any issues with any of them.

Abusive calls

- **[X]** Nightline will promptly end abuses of the service, to protect the wellbeing of our volunteers. Wherever a call is thought to be inappropriate, volunteers **do not** need permission from a senior volunteer to end a call.
- Volunteers have the option to end their shift after an abusive call. They can either leave or stay in the office without taking calls for the rest of the shift if they wish to remain near other people.
- **[X]** Nightline has a separate  Abusive Caller Guidance v.4 . **If your Nightline does not already have an Abusive Caller policy, or if you have any questions, please email policy@nightline.ac.uk.**

Suicide calls

- Volunteers can contact the Welfare Officer or Support Mentor for additional support when taking a suicide call.
- Volunteers must end their shift after an suicide call. They can either leave or stay in the office the rest of the shift if they wish to remain near other people, but they can not take more calls.
- Support Officer's should offer additional support and the chance to debrief for volunteers who have taken a suicide call as soon as possible after their shift - preferably directly after or the next morning. They should also check in with the volunteer again a week after the

suicide call was taken, either via email or inviting the volunteer to meet face-to-face for a coffee.

- [X] Nightlines has a separate Suicide Caller Policy. *If your Nightline does not already have an Suicide Caller policy, or if you have any questions, please email policy@nightline.ac.uk.*

Support after a shift

Support may be required after a shift has ended if a volunteer has taken a particularly difficult call:

- Volunteer they were on shift with, to informally discuss any issues they are experiencing. This can include their own wellbeing, but it cannot include details of the call.
- **Dedicated support mentors** who ensure that volunteers are not affected by calls and are available to talk. The **support mentor** is the only person a volunteer can disclose details about a call or caller to, as the caller did not consent to their data or information to be shared, as required under the UK General Data Protection Regulation act.
- The dedicated support mentor will send volunteers an email the following day after a shift checking how things went.
- The **Support Mentor may invite volunteers for coffee or to talk in person, especially the morning after a volunteer took a difficult call.** [X] Nightline has a budget for support mentors to take volunteers out, reimbursing for coffee or other small purchases so that financial worries are not a barrier to offering face-to-face meet-ups.
- Regular volunteer meetings to discuss on-going call procedures.
- The **Lead Support Mentor** will also hold regular group meetings to encourage the **support mentors** to talk about anything they are struggling with in Nightline.
- If the **support mentor**, or any other [X] Nightline committee member, keeps notes of discussions during volunteer meetings or one-to-one meet-ups, this data must be stored in a secure location as required by the UK General Data Protection Regulation act.

Accessing Support

Barriers to Support

Some volunteers may not access support because of a number of barriers. The following barriers are considered the most likely, particularly for abusive calls:

- Pride - comparing your reaction to others
- Internal disputes - for example over how to feel about sexually manipulative callers
- Lack of confidence in how other volunteers will react
- Concerns about burdening other people
- If the caller has expressed concern about confidentiality, volunteers sometimes feel guilty about talking about the call
- Lack of consistency in policies / volunteers unsure of how to apply policy
- Others minimising or justifying why the call wasn't abusive
- Lack of connection with others in the organisation

Internal sources of support

When creating a support and supervision policy you should consider including support from a number of sources, such as:

- Talking to the other volunteer on shift that night

- Talking to the welfare/support officer, coordinators, 'on call committee member' (either during the shift or later on).
- [X] Nightlines has support 'families' or 'mentors'
- [X] Nightline has arrangements with our university counselling service
- [X] Nightlines has support and supervision arrangements with [X] body, which could extend to provisions beyond counselling such as:
 - Fast track for counselling.
 - Financial support for the support team/mentors, including money for taking volunteers out for coffee, office snacks, or taxis to/from shifts.
 - Contact with the Student Union Safeguarding Lead to assist with any safeguarding concerns regarding volunteers and/or callers.
 - [X] University webpages which signpost relevant support systems.
- Safeguarding provisions for volunteers who are at risk, including [X] Nightline's Safeguarding Officer.

Whether to set up a mentor/welfare system

- Each new volunteer is allocated a mentor, who is an experienced, reliable volunteer and who has received some training in mentoring. This is done in small groups of around four new volunteers per mentor. The volunteer should have a lot of contact with their mentor throughout their training so that they would feel comfortable going to them for support. The mentor acts as their first port of call for any [X] Nightline related needs, and takes the new volunteers first few shifts where possible and speak to their mentees after subsequent shifts to find out how they are finding volunteering for Nightline, and to ensure that they are not suffering any harm to their mental wellbeing as a result of volunteering.
- Mentors go through the same Safer Recruitment process as volunteers to ensure that they are prepared to handle possibly distressing conversations and are capable of providing volunteer support.

Supporting the support mentors

The mentor's wellbeing is equally supported. Mentoring may involve difficult or distressing conversations, so mentors have access to support and are aware of their options if they need to take a break from their role. Including:

- **Taking a break from the mentor scheme.** If deciding to take a break, the mentor must tell the Welfare officer how long they plan to have a break. The Welfare officer can reach out to the mentor **two weeks** before they had indicated they'd end their break. If the mentor is taking indefinite leave, the Welfare Officer should check in once every **one month**. The mentor can rejoin their role when they express they have the emotional capacity to continue their role, and with sign off from the Welfare Officer.
- **Reducing the number of volunteers they mentor.** The Welfare Officer must ensure the supervised volunteers are allocated a new mentor who has capacity.
- **Reducing the number of shifts they supervise.** This must be coordinated with the Welfare Officer and other mentors, to ensure fair reallocation of shift hours.

Support from other services

Sometimes volunteers may not feel comfortable in discussing a problem with other volunteers or with the Committee.

- Sister Nightline - through the sister Nightline, volunteers are given the option to speak to volunteers from another Nightline. The system allows all volunteers to receive help and support when they need it without infringing upon the anonymity and confidentiality of the service *[Insert details regarding the Sister Nightline]*
- The university counselling service: volunteers can approach the committee in order to be put through to the counselling service *[Insert details if the service is offered and how it works]*.
- Signposting relevant external helpline organisations, relevant to the volunteer's needs, such as the Samaritans (116123), Papyrus, Victim Support, Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) or Switchboard LGBT+ Helpline.

Supporting volunteers at risk

Safeguarding

The following procedures have been taken from the Nightline Safeguarding Policies and Procedures template. Details of your Nightline's Safeguarding procedures should be provided in a separate Safeguarding policy. If you do not already have a Safeguarding policy, or if you have any questions, please email policy@nightline.ac.uk.

Training

- All listening volunteers must receive detailed safeguarding training as part of their initial volunteer training. Volunteers are not able to take a shift until they have completed this training and demonstrated that they understand it.
- Members of [X] Nightline Committee receive additional training to help them ensure that safeguarding arrangements within [X] Nightline are being implemented properly, and so that they can respond to any queries from volunteers.

Disclosure procedure

If any form of disclosure is made, you should:

- Remain calm
- Continue to use active listening techniques, including:
 - Listening carefully, allowing them to continue at their own pace
 - Keeping questions to a minimum
- Reassure the person that they have done the right thing
- Record in writing what they have said, using their own words as much as possible
- Ask what they would like to happen next
- Explain that you would like to inform the Safeguarding Lead so that they can help

Establishing if the volunteer is able to safeguard themselves

- [X] Nightline's policy is to initially assume that adults are able to safeguard themselves, but to err on the side of caution if there is any ambiguity.
- If unsure whether the volunteer can safeguard themselves, you should continue to use active listening techniques to explore the situation.

Signposting to help

If you signpost to help, and the volunteer asks for details, you can provide any or all of the following, depending on who is at risk of abuse / being abused:

- For students: Contact details for the Safeguarding Lead or Student Support Services
[Put details here]
- For adults with concerns about children: Contact details for the NSPCC
Phone: 0808 800 5000 (not 24/7)
Email: help@nspcc.org.uk
Online form: nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/reporting-abuse/report/report-abuse-online
- For adults: Contact details for the Local Authority's Adult Social Care
[Put details here - your Safeguarding Lead will be able to provide them]

Reporting to the Nightline Association

- The Nightline Association is **not** the legal parent body of [X] Nightline, and is not responsible for resolving safeguarding issues. The Nightline Association is an umbrella body for all Nightlines in the UK, and is responsible for issuing and accrediting best practice, including ensuring that appropriate safeguarding measures are in place in all Nightlines.
- Reports to the Nightline Association must **not** contain any personal information concerning the safeguarding issue. All individuals involved in the issue should be anonymised before any report is made to the Nightline Association.
- Reports should be made by emailing safeguarding@nightline.ac.uk

Volunteers undergoing difficult circumstances

Volunteers are human, and like everyone else, may go through some difficult times during their time with Nightline. Volunteers must be made aware of the various options if they need to take some time for themselves. including:

- **Reducing the number of shifts they undertake.** The Welfare Officer must inform the Rota Officer to reallocate the volunteer's shifts fairly across other volunteers.
- **Taking a break from Nightline.** If deciding to take a break, the volunteer must tell their allocated support mentor and/or the Welfare officer that they plan to take a break and for how long. The support mentor or Welfare officer can reach out to the volunteer **two weeks** before they had indicated they'd end their break. If the volunteer is taking indefinite leave, mentors should check in once every **one month**. The volunteer can rejoin their role when they express they have the emotional capacity to continue their role, and with sign off from the Welfare Officer. Volunteers should not rejoin Nightline until they are completely ready.



Appendix 1

Add further information here as necessary.