

Facilitation Guide

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What is Nightline Training?

Nightline train new volunteers in principles, policies, procedures, and practical skills in order to produce volunteers that are able to take calls independently, with varying levels of supervision depending on the Nightline's policies.

This guide outlines key principles and elements of training, objectives of Nightline training, training logistics, and content requirements. All Nightlines deliver training differently, so this guide does not set out one canonical way to deliver training, but those involved in developing training guidelines are encouraged to consider how your training meets these objectives, and what training methods will most effectively facilitate learning.

Principles of Training

Training requires reinforcement of desired behaviour, engagement of trainees, and active learning. Active learning, engaging students with activity and discussion, has been found to significantly better performance on exam results in STEM.¹ Similarly, student performance in social science and humanities programmes have been found to be significantly better with active learning.²

A key element of training is to encourage candidates to accept making mistakes and errors, as learning from our errors composes a key element of any education. Consolidation represents the reinforcement of this learning process in repeating experiences, mistakes, and practice the improvements along the way.

Rest and sleep are key to effective learning; consolidation and new insights occur during sleep and training should take this into account by leaving space between training to allow for this.

Training most effectively involves principles such as interleaving, spacing, test-enhanced learning, desirable difficulty, deliberate practice, and fostering a growth mindset.

- **Interleaving:** switching between different topics while practicing. In Nightline training, this might be rotating different roleplay types during a roleplay training session. Workshop or presentation sessions could involve a later session reinforcing earlier learning.
- **Spacing:** Anki spaced repetition represents the most well-known example of spaced repetition. Practicing the same skills at increased intervals can enhance learning. In Nightline training, this might involve the same roleplay type coming up after an increasing interval period of practicing other roleplay calls.

¹ Freeman, S., Eddy, S. L., McDonough, M., Smith, M. K., Okoroafor, N., Jordt, H., & Wenderoth, M. P. (2014). Active learning increases student performance in science, engineering, and mathematics. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, 111(23), 8410–8415. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1319030111>

² Kozanitis, A., Nenciovici, L. Effect of active learning versus traditional lecturing on the learning achievement of college students in humanities and social sciences: a meta-analysis. *Higher Education* 86, 1377–1394 (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-022-00977-8>

- **Test-enhanced learning:** Practicing retrieval of information produces learning enhancement not predicted by students, as retrieval practice and making mistakes prepare you in ways studying concepts alone cannot.³ In Nightline training, this is often done continuously through roleplays being continuously assessed to bring trainees up to meet an organisational standard consistently. Other Nightlines may also use assessment roleplays, but this may not produce the same consistency in call-taking.
- **Desirable difficulty:** Setting the difficulty of practice so that it meets an optimal challenge point. This relates to technical concepts of active listening, carrying out procedures accurately, managing emotionally-charged topics, and providing insightful feedback on their own practice.
- **Deliberate practice:** Intentionally moving through the cycle of practice, observation, feedback, repetition, and consolidation. Breaking down the steps towards achieving better practice and actively reflecting on these are important to developing a method of practice that allows learners to independently improve their skills. These might manifest as learners reflecting on their own feedback, being asked which skills and procedures they'd prefer to practice before a session, and being able to evaluate their own practice.
- **Growth mindset:** Encouraging effort and improvement, fostering a positive attitude in trainees through positive feedback and realistic evaluations of their progress to aid motivation and belief in ongoing learning.

Learning effectively involves different **stages** - often starting with learning **basic knowledge and consolidating** this with exercises, moving to **interactive practice and simulation**, then practicing this in a **real environment**.

It is important to **involve learners** in the structure of their own learning - while you may not allow trainees to structure their own curriculum in a Nightline context, you should encourage trainers to **regularly seek** trainees' **reflections** on their own progress and suggest elements in which they could improve as well as those in which they are doing well. This also allows your trainers to get a better idea of your trainees' **insight** into their performance, which is a core skill of improving as a Nightliner.

Trainers should also make learning **explicit**, allowing trainees to learn from feedback that is given in full rather than assumed to be understood implicitly.

Objectives of Nightline Training

Nightline training should provide trainees with the practice to:

- Acquire knowledge
- Build procedural skills
- Develop practical skills
- Show empathy through active listening
- Support callers by providing a safe, supportive environment
- Analyse and reflect on their own skills to identify points of improvement and good practice

³ Jeffrey D. Karpicke, Janell R. Blunt, Retrieval Practice Produces More Learning than Elaborative Studying with Concept Mapping. *Science* 331,772-775(2011). <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.1199327>

Stages of Nightline Training

See the Nightline Association's Training Basics guide, which should be attached to this guide.

Content requirements

All information in this section comes from the Nightline Quality Standards, version 4.⁴

Nightline training must legally cover all specific aspects of being a Nightline volunteer, including confidentiality policies, data protection, responding to questions about Nightline's privacy policy, and calls related to terrorism, serious crime (Northern Ireland), and minors.

For accreditation, Nightlines must train trainees on the 5 core Nightline principles, as well as specific areas relevant to being a Nightline volunteer. These include:

- call taking and types of calls;
- starting calls;
- the difference between giving information and advice;
- exploring the content of the call and the caller's feelings;
- language;
- tone and pace;
- support (where to get it);
- support (how to provide it);
- ending calls;
- information call;
- silent calls and hang ups;
- suicidal and self harm calls;
- abusive calls;
- calls of a sexual nature;
- specific policies/procedures for your Nightline;
- specific modes of communication that your Nightline uses and the systems used to deliver these.

For accreditation, Nightlines must also use realistic roleplays, properly debrief trainees and offer support after roleplays, give opportunities to practice learned skills, and give constructive criticism and advice. It is recommended that roleplay participants do not see each other during roleplays.

For accreditation, Nightline training must also ensure there is mutual respect between trainees and trainers, encourage trainees to give feedback on training, and training must last at least two days (or equivalent). Social elements in training are recommended.

⁴ GPG v4 § 7. Training

Elements of Effective Training

Communicating Ideas Clearly

Evaluating training, both written and verbal, includes ensuring that you communicate your desired messages clearly. Beware the trap of questions that ask ‘what is the answer I’m thinking of in my head?’, and similarly ensure that your statements and questions cannot be misinterpreted, cause an alternate conclusion, or lead to misconceptions.

You may wish to have another volunteer review your material or give feedback on your training facilitation - the aim is that the training should be suitable for anyone meeting the basic standards required to join training, and that any training materials would be suitable for anyone of a basic level of comprehension to deliver (e.g. a listening volunteer in a different helpline, or a professional in the mental health space, rather than necessarily a volunteer from a Nightline).

Interactive and Effective Training

The importance of interactive training lies both in trainees gaining experience by practicing skills, but also in trainees receiving feedback on their performance and insight into their practice.

Peyton’s four steps⁵ involve demonstration at normal pace, deconstruction with stepwise explanation, comprehension with instruction by the learner, and performance of the skill. While this is geared towards practicing basic procedural skills, it can provide some useful structure for training active listening and other skills of a Nightliner.

Interactive and effective training will probably involve at least some of:

- demonstration roleplays, where a trainer shows how they would take a practice call at normal speed;
- deconstructive roleplays, where a trainer takes a practice call, stopping before/after each response to discuss/explain why they are making the choice they make; and
- practice roleplays, where the trainee performs the specific skill and receives feedback after the call.

A more continuous training-oriented framework, more along the lines of Sawyer’s framework⁶ of learn, see, practice, prove, do, maintain would allow for:

- **Learn, See:** Seminar-style didactic presentation and observation

⁵ Walker & Peyton (1998). Walker M, Peyton J. Teaching in theatre. Teaching and learning in medical practice. Manticore Europe Limited; Rickmansworth: 1998. pp. 171-180.

See also: Giacomino K, Caliesch R, Sattelmayer KM. The effectiveness of the Peyton’s 4-step teaching approach on skill acquisition of procedures in health professions education: A systematic review and meta-analysis with integrated meta-regression. PeerJ. 2020 Oct 9;8:e10129. doi: [10.7717/peerj.10129](https://doi.org/10.7717/peerj.10129).

⁶ Sawyer T, White M, Zaveri P, Chang T, Ades A, French H, Anderson J, Auerbach M, Johnston L, Kessler D. Learn, see, practice, prove, do, maintain: an evidence-based pedagogical framework for procedural skill training in medicine. Acad Med. 2015 Aug;90(8):1025-33. doi: [10.1097/ACM.0000000000000734](https://doi.org/10.1097/ACM.0000000000000734).

- **Practice:** Deliberate practice of the skill, including gaining insight into both good practice and points for improvement, with a facilitator tracking progress and giving meaningful feedback
- **Prove:** Prove competency through assessment - ideally continuous
- **Do:** Practice under direct supervision - this may be as part of a 'probationary period', a 'first shifts' framework, or even as part of a model where multiple volunteers take calls together.
- **Maintain:** Skills are maintained through continued practice, internal QA (ongoing training), and external QA (listening into calls or providing caller surveys)

Training may include the following types of activity:

- **Videos:** Preparation material sent to trainees to be watched before a particular training session. It is easier in reducing trainer time spent, but a common drawback is that trainees will not have watched the videos before the session and you may need to rehash content and/or principles.
- **Presentations:** Presentations are an effective way to deliver didactic learning, ensuring trainees have a common baseline knowledge base before undertaking exercises such as roleplays. Interaction focused on applying the knowledge learned in the presentations can improve engagement significantly. This should not take up the majority of your training time, as trainees should have sufficient time to practise these skills to a high standard.
- **Roleplays:** Used to practise and hone key skills of active listening and procedural skills, roleplays should form the backbone of training. Roleplay sessions include opening exercises, technical skill exercises, roleplays, feedback, and a review of any unclear content.
- **Breaks:** Breaks must be embedded in the schedule, allowing for trainers and trainees to mingle, which can foster a sense of unity and common purpose. These should not be sacrificed to increase call practice time, as attention, progress, and attitude drops significantly when sessions are too long.

Activity sessions may include:

- **Icebreakers:** An interesting, often curriculum-unrelated question posed to everyone in the group. Trainees might be asked to discuss these with each other and feed back another trainee's answer if this is run as an exercise where trainers are planning calls at the same time.
- **Group discussions:** Posing a topic of discussion and facilitating trainees' discussion. You may wish to use systems to organise responses such as direct points and unrelated points in groups where people are more talkative and may not leave space for everyone to speak.
- **Group exercises:** In small groups, it may be useful to repeat a particular procedural skill, one after the other in a circle. Other interactive exercises are detailed below.
- **Interactive methods:** Useful examples include snowballing, circular interviewing, and line-ups.
 - **Snowballing:** 'Think-pair-share' questions, where the first question is asked in the context of the group thinking individually, the second asks them to talk in pairs, and the third asks them to discuss this in a group. This is particularly useful when it comes to encouraging participants to build theories from the ground up - you may

ask them to reflect on a simple premise, pair up to discuss the value of the premise, and share in groups how to achieve this practically.

- **Circular interviewing:** This technique involves asking participants to write down a question about a certain topic, mixing up the questions, and having participants ask the question written on the note. This allows participants to ask questions they may feel uncomfortable asking directly, and gives space for participants to discuss their thoughts on the question, which might help build collaborative relationships.
- **Line-ups:** Ask participants a question and have them line up along one side of the room. These should be dichotomous options, but not questions that ask for a binary answer, and are best with large groups. You can then add stages by changing the parameters of the question, and it is often useful to ask participants questions about why they placed themselves where they are, pair off people on different sides and ask them to discuss, or ask a participant what they think the other side are thinking.

To produce effective training, you will need **constructive alignment**, where learning outcomes, activities, and assessment are closely interlinked. Trainees should know the learning outcomes training aims to achieve, go through activities that hone these skills, and be assessed on these same outcomes. This is not a one and done process, but requires continuous review of training materials to ensure that the training programme facilitates success through practicing the skills that are desired and assessed.

Important factors include:

- **Effective feedback:** Discussed in the section [Giving Effective Feedback](#).
- **Standardised curriculum:** Each trainee should know what is expected of them during training in terms of principles and techniques, and should have some idea of the exact criteria they are being tested against. Practical skills teaching must have a consistent approach that is codified in order to train potential volunteers fairly and to a consistent standard.
- **Group size:** Groups should be small enough so that trainers are able to accurately keep track of trainees' progress and so that trainees can adequately practice roleplays to be able to consistently and appropriately actively listen, convey empathy, and carry out important and common call-taking procedures.
- **Supervision of progress:** There should be named trainers responsible for the progress of a set of trainees. Trainees will not understand what they do not know ('unknown unknowns'), and will not be able to accurately meet the standards needed to pass if their progress is not guided. These trainers should be competent and able to guide trainees through the training programme through facilitating practice, group exercises, and other activities.
 - **Different assessors:** Feedback being given from different people and different viewpoints can also help synthesise practice points to improve the trainees' practice, as well as to synthesise some useful tips or elements from different trainers' practice.

Giving Effective Feedback

Some important factors to be aware of are:

- **Closed-loop feedback:** Feedback in small chunks as often as possible. In practice, this might mean after each roleplay, a trainee offers their own ideas on their performance, other trainees give some feedback, and a trainer gives feedback encapsulating the points they agree with as well as their own thoughts. This allows trainees to develop insight into their own practice.
 - **Specific feedback:** Ideally, points of feedback relate to specific actions, words, or principles. It is not useful to vaguely encapsulate a concept as a point of feedback, or to say 'You just need more practice'. It must be clear to the trainee what, exactly, they should change and suggested ways of changing it.
 - **Severity of improvement points:** Trainees should be told whether a point of improvement is dangerous, harmful, suboptimal, or just a stylistic adjustment. If several of these are lumped in together or are given equal weight in feedback, the importance of each point can be overshadowed and the trainee may not prioritise improvement in the same way the trainer does.
- **Balanced feedback:** The 'sandwich' model of feedback involves a positive point of practice or a positive impression, some points for improvement, and positive feedback at the end. It is important to produce balanced feedback so trainees have an accurate impression of their progress, and this model helps provide feedback that is helpful and fosters a growth mindset, especially if one of the positive points is that they are improving in a particular area. It is important for trainees to be aware of the points on which they are doing well, as well as those they struggle with - if they don't know what they're doing right, they might stop doing it!
 - **Time to cool down:** If a trainer feels unable to give feedback that is not overly critical, they should take a moment to compose themselves and gather their thoughts before proceeding. Emotional and/or unclear feedback is not beneficial to the trainee or to the rapport built up between the two.
 - **Dialogic (collaborative) feedback:** Most feedback will probably be verbal in some form. Ensure that trainees are able to respond in some way to feedback, so that the trainer can hear their explanation or discuss their thought processes. The trainee should feel a right of reply - that they are able to maturely discuss the thought processes and patterns that led to the conclusion that happened, so they feel listened to and so the trainer understands what specifically needs to be worked on. Where relevant, feedback can also be phrased as suggestions rather than points critical of practice to allow trainees some flexibility in how to change their practice.
 - **Unknown unknowns:** There is a difference between things trainees may not be able to achieve yet but are aware of ('known unknowns') and those they are unaware they need to achieve or are outwith their domain of knowledge ('unknown unknowns'). Consider discussing with trainers how you would convert unknown unknowns to known unknowns, as well as how to make it clear to trainees that this is not a fault of theirs but instead a natural part of learning.
- **End-of-day feedback:** Giving individual and private feedback at the end of each day of training is important in summarising the day's progress. Allow trainees to write notes during this section. You could start by asking trainees to reflect on their feelings and

performance, then use prepared notes to give your summary of feedback as a trainer. Make sure your feedback is realistic given the stage of progress the trainee is in; if it is the first day, it is unrealistic to expect trainees to be perfect at basic call-taking and aiming for such will frustrate trainers and steer trainees away from a growth mindset. It is important to review both positive points of progress and points to improve on - we do not ask for trainees to be perfect, but to show consistent improvement and perform at the expected standard by the end of training/at assessment.

- **Service consistency:** Training Directors/Coordinators should discuss with trainers what thresholds are considered adequate for a trainee should pass, and should sit in on training sessions to be able to provide internal QA privately about how well they think trainers are giving feedback and how aligned their assessment criteria are. Trainees should not be surprised by the overly differing standards of assessment across trainers, as this creates inconsistencies in the service and discourages trainees as their goals are not clear.

Session Structure

Sessions should follow a predictable structure. An example is:

- Icebreaker - perhaps starting with a song or an interesting question that engages introspection
- Set the tone of the session
- Establish the format of the session, including important housekeeping information
- Outline the importance of the topic
- Outline the relevance of content to the trainee
- Describe the scope of the session - this should be realistic for the training and the time allotted
- Learning objectives - "By the end of the session, you should be able to..." using verbs from e.g. Bloom's taxonomy⁷.
- Main content of the session
- Questions for trainees, ideally introspective/reflective rather than correct or incorrect

When to recap concepts

Concepts that were learned and practiced earlier should be returned to in future practice sessions, and where a large section of the cohort does not understand a particular concept, this should be returned to as a large group. Presentations should have allotted time for this type of contingency, as this may not be uncommon in training.

In general, recapitulation of practice should be done continuously - interleaving in skills in which the trainee was proficient can lead to reinforcement of the technique as well as providing a confidence boost if this is a skill they perform well after a break. It also provides for consistency in the future - if they cannot replicate the skill another time during training, there is no guarantee that they will be able to on a Nightline shift!

⁷ Krathwohl, D.R. (2002) 'A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy: An Overview', *Theory Into Practice*, 41(4), pp. 212-218. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4104_2.

Safe and inclusive environments

Setting the environment for Nightline training requires participants to feel comfortable and safe. There are a number of types of safety that are necessary for effective training, and some that are essential to the running of a Nightline.

- **Inclusion:** Nightlines must ensure that the service is non-discriminatory to the extent of reasonable adjustments.⁸ In practice, having a system in place to ensure that any discriminatory practice at training by trainers or trainees is addressed swiftly and with appropriate outcomes, such as a commitment to changing behaviour, a warning, being asked to leave the programme, or even appropriate referral for disciplinary action. Welfare support for each individual is key during these situations. Accessibility in training is also mandated by the Nightline Quality Standards, requiring Nightlines to make adjustments to facilitate training in a way that does not disadvantage trainees from particular backgrounds. Ideally, training will be adjusted to be accessible to as many groups as possible, with particular adjustments made for individual trainees so that training is not more difficult for them than for other trainees - allowing for equity of accessibility.
- **Embedded organisation safety:** Participants in training and volunteers must feel able to discuss the motivations, reasoning, and events that led to the outcome of any negative event. For this, it is important to consistently strive for a no-blame 'just culture', where discussions are held for the sake of improving systemic practice and changing future outcomes, rather than as a tool of shame or blame. This is easier said than done, but efforts in this direction allow trainees and volunteers to be more honest, and this facilitates faster and more effective progress.
- **Psychological safety:** Participants should feel able to discuss questions that may be assumed knowledge or that may contradict best practice, in the knowledge that ignorance is not punished. Getting trainees to be more talkative and open gives trainers a better sense of their insight into their performance and behaviour!
 - **Safe practice in roleplays:** Trainers are ultimately responsible for managing the immediate welfare of trainees. This means creating an atmosphere that trainees feel comfortable practicing skills in, without fear of judgement. This also means that trainers should use scenarios that do not unnecessarily put participants at risk of psychological harm, as this could be harmful to trainees and trainers. For example, a roleplay call on the topic of suicide will most likely form an important part of training, but asking the individual acting as the volunteer to e.g. suggest a means of suicide is not a necessary or reasonable part of training.
- **Welfare structures:** There should be volunteers who are responsible for volunteer and trainee welfare over the course of training. These volunteers should check in on training groups to ensure that all participants have someone to talk to, so that any concerns can be properly addressed. Participants should be explicitly informed that they are able to take time away and return to training, with the exact parameters set out. For example, it may

⁸ GPG v4 § 9. Equal Opportunities: "It is unlawful to discriminate on grounds of race, sex, gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age, gender assignment, pregnancy or being on maternity leave or belief in the provision of services."

be stated that trainees can leave the room whenever they need, ideally mentioning to a trainer before they do so that someone can check on them. The expectation may be that they return before the next break, that a discussion is had at that point, or that they may catch up on specific sessions/roleplay time as long as trainers are adequately notified, prepared, and there is enough trainer time available.

- **Realistic roleplay scripts:** Roleplay scripts should be: accurate to a plausible caller's situation; test trainees on common, relevant, or high-stakes issues; not personally attack the trainee; and be detailed enough that any competent volunteer would be able to deliver the scenario and meet learning objectives. An example of an implausible scenario would be that the caller has been stolen away from their family by a pack of wolves, and an example of scenarios attacking the trainee would be xenophobic attacks or sexual attention towards the volunteer.

Difficult and sensitive issues

It is inevitable that trainees will have particular call types and call topics that personally affect them more than others. It is important that trainers guiding these trainees' progress and setting calls and discussions are aware of these topics, so that trainees do not face unnecessary psychological harm from training.

It is also important to be realistic with trainees about adaptations possible during training; for example, a trainee who finds scenarios where dogs die traumatic should not face calls or discussions that include the death of a dog, whereas a trainee who is concerned about taking suicide calls may have to be counselled that they will have to be able to take suicide calls to become a listening volunteer, about routes that may not involve taking calls, and that there can be welfare accommodations and extra support around these calls.

Trainers will also find certain call types and topics difficult. It is beneficial to your Nightline to have trainers in supervisory positions know about call topics that trainers should not be involved in instruction for. Other trainers should be able to cover this, and these call topics and types should not be mentioned to anyone for whom it is not strictly necessary to facilitate this at training. Setting these boundaries makes training less unnecessarily traumatic and affords trainers some more degree of protection.

Some trainees will also find some procedures and aspects of principles slightly unnatural. This is not uncommon, and important things to reassure trainees are that being non-directive and non-advisory are important aspects of evidence-based active listening as a helpline, as well as highlighting some of the pitfalls that could arise from being directive or advisory. It should also be made clear to trainees that procedures (particularly protective procedures) are there for their benefit, explaining why deviating from these procedures could be harmful for them, the service, and callers. This may be a useful point to incorporate activities such as circular interviewing and snowballing.

Interpersonal issues and trainer friendships

Your trainers will probably be friends with each other, and there may also be conflict between some of your trainers. In practical terms, there are a few measures you can put into place to reduce the incidence and severity of personal issues at training:

- **Clearly establish roles:** Roles at training should be clear and there should be a distinction between personal friendship and professional behaviour. Even if one person in a friendship leads training and another is involved at a basic level, while at training they should remain professional and confine their behaviour to appropriate behaviour in their roles. Forbidding socialising is not practical, but a clear boundary should be set so that this does not happen during training hours, and that there is a clear disconnect between roles, responsibilities, and mindsets at training and personal discussions.
- **Managing trainer friendships:** Trainers should be advised on setting clear boundaries in the context of training, allowing friends in different roles to act professionally and without breaching the boundaries of their roles in training, to avoid interpersonal conflict that may arise from difficulties giving honest feedback about performance in delivering training while mixing personal and professional.
- **Feedback and setting:** Feedback to trainers should be given promptly, in an appropriately sequestered setting from trainee environments. Ideally, this should occur in private with appropriate welfare support during times when trainees are not supposed to be present. Trainers should not be expected to wait hours to receive unknown negative feedback; this heightens anxiety and can cause significant distress.
- **Managing interpersonal issues:** Interpersonal issues will happen during training. Training supervisors should have plans for how to manage unexpected changes to scheduling, sequestration of particular volunteers from the training environment, and have contingencies for making changes if this happens between training supervisors.
- **Setting expectations about transparency:** Trainers should feel comfortable telling training supervisors about conditions that may render them unfit or unable to train trainees without fear of repercussions. This should be an expectation laid out explicitly by training supervisors, both in written form and verbally (how many people read every page of a trainer manual?). For example, if a trainer is unexpectedly intoxicated or hungover, concussed, or dealing with sudden personal upset, they should both know that training supervisors require them to disclose only that they are unable to continue training for a period of time, and feel comfortable disclosing this to training supervisors. This ensures the safety of all participants in training, as trainers who are unfit to continue may not be able to adequately create a psychologically safe environment.

Training the Trainer

Trainers will need to understand what you expect of them before facilitating training. A presentation and roleplay practice session is generally reasonable, in order to ensure that trainers are sufficiently prepared for basic and important situations during training. This must include who to go to if they are confused about what to do, as well as being clear about the role they take on during training and their responsibilities. Without defined responsibilities, it is unreasonable to expect trainers to behave the way you want them to.

For trainers giving feedback and managing progress, it is well worth organising additional sessions to ensure that they are adequately prepared to face their responsibilities, which will also include often-left-implicit obligations such as creating a safe environment, being engaging and attuned to the needs of their trainees, and suggesting approaches to managing difficult situations.

Approaches to situations will depend on the structure of your Nightline, but the key concepts that must be covered include giving feedback, strategies to adjust to concerns and change techniques in training, managing the emotions of a training environment, allowing sufficient time between difficult calls, and how to act in emergencies at training.

It can be very difficult to arrange trainer training sessions, but this is a key part of preparing for training success. Be prepared to allow trainers to train if they are competent and have done a trainer training session recently but are unable to attend this intake's, as well as making specific allowances where appropriate.

Training Logistics

Rooms and Timings

The types of rooms you will need depends on the types of training you are carrying out. For small group roleplays, we recommend smaller rooms with a maximum occupancy of at least 8, depending on your structure. For larger groups such as presentation sessions, you will need a room with adequate AV facilities as well as comfortably seating all trainees and the necessary trainers. Universities or Student Unions may have rooms available for training; you may have to adjust your training timetable based on changes to room availability year on year.

Many Nightlines train new volunteers over one or more weekends, where trainees should probably spend no more than 8 hours from the start of a day to the end. Training should not be taxing to the point of impairing forward progress. Trainers will also likely have to spend more time at training than trainees over the day, and this should not be overly long so as to dissuade volunteers from assisting at training. Trainer capacity is likely to be one of the significant bottlenecks in training, especially if your training requires an intensive ratio of trainers to trainees. Flexibility in how trainers can attend (e.g. attending only morning/afternoon of particular days) allows for trainers to make more days than they would otherwise.

Incentives for trainers to assist should involve both enjoyment of the training process itself and appropriate extrinsic rewards e.g. a subsidised coffee/some free snacks. Basic meals (e.g. a Meal Deal) may be beyond the scope of realistic or appropriate subsidy, but this may also depend on what role trainers take on. Involvement in training should not disadvantage trainers beyond the time they put in i.e. they should not have to unduly pay for food, transport, arranging logistics, etc. as this makes involvement less accessible and less trainers will attend.

Volunteer Availability

As alluded to, volunteer availability can be a significant issue in recruiting more volunteers, which can lead to diminished volunteer availability. Outwith the scope of this guide lie the factors of important discussions regarding volunteer numbers, sustainability, and top-level direction on what strategies to adopt to maintain volunteer numbers.

However, organising volunteer participation in training with a smaller volunteer base than expected is a common problem, and there are several more common options available:

- **Making training less trainer-intensive:** This is the headline principle. You should have an understanding of the required ratio of trainers to trainees and consider practical ways to reduce this. For example, eliminating a welfare position responsible for the entire cohort is much less effective and more costly than reducing the minimum number of volunteers facilitating roleplays as the ‘caller’ in a room from 2 to 1.
 - **Reducing trainer commitment:** Reducing the hours required to participate may involve shuffling around sessions so that presentations and roleplay sessions may be distinct sections of the day, which may not be completely optimal for learning but may reduce trainer burden and increase accessibility. Similarly, allowing volunteers to participate for only a morning or afternoon session allows more volunteers to commit to specific sessions rather than whole days.
 - **Reducing trainer minimums:** Allowing one trainer to handle roleplays for a group session where previously two trainers were required allows for more flexible scheduling, and may allow for more groups to be trained.
 - **Striping resources:** If there are both large group and small group sessions, it may be possible to utilise the maximum number of trainers by splitting the cohort in two, where one group would have presentations in the morning and one group would have them in the afternoon, allowing trainers to work with different groups depending on which half were in presentations and large group activities at the time. This idea faces a number of practical hurdles, but could increase capacity considerably.
- **Reducing the bar for participating as a trainer:** If trainers are Committee members only, or if there is an experience requirement for participating as a certain type of trainer, it may be worth reconsidering what the requirements are and why. Having more trainers may increase capacity for recruiting new volunteers considerably.
- **Changing training structure:** Your Nightline may train volunteers to a high standard using intensive techniques. However, these may not be sustainable for maintaining your volunteer base and you may have to consider increasing the number of trainees per trainer, whether through increasing group size, reducing programme hours so more trainees can be instructed in the same amount of time, or adding ways for volunteers to divide training into modules that they complete to achieve certain core competencies and gain a more limited scope of practice.
- **Seeking help from other Nightlines:** If necessary, there may be other Nightlines who have a different training schedule to you, and there may be a small number of volunteers able to help in training your new cohort. They will need an information pack detailing the differences in policy, practice, training, and vocabulary, as these differ considerably between Nightlines. You may well also need to find money to subsidise their travel costs.

This guide also cannot adequately cover dealing with having a volunteer base that is heavily weighted towards new, inexperienced volunteers. This is not an uncommon issue with Nightlines, but the key principle in this matter is to facilitate experience gain as rapidly as practically possible, including potentially modifying shift patterns so more new volunteers can gain experience faster.

External Speakers

Some Nightlines use external speakers to deliver presentations on topics related to their organisations, such as the Samaritans or a local crisis centre to deliver suicide calls training, or a rape crisis organisation delivering training on rape and sexual assault.

These presentations can be valuable in exploring the expertise of a specific service, but material should also take into account the skills and competencies required of a Nightliner, and should have clear scopes of practice delineating useful knowledge and core requirements.

Trainees must understand exactly what information and skills are core to their training as a Nightliner and what areas remain within the remit of specialist organisations. Nightline is not able to train volunteers to the same degree as a specialised helpline, especially considering the short term of most volunteers at Nightline.

External speakers may also come with associated costs - whether monetary for costs incurred, time spent liaising with other organisations, or time and money organising travel, rooms, and other facilities. This should be weighed against the benefit brought by an external speaker session - it is very sensible to consult external organisations on areas of Nightline training relevant to their practice, but external speakers may not always be feasible.

Backup Plans

On-the-day issues will happen to any form of training. Common issues include arranged rooms not being available, sudden trainer unavailability, trainees not showing up, welfare emergencies, and interpersonal issues.

A general principle for all of these issues is that Training Coordinators/Directors should consider these before the onset of training and be prepared to face them, with written plans for common and high-impact situations. They may wish to have alternate contacts who can arrange rooms at short notice and an alternate training schedule, trainers on stand-by or able to come in at short notice, a specific trainer responsible for contacting trainees who do not show up without giving notice, welfare volunteers able to organise and respond to issues while maintaining availability at training, and designated fallback volunteers who can take over specific responsibilities at training - including top-level supervisory roles. These plans should be reviewed by Training Coordinators/Directors before every training intake so they are able to implement and refer to them without delay.

Getting Effective Feedback

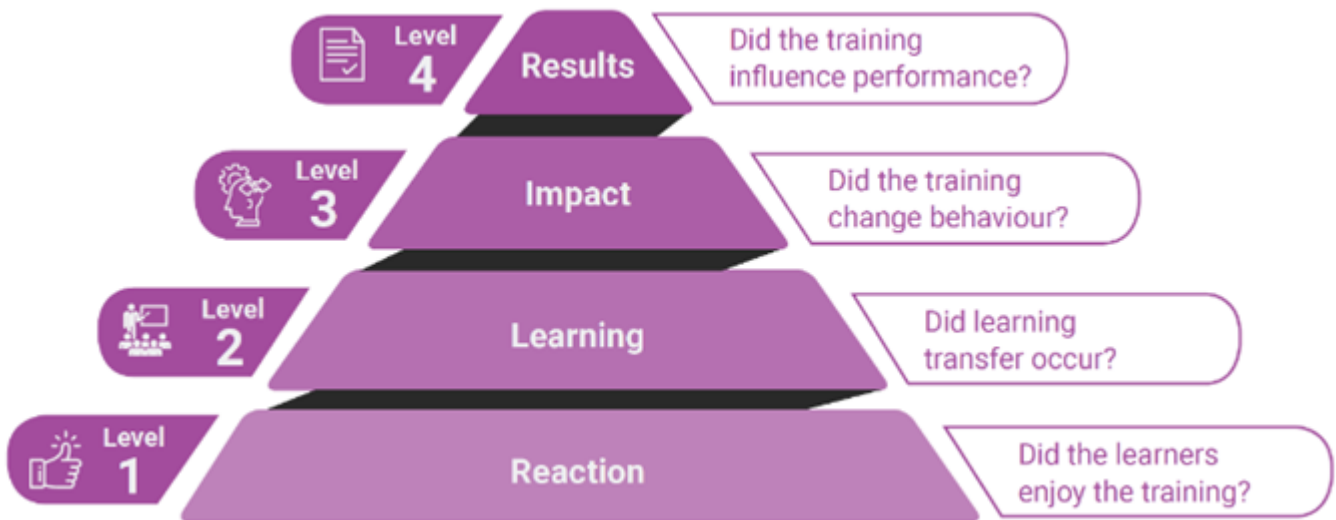
Once the training intake has completed and new volunteers have joined, it is easy to forget another important aspect of training. Getting impartial feedback from existing volunteers, new volunteers, and applicants who have not made it through training are all important to improving training on a structural level. You may have some ideas at different levels of training participation, but there should be structured discussions around key messages from feedback to consider possible improvements to the training process.

It is important to consider:

- **Usefulness of various aspects of training:** Nightlines will have established practice in training. What benefits does a particular existing type of training provide over alternative options for teaching the same skill or topic? Are there elements of training that are less relevant to core competencies as a volunteer?
- **Effectiveness of training:** How well-prepared are newly-trained listening volunteers to take calls? Do they meet the core requirements your Nightline has for volunteers? What do new volunteers feel most worried about, and what do they feel could benefit them to practice/learn?
- **Constructive alignment:** Learning objectives, content, and assessment should relate to the same content and aims. If there are things trainees are being assessed on that they are not taught, or that they are not told they should achieve, how fair is assessment? If there are things that training aims to instill that are not sufficient in content, how will trainees meet these objectives?
- **Communication:** How can we improve communication between trainers? How can we ensure trainees feel heard when it comes to their own training? How can we make more clear our requirements, goals, and feedback during training?
- **QA:** How do we ensure our training meets best practice? How can we check whether training is consistent and meets the same standards across the organisation?
- **Key things to keep/change:** What elements of good practice resonated with people? What things were controversial and merit further consideration?

It can be useful to consider the Kirkpatrick model⁹ in formulating questions to elicit feedback. The model categorises questions into four levels, categorising the feedback question by the level of utility it has in informing changes to practice. Most feedback questions are levels 1 and 2 - level 3 and level 4 questions are often more 'corny' (e.g. "What is one thing you would change about practice after this training?") but can be phrased in more relevant ways that elicit focused feedback.

⁹ Smidt, A., Balandin, S., Sigafos, J., & Reed, V. A. (2009). The Kirkpatrick model: A useful tool for evaluating training outcomes. *Journal of Intellectual & Developmental Disability*, 34(3), 266–274. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13668250903093125>



Other important factors include:

- Prioritising what you want to know;
- Asking single questions;
- Asking a limited set of questions to aid speed of completion;
- Keeping questions clear and avoiding leading questions, ideally testing them on a trainer first;
- Deciding what time to send out forms, whether straight after a session or as a follow-up; and
- Using both sliding-scale ('Likert') and free text answers, which allow respectively identification of common issues and gathering rich content about changing training.