

## Confidentiality Policy

- 1 Nightline operates as a fully confidential listening, information service. Consequently, no details shared with any individual Nightline volunteer within any call or IM will be revealed to other volunteers in the organization or to persons or agencies external to Durham Nightline or Durham Student Union. We cannot trace callers' telephone numbers.
- 2 Nightline recognises that on certain calls the caller may ask the Nightline volunteer to call them back, which the volunteer may do by dialling nine and then the phone number provided by the caller. However, the Nightline volunteer should never call an individual who has not personally asked to be called by the Nightline volunteer. To comply with a caller's request for the volunteer to call another individual would violate the confidentiality policy.
- 3 The confidentiality policy applies to all calls received by Nightline except when dealing with:
  - 3.1 A caller who requests third-party contact
  - 3.2 Terrorism alerts
  - 3.3 Abusive calls
  - 3.4 When a volunteer is ordered by a court to give evidence regarding a call.
- 4 The specific actions to be undertaken in these exceptional situations are outlined below.
- 5 **Third-Party Contact Request**
  - 5.1 The following includes:
    - 5.1.1 Emergency Services Request
    - 5.1.2 Suicidal Calls
    - 5.1.3 Non-Emergency Services Request
  - 5.2 **Emergency Services Request**
    - 5.2.1 If a caller ever requests that the volunteer contacts the emergency services on the caller's behalf, the volunteer will use the administration telephone to call 999 and suspend confidentiality only in order to give all relevant details to the operator, and then return to the Nightline telephone to talk with the caller until the ambulance arrives.
  - 5.3 **Suicidal Calls**
    - 5.3.1 Nightline aims to provide a confidential, non-directive, non-advisory and non-judgmental listening service for all callers. Consequently, Nightline maintains that callers are entitled to discuss suicide, as they are any other issue, with these aims being upheld by the Nightline volunteer they are speaking to. If a volunteer believes a caller has attempted to

commit suicide whilst on the telephone or before calling Nightline, the volunteer must ask them if they would like an ambulance. If the caller requests an ambulance the volunteer will follow 5.2.1 (above).

- 5.3.2 If the caller answers no to the offer of an ambulance, the Nightline volunteer may reassure them that they will respect their decision. The Nightline volunteer will not break confidentiality in a suicidal call without the callers consent. Where appropriate the volunteer may ask the caller again whether they wish to receive an ambulance but the volunteer should not attempt to influence the caller. If the caller chooses to terminate the call, this ends their contact with Nightline and no action is required.
- 5.3.3 Nightline does not claim to know whether anyone is right or wrong to attempt suicide. We aim to respect the choices of every caller and unconditionally provide the support and listening that we advertise. As such, we would never actively attempt to persuade a caller not to attempt suicide or to receive an ambulance, in line with helplines such as Samaritans. As a helpline our duty is to provide every caller with the services that we advertise, namely quality active listening and information provision, but nothing further.
- 5.3.4 Procedural guidance on how a volunteer should handle a suicidal call can be found in the Suicide Procedure Policy.

#### 5.4 Non-emergency services request

- 5.4.1 If a caller ever requests that the volunteer contacts a third party that is not an individual but rather an appropriate institution or service the volunteer may do so using the administrative phone. It is the volunteers discretion to decide who is an appropriate third party however examples are provided below.
- 5.4.2 University Security; Taxi Companies; Sexual Health Clinics; Sexual Assault Referral Centre; the Nightbus.
- 5.4.3 The volunteer should only attempt to contact appropriate third parties during Nightline's opening hours. It may be more appropriate to ask the caller if they would like the contact details of their Welfare Officer or Senior Tutor who are in a more appropriate position to provide this service. If a caller requests that the volunteer contacts a third party outside of Nightline's opening hours the volunteer should apologetically state that Nightline's Confidentiality Policy does not allow the volunteer to divulge callers details outside of Nightline's opening hours.

### 6 Terrorism Alert

- 6.1 Nightline acknowledges that under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, information received from people using the Nightline service (by either telephone or drop-in) regarding an act of terrorism must be shared with the police. Nightline's Terrorism Alert Policy details the exact procedure undertaken immediately following a terrorism alert obtained during a call.

### 7 Abusive Calls

- 7.1 Nightline acknowledges the possible negative effects of receiving abusive calls whilst volunteering for Nightline, and takes the necessary action to care for the welfare of Nightline volunteers. By following the step-by-step Abusive Caller Policy, Nightline volunteers may confidently identify and

terminate an abusive call. Any call which is terminated using this procedure must be recorded in the Abusive Caller Record Book (which is kept by the Co-ordinators).

- 7.2 All volunteers are required to suspend confidentiality by detailing the main features of the abusive call in writing in this book. Volunteers are also entitled to talk about the content of the call with the other duty on the evening they take the abusive call. They may also talk to any Committee member about the content of the call. Information revealed by the volunteer to the other duty or a Committee member is confidential and should not be repeated. The only exception is that the information should be passed on to the Co-ordinators. This exception is made so the Co-ordinators can identify regular abusive callers and monitor the effectiveness of the Abusive Caller Policy.
- 7.3 The Nightline committee, after a period of consultation with rota lasting no more than 2 weeks, and the approval of Durham Student Union, may decide to reveal information about an abusive caller to the police if they are of the opinion that:
  - 7.3.1 the illegal action of the caller is having a detrimental effect upon the organisation, or
  - 7.3.2 they reasonably suspect that the caller may be committing a crime, other than the abusive call itself, whilst on the phone to volunteers.
- 7.4 In such circumstances the Co-ordinators will hand over any relevant information (including call records relating to that specific caller) to the police. The Co-ordinators will at all times co-operate fully with the police in any investigation they undertake as a result.

## 8 Giving Evidence in Court

- 8.1 Nightline understands that if an individual volunteer refuses to break confidentiality by revealing relevant evidence from a call when ordered to do so by a court, this volunteer may be held In Contempt of Court. Consequently, Nightline encourages all volunteers to comply with requests from a court of law for evidence obtained during a call they have taken.