

Training Policy

This policy details Durham Nightline's training offering, volunteer recruitment process, and internal training requirements for volunteers.

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Training Weekend

All new volunteers for Nightline must have previously attended a full three-day Training Weekend and completed the selection process.

The Training Weekend takes place over three days, and consists of talks from Nightline volunteers and/or external speakers, and group sessions including discussion and roleplays.

There should be three Training Weekends per year, one per term, open to all students (numbers permitting), whether or not they intend to progress to a Training Interview.

All Nightline volunteers are encouraged to attend all Training Weekends while they are on rota to continuously refresh and expand their knowledge of welfare issues. As stipulated in the Volunteer Agreement, volunteers should attend at least two days of training as a trainer per academic year. Trainers who are training at a particular Training Weekend must attend a Training for Trainers session, run by the Training Officer(s) and/or Coordinator(s).

Speakers and Talks

The subjects for talks given at the Weekend must include Listening Skills, Sexual Violence, and Suicide. Changes to other talk subjects must be approved by the Committee.

Following the talk on Suicide, trainees must have the opportunity to ask questions, both to the speakers in the initial talk, and to their group leader in their group session. The Suicide Policy must be read out over the course of the talk and group session.

Roleplays and Group Sessions

A roleplay is a training simulation of what it might be like to take a real call or IM as a volunteer for Nightline. They give trainees the opportunity to practise the listening skills they are taught during the training, and allow for other trainees and trainers to give constructive feedback to help the entire group learn.

The roleplays are carried out in small groups of trainees depending upon the numbers of trainees and trainers. At least one trainer in the group will be an experienced trainer.

The roleplays in the group sessions must include a roleplay involving the Initial Silence Policy, a roleplay involving the Suicide Policy, and a roleplay on a sensitive topic, which might include:

- Self-harm
- Bereavement
- Eating Disorders
- Sexual Violence

Any other roleplays may be determined by trainers within a particular group, but should ensure a well-rounded coverage of different topics that a volunteer might encounter on a real duty. None of the roleplays used either during the Training Weekend or Training Interviews should be based on real calls.

Certification & Required Learning

Durham Nightline issues e-certificates to trainees to certify their completion of its training programme. There are three levels of certificate:

- Nightline Active Listening Certificate: awarded to trainees who attend all talks and group sessions on Day 1.
- Nightline Active Listening Certificate with added training: awarded to trainees who also attend particular talks during Days 2 & 3. This certificate will explicitly detail which additional training they have received.
- Nightline Enhanced Active Listening Certificate: awarded to trainees who attend all talks and group sessions on all three days of the training.

These certificates can be used to prove their attendance at the training; if required, trainees can also ask the Training Officer(s) to write to anyone requesting proof of attendance if this was within 2 years of attending the training.

Durham Nightline recognises that the University requires those in peer-supporter positions to attend its training. More information can be found on [this SharePoint page](#).

Durham Nightline may share attendance data of those who attended the training with Durham University for the purpose of operating its Peer Supporter role descriptor.

Durham Nightline is not responsible for the operation of the Peer Supporter role descriptor, nor its enforcement. Anyone with questions about the role descriptor should contact the Student Support & Wellbeing Office directly.

Attendance Limits

Durham Nightline acknowledges that some trainees might choose to attend more than one training cycle to, for example, improve their active listening skills, understanding or confidence in regards to the topics covered during the weekend. However, to respect volunteer time and to ensure all students at Durham University are fairly given the opportunity to attend a Training Weekend, students are limited to attending 3 training cycles within a 2 year period. If students do not complete a training cycle, the Coordinator(s) and Training Officer(s) may decide whether or not their involvement in the cycle counts as them having attended. If a student applies to join any training cycles that would exceed this limit, they will be rejected from the cycle, with the reason being stated.

Durham Nightline acknowledges that some trainees might need more roleplay practice in order to be accepted as a volunteer onto the service and/or improve their skills. With this in mind, trainees are allowed to participate in the interviewee cycle at the end of each Training cycle that they attend should they wish to become a volunteer.

Applicants who have applied multiple times will be treated in the same way as all other applicants and their performance in previous training cycles will have no bearing on the decision on whether to accept them as a volunteer. In order to ensure that this is fairly reflected in the interview process, Nightline will:

- Where possible, ensure the applicant has different interviewers from their previous cycle.
- Treat them as a new applicant in relation to roleplay feedback with their ability to actively listen, their understanding and implementation of the Nightline Principles and their Policy usage.

To ensure that this Policy can be applied, Durham Nightline will retain the names of all trainees who completed the training cycle for either:

- Up to 2 years after their attendance of a training cycle.
- Until the trainee is believed to have graduated from the University.

This will be done in accordance with the Confidentiality and Privacy Policy.

The only people with access to these records are the Coordinator(s) and the Training Officer(s).

Training Interviews & Recruitment

All trainees who wish to become a volunteer for Durham Nightline must:

- Hold an Enhanced Active Listening Certificate
- Complete at least one call roleplay in their group sessions
- Demonstrate willingness to understand Nightline's Principles and the listening techniques
- Demonstrate willingness to engage in discussion and clarify anything they didn't understand

The Training Officer(s) and/or Coordinator(s) may waive these requirements in the presence of any relevant accessibility requirements. These requirements must be communicated at the start of Days 2 & 3. There is no other assessment during the Training Weekend.

Any trainee who meets these requirements will be able to progress to a Training Interview. The Training Interviews are made up of a small number of suitability questions, and more roleplays, similar to the Training Weekend. The roleplays must allow the trainee to practise both calls and IMs, the Initial Silence Policy and Suicide Policy.

All trainees will be offered at least one Training Interview. Most trainees will progress to a second Training Interview, but this will not be offered where it is clear the trainee will not be successful. The decision not to offer a second Training Interview will be made jointly by the trainer who conducted the first Training Interview, the Training Officer(s), the Coordinator(s) and must be unanimous.

All trainers who are conducting Training Interviews must complete a Training for Interviewers session, run by the Training Officer(s) and/or Coordinator(s). After any Training Interview, the trainer shall complete the Interview Feedback Form.

At least one Training Interview must be conducted by an experienced trainer.

Once a trainee has completed a second Training Interview, a decision will be made jointly by the second interviewer, Training Officer(s) and Coordinator(s) on whether to accept the trainee as a Nightline volunteer, reject the application, or offer a final Training Interview to the trainee. If no decision can be agreed unanimously, a final Training Interview shall be offered to the trainee.

Once a trainee has completed a final Training Interview, a decision will be made jointly by the third interviewer, Training Officer(s) and Coordinator(s) on whether to accept the trainee as a Nightline volunteer or reject the application. If no decision can be agreed unanimously, the application will be rejected.

No decision on any particular trainee's progression may be made by only one volunteer. If required, the trainee's most recent interviewer should be directly involved in the decision making process.

Durham Nightline recognises that the nature of its recruitment process can be emotionally intensive. Trainees can, at any point during the recruitment process, pause a roleplay, or withdraw from the process altogether. Trainers must also ensure that discussion about a particular trainee's performance in the Training Interviews is limited to those that must know, for example the Training Officer(s) and Coordinator(s).

External Training

Durham Nightline also runs other sessions of external training. These include Active Listening workshops for societies, free of charge, on request. Durham Nightline also runs these sessions for Freshers' Representatives (Freps) each year, and colleges can sign up to receive a session, delivered either in their college or in an external venue.

These workshops do not constitute Nightline's full training offering. Attendees of these sessions will not be offered a certificate of any kind, nor permitted to progress to a Training Interview.

Internal Training

All new volunteers must complete three modules of internal training before they can be on duty:

- Volunteer Internal Training I - Abusive & Manipulative Calls
- Volunteer Internal Training II - Safeguarding
- Volunteer Internal Training III - Policies & Procedures

When volunteers have done five duties or more, they become eligible to become a Nightlead. Any volunteer who wishes to become a Nightlead shall also complete Volunteer Internal Training IV - Nightleading.

In the interests of maintaining service quality, all volunteers must attend at least two internal training sessions per academic year. The Coordinator(s), Training Officer(s) and Internal Training Officer will organise internal training sessions on a variety of issues at least twice a year.