



Exeter Student Nightline Abuse of Service Policy

Policy approved	January 2022 [Adam Davies and Maddy Swanton Co-Presidents 2021/22]
Policy review due	January 2025

Purpose

This policy and related procedure outline Exeter Student Nightline’s definition of abuse of our service and what this definition entails. This policy and procedure can be adapted to all methods of contact, with exceptions for particular methods noted where relevant. This policy replaces Exeter Student Nightline’s previous policy titled “Zero Tolerance Policy” which has been incorporated within this policy as our Zero Tolerance Approach. This policy ensures Exeter Student Nightline’s practices meet the requirements for Nightline Association Good Practice Guidelines and wider sector best practices.

Scope

This policy applies to all contacts made with Exeter Student Nightline through its official listening channels (*phone, IM, email, Skype, drop-in, etc.*) that involve any actions taken by any caller or relevant third parties that may be designated as an abuse of the service. All listening volunteers at Exeter Student Nightline must adhere to this policy and related procedures when they suspect a caller or third party is abusing Exeter Student Nightline as a service.

Definitions

In this policy and procedure, “calls” and “callers” may refer to all uses of Nightline’s student support and information service whether in verbal or written communication.

Term	Definition
Abuse of Service	The definition of “Abuse of Service” is formalised independently by each individual Nightline and then submitted for approval by the Nightline Association.
Zero Tolerance Approach	Exeter Student Nightline’s abuse of service policy takes a zero-tolerance approach to protect our volunteers and other service users from any form of abusive, inappropriate or manipulative language or behaviour. By engaging with any part of our service, callers are agreeing to these terms and we reserve the right to end any calls or contact in breach of this policy
Nightline Association	The Nightline Association is the umbrella body for all registered Nightline services across Universities within the UK, including Exeter Student Nightline
GPGs	GPGs (Good Practice Guidelines) highlight the key aspects of running a Nightline service and enable Nightline's to check that they are operating according to accepted standards of good practice and legal requirements.



Policy statement

Exeter Student Nightline is a student-led listening service that exists to help support fellow students who may be experiencing troubles and hardships during their University experience. Our service is there for any student who requires information or simply someone to talk to during the late hours of the night. While we hope callers find their contact with our service beneficial, **our service does not exist to receive or support abuse of any kind, nor do our volunteers engage with our service to receive abuse of any kind.**

It is in the legitimate interests of Nightline to protect against abuses of the service to protect our volunteer safety, wellbeing, and ensure that the service remains available for genuine callers.

In order to serve this interest, where a caller acts in an abusive or threatening manner towards our volunteers, Nightline may disclose the personal data of that caller to appropriate third parties. These parties include the police, other Nightline's, the Nightline Association, and other organisations with responsibility for the welfare of our volunteers such as the University of Exeter and the University of Exeter Students' Guild. This disclosure may include personal data such as name and phone number.

As a result, **Exeter Student Nightline operates under a Zero Tolerance approach to protect our volunteers and other service users from any form of abusive, inappropriate or manipulative language, or behaviour.** By engaging with any part of our service, you are agreeing to these terms and we reserve the right to end any calls or contacts in breach of this policy.

It is the purpose of this policy to clearly identify what actions are designated as abuse of our service. By employing this policy, Exeter Student Nightline intends to create a uniform approach to how we answer and respond to calls across our volunteer base so that callers who contact our service can expect a similar service delivered by all our listening volunteers.

Exeter Student Nightline recognises that some callers who use our service might engage in explicit language and that sometimes, under the context of these calls, it is not the caller's intention to insult or offend our volunteers. However, as previously aforementioned, it is the purpose of this document to create a uniform approach in response to incidents of explicit language or themes being discussed with the intention of abusing our service. For this reason, callers will be warned when volunteers feel topics or language they discuss may be inappropriate or abusive.

Furthermore, Exeter Student Nightline has identified that some of our callers are not current students attending the University of Exeter. Our service does not exist to support these individuals. While we will do our best to help signpost these individuals to service more appropriate for their needs, upon identification of repeated communications with our service after being informed to not contact our service, this will be classified as abuse of our service.

Exeter Student Nightline reserves the right to take measures deemed the most appropriate to protect our volunteers, and their wellbeing, from any instances of abuse.

If callers disagree with our Abuse of Service policy or feel as if their rights were unduly impacted by the enforcement of this policy, they are free to make a formal complaint about a call or our service in general through our complaints procedure available to consult on our website or the Exeter Students' Guild website.



Responsibilities

The *Coordinators* are responsible for:

- Ensuring this policy and procedure are being effectively implemented;
- Liaising with stakeholders about any changes to practices;
- Reviewing and monitoring the effectiveness of the policy and its implementation as part of a (minimum) 5-yearly cycle of policy review.

The *Training Officers* are responsible for:

- Carrying out and maintaining training of all Nightline volunteers, especially providing volunteers tools to implement this policy and procedure.

The *Welfare Officer* is responsible for:

- Ensuring the welfare of all volunteers is supported according to this policy and Exeter Student Nightline's welfare provision.

All volunteers are responsible for:

- Playing an active role in implementing this policy and developing their skills on this topic.



Legal considerations

As per our data protection policy, Exeter Student Nightline recognises the importance of protecting the personal information it handles in the course of its operations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and data protection best practices.

Data Protection Act 2018:

The Data Protection Act 2018 is the UK's implementation of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

Everyone responsible for using personal data has to follow strict rules called 'data protection principles'.

They must make sure the information is:

- Used fairly, lawfully and transparently
- Used for specified, explicit purposes
- Used in a way that is adequate, relevant and limited to only what is necessary
- Accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date
- Kept for no longer than is necessary
- Handled in a way that ensures appropriate security, including protection against unlawful or unauthorised processing, access, loss, destruction or damage

Your Rights—

Under the Data Protection Act 2018, you have the right to find out what information the government and other organisations store about you. These include the right to:

- Be informed about how your data is being used
- Access personal data
- Have incorrect data updated
- Have data erased
- Stop or restrict the processing of your data
- Data portability (allowing you to get and reuse your data for different services)
- Object to how your data is processed in certain circumstances

You also have rights when an organisation is using your personal data for:

- Automated decision-making processes (without human involvement)
- Profiling, for example, to predict your behaviour or interests



Communications Act 2003:

Section 127 covers the improper use of public electronic communications networks, including:

1. A person is guilty of an offence if she/he:
 - a. sends by means of a public electronic communications network, a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character; or
 - b. causes any such message or matter to be so sent.

Anyone found guilty of an offence under this section can be fined, or imprisoned for up to six months.

(Section 127 replaces similar provisions in the Telecommunications Act 1984)

The Protection from Harassment Act 1997:

Makes it a criminal offence for a person to pursue a course of conduct which may cause harassment, alarm or distress to another person. The Police have powers to issue restraining orders under this legislation, and offences can result in fines or up to six months imprisonment.

Malicious Communications Act 1988:

This sets out offences relating to sending indecent, offensive or threatening letters, electronic communications or articles with the intention of causing distress or anxiety to those receiving them.

Reviews and amendments

Jan 2022: Created Exeter Student Nightline Abusive of Service Policy

Feb 2022: Updated this policy to reflect more accurately the updated Exeter NL *Non-Exeter Student Caller Policy 2021/22*.

Mar 2022: Updated Legal Considerations to include "Communications Act 2003", The "Protection from Harassment Act 1997", and "Malicious Communications Act 1988".