

# Starter Kit

A document to help understand the key steps in launching a new Nightline and share best practices to ensure a high quality service.

# Nightline Europe

# Preamble

The “Starter-Kit” was developed as part of Nightline Europe, supported by Nightline France.

All Nightline’s members (39 members from 6 countries – Austria, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and France – in January 2026) added inputs to reflect a wider variety of Nightlines models. Nightline Europe’s members agreed to the Nightline Europe Proposal and committed to respect the Charter of Best Practice.

The purpose of this document is to help those interested to understand the key steps in launching a new Nightline, and share best practices to ensure a high quality service for the students who would use the service. Additionally, the Starter Kit aims to ensure consistent quality of the Nightline model, by helping new Nightlines to meet common standards for both services and volunteer management.

If you have any questions, please feel free to reach us at [nightline-europe.eu](mailto:nightline-europe.eu) or at [boardnle@proton.me](mailto:boardnle@proton.me)

# Confidentiality

This document is intended for volunteers and representatives of Nightline listening services that are part of Nightline Europe. It is also made available to European students wishing to create a Nightline with the help of Nightline Europe. It contains sensitive and confidential information, and shall not be distributed outside of the Nightline Europe network without approval of the Nightline Europe Board or Secretariat.

# Summary

## An introduction to the Nightline model

01

What is a Nightline?	01
Regional, national Nightline associations	02
Differences between Nightlines at country level	06
What experiences, concerns or situations volunteers listen to?	07

## The key steps in starting a Nightline with Nightline Europe

02

① Creating a team	10	⑤ I.T and logistics	28
② Acquiring institutional and financial support	14	⑥ Measuring and communicating impact	32
③ Setting up your Nightline (as a non-profit org.)	18	⑦ Communicating with partners and students	36
④ Recruiting and training volunteers	20	⑧ Planning for the future	42

## Annexes

03

Specific policies - Cases of suicide-related calls	44
The different roles within a Nightline	46
Cost distribution and budget model	48
Budget model	49
Volunteer training listening modalities	50
Recruiting models	52
Nightline logos across Europe	53
Troubleshooting : first challenges of your Nightline	54

Ready to launch your Nightline with Nightline Europe support?	58
---	----

# An introduction to the Nightline model

- 01 What is a Nightline?
- 02 Regional, national Nightline associations
- 03 Differences between Nightlines at country level
- 04 What experiences, concerns or situations volunteers listen to?

## 01 · What is a Nightline?

**A Nightline is a non-profit organisation providing mental health support to Higher Education (HE) students through a nocturnal listening helpline and information service. These services are run by fellow students who volunteer and receive extensive training before taking calls. Nightlines are often situated within a local university/group of universities or HE community. Some Nightlines also have employees alongside their volunteers to support the development of the organisation.**

Nightlines follow four key principles in the peer-to-peer support provided by student volunteers, which are always:

- CONFIDENTIAL
- NON-DIRECTIVE
- ANONYMOUS
- NON-JUDGMENTAL

The first Nightline was established in Essex (UK) in May 1970, when a university lecturer and a university chaplain noticed high levels of stress and anxiety among university students. A group of volunteers was formed to take calls from fellow students, forming the first ever Nightline. The Nightline model is innovative as it has been created well before the adoption of the Ottawa Charter (1986) which formalizes health promotion strategies (strengthening community action, building healthy public policy, creating supportive environments, developing personal skills and reorienting health services) (WHO, Ottawa, 1986).

Since then, the model has been replicated across the UK and Ireland (with Nightline Dublin launching in 1993) before developing in mainland Europe, with Nightlines starting first in Germany (Nightline Heidelberg, 1995) before spreading to Switzerland (Zurich, 2005), France (2016) and Austria (Innsbruck, 2019). Today, there are around 60 Nightlines around the world, principally in continental Europe, but also with some branches in the USA and Canada.

The “peer-led” approach to student mental health is at the heart of the Nightline model. Peer-listening is beneficial because fellow students are seen as less judgemental, and living a shared experience (Student Minds, 2014). Not all students need professional psychological or psychiatric help. For those that do, studies show it is often easier for students to reach out first to peers and then to mental health professionals (Dunne et al. 2009; Maccotta & Corcos, 2017). Nightline France conducted an evaluation of the helpline which highlights significant results regarding the effects of the service, which contributes to the well-being of the students who use it. The helpline responds to a need shared by callers: that of being able to verbalize their problems in a neutral, accessible, and supportive space where young people's voices can be welcomed, valued, and heard.

The principal mission of any Nightline is to provide support for students struggling during their studies. Depending on internal capacity, Nightlines also conduct activities to raise awareness about student mental health (communication campaigns, advocacy) and to provide training or information to partners (stands, workshops).

## 02 - Regional/national Nightline associations

Currently, Nightline Europe members are established in six different countries: Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, Switzerland and the United-Kingdom. Individual Nightlines in these countries are affiliated to regional or national Nightline associations: German-speaking Nightlines in Austria, Germany and Switzerland are members of Förderinitiative Nightlines Deutschland e.V.; Irish Nightlines are part of Niteline in Ireland; and French city/regional Nightlines are part of Nightline France.

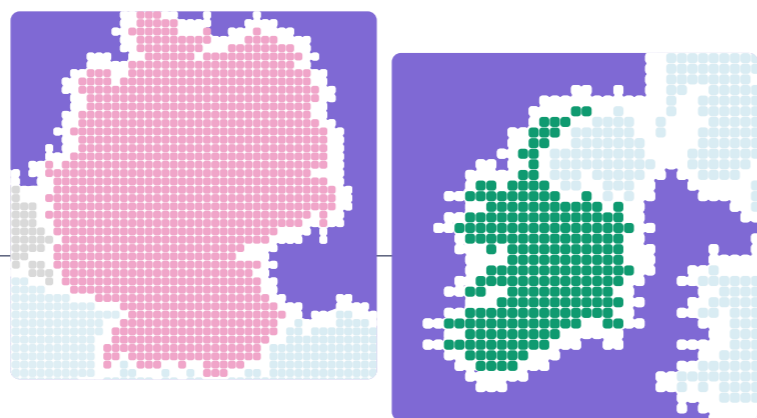
British Nightlines used to be affiliated to Nightline Association UK until its closure in the summer of 2025. These regional or national structures are described in more detail below.

### FÖRDERINITIATIVE NIGHTLINES DEUTSCHLAND E.V

Förderinitiative Nightlines Deutschland e.V. was founded in 2009 as a non-profit association, based in Germany. The organisation is run by a team of 10 volunteers. Both the core team and members of the Board have been active Nightline volunteers in different German-speaking Nightlines before working in the Förderinitiative.

Förderinitiative Nightlines Deutschland e.V. currently represents 28 German-speaking Nightlines across three countries. A core mission is to bring together members around the shared values and best practice of the Nightline service to students. Förderinitiative Nightlines Deutschland also supports the foundation and development of each member Nightline, providing a central

technical infrastructure, enabling knowledge management - including data collection - and communication among member Nightlines, and supporting an annual in-person conference for member nightline volunteers. Member Nightlines who pay a modest membership fee can make use of additional services like insurance.



### NITLINE IRELAND

NiteLine in Ireland is a registered charity and was established in 1993 by the Students' Unions of Trinity College Dublin and University College Dublin. Over the last 30 years, Niteline in Ireland has expanded to 11 colleges across Ireland. All of Niteline in Ireland volunteers come from their affiliated colleges. In addition to call taking, volunteers can be involved in different teams and departments within the Niteline service. Niteline Ireland has five departments (Publicity, Research and Development, Welfare, Training & Finance),

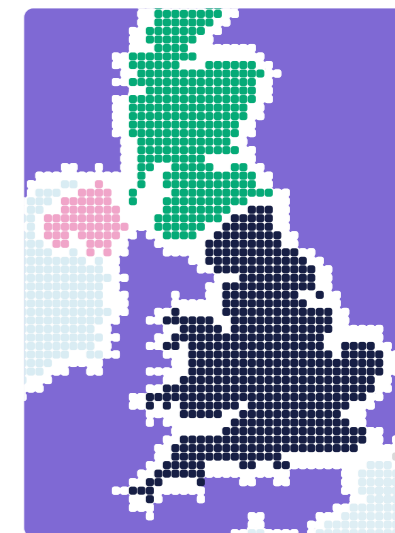
and these departments are led by a Head of Department, e.g., Head of Training.

These teams form the committee, which is headed up by the Coordinator and Vice Coordinator. The Coordinator looks after the day-to-day running of the Niteline and liaises with the Board of Trustees, who oversee the running of the service.

## NIGHTLINE ASSOCIATION UK

Nightline Association UK (NLA UK) was established in 2005 to help individual Nightlines across the UK in their development and provision of services to students. The organisation unfortunately had to close in the summer of 2025 for lack of funding, but it is worth noting that prior to closure, it played an important role in supporting new and existing UK Nightlines throughout their journey. NLA UK provided (non-legal) counsel and guidance through sharing packages of policies, processes, procedures and training courses. The organisation also worked to advocate and promote the Nightline movement through partnerships and communication with the general public and the private, public and voluntary sectors. At the time of closing, NLA UK represented around 30 Nightlines in the UK, offering listening services to over 1,400,000 university students and representing 2000+ listening volunteers.

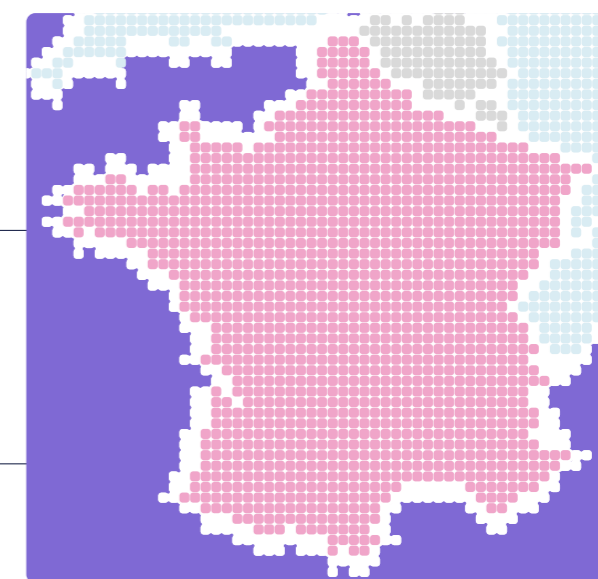
Nightlines in the UK used to be affiliated to the Nightline Association in order to use the Nightline name and branding, which was previously trademarked by the Nightline Association in the UK. Nightlines in the UK have to have a 'parent body' who is legally responsible for it (insurance, safeguarding, etc). There are some exceptions (London, Cambridge...), which are independent and have their own Board of Trustees. The Parent Bodies for most Nightlines are their Students Unions, or Wellbeing Services in their University.



## NIGHTLINE FRANCE

Nightline is a registered trademark in France. Nightline began with Nightline Paris in 2016 and has since launched various local branches in different cities and regions across France. Each regional branch is legally and organisationally part of Nightline France as a whole. Each branch follows centralised procedures and uses standardised documents (for example for training new volunteers). However, each branch has its own local 'council' of volunteers who run the helpline at the branch and who are responsible for local operational decisions (e.g. coordination of shifts).

Each branch also has a Local Coordinator who is a staff member (employee) and responsible for managing institutional or financial partnerships for the branch, including Regional Health Services and CROUS Student Support Services. Branches usually require a group of local universities as a principal partner for successful launch and development. Nightline France has a team of around 40 staff (employees) working in Paris and across the different branches, in support of around 400 volunteers and 30 à 40 Civic Service Volunteers (who support events and do not take calls).



## NIGHTLINE EUROPE

In the last few years, the three existing regional/national Nightline federations in Europe discussed closer cooperation, recognising the benefits of working together across Europe<sup>3</sup> on student mental health to boost attention, investment and action on the issue at European level.

In autumn 2023, the Nightline Europe network was officially created, with the following objectives in mind :

### CREATE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN EXISTING AND FUTURE EUROPEAN NIGHTLINES TO...

- Share best practice, tools and knowledge on student mental health
- Safeguard and improve the quality, accessibility and availability of European Nightline student services

### SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPACT OF EUROPEAN NIGHTLINES AND...

- Implement innovative projects dedicated to mental health for young people
- Access funding for existing or new Nightlines in Europe
- Boost visibility of the network and its members, its projects, and student mental health as a public policy issue

### IMPROVE AWARENESS AND ACTION ON STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH IN EUROPE

Members of the new network meet online quarterly and in-person once a year to discuss and agree on projects, including the following:

### CONSOLIDATING AND HARMONISING DATA COLLECTED BY EACH MEMBER NIGHTLINE ON CALLS

to produce an annual student mental health report for Europe with recommendations for policy-makers

### BUILDING A 'STARTER-KIT' TO OUTLINE THE PRINCIPAL STEPS AND REQUIREMENTS FOR OPENING A NIGHTLINE SERVICE

to support those HEI (High Education Institution) or groups of students interested in starting one;

### BENCHMARKING AND POOLING TRAINING AND GUIDELINES BETWEEN EACH NIGHTLINE

in order to learn from each other and maximise the journey and well-being of our volunteers.

<sup>3</sup> Förderinitiative Nightlines Deutschland (German-speaking Nightlines in Austria, Germany and Switzerland), Nightline Association UK (British Nightlines) and Nightline France (representing 7 regional branches).

By February 2026, the network had 38 members across the UK, Ireland, France, Austria, Switzerland and Germany.

#### GERMANY

- Bamberg<sup>01</sup>
- Berlin<sup>02</sup>
- Bochum<sup>03</sup>
- Dresden<sup>04</sup>
- Greifswald<sup>05</sup>
- Freiburg<sup>06</sup>
- Leipzig<sup>07</sup>
- Munich<sup>08</sup>
- Passau<sup>09</sup>
- Regensburg<sup>10</sup>

#### SCOTLAND

- Dundee<sup>11</sup>
- Glasgow<sup>13</sup>
- S' Andrews<sup>12</sup>

#### ENGLAND

- London<sup>14</sup>
- Warwick<sup>15</sup>
- Oxford<sup>16</sup>
- Liverpool<sup>17</sup>
- Nottingham<sup>18</sup>
- Lancaster<sup>19</sup>
- Newcastle<sup>20</sup>
- Durham<sup>21</sup>
- Leeds<sup>22</sup>
- Loughborough<sup>23</sup>

#### NIGHTLINE FRANCE

- ÎLE-DE-FRANCE (PARIS,SACLAY)<sup>24</sup>
- LILLE<sup>25</sup>
- LYON<sup>26</sup>
- AIX-MARSEILLE<sup>27</sup>
- NORMANDY<sup>28</sup>
- REIMS<sup>29</sup>
- PAYS DE LA LOIRE (NANTES, ANGERS)<sup>30</sup>
- TOULOUSE<sup>31</sup>

#### NORTHERN IRELAND

- Belfast<sup>32</sup>

#### NITELINE IRELAND

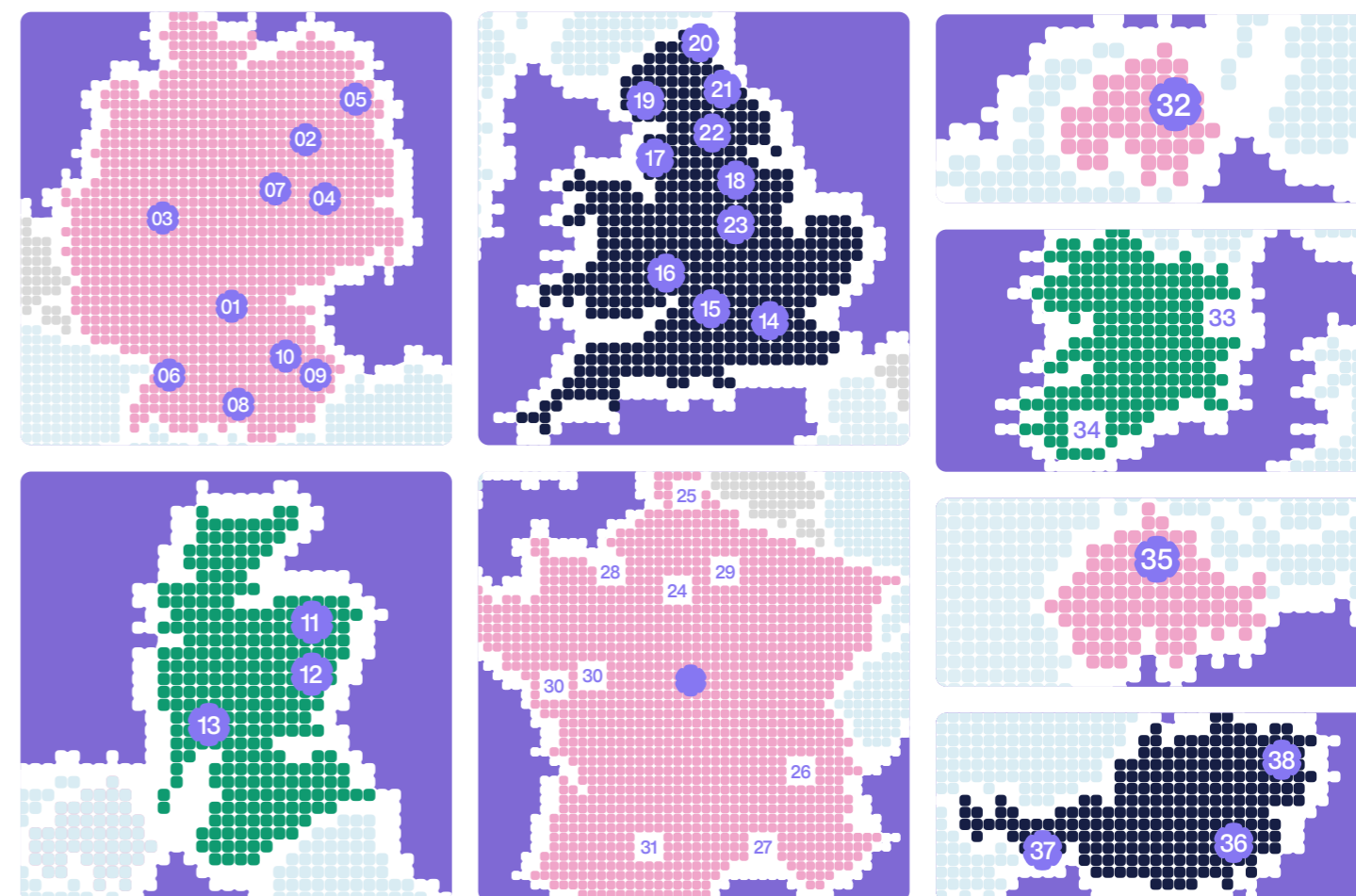
- DUBLIN<sup>33</sup>
- CORK<sup>34</sup>

#### SWITZERLAND

- Lucerne<sup>35</sup>

#### AUSTRIA

- Graz<sup>36</sup>
- Vienne<sup>38</sup>
- Innsbruck<sup>37</sup>



## 03 · Differences between Nightlines at country level

**All Nightlines share the common goal of supporting student mental health, as well as the basic service of a peer-led student listening helpline (meeting the core principles of non-directivity, anonymity, confidentiality and non-judgement).**

**However, each Nightline has its own unique history, context, and challenges or opportunities.**

**Key differences between Nightlines can be summarised as:**

### SIZE, LONGEVITY AND STRUCTURE

- The oldest Nightline was established in the UK in Essex, in 1970. The most recent independent Nightline to be established was in Osnabrück (Germany) in 2025.
- Most Nightlines rely on volunteers, some may have paid employees and volunteers
- Some Nightlines have hundreds of volunteers, others only a few (especially when starting out).
- The legal existence of a Nightline is an autonomous and local choice : some Nightlines are registered charities or non-profit organisations, some do not have legal existence and can be supported by their university or a student union.

### INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS AND FINANCING

- Some Nightlines are formally embedded within a university campus and affiliated to a specific university, for example depending on that university for office space and funding.
- Others work with a variety of universities and are not physically situated within a campus
- Many Nightlines receive support from national government and/or local authority sources. Many work with and receive financing or in-kind support from student services or individual academic actors or departments.

### VOLUNTEER JOURNEY

- All volunteers receive training on how to take calls safely and without judgement according to the key Nightline principles.
- The length and exact content of training varies between Nightlines according to resources and local best practice, but on average listening-volunteer training is for at least two days. All Nightlines train volunteers on how to take calls (including difficult calls) respecting the 4 principles of the listening line, and how to reach out for support.
- All Nightlines guarantee a secure framework for volunteer support, with volunteers never working alone, supported by other volunteers and sometimes by a professional.
- Some Nightlines organise ongoing/regular training.
- Some Nightlines offer roles in addition to listening, such as committees, Board members, local branch leadership, etc.

### ACTIVITIES

- All Nightlines aim to provide a listening-line as a minimum
- Some Nightlines, and particularly the regional or national associations, conduct additional training, outreach or advocacy with academic or public/government partners.
- Some Nightlines have their own social media presence.

## 04 · What experiences, concerns, or situations volunteers listen to ?

Nightlines keep track of the calls taken (as you will see later) – while adhering strictly to the principles. This enables each Nightline to produce data which is helpful in understanding who is reaching out to the service, and why. Recently, we analysed calls from our members in our 2025 Student Mental Health Report.

In 2025, the average call duration is 38 minutes, and for those Nightlines who have an online ‘chat’ option available the average chat duration is 59 minutes. Among Nightline Europe members, the three main reasons which motivated students to contact their Nightline were their daily life and relationships (28%) (including sub-themes such as grief, break-ups and family); their mental health (18%) (including suicide) and personal life (15%) (including sub-themes such as loneliness or homesickness).

The dominance of these topics across the network demonstrates the emotional challenges faced by students and the need for emotional and psychological support, the importance of relationships (family, friends or romantic) as part of students’ well-being, and the impact of loneliness on their mental health.

Moreover, 1,500 calls/chats were listed by Nightline Europe members as related to suicide – around 10% of the total taken. In these specific cases, all volunteers follow suicide calls policies. All Nightlines built strong suicide calls policies alongside professionals : suicide calls policies from Nightline Oxford in the United-Kingdom are reviewed by Oxford Samaritans. Nightline France signed a charter of shared values with the national suicide prevention hotline (3114). Volunteers receive thorough training and support to handle these calls. Everything is set for both the caller and the listener to feel safe and equipped for those types of calls. Nobody is ever alone.

## The key steps in starting a Nightline with Nightline Europe

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>01</b> Creating a team  | <b>05</b> I.T. and logistics                       |
| <b>02</b> Acquiring institutional and financial support            | <b>06</b> Measuring and communicating impact       |
| <b>03</b> Setting up your Nightline (as a non-profit organisation) | <b>07</b> Communicating with partners and students |
| <b>04</b> Recruiting and training volunteers                       | <b>08</b> Planning for the future                  |

## The key steps in starting a Nightline with Nightline Europe

**Students or those working with students interested in starting a Nightline must begin with the aim of providing a peer-led student listening helpline (meeting the core principles of non-directivity, anonymity, confidentiality and non-judgment).**

**There are specific local and/or national differences between Nightlines - notably legal requirements, but this Starter Kit provided by Nightline Europe aims to provide basic information on the most common and necessary steps for setting up a Nightline, regardless of where you are. What we suggest is to read this document at first and plan a meeting with Nightline Europe to discuss it and address your thoughts.**

**These steps are :**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| ① CREATING A TEAM                               | ⑤ I.T. AND LOGISTICS                              |
| ② ACQUIRING INSTITUTIONAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT | ⑥ MEASURING AND COMMUNICATING IMPACT              |
| ③ SETTING UP YOUR NIGHTLINE                     | ⑦ COMMUNICATING WITH PARTNERS AND TARGET AUDIENCE |
| ④ RECRUITING AND TRAINING VOLUNTEERS            | ⑧ PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE                         |

**We provide more detail below in individual sections. For each step, sample documents or policies are provided which provide additional detail.**

**Contact details for Nightline Europe are also provided at the end of the Starter Kit.**

### THE FIRST MONTHS

This document gathers experiences from Nightlines across Europe, since the first one was created in 1970 in Essex (UK). They all started from the same point : the wishes of students and/or universities to provide peer-to-peer support and improve the mental health of students.

We estimate that it can take 6 months to establish your Nightline and 10 months before answering the first calls : a long but very beneficial process for young people around you. The Nightline Europe network offers you tools, ideas and support. You'll have to test them and see what is working or not given your local conditions. We advise you for the first months to focus on the following steps :

- Create your students' team;
- Try to implicate as soon as you can staff members of your university, student health services... and any potential health or financing structure;
- Identify premises for your Nightline;
- Convene the status of your Nightline : find help within the Nightline Europe network, with local students' associations... This process may be long, so it is good to start early;
- Start drawing the outlines of your future training, if you prefer to start with chat or calls...

And remember that it is normal to not have everything set up as described below, you will learn with experience and time. You will define your Nightline.

TIP 01

01  
TIP  
01

## 01 · Creating a team

STEP  
01

The idea of starting a Nightline can come from one person or a group of people. Regardless, the first step is about creating a project team who can work together to get the new Nightline up and running.

The role of the team ultimately is to prepare for the Nightline to be operational (able to take calls or chats from students in need).

It is important not to underestimate the effort and time involved in starting a Nightline, especially if there are no other Nightlines in your country. Having a strong team is essential to share the load, and in most cases, can be a very rewarding collective effort.

### 1.1 · THE "GETTING STARTED" TEAM

With this in mind, we recommend :

#### FINDING A MINIMUM OF 6 PEOPLE AT OUTSET

This team must include active students. Though the idea to create a Nightline can come from a University or external student service, students themselves must be involved from the beginning in the decisions and set-up for a Nightline. This is at the heart of the peer-led approach

#### IDENTIFYING PEOPLE WHO ARE GENUINELY INTERESTED IN STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH

and support a peer-led approach is important, as you will need to remain patient when explaining the concept to those who haven't heard of it or who remain wedded to a "health professional only" approach to mental health support. You might like to create a quick factsheet on Nightlines/the peer-led approach (see section 7). Unsurprisingly, many Nightline volunteers are psychology, social science, health, or medical students. You could try subject schools/student body first.

#### CHECKING WITH YOUR TEAM MEMBERS ABOUT CAPACITY

depending on their role/contribution, it may take a few hours' work per week. You should be clear about what you think you will need before approaching them.

#### INVOLVING, OR AT LEAST CONSULTING, STUDENTS OR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE ALREADY IN REPRESENTATIVE OR LEADERSHIP ROLES

in the town/university where you want to set up, such as those on a Students' Union Council; their input and support will be invaluable.

#### MATCHING TEAM MEMBERS' INTEREST/EXPERIENCE WITH PROJECT NEEDS

You can get an idea of the kind of skills you will need by reading through the rest of this Starter Kit, but examples would include experience as a listening volunteer elsewhere, or I.T., data, communications, training or budget management experience.

It is worth reaching out to another Nightline in your country or within Nightline Europe members to look at their decision-making processes and operational structures (see annex).

The team that gets the Nightline started is likely to evolve into a committee or leadership roles as the Nightline grows: you will need people who have collectively been elected or approved to represent the Nightline, or make or organise decisions.

Typically, roles might involve Chair or President, Internal or External relations, Secretary or Treasurer. Questions to consider include (and will eventually need setting out in by-laws or a guiding document for your Nightline - see section 8) :

- Who decides, how, and about what? Is there a legal duty or responsibility linked to that role for your university or country?
- Is there a Board? Who should be on it?
- Who is responsible for what?
- Meeting structure – who needs to meet, and how often?

Finally, it is important to keep track - even in early meetings - of what was said. This can be in the form of written notes but eventually may need to be done electronically for ease of reference and longevity.

### 1.2 · THE LISTENING TEAM

Once you have your "getting started" team in place, it is important to begin thinking about the "listening" team - the volunteers who will take calls or chats from other students on the night-time service. Finding, training and looking after your volunteers is covered in section 4 of this Starter Kit.

### 1.3 · THE SUPPORTING TEAM

Once you have your core team established, you will need to think about the external partners whose support (whether financial, institutional, legal) you require to move forward. This is covered in section 2.

## 1.4 · CHALLENGES

STEP  
01

**One of the main challenges is to keep up team motivation when faced with resistance, or problems in setting up, or not knowing how to move forward. To overcome that, we recommend:**

### INVESTING IN “TEAM-TIME” DURING THE PROJECT

checking in with everyone, ensuring every meeting is held in a safe, constructive space, offering the opportunity for everyone to share (if they want to) how they are feeling at the start of discussions.

### INVESTING IN “TEAM-TIME” OUTSIDE OF THE PROJECT

combine or find time outside of project meetings for fun activities, such as sharing a meal, or social moment, or whatever the group enjoys doing together. Make sure you celebrate every success, even the small ones! It is not uncommon that students who are interested in Nightlines have been through difficult times themselves or still require some support for their own mental health.

Remember a Nightline should not take over your everyday life or studies - or become something which is a source of stress or poor mental health. Look after the people in your team, encourage everyone to be able to speak up if they feel overwhelmed and to share workload. If applicable, you can slowly start identifying an employee, a service provider, or a partner who has partial availability to provide support for your volunteers if they, too, need help.

It is an indispensable support, later you can secure access to a university psychologist or mental health professional. An idea in the future, may be to offer once a month (or every three listening services), a practice analysis group.

## 1.5 · MAKING YOUR TEAM SUSTAINABLE

This is partly achievable, and partly impossible! The Nightline itself can be sustainable through documenting your decisions and processes (and learning from them – see section 8 on institutional memory), as well as supporting the team in place which is helping your Nightline to grow. However, volunteers are students, and they will come and go, either temporarily - during exam periods, a year abroad, or at busy times in their lives - or permanently, when they have finished their studies.

As documented elsewhere, this regular turnover is normal and healthy for a student-led organisation, but can build this into your model by planning to recruit, train and integrate new members at regular periods in the year. For volunteers who hold committee/specific roles, again you can ensure that the projects on which they have worked are documented and in a shared space (i.e. a shared/online drive) and handed on through an ‘offboarding’ process with the person taking over.

## BENEFITS IN VOLUNTEERING

You may wonder why a student would want to get involved in a Nightline? Each person has their own reasons for getting involved in Nightline: to commit to a cause that is important to them, the opportunity to meet peers with relative social proximity (student status, age) and similar interests, to learn new skills...

By getting involved in a Nightline, volunteers :

- **Build self-confidence, personal impact and well-being**
- **Strengthen a sense of agency and empowerment**
- **Strengthen a sense of agency and empowerment**
- **Improve interpersonal and communication skills**

Nightline France conducted a study of the effects of volunteering for the Nightline France helpline has on its volunteers. First, getting involved with Nightline brings a range of knowledge and expertise in the field of mental health.

This includes knowledge (deconstructing pre-conceptions, understanding mental illnesses and disorders, etc.) as well as practical skills related to the “technique” of listening (to others and to oneself) and the ability to act as a liaison within the student community and beyond.

In addition to issues specific to mental health, hotline volunteers develop cross-cutting skills. While these include skills common to most volunteer work (teamwork, oral fluency, etc.), the development of communication skills and reflexivity about one's own practices.

These skills can be transferred to other social spaces: higher education, entry into professional life, relationships with loved ones, etc.

TIP  
02  
01  
TIP  
01

## 02 · Acquiring institutional and financial support

STEP  
02

### 2.1 · WHAT ARE THE COSTS INVOLVED IN STARTING A NIGHTLINE?

Starting a Nightline is mainly about motivation. However, financial resources will become an increasingly important part of the journey. The biggest costs involved with running a Nightline are having an office space for listening volunteers to come to conduct their shifts, and the necessary equipment such as computers and telephones; the organising of training for future listening volunteers (premises hire costs, training materials, refreshments) and, if applicable to your Nightline, transport costs to ensure listening volunteers are able to get home safely after their nighttime shifts if these finish at times when public transport is either no longer available or it is unsafe.

#### LONGER-TERM, ADDITIONAL COSTS FOR RUNNING A NIGHTLINE CAN INCLUDE:

- Organising additional events (outside training) for team building, volunteer welfare, or governance (premises hire, refreshments, travel or accommodation costs to attend the meeting, etc);
- Legal or administrative costs (insurance, registering the name of your Nightline);
- Communication (creating and maintaining a website; purchase of domain names; content production for websites or social media channels; costs for 'hard-copy' publicity, such as designing or printing posters, and associated software for their design);
- Staff costs (salaries, employer contributions) or specialist freelance staff (graphic designer, web designer, etc) and psychologist support.

#### WITH A SMALL BUDGET AT THE BEGINNING OF YOUR NIGHTLINE, YOU MAY PRIORITIZE FINANCING:

- Finding premises provided free of charge by a university or partner organisation
- Actions to ensure volunteers' well-being (cohesive activities, food, comfortable premises).
- Ride home for volunteers: Nightlines open from the evening to the middle of the night take care of taxi expenses for volunteers going home after their shift.

**Nightline Europe can explain to you how costs may be allocated based on your Nightline model.**

### 2.2 · CONSTRUCTING A BUDGET

A basic budget is easy to build and will be useful to understand the essential costs in getting started, as well as costs which may be involved for planning for future growth (i.e., increasing the number of volunteers recruited and trained). In thinking about and estimating these costs, you can also conduct a resource mapping exercise (exploring where you might find new funding, such as a new partner, or applying for a call for proposals/projects).

Templates for budgets are available free online or through digital suites or you can contact Nightline Europe for support in setting up a basic budget (income/outcome).

It's important for you to adapt the budget to your reality: the accounting format of a budget, the charges and expenses, can vary from one country to another. As you need to understand how your budget works, we suggest you choose the format you're most comfortable with.

### 2.3 · CALLS FOR PROJECTS/APPLYING FOR FUNDING

It may be worth keeping an eye on any calls for proposals/projects run by your local authorities or regional/national ministries or agencies looking to support new organisations working on youth, education or (mental) health projects. You might like to set up an alert or similar notification system based on key words in a search engine to receive these opportunities directly to your inbox.

**However, please note that:**

#### CALLS FOR PROJECTS USUALLY HAVE A SET OF ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Your Nightline may need to be established as a charity or non-profit organisation, and often for a minimum duration before being eligible to apply. You may also need authorisation from your university or students' union if you are affiliated to them or depend on their 'umbrella' status as an organisation.

#### APPLYING FOR FUNDING USUALLY REQUIRES FILLING IN FORMS TO DESCRIBE YOUR PROJECT, ITS OBJECTIVES AND ITS FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

Usually a provisional budget for the budget is required, and many funding rounds require a project to have co-financing from other sources. It can be time-consuming (especially if there are several rounds to get through before funding is awarded).

#### APPLY FOR FUNDING IF THERE IS AGREEMENT FROM THE WHOLE TEAM AND CAPACITY TO BE ABLE TO WRITE THE BID

and, most importantly, manage the project, should it be approved. Winning a call for proposals carries administrative and legal obligations in terms of monitoring – and at the end of the project, accounting for – the activities undertaken, and funds spent.

## 2.4 SECURING INITIAL INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

### STEP 02

Securing initial institutional support and funding go hand-in-hand. Buy-in from the local university or group of universities whose students the Nightline will be supporting is essential, not only for administrative or authorisation reasons (some Nightlines are affiliated to student services for the university, for example) but also because the university can help to promote the existence of the Nightline, enabling you to recruit volunteers and receive calls. If the university cannot or will not provide seed funding for basic items, health or student services may be able to provide 'in-kind' support such as free premises hire, printing, etc.

In addition to your local university or universities, and any key affiliated groups such as Students' Union elected officials, the group launching the Nightline should consider approaching local elected authorities – such as local town halls or regional councils –, regional or national student welfare bodies, regional or national health or youth agencies or bodies, national Health, Education or Youth Ministries. Local businesses may also be interested in sponsoring the Nightline in return for publicity, for example on a website or social media. However, it is important to establish criteria within the Nightline about the kind of business/donor from whom it is appropriate to accept funding or for which you might wish to provide publicity in return for support – for example, working with a local drinking establishment could be problematic for the messaging this represents.

**Securing institutional support is easier when you can make the case for starting a Nightline. This can be through:**

#### PROVIDING DATA

facts and figures which demonstrate the importance of investing in student peer-led services and their benefits. You could look through the Nightline Europe report, Learning the Lessons, to understand the history of peer-led student mental health support and its benefits – as well as the extent of the problem in Europe. You may like to complement the report (which is Europe-wide) with whatever data you have about your country or, if possible, your town/university: facts and figures about prevalence, students' satisfaction with current mental health services, etc.

#### FOCUSING ON BENEFITS

sometimes, the people you will meet have not yet considered the impact of internal policies on the mental health of their students. You can therefore present studies that show that mental health is a component of educational success and that Higher Education can have an impact and shared responsibilities. If this does not seem enough, you can demonstrate a 'return on investment': what does the university or partner get in return? How is that good for them? For example, universities might hope to recruit more students (national or international) and provide those students with a better educational experience – and therefore build a strong reputation as a university invested in its students' well-being – through supporting the development of a Nightline service.

#### ENSURING A CLEAR ASK OF THE PARTNER

what is required, for how long, and what they will receive in return. Remember not everyone will have heard of the Nightline model. Some may be suspicious about 'student-led' peer services for mental health – for example, many student health services in universities are at first concerned that student volunteers are being asked to take on the role of mental health professionals (which is not the case). It is important to mention that Nightline is in no way a substitute for healthcare professionals. On the contrary, listeners are trained to remain in a position of active listening and non-medical assistance, one of the core of a Nightline's principles. Furthermore, most Nightline services develop a support framework for volunteers so that they feel supported and do not encounter difficulties in their work.

#### USING PREVIOUS CONNECTIONS TO OPEN DOORS

such as letters of recommendation from other partners, connections in the students' union, Dean's/ University President's offices, etc.

To help with these points, you could build a one/two-pager with a few key terms, facts and figures, and have a short-term (6-12 months) strategic document setting out a vision of how to launch and develop the Nightline, and estimated resources (human, financial, operational) to achieve it (see also Sections 7 and 8). You can practice your 'pitch' with the other volunteers of the core team or a trusted partner, teacher, other Nightline, or Nightline Europe staff.