
CONSTITUTION AND RULES

CONTENTS

CONSTITUTION AND RULES.....	3
NAME	3
OBJECTIVES.....	3
COLLECTIVE	3
OFFICERS.....	3
MEETINGS	4
FINANCE	4
DATA PROTECTION	4
The Principles.....	4
Maintaining Confidentiality.....	5
Use of Personal Information	5
The Database	5
Rights to access	6
CONSTITUTION	6
CHILD PROTECTION POLICY	6
INTRODUCTION	6
PRINCIPLES UPON WHICH THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY IS BASED.	6
IMMEDIATE ACTION TO ENSURE SAFETY	7
Recognition of Abuse or Neglect	7
Physical Abuse.....	7
Emotional Abuse	7
Sexual Abuse	7
Neglect	7
What to do if children talk to you about abuse or neglect	8
Consulting about your concern.....	8
Making a referral	8
Information required.....	9
Action to be taken following the referral	9
Confidentiality.....	9
EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY	9

THE COLLECTIVE	10
DROP-IN SERVICE USERS	10
TRAINING.....	10
VULNERABLE PEOPLES POLICY	10
DEFINITION	10
SUPPORT TO COLLECTIVE MEMBERS	10
CONFIDENTIALITY.....	11
CODE OF CONDUCT	12
THE COLLECTIVE CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY	12
THE DROP-IN CODE OF CONDUCT	13
Confidentiality.....	13
Respect.....	13
It helps to talk.....	13
Visitors.....	13
Introducing a new group member	13
Discussions	13
Behaviour	13
Smoking	13
Mobile Phones	13
Any trouble	14
Information we may keep	14
SIGNITURES TO THE ABOVE CONSITUTION AND RULES	15

CONSTITUTION AND RULES

NAME

The association shall be called Northampton Lesbian Line, abbreviated to NLL and hereinafter called the Group.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Group shall be to provide for a safe environment to meet on a Wednesday evening and to provide a telephone support line for lesbians and women who are questioning their sexuality, to promote the welfare of lesbians in Northampton and surrounding areas and to undertake any activities in pursuance of these objectives.

The Group is opposed to discrimination. In particular the Group is opposed to discrimination (including offensive language or behaviour) towards any member on the grounds of: religion, ethnic group, sex, age, physical or other disability, HIV status or sexuality. The activities of the Group will endeavour to reflect this policy.

COLLECTIVE

The Collective shall consist only of individuals who agree with the objects of the Group.

Only Collective members shall have the right to vote.

Collective member can be suspended if; in the opinion of the group Collective her behaviour is prejudicial to the objectives of the Group.

Expulsion or reinstatement will be decided at a Special Meeting or AGM, where the Collective member can put her case.

The Group may form Sections with special interests, e.g. Women, Sports, and Youth, to meet independently as required but with no separate membership or committee. The Group may affiliate to other independent Groups supporting the aims of Lesbian and gay issues at the discretion of the Collective.

The collect shall have authority to run the day to day affairs of the NLL, to obtain funds on behalf of the NLL and to make decisions in the light of the Constitution in particular instances, until such time as any interpretation is upheld or changed by a motion at a Special or Annual General Meeting.

Any matter decided by a Collective Meeting shall be valid if decided by a simple majority, with at least half the Collective members being present.

Collective members can be replaced if they are absent from two or more meetings without adequate explanation.

A Collective meeting shall be held at least every eight weeks.

The Secretary shall maintain an accurate record of decisions taken at the Annual General Meetings, Special Meetings and Collective Meetings, to be available for perusal on request of any Collective member.

The Secretary must not reveal to any person or agency other than Collective members, any information concerning any person whom she has a record via membership, other than with that person's express permission.

The Treasurer shall maintain an accurate record of financial transactions, and shall present an itemised balance sheet at the AGM.

OFFICERS

The Collective will contain designated officers; a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, Voluntary Duty organiser, Publicity officer and such other officers shall be determined at the AGM, up to a total of ten officers.

New members may either be proposed by Collective members or can request to join.

New members to the Collective must be agreed by the Collective.

MEETINGS

There shall be an Annual General meeting of the Group held in April/May. At least thirteen days prior notice must be given in a meeting or meetings of the Group beforehand, or by the notification of all members whose addresses are held by the Secretary.

AGM require all members to be present unless apologies given. Voting majority is 2/3rds.

Decisions on single issues shall be determined by a quorum, (2/3rds of the Collective present) the Chairperson or acting Chairperson having the casting vote.

On other issues, or when a written ballot has been decided beforehand, the greatest number of votes cast shall decide the issue. Postal votes shall be permitted at the discretion of the Collective, but not proxy votes. Motions to amend this Constitution or to dissolve the Group require a two-thirds majority of votes cast to be valid. If a quorum for a dissolution motion cannot be assembled, a majority of votes of all contactable members will suffice.

Special Meetings may be called by the Collective or on the written request of at least 3 collective members giving grounds for the meeting. Decisions taken shall be valid only if prior notice of the meeting, attendance and voting procedures are the as for the AGM.

Ordinary meetings shall be held at such intervals and at such notice as may be determined from time to time. Collective members may invite guests, and visitors may attend unless restrictions are specified in advance by agreement of the Collective.

At least one open meeting will be held once a year for women who attend the drop-in.

FINANCE

An account has been opened with a Financial Institution acceptable to the Collective. Cheques or other debits on the account are valid only if signed by either of the two signatories as agreed by the Collective and registered with the Financial Institution.

Should the Group dissolve in its entirety, all moneys remaining in the balance sheet would be given to another community group in the area with similar aims. The financial year shall run from 1st April to 31st March.

DATA PROTECTION

First names only will be recorded by NLL. No identifying remarks will be made.

The Secretary is the Data Controller for the purposes of the Data Protection Act on behalf of Northampton Lesbian Line.

NLL uses personal data about living individuals for the purposes of general NLL administration and communication.

NLL recognises the importance of the correct and lawful treatment of personal data. All personal data, whether it is held on paper, on computer or other media, will be subject to the appropriate legal safeguards as specified in the Data Protection Act 1998.

Northampton Lesbian Line fully endorses and adheres to the eight principles of the Data Protection Act. These principles specify the legal conditions that must be satisfied in relation to obtaining, handling, processing, transportation and storage of personal data. Volunteers and any others who obtain, handle, process, transport and store personal data for Northampton Lesbian Line must adhere to these principles.

The Principles

The principles require that personal data shall:

1. Be processed fairly and lawfully and shall not be processed unless certain conditions are met.
2. Be obtained for a specified and lawful purpose and shall not be processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose.
3. Be adequate, relevant and not excessive for those purposes.
4. Be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date.
5. Not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose.
6. Be processed in accordance with the data subject's rights.
7. Be kept secure from unauthorised or unlawful processing and protected against accidental loss, destruction or damage by using the appropriate technical and organisational measures

8. Not be transferred to a country or territory outside the European Economic Area, unless that country or territory ensures an adequate level of protection for the rights and freedoms of data subjects in relation to the processing of personal data.

Maintaining Confidentiality

Treat all your personal information as private and confidential and not disclose any data about you to anyone other than the Collective.

All Collective members who have access to Personal Data will be required to agree to and sign a Confidentiality Policy and a Data Protection Policy.

There are four exceptional circumstances to the above permitted by law:

1. Where we are legally compelled to do so
2. Where there is a duty to the public to disclose
3. Where disclosure is required to protect our interest
4. Where disclosure is made at your request or with your consent

Use of Personal Information

Use data for three main purposes;

The Day-to-Day Administration of the Northampton Lesbian Line: e.g. support and care and oversight including telephone calls, meetings, financial records of giving for audit and tax purposes

Contacting lesbians in Northampton to keep them informed of Northampton Lesbian Line activities

Statistical Analysis: Gaining a better understanding of Lesbians in Northampton demographics.

NB: although collated data may be passed to a third party, such as number of Small Groups or Small Group attendance, no personal data will be disclosed.

The Database

Information contained on a Database will not be used for any other purposes than set out in this section. The Database is accessed through a standalone pc and, therefore, cannot be accessed through any other computer.

1. Access to the Database is strictly controlled through the use of name specific passwords, which are setup and authorised by the Data Controller.
2. Those authorised to use the Database only have access to their specific area if use within the Database, this is controlled by the Data Controller who is the only person who can access and set these security parameters.
3. People who will have secure and authorised access to the Database are NLL Collective.
4. The Database will be NOT be accessed by any authorised users outside of the NLL Collective in accordance with the Data Protection Act, unless prior consent has been obtained from the individual whose data is to be viewed.
5. All access and activity on the Database is logged and can be viewed by the Data Controller.
6. Subject Access
All individuals who are the subject of personal data held by the Northampton Lesbian Line are entitled to:
 - a. Ask what information the Society holds about them and why.
 - b. Ask how to gain access to it.
 - c. Be informed how to keep it up to date
 - d. Be informed what the Society is doing to comply with its obligations under the 1998 Data Protection Act.
7. Personal information will not be passed onto any third parties outside of the Northampton Lesbian Line environment.
8. Subject Consent
The need to process data for normal purposes has been communicated to all data subjects. In some cases, if the data is sensitive, for example information about health, race or gender, express consent to process the data must be obtained.

9. Retention of Data

The need to process data for normal purposes has been communicated to all data subjects. In some cases, if the data is sensitive, for example information about health, race or gender, express consent to process the data must be obtained.

Rights to access

Volunteers and other subjects of personal data held by the Northampton Lesbian Line have the right to access any personal data that is being kept about them on computer and also have access to paper-based data held in certain manual filing systems. This right is subject to certain exemptions: Personal Information may be withheld if the information relates to another individual. Any person who wishes to exercise this right should make the request in writing to

Northampton Lesbian Line, using the standard letter which is available on line from

www.ico.gov.uk

Northampton Lesbian Line reserves the right to charge the maximum fee payable for each subject access request. If personal details are inaccurate, they can be amended upon request.

Northampton Lesbian Line aims to comply with requests for access to personal information as quickly as possible, but will ensure that it is provided within 40 days of receipt of a completed form unless there is good reason for delay. In such cases, the reason for delay will be explained in writing to the individual making the request.

CONSTITUTION

These rules or amendments thereto shall be adopted at a Special Meeting of the Group.

The officers shall be confirmed in office or replaced, but no new offices shall be created at the meeting.

The rules when adopted shall be sent to the chosen organisations and copies shall be available to Collective members and drop-in attendees on request.

Clauses may be further amended at subsequent Special General Meetings as and when objections are received.

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This document is the Child Protection Policy for The Northampton Lesbian Line which will be followed by all collective members of the organisation and followed and promoted by those in the position of leadership within the organisation.

The organisation does not undertake activities with children.

This document is written in accordance with Child Protection Policy and 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' produced by the Department of Health in 1999.

PRINCIPLES UPON WHICH THE CHILD PROTECTION POLICY IS BASED.

- The welfare of a child or young person will always be paramount.
- The welfare of families will be promoted.
- The rights, wishes and feelings of children, young people and their families will be respected and listened to.
- Those people in positions of responsibility within the organisation will work in accordance with the interests of children and young people and follow the policy outlined below.
- Those people in positions of responsibility within the organisation will ensure that the same opportunities are available to everyone and that all differences between individuals will be treated with respect.

IMMEDIATE ACTION TO ENSURE SAFETY

Immediate action may be necessary at any stage in involvement with children and families.

IN ALL CASES IT IS VITAL TO TAKE WHATEVER ACTION IS NEEDED TO SAFEGUARD THE CHILD/REN ie:

If emergency medical attention is required this can be secured by calling an ambulance (dial 999) or taking a child to the nearest Accident and Emergency Department.

If a child is in immediate danger the police should be contacted (dial 999) as they alone have the power to remove a child immediately if protection is necessary, via Police Protection Order.

Recognition of Abuse or Neglect

Abuse or neglect of a child is caused by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting: by those known to them or more rarely by a stranger.

Physical Abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer feigns the symptoms, of, or deliberately causes ill health to a child whom they are looking after. This situation is commonly described using terms such as, fabricated illness by proxy or Munchausen Syndrome by proxy.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional ill treatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only in so far as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. It may involve causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of ill treatment of a child though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including penetrative (eg rape or buggery) or non-penetrative acts. This may include non-penetrative acts. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material, or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food, shelter and clothing, failing to protect a child from physical harm or danger, or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Individuals within the organisation need to be alert to the potential abuse of children both within their families and also from other sources including abuse by members of that organisation.

The organisation should know how to recognise and act upon indicators of abuse or potential abuse involving children. There is an expected responsibility for all members of the organisation to respond to any suspected or actual abuse of a child in accordance with these procedures.

It is good practice to be as open and honest as possible with parents/carers about any concerns.

However, you must not discuss your concerns with parents/carers in the following circumstances:

- where sexual abuse is suspected
- where organised or multiple abuse is suspected
- where fictitious illness by proxy (also known as Munchausen Syndrome by proxy) is suspected
- where contacting parents/carers would place a child, yourself or others at immediate risk.

What to do if children talk to you about abuse or neglect

It is recognised that a child may seek you out to share information about abuse or neglect, or talk spontaneously individually or in groups when you are present. In these situations you must:

- Listen carefully to the child. DO NOT directly question the child.
- Give the child time and attention.
- Allow the child to give a spontaneous account; do not stop a child who is freely recalling significant events.
- Make an accurate record of the information you have been given taking care to record the timing, setting and people present, the child's presentation as well as what was said. Do not throw this away as it may later be needed as evidence.
- Use the child's own words where possible.
- Explain that you cannot promise not to speak to others about the information they have shared.
- Reassure the child that:
 - you are glad they have told you;
 - they have not done anything wrong;
 - what you are going to do next.
- Explain that you will need to get help to keep the child safe.
- Do NOT ask the child to repeat his or her account of events to anyone.

Consulting about your concern

The purpose of consultation is to discuss your concerns in relation to a child and decide what action is necessary.

You may become concerned about a child who has not spoken to you, because of your observations of, or information about that child.

It is good practice to ask a child why they are upset or how a cut or bruise was caused, or respond to a child wanting to talk to you. This practice can help clarify vague concerns and result in appropriate action.

If you are concerned about a child you must share your concerns. Initially you should talk to one of the people designated as responsible for child protection within your organisation. In this organisation this person is chairperson. If one of those people is implicated in the concerns you should discuss your concerns directly with Social Services.

You should consult externally with your local Social Services Department in the following circumstances:

- when you remain unsure after internal consultation as to whether child protection concerns exist
- when there is disagreement as to whether child protection concerns exist
- when you are unable to consult promptly or at all with your designated internal contact for child protection
- when the concerns relate to any member of the organising committee.

Consultation is not the same as making a referral but should enable a decision to be made as to whether a referral to Social Services or the Police should progress.

Making a referral

A referral involves giving Social Services or the Police information about concerns relating to an individual or family in order that enquiries can be undertaken by the appropriate agency followed by any necessary action.

In certain cases the level of concern will lead straight to a referral without external consultation being necessary.

However, inability to inform parents for any reason should not prevent a referral being made. It would then become a joint decision with Social Services about how and when the parents should be approached and by whom.

IF YOUR CONCERN IS ABOUT ABUSE OR RISK OF ABUSE FROM SOMEONE NOT KNOWN TO THE CHILD OR CHILD'S FAMILY, YOU SHOULD MAKE A TELEPHONE REFERRAL DIRECTLY TO THE POLICE AND CONSULT WITH THE PARENTS.

If your concern is about abuse or risk of abuse from a family member or someone known to the children, you should make a telephone referral to your local Social Services Office.

Information required

Be prepared to give as much of the following information as possible (in emergency situations all of this information may not be available). Unavailability of some information should not stop you making a referral.

- Your name, telephone number, position and request the same of the person to whom you are speaking.
- Full name and address, telephone number of family, date of birth of child and siblings.
- Gender, ethnicity, first language, any special needs.
- Names, dates of birth and relationship of household members and any significant others.
- The names of professionals' known to be involved with the child/family eg: GP, Health Visitor, School.
- The nature of the concern; and foundation for them.
- An opinion on whether the child may need urgent action to make them safe.
- Your view of what appears to be the needs of the child and family.
- Whether the consent of a parent with parental responsibility has been given to the referral being made.

Action to be taken following the referral

- Ensure that you keep an accurate record of your concern(s) made at the time.
- Put your concerns in writing to Social Services following the referral (within 48 hours).
- Accurately record the action agreed or that no further action is to be taken and the reasons for this decision.

Confidentiality

The organisation should ensure that any records made in relation to a referral should be kept confidentially and in a secure place.

Information in relation to child protection concerns should be shared on a "need to know" basis. However, the sharing of information is vital to child protection and, therefore, the issue of confidentiality is secondary to a child's need for protection.

If in doubt, consult.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Northampton Lesbian Line Constitution which is available to all members.

The Collective is committed to equal opportunities policy and practice and will ensure that all volunteers and drop-in attendees, both actual and potential, are treated equally and as individuals regardless of age, disability, ethnic or national origin, marital or parental status, political belief, race, religion.

We positively discriminate for Lesbians or women questioning their sexuality.

In implementing this policy the NLL will take account of existing legislation: the Race Relations Act 1976, the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, the Equal Pay Act 1970 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. We endeavour to keep up with legislation.

This equal opportunities policy will be implemented across all aspects of the Collective's work in :-

- the appointment of members to its Collective;
- all dealings with the general public.

THE COLLECTIVE

Northampton Lesbian Line will aim to ensure that the Collective of the organisation is representative of society. The Collective will be responsible for ensuring that the equal opportunities policy is properly implemented, monitored and reviewed.

DROP-IN SERVICE USERS

Northampton Lesbian Line aims to make its services accessible to Lesbians in Northampton and in order to achieve this will take steps to remove barriers which prevent potential audience, participants, or users from having equal access to the organisation's activities.

This will include:

- ensuring that activities take place in venues and premises which are accessible to disabled people,
- providing facilities for disabled people to enable them to participate fully in activities
- ensuring that the design of publicity material takes account of the needs of disabled people in terms of print, format and information on access;
- encouraging and enabling people from under-represented groups to attend and participate.

TRAINING

The Collective will endeavour to keep up to date regarding lesbian issues, and those issues pertaining to women's health. Training may be sourced from both internal and external bodies where appropriate.

New collective members will be trained in answering the telephone support line.

New collective members will be trained in meet and greet, listening and supporting drop-in visitors.

collective members will be continually trained in telephone support and drop-in support.

VULNERABLE PEOPLES POLICY

The Collective is committed to ensuring that vulnerable people who use our services are not abused and that working practices minimise the risk of such abuse.

DEFINITION

Vulnerable adults are people who are over 18 years of age and are getting or may need help and services to live in the community. Vulnerable adults may be unable to take care of themselves and unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation by other people.

SUPPORT TO COLLECTIVE MEMBERS

Abuse can take place in any setting, public or private, and can be perpetrated by anyone.

Collective members have a duty to identify abuse and report it.

The Collective members on duty will support each other and or provided support from an outside body if required.

One to one meeting requests must be agreed with another collective member.

The collective member or the individual can request another collective member to be present in the one to one meeting.

Collective members may also be the subject of an allegation of abuse in writing.

While support will be offered, the Collective will ensure that the relevant body are given all assistance pursuing any investigation. Suspension and/or discipline may be implemented.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Confidentiality is crucial to all our work and relationships and the Collective confidentiality policy should be adhered to except that the welfare of vulnerable adults is paramount and takes precedence over it. Do not keep concerns relating to potential abuse of vulnerable adults to yourself.

Confidentiality may NOT be maintained if the withholding of information will prejudice the welfare of the adult

CODE OF CONDUCT

THE COLLECTIVE CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

- Collective member should not engage in relationships with new or vulnerable lesbians.
- Collective member should not discuss confidential matters arising from either the drop-in or the regular Collective meetings with anyone outside of the Collective unless absolutely necessary.
- Collective members should protect vulnerable people where necessary.
- Collective members should always be courteous to all drop-in visitors.
- Collective members should pass on any relevant information from a drop-in session to each other to ensure continuity of service.
- Collective members must at all times be mindful of the need for confidentiality.

THE DROP-IN CODE OF CONDUCT

Northampton Lesbian Line rules are written to ensure that the group runs smoothly and is a safe space for all lesbian women and those questioning their sexuality. They are reviewed by the collective on an ongoing basis.

Confidentiality

The collective is a confidential space and this is only possible with your help. Please try to avoid discussing what was said during the drop in, or who attended, when you are not at drop-in sessions.

In public we will respect your confidentiality and we ask you to respect ours. Personal details should be kept to yourself if given to you.

We use first name terms only and you should not give your mobile phone number out unless you really want to.

As far as possible we will keep what you tell us confidential. There may be times, however, when it might be necessary to pass information to other agencies, for example, in issues relating to child protection or if you would like to be referred to another service.

We will usually endeavour to obtain your written consent before any personal information is passed outside of the organisation. However there may be exceptional circumstances where information may be disclosed such as: threatening behaviour, threats of violence, abuse, actual violence or suspected child abuse. We may inform you if we pass information to an outside agency.

Respect

You must respect others opinions, backgrounds and difference.

You must not barrack or intimidate anyone at the drop-in.

You must be polite and respectful at all times.

It helps to talk

Please tell us if you are having problems with other members of the group, we want this to be a space where everyone can feel safe, but we can't do this unless you talk about any problems you have within the group. You can ask a collective member to mediate or chat with you about the issue in a 1-2-1.

Visitors

We understand how difficult it can be to walk into a group like Northampton Lesbian Line for the first time, so we are happy for you to bring a female friend, or female family member, along for support until you feel at ease.

Introducing a new group member

Over time, you may meet lesbians or women questioning their sexuality who you would like to bring along to the group. We are happy for this to happen.

Discussions

We will often hold discussions on issues relevant to lesbians. There is no obligation to take part in these if you don't want to although they are a good way to get to know other group members and break the ice!

Behaviour

Our drop in centre is an alcohol and illegal drugs free zone. Anyone who appears under the influence of drink or drugs will be asked to leave.

The collective reserve the right to refuse entry. Visitors to the drop-in are expected to adhere to our code of conduct.

If any individual's behaviour is contrary to the code of conduct they may be asked to leave. A person who is asked to leave on three separate occasions may be excluded permanently.

Smoking

Our drop in centre is a no smoking building. There is a designated smoking area outside. Please dispose of your cigarette butts sensibly.

Mobile Phones

Mobile phones are allowed but their use should be discrete during the drop-in.

Any trouble

Any allegations of abuse or misconduct can be submitted in writing to either a collective member or a relevant body.

Information we may keep

This includes any information we might put into our written records. We keep written records about the group in order to improve the service that we offer.

We are committed to ensuring that any personal information collected is only used for specific purposes and that no more is collected than is actually needed.

This information is always where possible anonymous and kept in a secure location, only Lesbian Line Collective members will have access to these notes.