

Document for Christian Helplines **Association**

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By CHA Executive

(Original Document compiled by CHA Working Party (August 2003)
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The Vision Statement of the Christian Helplines Association

Our desire is to serve Jesus Christ by serving the people who call us.

Our purposes are:

1) To empower and enable Christian Helplines in the UK to establish good practice and standards in the delivery of the services they offer.

A Christian helpline is defined as one that can agree with the policies in this document and are underpinned by a Christian worldview, so that each helpline can achieve and maintain a standard that ensures a minimum quality of delivery and staffing.

2) To enable members of the Association to explore collaborative projects together.

3) To meet together to support, encourage and pray for each other.

4) To provide resources to others wishing to establish new Christian Helplines.

Statement of Faith for Members of the Christian Helplines Association

It is considered that members of the CHA assent to the following Statement of Faith as revised by the Evangelical Alliance in 2005.

We believe in...

1. The one true God who lives eternally in three persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
2. The love, grace and sovereignty of God in creating, sustaining, ruling, redeeming and judging the world.
3. The divine inspiration and supreme authority of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, which are the written Word of God—fully trustworthy for faith and conduct.
4. The dignity of all people, made male and female in God's image to love, be holy and care for creation, yet corrupted by sin, which incurs divine wrath and judgement.
5. The incarnation of God's eternal Son, the Lord Jesus Christ—born of the virgin Mary; truly divine and truly human, yet without sin.
6. The atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross: dying in our place, paying the price of sin and defeating evil, so reconciling us with God.
7. The bodily resurrection of Christ, the first fruits of our resurrection; his ascension to the Father, and his reign and mediation as the only Saviour of the world.
8. The justification of sinners solely by the grace of God through faith in Christ.
9. The ministry of God the Holy Spirit, who leads us to repentance, unites us with Christ through new birth, empowers our discipleship and enables our witness.
10. The Church, the body of Christ both local and universal, the priesthood of all believers—given life by the Spirit and endowed with the Spirit's gifts to worship God and proclaim the gospel, promoting justice and love.
11. The personal and visible return of Jesus Christ to fulfil the purposes of God, who will raise all people to judgement, bring eternal life to the redeemed and eternal condemnation to the lost, and establish a new heaven and new earth.

The Core Values of the CHA (Practical outworking of the Vision & Statement of Faith)

Members of the CHA must be able to work within these core values.

1. Accept the Vision, Statement of Faith and Core Values of the CHA. These values are all underpinned by a specifically Christian worldview.
2. To offer help to people who call without discrimination or partiality of any kind.
3. To treat everyone who calls with respect and to value the dignity of the individual.
4. To regard confidentiality as paramount in all their activities.
5. To adopt an operating style that reflects the Christian faith and ethos of the organisation, which is non-judgemental and non-directive to assist callers in making personal choices.
6. To be available to all who call, but recognising that where other professional services exist who may be able to better meet a caller's needs, then information to do so will be made available (e.g. signposting to another helpline in the Telephone Helplines Directory).
7. To deliver services that are effective, equitable and efficient.
8. To offer services free of charge save for the cost of the call itself.
9. To acknowledge that staff of the helpline are their most valuable asset.
 - Training them to deliver the organisation's services and any services resulting from collaborative projects through the CHA.
 - Providing regular contact with and supervision of their staff.
 - Encouraging them in seeking ways to improve their ability to deliver the service.
 - Encouraging them in their personal spiritual growth and development.
10. To strive to build effective relationships with other professionals and that these relationships should be based on mutual respect, co-operation and support.
11. To avoid complacency and continually seek ways in which to improve the quality of provision.
12. To demonstrate unconditional acceptance of individuals and show concern and respect for them.

The following appendices are guidelines only for policies that the CHA would expect a helpline to have in place. Association members are expected to draft their own policies to suit their particular operation.

Appendix 1

Equal Opportunities Policy

Service Delivery

It will be the policy of a member of the Christian Helplines Association to do all in their power to ensure that the services they offer are offered unconditionally. It is seen as a matter of fundamental importance that people are able to get the help, advice and information they seek, without discrimination or partiality of any sort. It is essential that our response be seen as genuine and non-judgmental.

Christian helplines will always offer whatever support or assistance available to anyone who calls them, even where the caller may have different beliefs, preferences or values. In such cases the Christian helpline will always endeavour to respond in a way that conveys unconditional acceptance and respect for their rights. It is not our policy to tell people what to do but rather to offer them any help they require to make their own decisions. The task of the Christian helpline is to give any support or assistance they can, to help the Caller work things through, in the way they consider best.

Each Christian helpline, within the resources available to it, will make every effort to ensure that their services are as accessible to all users as possible and that any activities that they put on are inclusive and participative. They will seek to establish what types of activities potential service users require and that they are timed to suit as many as possible, taking into account religious and cultural needs. Christian helplines will take every possible care in relation to the health and safety of all those they are in contact with. They will take out adequate **professional indemnity insurance**.

Employment (Recruiting “Within the Ethos”)

The issue of staff recruitment is important since the personal beliefs, attitudes and perspectives of staff members can either enrich and contribute towards the Christian ethos that lies at the heart of what constitutes a Christian helpline, or be ambivalent towards it, thus creating potential conflict with and confusion over our aims and objectives. Professional qualifications, relevant experience and good references are, therefore, only one set of criteria appropriate to assessing the suitability of a potential member of staff.

It is essential that all those working with Christian Helplines understand the basic beliefs of the organisation they are working for and that they also accept the orientation, approach and philosophy of care being provided. This is true with respect to: a) Paid staff members (full and part-time)

- b) Members of the Management of the Christian Helpline
- c) Volunteers

Christian helplines will recruit volunteers and applicants for staff positions from any background, provided they can commit to the organisation's statement of faith, ethos, objectives, ethics and procedures.

Appendix 2

Confidentiality Statement

All CHA members should have ***the following minimum guidelines*** in place appropriate to the service they offer. In general CHA members will be required to ensure that confidentiality is maintained within the following ***parameters***.

Information given by callers remains confidential to the Christian helpline concerned except in the following circumstances:

- a) With specific permission the listener/counsellor may discuss the caller/client's need with his or her doctor, minister, other professional person or family as agreed with him or her.
- b) Sharing of information within the Christian helpline or with the Supervisor and /or Manager of the Christian helpline (all of whom are bound to maintain confidentiality) is on a "need to know" basis.
- c) In circumstances when the listener/counsellor believes there is a real risk to the safety of the caller or others, the information ***may be*** provided to appropriate/relevant person or persons. This for example would include when a crime has been committed and details have been supplied.
- d) When required to do so by the process of law. (This would include an "expression of concern" to the local Area Child Protection Committee where it is thought a child or young person under the age of 18 is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm, the reporting of potential acts of terrorism)
- e) Members of the CHA are required to be committed to safely store all records of calls in compliance with the Data Protection Act of 1998 and make them available to a caller if they request them. Records should be destroyed after a suitable period as determined by the Christian helpline.

Appendix 3

Complaints Procedure

Members of the CHA should have a clear Complaints Procedure in place.

An example of a suitable one is given below.

Complaints Procedure

(Printing in bold italics should be replaced with appropriate details)

Any caller who has a complaint about the service offered by *NAME OF HELPLINE* will in the first instance be encouraged to contact *NOMINATED CONTACT, NAME & ADDRESS of HELPLINE* in writing, **by email to (*email address*), by Fax No if available, or by telephone asking to speak to the *HELPLINE MANGER*.**

They should state clearly the nature of their complaint, time and date of their call and when writing clearly mark the letter as confidential.

If the caller requires support to make their complaint they should be directed to appropriate agencies that can help them. For example their Church Minister, Citizens Advice Bureau, Telephone Helplines Association, or other appropriate advocate.

The matter will be taken up with the parties involved **within 21 days** to try to resolve the situation maintaining strict confidentiality.

If the situation is not resolved, the caller has the right to take the matter up with the Chairman of the Trustees/Directors of the ***HELPLINE*** so that they may bring this to the attention of the full board of Trustees/Directors at the earliest opportunity.

The Chairman will appoint an independent person to investigate the complaint. This person will carry out their investigation through correspondence unless the relevant parties need to meet. When the investigator has collated all the relevant information the Trustees/Directors will decide whether to uphold the complaint. They will normally decide on any disciplinary action at the same time. All parties to the complaint may attend and put their case at this meeting. A person of their choice may accompany parties attending. *NAME OF HELPLINE* will not normally be responsible for any costs of parties attending.

Appendix 4

Training & Supervision

All members of CHA will need to show that they have a training programme in place and provide supervision for their staff and volunteers.

Training

Initially the “grandparent” principle would need to be adopted for those already working for individual helplines. This combined with peer auditing through members of the Association would ensure a standard was being achieved and maintained in individual helplines that are part of any Association.

Many Christian Helplines have used counselling training courses modified for telephone work rather than a dedicated and accredited telephone ***listening/helpline worker*** course. In addition for helpline work some subjects needed greater depth than an ACC or other accredited counselling course would provide.

For any collaborative projects to be viable, training will need to be standardised so that where collaboration occurs there can be a confidence in the services being provided.

Crossline in Coventry has put together and obtained accreditation from the ACC for a Telephone Listening Course that can provide this core element of common training for Christian helpline workers. It is hoped that this can be used widely for training of people on Christian Helplines in the CHA where appropriate.

This means that members of the CHA can have access to quality training materials once they have been accredited to deliver the training and so avoid any “reinventing of the wheel”. It will also facilitate new Christian helplines setting up and the training of their workers/volunteers.

Some provision for costs would need to be made so that the CHA could fulfil the accreditation requirements payable per student to the accrediting body and to ensure the course was being run and delivered as written. It is anticipated that such costs would be received from charges made to training course participants (or participating helpline) who would have both the knowledge and confidence that they were receiving quality and accredited training for Christian helpline work.

Supervision

Members of the CHA must be able to demonstrate that supervision is in place that is appropriate for their organisation. This could be achieved in various ways. It might include one-to-one supervision face-to-face or over the telephone, group supervision or telephone conferencing, team debriefings and/or team meetings.

In all cases members would be expected to have procedures for dealing with major crises such as suicide, child protection issues and difficult caller situations. These would normally include seeking out management support/supervision following any such call.

Appendix 5

Child Protection Statement

All members of the CHA will have a written Child Protection Policy agreed with their Board of Trustees/Executive.

As with the confidentiality statement any concern that a Child under 18 is at risk of significant harm should be raised with the child protection agency local to the child.

The safety of the child should be viewed as a higher priority than the confidentiality of the call.

All Helplines should have the Childline number available to all operatives at all times. This number is 0800 1111. In the case where a child calls and is in an abusive situation this number should always be offered to them.

A senior member of the Helpline should be appointed as a Child Protection Co-ordinator. They will liase with all appropriate agencies in formulating and implementing child protection procedures. These procedures must form part of training given to members of the team.