


London Lesbian & Gay Switchboard (LLGS) provides an information, support and referral service for people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and anyone who needs to consider issues around their sexuality.

Our award-winning volunteers listen and provide support on the helpline to approximately 30,000 people each year.

They also provide information on the LGBT community, services and events to the 140,000 people who visit our information website www.queery.org.uk each year.

You can be a part of it, we are currently looking for:

 Helpline volunteers

 Office Support volunteers

 Information/Research volunteers

 Fundraising and events volunteers



The Queen's Award for
Voluntary Service 2007

Helpline Volunteers

Helpline Volunteers make up the majority of our volunteers and we could not operate without them. They listen to callers' concerns, provide calm words, appropriate support and relevant information when necessary.

What we look for:

We are looking for people with the ability to listen to callers in a non-judgemental, non-directive manner and limit using their own experiences when taking calls.



Although we don't expect volunteers to know everything about gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans life in the UK we do look for people with a general perception of the diversity of people's life experiences.

Volunteers with daytime and weekend availability are particularly sought after, as these periods can be difficult to cover.

Training and support provided:

Helpline applicants who are successful at interview are invited to attend the Core Assessment Training (CAT) course. This training equips trainees to deal with the wide range of LLGS callers and consists of role-plays, group exercises and other activities, as well as sessions on the information system, sexual health and HIV. The course takes place over four consecutive Saturdays or seven weeknights, and trainees must be able to attend all sessions.

Trainees are allocated a personal trainer, who will work with them on a one-to-one basis for the first 12 hours on the telephone and provide additional support throughout the training

if needed. During the next 21 hours on the phone the trainees are supported by other fully trained volunteers, who are on a helpline shift at the same time.

As a part of the training, trainees are required to take part in at least one back-up activity. There is a wide range to choose from such as joining a bucket rattle around Soho, attending a working group meeting, updating our database and more.

After 33 training hours on the telephone, completing a back-up activity and successful completion of an end-of-training review volunteers are able to work on the telephone without the need for a fully trained support volunteer. However, all volunteers continue to support each other in the phone room when needed.

Additional confidential one-to-one support is available should a volunteer feel they need it after a difficult call. There is also continued training for all volunteers in form of regular update evenings on various subjects such as domestic violence in same-sex relationships, HIV/AIDS and trans awareness.



Commitment:

Although volunteers are largely free to book shifts appropriate to their lifestyle, we do expect them to commit to taking calls on a regular basis. The minimum commitment is 18 hours every calendar quarter (usually as three-hour shifts), including at least three shifts starting at 10:00 (10am) or finishing at 23:00 (11pm). We understand that this may not always be possible so we accommodate for illness, holidays and other changes of circumstances; exemptions to this requirement may be available upon request.

LLGS operates a flexible shift system and there are currently no fixed shifts, meaning that volunteers can come and do their shifts depending on what suits them. Most shifts are 3-4 hours in length and are booked in advance on our online rota or through the Volunteer Co-ordinator.

Information/Research Volunteers (Support)

To assure the high quality of our service it is vital that the information available to our volunteers is as up-to-date and accurate as we can make it.

We are looking for people to check existing information, gather new information, update our data systems and train others to do it.

This volunteering opportunity is for people with basic IT skills, who like to keep up-to-date about new clubs, venues and services of relevance for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and trans people across the UK. Activities may include:

- Identifying new support, social, and specialist services of relevance to the LGBT community using the gay press.
- Entering details of new organisations onto our database.
- Contacting organisations by phone or email to keep their entries in our database up to date.
- Identifying priority areas to research and key referrals for our callers through liaison with staff and helpline volunteers.



Information/Research Volunteers can work from home or come into the LLGS offices and work from there.

Office Volunteers (Support)

Our Helpline Volunteers need a dedicated team of Office Support Volunteers to help with administrative aspects of LLGS work.

We are looking for people who can ideally attend the office regularly during our office hours of 10am-6pm to help us with administrative workload. Activities may include:

- Preparing mailouts and e-mailouts.
- Analysing statistics.
- Recording information on relevant databases.

Fundraising and Events Volunteers (Support)

We try to be as visible as possible to make everyone aware of the services we provide – you may see our stall at Pride, Soho Pride and many other LGBT events around London. If you feel you can help us organise and co-ordinate our stalls or help with our Pride arrangements, this is the role for you. In addition, you may be asked to help with our publicity campaigns in the gay press and also marketing initiatives.

Alternatively you may just choose to join us on one of our regular bucket rattles in London. It raises much-needed support for our work and is a good opportunity to make new friends on a fun night out.

The minimum commitment for Support Volunteers is the same as for helpline volunteers i.e. 18 hours per quarter. We understand that this may not always be possible so we accommodate for illness, holidays and other changes of circumstances; exemptions to this requirement may be available upon request.



Frequently asked questions

Further information can be found at www.llgs.org.uk or by contacting the Volunteer Co-ordinator on 020 7689 8517

Where is LLGS based?

The LLGS office is based in Islington, north London.

If you aren't able to get to London regularly, there may be another helpline closer to you that needs volunteers. You can search for your nearest helpline on www.queery.org.uk

What time does LLGS open/close?

The helpline's opening hours are from 10am until 11pm, seven days a week; however some events/fundraising opportunities may take place outside these hours.

Do I have to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans to volunteer?

Yes. LLGS policy is that all volunteers must self-identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or trans.

I'm unwaged; is it possible to be reimbursed for expenses?

All unwaged volunteers can claim back their expenses, such as travel costs and childcare costs if necessary.

What other facilities are there for volunteers?

We want you to feel part of the LLGS family. We organise regular social events so you can meet other volunteers. We usually host a chill-out party at the end of Pride, and attend other social events such as Walk for Life.

LLGS membership cards entitle volunteers to discounts at a range of gay venues across London. We also provide hot and cold drinks and snacks for our volunteers in the phone room and common room..

What happens next?

Please complete the enclosed Volunteer Application Form, the Helpline Supplementary Application Form if required, and the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Form and send them to LLGS's Volunteer Co-ordinator either by email to vc@llgs.org.uk or by post to LLGS, P.O. Box 7324, London, N1 9QS. If your application has been successful, you will receive an email or phone call inviting you for interview.

What if I am not successful?

If you aren't successful this time, you can reapply and any previous applications won't affect future applications, but we do ask that you wait six months before reapplying. Alternatively you can choose a different LLGS volunteering opportunity to the one you originally applied for.

I don't think I can commit to volunteering right now; how else can I support LLGS?

LLGS's work is dependent on donations which are vital for ensuring we can offer the best possible service to our volunteers and callers.

You can donate online at <http://llgs.org.uk/donations.html> or you can send a cheque to LLGS, P.O. Box 7324, London, N1 9QS.

Supporting us financially is just as rewarding as you will know you are helping us to support the many people who seek our help each year.

Who do I contact if I have any more questions?

The Volunteer Co-ordinator is a full-time member of staff and is available on 020 7689 8511 or vc@llgs.org.uk if you have any questions about the application process or would like to discuss any additional needs you may have.

Are the premises accessible?

Yes, we strive to ensure that our premises are as accessible as possible. Additionally disabled volunteers may make use of our taxi account, if necessary, to enable them to get to and from our premises.