

It's my job

Read about Sandy McGuire and decide if these sentences are true (T) or false (F).

- 1 Sandy works at night. _____
- 2 Her shift is a quiet one. _____
- 3 Some people phone because they are lonely. _____
- 4 Sandy only gives information – not advice. _____
- 5 Helpline nurses have to speak foreign languages. _____

Sandy McGuire

I operate the telephone helpline on the graveyard shift – that's the one from midnight through to the morning. Although it's quiet and still in the streets outside, it's not so quiet in the office. The early hours of the morning are sometimes the busiest time, when the telephone never stops ringing.

People call the helpline for information or advice, or sometimes they just need to hear a friendly voice. We talk to people who are depressed and worried, and sometimes in pain. Sometimes we get some funny enquiries – yesterday, a teenager phoned because he had swallowed some chewing gum and he was afraid he was going to die!

We can't see our patients, so we have to be very good on the phone. We have to learn how to do it, because it doesn't come naturally. We have to know how to ask the right questions so that we get clear and accurate answers, and we have to be able to speak in language anyone can understand.

