



CHILDLINE ANNUAL REVIEW

2018/19

childline
A life-changing **NSPCC** service

FOREWORD

Year after year, I am both saddened and heartened at the volume of young people who come to Childline for help and advice.

Young people who have nobody else to turn to, nobody to confide in about their deepest worries and fears, no one who will listen to them and empower them to transform their lives. Except for Childline, who is always here for them and we have been for some 33 years.

I'm so grateful to Childline for listening to me. The previous counsellor I spoke to was so supportive and amazing. The advice you give always helps me to think clearer so I can make better decisions in my life. I feel so much better now.

Gender unknown, 14

Once again, over the last year, Childline has delivered over a quarter of a million counselling sessions to children and young people, who must have felt so isolated and alone that they needed to come to us, to turn to a complete stranger, for help.

This loneliness and isolation seems to be growing. Loneliness affects so many of us across all generations but to think that so many children and young people are feeling lonely, seems particularly distressing.

There were over 5,000 Childline counselling sessions with young people over the last year who told us that they felt desperately lonely, a 12 per cent increase compared with last year. What is causing this increased feeling of loneliness and isolation? Social media opens up a huge amount of opportunities for young people to connect with their peers via a host of different 'social' platforms but I can't help feeling that sometimes, this online connection can lead to young people feeling even more isolated by comparing themselves with others and feeling that they don't fit in, or that other young people seem more loved and happier than they are themselves.

Family relationships and breakdowns can compound this, leaving young people feeling completely alienated from the people closest to them. We all remember, probably, times when parents seemed like the enemy, but for me there was always an aunt or a grandmother to bring me back to reality, calm me down and reassure me. The days of the extended family like mine, where there was a network of people to confide in and provide support, seem long past for many children. Sometimes the adults are just too preoccupied, or too busy, to notice when a child is unhappy, and needs time, space and a listening ear. The evenings when everyone in a family gathered at the end of the day for a supper around the kitchen table to talk together have been replaced for many young people with a meal on a tray, eaten alone, with only their tablet or their computer for company. Yet we all need someone to confide in, to be able to rely on unconditional love from someone. When parents split, or adverse circumstances such as drug or alcohol abuse causes chaos at home, a young person can feel completely alone, and cast adrift.

FOREWORD

Childline has seen a major shift over the past 33 years. In 1986 the chief concerns were actions of others who inflicted abuse, bullying or neglect on the children who contacted us. Now we are hearing from young people who are just deeply unhappy. So mental health issues dominate the main concerns which young people contact Childline about, with 109,136 counselling sessions, almost 25,000 of which were with children who felt so desperate, they told us about having suicidal thoughts. It is hard to imagine how these children and young people would cope without Childline there to support them.

When Childline launched 33 years ago, we brought to the fore extremely sensitive issues that nobody else was discussing, in particular sexual abuse. Over time, with the societal changes, the nature of sexual abuse has also changed and tragically this year we have seen a 16 per cent increase in counselling sessions about child sexual exploitation (CSE). This type of sexual abuse is so hard for young people to identify, as perpetrators groom their victims to make them believe they love them, often through blackmail and/or manipulation, leading them to feel isolated from the people closest to them, in order to carry out the most atrocious acts.

When we were first in touch he was really nice to me and he always told me he loved me and that he cared about me and at the time I truly believed he did. Then he started begging me for pictures and for me to do stuff on webcam and I found myself doing it, even though I was not comfortable about it. If I don't do what he wants he gets angry with me and threatens to send the pictures he has of me to my friends.

Girl, 12

Abuse still accounts for a large proportion of contacts to Childline. In the last year there were over 19,000 counselling sessions with children about neglect (488), sexual abuse (8,841), physical abuse (6,593) or emotional abuse (3,925). Our counsellors work very closely with these young people to try to support them to find a way out of these abusive situations, and help them cope with the impact the abuse is having or has had on them.

It therefore deeply worries me to know that because of the lack of resources we are only able to answer two in every three children who need our help. This report illustrates once again the need for this vital, often life-saving, service which supports the hundreds of thousands of young people who depend on us.

FOREWORD

We have nearly 1,500 wonderful and dedicated volunteers who work around the clock to be there for children when nobody else is. We have thousands of dedicated supporters who give generously to make sure Childline can exist and we are enormously grateful to them.

Childline is here for all young people, all of the time. We now need everyone to join us – the Government, the public, parents and professionals in recognising the issues and work together to improve the future for all our children and young people.

Dame Esther Rantzen DBE

Childline is an NSPCC service. It's a place just for children and young people; somewhere they can get the support they need to feel safe, whatever life has thrown at them.

They can get information and advice on different topics; share experiences with people their own age; or have a free, confidential and non-judgmental chat with a counsellor, 24/7, online or on the phone, by calling **0800 1111** or visiting [childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk) or downloading the **For Me** app.



I talked to a Childline counsellor a while ago about some really difficult feelings I was having. The advice you've given me has really helped me. I'm now speaking to my doctor and I feel much better. I just want to thank Childline for their support.

Gender unknown, 17

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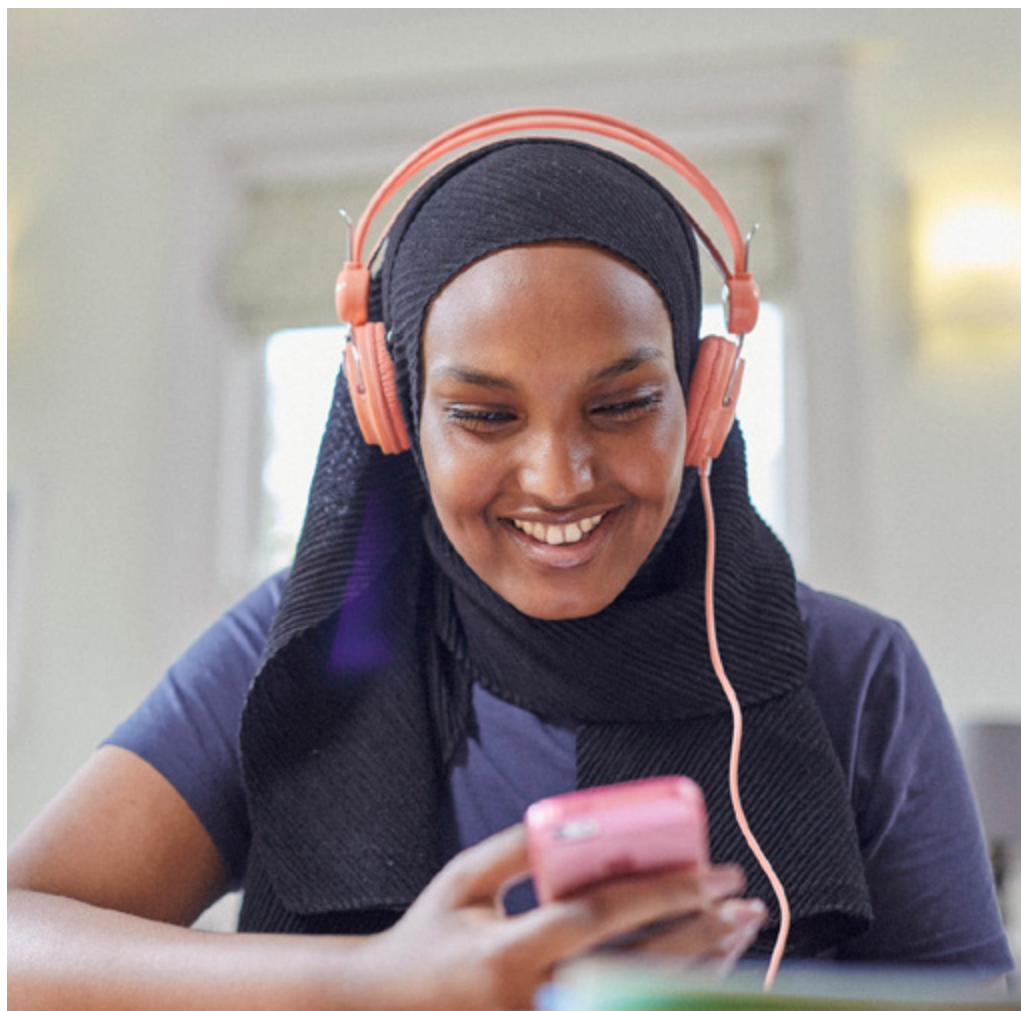
All names and potentially identifying details in this report have been changed to protect the identity of the child or young person. Quotes are created from real Childline counselling sessions but are not necessarily direct quotes from the young person.

This report was produced by the NSPCC Knowledge and Information Service. For more information about this report please contact us at learning@nspcc.org.uk

INTRODUCTION

Childline is a free, private and confidential service where children and young people can talk about anything that's on their mind.

Whatever the problem, whenever help is needed, Childline is there.



Childline counsellors provide support online and over the phone to children and young people when they need it the most. And the Childline website provides children with the information and advice they need to understand their problems, and the tools to express how they are feeling.

This year we provided more than 250,000 counselling sessions to children and young people. We had over 3.5 million visits to the Childline website and over 41,000 posts were submitted and published on the Childline message boards.

Our generous supporters donated money to help us deliver and develop our service, and nearly 1,500 Childline volunteers in 12 bases across the UK gave over 170,000 hours of their time to supporting children and young people.

It's all this support which enables Childline to provide its unique and vitally important service.

INTRODUCTION



It means we're there for children whatever their worry, big or small. Children can tell us about anything that's on their mind, from mental health problems and family relationship issues to abuse and bullying. This year in over 5,000 counselling sessions children talked to us about issues that are so serious we needed to get them additional help.

We're open 24 hours a day, so we're there for children when other sources of support are not. We've continued to see a rise in children contacting us about mental and emotional health issues – problems that children can face any time of the day or night.

We offer a confidential service, so children can turn to us when they feel too scared, ashamed or embarrassed to talk to anyone else. In 2018/19, there were over 34,000 counselling sessions with young people who said a Childline counsellor was the first person they had talked to about their problem, an eight per cent increase on 2017/18.

We can help children and young people when they are feeling anxious, lost, hopeless, scared or alone. In four out of five counselling sessions children and young people indicated that they felt better able to cope after counselling¹.

We speak to children in ways that work for them. We know that children are increasingly living their lives online, so we make sure we're available online as well as over the phone. This year 74 per cent of all counselling sessions took place online, the highest proportion ever. We've also continued to develop pages on our website, giving children the information and advice they need. And we've provided online tools to help children express themselves, monitor their mood, share their problems and come up with solutions. This year we've also extended our online presence to include a website providing tailored information, advice and games for primary school aged children.

34,513

counselling sessions in 2018/19 in which young people said a Childline counsellor was the first person they had talked to about their problem.



In four out of five counselling sessions children and young people indicated that they felt better able to cope after counselling¹.

¹Based on the 151,581 counselling sessions where the young person indicated whether they were better able to cope after counselling.

INTRODUCTION

We're proud of what we've achieved together. But we know that there is more to do.

In 2018/19 our counsellors couldn't respond to one in three children who needed our help. Online counselling sessions take over twice as long as those over the phone, meaning we need more volunteers to support the same number of children. And more children are seeking support in the evening and at night, when fewer volunteers are available.

It's clear that children's and young people's needs are changing, so we're changing with them. We've established the Childline Development Programme to increase the capacity, resilience and quality of the Childline service. New initiatives for 2018/19 include: a streamlined volunteering process to make it easier to become a volunteer, new volunteering shifts to increase capacity during peak times and new tools on our website to empower young people to develop coping strategies or to engage with us in different ways whilst waiting to speak to a counsellor.

We're hoping these, and many other, improvements will enable even more children to benefit from Childline now and in the future.

I am so immensely grateful that you were there to listen without telling me I am lying, judging me or making me feel worse about myself... that is the amazing thing about these chats, they can save lives.

Girl, 14



KEY STATISTICS

CHILDLINE IN NUMBERS 2018/19

250,281

counselling sessions provided by Childline to children and young people.

1. MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH
2. FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS
3. SUICIDAL THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

were the **top three concerns** young people were counselled about.

19,847

counselling sessions (8% of the total) had abuse as the main concern. This included neglect or physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

5,676

counselling sessions resulted in a referral by Childline to external agencies, such as the police or children's services.

1,484

Childline volunteer counsellors.

45%

of all Childline counselling sessions related to emotional health and wellbeing (including self-harm and suicidal thoughts and feelings).

1. SEX AND SEXUAL HEALTH
2. SELF-HARM
3. RELATIONSHIPS

were the **top three topics** on the Childline website's message boards.



Childline counsellors couldn't respond to **one in three** children who needed our help.

41,734

posts were submitted and published on the **Childline message boards** by children and young people.

12

Childline bases across the UK, in: Aberdeen, Glasgow, Foyle, Belfast, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Prestatyn, Nottingham, Birmingham, Cardiff and London.

34,513

counselling sessions in which the young person said a **Childline counsellor was the first person they had talked to about their problem.**

74%

of counselling sessions **took place online.**

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE TELLING US

Top ten issues that children and young people talked to Childline about in 2018/19

Our counsellors record the issue that children and young people talked about most in counselling sessions. However, children and young people may decide to talk about a range of things.

Main concern	Number of counselling sessions	% of counselling sessions about own concerns*
1 Mental or emotional health Low self-esteem, lack of confidence, anxiety, feeling sad, low mood, lonely, mental health issues, loss and bereavement.	71,283	30%
2 Family relationships Conflict/arguments with family members, parents' divorce/separation.	26,471	11%
3 Suicidal thoughts or feelings Suicidal thoughts or feelings or actively suicidal.	24,447	10%
4 Bullying Peer-to-peer bullying, either face-to-face or online.	15,851	7%
5 Self-harm Self injury that is intentional.	13,406	6%
6 Friendship issues Falling out with friends, difficulty making friends.	12,331	5%
7 Sex, relationships, puberty or sexual health Sexual development, relationship issues, body changes, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), contraception etc.	12,331	5%
8 Problems in school or with education Exam pressures, concerns about performance, not coping with workload, dislikes school, new school worries, problems with teacher, truancy.	10,029	4%

The top ten main concerns give us a good idea of what children and young people are contacting Childline about, but this only gives a snapshot of their concerns.

Main concern	Number of counselling sessions	% of counselling sessions about own concerns*
9 Sexual abuse (including online sexual abuse) The child has been forced or persuaded to take part in sexual activities. This doesn't have to be physical contact and it can happen online.	8,841	4%
10 Physical abuse Young person is at risk of, or has experienced physical abuse. This includes physical punishment.	6,593	3%
All mental or emotional health and wellbeing** Combines main concerns of: mental/emotional health, suicidal thoughts and feelings, and self-harm.	109,136	45%
All abuse Combines main concerns of: neglect (488), emotional abuse (3,925), sexual abuse (8,841) and physical abuse (6,593).	19,847	8%
All own concerns* Where a young person talks about what's happening in their own life, rather than being worried for another young person.	241,523	100%
In addition, Childline delivered 8,758 sessions to young people who had concerns about another child.		

*Proportion of all counselling sessions where the young person talks about their own worries (241,523 sessions in total). In addition, Childline delivered 8,758 sessions to young people who had concerns about another child. These are not included in any of the breakdowns by concern.

**To help counsellors provide the most appropriate response to a child, counsellors record "mental or emotional health", "self-harm" and "suicide" as three separate issues. In this report we sometimes combine these three categories to give an overall picture of the counselling we provide on mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE TELLING US

To give a sense of the range and depth of issues children and young people talk to Childline about, we've included a sample of some common and emerging topics children have been talking to us about over the last year.

Mental and emotional health and wellbeing

Over two fifths (45 per cent) of all Childline counselling sessions are about mental and emotional health and wellbeing, a category which includes young people's concerns about mental and emotional health, suicidal thoughts or feelings and self-harm.

Mental and emotional health remains the most talked about of these three issues. It's a subject which covers a wide range of concerns, from complex mental health conditions, depression, anxiety and stress, to feelings of low mood, loneliness and low self-confidence.

#1

Mental and emotional health is the issue that children and young people talk to us about the most.

45%

of all Childline counselling sessions are about mental and emotional health and wellbeing.

There were 5,187 counselling sessions in total where young people told us about their feelings of loneliness this year, a 12 per cent increase on the previous year.

I've been feeling really lonely for a while. I feel like no one cares about me because I have no friends at school. I'm too scared to talk to anyone about how I feel because I'm so embarrassed.

Boy, 13

90%



increase in the number of counselling sessions in which young people talked about confidence issues.

26m

views of our mental health campaign advice and videos.

Some children told us that they felt the people around them didn't understand the problems they were going through, which left them feeling very alone. Others were keeping their worries to themselves and were contacting Childline because they'd reached a point where bottling things up was affecting their mental wellbeing.

I just try and deal with it all alone to be honest because most of the time that is how I am feeling, alone. It means a lot to know there is someone there.

Girl, 14

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE TELLING US

Feelings of loneliness were sometimes linked to low self-confidence.

I often feel like I don't like myself, I don't have a good personality or a good body. I end up with these thoughts going around and around in my head and I'm left feeling unwanted and just out of place.

Girl, 17

In 2018/19 we delivered 5,947 counselling sessions in which young people talked about confidence issues, a 90 per cent increase on the previous year. Young people talked about a range of issues affecting their confidence, including: body image, bullying, critical parents, academic performance and relationship problems.

Some young people talked about their feelings of loneliness or low self-confidence leaving them vulnerable to other negative experiences.

I just feel so alone, like no one understands me and just end up taking advantage of me. I've overwhelmed myself with so many things and I just bottle it all up, it all becomes too much to handle. I have zero confidence and am too quiet and anxious so people get away with pressuring me to do stuff like smoking and sexual things.

Girl, 14



WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE TELLING US

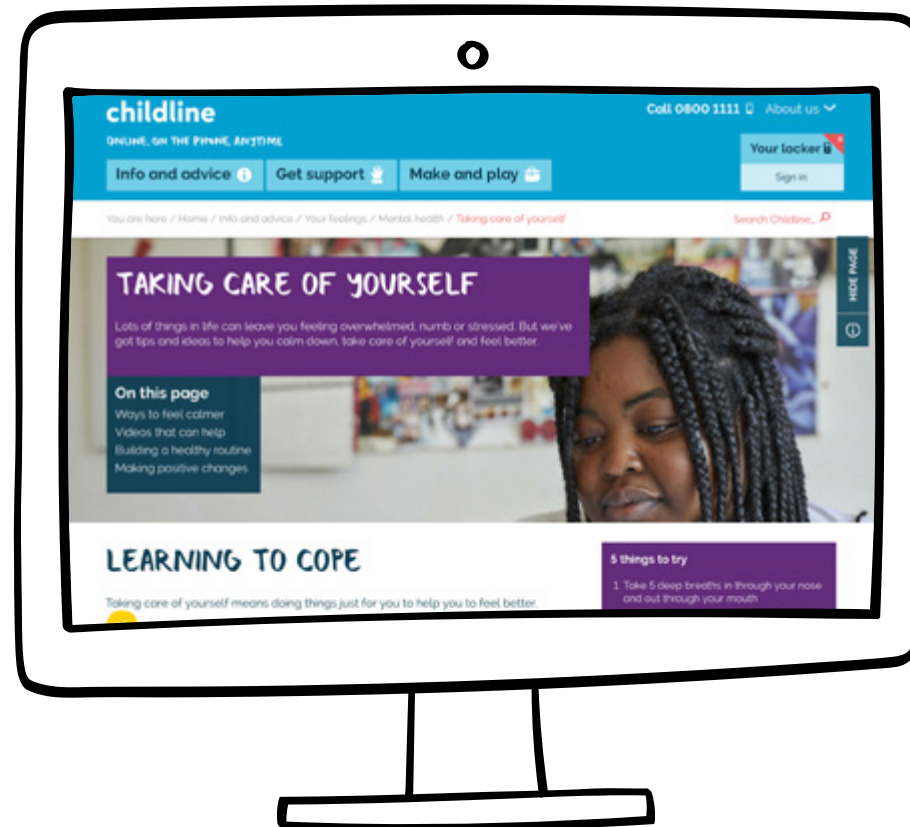
We know that Childline has become an increasingly important source of support for children experiencing mental and emotional health problems. We've introduced a national learning and development programme to make sure our counsellors develop and maintain the skills and knowledge needed to support young people when they turn to us for help.

We've also produced new online information and advice based on what children are telling us. For example:

- our page on **Hearing voices**, written in conjunction with Kings College London, helps young people make sense of what is happening to them and get the support they need: childline.org.uk/hearing-voices
- our **Taking care of yourself** section provides young people with tips and tools on how to stay calm, take care of themselves and feel better: childline.org.uk/taking-care-of-yourself

We've also reached out to children and young people through social media, with a three-month long campaign aimed at: tackling the stigma around mental health, looking at how young people can support each other, highlighting helpful information and tools on the Childline website and encouraging young people to contact Childline if they need further support. Overall, we had 26 million views of our mental health campaign advice and videos.

To enable children to get the help they need, we're also calling on the Government to increase funding for children and young people's mental health services and for early intervention services from voluntary organisations (like Childline) alongside improving school-based support.



WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE TELLING US

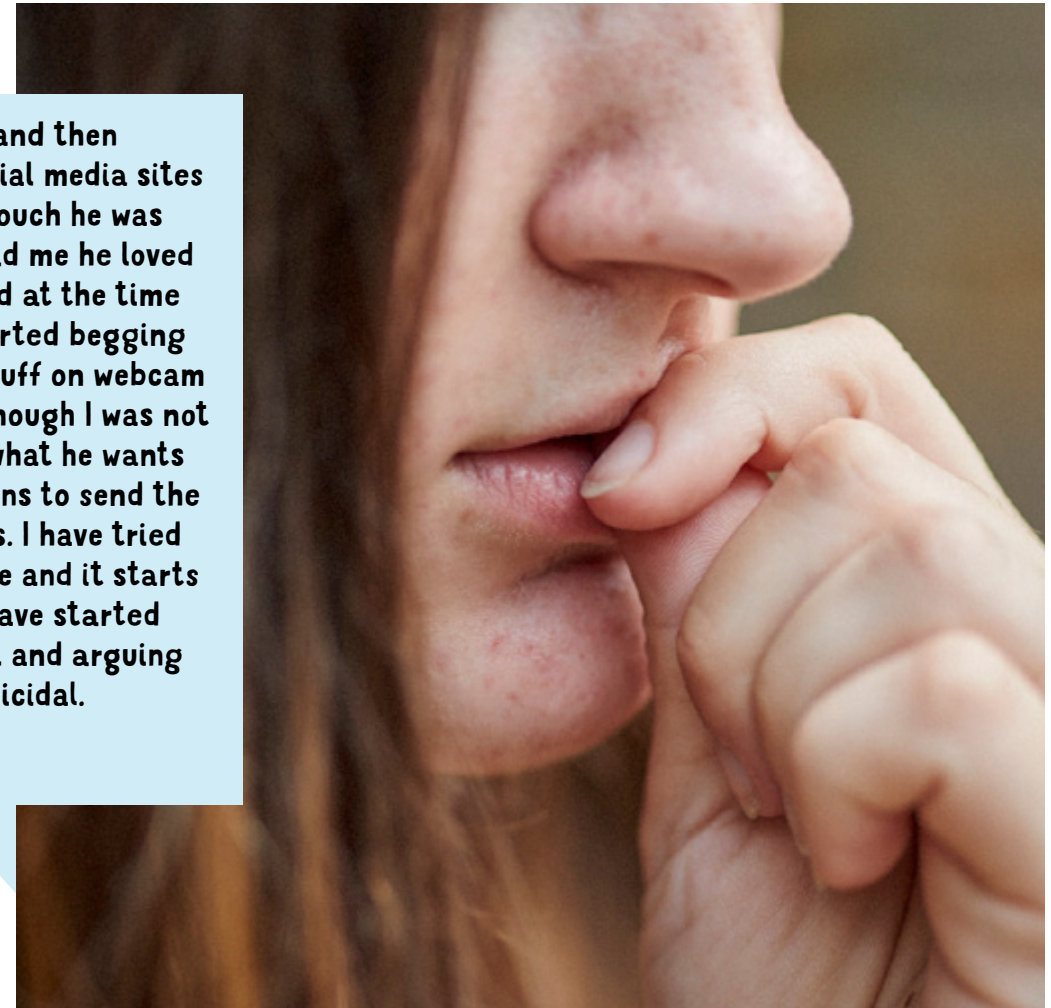
Child sexual exploitation

We've been hearing more about concerns around child sexual exploitation (CSE). In 2018/19 Childline delivered 4,500 counselling sessions about CSE, an increase of 16 per cent since 2017/18.

CSE is the most frequently mentioned form of sexual abuse, and covers issues like: grooming, sharing and receiving sexual images and messages, trafficking, sexual harassment, engaging in online sexual activities such as live streaming, and having contact with people who pose a sexual abuse risk.

I met this person on a video game and then somehow, he found me on other social media sites I belong to. When we were first in touch he was really nice to me and he always told me he loved me and that he cared about me and at the time I truly believed he did. Then he started begging me for pictures and for me to do stuff on webcam and I found myself doing it, even though I was not comfortable about it. If I don't do what he wants he gets angry with me and threatens to send the pictures he has of me to my friends. I have tried to block him but he always finds me and it starts all over again. It has got so bad I have started cutting myself, doing bad at school and arguing with my family. Sometimes I feel suicidal.

Girl, 12



WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE TELLING US

Experiences mentioned by young people include:

- receiving attention or gifts
- being persuaded to share sexual images online
- being threatened that images will be shared with friends or family
- not knowing where to go for support or being too scared to ask for help.

Some young people talked about the negative impact CSE was having on their mental health, some blamed themselves for getting into the situation in the first place and some turned to self-harm, alcohol or substance misuse as ways of coping with their experiences.

Young people didn't always recognise when their relationship was unhealthy or exploitative, which left them feeling reluctant to talk about what was happening to them in case their relationship ended or they got their 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend' in to trouble.

We launched a social media campaign to look at healthy sexual relationships to help young people identify signs that their relationship might not be quite right, and to reassure them that Childline is there for them. Overall we had over 700,000 clicks through from the campaign to the Childline page on Healthy and unhealthy relationships: childline.org.uk/relationships.

The NSPCC's Protect and Respect service also works directly with children and young people who need support to learn about healthy relationships or who may be experiencing exploitation. And we're calling on the Government to ensure that schools get the support they need to teach the vitally important relationships and sex education curriculum.

Physical punishment

We've also seen a rise in concerns around physical punishment. It's the second most commonly mentioned form of physical abuse and in 2018/19 it was discussed in 2,059 counselling sessions, a 77 per cent increase on the previous year.

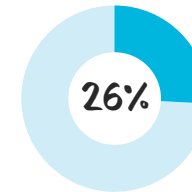
My step-dad hits me for no reason and he makes out its all my fault. He can hit me because of stupid small things like not sitting up straight. I think he hates me as I just seem to make him angry. I really love my mum but she never says anything because she thinks he is disciplining me too.

Boy, 12

Some young people mentioned parents fighting amongst themselves or being under the influence of drugs or alcohol when punishing them.

The NSPCC views the use of physical punishment against children as unacceptable and has long campaigned to make all physical punishment against children illegal. Scotland recently became the first UK nation to ban the use of physical punishment, and a Bill is currently passing through the Welsh Assembly. We are calling for similar measures to ensure equal protection for children in England and Northern Ireland.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE TELLING US



of all counselling sessions carried out with young people about emotional abuse mentioned family problems.

Emotional abuse, family conflict and pressures

For the second year running we've seen an increase in counselling about emotional abuse. There were 3,925 counselling sessions about emotional abuse in 2018/19, up five per cent since 2017/18 and 22 per cent since 2016/17.

Over a quarter (26 per cent) of all counselling sessions about emotional abuse mentioned family problems. For some children these issues had a significant impact on their mental health.

I hate living with my parents. They are so horrible to me and tell me if I don't behave they will put me into care and that my life will be over. They always say I am the problem child who messes up at school and how I am always to blame for things being bad at home. Sometimes it all feels so overwhelming I cannot breathe and I think about ending my own life.

Girl, 12

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE ARE TELLING US

Concerns about family relationships cover a wide range of issues including arguments and conflicts which were discussed in 17,997 counselling sessions, up six per cent on the previous year. Some young people contacted Childline about how they are affected by their parents' divorce or separation. Custody, residency and contact issues were discussed in 1,367 counselling sessions, up 84 per cent compared to the previous year.

In response to these increases we've developed new web content for children experiencing problems with their families.

New information and advice includes:

- **Living with step and second families**
childline.org.uk/stepfamilies-second-families
- **Parents and alcohol**
childline.org.uk/parents-alcohol
- **Divorce and separation**
childline.org.uk/divorce-separation
- **Parents in prison**
childline.org.uk/parents-prison

The NSPCC has also developed and evaluated a range of services to support parents and families in caring for their children, such as Baby Steps and Parents Under Pressure.

If you want to read more about the issues children and young people talk to Childline about, you can browse our series of thematic reports. Each report focuses on a specific issue, and all are available to download at nspcc.org.uk/childlinereport. Topics we've looked at in the past include:

- **families facing adversity**
- **peer sexual abuse**
- **bullying**
- **support following experiences of sexual abuse**
- **online abuse**
- **neglect.**

Our next report will take an in depth look at the experiences of children and young people who are talking to us about loneliness and confidence issues.

REFERRING CHILDREN TO OTHER AGENCIES

Childline is a confidential service. It means children and young people can see it as a safe space to talk about their worries. We help to increase confidence by reassuring children that things can change, empowering them to find out what works best for them, and working with them to find solutions to their problems – for example helping them to work out which trusted adults in their life they can confide in. For the vast majority of children and young people, this approach works.

But in exceptional circumstances, for example if a child is in a life-threatening situation, or if they are requesting direct help, we may need to share their details with another agency who can help them. Before making a referral, we will always seek the young person's consent. As a last resort, to keep them safe, we may need to make a referral without their agreement. You can read our full confidentiality promise to children and young people on the Childline website: childline.org.uk/confidentiality.

When we make referrals, our counsellors continue to talk to the young person about what they want to happen. We liaise with the other agencies, including emergency services, to ensure that help and support is provided how and when the young person needs it.

Sometimes young people tell us that they weren't happy with the way that other agencies became involved and ask us not to share their details with anyone else. In such cases, we will balance their wishes with our responsibility to keep them safe. Other young people get in touch to thank us after we have referred them.

5,676 counselling sessions resulted in a referral to another agency. The majority (62 per cent) related to concerns around suicide. The second most common reason was physical abuse, followed by issues around mental or emotional health, self-harm and sexual abuse.

I just want to thank Childline and say how grateful I am for all that you do. When I was feeling really low I told Childline about my plans to end my own life. Childline counsellors listened to me and sent an ambulance to make sure I got the right help. Now I've had support from mental health services and I'm in a much better place. I feel so grateful to know I can come back to Childline whenever I need to speak to someone. Thank you for being there for me through some of the darkest times in my life. I'm not suffering in silence anymore.

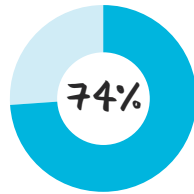
Girl, 17

HOW OUR WEBSITE SUPPORTS CHILDREN

Childline counsellors provide vital support to children when they need it the most. However, not every child who needs our help is ready or wants to speak directly to a counsellor.

That's why the Childline website is such an important part of the support we offer.

Not only does it provide lots of information and advice to children who want to find out more about something that's worrying them, it also offers a wide range of different tools, like the art box, games, mood journal and message boards, to help children get support, express themselves or distract themselves from their worries in the ways that work best for them.



of all counselling sessions took place online, the highest proportion ever.



HOW OUR WEBSITE SUPPORTS CHILDREN

Here's some of the ways we've been reaching children online.

Childline.org.uk/kids

We believe that every child should know there's someone there for them if something is worrying them or isn't right. It's the reason Childline exists. And it's also the reason our *Speak out. Stay safe.* programme visits primary schools across the UK teaching children that abuse is never OK and how to get help if they need it.

The Childline website is a great way to reinforce these messages. But the main site is aimed at older children and covers topics that younger children might find upsetting, such as self-harm and suicidal feelings.

So, in 2018 we launched the Childline site for under-12-year-olds, childline.org.uk/kids, which offers age appropriate information and advice for younger children. The site acts as an introduction to everything Childline has to offer and to the idea that they can seek support, talk to a trusted adult and take control and act on their own behalf. It's promoted through the *Speak out. Stay safe.* service and through specially designed Childline posters for primary schools. Since its launch the childline.org.uk/kids page has received over 10,000 unique page views.

As with the main Childline website everything on the site for under-12-year-olds reflects what children are talking to us about. The site covers the most common concerns that under-12s talk to Childline about, as well as the topics covered in the *Speak out. Stay safe.* service. We look at how children talk about the things that are affecting them, to make sure we are using the right language and focusing on the right issues.



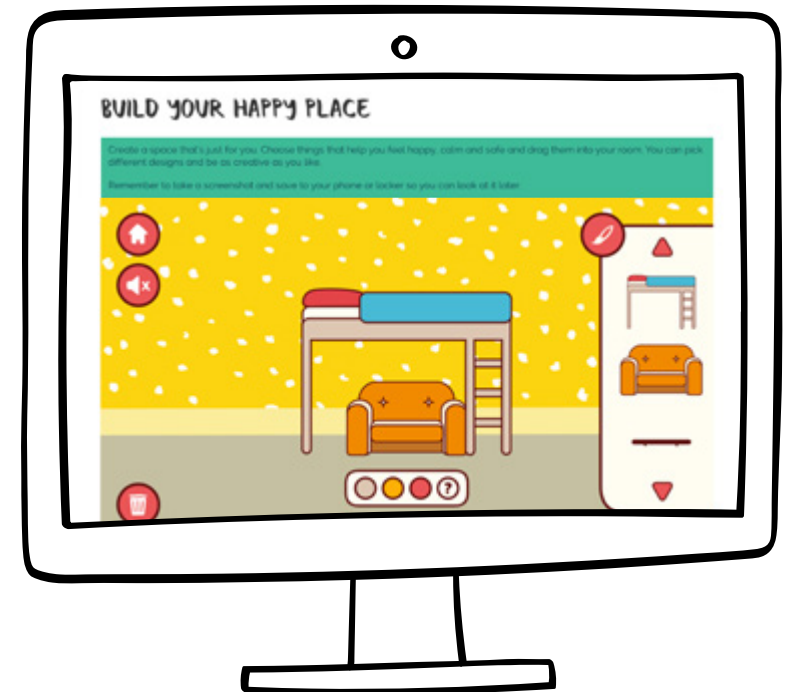
HOW OUR WEBSITE SUPPORTS CHILDREN

Whilst developing the site we also gathered feedback from children on what makes a good website. One of the things that they told us was that they preferred illustrations to photos as they are colourful and easy to understand. So the site is full of warm, friendly and reassuring illustrations.



They also told us that games and interactive tools were a good way to help them express themselves and cope with their worries. So the site also includes lots of opportunities for children to play and create.

- **Build Your Happy Place** – is a game where under 12-year-olds can design their dream room, with items like mirror balls and chocolate fountains.
- **Calm Cloud** – helps young people who are upset, angry or stressed, by encouraging them to breathe in time with our calm cloud animation. We are planning on creating a Calm Zone which will offer a range of tools.



HOW OUR WEBSITE SUPPORTS CHILDREN

The Childline website offers a wide range of ways for young people to express themselves, talk about how they are feeling and support each other. All content created by young people is moderated by Childline for safeguarding concerns and disclosures.

Message Boards

Childline message boards are a public forum where young people remain anonymous. Children can choose the name they use to post comments, with only first names allowed. Boards cover a wide range of issues, from health and wellbeing to abuse and neglect.

The boards provide young people with a supportive and non-judgemental online community of their peers where they can write about their experiences and emotions and receive support and advice.

In 2018/19 there were 41,734 posts submitted and published on the Childline message boards by children and young people. The three most popular topics were: sex and sexual health, self-harm and relationships.

Most of us go on here because we need help. We're not happy, we don't feel safe telling people we know face-to-face, and we feel alone. I honestly thought that not many people must be feeling how I felt, and while it makes me sad to see how many of us aren't OK, it also makes me so, so thankful that a) I'm not alone, there's this huge community of people supporting others they don't even know, just for the sake of humanity and compassion, and b) that all of us on here have the guts to ask for help.

Gender and age unknown, Childline website user



HOW OUR WEBSITE SUPPORTS CHILDREN

Mood Journals

Mood journals provide young people with a space for reflection. Young people can express their thoughts and feelings, talk about their plans and look back at their entries. They can also use their mood journal to track their mood over a period of time, and share it with a Childline counsellor if they need to.

Some young people use their journals to help them through specific events while others use it regularly like a diary to record events of the day. It is also quite common for a young person to make an entry after speaking with a counsellor, often to express relief and thanks.

In 2018/19 there were nearly 44,700 mood journal entries.



The journal is valued by young people as a place where they feel comfortable disclosing and discussing their deepest thoughts, concerns, and worries, and reflect on how their mood has changed over time.

I use a mixture of the Childline website and the app and I'd just like to say thank you, they're great! On the website with the mood journal you can choose to put it in graph format so you can see your moods going up/down etc. I really like it!

Gender and age unknown,
Childline website user

HOW OUR WEBSITE SUPPORTS CHILDREN

Art Box

Some young people may find it easier to use images to talk about what is happening to them. The Art Box allows young people to express themselves through pictures, and to support each other by sharing images in the public gallery.

There were over 17,000 images created in the Art Box in 2018/19.

Young people value the art box as an outlet for feelings and issues which they otherwise might not be able to express.

I love art and it helps me relax also writing too much is not really my thing as I am a bit dyslexic... :)

Gender and age unknown, Childline website user

Ask Sam

Ask Sam is the Childline website's equivalent of an 'agony aunt' or 'uncle'. Young people can write a letter to Sam asking for advice about a specific issue. Over 14,000 Ask Sam letters were submitted in 2018/19.

A selection of the letters are chosen to be answered publicly, so other children can benefit from Sam's advice and see that others are facing similar problems to them. The published letters and responses were viewed over 1.1 million times. The Ask Sam format enables Childline to provide advice on more unusual or specific issues which would not otherwise be covered on the Childline website. It provides a library of examples of real-life problems and solutions that young people can search or browse through.





HOW CHIDLIN
HELPED ME

HOW CHILDLINE HELPED ME

I lost my Nana and was really struggling and feeling so sad. The counsellor I spoke to said I should try drawing or reading to get my mind off my grief. Please tell her that it has really helped and I am very grateful.

Girl, 12, counselled by Manchester Childline base



I just wanted to say a big thank you to the counsellor I spoke to this morning. I don't know what I would have done if you had not been there to talk to. You made me feel so much better about myself and gave me hope that maybe I will make it. I am so grateful for everything you have done. I was able to feel like my feelings are valid and that I have worth and a reason to live. You're honestly the best!! You do such an amazing job and that's why I wanted to share my gratitude. Thank you again for being so lovely and for everything. I will be back soon for another chat.

Girl, 14, counselled by London Childline base

I can't even begin to explain how much my 1-2-1 chat helped me. I am so immensely grateful that you were there to listen without telling me I am lying, judging me or making me feel worse about myself and that is the amazing thing about these chats, they can save lives. Before the chat started, I didn't know what to do or where to go from here but now I feel like we made a plan that I can try and I have a route of support. I couldn't have asked for a better chat. Keep doing what you're doing because it certainly could have potentially saved my life or saved me from something bad today. So grateful that Childline is there!

Girl, 14, counselled by Belfast Childline base

HOW CHILDLINE HELPED ME

I want to talk about my anxiety and panic attacks. There are several things that make me anxious, how people see me, pressure of exams and school. I have found some of the things on the Childline website really helpful. I have tried to do the slow breathing and counting exercises you recommend on the Controlling your panic attacks page and they do help.

Girl, 13, Childline website user

I contacted Childline for the first time because I needed some advice. I contacted using the 1-2-1 chat and I'm glad I did. I had probably one of the best counsellors ever. She was so friendly, and I can't thank her enough.

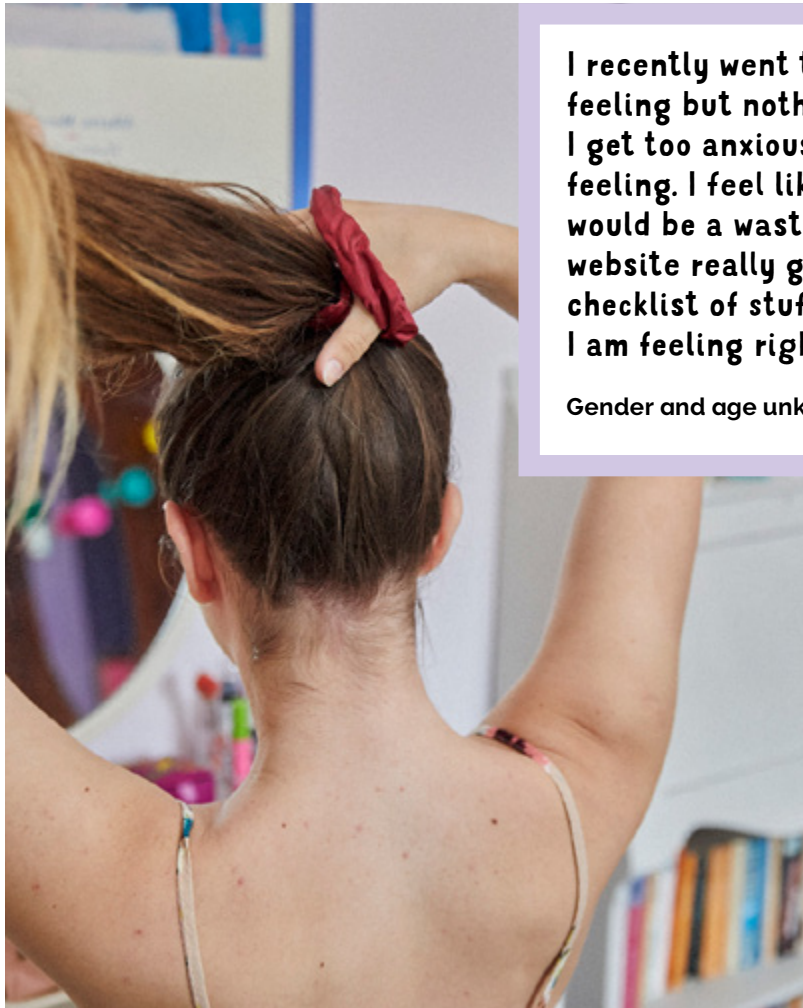
Boy, 14, counselled by Nottingham Childline base



I just want to tell you that the counsellor I spoke to is a hero. She was really nice, and I want her to know I am taking her advice and will be speaking to my school about seeing a school counsellor. Tell her she is doing a great job!

Girl, 14, counselled by Cardiff Childline base

HOW CHILDLINE HELPED ME



I recently went to my GP about how I am feeling but nothing really came of it as I get too anxious to talk about how I am really feeling. I feel like if I go back to my doctor it would be a waste of time. I found the Childline website really good and I have now got a checklist of stuff that is completely how I am feeling right now.

Gender and age unknown, Childline website user

Thank you for listening to me and hearing my side of everything. It has helped me to encourage my boyfriend to get in touch with Childline himself and he has now found the courage to talk about the abuse he is experiencing from his Dad. Thank you so much for helping us both.

Girl, age unknown,
counselled by Aberdeen Childline base

I recently had a chat as I really needed some ways to not break the few months I have been clean from cutting. The counsellor sent me a link to five pages worth of distractions. I would just like to say thank you ever so much to her because if she had not been there so early in the morning I am pretty sure that I would have broken my clean days. She was very sensitive when talking to me about my self-harm and I really appreciate the fact that she wanted me to have the help that I needed so **THANK YOU!**

Girl, 17, counselled by Birmingham Childline base

HOW CHILDLINE HELPED ME

I want to thank the counsellor at the Foyle base for saving my life. This has not been the best year and people have come and gone from my life, but Childline has always been there and has been the most loyal of them all. I am also thankful for the Childline website and I intend to fundraise for Childline.

Girl, 17, counselled by Foyle Childline base



Could someone please pass on my thanks to the counsellor I spoke to last night. I was talking to him through to the early hours of the morning and he really helped me and got me the help I needed. I really appreciate it. Thank you.

Girl, 14, counselled by Liverpool Childline base

I just had an amazing chat with a lady from Glasgow, she was so lovely. I'm so, so grateful, she stopped me from going to a dark place this evening when I felt so low and she listened to me and understood me which is something I don't get anywhere else. She was just amazing and I've stayed safe tonight because of her. One of the best counsellors I've spoken to so far :)

Girl, 17, counselled by Glasgow Childline base

HOW CHILDLINE HELPED ME

I just had a chat and it was the first time I have opened up. It was hard, but the counsellor I spoke to was very understanding. I have never felt like I had anyone to talk to before but now I do and it was really good to get things off my chest.

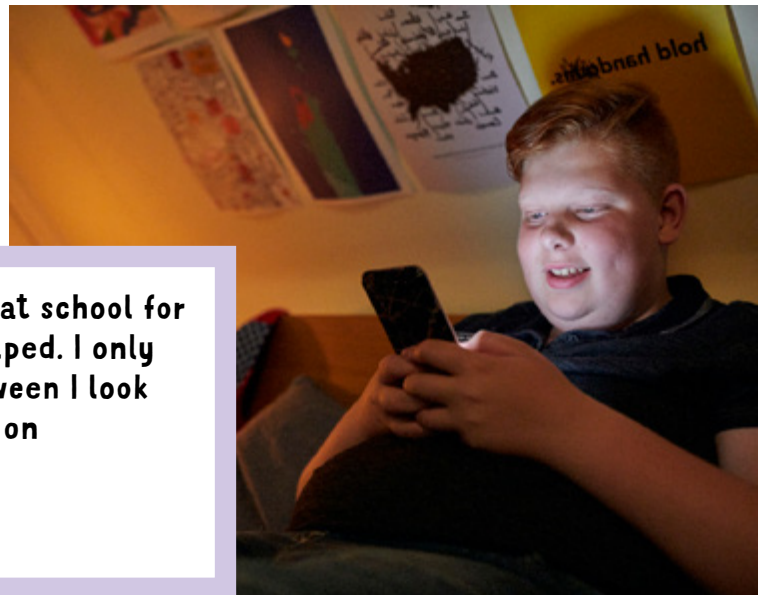
Girl, 16, counselled by Prestatyn Childline base

I just wanted to thank Childline for the chat yesterday. Your support saved my friendship. Everything is better now, and I am so relieved. I will definitely come back to Childline if I ever need support again.

Girl, 11, counselled by Leeds Childline base

I have been seeing a counsellor at school for the last few years which has helped. I only see them once a week so in between I look at the Childline website for tips on managing anger and stress.

Boy, 13, Childline website user



Your donation, no matter how big or small, could make all the difference to children when they need it the most.

£4 could pay for one of our trained Childline volunteer counsellors to answer a child's call for help.

£27 could pay for a Childline supervisor for one hour. Our dedicated supervisors support our volunteer counsellors.

£190 could pay for one Childline supervisor shift, so they can support our volunteer counsellors.

£1,600 could pay to recruit, train and support a new Childline volunteer.

Find out more about making a donation at nspcc.org.uk/donate



TRANSFORMING
CHILDLINE

TRANSFORMING CHILDLINE

In 2017 we asked our Trustee Sir David Normington to chair a review of Childline looking at how to better meet the needs of children and young people in a changing world. Following this review the Childline Development Programme was set up to transform Childline. This two-year programme of work is focused on delivering eight projects, with the aim of increasing the capacity, resilience and quality of our counselling service.

BUILDING A STRONGER SERVICE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE



Commitment to Childline as a volunteer service



Local and national planning



Increasing counselling hours



Managing the flow of contacts



Better support for supervisors and other staff in Childline bases



Improving our practices



The night service



Learning and development for staff and volunteers

TRANSFORMING CHILDLINE

The review identified the need for more Childline volunteers to help meet demand. In response we've introduced a range of new initiatives to attract more volunteers, including:

- streamlining our recruitment process to make it easier to become a volunteer
- handing more control for recruitment over to our local Childline bases, making it easier for them to build up relationships with their local communities.

And we're working hard to make our existing volunteers feel more valued and motivated to stay, by:

- giving local bases the ability to organise their own recognition and reward initiatives
- creating a national learning and development programme so volunteer counsellors can continually develop their skills and knowledge, making them more confident and improving the service they are able to offer to children and young people.

The review also highlighted a shortfall in the number of volunteers at the times of day that the service is at its busiest. So, we've made changes to improve the situation, including:

- creating new shift patterns to help us meet demand at our busiest times
- piloting changes to our night service, including changes in shift times
- cutting back on the amount of time counsellors spend recording information after a counselling session, to free up more time to spend working directly with children.

We're also looking at ways of expanding the support we offer to children, including:

- creating new web content to give young people the information they need
- launching new tools to help empower young people to develop their own coping strategies
- spending dedicated time focusing on young people who regularly rely on our support, to look at how we can help them to support themselves whilst making sure they are getting the help they need
- introducing new 'solution focused' tools to our night service teams to enable them to support all children contacting us overnight.



Childline counsellors couldn't respond to **one in three** children who needed our help.



**OUR
VOLUNTEERS**

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Childline wouldn't exist without our dedicated volunteers. Every day volunteers at our 12 bases make a vital difference to the lives of children and young people across the UK.



Childline volunteers come from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences, united in their desire to make sure children and young people are heard and kept safe.

They give a regular weekly four-hour shift. Each shift starts with a pre-brief to share news and developments and to check in with everyone about how they are feeling. At the end of the shift there is a debrief with a Childline supervisor so that volunteers are able to share how they are feeling and reflect on what they've learned before they head home.

OUR VOLUNTEERS

No shift is the same, but every volunteer is making a difference to a child's or young person's life by listening in a non-judgemental way and giving empathy. Most of all they help them realise that someone believes what they have to say and makes them feel that they are important and valued. One of our volunteers, Matt, had this to say about his experience:

"I didn't realise at the time, but the day I first learned that counsellors at Childline were volunteers, would change my life. As soon as I read about what it means to be a volunteer, I knew being a part of such a unique and impactful organisation was something I felt compelled to pursue. I felt that Childline could offer me a unique opportunity to impact children's lives for the better.

171,299

hours of volunteers' time given to supporting children and young people.

1,484

volunteer Childline counsellors.

Little did I know that not only would being a part of such an amazing organisation be so rewarding, but it would also transform so many other areas of my life. Being at Childline has helped me develop skills that I am able to carry through all aspects of life and work.

A part of being at Childline is the four hours of volunteering I commit to per week, but beyond that, it's the opportunity to be a part of an inspirational team of people who are so diverse but come together with a shared value and passion for supporting young people. The feedback received from young people demonstrates why we're all here; knowing that even in a small way we can make young people feel happier, supported and cared for, when they need it most.

Volunteering at Childline isn't always rosy, and comes with ups and downs; some contacts with young people can have a real impact on you as a counsellor, but the support offered by the supervisors is first class, meaning you never need to face a challenge on your own. That culture is so important to counsellors and for me is a huge reason for being so passionate about being a part of the team.

Childline has been an opportunity to further push myself, at times taking me out of my comfort zone and developing my own skills, through initial training and continuous development offered by the organisation. More recently this has included becoming a mentor to new counsellors completing their training, supporting them as they start their own Childline journeys – yet another opportunity I've been so proud to be a part of."

Becoming a Childline volunteer means being there when a child needs you the most. Just four hours out of your week can make all the difference. Sometimes all children need is someone like you who has the time to listen.

Find out more about becoming a Childline volunteer at nspcc.org.uk/volunteer.

12

Childline bases across the UK, in: Aberdeen, Glasgow, Foyle, Belfast, Leeds, Manchester, Liverpool, Prestatyn, Nottingham, Birmingham, Cardiff and London.

34,513

counselling sessions in which the young person said a Childline volunteer was the first person they had talked to about their problem.



OUR
SUPPORTERS

OUR SUPPORTERS

A HUGE THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

The NSPCC is grateful to everyone who generously supported Childline in 2018/19.

In particular, we would like to thank all the donors listed here, as well as those who gave legacy gifts and those who wish to remain anonymous.

Childline Board:

- Tom Toumazis MBE (Chair)
- Geoff Austin
- Nick Bampton
- Mark Endemano
- Dan Gopal
- Shaun Gregory
- Irina Hemmers
- Nick Hugh
- Lynne Millar
- Stuart Orr
- Kathleen Saxton
- Tim Wilmot
- Hugh Wood

Childline Board Ambassadors / Friends of The Board:

- Claire Enders
- Azon Howie
- Philip Rowley

• Baker Ross

• Beaverbrooks Charitable Trust

• BT Group

• Childline Ball Committee

• Childline Rocks

• David & Rose Heyman Foundation

• Terry Daniels

• Department for Education

• The Edith Murphy Foundation

• The Ellerdale Trust

• The Eveson Charitable Trust

• Samantha Faiers

• Four Acre Trust

• Glamour of Manchester
Childline Ball Committee

• Harrods Limited

• Home Bargains

• The Ingram Trust

• John James Bristol Foundation

• KPMG

• Moondance Foundation

• Anne Morris OBE

• Old Jamaica Road Charitable Trust

• Adriana Otaibi

• Hayley Parsons OBE

• The Peter Dixon Charitable Trust

• The Peterson Family

• Players of the People's Postcode Lottery

• Miss R C R Angel Charitable Trust

• Bruce Ritchie

• The Robertson Trust

OUR SUPPORTERS

A HUGE THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

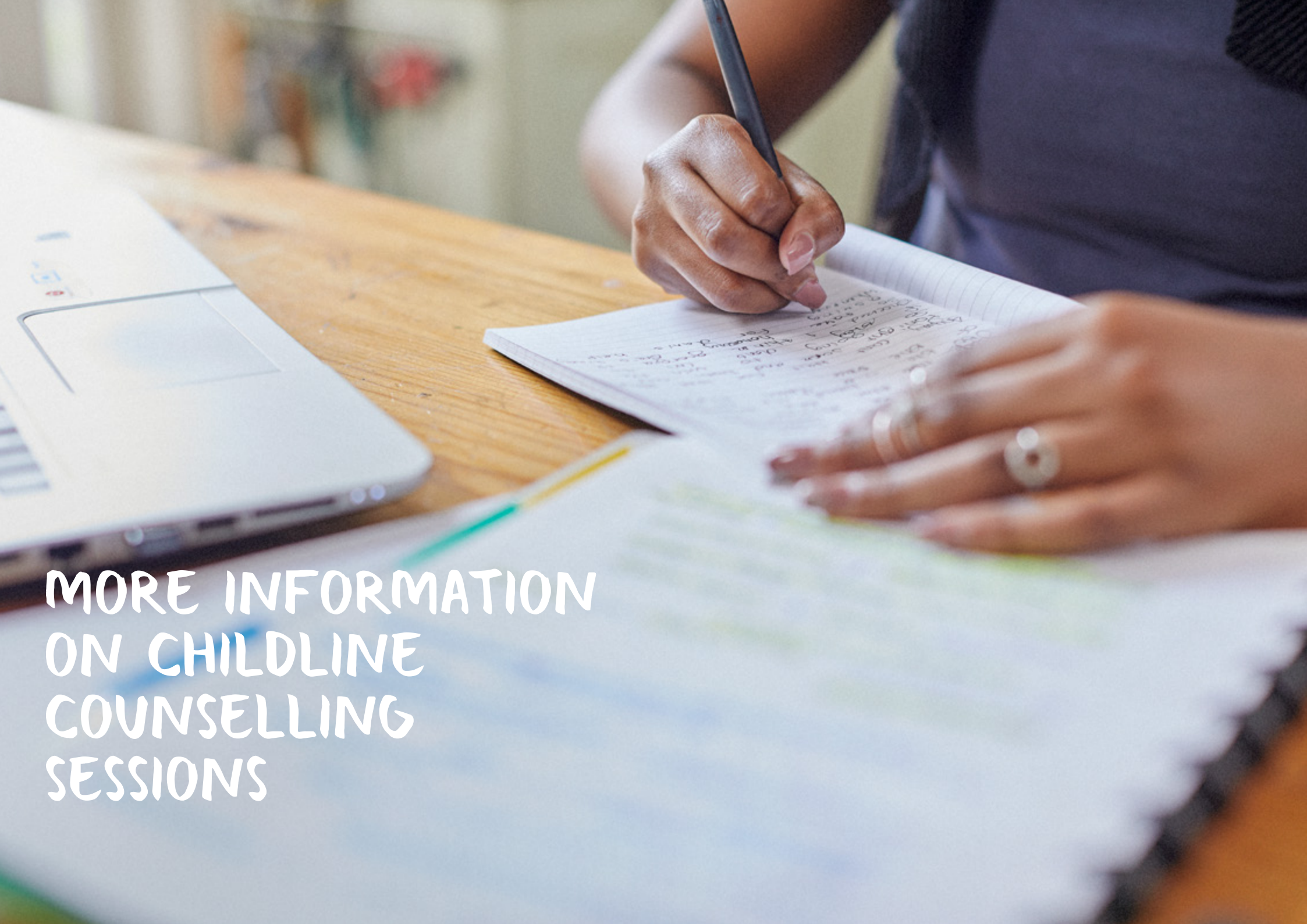
- Rontec Watford Ltd – Gerald Ronson CBE
- The Scottish Government Learning Directorate
- Scottish Government CYPFEIF and ALEC fund (administered by Corra Foundation)
- Stacey Solomon
- Mark Steinberg
- Truants
- Wales Appeal Board
- Welsh Government
- White Hat Ball Committee
- Woodmansterne Publications Ltd

We would also like to thank everyone who generously sponsored Childline for One Unforgettable Day.

Funding one day of Childline means you're helping hundreds of children and young people with nowhere else to turn. To find out how you could help them find a way forward and change their lives for the better email OUD@nspcc.org.uk.

- Richard and Patricia Caring and The Children's Charity for the Good of All Children
- Designer Contracts
- Sir Doug Ellis OBE
- The Hammond Family
- Christian and Florence Levett
- Moondance Foundation
- The Trade Centre Group





MORE INFORMATION
ON CHIDLIN
COUNSELLING
SESSIONS

MORE INFORMATION ON CHILDLINE COUNSELLING SESSIONS

How we record young people's concerns

Childline not only provides support to those who contact us, it also helps to give us a picture of the issues facing children and young people today.

We read case notes and transcripts of counselling sessions to get an insight into what young people are talking about. Throughout the report, all names and potentially identifying details are changed to protect the identity of the child or young person. Quotes are created from Childline counselling sessions or online message board posts but are not necessarily direct quotes from the young person.

We also use data from Childline counselling sessions to help us identify patterns and trends in what young people are talking to us about. We run reports that tell us how many counselling sessions we have provided about certain issues. However, it's important to bear in mind the limitations of the data.

- Childline is an anonymous service, so we can't always know if people are contacting us multiple times. Therefore, we report on data about Childline counselling sessions rather than the number of individuals who contact us.
- Children and young people can decide what they want to talk to us about, and they may raise a number of concerns during a counselling session.
- Our recording system helps us capture information about what children and young people are telling us, and enables our supervisors to decide what action needs to be taken if there is a safety concern. We record the issue that the young person talks about the most as the 'main concern'. We also record other issues that come up during the counselling session.
- When children and young people start to talk to us about new and emerging concerns, we review whether we need to introduce new categories or merge existing ones. Such changes in recording practices mean it's not always straightforward to make comparisons over time.
- As our data comes from a recording system that's used by nearly 1,500 volunteers, it has limitations when compared with a more controlled collection and analysis of data designed around a specific research framework.
- Information drawn from Childline counselling sessions isn't necessarily representative of the UK child population. Children contact Childline when there is something that they are worried about, so they are self-selecting groups coming to us in times of need.

How and when children and young people contact Childline

Children and young people can get in touch with our counsellors on the phone or online, via 1-2-1 chats or by email. In 2018/19, there were 250,281 counselling sessions, 74 per cent of these took place online compared with 26 per cent on the phone.

Childline is there for children 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, but children are more likely to contact us at certain times. We have seen a rise in the number of counselling sessions delivered late at night and in the early hours of the morning, probably because young people are increasingly likely to have access to their own computers, tablets and mobile phones and because other sources of support are not available at night.

This year, half (50 per cent) of Childline counselling sessions took place between 6pm and midnight, and the most popular time for counselling was between 8pm and 9pm.

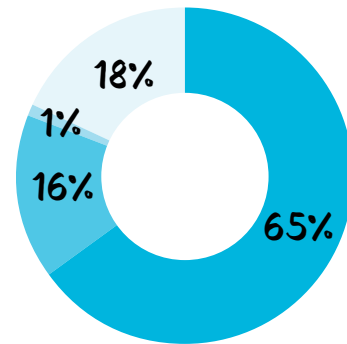
MORE INFORMATION ON CHILDLINE COUNSELLING SESSIONS

Overview by gender

In 2018/19, 82 per cent of young people told us their gender.

65 per cent of counselling sessions were provided to girls and 16 per cent were with boys. For the first year we also recorded information on counselling sessions where the child identified as transgender. One per cent of all counselling sessions were with transgender children. In 18 per cent of counselling sessions the gender was unknown.

Breakdown of counselling sessions by gender



- Girls
- Boys
- Transgender
- Unknown gender



MORE INFORMATION ON CHILDLINE COUNSELLING SESSIONS

Breakdown of main concerns by gender

Boys, girls and transgender children talk to Childline about different issues, as this table shows.

Girls				Boys				Transgender			
	Main concerns	Sessions	%*		Main concerns	Sessions	%*		Main concerns	Sessions	%*
1	Mental or emotional health	47,819	31%	1	Mental or emotional health	9,005	23%	1	Sexual or gender identity	1,405	49%
2	Family relationships	17,262	11%	2	Family relationships	4,820	12%	2	Mental or emotional health	395	14%
3	Suicidal thoughts or feelings	16,444	10%	3	Bullying	4,165	11%	3	Suicidal thoughts or feelings	307	11%
4	Self-harm	9,416	6%	4	Sex, relationships, puberty or sexual health	3,469	9%	4	Family relationships	168	6%
5	Bullying	9,309	6%	5	Suicidal thoughts or feelings	3,319	8%	5	Self-harm	119	4%
6	Friendship issues	8,335	5%	6	Physical abuse	1,853	5%	6	Bullying	100	3%
7	Sex, relationships, puberty or sexual health	7,617	5%	7	Friendship issues	1,826	5%	7	Friendship issues	45	2%
8	Sexual abuse (including online sexual abuse)	6,986	4%	8	Problems in school or with education	1,590	4%	8	Sex, relationships, puberty or sexual health	44	2%
9	Problems in school or with education	6,233	4%	9	Sexual or gender identity	1,293	3%	9	Emotional abuse	42	1%
10	Eating or body disorders	4,288	3%	10	Self-harm	1,073	3%	10	• Eating or body disorders • Problems in School • Sexual abuse (including online)	40	1%

*Percentage of counselling sessions within this gender.

MORE INFORMATION ON CHILDLINE COUNSELLING SESSIONS

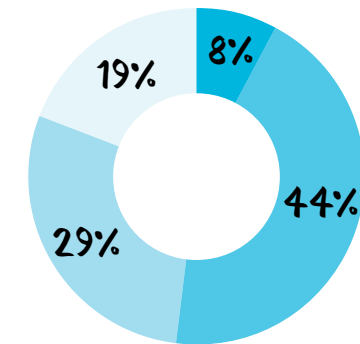


Overview by age

This year children and young people told us their age in 81 per cent of counselling sessions. The most common age was 15.

The most common age group was children aged 12–15 (44 per cent of counselling sessions), followed by 16–18 year-olds (29 per cent) and then children aged 11 and under (8 per cent). In 19 per cent of counselling sessions the age of the young person was not known.

Breakdown of Childline counselling sessions by age



- 11 and under
- 12–15
- 16–18
- Unknown age

MORE INFORMATION ON CHILDLINE COUNSELLING SESSIONS

Breakdown of main concerns by age group

Children of different ages talk to Childline about different issues, as this table shows.

11 and under				12–15				16–18			
	Main concerns	Sessions	%*		Main concerns	Sessions	%*		Main concerns	Sessions	%*
1	Bullying	4,006	20%	1	Mental or emotional health	30,419	28%	1	Mental or emotional health	23,229	34%
2	Family relationships	3,742	18%	2	Family relationships	11,588	11%	2	Suicidal thoughts or feelings	8,579	12%
3	Mental or emotional health	3,529	17%	3	Suicidal thoughts or feelings	10,419	10%	3	Family relationships	7,067	10%
4	Friendship issues	1,734	8%	4	Bullying	7,682	7%	4	Sex, relationships, puberty or sexual health	4,862	7%
5	Physical abuse	1,132	6%	5	Self-harm	6,754	6%	5	Sexual abuse (including online sexual abuse)	3,283	5%
6	Problems in school or with education	1,041	5%	6	Friendship issues	5,960	6%	6	Self-harm	3,271	5%
7	Suicidal thoughts or feelings	653	3%	7	Sex, relationships, puberty or sexual health	5,089	5%	7	Problems in school or with education	2,630	4%
8	Sex, relationships, puberty or sexual health	571	3%	8	Problems in school or with education	4,935	5%	8	Friendship issues	2,052	3%
9	Sexual abuse (including online sexual abuse)	541	3%	9	Sexual abuse (including online sexual abuse)	3,885	4%	9	Eating or body image disorders	1,705	2%
10	Sexual or gender identity	409	2%	10	Sexual or gender identity	3,260	3%	10	Bullying	1,538	2%

*Percentage of counselling sessions within this gender.

MORE INFORMATION ON CHILDLINE COUNSELLING SESSIONS

Overview by nation

In 2018/19, we recorded the nation in which the child or young person lived in 85 per cent of all counselling sessions. The top three main concerns amongst children from all four nations are the same. As this table shows children from across the UK use the Childline service.

Breakdown of counselling sessions by nation

Nation	Total counselling sessions	% of counselling sessions where nation is known	% of UK population under-18 (mid-year estimates 2018)
England	177,631	83%	85%
Scotland	14,719	7%	7%
Wales	8,823	4%	4%
Northern Ireland	4,745	2%	3%
Other	7,585	4%	n/a
Total where nation known	213,503	100%	100%
Total	250,281	n/a	n/a

For over 30 years Childline, the NSPCC's service to give young people a voice, has been there for young people when they feel no one else will listen.

Online and on the phone, every day of the year, Childline is here to listen and, most importantly, help young people work through their issues. It means we can give every one who contacts us the confidence and belief that, whatever challenges they face, we can help them find a way forward.

How you can help us be there for generations to come:

All this support we provide is only possible with the generosity and support of people like you. We need everyone to play their part in making sure we can help every child who desperately needs us.

1. Donate

Every penny will help make sure we get closer to being there for every child.

2. Fundraise

Cycle, run or pick any way you like to raise money for our vital work.

3. Volunteer

Childline depends on the generosity and skills of so many volunteers. Just a few hours per week will mean you're helping turn children's lives around. And we'll be here to help and train you up.

4. Campaign

The NSPCC and Childline are there to take action to keep children safe. By sharing your voice you can help make sure we're heard.

5. Spread the word

Let others know about the crucial work we carry out and how they can get involved in making sure we're there to help every child find their voice.

ALWAYS HERE

If a child you know needs further support, you can direct them to Childline for free confidential help.



0800 1111
[childline.org.uk](https://www.childline.org.uk) or
download our app ***For Me***



For more information about supporting our work go to
[nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/)
or email **help@nspcc.org.uk**

