A 30th birthday is a milestone, a moment for reflection. For us at Childline our 30th year has not only allowed us to celebrate real achievement, 4.5 million children helped, it has also challenged us to learn from past experience and recognise new unprecedented challenges. Suicide is one of those challenges. Right from the moment we launched in 1986 we have heard from children who felt life was not worth living. But over the years the numbers of suicidal and depressed and anxious children has steadily increased. In 2016/17, as you will see from this review, we have heard from more suicidal children than ever before. 22,456 young people told us that they are contemplating ending their lives. Many of the young people who contact Childline describe similar feelings of deep unhappiness. A third of Childline counselling sessions are concerned with mental and emotional health issues including self-harm and suicidal feelings. This must not be underestimated in the potential danger they represent. Concerns such as depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and unhappiness are some of the main reasons why children and young people contact us – and they can cost lives!

Past experience has taught us that young people desperately need a safe place to turn to, to talk about feelings like these. They choose to come to Childline because they trust us, and our confidentiality policy is one major reason for that trust. It is a heavy responsibility, because so many children tell us they have not been able to confide in anyone else – in almost 33,000 of our counselling sessions this year, young people told us that we were the first people they had been able to speak to about their problems. Even if they have accessed the all-too-rare mental health services, they sometimes tell us more than they are able to disclose to the professionals working with them. But, of course, the vast majority have no other support at all. We are literally a life-line.

We are here for thousands of disabled children, whose extra vulnerabilities are often ignored or misunderstood. So in this review we also look in detail at the problems they discuss with us, and the ways we are able to help and support them. Our challenge now is to reach out to children and young people whose disabilities mean we are not yet accessible to them. And you will find in this review the new initiatives we are trialling at the moment.

It is not easy to read the accounts of young people who are experiencing so much suffering. So it is a relief to hear what they tell us about Childline’s support.

Over the past few years I’ve been using Childline online and it’s been very supportive. The 1-2-1 chat counsellors have helped me through tough times and always told me that I am valid. No matter how much the world around me is changing and crumbling around me, they are always there for me.

Gender and age unknown
Childline has a tremendous team of committed and skilful staff and volunteers who are responsible for our success in supporting young people and saving precious young lives. But Childline could not have achieved anything alone. We depend upon our army of donors and supporters, and our partners in the community. Without them we could not help a single child.

Above all we depend upon the nation’s children and young people to continue to trust us and turn to us for help. Our greatest challenge is that we cannot answer every child, we simply do not have enough resources.

Our promise is that we will work as hard as we can to bridge that gap, and achieve our aim of ensuring that every child who needs us can get through to the help they deserve. For, as this review shows, in 30 years we have proved that Childline is a necessity, a life-line for children who have nowhere else to turn, and today it is needed more than ever.

Esther Rantzen

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

I’ve been having suicidal thoughts for the past few weeks. I don’t think I deserve help, I think I deserve to suffer and die. I don’t think I’m a good enough person and I don’t deserve my friends and family.

Boy, 18
For over 30 years, Childline has provided children and young people with a safe, supportive and confidential space where they can get information and advice, talk and be listened to, feel valued and empowered and start to get the help they need to improve their wellbeing.

Our trained counsellors suggest options to them, helping them access support and protection where necessary. Over the years, more than 4.5 million children and young people have sought Childline’s help. This year, we provided more than 295,000 counselling sessions to children and young people wanting to talk about their problems. Many more accessed our web based resources, including peer support message boards, information and advice pages and YouTube videos discussing a range of topics.

Children and young people experience a range of ongoing pressures and risks in today’s complex and rapidly changing world. These may include lack of confidence, relationships, bullying, sexual development and worries about school, as well as sexting, abuse and neglect. Sometimes these problems may be exacerbated by the inescapable impact of social media. It’s easy to see these challenges as part of modern life – but this doesn’t make them straightforward to cope with.

I just wanted to tell you how everything has gone since I last contacted Childline. In my last chat the counsellor helped me to gain the confidence to ask for counselling at my school. I took your advice and have now met the counsellor. It went well, she was kind and understanding and I am now having regular meetings with her. I feel a lot better and she has given me some different ways to cope with anxiety. My school counsellor was really proud I had contacted Childline and I am glad I did, because it gave me the courage I needed to get help.

Gender and age unknown
When problems build up, it can be hard for young people to find solutions or know who to ask for help. Children and young people contact Childline because they don’t feel able to talk to anyone else: they may not want to worry or upset their parents, feel like they are a burden to others, or worry about getting in trouble if they share things that have been happening to them. They may have been threatened into silence, been told it’s their fault or feel fearful or ashamed, or they may have already tried talking to someone else but weren’t able to get the support they needed.

In this report, we’re focusing on two mental and emotional health issues where we’ve seen substantial year-on-year increases in counselling sessions: **anxiety** and **suicidal thoughts or feelings**. We’re exploring what young people are saying about the feelings they are experiencing, how this affects their lives, and their experiences of seeking support. We’re also looking at what **children or young people who are d/Deaf**, **disabled**, **have special educational needs** or **a health condition** are telling us. Many of these young people say they turn to Childline because it’s difficult for them to get support elsewhere – so it’s really important for us to share and learn from their experiences.

A recurring theme across all areas is that children and young people often struggle to find someone who will listen to them and offer support. That’s why Childline is so important – it’s a place where they can speak openly about whatever is troubling them, whenever they need to, and know they will be heard.

Children and young people tell us how helpful they find it to talk through their problems with our counsellors and get help and support, but they also want to learn how to deal with challenges on their own. Childline empowers children and young people by offering thoughts and ideas that can help them to build their resilience and independence, as well as accessing other support. Throughout this report we’re highlighting the **coping strategies** that children and young people say they find most effective.

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1 The term d/Deaf refers to people with any type of deafness or hearing loss. It includes people who see themselves as being part of the Deaf community as well as those who don’t identify with Deaf culture.
The most common reasons why children and young people contact Childline have remained broadly the same as last year. Mental and emotional health is the top concern, with 22 per cent of counselling sessions.

When we include suicidal thoughts or feelings (8 per cent of counselling) and self-harm (5 per cent), a total of one in three counselling sessions are about mental and emotional health and wellbeing issues.

Family relationships are the second highest concern (13 per cent of counselling sessions) – this includes topics such as arguments with family members, divorce and separation. The third most common concern is bullying and cyberbullying (9 per cent of counselling sessions). Other main concerns children and young people raise include: suicidal feelings; sex, relationships, puberty and sexual health; friendship issues; self-harm; problems in school/education; sexual abuse and online sexual abuse; physical abuse.

On the Childline website, the most commonly viewed information and advice pages this year have been about sexting (sharing explicit texts, images or videos), children’s rights, bullying and self-harm.

I've struggled coping with my mental health issues over the past few years. I've been thinking of ways that I could take my own life recently and I was planning on doing it tonight. Deep down I know that I don’t want to die, I just don’t think anything will change and I'm not going to feel any better than this.

Girl, 17

2 See Appendix 4 for information about how main concerns are recorded.

3 This relates to the number of times the information and advice pages were viewed, not the number of individuals who viewed the pages.
OVERVIEW OF 2016/17

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH

One in three Childline counselling sessions are about mental and emotional health and wellbeing issues (when we include self-harm and suicidal thoughts or feelings).

Concerns such as depression, anxiety, stress, loneliness, low self-esteem and unhappiness are the main reason why children and young people talk to us.

Children and young people can experience mental and emotional health problems for many reasons. For example, they may be anxious about exams, worried about the future, or have experienced trauma which has left them with difficult feelings to cope with. Talking to our counsellors can give them the confidence to move forward and speak to a trusted adult about their worries.

Many young people talk to us about seeking therapeutic support for mental and emotional health problems. We hear from those who say they are having difficulty accessing help from child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) – some are on a waiting list, and some say they have been told they don’t meet the criteria for CAMHS support (although this may be because they’ve been referred on to a more appropriate service). Those who are having treatment may be finding it difficult to talk to professionals face-to-face, or they may worry about what to do if they are struggling to cope between sessions. Others have already received therapeutic treatment for their mental health problems, but have concerns about the service ending.

Childline is a confidential service. We’re there to listen to young people and suggest options about ways of staying safe. But in exceptional cases, if a child or young person needs more help than we can provide, we will help them access support from other agencies (for example if their life is in danger we will make a referral to the emergency services). The most common reason for us to share a child or young person’s details with another service this year was because they had suicidal thoughts or feelings (61 per cent of the children we referred)⁴. We’re working to build closer relationships with other agencies such as children’s social care, health services and young offenders’ institutions so that we can complement the existing child protection services and influence children’s lives for the better.

²For more information about the referrals we make to other agencies, see page 22

⁴Of the children we referred to another service had suicidal thoughts or feelings.

22,000+

In 2016/17, over 22,400 young people told us that they were contemplating ending their lives.

#1

Mental and emotional health is the top concern of children and young people who contact Childline, with 22 per cent of counselling sessions.
We’re here for young people whatever their level of need, and we’re looking at the best ways to support those who are in higher risk situations or need a more therapeutic response.

As well as offering 1-2-1 support through our counselling service, we want to provide alternative ways for children and young people to seek information and advice. We’ve responded to the increase in counselling about mental and emotional health by adding new sections to the Childline website on managing anxiety and getting through a tough time. These reassure young people that they are not alone, remind them that they can always talk to us if they need support, and suggest practical coping strategies which they can use straight away.

My anxiety and depression have got worse since moving to a new school. I’m predicted good grades but there’s a lot of pressure on me to do well. Struggling with my mental health problems is making me lose motivation to work. I try and put on an act so people don’t know what’s happening but I feel like I’m not being myself anymore.

Boy, 17
Sex and sexual health is the most viewed topic on the Childline message boards this year, and relationships is the second most viewed topic (there are 61 topics in total).[^5]

**17,900**
(Approx.)
counselling sessions where a young person’s main concern was about sex, relationships, puberty and sexual health.

**#1**
Sex and sexual health is the most viewed topic on the Childline message boards this year.

This year there were nearly 17,900 counselling sessions where a young person’s main concern was about sex, relationships, puberty and sexual health. Young people chose to talk to counsellors about topics including sexual development, body changes, contraception, sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and relationship issues. Some described the pressures of being persuaded to get involved in risky activities such as sexting, being groomed and blackmailed, and talked about the feelings of helplessness and shame they have experienced as a result.

It’s vital that young people learn about healthy relationships – having an understanding of what’s healthy and unhealthy behaviour and knowing how to recognise the signs of abuse or grooming means they are more able to protect themselves and seek help if they need it. In September 2016 we launched **#Listentoyourselfie**, a campaign that was funded by BBC Children in Need. This featured two short films about a young person whose selfies come to life and question a situation they are in: one highlights same-sex online grooming and the other focuses on peer to peer sexual pressure and grooming.

[^5]: This relates to the number of times the message board was viewed, not the number of individuals who viewed the message board.
We continue to support children and young people who have experienced abuse and neglect. Sexual abuse is the fifth most viewed of our 61 message board topics.

This year, there were over 21,800 counselling sessions where a child or young person’s main concern was abuse (this includes sexual, physical, or emotional abuse and neglect). Of all the counselling sessions this year where the main concern was related to abuse, 43 per cent were about sexual abuse or online sexual abuse. Children and young people decide to discuss their experiences in different ways and they may raise abuse as one of several concerns in counselling sessions — so the total number of children and young people talking to us who have experienced abuse will be higher than this figure suggests.

In 36 per cent of the counselling sessions where abuse was the main concern, the young person also discussed their mental and emotional health, suicidal feelings or self-harm. Young people who have experienced abuse (sexual abuse in particular) talk about the impact it has on them, with effects including the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and panic attacks. This can be so difficult to deal with that they have developed suicidal thoughts or feelings. In the NSPCC’s survey of more than 1,000 professionals working with children who have been abused, 96 per cent said there aren’t enough CAMHS services for children who have experienced abuse (NSPCC, 2015). We believe that every young person who has experienced abuse or neglect should have access to the right mental health support when they need it — they shouldn’t have to wait until they’re at crisis point before they can get the support they need. We’re calling on the government to target therapeutic support for every young person who experiences abuse, to help them get their lives back on track as soon as possible and ensure their mental health issues don’t escalate.

My boyfriend is older than me and he makes me share pics and do stuff with other guys online. He gives me money and food when I go online and do things via webcam. I have not told anyone else what is happening, I am so scared and drink to forget. I am too scared to report him. I just know I am not normal, I am weird and nobody understands. I am disgusting, so rather me than another young girl.

Girl, 16
Children and young people care deeply about what happens in the wider world. Tragic incidents such as the terrorist attacks in Manchester and London can leave them feeling upset, angry, frightened and confused.

This year we started recording the counselling sessions where young people raised concerns about terrorism, radicalisation or extremism – there were 106, and almost half of these were about terrorism in particular. Our peer support message board which is dedicated to our world/current news provided a safe space for young people to share their thoughts and feelings about these events. The short film we produced with The Times – How should you talk to your children about terrorism? – also gives parents advice on the most effective ways to address their children’s fears.

For young people who are at risk of exploitation through radicalisation, or who are worried about a friend who may be being radicalised, the worries about the world section on the Childline website offers advice and support. It explains what terrorism, extremism and radicalisation are, offers advice about how to stay safe, and reminds young people that our counsellors are always available to talk things through with them.

I’m worried about the terrorist attack in Manchester. I am someone who is quite affected by these things wherever they are in the world but I live in Manchester and I know people who went to the concert. Luckily, none of my friends are in hospital but I know people whose friends have had to go to hospital because of the attack. It makes me feel very scared to do anything. I’ve stopped going out to busy places with my friends and all I want to do is stay inside where I am safest.

Gender and age unknown
We’ve continued to see an increase in children and young people needing to talk to us about online safety and abuse – this year there were over 12,200 counselling sessions, up 9 per cent on last year.

When children and young people talk to us about online safety, they mention cyberbullying, online grooming, and taking part in online sexual activity. Sexting was the most viewed information and advice topic on the Childline website for the fourth year running – this year there were over 221,800 page views to our sexting page, a 20 per cent increase on last year.

If young people lose control of an explicit image of themselves online, it can make them feel ashamed, embarrassed and anxious. So as well as offering counselling and advice, we’ve strengthened our partnership with the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF). Through the Childline website, young people can contact the IWF anonymously to get abusive images removed from the internet (they do need to verify that they are under 18 using YOTI, a digital identity app). Being able to act quickly can make a huge difference to a young person’s wellbeing, and if the images are being hosted in the UK, they can be removed almost immediately.

But the internet also provides great opportunities for children and young people. It’s how they socialise, find entertainment, and seek support – 71 per cent of our counselling sessions now happen online. We’ve been building our presence on Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, to make sure more young people know they can contact Childline if they are worried about anything.

It’s essential that young people are as well protected online as they are offline, so that they can keep using the internet safely. The online and mobile safety section of the Childline website gives young people valuable information and practical guidance on topics including staying safe online, online gaming, cyberbullying, online grooming and online pornography. We’re also calling on the government to introduce a set of minimum standards for all social networks and communication providers whose services are accessed by children. This should be overseen by an independent body, to ensure internet companies, social media and interactive platforms and services are transparent and accountable for the safety of all children using their services.
Young people often tell us that their parents don’t understand the gaming world, or the social networks they spend time on. The NSPCC’s Net Aware guide to the social networks, apps and games children and young people use helps parents and carers make sure they are as well informed as possible about how to keep their children safe online. Parents and carers can also sign up to the NSPCC and O2 Net Aware newsletter, which keeps them up to date on new social networks, apps and games and gives tips on online safety. Our Share Aware campaign helps families understand how to be safe online by working as a TEAM – to Talk about, Explore, Agree and Manage the online world.

I met someone online the other day, and even though we’ve only just met she’s become really possessive and threatens me when I don’t reply to her. I’ve never met her in real life but she keeps asking me to meet up, it’s a bit creepy. I don’t want to tell my parents about it, they’d just go mental. They don’t understand how these things work and that you can easily talk to strangers online, they’ll just overreact.

Girl, 14
NEW WEBSITE AND APP

Our new Childline website, which we launched in July 2016, is a great way for young people to find a wide range of reliable information, advice and tools in a format that’s easily accessible to the devices they use to access the internet.

In March 2017 we introduced our exciting new Childline app, For Me, making it even easier for young people to get information, advice and support. For Me is the first app to provide direct counselling to young people through a mobile device, and it’s free to download. Through the website and app, young people can find out about a broad range of topics, from how to ask an adult for help, to visiting a doctor, homelessness, forced marriage or children’s rights.

It’s vital that children and young people are able to access Childline in different ways, to suit their needs. Using the website and app, young people can have a 1-2-1 chat with a counsellor, send us an email, or write a letter to Ask Sam about the issues that affect them. ‘Sam’ responds to a cross section of the letters that young people have sent (these are published on the website but personal details are removed so the sender is anonymous), and young people can search the archive of letters for advice and information on a wide range of topics.
NEW WEBSITE AND APP

Young people can also use a wide range of tools on the website to build up their own set of positive coping strategies, finding out what works best for them. Our new Bounce back from bullying tool, for example, asks questions about specific aspects of bullying, suggesting ways to manage different situations and empowering young people to start taking back control of their lives. Or, if a young person just wants to take their mind off things for a while, they can play one of Childline’s online games – such as Wall of expression, where they can write about something that makes them feel bad on a wall, and then knock it down.

Many young people find writing or drawing a helpful way to express their feelings creatively, and the Art box is an increasingly well-used way for them to do this. They can save their work in their locker so they can come back to it later, or keep it as a record of how they were feeling. They can also choose to share it with a counsellor, other members of the Childline online community, keep it private or delete it – which ever they find most helpful.

We encourage young people to register with the Childline website but they don’t need to give their personal details if they don’t want to. They are then given their own private locker where they can save helpful information, so they don’t have to bookmark a page on an internet browser where other people might see it. Through their locker they can fill in their own mood journal, which helps them track their emotions, identify triggers for certain feelings or behaviours and map their progress.

I just wanted to say that Childline is a really good website. It’s really good that counsellors are there so that children and teens can talk to them about anything and everything. This website is amazing.

Gender and age unknown
NEW WEBSITE AND APP

The popular peer support message boards on the Childline website give young people a valuable opportunity to support each other safely. By reading posts from those in similar situations and asking for advice from peers, young people soon realise they are not alone. Many young people use the message boards to celebrate their own successes in a supportive environment, and in time they may feel able to model good behaviour to others.

Some topics seem to be discussed more on the message boards than in counselling sessions. Sex and sexual health, relationships and self-harm are the three most viewed message board topics – but sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health is only the fifth highest main concern in counselling sessions, and self-harm is the seventh. This could be because young people are slightly embarrassed about talking to a counsellor about some things (although some young people post on message boards as well as having counselling sessions). It might also be because young people can mention several issues in counselling sessions, so these topics might be recorded as additional concerns rather than a main concern. It’s clear that young people really value being able to reach out to the Childline online community for advice and support through the message boards. Other popular message board topics include: sexuality, sexual abuse, pregnancy/young parents, and gender identity.

All our social media channels, the message boards and content that’s generated by young people on the Childline website are fully moderated, so if a young person raises a safeguarding concern in an online post, we will take appropriate action. We work hard to ensure our online community is as safe as possible, helping young people to learn the best ways of engaging with others safely online.
In October 2016 we celebrated Childline’s 30th birthday. Since the service launched in 1986 we’ve helped over 4.5 million children, and worked with a wide range of organisations to raise awareness of the issues facing young people.

We’ve achieved a huge amount. But we know there is still work to be done to make sure all children feel they can contact us for support.

Every child is different, and they each experience and cope with problems in their own way. So we’re exploring ways to tailor our response to children and young people, depending on their needs. We’re currently investigating ways to provide age-appropriate support to children aged 11 and under through the Childline website. We’re also looking at how we can personalise the website for specific situations. For example, if a young person records that they are feeling particularly stressed in their mood journal, the home page could highlight information about anxiety and stress, with suggestions of helpful strategies they can use. And we know young people can feel particularly vulnerable at night time because the people they usually turn to for support are less available, so the information the Childline home page displays over night could be tailored towards helping them cope with their feelings.

We’re developing ways to make Childline more inclusive. For example, this year we launched the Sign Video service. This enables children and young people who are d/Deaf to talk to a Childline counsellor through a qualified British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter. And we’re piloting a service where d/Deaf children and young people can chat directly to a counsellor in BSL via Skype, and the counsellor will reply in Sign Assisted English. We’re also developing information and advice for asylum-seeking and refugee children and young people which will be available on the Childline website.

This year there were over 60,000 visits to the Childline web pages about issues surrounding ethnicity and culture, including racist bullying, female genital mutilation (FGM) and forced marriage. We’ve had 205 counselling sessions on forced marriage this year – a 12 per cent increase on last year. It’s encouraging that young people from diverse communities feel able to contact Childline, but there is more work to do. We want to reach out to children in every community, and are investigating the best ways to break down barriers.
We have more than 1,400 dedicated and highly skilled volunteer counsellors, and without them we wouldn't be able to give children and young people the support we do. In a changing world, we need to make sure we keep supporting our counsellors, giving them opportunities to develop their knowledge and enabling them to respond effectively to all the challenges children and young people face. This includes making sure they are able to spend the right amount of time talking to each child or young person who needs help. We still face some challenges meeting demand at peak times, and we're exploring innovative ways to meet high levels of demand whilst continuing to provide a high quality service. This will enable us to continue to provide all children and young people with somewhere safe to turn whenever they need support.

Thank you for being so caring to me the other night after I had taken an overdose. It was messy but because of Childline I wasn’t alone. I just got home from the hospital today and am feeling much better physically and about life in general. I am now getting proper help.

Girl, 18
### Key Statistics for 2016/17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Statistics</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Mental and Emotional Health</strong></td>
<td>22,456</td>
<td>This year we saw the highest ever levels of counselling about suicidal thoughts and feelings, with 22,456 sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Family Relationships</strong></td>
<td>3,850</td>
<td>Childline referred 3,850 children and young people to external agencies, such as the police or children's services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Bullying/Cyberbullying</strong></td>
<td>295,202</td>
<td>Childline provided 295,202 counselling sessions to children and young people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>One in three</strong></td>
<td>3.2M+</td>
<td>Childline counselling sessions related to mental and emotional health and wellbeing issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mental and Emotional Health</strong></td>
<td>21,842</td>
<td>The top three concerns young people were counselled about were mental and emotional health, family relationships, and bullying/cyberbullying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family Relationships</strong></td>
<td>32,990</td>
<td>In 32,990 counselling sessions, the young person said Childline was the first place they had talked about their problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Bullying/Cyberbullying</strong></td>
<td>13,746</td>
<td>There were 13,746 counselling sessions about anxiety.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>One in three</strong></td>
<td>8,253</td>
<td>There were 8,253 counselling sessions with children or young people who told us they were Deaf, disabled, had special educational needs or a health condition (a 13 per cent increase on last year).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Childline website received 3,262,245 web visits and has 845,410 total registered users.
# REASONS WHY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE CONTACT CHILDLINE

## Top ten reasons why children and young people contact Childline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Main concern</th>
<th>Number of Counselling sessions</th>
<th>% of total counselling sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mental/emotional health: Low self-esteem, lack of confidence, anxiety, feeling sad, low mood, lonely, mental health issues, loss and bereavement.</td>
<td>63,622</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family relationships: Conflict/arguments with family members, parents' divorce/separation.</td>
<td>37,390</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bullying/cyberbullying: Peer-to-peer bullying, either face-to-face or online.</td>
<td>24,571</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Suicidal thoughts or feelings: Suicidal thoughts or feelings or actively suicidal.</td>
<td>22,456</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health: Sexual development, relationship issues, body changes, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), contraception etc.</td>
<td>17,896</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Friendship issues: Falling out with friends, difficulty making friends.</td>
<td>16,183</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Self-harm: Self injury that is intentional.</td>
<td>15,376</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Problems in school/education: Exam pressures, concerns about performance, not coping with workload, dislikes school, new school worries, problems with teacher, truancy.</td>
<td>15,156</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sexual abuse/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.</td>
<td>9,452</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Physical abuse: Young person is at risk of, or has experienced physical abuse. This includes domestic violence, female genital mutilation (FGM) and honour based violence.</td>
<td>8,483</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 other issues. The top ten main concerns give us a good idea of what children and young people are contacting Childline about, but these figures are only a snapshot of the concerns they may have, and can’t tell us the total numbers of children who are experiencing any particular problem.
Childline is a confidential service, which means children and young people can feel safe talking to us about their worries. We want to lift their confidence, reassure them that things can change, empower them to find out what works best for them, and work with them to find solutions to their problems – for example identifying a trusted adult they can confide in. This approach works for the vast majority of children and young people.

But in exceptional circumstances, for example if a child is in a life-threatening situation, or if they are requesting direct help, we will share their details with another agency who can help them. For example we may make a referral to the police, ambulance service or children’s services. Occasionally, to keep them safe, we may need to make a referral without the child or young person’s agreement.

I just wanted to say thank you for helping me. I contacted Childline after I self-harmed and I was scared about what would happen. The counsellor that I spoke to called an ambulance and the paramedics came to check that I was okay. I’m going to go try speak to a doctor about what’s happened. I don’t know what would have happened if I didn’t have help and I want to let you know that I’m okay. I’m so grateful that you helped me.

Girl, 16–18
In 2016/17, Childline referred 3,850 children and young people to other agencies. Looking at the children whose details we passed on, 48 per cent were referred to the police, 10 per cent to children’s services, and 42 per cent to other agencies, such as the ambulance service. Sometimes we may refer a child to more than one agency.

- The total number of children referred has increased by 7 per cent since last year.
- The main reason for a referral to be made was suicidal thoughts or feelings (61 per cent of all children and young people referred). This is an increase of 7 per cent compared with last year, and is in line with the growth in counselling about suicidal thoughts or feelings.
- The most common reason for 12–18 year-olds to be referred was suicidal thoughts and feelings (71 per cent of all children and young people referred). This is an increase of 7 per cent compared with last year, and is in line with the growth in counselling about suicidal thoughts or feelings.
- It was much more common for girls to be referred about suicidal thoughts or feelings than boys (65 per cent of referrals about girls were related to suicidal thoughts compared with 43 per cent about boys).
- Physical abuse was the second most common reason for referrals (11 per cent of all children and young people referred).
- Physical abuse was the most common reason for children aged 11 and under to be referred (49 per cent of referrals for this age group).
- It was more common for boys to be referred about physical abuse than girls (16 per cent of referrals about boys related to physical abuse, compared with 10 per cent of referrals about girls).
- Sexual abuse was the third most common reason for referrals (5 per cent of all children and young people referred).

We make referrals to the police if we need them to check that a child or young person is safe. For example, if a young person has run away from home and is in a vulnerable situation, or because a child or young person tells us that someone younger than them is in danger.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Primary concern</th>
<th>Children referred</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Suicidal thoughts or feelings</td>
<td>2,357</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>432</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sexual abuse/online sexual abuse</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Runaway</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Own behaviour/actions</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mental/emotional health</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Looked after children/children in care</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I don't know why I feel this way.

ANXIETY
There were 13,746 counselling sessions about anxiety this year – the highest levels to date.

This was a 17 per cent increase on 2015/16, and a 59 per cent increase compared with 2014/15. We’re focusing on anxiety in this year’s report to highlight the growing impact it’s having on children and young people’s lives.

#### Anxiety

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>13,746</th>
<th>94%</th>
<th>83%</th>
<th>7.5%</th>
<th>11%</th>
<th>14%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12+ over</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Older children are more likely to contact Childline, but they are proportionately even more likely to talk to us about anxiety. 94 per cent of counselling sessions about anxiety are with children aged 12 or over, compared with 88 per cent of all counselling sessions.

Although young people are more likely to choose to contact Childline online than by phone, they are proportionately even more likely to talk about anxiety online. 83 per cent of counselling about anxiety happens online, compared with 71 per cent of all counselling sessions.

Girls are more likely than boys to contact Childline, but they are proportionately even more likely to talk to us about anxiety. 75 per cent of counselling sessions about anxiety were with girls, 11 per cent were with boys and 14 per cent were where gender was unknown. This compares with 67 per cent of all counselling being with girls, 17 per cent with boys and 16 per cent where gender was unknown.

Childline is a private and confidential service. It’s up to children and young people to decide how much, or little, information they want to share with us. However, enough children and young people provide information to give us an idea of who is contacting Childline.

Throughout this report the statistics we provide about the age of children and young people are based on the counselling sessions where this information was known. For more detailed information about who contacts Childline, please see Appendix 2.
What do children and young people with anxiety tell Childline?

Young people with anxiety describe an overwhelming feeling of worry and panic, which stops them from carrying out daily activities. They talk about feeling anxious around new people or unfamiliar situations, sometimes experiencing such strong feelings that they avoid going to school or leaving the house. Anxiety can be accompanied by low concentration, problems sleeping and social withdrawal.

This year there were 3,304 counselling sessions where a young person talked about having panic attacks, a 4 per cent increase from 2015/16. Young people said these attacks make them feel trapped, nauseous and faint, with a tightening in their chest, breathing problems and sometimes hyperventilating.

Young people with anxiety often talk about experiencing uncontrollable extremes of emotions and mood swings. These can be brought on by events that seem small or inconsequential, which means the young people feel they are overreacting. They talk about feeling angry or irritable, saying that they are struggling to handle their emotions and don’t think their friends and family understand what’s happening to them. As a result they often want to be on their own. But this can lead to them becoming more isolated.

Young people who talk about having anxiety often experience other mental health problems. Many also feel low, upset, and lonely, with depression, low levels of motivation and difficulty concentrating. Some raise concerns about eating disorders, suicidal thoughts and hearing voices. This can make them worry about their ability to cope.

“My anxiety and depression have got worse since moving to a new school. I’m predicted good grades but there’s a lot of pressure on me to do well. Struggling with my mental health problems is making me lose motivation to work. I try and put on an act so people don’t know what’s happening but I feel like I’m not being myself anymore.” (Boy, 17)
Why are children and young people experiencing anxiety?

Some young people can identify triggers for their anxiety, such as presentations or exams, which make them feel anxious or cause a panic attack:

“I’ve been struggling with social anxiety for a while now. I get panic attacks and little things set them off, like being around lots of people or having to talk in front of the class. It makes me really worked up even though I know there’s nothing to worry about. My friends think I should talk to a doctor but I’m too scared to talk to anybody.” (Girl, 15)

But many don’t think there is any particular reason for their feelings. Some young people are so confused about what is making them have anxiety that they ask our counsellors what could have caused them to feel this way:

“I’m feeling confused at the moment. I’ve been feeling more and more anxious recently and I had my first panic attack the other day. I’m confused about why my feelings have become so much worse so quickly. I feel anxious about everything – being at school, my friends, relationships – and I’m questioning everything I do. I don’t understand what’s making me feel this way and I’m finding it all really scary.” (Gender and age unknown)

3,304 counselling sessions, this year, where a young person talked about having panic attacks.

Recently I’ve been feeling anxious and the smallest things make me feel scared. I don’t understand because nothing has happened to trigger it, I’ve just been feeling worse and worse lately. It’s got to the point where I’ve felt so overwhelmed today I just want to run away from it all.

Girl, 16
How do children and young people cope with anxiety?

Young people struggling with anxiety often tell us they’re finding it difficult to ask for help. Of the counselling sessions where a young person’s main concern was mental and emotional health this year, 10 per cent (6,546) said they hadn’t previously told anyone about their problems.

Some are afraid of being judged or stigmatised by other people, while others say they have tried to talk to their parents without success. They tell us their parents don’t understand what they are going through – this can be particularly difficult if their parents have previously dismissed their anxiety as an overreaction or a passing phase.

I want to go and talk to my college counsellor about self-harm but I’m too nervous to go to my appointment. I get worked up and anxious before my appointments and feel like people are judging me. I get so awkward when I talk about my problems and then my nerves stop me from asking for help. I’ve not spoken to the counsellor before because I just avoid everything that makes me feel nervous, but I know that I need to speak to somebody about how I’m feeling.

Girl, 17

“I’ve been feeling so anxious lately that it’s making me feel sick. I’ve had problems with anxiety for a couple of years but it’s got worse recently and I don’t know what to do. I’ve told my mum about it but she said it’s just a part of growing up. I don’t think it is though. I feel really self-conscious around people, especially when I don’t know them and I’ve started feeling crazy because every little thing makes my mood change. I trust my friends to give me advice when I have problems but I’m so worried about what they will think of me if I tell them about this. I’m too anxious to ask anyone for advice.” (Girl, age unknown)

We hear from young people who want to get help, but are too anxious to contact a professional or attend arranged counselling sessions. Some feel their anxiety has stopped them from getting the help they need.

In around a fifth of counselling sessions (12,451) about mental and emotional health, the young person said they had spoken to a professional before contacting Childline (this includes child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), a health professional, a school counsellor and a social worker). If they’ve experienced challenges in getting support, they may feel as if they aren’t being listened to – so it can really help to talk things through with us. Some young people tell us they on a waiting list for CAMHS and others say they have been told they don’t fit the criteria for CAMHS support (they may have been referred to another service that can help them, which can take time). In both cases they might be worried about how they will cope while they wait for their treatment to start.
Other young people are already receiving support from CAMHS for their anxiety. They may find the therapeutic process challenging, and feel that they need extra support. Some are confused about how their parents will be involved in their sessions, and what their counsellor will tell their parents about the things they’ve discussed. Although it’s often in a child’s best interest for their parents to be part of their treatment plan, young people can find it difficult to be open about their feelings in front of their parents.

Many young people worry about who they can trust and whether their therapy will be confidential.

“CAMHS sent a letter to my parents telling them what I said in my sessions, so I don’t feel like I can trust them anymore.” (Girl, 14)

Some young people have already received professional support, which has now ended. But if they don’t think their anxiety has improved enough, they may worry that their treatment finished too soon. Some tell us that opening up to a counsellor face to face takes time because of their anxiety, and they don’t feel they were given long enough to tell the counsellor everything they needed to.

I went to see a CAMHS counsellor about my anxiety and bipolar disorder but they didn’t think anything was wrong with me. I’m now really worried because I didn’t tell them everything I wanted to. My dad was there with me and I didn’t want to speak out in front of him.

Girl, 14

For the past few years I’ve been struggling with anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and an eating disorder. I’ve self-harmed to cope before but I’m finding it all so hard to cope with. I’ve been pretending to everybody that I’m okay but I’m not.

Girl, 17
Some young people share coping strategies that they find helpful with us, and with each other via our peer support message boards. These include:

- **Breathing exercises** – these can help a child or young person to calm down when they are feeling panicked, stressed or anxious.

- **Being creative** – for example writing, drawing, modelling, dancing, singing, colouring in – this gives young people a way to express the way they are feeling. It also gives them something to concentrate on as a distraction from their anxiety and keeps their hands busy which can be helpful if they are feeling agitated.

- **Listening to music** – this can be helpful as it can soothe young people or distract them from negative feelings, depending on what they need (listening to loud music can be just as soothing as quiet music!). Creating a playlist of favourite songs to suit a particular mood can also be helpful as it gives a young person a project to work on and a sense of achievement when it’s finished.

- **Positive affirmations** – when a young person is having repetitive negative thoughts it can be helpful to repeat a positive phrase such as “this feeling will pass”, “I’m in control” or “I’m good enough” to counteract the anxious thoughts and stop the negative cycle.

- **Getting involved with hobbies, clubs and activities** – spending time doing something they enjoy is a good way for young people to release energy. Over time, joining a club or regularly taking part in a group activity can boost a young person’s self-esteem and give them a sense of achievement. It encourages young people to be sociable, builds up their self-confidence and can help them make new friends.

- **Using the resources on the Childline website** – the Childline website has a range of resources young people can use to help deal with difficult feelings. It gives information about anxiety, stress and panic attacks and suggests practical coping strategies they can use straight away.

Helpful resources include:

- **About anxiety** – what anxiety is, what causes it and what young people can do if it’s getting too much.

- **Balloon Game** – an online game to help young people express and release their worries.

- **Controlling your panic attacks** – practical advice on controlling panic attacks.

- **Coping with stress message board** – a peer support message board where young people can post and speak to other young people about their experiences of stress, and share tips on coping strategies.

- **Managing stress and anxiety** – a short film talking about what anxiety is like and giving tips on how to cope.

- **Mental health message board** – a place for young people to share their experiences with their mental health and get advice from others.

- **Worries about the world** – information to support young people who are troubled about world events, particularly terrorism.

- **You are more than your anxiety** – part of the Voice Box series on Childline’s YouTube channel, which discusses experiences of anxiety and giving tips on how to survive it.
When I am experiencing a panic attack I try and control my breathing to calm me down. Another thing that helps is to think ahead and know that everything will be okay once it is over, and that you will get past that feeling.

Gender and age unknown

When you’re having a panic attack I find it helps to look around you and list the different things that you see. I think this helps to distract you from feeling anxious and makes you realise that you’re not in danger.

Gender and age unknown

I used to self-harm to cope with anxiety and depression but I know now that it doesn’t help anything. It really helped me getting more hobbies like tennis or meditation. It helps take your mind off how you’re feeling and find people who will support you.

Gender and age unknown

Young people who use the message boards on the Childline website have made these recommendations:
SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR FEELINGS

feels like NOTHING will change
Both the number and proportion of counselling sessions where a young person’s main concern is about suicidal thoughts and feelings is rising.

**22,456**

In 2016/17 there were 22,456 counselling sessions where a child or young person’s main concern was having suicidal thoughts or feelings.

**15%**

This year the number of counselling sessions where a young person’s main concern is about suicidal thoughts and feelings increased by 15 per cent from 2015/16.

16–18 year-olds are proportionately even more likely to talk to us about having suicidal thoughts or feelings than under 16s (47 per cent of counselling sessions where a child or young person’s main concern was that they were having suicidal thoughts or feelings were with 16–18 year-olds, compared with 33 per cent of all counselling sessions).

Girls are more likely to talk to Childline than boys, but they are proportionately even more likely to talk about suicidal thoughts and feelings than boys. Of counselling sessions about suicidal thoughts and feelings, 72 per cent were with girls, 14 per cent were with boys, and 14 per cent were where gender was unknown. This compares with 67 per cent of all counselling sessions being with girls, 17 per cent with boys, and 16 per cent where gender was unknown.

**3rd**

It is the third most common concern for girls (8 per cent of all counselling with girls).

**5th**

It is the fifth most common concern for boys (6 per cent of all counselling with boys).
This year we saw the highest level of counselling about suicidal thoughts and feelings we’ve ever recorded. We’ve had 2,061 counselling sessions where a young person has been actively suicidal – a 9 per cent increase since last year (this means they have taken steps such as writing a suicide note, giving meaningful items away or planning how to end their life). The number of young people who have been experiencing suicidal thoughts or feelings for a long period of time has also increased.

It’s encouraging that more young people feel able to ask Childline for help, but we want to share some of the challenges they are facing so that we and other professionals can provide them with the support they need.

When I was younger I was sexually abused by a friend of my family. It isn’t happening any more but it went on for years and I now have flashbacks. When I have flashbacks it feels like it’s happening all over again. After I have the flashbacks I feel like I can’t cope with everything that’s happened and I’ve thought about ending it all.

Girl, 14
Counselling sessions where the main concern was suicidal thoughts or feelings

Girls are more likely to talk to Childline than boys (67 per cent of all counselling sessions are with girls, 17 per cent are with boys and in 16 per cent gender is unknown). And they are proportionately even more likely to talk to us about suicidal thoughts or feelings (72 per cent of counselling sessions about suicidal thoughts or feelings are with girls, 14 per cent with boys and in 14 per cent gender is unknown). But National statistics indicate that suicide affects more males than females (Office for National Statistics, 2017). So we launched our Tough to Talk campaign in March 2017, to encourage more boys to speak out about mental health issues, to stop suicidal thoughts or feelings from becoming overwhelming.

Our short film, Things guys don’t talk about, was promoted through several internet channels, and Childline’s YouTube channel ran a series of Voice Box episodes discussing the importance of opening up about feelings. The campaign was a huge success: the film achieved a total of just under 10 million views, and during the two-week campaign period there was a 137 per cent increase in counselling sessions for boys whose main concern was suicidal thoughts or feelings (192 sessions, compared with 81 sessions in the same period in 2016). We also saw an increase in counselling sessions with girls whose main concern was suicidal thoughts or feelings compared with the same period in 2016 (778 sessions, compared with 462 sessions in the same period in 2016). This contributed to the overall increase in counselling sessions about suicidal thoughts or feelings since last year.

We’re hoping that young people experiencing suicidal thoughts or feelings will increasingly think of Childline as a relevant place to go to for support following the success of Tough to Talk. We’re investigating ways of working with partners to engage more boys, making sure they know we’re there to support them if they are experiencing suicidal thoughts or feelings or any other difficulty.
Why do young people experience suicidal thoughts or feelings?
Children and young people raise lots of different issues during counselling. We record a young person’s main concern as well as any additional concerns they may mention. There are some feelings that young people with suicidal thoughts often discuss, such as low moods, depression, anxiety and panic attacks. Many also talk about self-harm, family relationships, problems at school, bullying and friendship issues. However suicidal thoughts and feelings are very complex and each young person will have had a set of individual experiences which have built up and led to them thinking about the possibility of ending their life.

Boys whose main concern is suicidal thoughts or feelings also talk about sex, relationships, puberty and sexual health issues, sexual and gender identity issues, and alcohol, drugs or substance misuse. Some boys talk about having recently come out to their parents, feeling that they would not be accepted if they ‘came out’ or being bullied about their sexuality.

My parents have been angry with me ever since I came out as gay. They hate me now and only ever shout at me. I’m getting bullied at school as well. Other kids say nasty things to me and hit me, they tell me to kill myself because I’m gay. I don’t think there’s any point being here anymore, I can’t cope with what’s happening.

Boy, 15
Eating problems are one of the 10 most common other concerns raised by girls whose main concern is having suicidal thoughts or feelings. Girls who were suffering from eating disorders talk about feeling overwhelmed by several mental health issues, including depression and anxiety, and feeling they don’t have anyone to talk to.

Many of the girls who talk to us about having suicidal thoughts or feelings also mention sexual and emotional abuse. Girls who have been sexually abused tell Childline they are struggling to cope with the on-going psychological effects, including the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), panic attacks and flashbacks. When emotional abuse is a concern, girls talk about being constantly put down by their parents, being told that they are useless and made to feel unwanted. In many cases they have lost their sense of self-worth and don’t think they would be missed if they were to take their life. Children and young people who have been abused shouldn’t have to be at crisis point before they get the help they need. This is why our It’s Time campaign is calling on the government to ensure that all children who have experienced abuse receive the right support, at the right time for them.

In some cases, young people think they deserve to die or should be punished for not being good enough.
Top 10 additional concerns when a young person’s main concern is suicidal thoughts or feelings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Girls Concern</th>
<th>% of sessions</th>
<th>Boys Concern</th>
<th>% of sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mental/emotional health</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Mental/emotional health</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Problems in school/education</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>Problems in school/education</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>Bullying/cyberbullying</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bullying/cyberbullying</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Eating problems</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sexual abuse</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Sexual and gender identity</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Emotional abuse</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Alcohol/drugs/substance misuse</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some young people say they have previously self-harmed to distract themselves from suicidal thoughts or feelings.

Others (boys in particular) may talk about struggling with alcohol or drug misuse after turning to substances to cope with problems such as depression or the effects of abuse.

Many young people don’t feel able to tell anybody about how they are feeling, because they are too scared of the consequences. They may be frightened that other people won’t understand what they are going through, worried about being judged or concerned about being told off or not taken seriously by their parents:

“I have depression and I self-harm to cope, but my suicidal thoughts have been overwhelming recently. I feel really bad today and I’m thinking about going out for a walk but I’m scared about what I’ll do. I was thinking about jumping off a cliff earlier. I think I need help. I don’t want my mum to find out, she doesn’t understand how I feel and would just tell me that I’m being silly.” (Boy, 18)

A number of young people tell us that they don’t want to die, but feel so overwhelmed and hopeless that they don’t think they can carry on living. These young people often talk about struggling to get the help they need from professionals, their friends or family. So it’s vital that Childline is there for them when they don’t know where else to turn.

“I’ve attempted suicide before and I don’t feel safe when I feel like I do at the moment. My suicidal feelings are overwhelming and I keep having panic attacks. I’ve been taking medication for my depression but I don’t feel like it’s working anymore. I’m not seeing my doctor again for a while and I’m scared about waiting for so long. I’m struggling every day.”

Girl, age unknown

“I’ve been thinking about ending my life recently and how I could do it. I’ve felt low for a really long time but recently it’s got worse. I struggle to get up in the morning and have reached a low point. I used to self-harm to cope with my feelings but that isn’t helping anymore. I don’t want to die but I can’t carry on like this. I want somebody to try and help me but I don’t think anyone can and I don’t think anyone cares.”

Girl, 16
How do children and young people with suicidal thoughts or feelings get help?
Childline is a confidential service – children and young people contact us because they trust us. We work with young people to identify possible solutions to their problems, and empower them to make their own decisions about what’s best for them. And we want to provide them with effective support when they need it most. As part of this we’ve been training our Childline supervisors in ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) over the past few years (LivingWorks, 2017). This enables our supervisors to support our volunteer counsellors in working with children and young people who are having suicidal thoughts or feelings, and gives them a framework to use when assessing a young person’s level of risk and deciding how to help them appropriately.

Young people who are experiencing suicidal thoughts and feelings can also access a range of support through Childline online. This includes:

- **Bottling up emotions** – part of the Voice Box series on Childline’s YouTube channel, this short film gives young people advice on how to express their emotions.
- **Coping with suicidal thoughts or feelings** – practical support and advice for young people living with suicidal thoughts or feelings.
- **Feeling sad, depressed or unhappy** – a short film talking about how depression and suicidal thoughts can feel for young people, and encouraging them to get support.
- **Somewhere New** – a YouTube video giving tips and support for young people experiencing suicidal thoughts or feelings.
- **Suicidal thoughts – Fiona’s story** – an anonymised story about Fiona, a young person who experienced suicidal thoughts, and how she got support.

However in a minority of cases, for example where a child or young person is in a life threatening situation or if they have requested direct help, we need to make referrals to other agencies so that the young person can get the specialised support they need. This year, we made 2,357 referrals about young people with suicidal thoughts – it was the most common reason for us to make a referral to another agency (61 per cent of children referred).

I was depressed and suicidal. After talking to Childline I told people about the fact I nearly took my own life. Things are sorted now and I know what to do in this type of situation, so I might not ever need to contact Childline again! I just really want to thank Childline for saving my life!

Girl, 12
Some young people with suicidal thoughts are asking us to contact other agencies on their behalf. There could be several reasons for this. Some young people recognise that they could cause themselves serious harm but they don’t want to go through with it. They’re scared about losing control and want Childline to get them help.

In other cases, young people can be anxious about asking for medical help, and they are more comfortable contacting Childline:

“I’ve taken an overdose and my anxiety is stopping me from ringing an ambulance. I’m worried about hurting my mum and don’t want her to know that I’ve overdosed, can you help me?” (Girl, 13)

Some of the young people we referred for suicidal thoughts said they had previously asked for support from professionals. We hear from other agencies that waiting times for mental health services are getting longer and the criteria for being given support are getting more stringent, making it more difficult for young people to get help. And while they are on a waiting list, their mental health problems can escalate. Some ask us to speak to other agencies on their behalf and help them get the support they need more quickly:

“My GP referred me to CAMHS because of my suicidal thoughts, but I’ve been told that I have to wait for months for an appointment. I’ve been feeling really low for months now and I don’t have anyone I can talk to about it. Can you speak to CAMHS and tell them how bad I’m feeling?” (Boy, 17)

Other young people talk about having had professional support, but feel that this hasn’t worked for them and think their options have run out. Some older teenagers have been having support from CAMHS but now need to move to adult services. This can have a negative impact:

“Since turning 18 I have had to leave CAMHS and I’ve been waiting for months to see adult services. I’ve been waiting for so long but still no one has contacted me. I feel like no one cares about me. I can’t take waiting anymore and I have no one to support me, I just want to end it all.” (Gender unknown, 18)

Overall, we’re seeing growing trends in the number of counselling sessions about suicidal thoughts; the number of young people having suicidal thoughts or feelings who are agreeing to us referring them to other agencies; the number of young people who have previously told someone about their suicidal thoughts or feelings; and the number of young people who have been experiencing suicidal thoughts for a long time. This may suggest that, although young people want to get help for their suicidal thoughts or feelings, they are not able to get the support they need; or that the support young people have previously been given for their suicidal thoughts or feelings has not solved all their problems.
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS, DISABILITIES OR A HEALTH CONDITION

JUST WISH they understood me
The issues we’re discussing in this section all come from counselling sessions where a child or young person told our counsellors they were d/Deaf, disabled, had special educational needs or a health condition.

There were 8,253 counselling sessions in 2016/17 with children or young people who told us they were d/Deaf, disabled, had special educational needs or a health condition – a 13 per cent increase from 2015/16.

42 per cent of counselling sessions where the young person said they were d/Deaf, disabled, had special educational needs or a health condition, were with an autistic young person.
We’re using the term ‘disabled children and young people’ as a generic term throughout this section. It covers children and young people with a range of very different conditions and identities, some of whom may not identify as being disabled – for example children who are d/Deaf, are on the autistic spectrum, have a condition such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) or children who have a long term illness. Disabled children and young people can experience challenges as a direct result of their disability or as a result of social norms and other people’s attitudes. They can be particularly vulnerable and can struggle to make their voices heard. So it’s really important that we’re able to share some of the concerns they’ve raised.

### 10 most common disabilities, special educational needs or health conditions children and young people told us they were affected by in 2016/17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability, special educational needs or health condition</th>
<th>Number of counselling sessions</th>
<th>% of counselling sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autistic spectrum condition</td>
<td>3,462</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning difficulties/special educational needs</td>
<td>1,247</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical disability/mobility issues</td>
<td>974</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)/attention deficit disorder (ADD)</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epilepsy</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bladder/bowel condition</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d/Deaf</td>
<td>231</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cancer</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skin condition</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since last year we’ve recorded an increase in counselling with young people who have the 10 most common disabilities, special educational needs or health conditions. However for d/Deaf children and young people, the number of counselling sessions has decreased by 15 per cent. We launched our new Sign Video service this year, so that d/Deaf children and young people can communicate directly with our counsellors through a qualified British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter using video chat. We’re also piloting a service where d/Deaf children and young people can chat directly to a counsellor in BSL via Skype and the counsellor will reply in Sign Assisted English. Although this means they can be seen by the interpreter or counsellor, they can choose to share as much or as little information as they want to about themselves. And our confidentiality promise is still the same. We hope this will enable us to reach more d/Deaf children and young people, giving them different ways to access the same level of support we provide for other children.

In 97 per cent of the total counselling sessions with disabled young people, the child or young person talked about having one of the 10 most common disabilities, special educational needs or health conditions.
Main counselling concerns raised by young people who are d/Deaf, disabled, have special educational needs or a health condition in 2016/17.
The main concerns that disabled children and young people talk to us about are similar to the main concerns from all counselling sessions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Main concern</th>
<th>% of counselling sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mental/emotional health</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>d/Deafness/disability/special educational needs/health condition</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bullying/cyberbullying</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Suicidal thoughts or feelings</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Problems in school/education</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Own behaviour/actions</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I just want to be a normal teenager again, happy and pain free and to not be different, but I know that is impossible.

Girl, age unknown
Why do disabled young people talk to Childline?
Disabled young people often tell us they find it very difficult to speak out about their feelings. Some feel like they’re a burden to their families and think they need to be strong so they don’t make things harder for everyone else. But others have tried to share their feelings and felt like they aren’t being listened to. Many young people say they receive practical help at school, home and from medical professionals, but feel as though they are losing their identity as a person. They may find that the adults around them are focused on managing their disability, rather than understanding their feelings and opinions.

It can also be challenging for young people with certain disabilities to communicate exactly what is making them upset and get the right support.

Disabled young people frequently mention that they don’t feel they are very well understood, and don’t get enough emotional support. It’s clear that many are coping alone with their feelings. So it’s vital that Childline is there for them to talk to.

Gender and age unknown

I am feeling really sad and upset because I am being bullied at school. I tried telling my teacher but that didn’t really work. She said she would speak to the girls who are bullying me but nothing has changed which makes me feel sad and depressed. I was hoping they would stop making fun of me. The trouble is, it’s really hard for me to tell the teachers exactly what the bullies are saying, but I can tell they are making fun of me and they have even thrown things at me. I am Deaf and I used to go to a school for Deaf children before but now I don’t so that has been hard too. I would really like more support from the school to make them stop bullying me and help me make friends.

Gender and age unknown

I've got cancer and I feel I have no say over what happens to my own body. Everybody else decides my life for me. The doctors use language I don't understand and my parents make decisions without discussing or explaining it to me. They think they are doing the right thing and I know they care, I have tried to tell them but they don't listen - it's like I became ill and lost my voice. I am fed up with being wrapped up in cotton wool but I am too scared to speak up and say what I want for fear of upsetting my parents.

Girl, 14
What do disabled children and young people tell Childline?
Disabled children and young people can have a very different lifestyle to the young people around them. They may not have as much freedom and independence, with fewer opportunities to socialise and make friends. They often talk about wanting to be able to live their life like other teenagers, and wanting to be the same as their peers.

Young people can find their disability adds pressure to their family relationships, and this makes them feel guilty. Some young people tell counsellors about family arguments and communication breakdowns. Others find there is conflict with their siblings, who may be jealous of the extra attention they get due to their disability. It’s understandable that parents need to take extra care of these children, but it’s common for disabled young people to talk about feeling over-protected.

“I feel like a criminal being watched – constantly under surveillance.”
(Gender and age unknown)

Disabled young people may find other people’s reactions to their disability more challenging than the disability itself. They talk to us about feeling left out of social activities and events, for example not being invited to parties, outings, or holidays. This can make them feel lonely.

I really want to make friends but people make fun of me, they call me a freak and it makes me sad. I hear the girls all making plans and arranging to do things and I am never invited.

Girl, 11
Issues such as low self-confidence, finding it hard to interpret others’ actions, coping with emotions, not knowing whether to share details of their disability, and embarrassment about a disability can create extra pressure when navigating teenage relationships.

Young people who have recently become disabled or been diagnosed with special educational needs or a long term health condition, talk about finding it difficult to cope with this sudden change to their lives. Many of them say they feel like a failure because they aren’t able to do things as well as they once could, or have even had to stop doing certain activities.

“About six months ago I was involved in a car accident that has left me disabled. I am going back to school tomorrow for the first time since the accident and I am really nervous at how people will react. I don’t even want to go back to that school because the last time I was there I could walk and now I need help with almost everything. I haven’t told my parents how I am feeling because they are upset enough at how I am now”. (Boy, 13)

This year, 42 per cent of counselling sessions with disabled children and young people were with someone who said they were on the autistic spectrum (3,462 sessions). Some of them mention being bullied for doing or saying ‘odd’ things. They may feel they are easy targets for bullies as they don’t have a group of friends to protect them. Autistic children and young people talk about finding it hard to read facial expressions and body language, and not always being able to work out whether someone is being friendly. Some feel as if other people could be using this as a way to take advantage of them or manipulate them into doing things they aren’t comfortable with.

Bullying was the third highest concern for all children and young people (including those who are disabled). Disabled children regularly talk about being made fun of, being called hurtful names, being excluded and isolated, being teased and mimicked, being laughed at when unable to complete class work/achieving low grades, and being stolen from. They also mention feeling uncomfortable in situations where their disability or difference becomes more obvious, for example when they can’t take part in sports activities. Some young people talk about experiencing bullying from fellow pupils outside of school.

“They bully me because I wear glasses and have a funny looking eye. I get bullied going to school and coming back. Some of the bullies live in the next street to me. I asked my school for help but I was told they couldn’t do anything about bullying that happens outside of school. I can’t tell my parents as they work long hours and I hardly see them to talk to. I am really sad and so worried about what the bullies will do to me.”

Boy, 9
Disabled young people were more likely to talk about problems in school/education than other young people (this was the sixth highest concern for disabled young people but the eighth highest concern of all counselling sessions). Problems they experience include: poor attendance levels due to their disability; struggling with classwork or exams; and coping with noise and distractions. Many children who have previously attended a special school talk about struggling with the move to a mainstream school.

Disabled young people can feel they are not well understood by all their teachers. This can have an impact on how teachers communicate with them or how teachers interpret their behaviour:

“I feel like my teachers think I am stupid, they are patronising when they speak to me and sometimes shout when talking which they do not need to – it’s really embarrassing. I just wish teachers understood me more – it would make things so much better for me in school” (Girl, 11)

However some young people also value the support they receive at school, for example having one-to-one help in the classroom or having a teacher who has made an extra effort to understand their situation:

“My new PE teacher did something really special. She came and sat with me and said she knew I had autism and wanted me to tell her what it was like and how she can make things easier for me. She made me so happy and now she has been made my mentor.  I am allowed to work with my PE teacher if I have a bad autism day, she supports me a lot.” (Girl, aged 13)

For some disabled young people, the pressures of school work and performing in exams can be even more challenging than for their classmates:

I have been feeling really stressed for a while now mainly due to school and exams. I have good support at school but sometimes everything is just overwhelming. I’m autistic so I am sensitive to light and noise and get very upset. I self-harm by punching myself in the face and I really want to stop. My doctor gave me tablets for anxiety but I don’t feel any better on them. I also really worry about my future like whether I will get into university or will be able to cope with living away from home. It just all gets too much so I hurt myself.

Boy, 17
Many of the disabled young people who talked to us this year have shared their worries about the future. They describe feeling scared or terrified, worrying about how their disability will impact upon their future ambitions and/or getting into university. They also raise concerns about living independently and wonder whether they will be able to support themselves in the future. Some of these young people can’t picture ever being in a loving relationship or becoming parents, and others fear not having a future at all.

Other young people feel their parents aren’t telling them everything about their condition and prognosis. They might have overheard conversations, and feel their family aren’t being open and honest with them. This makes them feel scared, anxious and worried about what’s going to happen to them.

I am feeling dreadful. I don’t really know what to do. I am at the point where I just want to drop out of college. I can’t really cope with the pressure and am breaking down constantly. I am on the autistic spectrum and I don’t understand how everyone else seems to deal with the world we live in. It’s loud and confusing and I don’t like it at all. I have had a lot of professional help in the past but I don’t have it anymore because I got sick of talking about what had happened rather than looking for ways forward. I am beginning to think the reason for that is that there are no solutions. I try to be open with my parents but I have never really done too well and I don’t want to bring them down anymore. I want to have my own life as I am too much of a burden on them but at the moment I cannot see any future.

Girl, 17
How do disabled children and young people overcome challenges?
A number of disabled young people talk to us about forming relationships online as a way to feel less isolated. This has many benefits: they say they feel more confident in talking to people online and value the relationships they build, which makes them feel less lonely:

However, problems with online friendships can cause a lot of anxiety, making a young person whose confidence is already low feel even worse:

‘Over the last few weeks my online friends have stopped contacting me and I don’t know why. It’s so upsetting because I don’t have any friends at school – I’ve got Asperger’s so I get bullied and told I should be dead. I have now realised that I have developed an addiction to virtual friends to make up for the lack of real life friends I have, so I have taken myself off social media tonight. I feel so isolated and alone and have just been in my room just staring into space. I am worried about the impact this is having on my mental health. I have previously felt suicidal and I do not want to go back there’ (Girl, 16).

I have one friend online I have never met but she’s really wonderful and has been in the exact same position as me with her disability. It helps me to know that things will get better because she copes a lot better now, and always tries to help me. We FaceTime a lot and she is the only person I can confide in.

Girl, age unknown

I have been talking to a boy online but have never met him in person. I feel comfortable talking about anything with him. He doesn’t live that far away and I really like him. He says he wants to meet me but I am worried that when he sees me he won’t want to talk to me because I am not the prettiest and I look different to the pictures I have sent him. I have a speech problem too which he doesn’t know about. I haven’t told him because people make fun of the way I speak and I have lost confidence in talking – I hardly ever speak. I really want to meet him but feel quite anxious about it.

Girl, 14
Disabled young people who are looking for friendship online can be vulnerable to online grooming:

‘Can you help me with advice? I think I am being sexually groomed online. I met this older woman online and we talk every day. I told her about my disability and she said she understood my condition and knew others like me. After a while she asked me to do things that made me feel uncomfortable but I did it because she was the first female to take notice of me. I now feel like she manipulated me. I am so ashamed, it has made me feel like I don’t want to be here anymore, I have even thought about overdosing. I have told my mum and she has reported it but I feel like it’s all my fault – I am so stupid, I shouldn’t have done it.’ (Boy, 17)

It’s really important that all young people are able to recognise the signs of a healthy or unhealthy relationship, know the signs of grooming and know who they can ask for support when they need it. This is why we’re calling on the government to ensure Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) in schools is well funded and taught to a high standard. We’re also calling for a set of minimum standards for all social networks and communication providers whose services are accessed by children, so that children and young people can be as safe online as they are offline.

I have a serious health condition and can’t really do things other girls of my age do. I spend a lot of time online and had a long distance online relationship when I was 15. It was really good at first but after a while my boyfriend became abusive and he made me do things, terrible things, and I seriously harmed myself. I got so depressed I attempted suicide. Social services and the police got involved and told me I had been groomed. I can’t seem to get over what happened and still feel so many different emotions but I have not received any support for my suicidal thoughts.

Girl, 18
Disabled young people often discuss ways of coping and building their own resilience with our counsellors. As well as talking to Childline, there are several strategies they say they find helpful (some children and young people may not be able to do all of these depending on their disability):

- **Exercise and sport** – this can give them an outlet for their energy, something positive to focus on, and a sense of achievement. It can improve mental health as well as physical fitness.

- **Going for quiet, long walks** – this gives them an opportunity to think things through. It can also provide a gentle form of exercise for those who are unable to get involved in certain sports.

- **Deep breathing or meditation** – these techniques can be really helpful for young people who are stressed or anxious.

- **Listening to music** – this can be relaxing, fun, and young people can decide what they listen to depending on their moods. They may also want to create their own playlists.

- **Creative writing and other creative arts** – activities such as drawing, painting, dancing, singing or colouring in give young people a helpful way to express their feelings. Disabled young people also talked about creating a montage of images, reminding them of good things in their life. They also mentioned the Art box on the Childline website as a particularly helpful resource.

- **Watching YouTube videos, particularly of YouTubers who have similar disabilities** – this can help young people feel less isolated. However counsellors often talk to young people about what they are planning to watch, as some YouTube videos can be unhelpful. Some young people also find it helpful to make YouTube videos, as this helps them feel as if they have a voice.

- **Watching Netflix or films** – this can be a helpful distraction from negative thoughts, but we advise young people to set themselves sensible time limits for this type of activity.

- **Finding appropriate ways to let out stress or anger** – techniques such as hitting a pillow can help release stress without hurting or taking things out on other people.

- **Chatting with friends online** – this helps young people who feel isolated or whose disability is stopping them from going out to socialise.
In some cases, young people don’t fully understand their disability, because it’s described using confusing language without being clarified. If this happens, we can help them work things out. Many young people tell us that they’ve found the resources on the Childline website helpful in understanding their disability – particularly if they need information on an autistic spectrum condition or dyslexia.

Helpful resources on the Childline website include:

- **Autism** – support and advice for young people with autistic spectrum conditions.

- **Deaf Zone** – offers a range of advice and support in English and British Sign Language (BSL) on topics such as bullying and cyberbullying, discrimination and equal opportunities, staying safe online.

- **Contacting Childline using Sign Video** – YouTube film giving information for d/Deaf young people on what Childline is, and how to talk to a counsellor using Sign Video.

- **Disability in sport** – a short film as part of Childline’s Voice Box series on YouTube, featuring TV presenter Ade Adepitan who talks about getting involved in sport when you’re disabled.

- **Dyslexia and learning disabilities** – support and information on what a learning disability is, how to get support and what rights young people with learning disabilities have.

- **Family Relationships – BSL video** – short YouTube film in British Sign Language giving young people information and advice on family relationships.

- **Living with a disability** – information about issues that may affect d/Deaf or disabled young people, including information about their rights.

- **Living with d/Deafness and disability message board** – a peer support message board where young people can talk about issues relating to being d/Deaf or disabled and get advice from others.

- **Overcoming challenges if you’re d/Deaf** – one of Childline’s Voice Box films on YouTube, sharing advice for d/Deaf young people.
ALWAYS there for me

HOW CHILDLINE HELPED ME
I have had anxiety for a long time but when I started talking to Childline counsellors it built up my confidence to tell my older sister who is 15. Through talking to her I found out that she is struggling with social anxiety. Although we are really close we had not realised that we were both going through similar things. So we have decided we are now going to talk to our parents together. So you didn’t just help me but also my sister.

Girl, 12, London Childline base

I am just calling to say I have had a good day today. I suffer with anxiety and depression and was on the phone to Childline last week as I felt really low. I didn’t remember to thank you at the end of the call so wanted to call back to tell you how much it helps talking to Childline. I don’t have any friends and have been let down so much by people in the past but knowing Childline is always there really helps.

Boy, 18, Liverpool Childline base
I’ve been going through a lot and it’s so helpful just to talk – I’ve spoken to Childline before and they’ve shown me some great bits on the website too. I’ll be staying in touch – it’s so good to know they’re there.

Boy, 17, Manchester Childline base

I phoned Childline in the middle of the night feeling unwell. You told me to wake up my mum and tell her so I did. Mum took me to hospital and I was diagnosed and treated for an asthma attack which I had never had before. I am feeling much better now :)

Girl, age unknown, Glasgow Childline base
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 2016/17, there were 295,202 counselling sessions (there were 301,413 in 2015/16). 71 per cent of these took place online compared with 29 per cent on the phone.

Girls are even more likely than boys to choose to contact us online. 72 per cent of counselling sessions with girls took place online (28 per cent were by phone) compared with 55 per cent of counselling sessions with boys (45 per cent were by phone).

Breaking things down by age, we find that children aged 11 and under are still more likely to be counselled by phone (56 per cent of counselling) than online (44 per cent of counselling). Nearly 70 per cent of young people aged 12–18 were counselled online this year.

**When children and young people contact Childline**

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, 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 of Childline counselling sessions took place between 6pm and midnight.
- The most popular time for counselling is between 8pm and 9pm.
- 1 in 4 counselling sessions with young people who have mental or emotional health problems or are experiencing suicidal thoughts or feelings took place between 9pm and midnight.
- The most popular day for counselling is Monday.
- The busiest months for counselling were May and March, the quietest months were February and September.
### Overview by age

This year children and young people told us their age in 72 per cent of counselling sessions. Throughout this report, the statistics about the age of children and young people having counselling sessions are based on those where the age was known.

Almost nine out of ten counselling sessions (88 per cent) took place with 12–18 year-olds. The most common age was 15.

The most common age group was children aged 12–15 (55 per cent of counselling sessions), followed by 16–18 year-olds (33 per cent) and then children aged 11 and under (12 per cent).

Children aged 11 and under are most likely to talk to us about bullying, family relationships and mental and emotional health.

Young people aged 12–15 are most likely to talk to us about mental and emotional health, family relationships and bullying.

Young people aged 16–18 are most likely to talk to us about mental and emotional health, family relationships and suicidal thoughts or feelings.

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### Breakdown of Childline counselling sessions by age

![Pie chart showing the distribution of counselling sessions by age group.]

- **11 and under:** 12%
- **12–15:** 55%
- **16–18:** 33%

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### Breakdown of counselling sessions by age and concerns mentioned:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>11 and under</th>
<th>12–15</th>
<th>16–18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Counselling sessions</strong></td>
<td>26,369</td>
<td>116,458</td>
<td>70,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Main concern</strong></td>
<td>Bullying/cyberbullying (23% of all counselling with age group)</td>
<td>Mental/emotional health (21% of all counselling with age group)</td>
<td>Mental/emotional health (25% of all counselling with age group)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most common abuse type</strong></td>
<td>Physical abuse (1,433)</td>
<td>Sexual abuse/online sexual abuse (4,147)</td>
<td>Sexual abuse/online sexual abuse (2,932)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mental and emotional health</strong></td>
<td>3,256 (up 25%)</td>
<td>23,422 (up 6%)</td>
<td>17,440 (up 19%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anxiety</strong></td>
<td>598 (Up 11%)</td>
<td>5,627 (Up 16%)</td>
<td>3,990 (up 30%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Suicidal thoughts/feelings</strong></td>
<td>491 (up 41%)</td>
<td>7,873 (up 13%)</td>
<td>7,434 (up 35%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>d/Deafness/disability/special educational needs/health condition</strong></td>
<td>758 (up 42%)</td>
<td>3,474 (up 6%)</td>
<td>2,779 (up 29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Concerns that appeared in the top 10 for this age only</strong></td>
<td>Own behaviour/actions</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Pregnancy and parenting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 2

### Who Contacts Childline - Breakdown by Age and Gender

Breakdown of main concerns by age group:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>11 and under</th>
<th></th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>12-15</th>
<th></th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>16-18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main concerns</td>
<td>% counselling with age group</td>
<td></td>
<td>Main concerns</td>
<td>% counselling with age group</td>
<td></td>
<td>Main concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bullying/cyberbullying</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mental/emotional health</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mental/emotional health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mental/emotional health</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bullying/cyberbullying</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Suicidal thoughts and feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Suicidal thoughts and feelings</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Problems in school/education</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Self-harm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Problems in school/education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Problems in school/education</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sexual abuse/online sexual abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Sexual abuse/online sexual abuse</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Pregnancy and parenting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Own behaviour/actions</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sexual abuse/online sexual abuse</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Suicidal thoughts and feelings</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Bullying/cyberbullying</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures indicate the number of counselling sessions where a main concern has been identified.
Overview by gender
This year, 84 per cent of children and young people told us their gender (up from 68 per cent last year). This is largely because young people now need to state their gender when they register for an account with the new Childline website (although if they are not comfortable with selecting ‘male’ or ‘female’ they can select ‘other’ or ‘prefer not to say’). Throughout this report we’ve used the term ‘gender unknown’ to refer to the occasions when young people have chosen not to tell us their gender, or selected ‘other’.

67 per cent of counselling sessions were provided to girls – almost four times as many as boys (17 per cent). In the remaining 16 per cent of counselling sessions, the child or young person’s gender was unknown.

In just under half our counselling sessions, the child or young person has spoken to one of our counsellors before (an estimated 49 per cent of all counselling). Girls are more likely to come back for further counselling sessions than boys (this year an estimated 50 per cent of counselling sessions with girls were further sessions compared with an estimated 37 per cent of counselling sessions with boys. An estimated 56 per cent of counselling sessions where gender was unknown were further sessions).

*This figure is estimated because we rely on the young person either choosing to tell us that they have received counselling from us before during phone counselling sessions, or continuing to use the same username online.
**Main reasons why boys and girls contact Childline:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Main concerns</th>
<th>% of total sessions</th>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Main concerns</th>
<th>% of total sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mental/emotional health</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mental/emotional health</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Suicidal thoughts and feelings</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Bullying/cyberbullying</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bullying/cyberbullying</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Suicidal thoughts and feelings</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Problems in school/education</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sexual and gender identity</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Problems in school/education</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sexual abuse/online sexual abuse</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Own behaviour/actions</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Boys and girls talk to Childline about different issues. Whilst mental and emotional health and family relationships are the most common concern across both genders, a higher proportion of girls have counselling about sexual abuse, self-harm, suicidal thoughts and feelings and friendship issues.

Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health are the fourth most common concern in counselling sessions with boys (they are the seventh most common concern for girls). For boys, bullying and cyberbullying is the third most common concern, but it’s the fourth most common for girls. Sexuality and gender identity is in the top 10 main concerns for boys, as well as concerns about a young person’s own behaviour, but these don’t appear in the top 10 for girls.
What children from each nation are telling us
In 2016/17, we recorded the nation in which the child or young person lived in 73 per cent of all counselling sessions. 97 per cent of these were from online counselling.

The distribution of counselling sessions across the four nations is broadly proportionate to their respective populations.

The top 10 concerns were the same for children and young people in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. However the order of the top ten concerns differs slightly between each nation. For instance, in England self-harm is the fourth most common concern, but in Scotland it is the eighth.

This data mostly relates to online counselling, so it does not reflect the full UK picture. Because more girls are counselled by Childline, girls much prefer online counselling, and older children prefer to be counselled online, the nation breakdown is skewed towards what older girls are talking to us about. Whilst physical abuse appears in the top 10 concerns overall, it doesn’t appear in any of the nation breakdowns – this is because it’s a concern that boys and younger children are more likely to raise.

### Breakdown of counselling sessions by nation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Total counselling sessions</th>
<th>% of counselling sessions where nation known</th>
<th>% of UK population (aged 0–18) (mid-year estimates 2016)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>184,402</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>5,230</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>14,693</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>8,853</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Republic Of Ireland</td>
<td>607</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>818</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (where nation known)</strong></td>
<td><strong>214,603</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>295,202</strong></td>
<td><strong>n/a</strong></td>
<td><strong>n/a</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Breakdown of referrals by nation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agency country</th>
<th>Total referrals*</th>
<th>% all referrals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>3,877</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>4,328</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figures indicate to which nation the referral is made, which is usually where the child lives, and include situations where a child has been referred to more than one agency.
## APPENDIX 2

### WHO CONTACTS CHILDLINE – BREAKDOWN BY AGE AND GENDER

Breakdown of counselling sessions by age and nation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>England</th>
<th>Northern Ireland</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>Wales</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of counselling sessions</td>
<td>% of total counselling sessions where age is known</td>
<td>Number of counselling sessions</td>
<td>% of total counselling sessions where age is known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 and under</td>
<td>10,343</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12–15</td>
<td>72,166</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>1,951</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16–18</td>
<td>42,723</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>1,376</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown age</td>
<td>59,170</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1,583</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>184,402</td>
<td>5,230</td>
<td>14,693</td>
<td>8,853</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Main reasons why children and young people in England contact Childline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Primary concern</th>
<th>Counselling sessions</th>
<th>% of total counselling sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mental/emotional health</td>
<td>44,769</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>21,652</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Suicidal thoughts/feelings</td>
<td>16,523</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>11,594</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>11,295</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Bullying/cyberbullying</td>
<td>10,664</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>10,137</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Problems in school/education</td>
<td>9,297</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sexual abuse and online sexual abuse</td>
<td>5,629</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sexual and gender identity</td>
<td>5,187</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Main reasons why children and young people in Northern Ireland contact Childline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Primary concern</th>
<th>Counselling sessions</th>
<th>% of total counselling sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mental/emotional health</td>
<td>1,250</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Suicidal thoughts/feelings</td>
<td>387</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>359</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Problems in school/education</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Bullying/cyberbullying</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sexual abuse and online sexual abuse</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sexual and gender identity</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Main reasons why children and young people in Scotland contact Childline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Primary concern</th>
<th>Counselling sessions</th>
<th>% of total counselling sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mental/emotional health</td>
<td>3,483</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>1,590</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Suicidal thoughts/feelings</td>
<td>1,095</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bullying/cyberbullying</td>
<td>1,039</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>1,015</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Problems in school/education</td>
<td>861</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>803</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sexual abuse and online sexual abuse</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sexual and gender identity</td>
<td>464</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Main reasons why children and young people in Wales contact Childline:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Primary concern</th>
<th>Counselling sessions</th>
<th>% of total counselling sessions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mental/emotional health</td>
<td>2,163</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Suicidal thoughts/feelings</td>
<td>769</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>591</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Bullying/cyberbullying</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Problems in school/education</td>
<td>462</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sexual abuse and online sexual abuse</td>
<td>272</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sexual and gender identity</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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. For this reason, some concerns are grouped together whilst others are recorded separately (for example anxiety is a part of ‘mental and emotional health’ whilst ‘suicidal thoughts or feelings’ is a separate concern).

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 well as allowing counsellors and their supervisors to respond appropriately to children and young people, the data we record provides us with a unique overview of the worries and concerns of hundreds of thousands of children who contact us. This gives us a wealth of information. However, because our data comes from a recording system that’s used by over 1,400 volunteers, it has limitations when compared with a more controlled collection and analysis of data designed around a specific research framework.
The following list gives the URLs of all the online resources we’ve mentioned in the report.

- **Art box** – a tool which helps young people to express their feelings creatively, through drawing and writing. [childline.org.uk/toolbox/art-box/](http://childline.org.uk/toolbox/art-box/)
- **Ask Sam** – our online advice column for young people. [childline.org.uk/get-support/ask-sam/](http://childline.org.uk/get-support/ask-sam/)
- **Asking an adult for help** – information about finding the right person to talk to, and how to start a difficult conversation. [childline.org.uk/ask-adult](http://childline.org.uk/ask-adult)
- **Bounce back from bullying** – a tool to help young people who are being bullied start taking control of their lives. [bounce-back-from-bullying.childline.org.uk](http://bounce-back-from-bullying.childline.org.uk)
- **Female circumcision, FGM and cutting** – explains what Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is, what girls can do if they are worried about having FGM, and how to help someone else who is at risk of FGM. [childline.org.uk/fgm](http://childline.org.uk/fgm)
- **Forced marriage** – information about what forced marriage is, how it differs from arranged marriage, and what young people can do if they feel they are being forced into a marriage. [childline.org.uk/forcedmarriage](http://childline.org.uk/forcedmarriage)
- **Homelessness and running away** – explains why young people might want to run away from home, the risks of living on the streets, and advises young people about what support they can get if they are considering running away from home. [childline.org.uk/awayfromhome](http://childline.org.uk/awayfromhome)
- **How should you talk to your children about terrorism?** – short film produced with The Times, giving parents advice on the most effective ways to address their children’s fears. [youtube.com/watch?v=PyeVdGvq6S0&feature=youtu.be](http://youtube.com/watch?v=PyeVdGvq6S0&feature=youtu.be)
- **#Listentoyourselfie** – our campaign encouraging young people to listen to their gut feeling about what’s right and wrong for them in sexual relationships. [childline.org.uk/selfie](http://childline.org.uk/selfie)
- **Locker** – a young person’s private space on the Childline website where they can save helpful information. [childline.org.uk/locker](http://childline.org.uk/locker)
- **Message boards** – peer support boards on a wide range of topics, giving young people the valuable opportunity to support each other safely. [childline.org.uk/get-support/message-boards/boards/threads/?roomid=250](http://childline.org.uk/get-support/message-boards/boards/threads/?roomid=250)
- **Mood journal** – a tool on the Childline website which helps young people track their emotions, identify triggers for certain feelings or behaviours and map their progress. [childline.org.uk/locker/#journal](http://childline.org.uk/locker/#journal)
• **Net Aware** – parents’ guide to the social networks, apps and games children and young people use. net-aware.org.uk

• **Online and mobile safety** – information and practical guidance on topics including staying safe online, online gaming, cyberbullying, online grooming and online pornography. childline.org.uk/online-safety

• **Our world/current news** – a peer support message board where young people can share their thoughts and feelings about what’s happening in the world. childline.org.uk/get-support/message-boards/boards/threads/?roomid=217

• **Racism** – information about what racism is, why some people are racist, different forms of racism and how to deal with racist bullying. childline.org.uk/racism

• **Sexting** – information about what sexting is, what support young people can get if they feel pressured to start sexting, and what to do if they lose control of a sexual image online. childline.org.uk/sexting

• **Support for anxiety:**
  - **About anxiety** – what anxiety is, what causes it and what young people can do if it’s getting too much. childline.org.uk/anxiety
  - **Balloon Game** – an online game to help young people express and release their worries. childline.org.uk/toolbox/games/balloon/
  - **Controlling your panic attacks** – practical advice on controlling panic attacks. childline.org.uk/panic-attacks
  - **Coping with stress message board** – a peer support message board where young people can post and speak to other young people about their experiences of stress, and share tips on coping strategies. childline.org.uk/info-advice/your-feelings/anxiety-stress-panic/coping-with-stress/

• **Managing stress and anxiety** – a short film talking about what anxiety is like and giving tips on how to cope. childline.org.uk/toolbox/videos/managing-stress-anxiety/

• **Mental health message board** – a place for young people to share their experiences with their mental health and get advice from others. childline.org.uk/get-support/message-boards/boards/threads/?roomid=242

• **Wall of expression** – an online game which helps young people express the challenges they face and start to feel more in control (the aim is to write about something that makes you feel bad on a wall, and then knock it down). childline.org.uk/toolbox/games/wall-of-expression/

• **You are more than your anxiety** – part of Childline’s Voice Box series on YouTube, discussing experiences of anxiety and how it can be managed. youtube.com/watch?v=AjIwRf6AU5

• **Share Aware** – our campaign helping families understand how to be safe online. nspcc.org.uk/shareaware

• **Visiting your doctor** – answers questions that young people commonly ask about going to see their doctor. childline.org.uk/doctor

• **Worries about the world** – information to support young people who are troubled about world events, particularly terrorism. childline.org.uk/worries

• **Your rights** – information about children’s rights and the laws about what age young people are allowed to do certain things in the UK. childline.org.uk/your-rights
Support for suicidal thoughts or feelings:

- **Bottling up emotions** – part of the Voice Box series on Childline’s YouTube channel, this short film gives young people advice on how to express their emotions. [youtube.com/watch?v=9O3gVyfAvac](https://youtube.com/watch?v=9O3gVyfAvac)

- **Coping with suicidal thoughts or feelings** – practical support and advice for young people living with suicidal thoughts or feelings. [childline.org.uk/cantcope](https://childline.org.uk/cantcope)

- **Feeling sad, depressed or unhappy** – a short film talking about how depression and suicidal thoughts can feel for young people, and encouraging them to get support. [childline.org.uk/toolbox/videos/depression/](https://childline.org.uk/toolbox/videos/depression/)

- **Mental health message board** – a place for young people to share their experiences with their mental health and get advice from others. [childline.org.uk/get-support/message-boards/boards/threads/?roomid=242](https://childline.org.uk/get-support/message-boards/boards/threads/?roomid=242)

- **Somewhere New** – a YouTube video giving tips and support for young people experiencing suicidal thoughts or feelings. [youtube.com/watch?v=vFJeRUgqT9Y](https://youtube.com/watch?v=vFJeRUgqT9Y)


- **Tough to Talk** – our campaign aiming to encourage young men experiencing suicidal thoughts or feelings to seek help. [childline.org.uk/taughtotalk](https://childline.org.uk/taughtotalk)

- **Tough To Talk ft. Olly Alexander** – part of Childline’s Voice Box series on YouTube, this short film complements the Tough to Talk campaign. It highlights how difficult it can be to talk about problems, and suggests ways that young people can speak out. [youtube.com/watch?v=8VRAsn1YTA](https://youtube.com/watch?v=8VRAsn1YTA)
Support for children and young people who are d/Deaf, disabled, have special educational needs or a health condition:

- **Autism** – support and advice for young people with autistic spectrum conditions. childline.org.uk/autism
- **Deaf Zone** – offers a range of advice and support for in English and British Sign Language (BSL), on topics such as bullying and cyberbullying, discrimination and equal opportunities, staying safe online. childline.org.uk/deafzone
- **Contacting Childline using Sign Video** – YouTube film giving information for d/Deaf young people on what Childline is, and how to talk to a counsellor using Sign Video. youtube.com/watch?v-aTnQKDR8zyQ
- **Disability in sport** – a short film as part of Childline’s Voice Box series on YouTube, featuring TV presenter Ade Adepitan who talks about getting involved in sport when you’re disabled. youtube.com/watch?v-BymoSyjBspM
- **Dyslexia and learning disabilities** – support and information on what a learning disability is, how to get support and what rights young people with learning disabilities have. childline.org.uk/dyslexia
- **Family Relationships – BSL video** – short YouTube film in British Sign Language giving young people information and advice on family relationships. youtube.com/watch?v-SdrpMrRIUYJ
- **Living with a disability** – information about issues that may affect d/Deaf or disabled young people, including information about their rights. childline.org.uk/disability
- **Living with d/Deafness and disability message board** – a peer support message board where young people can talk about issues relating to being d/Deaf or disabled and get advice from others. childline.org.uk/get-support/message-boards/boards/threads/?roomid-250
- **Overcoming challenges if you’re d/Deaf** – one of Childline’s Voice Box films on YouTube, sharing advice for d/Deaf young people. youtube.com/watch?v-HzP5d6l1JRA
• **LivingWorks (2017)** – the world leader in suicide intervention training
livingworks.net [Accessed 28/07/17]

• **NSPCC (2015)** – in November/December 2015, the NSPCC surveyed 1,308 professionals – including psychologists, GPs, teachers and social workers – about their awareness and experience of working with children where the effects of abuse or neglect were a primary concern.

For 30 years Childline, the NSPCC’s service to give young people a voice, has been there for over 4.5 million 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.

For more information about supporting our work go to nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/ or email help@nspcc.org.uk