UNDER PRESSURE

ChildLine Review

What's affected children in April 2013 – March 2014

NSPCC

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR
This report is important as it tells us, first hand, what young people today are feeling about the challenges and pressures they face. It also tells us how those challenges are changing over time and the ways in which society, culture and technology impact their lives.

ChildLine’s experience over 28 years makes us a primary source of information on youth trends, safeguarding issues and behaviours. As such, we can provide a real sense of what life is like for young people in the UK. At ChildLine we do our best to represent the thoughts and feelings of young people, so we can develop our services to support them in the best possible way. ChildLine is representing these perspectives to Government, as well as using them to inform our public campaigns and to change laws and behaviours. We aim to put young people's voices at the disposal of all those who can help give every young person the childhood they deserve.

This year we have trained hundreds of new volunteers. We’ve also given our existing teams extra training to better understand the issues that young people are contacting us about, so they can provide the very best support. Support which is sometimes life-saving. These volunteers work around the clock, at weekends and even on Christmas Day so that there is always someone there, ready to listen to children across the UK. I am immensely proud and grateful to all these wonderful people who dedicate their spare time to help children. Without them, ChildLine simply couldn’t exist.

In the last year, we have seen some significant changes in the issues that young people are contacting ChildLine about, and in how they choose to speak to us. Two thirds of contacts are now made online. Young people tell us they find it much easier to talk about how they feel, particularly on more serious issues such as suicide and self-harm, using our online service rather than over the phone.

It’s concerning that there has been a 34 per cent increase in young people talking to ChildLine about mental health...
conditions including hallucinations, delusions and panic attacks. In over 24,000 counselling sessions they talked about concerns they had over their own mental health, and in some cases they contacted us because they were worried about another child.

We have seen a 168 per cent increase in counselling related to online sexual abuse, which illustrates how quickly technological developments can impact young people. Last year, we launched our ‘Zipit’ app to help equip children with appropriate ways to protect themselves.

I am always encouraged that children and young people continue to know they have a safe place to turn to. I am often amazed at how they talk to ChildLine so coherently and insightfully about some of the most heart-wrenching issues. It is absolutely essential that we listen to our children. It’s all of our responsibility to be there for them, whenever they need us, and support them however we can into a better future.

Peter
For those who are concerned about children in the UK today, there is no better way to understand them than to read this Review. No-one but ChildLine hears from so many children and young people. Nowhere else is such a uniquely accessible service offered to children, that they can ask for help by phone, by email, through our message board, and by on-line chat at any hour, day or night, every day of the year, and that the service is free and confidential. As a result there is an enormous response. In the last year ChildLine counselled almost 300 000 young people, who described to us the problems they face, and the suffering they experience. And although this Review paints a distressing picture of childhood in Britain today, a message of hope is also contained in it. At least now vulnerable children have somewhere to speak to, some support to turn to, and they know that ChildLine cares about them and listens to them.

ChildLine was launched in October 1986, twenty-eight years ago. So much has changed in that time. I remember very clearly our first film, broadcast by the BBC in the Childwatch programme, showing a child running to a phone box to make her call. She would be hard put to find a phone box these days! She would be far more likely to use her mobile phone which enables her to ring us anytime, anywhere, safe in the knowledge that she will not be overheard. And of course nobody in the 1986 could have predicted that young people today are even more likely to contact us via the internet, for many the most familiar means of communication, and the one they find easiest and most comfortable to use.

68% of our contacts came to us via the internet, so it clearly liberated even more children to disclose their concerns, but it also brought with it additional challenges. It inevitably takes longer to counsel a child when every question and answer has to be typed, so we need to recruit more volunteers to support all the young people who choose to contact us this way. But ChildLine has always risen to each new challenge, and I’m sure will find new ways to ensure that every child gets the support they need.

Before you read the Review, (and I am sure you will find it deeply thought-provoking, as I did), let me tell you a couple of stories

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Children and young people can contact ChildLine 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
from the year. Visiting one of our Bases recently (we have twelve Bases around the country, each one with its own loyal, skilled group of staff and volunteer counsellors), one of our volunteer counsellors told us all the story of her own young life.

“I was a night-mare” she told us, honestly. “At thirteen I was always being picked up, drunk out of my head in the centre of town, and brought home by the police. I was on the edge of crime. I used to ring ChildLine over and over again, shouting at them, abusing them, using appalling language. I suppose I was testing them. What was going on in my life was so shocking that I wanted to see if they were shockable. And they weren’t. Each time they answered me kindly, and with respect. So in the end I found the courage to trust them, ChildLine was the only place I could trust, and I was able to tell them what was happening to me. I had been groomed, bribed with cigarettes and alcohol, and sexually exploited. It was horrible. It almost destroyed me. I was too frightened to ask for help. But I found so much support from ChildLine that I had the courage to leave home, leave the town I was living in, and escape. Of course then I went from disaster to disaster, but ChildLine helped me survive.

Finally I decided to tell the police what had happened. I went and made a statement in a police station, one where they knew me well, and they didn’t believe me. I still remember the woman police officer who took my statement. When I had finished she told me to make another statement withdrawing everything I had said. Otherwise she told me I’d be done for wasting police time. So I had no choice. I withdrew it all. So my abuser has never had to answer for the crimes he committed all those years. But I survived. And now it’s so important to me to give other children the support I got from ChildLine. Otherwise I know I wouldn’t be here. I’d be dead.”

It’s a story that has become tragically familiar in the last few years, especially since we have discovered what has happened in cities like Rotherham. There, too, police and social workers who took statements from “wild” children who were being sexually exploited decided either that they were not to be believed, or that they had made a “life choice” – at thirteen. But the story our volunteer counsellor told us was not a recent story. She first called ChildLine when she was 13, in 1988, a couple of years after we launched. This grooming and sexual exploitation has been going on for decades, swept under the carpet, imprisoning vulnerable children have been unable to ask for help, silenced by the disbelief that surrounded them.

We at ChildLine are taking this issue very seriously, concerned to ensure that even children on the edge of society know we are here for them. It is not easy to persuade a young person who is overwhelmed with fear and shame, as one told us “I feel so guilty and ashamed because I walked myself into this mess, I can’t ask for help now.” Many do not even recognize the process of grooming, and believe they are involved in a genuine relationship. So it is part of our role to educate and inform, as well as listen and protect.
In the cyber world, when most of our contacts with children now happen not by phone, but on-line, some of my generation may be concerned that counselling a child via the internet may not be as effective as a phone conversation. I can understand that concern. Indeed, I myself was used to decades of judging children’s moods and thoughts by listening to their tone of voice, hearing their tears or their laughter, assessing their age and their mental state. So at first I too was not convinced the internet could work as well. Until I saw a brilliant piece of on-line counselling by a volunteer counsellor.

A child, (he had to guess her age and gender, but he thought she was a girl, in her early teens), was returning to an on-line conversation with ChildLine she had started the day before. (The whole thread is available on the screen for our counsellors to see, which is a huge advantage over the phone.) In this case he realized that all she had so far explained was that she was in foster care, and that she was self-harming. By offering gentle support to each answer she gave, without hurrying her, or interrogating her in a way that might have frightened her into silence, she gradually told him her story, which was that returning home for a visit, she was sexually abused by a member of her family. She discussed on-line with our counsellor how she could talk about this to her foster parents, with whom she had a very good relationship, but who, she feared, might be angry at her for self-harming.

At the end of the last reply, which ended on a positive note, just before she signed off she said “Thank you for listening to me.” And yet not a word had been spoken. To many young people today, a conversation on-line is just as real, and immediate, as the spoken word.

There are new issues explored in this Review. Cyber bullying and sexting prove that the darker side of the internet is causing pain and suffering in many young people’s lives, there has been an 87% increase in the number of counselling sessions about on-line bullying. The insidious aspect of this cruelty is that it follows a child wherever they are, there seems to be no escape from their phone or social network. But perhaps the most worrying increase is in the number of contacts that describe acute mental health issues, depression, suicidal thoughts, self-harm, eating disorders and even hallucinations. Four out of the top ten issues relate to mental health. And when I asked young people why they thought this was, they unanimously told me “There is nobody we can talk to.” I believe it is also significant that the top two problems were a break-down in family relationships, and loneliness. Ironically, at a time when we have never been so well connected to each other technologically, our young people have never felt more isolated.

As you read this Review, may I ask you three favours? Can you think about the young people in your own life? Do they have anyone safe to confide in? Can you ensure that they know ChildLine’s number, 0800 1111. Is free, confidential and open every day and night of the year? And if you have any time to spare, could you consider donating to us those crucial 4 hours a week which you could spend volunteering for us? You may be saving a child’s life.

With thanks and best wishes,

Esther
(Dame Esther Rantzen)
Executive summary

Children and young people across the UK are continuing to turn to Childline (0800 1111, www.childline.org.uk) about the issues that affect them every day. Through looking at what they contact us about we can start to build a picture of their lives and the nature of the problems they face. Some of these problems are consistent over the years – others change.

We’ve seen a worrying rise in mental health concerns.

Four of the top ten issues children get in touch with us about relate to mental health, and taken together these account for more than two thirds of counselling sessions carried out by ChildLine.

These four issues are: self-harm; suicidal feelings; low self-esteem and unhappiness; and mental health issues that are prolonged or re-occurring and significantly interfere with the young person being able to lead a normal life. The last category has seen the highest increase in the last year (34 per cent) and is considered in more detail later in this report.

We know that the rise in mental health issues is closely linked to other problems we’re hearing more about.

In the past year school and education problems appeared in the top ten concerns for the first time, a 13% rise from the previous year. It was most frequently mentioned as an additional concern, and where this was the case, the primary concern related to a mental health issue in more than half of these cases. 58 per cent of counselling sessions in relation to school and education problems were about exam stress, a 200 per cent rise on the previous year.

We are also noticing a 15 per cent rise in contacts about eating disorders and how these are used as a way to cope. In 32 per cent of counselling sessions about eating disorders, low self-esteem was mentioned.
Pressures in the family home and the impact of a 24hr digital world are fuelling these growing mental health issues.

In 2013/14 family relationships accounted for 13 per cent of the counselling sessions carried out. Young people spoke about issues such as divorce, separation and conflicts in the family in almost 81,000 counselling sessions. When problems in their relationships escalate, we’ve witnessed how the pressure this puts on young people leads to a decline in their emotional well-being.

Many contacts to ChildLine reflect the darker side of the digital world – for example over the last three years there has been an 87 per cent increase in the number of counselling sessions about online bullying. We hear that online abuse and bullying can leave young people feeling desperately unhappy because it can happen 24/7 and reach them wherever they are with no escape. They can also find it difficult to talk to and get support from their parents or other adults about these issues partly because of a lack of understanding.

This is why over the next year we are carrying out a number of campaigns to help parents and young people understand and cope with online issues.

On a more positive note we see the benefits of the digital world for young people accessing help. 68 per cent of ChildLine counselling sessions now take place online, with many young people saying they find it easier to talk about their problems in this way rather than over the phone. We also received over 117,000 message board posts from young people wanting to share their worries with their peers – a 12 per cent increase compared to 2012/13.

87% increase in the number of counselling sessions about online bullying

68% of ChildLine counselling sessions now take place online
Abuse remains a primary issue that children contact ChildLine about.

In the last year, almost 50,000 children and young people contacted ChildLine to say they were being (or suspected they were being) abused, either sexually, physically or emotionally, making abuse the fourth most common reason for contacting ChildLine.

This is broken down as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Abuse</td>
<td>18,769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Abuse and Online Sexual Abuse</td>
<td>15,384</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Abuse</td>
<td>12,363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglect</td>
<td>3,233</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Neglect is an issue that is very difficult for children to recognise and identify with. They are more likely to talk about being left at home alone for long periods of time or say they do not have enough food to eat or clean clothes.
However, we are seeing a shift in the nature of the reported abuse.

This year we saw a decrease in young people talking about sexual touching and rape, but an increase of 168 per cent in young people needing counselling about sexual abuse online.

We have seen an 18 per cent decrease in physical abuse counselling compared with 2012/13. One of the key areas we have seen the greatest decrease is in young people talking about being victims of physical abuse which left a mark – down 61 per cent. It goes without saying that 18,769 counselling sessions where physical abuse is mentioned is 18,769 too many – but we are hopeful that we may be seeing a decline in physical violence against children.

We have also seen a 28 per cent drop in young people contacting us about physical bullying. Proportionately the number of counselling sessions about bullying has remained at around ten per cent – but the contacts we are receiving suggest the nature of the bullying is increasingly moving online.

**We are proud that ChildLine continues to be somewhere that children and young people can and do turn to.**

We strive to give children the best possible support and we work closely with other organisations and agencies who aim to do the same. In order to do this effectively we need to understand the problems that face young people. We believe that the best way to do this is to listen to what young people themselves are telling us – and that is why we are producing this report.

As well as giving an overview of contacts to ChildLine we will look in depth at the issues mentioned in this summary where we have seen significant increases in contacts about particular issues that are putting pressure on young people namely:

- mental health conditions,
- eating disorders,
- online sexual abuse
- school and education problems.

**The more we understand children’s problems and share our findings the better we can help them.**

One way in which we know we do help of course is simply by continuing to be there to listen 24/7 and provide support, no matter what pressures a young person is under. ChildLine has helped over 3.5 million children and young people since it started in 1986, making sure that they always have a place to turn to. In 2014/15 we will continue to be there for many more.
During 2013/14, ChildLine counselled 280,064 children and supported a further 10,915 who had serious concerns about another child. This brings our total counselling sessions 290,979. A similar total to 2012/13.

Four of the top ten issues relate of to mental health, accounting for more than two thirds of total concerns. These are self-harm; suicide; low self-esteem and unhappiness; and (diagnosable) mental health conditions. The latter saw the largest increase – 34 per cent from 2012/13.

The three main worries were family relationships, low self-esteem and unhappiness and self-harm.

For the first time, school and education problems appeared in the top ten concerns with a 200 per cent increase in counselling about exam stress.

Since 2012/13 there has been a 15 per cent increase in counselling about eating disorders and a 21 per cent increase for body image issues.

Referrals on behalf of the most vulnerable and at risk children saw a 7 per cent increase, with 65 per cent of total referrals about suicidal young people.

There has been an increase of 168 per cent from 2012/13 in counselling about online sexual abuse.

There has been an 18 per cent decrease in physical abuse counselling.

The ChildLine website received over 3 million visits – 29 per cent more than in 2012/13.

Online counselling continued to grow, rising from 59 per cent in 2012/13 to 68 per cent in 2013/14.
### The top ten reasons why young people contact ChildLine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Concern category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Main concern</th>
<th>Additional concern</th>
<th>Combined total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>Conflict/arguments with family members. Parent’s divorce/separation.</td>
<td>35,259</td>
<td>45,393</td>
<td>80,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Low self-esteem and unhappiness</td>
<td>Low self-esteem, confidence; feeling sad, low mood, lonely.</td>
<td>32,324</td>
<td>47,943</td>
<td>80,267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>Self-injury that is intentional.</td>
<td>24,308</td>
<td>28,610</td>
<td>52,918</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Abuse</td>
<td>Physical, sexual, emotional and neglect.</td>
<td>26,066</td>
<td>23,683</td>
<td>49,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bullying/online bullying</td>
<td>Peer-to-peer bullying, either face-to-face or online.</td>
<td>27,766</td>
<td>14,501</td>
<td>42,267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Suicidal</td>
<td>Suicidal feelings or actively suicidal.</td>
<td>17,930</td>
<td>16,587</td>
<td>34,517</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The top ten reasons why young people contact ChildLine (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Concern category</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Main concern</th>
<th>Additional concern</th>
<th>Combined total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>School/education problems</td>
<td>Exam pressures, concerns about performance, not coping with workload, dislikes school, new school worries, problems with teacher, truancy etc.</td>
<td>12,911</td>
<td>21,543</td>
<td>34,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>Falling out with friends, difficulty making friends.</td>
<td>15,558</td>
<td>16,032</td>
<td>31,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>Sexual development, relationship issues, body changes, STI’s, contraception etc.</td>
<td>18,240</td>
<td>10,304</td>
<td>28,544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mental health conditions</td>
<td>Mental health issues which are significantly interfering with the young person being able to lead a normal life and is prolonged or re-occurring.</td>
<td>12,784</td>
<td>11,562</td>
<td>24,346</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How children and young people are contacting ChildLine

In 2013/14 we continued to see more children and young people choosing to be counselled online, with 68 per cent of counselling sessions taking place via 1-2-1 chat or email.

This was up from 59 per cent last year, when for the first time ChildLine counselled more young people online than over the phone. This year we’ve seen a higher proportion of children aged 11 and younger choosing online channels, with 40 per cent of counselling with this age group taking place via 1-2-1 chats or emails compared with 34 per cent in 2012/13 however the telephone still remains a crucial service for the youngest children who need to contact ChildLine.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Telephone</th>
<th>Online</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 and under</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-15</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It has become increasingly clear over the last few years that when it comes to mental health concerns in particular, young people prefer to get in touch online. They tell us they find it easier to communicate with counsellors this way rather than saying what they are going through out loud on the phone. Of the top ten concerns, only physical abuse is counselled more by telephone (55 per cent) than online.
Who contacts ChildLine?
Age overview

Although children and young people don’t have to tell us how old they are when they contact ChildLine, in 2013/14 they told us their age in 61 per cent of counselling sessions. Of these, over half (58 per cent) were between the ages of 12-15, with the most common age counselled being 15.

A breakdown of age groups

- 11 and under: 13 per cent
- 12-15: 53 per cent
- 16-18: 29 per cent
There were 21,588 counselling sessions with this age group. Consistent with previous years, one in four children contacted us about bullying – the top issue for this age group.

An increased number of younger children contacted us about mental health conditions, self-harm and feeling suicidal. You can find a detailed outline of this in the mental health section of this report.

7 per cent of all counselling sessions with children aged 11 and under related to physical abuse – proportionately the highest of any age group.

Last year we saw a 19 per cent growth in counselling about school and education problems among primary school aged children. This trend has continued with a 43 per cent increase from 2012/13.

In 2,534 counselling sessions the child told us that they had not told anyone else about the problem they were experiencing. One in four of these (613) cases were in relation to bullying – indicating how difficult it is for younger children to speak up and seek support when being bullied.

### Top ten concerns for children aged 11 and under

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main concern</th>
<th>Number of counselling sessions</th>
<th>Percentage of total counselling for 11 and under</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bullying/online bullying</td>
<td>5,365</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>3,317</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>1,884</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>1,568</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/education problems</td>
<td>1,340</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem/unhappiness</td>
<td>1,306</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>1,243</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse and online sexual abuse</td>
<td>766</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical health/illness/disability</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Counselling with 12-15 year-olds continues to increase (up 2 per cent) with this age group representing 58 per cent (99,837) of all counselling sessions.

Family relationship problems are the top reason for this age group contacting ChildLine. 6,600 of these counselling sessions were about arguments and conflicts with parents, siblings and other family members, making it the main sub-category under family relationship problems.

Compared to 2012/13, counselling sessions with 12-15 year-olds feeling suicidal increased by 36 per cent, and self-harm increased by 20 per cent. Most counselling sessions about self-harm were with 14 year-olds – a year younger than in 2012-13. The age with the highest increase of counselling about self-harm was 12 year-olds (44 per cent increase from 2012/13). There were over 9,500 counselling sessions with 12-15 year-olds where the young person mentioned they had a history of self-harming or attempted suicide.

### Top ten concerns for 12-15 year-olds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main concern</th>
<th>Number of counselling sessions</th>
<th>Percentage of total counselling for 12-15 year olds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>13,294</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying/online bullying</td>
<td>10,537</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem/unhappiness</td>
<td>10,423</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>9,769</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>6,920</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicidal</td>
<td>6,137</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/education problem</td>
<td>5,380</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>4,861</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>4,697</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse and online sexual abuse</td>
<td>4,466</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 12 year-olds

was the age with the highest increase of counselling about self-harm – 44 per cent increase from 2012/13
16-18 year-olds

ChildLine carried out almost 51,000 counselling sessions with young people aged between 16 and 18, representing 29 per cent of counselling.

There was a 12 per cent increase in counselling about mental health conditions with this age group, and a 2 per cent increase in counselling about suicidal feelings. However, self-harm counselling for 16-18 year-olds saw a decrease of 11 per cent.

School and education problems saw a 30 per cent increase in the 16-18 age group due to young people feeling increased pressure and needing extra support in the run-up to and during their exams. You can find more details on this in the school and education problems section.

16-18 year-olds were the only age group where we saw an increase from 2012/13 in the number of counselling sessions about family relationship problems (3 per cent). 15 per cent of 16-18 year-olds that contacted us about this said that they wanted to leave home due to conflict with family members.

Sex/relationships/puberty and sexual health accounts for 10 per cent of all the counselling for this age group. This makes it a greater concern for 16-18 year-olds than for younger children that contact ChildLine. The majority of young people contacting us about this needed relationship support and advice.

Top ten concerns for 16-18 year-olds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main concern</th>
<th>Number of counselling sessions</th>
<th>Percentage of total counselling for 16-18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>7,140</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem/unhappiness</td>
<td>6,214</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>5,123</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicidal</td>
<td>3,660</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health conditions</td>
<td>3,422</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>2,966</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse and online sexual abuse</td>
<td>2,585</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy and parenting</td>
<td>1,982</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/education problems</td>
<td>1,930</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying/online bullying</td>
<td>1,669</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender

There were 145,680 counselling sessions with girls (52 per cent), 38,889 boys (14 per cent) and 95,495 (34 per cent) with young people who didn’t tell us their gender. Compared to last year, the girl to boy ratio increased from 3:1 to 4:1.

39 per cent of girls chose to phone ChildLine compared to 67 per cent of boys, suggesting that boys are more likely than girls to choose telephone counselling over online counselling.

Bullying is still the leading concern for boys whereas for girls it’s family relationship issues.

In 2013/14 school and education problems saw a significant increase for both girls (34 per cent) and boys (14 per cent) and appeared in the top ten concerns for both genders for the first time.

Self-harm and mental health conditions issues only appear in the top ten concerns for girls whereas physical abuse and sexual/gender identity only appear in the top ten concerns for boys.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Total girls</th>
<th>Percentage of girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>18,144</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem/unhappiness</td>
<td>16,300</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying/online bullying</td>
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<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>13,015</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicidal</td>
<td>9,833</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>8,306</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health conditions</td>
<td>6,981</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse and online sexual abuse</td>
<td>6,278</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/education problems</td>
<td>5,899</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

39% of girls chose to phone ChildLine

145,680 counselling sessions with girls in 2013/14
## Boys

### Top ten concerns for boys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Total boys</th>
<th>Percentage of boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bullying/online bullying</td>
<td>5,454</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>4,719</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>4,185</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem/unhappiness</td>
<td>3,005</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>2,743</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse and online sexual abuse</td>
<td>2,054</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/education problems</td>
<td>1,707</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual and gender identity</td>
<td>1,641</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicidal</td>
<td>1,574</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>1,541</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Referrals
ChildLine refers a child or young person when they are in immediate life-threatening danger, are facing significant harm or requesting direct help.

In 2013/14, ChildLine made 1,975 referrals to external agencies, such as the police or children’s services, on behalf of 1,960 children and young people (some young people can be referred to multiple agencies). There was a 7 per cent rise in the number of children and young people being referred compared to the previous year.

One extremely worrying trend we’ve seen over the past years is the number of children who have been calling us where their problems have got to the stage where there situation is life threatening.

Referrals where children and young people were actively suicidal increased by 17 per cent since 2012/13 and 33 per cent since 2011/12. 1,277 (65 per cent) per cent of all referrals last year were suicide-related, compared to 1,095 (60 per cent) in 2012/13.

Often young people find it difficult to identify exactly what the issue they are struggling with is and may not be able to access the support they need early enough. While it is positive that these young people did call ChildLine and we hope as a result of this got the help they need, we must look at why they didn’t feel able to talk to anyone about their problems earlier, and what more needs to be done to break down the stigma of being able to talk about suicidal thoughts.

Other concerns which had an increase in referrals include sexual abuse, self-harm and emotional abuse.

75 per cent of referrals were made to the police (11 per cent increase since 2012/13), and 10 per cent to children’s services. A further 15 per cent were made to other agencies like the ambulance service.

Where appropriate, every effort is made to obtain consent from the child or young person before we share their information with relevant services. We don’t breach confidentiality lightly as we know how important it is to the young people that contact us that what they say stays between them and the ChildLine counsellor.

However, in cases where a child is in immediate danger this is not always possible.

ChildLine will only breach confidentiality in the following circumstances:

- when the child or young person is in a life-threatening situation.
- when the child or young person has alleged abuse by a person in a position of authority
- when the child or young person is abusing others or there is a significant risk they may harm others
- when the age or capacity of the child indicates they don’t have the ability to make appropriate decisions for their immediate safety or there is a risk to their younger siblings or another connected child.
There was a 26 per cent rise in the number of referrals made for young people aged 16-18. This was due to an increase in physical abuse referrals – up 71 per cent – and sexual abuse referrals – up 53 per cent. There was also a 29 per cent increase in referrals for this age group where the young person was actively suicidal.

The younger age group of children aged 11 or under saw a 16 per cent year on year increase in overall referrals with referrals relating to suicide doubling from 9 to 18 referrals for this age group.

Despite this being the largest age group to contact ChildLine, referrals for 12-15 year old saw the smallest year-on-year increase of 7 per cent.
Mental health conditions
Of the top ten concerns children and young people contact us about mental health conditions saw the greatest year-on-year growth.

There were 24,346 counselling sessions where young people talked about this – an increase of 34 per cent. While this isn’t the category we receive the highest number of contacts about, it is the one in which we have seen the largest increase over the last year and so is important to reflect on. In addition to accessing direct support, a large number of young people were seeking information about these subjects.

The ChildLine website pages on ‘Depression and feeling sad’ received almost 52,000 views and our video about depression was viewed more than 24,000 times.

The mental health message board, where young people can access peer-to-peer support, received more than 56,000 visits. The range of concerns talked about were as broad as the mental health spectrum but common topics were OCD, bipolar disorder, suicidal feelings, psychiatric hospitalisation and hearing voices.

There was a 6:1 girl to boy ratio of counselling about mental health conditions. 98 per cent of those counselled were between 12-18 years old, with the most common age decreasing from 17 to 15.
Self harm and suicidal feelings

Self-harm was mentioned in 3,500 counselling sessions where a young person spoke about mental health conditions (28 per cent) making it the most common additional concern talked about by young people struggling with these issues.

In 20 per cent of the counselling sessions where a young person spoke about a mental health condition they also talked about their suicidal feelings. We have produced a spotlight report called On the Edge, which looks at the key issues young people raise when contacting ChildLine feeling suicidal. This can be found at nspcc.org.uk/ontheedge

Low self-esteem, isolation and loneliness were all commonly experienced by young people contacting ChildLine about mental health conditions.

Reclusive behaviour often made them feel worse. Typically the young person would say they felt abnormal or weird when comparing themselves to their peers, and that they wished they could just be like everyone else.

Through this comparison they grew more conscious about their mental health or depressive disorder, which eventually made them lose the confidence to leave the house.

“I feel so alone and worthless – I can’t carry on like this anymore. I’m so depressed that I don’t even leave the house because I’m scared of what people will think of me. I’m having counselling but it’s not helping me with my confidence. I don’t see the point in living like this so I’ve thought about taking an overdose. I’d be better off dead.”

(Girl, 12-15)
Depression

In over half of mental health counselling (56 per cent or 7,194 counselling sessions) young people told us they were depressed and talked about how hard daily life was.

Many struggled to find enjoyment in anything and found it hard to get out of bed in the morning and face the day ahead.

They often suffered in silence, believing that if they opened up about how they were feeling they would not be taken seriously, be accused of attention-seeking or simply would not be understood. This was especially the case when the young person didn’t understand why they were feeling depressed.

Depression was also sometimes triggered by painful or stressful life events. In these cases, young people told us they were unable to cope and often were feeling so desperate they were self-harming or felt suicidal. Such life events were varied but included school pressures, bullying, abuse, bereavement and relationship difficulties.

“I don’t know how to explain how down I’m feeling. I don’t exactly know what’s triggered it, but I have just been feeling like I have nothing to get out of bed for and nothing makes me happy anymore. I want to speak to someone, but I find it hard to reach out and don’t feel comfortable explaining my feelings.”

(Girl, 12-15)

“I’ve suffered from depression for over a year now. Life is so hard. It’s affected my friendships because people don’t want to be around someone who is down in the dumps all the time. I don’t know why I feel so stressed all the time – nothing ever goes right for me. My parents are supportive, but I don’t think they truly understand. I am beginning to lose hope and wish I could put an end to how I feel.”

(Boy, 16-18)
Hallucinations and delusions

Young people talked about having hallucinations (seeing, hearing and smelling things others don’t) and delusions in 2,169 counselling sessions.

They wanted to understand why they were experiencing these things, and they were often terrified and too frightened to tell anyone what was happening to them.

Some children talked about constant voices in their head, which would sometimes even tell them to hurt themselves. One in seven talked about self-harm or suicidal feelings alongside hearing voices.

Where young people were experiencing delusions, they were often paranoid that someone was trying to cause them harm or that there was a conspiracy against them.

Hallucinations and delusions were sometimes symptoms of a diagnosed mental health condition such as schizophrenia or bipolar.

I am afraid to talk about this, but I just need to tell somebody. I constantly feel paranoid and like everyone’s out to get me. Sometimes I imagine that people are trying to kill me, and I hear all these voices in my head. I cope with these feelings by crying. It’s too difficult to tell anyone because it’s not normal. I don’t want to worry my mum as she has got her own issues. If I tell my friends they will think I’m a freak. I don’t know what to do?

(Girl, 12-15)
There were 325 counselling sessions where the young person told ChildLine they had schizophrenia. Problems with thinking and concentration, reduced motivation, sleeping problems, angry outbursts and an indifference to social contact were commonly mentioned.

Young people told us how they were consumed by anxiety or experiencing panic attacks in over 1,800 counselling sessions.

Those suffering from social anxiety found it difficult to leave the house for fear of being judged. In these cases, they spent long periods of time in self-imposed isolation and felt unable to engage with others because they were too nervous or embarrassed.

Young people described their experiences of panic attacks where their anxieties became out of control. They often detailed the symptoms of these attacks to counsellors, including breathlessness, palpations, feeling nauseous or faint, suffering from acute pains, and loss of concentration. For many young people, these panic attacks were happening on a regular basis.

“I’m feeling completely overwhelmed at the moment. My emotions are out of control and I keep getting anxiety attacks. I get shaky and can’t breathe and it takes me ages to calm down again. I am constantly paranoid about what people think of me and I hate going out in public places now. I don’t know what to do?”

(Girl, 12-15)

“I have recently been to see my psychologist because of my mental health issues. I told them about how I see and hear things, and they diagnosed me with schizophrenia. It’s not something I ever expected to have, so I don’t know how to deal with it? I’m scared about what’s happening to me.”

(Anon)

Schizophrenia

Panic attacks/ anxiety disorders
Bipolar

One of the main difficulties young people with bipolar talked about was coping with their mood swings. There were 451 counselling sessions with young people about bipolar and many described how sometimes they would feel confident and optimistic about life and then would feel hopelessness and despair – even struggling to see the point in life.

“I have bipolar disorder, and I am worried about how quickly my mood keeps switching. I am getting irritated really easily and find it difficult focusing on things. Then I have a sudden burst of creativity and energy and feel great. I’m so worried that my mood swings will get worse and worse!”

(Girl, 12-15)

Personality disorders

There were 229 counselling sessions with young people who had told ChildLine they had a personality disorder. Confusion, feeling out of control, and difficulties managing emotions and maintaining friendships were common issues.

“I’m worried about going back to school this year. I’m not very normal and people treat me differently. I find it really difficult to make friends and when I do, they soon get sick of me. I can be quite aggressive sometimes and people always agitate me. My psychologist says it’s because I have a personality disorder. Being different is so hard.”

(Boy, Age Unknown)
Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)

There were 557 counselling sessions with young people who explained that their obsessions and compulsions, in both physical and mental forms, prevented them leading a normal life. Young people often felt that others lacked understanding about their OCD, frequently making them the subject of jokes, ridicule and bullying.

“I have been battling with my OCD for a while now. It’s hard because I feel like something bad is going to happen if I don’t do my rituals. People at school laugh at me for it and think I’m some kind of weirdo, but they just don’t understand how difficult it is.”
(Boy, 12-15)

Supporting others with mental health issues

There were over 3,100 counselling sessions with young people concerned about another person’s mental health. Many were having difficulties understanding the complexities of mental health or wanted to know how they could provide more support. In cases where the person they were supporting was a parent, young people often felt emotionally neglected and alone. A common problem was that they wanted to help their parent, but didn’t know how.

“My mum has bipolar and I’m starting to find it difficult to cope with her. Sometimes she gets so down she threatens to kill herself - it really scares me. She’s getting help, but she still puts a lot of her problems on me. I wish I had a normal mum - I do love her but I hate the way she can sometimes be.”
(Girl, 16-18)
Eating disorders
In 2013/14, ChildLine dealt with 12,180 counselling sessions about eating disorders – a 15 per cent increase on the previous year.

Over the last three years, counselling sessions about eating disorders have more than doubled.

The ChildLine webpage about eating disorders received almost 16,000 page views, and the eating disorders video received 4,500 views from young people seeking information and advice.

Who contacts us about eating disorders?

The number of counselling sessions with girls outnumbered boys by 26:1, making it the most significant gender disproportion of any issue. However, the number of counselling sessions with boys saw the greatest year on year growth, increasing by 41 per cent since 2012/13 compared with just 14 per cent for girls.

Eating disorders start to become more prevalent when young people are facing the pressures of secondary school. Where age was known, 98 per cent of counselling sessions were with 12-18 year-olds with 1 in 5 (649) aged 15. However, the largest increase in eating disorder counselling was with 16-18 year-olds – up 16 per cent.
What do they tell us?

The majority of young people told ChildLine they had been experiencing eating disorders for years.

Once they had got used to a particular pattern of eating, it became very hard to break the cycle, and they described their constant battle with food.

Some told us how controlling their eating had helped them cope with very difficult and painful situations such as being abused or bullied. In some cases it was used as a form of self-punishment.

ChildLine captures feelings that young people mention during counselling so that we can work out which emotions are most associated with different concerns. Feelings of guilt, being scared or worried were amongst the most common in young people with eating disorders – mentioned in over 20 per cent of counselling.
What type of eating disorders do young people talk about?

Nearly half (2,440) of counselling about eating disorders related to anorexia. Significant loss of appetite, being unable to eat anything and compulsive exercise were all frequently mentioned.

Young people emphasised how they hated the way their body looked – believing they would be much happier and more accepted if they were slimmer. Some restricted their eating because it was something they could control in their lives.

Bulimia was the second most common eating disorder, discussed in 19 per cent of counselling sessions on this issue. Young people referred to getting into cycles of binge eating, feeling incredibly guilty and then purging through vomiting, laxative or slimming pill abuse to rid their bodies of what they had consumed.

I feel sad and hate myself all the time because I eat too much. I eat and eat and afterwards I feel horrible. To cope with the feeling of disgust I have for myself I vomit and take laxatives and sometimes self-harm. It’s been going on for a few years now.

(Girl, 12-15)

My Dad abused me when I was younger, so when I was little I had to grow up having to protect him even though he was supposed to be the one who looked after me. I feel like I have had to grow up so quickly and I never got to experience being a child. I have had an eating disorder for a long time now and I think it is because I wanted to be in control of something. I never thought I would have the courage to speak to anyone about this.

(Girl, 16-18)
Body image issues

In 1,655 (32 per cent) of counselling sessions about eating disorders, young people mentioned having low self-esteem.

Many of these young people were concerned about their body image and expressed anxieties and low self-confidence about the way they looked.

Young people’s issues with their body image and appearance played a huge part in triggering eating disorders. During 2013/14, ChildLine handled more than 5,000 counselling sessions with young people who talked about body image issues – up 21 per cent since 2012/13. The majority of these took place with girls who outnumbered boys by 11:1 when talking about this concern.

Bullying, name-calling and being victimised about weight often led to young people developing body image issues. Young people often strongly believed that by changing their body it would result in them being socially accepted.

I used to get bullied and called fat by people at school. It made me feel ugly, so I started eating less and less. I lost loads of weight but ended up becoming obsessed with not eating. I thought by becoming skinny people would stop bullying but they haven’t, I still get called names. I feel like giving up.

(Girl, 12–15)
Girls

Girls frequently talked about feeling under immense pressure to look and act a certain way.

The pressure worsened when girls compared themselves to their peers, celebrities or pictures of women in the media. Restricting the amount of food they were eating was the only way they believed they could achieve “perfection,” or the “ideal body type.”

Girls also talked about social anxieties arising from body image issues, with some not wanting to leave their house because they were scared other people would judge them. This increasing isolation made matters worse as they did not surround themselves with the comfort of friends to help build their self-esteem.

I don’t like the way I look because I feel fat and ugly. I have the perfect image in my head of how I want to look and have been looking at websites of skinny people for inspiration. I want to stop eating so I can lose weight and feel better about myself.

(Girl, 12-15)
Boys often spoke about how a negative body image and restriction of eating arose from a desire to fit in.

Negative body image sometimes began if the young person saw themselves as separate from the friendship group, for example if they were less fit or struggled with team sports. In other cases, boys did not see their weight as an issue until friends commented, or they were bullied about their weight. Sometimes boys started off with a desire to "lose a bit of fat" and "get healthy" which escalated into an eating disorder.

In some counselling sessions boys spoke about how they would be too embarrassed to tell anyone about their eating disorder as they believed others perceived it as a "girls’ problem" and would therefore be considered abnormal. Boys often felt isolated from information on eating disorders and body image issues as they thought everything they had read was directed at girls.
Young people contacting us about eating disorders sometimes mentioned the use of pro-ana websites. These are incredibly dangerous websites that normalise anorexia and encourage the condition, endorsing it as a lifestyle choice rather than a mental health problem.

Young people explained how they used these pro-ana websites as a support network, seeing them as a place to turn so they could discuss what they were going through with like-minded individuals. They told ChildLine about meeting friends on these sites, sharing experiences and receiving encouragement. Some said they were pressured to go further with their anorexia, receiving tips and advice on how to lose weight and suppress their hunger.

They also talked about blogs and information pages on social media they had seen which advocated anorexic behaviours and idealised slim body types. Young people told counsellors that they aspired to be like the people they had seen on these blogs and that they had given them ‘thinspiration.’

I don’t feel like I can be happy with myself until I’m a size zero. I sometimes talk to my friends on this pro-ana site who help me to stay thin and give me advice about how to keep the weight off. I’ve started doing this diet they recommended recently which is helping.

(Girl, 12-15)
Online abuse and safety
Sexting is really pretty normal at my age. It seems like everyone’s doing it. There are definitely risks involved. Someone saw a video message I had sent to a previous girlfriend, took a screen shot and posted it online. They called me a pervert and lots of people I knew saw it. I was completely devastated and, to be honest, almost suicidal. I’ve never pressured anyone into sexting, and when any girl I’ve been seeing hasn’t been interested I’ve been fine with that. There are some people though who will put pressure on you.”

There were 11,095 counselling sessions about online abuse and safety in 2013/14 – a 4 per cent increase compared to the previous year, and 73 per cent increase since 2011/12.

Over half of counselling was with girls and three quarters of counselling was with 12-15 year-olds.

While the majority of the contacts (8,253) were about online bullying or social media issues, the area in which we have seen the main increase relates to online sexual abuse. We have carried out 2,842 counselling sessions about this, a 168 per cent increase from 2012/13.

The NSPCC and ChildLine are planning a range of campaigns to help with these issues over the next year, including Flaw in the Law which looks to close the gap in the law in England and Wales that allows an adult to send a sexual message to a child and Share Aware, a campaign encouraging parents to talk to their children about how to stay safe online.

Gender breakdown for online abuse and safety counselling sessions 2013/14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boys</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Girls</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Pressures to send sexual messages or images

Sending or receiving a sexually explicit text, image or video on a mobile phone (commonly referred to as sexting), was mentioned in almost 1,300 counselling sessions.

In October 2013 a ChildLine survey of 13-18 year olds revealed that 60 per cent of young people had been asked for a sexual image or video of themselves, 40 per cent had created an image or video of themselves, and a quarter had sent this to someone else.

Speaking about this James* 17 told us:

“Sexting is really pretty normal at my age. It seems like everyone’s doing it. There are definitely risks involved. Someone saw a video message I had sent to a previous girlfriend, took a screen shot and posted it online. They called me a pervert and lots of people I knew saw it. I was completely devastated and, to be honest, almost suicidal. I’ve never pressured anyone into sexting, and when any girl I’ve been seeing hasn’t been interested I’ve been fine with that. There are some people though who will put pressure on you.”
This pressure was evident from some of the counselling sessions carried out by ChildLine. Young people spoke about how they had been asked by someone they trusted, often a boyfriend, to send a sexual photo of themselves. Many had not wanted to do this, but didn’t know how to say no and were worried about being ridiculed or “dumped” if they did not comply.

Sexting often led to friendship issues and bullying as the young person’s photo was shared widely within their school and online communities. This left them feeling overwhelmed, betrayed and embarrassed.

Often the young person received threats or was blackmailed for more photos. These young people looked to ChildLine for advice on how they could deal with the situation. They just didn’t know how to make it stop.

Most young people felt too uncomfortable to talk to adults about sexting and were worried that they would get in trouble for it, so they didn’t seek support from anyone else – leaving them anxious and isolated.

My boyfriend keeps asking me to do stuff with him and is forcing me to sext. I sent him some sexy pictures, but I immediately regretted what I had done. He wants full naked pictures now, but I don’t want to do that. He said he is going to tell everyone all my secrets if I don’t though. I love him and want to make him happy, but I’m not ready to do stuff yet as I still feel too young. I’m scared he is going to break up with me or tell people things about me if I don’t do what he wants though.

(Girl, age unknown)

Recognising this growing problem, ChildLine launched its first ever mobile phone app called Zipit, which can be downloaded from the ChildLine website www.childline.org.uk/zipit as well as all major app stores.

Zipit offers young people funny images they can use as a response to requests for naked or explicit pictures. It has already received over 60,000 downloads. We have also launched the Share Aware campaign – for parents to help them keep their children safe online.
Dangerous online relationships

Young people described online interactions as being like the start of a relationship; the person they had met online complimented them and made them feel wanted and special.

These relationships were predominantly started on social networking and dating sites.

Over time, conversations became more and more sexual, and sometimes the young person was asked and pressured into sending explicit images. Many of the young people we listened to believed that sending an image would end the requests but soon discovered that this just led to being asked for more. Ignoring or blocking the online contact didn’t always work as perpetrators would find the young person again through social networking sites.

In numerous cases the online contact had pretended to be around the same age as the young person, but once they were in a position of control, disclosed that they were a lot older. Reporting what was happening or telling anyone else also seemed too difficult, leaving the young person feeling trapped, scared and alone.

It is because of cases like this that ChildLine has partnered with the Internet Watch Foundation to help make it easier for young people to know where to turn to get sexually explicit images removed from online.

I met a boy online who said he was my age. We had been talking a lot before he asked me to send him a photo. I did but I really regret it now because I found out he’s a lot older than he said he was, and he’s posted my pictures all over the internet. My friends have seen them and said I’m disgusting and that they don’t want to be friends with me anymore. I feel so humiliated. I want the pictures to be taken down but I don’t know how I can do this? I feel so stupid for believing him. Everything is such a mess now.

(Girl, age unknown)
Worries about what they are viewing online

ChildLine has seen a 145 per cent increase in young people talking about exposure to online porn, websites with harmful content or child abuse images. There were 1,162 counselling sessions about this in the past year.

The main concerns children and young people had were:

- how their parents would react if they found out
- thinking they were abnormal
- the impact viewing porn was having on intimate relationships
- whether they could be arrested for viewing pornography

Young people spoke about how they felt confused, with mixed feelings of shame and guilt, but also enjoyment. In some cases, the young person had recognised that viewing porn was affecting their views on relationships and their sexual thoughts and feelings – often considering themselves perverted or abnormal. A number of children and young people contacted ChildLine to disclose their concerns about a porn addiction, feeling as though their interest in explicit imagery was turning into an addiction.

At times young people had searched for pornographic images but ended up stumbling upon images that were far more graphic or were child abuse images – leaving the young person feeling disturbed, confused and upset. In these instances they didn’t know who to speak to about how they were feeling because they felt embarrassed and were worried that people wouldn’t believe it was a mistake.

Young people who had viewed porn on the internet and those who had not viewed porn spoke about being bombarded with pop-up windows featuring explicit imagery. Many were particularly concerned when the pop-ups displayed indecent images of children as this was not something they had searched for, but feared they would be accused of looking at it.

I can’t stop thinking about the sex scenes I saw in a porn film. I think I’ve become a bit obsessed. All I do is fantasise about the stuff I saw – like being tied up. I know it makes me sound a bit weird but I can’t help it.

(Girl, 12-15)

I used a search engine to find some sexy pictures of women but loads of things I didn’t want to see came up. The pictures were really graphic and of parts I didn’t want to see. It has upset me because I wasn’t expecting for them to appear. They were really dirty and I can’t get them out of my head. It’s getting me down.

(Boy, 12-15)
There was a small number of young people who told ChildLine that they had deliberately searched for child abuse images or were actively posting and saving child abuse images online. These young people talked about the shame and disgust they felt, and most of them admitted that they knew the material they were accessing was wrong. They said they couldn’t lose their interest in it and went to great lengths to view the material in private and clear their internet history so nobody would find out what they were doing.

They understood the severity of what they were doing and contacted ChildLine for advice on how to stop. In some cases they wanted to find out whether their IP address could be traced by the police. Despite the desperation and fear that many of the young people were feeling, none of them felt they could talk to a family member, trusted adult or friend because they understood what they had been doing was wrong and were scared of the repercussions.

In these circumstances ChildLine supported the young person to explore how they felt about what they had done and reassured them that it was good that they had sought advice and support. We helped them to recognise that the behaviour is not healthy and looked at ways in which the young person could address their behaviour and ideally access some local support. When young people seemed like they may be a risk to others we explored this as fully as possible and in some circumstances made a referral. We would ideally do this with the young person’s consent, but in some cases we had to breach confidentiality. For young people who engage more regularly with the service it can be possible to work out if their behaviour has become more severe, and take action if necessary.

“I’m disgusted with myself because I’ve been looking at child abuse images”

“I’m disgusted with myself because I’ve been looking at child abuse images for pleasure. I know it’s bad so I’m really embarrassed that I do it but I can’t help it. I’ve been sending some images around a group I’m part of which I’m now starting to regret. I’m worried the police will find out and I’ll get in trouble. I’ve deleted a lot of the material because I feel so anxious and ashamed of myself. I can’t talk to anyone about what I’ve done because I know what they’ll think of me.

(Boy, 12-15)
What is apparent from listening to young people talk about online issues is that most were fully aware of online dangers but believed they could stay in control of the situation and knew how to keep themselves safe.

However, many still ended up in compromising situations which left them feeling that they should have known better, admitting they hadn’t believed anything bad would happen to them. As a result of blaming themselves, a number of young people resisted getting help despite being deeply affected by what had happened. They were scared of being judged.

I met a guy on a dating site who I really got on with. We’d been talking for a while before he asked me to send him a picture. I agreed even though I knew the risks because I was stupid enough to trust him. It was such a mistake because he instantly changed towards me and I’ve felt really stressed that the photo might resurface since. I’ve not spoken to anyone about how down the situation’s getting me because I feel like I’ve only got myself to blame.

(Girl, Age Unknown)

During the coming year, ChildLine will launch a campaign to help children and young people deal with increased exposure to pornographic material and to help them understand that pornography does not represent real life relationships.
School and education problems
In 2013/14, school and education problems appeared in the top ten concerns for the first time with 35,500 counselling sessions – a 13 per cent increase compared to 2012/13.

It was most frequently mentioned as an additional concern, and where this was the case, nearly half of counselling sessions related to mental health issues such as low self-esteem and unhappiness, self-harm, suicidal feelings and mental health conditions.

62 per cent of counselling about school and education problems was with 12-15 year-olds, 22 per cent with 16-18 year-olds and 16 per cent were aged 11 or younger.
The most significant increase in counselling about school and education problems was with 12-15 year-olds (45 per cent) followed by children aged 11 and under (43 per cent) and 16-18 year-olds (30 per cent).

---

**Age breakdown of contacts about eating disorders**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>2012-13</th>
<th>2013-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11 and under</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-15</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>5,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>3,000</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Exam stress**

Where school and education was the young person’s main concern, 58 per cent of counselling sessions were about exam stress (7,546). This represented a 200 per cent increase compared to 2012/13. There were also more than 87,500 views of our webpage about this topic.

Not wanting to disappoint their parents, fear of failure and the general pressures linked to academic achievement were all major themes.

Stresses about exams affected young people’s ability to sleep, triggered anxiety attacks, depression and tearfulness, and eating disorders. In some cases it also led to self-harm and suicidal feelings, or made them worse. School and education problems were mentioned as an additional concern in 10 per cent (2,477) of self-harm counselling and 10 per cent (1,743) of counselling with young people feeling suicidal.

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*I’m so panicky over exams. I’m under so much pressure from everyone to do well. When I feel too overwhelmed I start to self-harm. I’ve tried speaking to mum about how I feel but she just tells me that I’m being a dramatic teen. That makes me feel so much worse because these are serious feelings for me.*  
(Girl, 12-15)
Young people talked about being stressed about exams no matter where they saw themselves in terms of achievements. If they were in lower sets they worried about their peers seeing them as stupid if they did badly. While those in the highest sets sometimes spoke about feeling under pressure to achieve top marks to live up to other people’s expectations.

**All age groups worry about how exams will affect their future.**

The pressure of doing well was also linked to worries about what was coming up next for young people. Children aged 11 and under were anxious about how their results would affect which secondary school they would go to and what tier group they would be placed in. Not doing well often raised doubts about being able to make new friends or provoked fears of being bullied.

For year 11 students, trying to cope with an increased workload and struggling with revision were common issues. Worries intensified as exams approached, with young people linking their results to their ability to realise future ambitions and career plans.

*I think I’m going to fail my GCSEs and that makes me so worried for the future. What if I can’t get a job anywhere? I’m struggling in so many subjects and finding revision hard because I don’t really know how to organise myself. I’ve been self-harming to deal with how scared I am.*

*(Boy, 12–15)*

Achieving the right grades in order to get into university was a common worry for 16–18 year olds. Many felt as if exams and results had become their “whole life” and were struggling to cope with the pressure. Stresses around having to move out of home to attend college or university, being able to afford accommodation and managing bills were commonly mentioned.

*I’m really feeling the pressure of A levels, I’ve been having panic attacks and difficulty breathing. I’m so afraid of not getting the right grades and I’m stressed about the future. My life could turn out so differently depending on what I get.*

*(Boy, 16 to 18)*

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*I’ve got SATs coming up soon and I’m so worried! I’m going to the big school and it’s a different one to where my friends are going. If I do badly in these exams they might put me in a low set and then people might make fun of me. I’m scared to talk to the teacher about it and mum’s got enough on her plate. I’m told to just do my best but I feel under pressure anyway.*

*(Girl, 11 and under)*
Impact of exam stress on family life

Young people who contacted us about exam stress often talked about the effect this was having on their relationship with their family. Family relationship problems were mentioned as an additional concern in just over 2,000 (16 per cent) of counselling sessions where school and education problems were the main concern.

Arguments with parents were often mentioned, with young people feeling that their parents were always shouting or nagging them to study harder. Young people often had mixed feelings about the support they received from their parents. On the one hand the young person was grateful for the practical support they received from parents who had spent money on tutors, revision books and resources. Yet on the other hand the young person did not always feel emotionally supported – believing that their parents did not understand how stressed they felt.

I just feel like crying all the time. I am stressed with exams and Mum is always shouting at me because she thinks I am not studying hard enough. She doesn’t seem to realise that because of my home life it makes it harder to concentrate and focus at school.

(Anon)

Some young people who were feeling overwhelmed with exam pressures recognised the impact their own behaviour was having on their families and often really regretted their actions. They acknowledged that their stress was creating a bad atmosphere at home but did not know how to control their behaviour and turned to ChildLine for support and advice.

I am feeling very stressed and I wondered if I could have some help on how to make myself less stressed. The amount of work I have from school is piling up and I am finding it hard to keep up. I am in my GCSE year and it’s important to be on track but all the extra work and deadlines is making me so stressed I end up taking it out on my family by shouting at them. Everyone keeps telling me I am not trying hard enough which doesn’t help – nobody will listen. My family don’t seem to have much time for me which makes me upset and angry with them as they don’t seem to be taking me seriously.

(Unknown, Secondary School)

For those attending university, the pressures of their course often made them want to leave but they felt that they had no choice but to keep going. They didn’t feel they could ask to leave university as they knew how disappointed their parents would be and felt guilty about the money that their parents had already spent.
I am feeling very stressed and overwhelmed at the thought of going back to uni. I cannot cope with the pressure of my course and feel scared about going back as I have not done any revision for my exams that are starting soon. I cannot drop out as my parents expect me to graduate and are so proud of me attending uni and all the money they have spent would have been for nothing. I have no special support at uni and just don’t feel I can tell anyone how bad I am feeling.

(Girl, 16-18)

Coping alone

Young people mentioned whether they had told anyone else about how they were feeling in half of counselling sessions where school and education problems were the main concern (6,601). When mentioned, a quarter had spoken to a teacher (1,590).

For some this had been a positive experience where teachers listened, gave advice, arranged counselling, allowed more flexibility with deadlines and helped with revision techniques. However, others felt that talking to a teacher had not been helpful. Sometimes teachers tried to encourage the young person by reassuring them that they could achieve good grades, but as this opinion was not shared by the young person they were left feeling isolated and unheard. In other cases they didn’t feel as if the teacher was interested or had time for them.

I feel like a million things are going on in my head! I have so much revision to do for my GCSEs and really want to get to college after my exams. I do not feel confident that I am going to get my predicted grades of A’s and A’s but when I tell my teacher they just tell me not to worry and that I can do it.

(Girl, 12-15)
Appendix – Nation breakdown ChildLine Annual Review 2013-14

Please note that counselling by nation figures represent the number of counselling sessions handled by a ChildLine base that is located in a particular Nation. These figures do not represent where a child or young person lives as all ChildLine bases can deal with contacts from children anywhere in the UK.
## Total Counselling by Nation 2013-14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Counselling</th>
<th>Third Party</th>
<th>Total Counselling</th>
<th>% Counselling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>176,663</td>
<td>6,499</td>
<td>183,162</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>51,682</td>
<td>2,414</td>
<td>54,096</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>28,303</td>
<td>879</td>
<td>29,182</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>23,416</td>
<td>1,123</td>
<td>24,539</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
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</table>
## Top 10 Concerns by Nation

### England

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Concern</th>
<th>Main Concern</th>
<th>Additional Concern</th>
<th>Combined Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem and unhappiness</td>
<td>19,512</td>
<td>29,324</td>
<td>48,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>21,501</td>
<td>27,264</td>
<td>48,765</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>15,682</td>
<td>18,057</td>
<td>33,739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying/online bullying</td>
<td>17,214</td>
<td>9,308</td>
<td>26,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicidal</td>
<td>12,153</td>
<td>10,272</td>
<td>22,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/education problems</td>
<td>8,117</td>
<td>13,402</td>
<td>21,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>9,540</td>
<td>9,637</td>
<td>19,177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>11,306</td>
<td>6,497</td>
<td>17,803</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health conditions</td>
<td>8,024</td>
<td>7,373</td>
<td>15,397</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>7,049</td>
<td>4,915</td>
<td>11,964</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Scotland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Concern</th>
<th>Main Concern</th>
<th>Additional Concern</th>
<th>Combined Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem and unhappiness</td>
<td>7,050</td>
<td>10,998</td>
<td>18,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>6,909</td>
<td>10,381</td>
<td>17,290</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>3,991</td>
<td>5,271</td>
<td>9,262</td>
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<tr>
<td>School/education problems</td>
<td>2,189</td>
<td>4,428</td>
<td>6,617</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>2,898</td>
<td>3,623</td>
<td>6,521</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suicidal</td>
<td>2,681</td>
<td>3,240</td>
<td>5,921</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>3,463</td>
<td>2,067</td>
<td>5,530</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health conditions</td>
<td>2,259</td>
<td>2,104</td>
<td>4,363</td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>1,869</td>
<td>1,463</td>
<td>3,332</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary Concern</td>
<td>Main Concern</td>
<td>Additional Concern</td>
<td>Combined Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>3,032</td>
<td>4,413</td>
<td>7,445</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem and unhappiness</td>
<td>2,476</td>
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<tr>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>2,013</td>
<td>2,881</td>
<td>4,894</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bullying/online bullying</td>
<td>2,534</td>
<td>1,414</td>
<td>3,948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/education problems</td>
<td>1,166</td>
<td>2,178</td>
<td>3,344</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suicidal</td>
<td>1,454</td>
<td>1,760</td>
<td>3,214</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>1,385</td>
<td>1,594</td>
<td>2,979</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>1,598</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>2,538</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health conditions</td>
<td>1,221</td>
<td>1,209</td>
<td>2,430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical abuse</td>
<td>1,029</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>1,953</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Northern Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Concern</th>
<th>Main Concern</th>
<th>Additional Concern</th>
<th>Combined Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family relationships</td>
<td>3,817</td>
<td>3,335</td>
<td>7,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low self-esteem and unhappiness</td>
<td>3,286</td>
<td>3,150</td>
<td>6,436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-harm</td>
<td>2,622</td>
<td>2,401</td>
<td>5,023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bullying/online bullying</td>
<td>2,661</td>
<td>1,093</td>
<td>3,754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School/education problems</td>
<td>1,439</td>
<td>1,535</td>
<td>2,974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicidal</td>
<td>1,642</td>
<td>1,315</td>
<td>2,957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendship issues</td>
<td>1,735</td>
<td>1,178</td>
<td>2,913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex/relationships/puberty/sexual health</td>
<td>1,873</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>2,673</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mental health conditions</td>
<td>1,280</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>2,156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual abuse &amp; online sexual abuse</td>
<td>1,023</td>
<td>378</td>
<td>1,401</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Channel Breakdown by Nation

England Channel Breakdown
- PIB: 22 PER CENT
- Voice: 31 PER CENT
- 121 chats (47 PER CENT)

Northern Ireland Channel Breakdown
- PIB: 22 PER CENT
- Voice: 26 PER CENT
- 121 chats (52 PER CENT)

Scotland Channel Breakdown
- PIB: 33 PER CENT
- Voice: 35 PER CENT
- 121 chats (32 PER CENT)

Wales Channel Breakdown
- PIB: 17 PER CENT
- Voice: 34 PER CENT
- 121 chats (49 PER CENT)
### Age Breakdown by Nation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>11 and Under</th>
<th>12-15</th>
<th>16-18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>12,920</td>
<td>60,667</td>
<td>31,125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>4,314</td>
<td>19,359</td>
<td>9,859</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>2,159</td>
<td>10,549</td>
<td>5,195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>2,195</td>
<td>9,262</td>
<td>4,522</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
England Age Breakdown

12-15: 58 PER CENT
16-18: 30 PER CENT

Northern Ireland Age Breakdown

12-15: 59 PER CENT
16-18: 29 PER CENT

Scotland Age Breakdown

12-15: 58 PER CENT
16-18: 29 PER CENT

Wales Age Breakdown

12-15: 58 PER CENT
16-18: 28 PER CENT
## Gender Breakdown by Nation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation</th>
<th>Girl</th>
<th>Boy</th>
<th>Gender unknown</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>89,944</td>
<td>24,133</td>
<td>62,586</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>28,157</td>
<td>7,579</td>
<td>15,946</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>14,435</td>
<td>3,744</td>
<td>10,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>13,144</td>
<td>3,433</td>
<td>6,839</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
England Gender Breakdown

- Girls: 14%
- Boys: 35%
- Gender Unknown: 51%

Northern Ireland Gender Breakdown

- Girls: 13%
- Boys: 36%
- Gender Unknown: 51%

Scotland Gender Breakdown

- Girls: 15%
- Boys: 31%
- Gender Unknown: 54%

Wales Gender Breakdown

- Girls: 15%
- Boys: 29%
- Gender Unknown: 56%
## Referrals by Nation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation Agency Referred to Located in</th>
<th>Total Agencies Referred To</th>
<th>Total Young People Referred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>1,324</td>
<td>1,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>211</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,975</strong></td>
<td><strong>1,960</strong></td>
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</table>
### Nation breakdown of topics in ChildLine Annual Review Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>England</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>Northern Ireland</th>
<th>Wales</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>15,397</td>
<td>4,363</td>
<td>2,156</td>
<td>2,430</td>
<td>24,346</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating disorders</td>
<td>7,822</td>
<td>2,167</td>
<td>1,058</td>
<td>1,133</td>
<td>12,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online safety and abuse (combined of online bullying/social issues and online sexual abuse)</td>
<td>6,828</td>
<td>2,298</td>
<td>867</td>
<td>1,102</td>
<td>11,095</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online Bullying/Social media issues</td>
<td>5,013</td>
<td>1,778</td>
<td>625</td>
<td>837</td>
<td>8,253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online sexual abuse</td>
<td>1,815</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>265</td>
<td>2,842</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School &amp; education problems</td>
<td>21,519</td>
<td>6,617</td>
<td>2,974</td>
<td>3,344</td>
<td>35,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ChildLine is here thanks to the generosity and dedication of our amazing volunteers. The following quotes from young people demonstrate the difference their invaluable support has made to their young lives.

**From young people**

ChildLine has been a huge support to me. The advice you give always helps me to think clearer and make better decisions. I feel like I’m in such a better place now. Thank you – I’m so happy you exist and I would love to become a counsellor one day!

(Anon, Leeds online base)

ChildLine has helped me loads, so I just wanted to say thank you for the advice given to me – it really made my situation much better! You’re always there when I need you.

(Anon, Nottingham base)

I just wanted to contact to say thank you ChildLine. You gave me the confidence I needed to speak to a teacher at school about being bullied and they’re helping to resolve the issue now. I feel so much better! I’d recommend you to anyone who was having problems.

(Girl, Birmingham base)

I wasn’t sure if ChildLine would understand me when I first contacted them but they were really helpful and helped me deal with all my frustrations.

(Anon, Manchester base)

Thank you for the tips on how to stop cutting, ChildLine. I’ve tried them and they are really helping which is making me feel a lot happier.

(Anon, London base)

The counsellor who I spoke to today was amazing. They helped me so much, so for the first time in ages, I actually feel happy and positive. Thank you.

(Anon, Glasgow base)
I am getting support from a school counsellor once a week. She is really nice and knows some things but a lot of things I have not told anyone about. Even though she says she won’t tell anyone how do I know that she won’t? She could and just not tell me and then everyone would know about me. It’s different talking to ChildLine because if you told others they wouldn’t know me as I have not told you who I am. My biggest fear about other people knowing about my problems is that they will think I am mad and I end up being sectioned.

(Girl, 12-15, London Base)

I’m so grateful to ChildLine for listening to me. I feel like I can talk about all the things I’m going through and can say exactly how I’m feeling, knowing that I won’t be judged. Thank you for all your support!

(Girl, Cardiff online base)

I was so worried and stressed before I spoke to ChildLine but I was given such good advice on how to deal with my problems. I feel like I can cope so much better now. Thanks for giving me the confidence to speak to my parents!

(Girl, Liverpool base)

ChildLine has helped give me the confidence to speak to someone about what I’m going through. I really appreciate the support you’ve given me.

(Anon, Foyle base)

I’ve called ChildLine so many times and they’ve always been there for me – I think they’re great and their website is amazing! Whenever I’m feeling low, I know I can go on there and it will make me feel better.

(Anon, Aberdeen base)

ChildLine I’m so glad you’re around! It’s amazing knowing I can talk to you about anything. You’ve really helped me open up so I feel so much better about things that are going on in my life.

(Girl, Prestatyn base)
ChildLine has 12 bases around the UK. ChildLine is dependent on the kindness and generosity of volunteers who give up their spare time to support children and young people who need us, by phone, online 1-2-1 chat and email. For more information or to find out how to get involved, please visit the NSPCC website [www.nspcc.org.uk/volunteer](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/volunteer).
Wherever we’ve used quotes from young people, we’ve changed their names and details that might identify them to protect their identity.

ChildLine is the UK’s free, 24-hour helpline and online service for children. Trained volunteer counsellors comfort, advise and protect children and young people. Calls to ChildLine are confidential, but if a child is in immediate danger the counsellor will let the caller know if they have to break confidentiality and contact the emergency services to save the child’s life.

Children and young people can contact ChildLine 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year on 0800 1111 and at childline.org.uk. For any enquiries please contact us at ChildlineBusinessSupportTeam@nspcc.org.uk

ChildLine is a service provided by the NSPCC. Registered charity numbers 216401 and SC037717.