

Voices

of Children and Young People in the EU

Child Helpline Data 2017



Special focus: LGBTQI+ Children and Young People

Voices of Children and Young People

Child Helpline Data 2017

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Disclaimer

The data presented in this report was obtained through Child Helpline International's annual data survey, and reported as collected and submitted by our child helpline members. We received data relating to the year of 2017 from 26 child helplines in 22 countries of the European Union. Data presented and statements made do not capture the full scope of practices and policies of all countries and cases handled by child helplines and other child protection organisations at the national level. The exact data can be requested from Child Helpline International.

Child Helpline International's work is firmly grounded in the principles and values enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, including children's right to privacy and protection from harm. To preserve the trust and confidence children and young people place in child helplines every day, any personal details cited in case summaries has been altered and anonymised.

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Foreword

Every day and every night, child helpline counsellors, volunteers and staff across Europe work to ensure that **the voice of every child and young person is heard**. To support our members in achieving this goal, and based upon the needs they identified, we have been focusing on groups of children and young people who are at higher risk of having their rights violated, and who are less likely to seek out support.

As part of a four-year Framework Partnership Agreement under the European Commission's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020), we are working to further improve accessibility to child helplines through promoting inclusive practices. In 2018, we looked at how child helplines can best support **LGBTQI+ children and youth**. We did this by collecting and sharing good practices among our members and partners, by improving our data collection for 2017, and through establishing quality standards for our member child helplines. In this report, we will showcase our data, and what we learned about inclusive practice in 2018, emphasising the **important role child helplines play in making sure that all children and young people everywhere have easy access to high quality support** whenever they need it.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most comprehensive statement of children's rights globally, has 54 articles that establish the social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights that children are entitled to everywhere. Child helplines directly support and implement children's rights laid out in the UNCRC by working to end violence against children (Article 19) and acting on children's right to be heard (Article 12), among others. 2019 marks the 30th Anniversary of the Convention, and it has **never been more relevant and more important** to ensure that the **right to be heard** is realised for **every child, everywhere**.



Patrick Krens
Executive Director
Child Helpline International



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“ It has never been more relevant and more important to ensure that the right to be heard is realised for every child, everywhere. ”

Introduction

Every child and young person has the right to be heard, the right to protection and the right to access essential services, free from bias or other barriers. **Child helplines play a critical role in the promotion and realisation of children's rights globally**, as they provide a safe, low threshold, and an accessible platform for children and young people across the globe to receive the support they need through immediate counselling and referral services.

Through quality data and first-hand insight into the issues most affecting children's lives, child helplines have the **immense capacity to advocate for children's rights and wellbeing** in specific contexts and globally.

The fact remains that children's lives play out in a broad social context where a myriad of factors shape their lives and rights. This demands the participation and commitment of governments and other key actors in collaboration with child helplines.

We call on governments, children's rights actors, the ICT industry, child helplines and the general public to ensure accessibility, high quality service and sustainability of child helplines everywhere. We call on all relevant actors to build partnerships that facilitate dialogue, knowledge exchange and strong networks that children and young people can access in their everyday lives and at times of crisis. We call on governments and policy makers to **listen to the views and needs of children and young people**, and to **take decisive action on the issues they raise**.

A multi-sectoral approach involving support and long-term funding of the priorities laid out in our key advocacy messages will contribute to the eradication of all violence against children as mandated in Sustainable Development Goal 16.2. Such an approach will strengthen children's rights as safeguarded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and strengthen the child helplines that children and young people rely upon. It will protect and more importantly **empower children and young people** across the globe to live with dignity, to access support where and when needed, and to be agents of change in their lives and the lives of others.

Let's ensure that every child's right to be heard is realised, and that every child helpline has access to the resources and global network they need to help **make universal children's rights a reality**.

Children's Rights and Child Helpline Data

Child helplines have a unique insight into the gap between policy and reality, making them a key actor in advocating for children's rights. Across the world they support millions of children every year. They respond to issues ranging from serious children's rights violations, to children who just want someone to chat to on the way home from school. What brings child helplines together is the provision of an easily accessible, confidential system that allows children themselves to tell a counsellor what is going on their lives.

Child helplines have a unique insight into the direct experiences of children and young people on a larger scale than any other organisations. Therefore, the **value of child helplines' data on contacts cannot be overstated** in informing and guiding policy, learning and practice. The role of child helplines in protecting children and promoting their rights is adapted to the needs of each child or young person. Child helplines work with a range of national partners and referral agencies to ensure that children and young people receive the support they need to thrive. In this position, child helplines have oversight of where services are missing or failing children and young people.

Sustainable Development Goal 16.2

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted by world leaders at a historic UN summit in September 2015 to fight inequalities across the globe, end all forms of poverty, and tackle climate change as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Goal 16 urges countries to promote just, peaceful and inclusive societies. SDG 16.2 specifically seeks to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children, which child helplines play a crucial role in addressing globally.



116 111 - Six Digits to Remember

116 111 is the number reserved for child helplines in the EU. This number is currently operational in 24 out of 28 Member States. The EU Commission has identified child helplines as a service of social value, and the harmonised 116 111 number is an important part of a reporting system to tackle abuse and exploitation of children and young people.

Our key advocacy messages

Every child should have free and unrestricted access to child helpline services

Governments and the ICT sector should facilitate children's rights by supporting child helplines to **improve their reach and accessibility to all children and young people**. Especially vulnerable groups of children and youth – and their unique needs and service barriers – need to be accounted for in the push for greater accessibility of helpline services, ensuring that child helplines are always free of cost, and with a variety of appropriate contact methods.

Child helplines should be strengthened through investments in infrastructure and new functionalities, offsetting service costs, and research and analysis concerning accessibility. Additional considerations include expanding modes of contact, service languages offered, and hours of operation at child helplines.

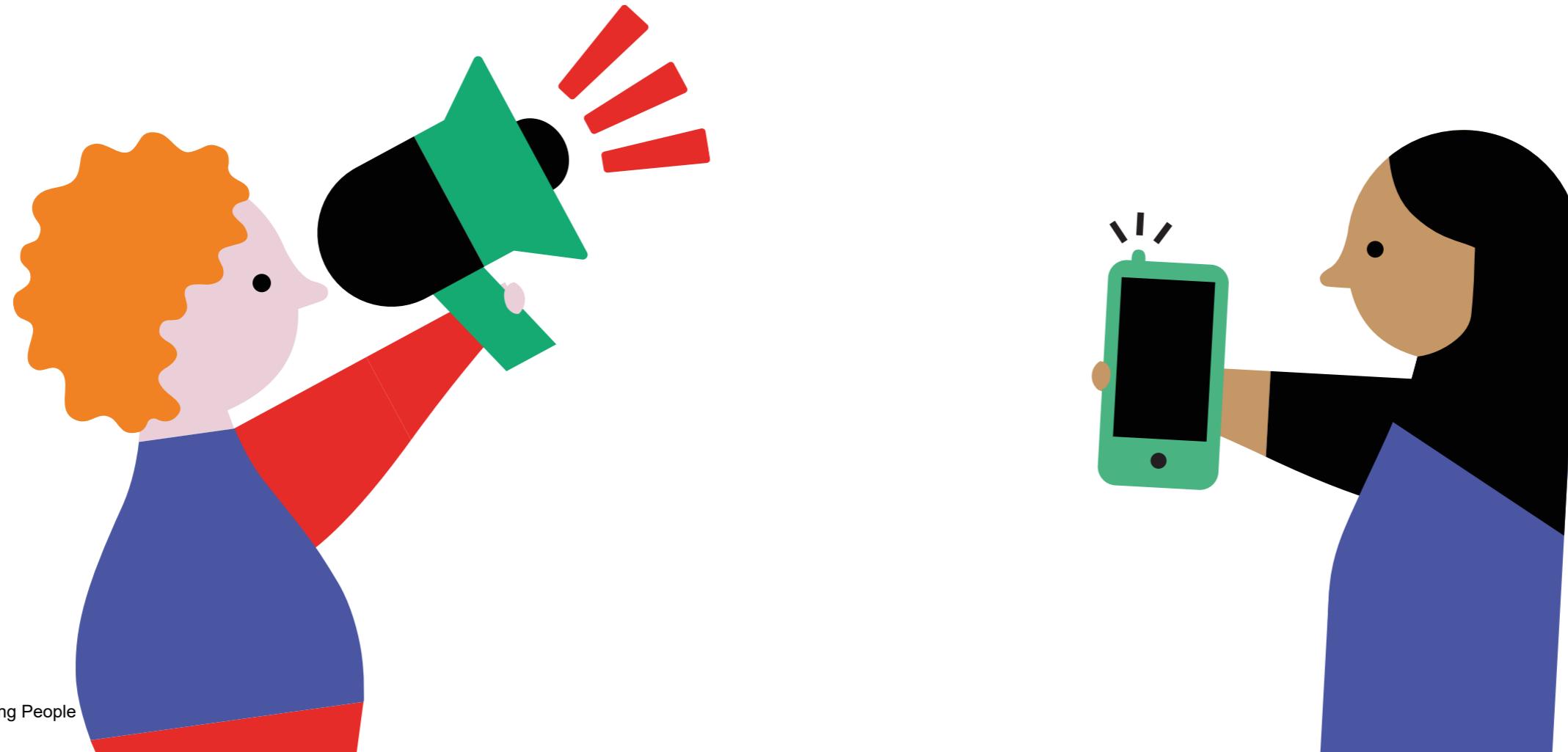
Funding and support should be made available to raise awareness of child helplines in a child-friendly manner that ensures children and young people know how to use helpline services and what they can expect. Promotion of the regionally harmonised **116 111 child helpline number has a vital role to play** in raising public awareness of child helpline services and easing access for children and youth in the European Union.

Quality and sustainability of child helplines is crucial to ensuring children's rights

Child helplines require **reliable long-term funding to sustain and evolve their operations**, and to consistently improve the quality of services offered to children and young people in need of support and protection. Child helplines provide an essential social service to children and young people within national jurisdictions while contributing to the broader realisation of children's rights. Governments should thus provide sources of long-term funding to facilitate high quality and sustainable child helplines. Telecoms and the ICT industry should waive costs where possible.

Child helplines should receive **funding and support** towards the implementation of good governance practices, effective data collection and analysis, comprehensive training programmes for staff and volunteers interacting with children and youth, and contingency plans to help keep child helplines operational during national emergencies and technological or infrastructural failure, among other needs.

Child Helpline International has developed a robust Quality Assurance Framework for child helplines. Governments and other actors should support child helplines to implement the quality standards, and to monitor and evaluate the broader social service scene available to children and young people as a wider support network.



Structured partnerships are needed to eradicate violence against all children

The implementation and monitoring of Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 to end the abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against children is the responsibility of all governments and child protection actors. Child helplines play a decisive role in ensuring children's safety as they are frequently the first point of contact for children and young people facing violence, and provide critical counselling services and referrals to the broader child protection network.

Governments, child protection agencies and thematic expert organisations should work with child helplines to build a **highly integrated service network** that children and young people can depend on. Structured partnerships are needed to establish clear referral pathways and effective knowledge exchange on topics pertinent to children's lives, and to inform interventions taken to protect children.

Funding should be made available through collaborative partnerships to strengthen child helplines' data collection and the quality of frontline services offered. The **diverse needs** of children and young people in Europe need to be taken into account.

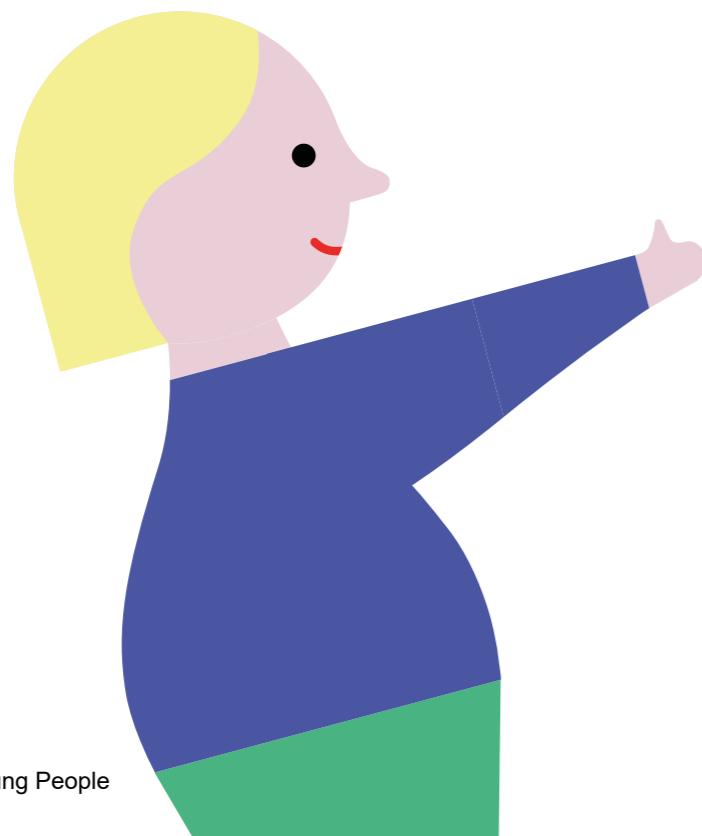
In particular, **vulnerable and underrepresented groups of children and young people stand to benefit from increased coordination among child helplines and other actors**. Abuse and violence is the leading issue facing LGBTQI+ children and youth in the European Union based on child helpline data. Strong partnerships between child helplines and LGBTQI+ organisations are thus needed to equip LGBTQI+ young people with adequate resources and referrals to get the appropriate support they need.

Child helpline data and youth participation should inform policy and decision-making that affects children's lives

Every child has the right to be heard and it is the responsibility of child helplines, governments and other child protection actors to listen to and act upon the views and needs of children and young people. Children's voices should not only play a role in shaping child helpline services, but should inform **decision-making at the highest levels**. Governments, INGOs and other actors should implement effective child and youth participation practices to ensure that services and policies affecting young people are relevant to their lives and uphold their best interests as enshrined in the UNCRC.

Child Helpline International and child helplines offer a wealth of data on the issues and trends most affecting children and young people in local, regional and international contexts. Given that psychosocial and mental health was the top category for contacting child helplines in the European Union, governments and policy makers should address young people's **access to high quality mental health services**, or lack thereof. Such valuable data and the insight it provides into the issues affecting children's lives and their rights should not go to waste.

Governments, INGOs and relevant actors should act on children's voices and child helpline data to implement the kinds of evidence-based changes children and young people need in society. They should sign onto and monitor the implementation of international conventions, such as the UNCRC, that protect a favourable policy climate for children's rights and the work of child helplines.



Why children and young people contact child helplines in the EU

Child helplines collect anonymous data on the contacts they receive from children, young people and concerned adults on a daily basis. This includes, for example, the reason for contact, age and gender of the child, and the method of contact (telephone, website, etc.).

We survey our members once a year to get a comprehensive regional and global picture of issues facing children and young people. This report is based on child helpline data received from 26 child helplines in 22 countries of the European Union in the year **2017**, when our child helpline members provided counselling services to **1 200 310 contacts**. These contacts are organised into 23 thematic categories, with each category comprising a number of different reasons for making contact.

The top 5 categories

Peer relationships
133 743

Sexuality and sexual awareness
108 636

Psychosocial and mental health
315 299

Abuse and violence
93 963

Family relationships
167 175

Most children (or concerned adults or peers) who contacted child helplines in 2017 expressed concerns relating to **psychosocial and mental health**. The child helplines recorded almost twice as many contacts related to mental health compared to **family relationships**, the second largest reason for making contact.

Children in the EU seemed particularly concerned with their **relationships, whether with their family or with their peers**. Another important reason for children and young people contacting child helplines is because they had questions about **sexuality and sexual awareness**. Finally, issues of **abuse and violence** were also important reasons why children and concerned adults contact the helplines in 2017.

Top reasons across the top 5 categories

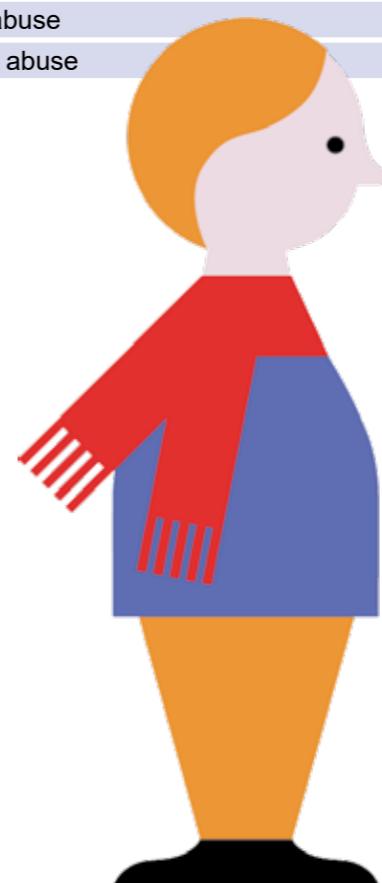
| | | |
|----|-------------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Parent/child relationship | 75 209 |
| 2 | Fear and anxiety | 57 172 |
| 3 | Problems with friends | 56 933 |
| 4 | Partner relationships | 45 972 |
| 5 | Suicidal thoughts and suicide | 40 043 |
| 6 | Feelings of sadness | 31 679 |
| 7 | Physical abuse | 30 549 |
| 8 | Info about sexual development | 27 772 |
| 9 | Self-harm | 26 588 |
| 10 | Boredom | 24 784 |

Girls, where gender is known

| | | |
|----|-------------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Parent/child relationship | 41 219 |
| 2 | Fear and anxiety | 35 302 |
| 3 | Problems with friends | 31 270 |
| 4 | Partner relationships | 29 357 |
| 5 | Suicidal thoughts and suicide | 25 627 |
| 6 | Feelings of sadness | 24 581 |
| 7 | Self-harm | 18 825 |
| 8 | Depression | 13 832 |
| 9 | Sexual abuse | 13 490 |
| 10 | Physical abuse | 12 175 |

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Parent/child relationship | 17 289 |
| 2 | Info about sexual development | 15 787 |
| 3 | Problems with friends | 12 806 |
| 4 | Partner relationships | 10 726 |
| 5 | Fear and anxiety | 10 377 |
| 6 | Physical abuse | 8 295 |
| 7 | Boredom | 7 240 |
| 8 | Parents with mental health issues | 6 996 |
| 9 | Loneliness | 6 885 |
| 10 | Sexual fantasy | 6 849 |

“...Another important reason for children and young people contacting child helplines is because they had questions about sexuality...”



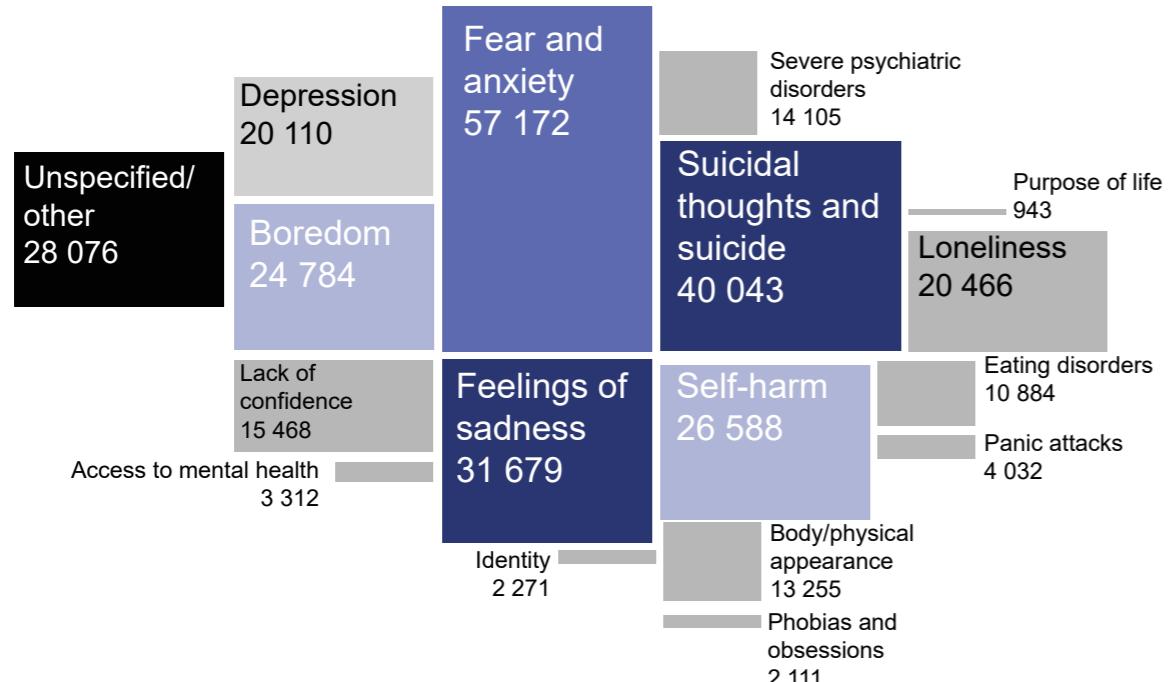
Psychosocial and mental health

Our child helpline members in the EU responded to **315 299 contacts** on issues regarding **psychosocial and mental health**. This represents 26% of all of the contacts in the EU who received counselling.

The top five specified issues in this category are fear and anxiety, suicidal thoughts and suicide, feelings of sadness, self-harm and boredom.

Overall, these findings align with global findings that show that **symptoms related to anxiety and depression are the most common mental health issues**, and highlight children and young people's desire to get support in dealing with these issues.

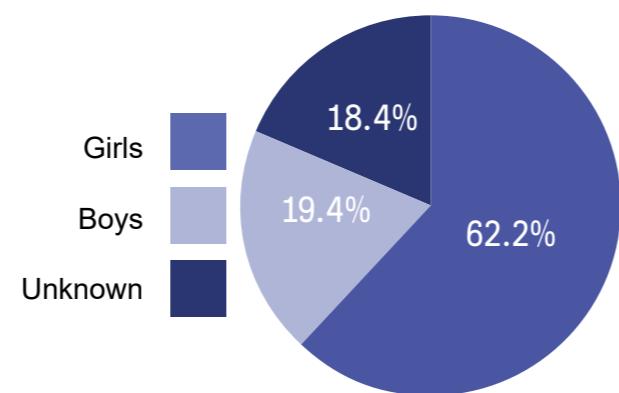
Psychosocial and mental health: reasons for making contact



Reasons by gender, where known

| Girls | | |
|-------|-------------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Fear and anxiety | 35 302 |
| 2 | Suicidal thoughts and suicide | 25 627 |
| 3 | Feelings of sadness | 24 581 |
| 4 | Self-harm | 18 825 |
| 5 | Depression | 13 832 |

Category by gender



Case studies: psychosocial and mental health

"I need help, I want to kill myself..."

"Plenty of young guys my age kill themselves every day. I am going to hang myself in the next few minutes before my parents come home."

The counsellor reminded the boy that he had asked for help, and that the child helpline could help him if he gave them his location. The caller gave his location, and the child helpline was able to contact the emergency services, who arrived on time to save the caller. The caller needed a calm person at the other end of the phone who could listen to him without making any judgement. The Child Helpline helped him to stay calm.

"I haven't told anyone about my anxiety..."

"I have had it since I was nine, I feel depressed. I used to self-harm, but I am not doing that anymore. I am trying to find a new way of coping with my feelings."

The counsellor gave the young person space to tell her story, respecting that this was the first time she had talked to anyone about her feelings. Together, they explored options for the girl to talk to other people in her life, but she was not yet ready. The counsellor reassured her that she had done the right thing by making contact with them, and that she was always welcome to call again. The counsellor also started the process for her to explore what other kinds of support were available to her, and how she might think about accessing more help if she needed it."

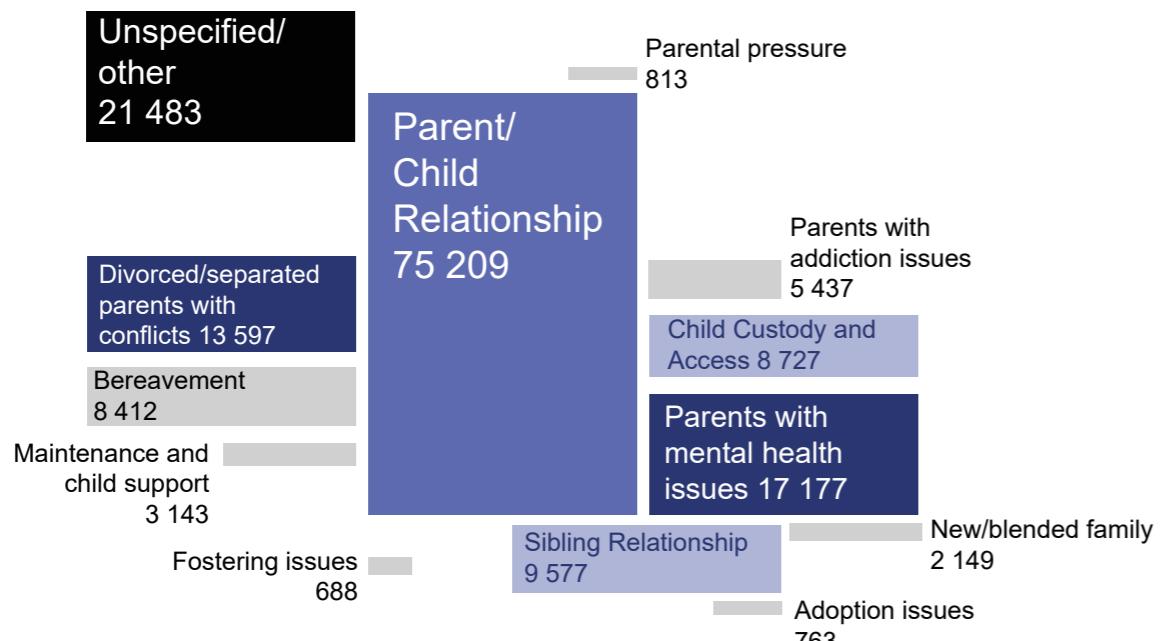
Family relationships

Our child helpline members in the EU responded to **167 175 contacts** relating to **family relationships**. This represents 14% of all of the contacts in the EU who received counselling.

Looking more closely at the reasons for contacting the child helplines in the EU within the broad category of family relationships, we see that most of the calls concern the **relationship between parents and the child**. The other top specified reasons for contact in this category are parents with mental health issues, divorced / separated / parents in conflict, sibling relationships and child custody and access.

Child helplines also recorded a number of contacts about **bereavement in the family**.

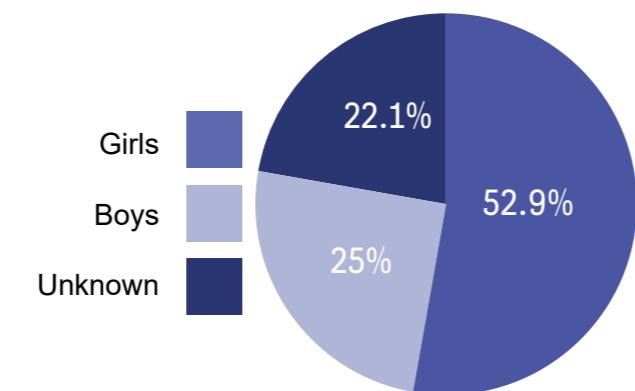
Family relationships: reasons for making contact



Reasons by gender, where known

| Girls | | |
|-------|--|--------|
| 1 | Parent/child relationship | 41 219 |
| 2 | Parents with mental health issues | 9 939 |
| 3 | Divorced/separated/parents in conflict | 7 941 |
| 4 | Bereavement (family) | 4 812 |
| 5 | Child custody and access | 4 674 |

Category by gender



Case studies: family relationships

"My parents are getting divorced..."

"They just told me. I don't know what to do to feel happy again..."

The girl was crying on the phone, saying that this was the hardest thing that had ever happened to her. The counsellor talked to her about this, and explored whether she had someone in her environment who she can talk to and get support from. The counsellor reassured the girl that things would probably feel better when the parents have come out on the other side of the divorce. She just needed someone to talk to and listen to her feelings, and the Child Helpline managed to find a person in her network that she felt comfortable speaking to about her situation.

"Can you help me with how to talk to my parents?"

"I need help to communicate my needs more clearly so I don't get so upset when they don't understand me."

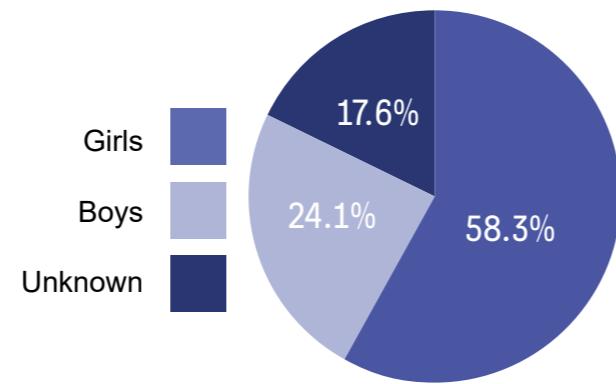
The counsellor supported the young person by telling her to remember and reflect over situations where she had been able to communicate her feelings clearly to other people. The young person came to realise that if she feels listened to and accepted, she is able to express herself more clearly. They agreed that the girl would try to tell her parents that she did not feel she was being listened to and that she felt her parents weren't accepting her parents as a first step to improving communication between them all.

Peer relationships

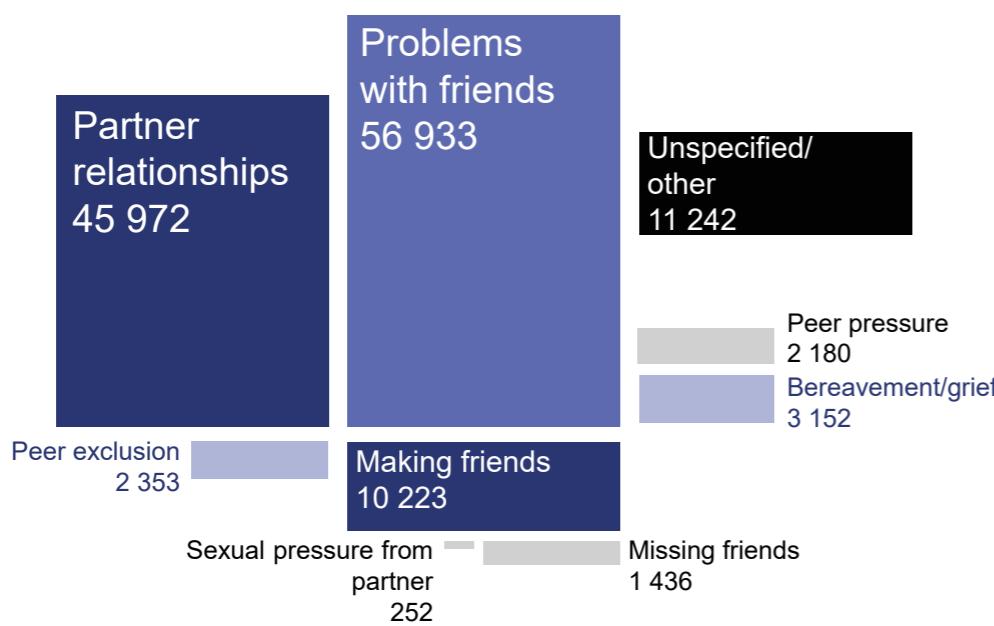
Our child helpline members in the EU responded to **133 743 contacts** relating to **peer relationships**. This represents 11% of all of the contacts in the EU who received counselling.

Peer relationships are an important concern for children in the EU. The data in this category clearly illustrates the concerns children have about their **present or desired relationships with friends and/or partners**. The top five specified reasons for contact in this category are problems with friends, partner relationships, making friends, bereavement among their peers, and peer exclusion.

Category by gender



Peer relationships: reasons for making contact



Reasons by gender, where known

| Girls | | |
|-------|---------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Problems with friends | 31 270 |
| 2 | Partner relationships | 29 357 |
| 3 | Making friends | 5 609 |
| 4 | Bereavement/grief (peers) | 1 705 |
| 5 | Peer pressure | 1 221 |

| Boys | | |
|------|---------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Problems with friends | 12 806 |
| 2 | Partner relationships | 10 726 |
| 3 | Making friends | 2 849 |
| 4 | Bereavement/grief (peers) | 1 321 |
| 5 | Peer exclusion | 813 |

Case studies: peer relationships

"It's hard for me to make friends..."

"I have some friends, but they are all far away. I feel lonely and miss having friends in real life."

The young person had some negative experiences with friends in the past. The counsellor talked about the meaning of friendship, and how the young person's previous negative experiences had made her a bit shy. Together, they came up with some ideas on how to meet new people. They also talked about how to deal with her feelings of shyness and how she might possibly get closer to her more casual friends. Lastly, the counsellor also checked that the young person was aware of how to be safe online.



"Is he hiding something from me...?"

"My boyfriend has put a password on his phone... I think he might be hiding something from me."

The young person told the counsellor that she had experienced infidelity in previous relationships, and was concerned this was the case again.

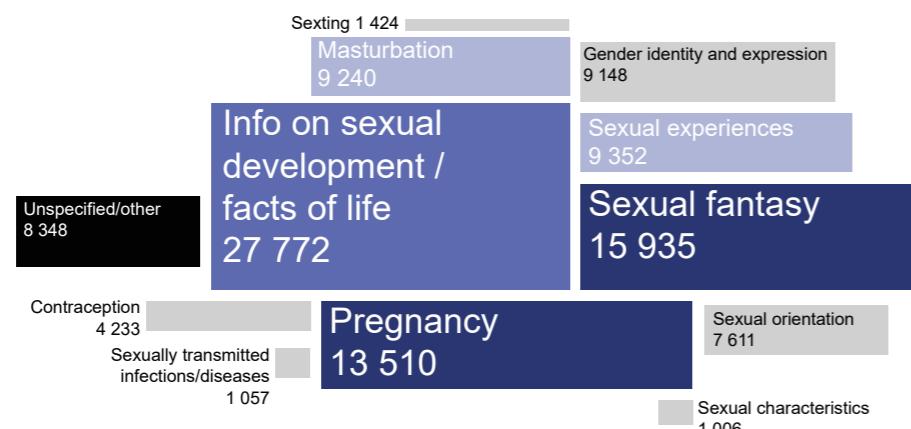
The counsellor talked to the girl about the importance of speaking to her boyfriend directly about her concerns. They also discussed that, because the young person used a password on her own phone, this might be the reason why her boyfriend was doing the same. The young person said she would talk to her boyfriend the next morning.

Sexuality and sexual awareness

Our child helpline members in the EU responded to **108 636 contacts** seeking information about a diverse range of topics connected with **sexuality and sexual awareness**. This represents 9% of all of the contacts in the EU who received counselling.

The top five specified reasons for contact were information on sexual development (facts of life), sexual fantasy, pregnancy, sexual experiences and masturbation. A number of contacts related to **gender identity and expression** - including contacts where the contact's gender was not specified - and we will be focusing on this issue elsewhere in this report.

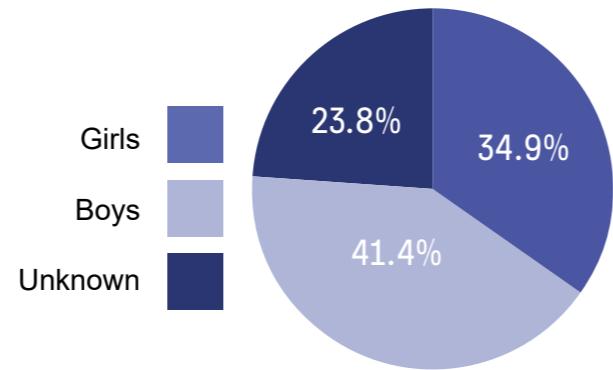
Sexuality and sexual awareness: reasons for making contact



Reasons by gender

| Girls | | |
|-------|--------------------------------|-------|
| 1 | Info on sexual development | 9 831 |
| 2 | Pregnancy | 8 908 |
| 3 | Sexual experiences | 4 415 |
| 4 | Sexual orientation | 4 211 |
| 5 | Gender identity and expression | 2 642 |

Category by gender



| Boys | | |
|------|----------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Info on sexual development | 15 787 |
| 2 | Sexual fantasy | 6 849 |
| 3 | Masturbation | 6 383 |
| 4 | Sexual experiences | 4 515 |
| 5 | Sexual orientation | 3 103 |

Case studies: sexuality and sexual awareness

"How can I tell my friends that I am gay?"

"I am scared about coming out to my friends and family because I don't know if they will accept me..."

The counsellor validated the young person's emotions, and asked if there was somebody he knew who he would feel comfortable talking to. The young person suggested that a close friend of his would be a good person to tell first. Together, the young person and the counsellor came up with an idea on how to talk with the friend. Towards the end of the conversation, the counsellor gave the young person contact details to local LGBT+ services.

"I am not ready..."

"He wants to have sex with me, but I don't feel ready. I don't know what to do..."

The counsellor explored what the young person wanted, and what she felt doubtful about. The counsellor supported the young person by encouraging her that she is the only one who can decide when, where and with whom she will have her first sexual experience. They also talked about how important it is to communicate this to a prospective partner. The young person decided to speak to her boyfriend about her feelings.

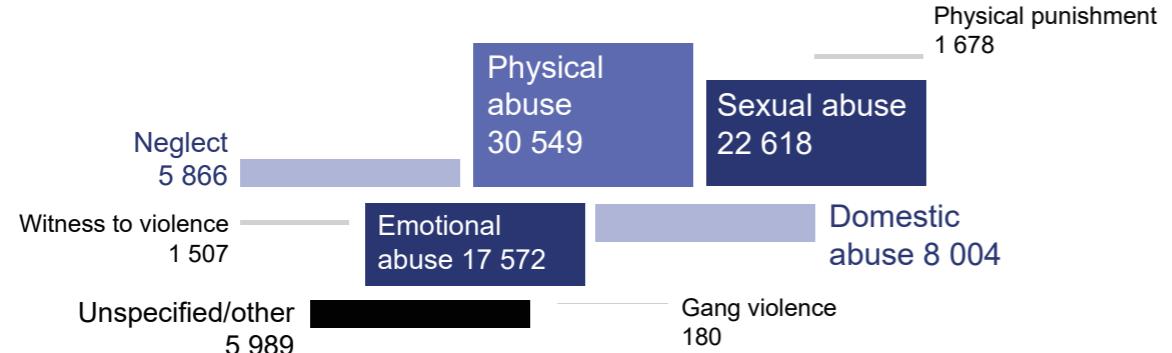


Abuse and violence

Our child helpline members in the EU responded to **93 963 contacts** relating to **abuse and violence**. This represents 8% of all of the contacts in the EU who received counselling.

By providing support and counselling on issues of abuse and violence, **child helplines can play a crucial role in supporting the Sustainable Development Goal 16.2**, which seeks to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children.

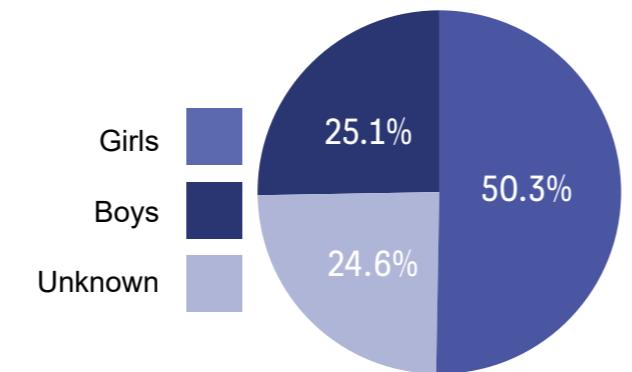
Abuse and violence: reasons for making contact



Reasons by gender, where known

| Girls | | |
|-------|-----------------|--------|
| 1 | Sexual abuse | 13 490 |
| 2 | Physical abuse | 12 175 |
| 3 | Emotional abuse | 9 869 |
| 4 | Domestic abuse | 4 520 |
| 5 | Neglect | 2 581 |

Category by gender



Case studies: abuse and violence

"I want to run away..."

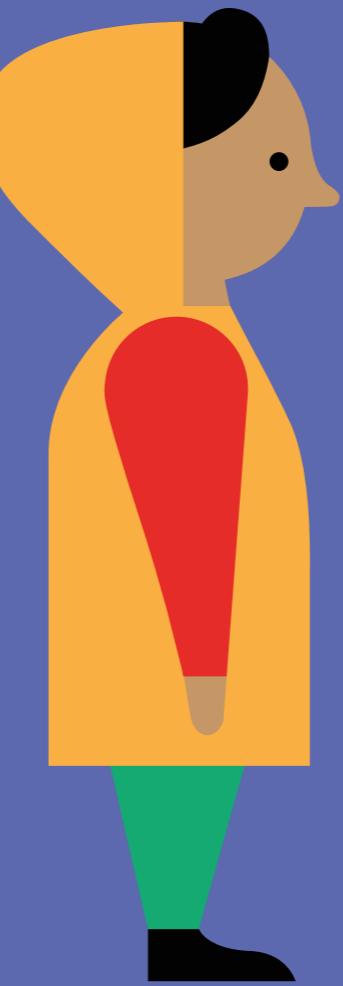
"My dad says really mean things to me, and my mum has abused me since I was little. I don't want to go to the police because my mum might go to prison, but I don't know how to make it stop."

The young person told the counsellor that her mother had hit her the day before, and that she had some visible injuries. The young person expressed that she sometimes wants to die, that she self-harms regularly and that she wants to run away. The counsellor supported the young person by giving her time and space to talk about her feelings and experiences, and validated her emotions. The counsellor encouraged her to ask for help, provided different options and offered help with reaching out to access further support.

"My parent yells at me and hits me..."

"One of my parents is away a lot, and my other parent is angry and aggressive. The other one knows about it, so there is no point in telling them."

The counsellor reassured the child that he has done the right thing by contacting the Child Helpline, and that he has been very brave in doing so. The counsellor explained that the child has the rights to protection from violence, and outlined the different options available to him to seek out help. The child did not want help from social services, preferring to get help from someone who was already there in his life. The child and the counsellor explored together whether there was such a person who can provide this help and support.

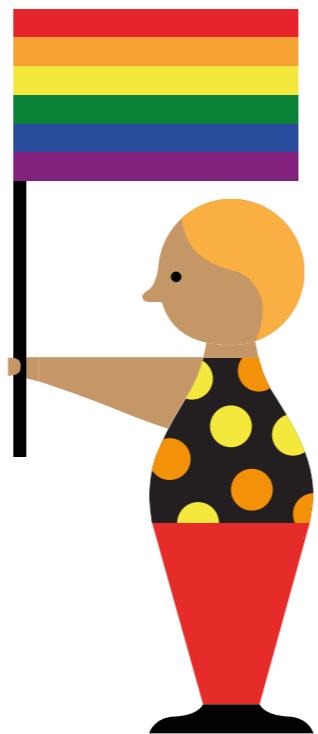


The child eventually decided that he was too scared to talk to anyone about it. The Child Helpline offered to help him speak to Social Services again, and he agreed to think about the proposal. The counsellor booked a new appointment with him for a few days later, so that they could talk again.

Special focus: LGBTQI+ children and young people

Child helpline data on issues facing LGBTQI+ children and young people is currently lacking. Therefore, part of our 2017 data collection focused specifically on LGBTQI+ children and young people. The data is still incomplete, but together with the case studies it provides some indication about why LGBTQI+ children and youth contact child helplines in the EU.

We requested data for contacts where the child or young person specifically identified as LGBTQI+. This data shows that the top 5 reasons LGBTQI+ children and young people contacted child helplines in 2017 were about abuse and violence, family relationships, bullying, addiction and basic needs. The fact that "abuse and violence" is identified as the top reason for making contact with a child helpline confirms the **particular vulnerability of LGBTQI+ children**.



One of the categories for which child helplines submitted data is "Sexuality and Sexual Awareness". Some of the reasons for contact within this category specifically relate to **sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sexual characteristics (SOGIESC)**. In total, child helplines in the EU received 17 765 contacts concerning these issues. Again, this indicates the importance of child helplines in providing guidance and support, and the need for child helpline counsellors to be knowledgeable on issues faced by LGBTQI+ children and young people.

Definite conclusions should not be drawn from these numbers, as the data collected only partially represents the situation in the EU. However, it is relevant to note that the **issues facing LGBTQI+ children and young people differ from the top five issues facing children generally** in the EU.

"I want a boyfriend..."

"I don't like online dating...all the guys on there are just looking for sex. I want to find a boyfriend that I can share my everyday life with. Is it possible to be gay and have a romantic relationship?"

The young person told the counsellor that he often wished he was straight, so he did not have to be afraid of discrimination and negative reactions from his family and friends.

"My parents think being gay is a disease..."

"They don't believe that I am gay. I feel depressed, and I have thought about suicide."

The young person expressed that he had low self-esteem. He had recently had an argument with his friend, who did not want to be friends with him anymore after finding out he was gay. He needed someone to talk to about this, and about his sexual orientation.

"They said it's a phase..."

"I came out to my parents as non-binary. They haven't exactly done anything bad, but I feel like things are not the same. They don't seem happy, and I feel like they don't love or value me as much as before". They said that they think it might be a phase... I think they want me to be cis-gendered".



Supporting LGBTQI+ children and young people: a statement by IGLYO

Many LGBTQI+ children and youth across the world grow up in a context where their identities are not affirmed. When and if they do seek help, social norms, prejudice or ignorance - or a combination of these - means they often do not receive the help they need and deserve. This is why it is so wonderful to see Child Helpline International developing a Community of Practice on how child helplines can best support LGBTQI+ children and youth, and practical guidelines for child helpline counsellors to utilise.

As a youth development organisation, IGLYO builds the confidence, skills and experience of LGBTQI young people to become leaders within the LGBTQI and human rights sectors. Through cross-cultural exchange and peer learning, IGLYO also creates a powerful collective of youth activists across Europe and beyond, who can share strategies and visions, and foster values of international solidarity. IGLYO ensures the voices and experiences of LGBTQI young people are present and heard by decision-makers at European and international levels. We do this through international trainings and events, targeted capacity building programmes, intercultural exchanges and peer learning, online tools and resources, and digital story-telling and campaigning.

Over the last two years, IGLYO has been working with civil society organisations and education experts in Europe to gather in-depth data on LGBTQI+ inclusion within secondary schools, to produce our first ever LGBTQI Inclusive Education Index & Report. What we have found is, of our 10 comparable indicators (first created by LGBTQI+ young people themselves, and then further developed by a group of international experts), only 4 out of 49 countries reviewed currently provide most of these measures. 11 countries have failed to implement any measure at all. Mandatory teacher training on LGBTQI awareness is only present in 4 countries.

LGBTQI+ children and young people deserve to be heard and understood, and their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and/or sex characteristics, whatever they may be and whatever stage in their journey they are, should not be a barrier to them accessing the information and support they need. We hope this report is just the beginning of the continuing intersectional and empowering work we can do together to strengthen helplines' response to the various issues LGBTQI+ youth face.

Anna Robinson, Co-Chair



The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer & Intersex Youth and Student Organisation (IGLYO) is an international LGBTQI organisation that aims to empower and enable its members to ensure representation of LGBTQI youth and student issues. IGLYO advocates on behalf of members to international bodies, institutions and other organisations.

Community of practice – LGBTQI+ children and young people

In 2018, Child Helpline International convened a multi-disciplinary **Community of Practice** to exchange knowledge and good practices on how child helplines can best support LGBTQI+ children and young people. To learn more, go to:

<https://www.childhelplineinternational.org/our-work/comprac/>

What did we learn?

Overall, the importance of **explicit protections for LGBTQI+ children and young people** on a regional level is essential, as national rights can vary greatly.

On an individual support level, counsellors and other people who support LGBTQI+ children and youth should:

- Understand that terminology and pronouns are important. **Avoid labelling** unless this is initiated by the children or young people themselves. Provide a safe space for children and young people to figure out their own sexuality and identity.
- Focus on how they **respond to the emotions** presented by LGBTQI+ children or young people, and on their individual needs.
- Explore LGBTQI+ children and young people's own **social safety nets**, such as family members, friends, teachers and other significant people around them.
- Help LGBTQI+ children and young people **develop resilience** by acknowledging their strengths and providing positive reinforcement.
- Communicate to LGBTQI+ children and young people that their sexual orientation, gender identity and expression or sexual characteristics are not the root of the issue, and that **lack of support** and **societal norms are the problem**.
- Reflect and **be aware of internalised homophobia, biphobia or transphobia**.
- Reflect and **be aware of cis- and heteronormative assumptions and beliefs**.

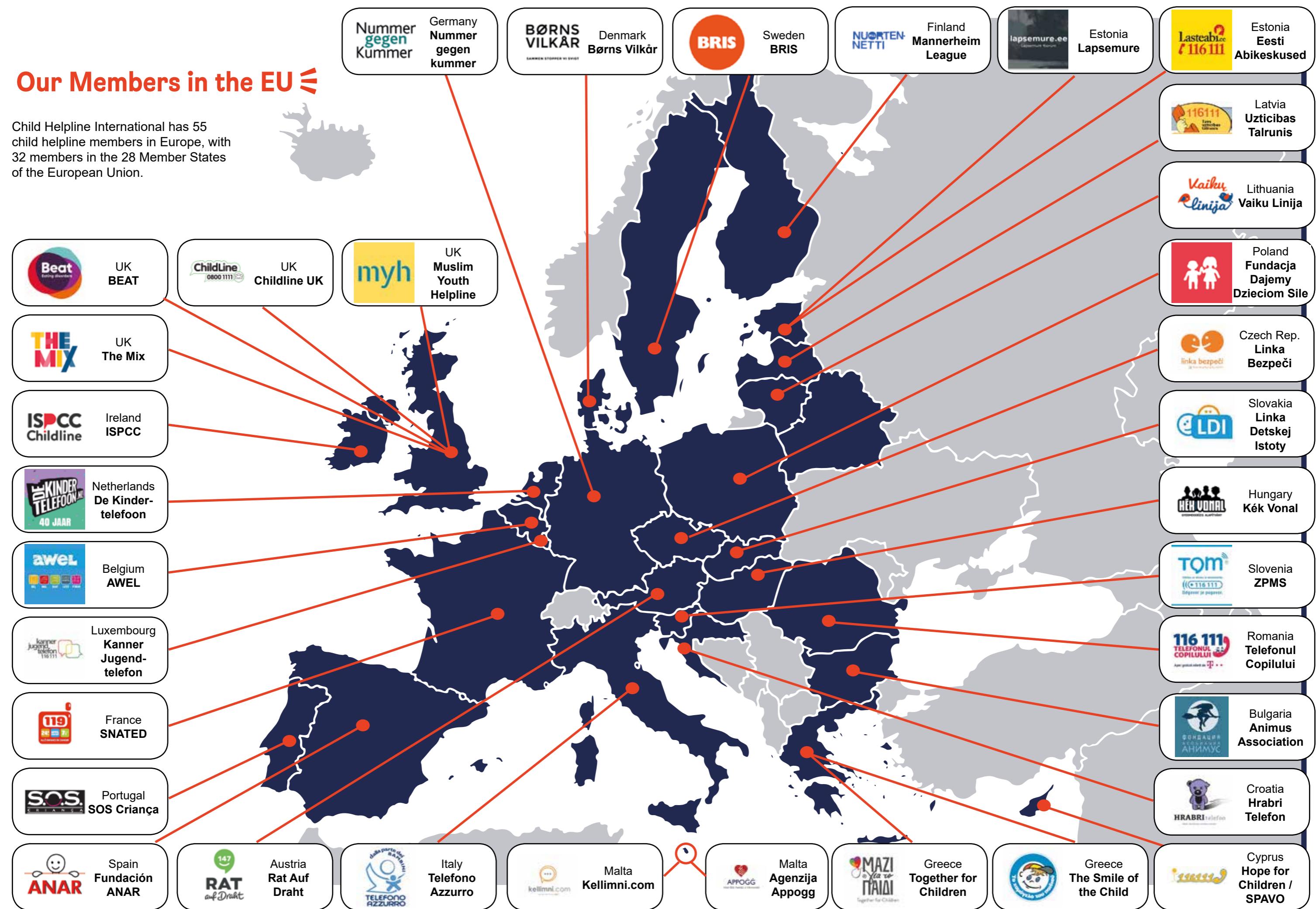
In their partnerships with other organisations and relationships with the general public, child helplines can support LGBTQI+ children and young people by:

- **Working in partnerships with local LGBTQI+ organisations**, and signposting children and young people to these organisations when necessary.
- Using their platforms to **advocate on behalf of LGBTQI+ children and young people**.
- Making LGBTQI+ awareness and norm-criticism part of their **training curriculum**.



Our Members in the EU

Child Helpline International has 55 child helpline members in Europe, with 32 members in the 28 Member States of the European Union.



Austria

Rat Auf Draht

147

<http://www.rataufdraht.at>

Belgium

Jongerenlijn AWEL

102

<http://www.awel.be>

Bulgaria

Bulgarian National Helpline for Children

116 111

<http://animusassociation.org/programi-uslugi/nacionalna-telefonna-linia-deca/>

Croatia

Hrabritelefon

0800 0800 / 116 111

<http://www.hrabritelefon.hr>

Cyprus

Call 116 111 Cyprus

116111

<http://www.call116 111.com>

Czech Republic

Linka Bezpečí

116 111

<http://www.linkabezpeci.cz>

Denmark

BørneTelefonen

116 111

<http://www.bornsvikar.dk/det-goer-vi/boernetelefonen/>

Estonia

Lapsemure

<http://www.lapsemure.ee>

Eesti Abikeskused

116 111

<http://www.lasteabi.ee>

Finland

MLL Nuortennetti

116 111

<http://www.nuortennetti.fi>

France

Allô Enfance en Danger

119

<http://www.all119.gouv.fr>

Germany

Kinder- und Jugendtelefon

116 111

<http://www.nummergegenkummer.de/kinder-und-jugendtelefon.html>

Greece

The Smile of the Child

1056 / 116 111

<http://www.hamogelo.gr>

Together for Children

11525

<http://www.mazigiatopaidi.gr>

Hungary

Lelkisegély-vonal

116 111

<http://www.kek-vonal.hu>

Ireland

ISPCC Childline

1800 66 66 66 / 116 111

<http://www.childline.ie>

Italy

Hello Telefono Azzurro

19696

<http://www.azzurro.it>

Latvia

Uzticibas Talrunis

8006006 / 116 111

<http://www.bti.gov.lv>

Lithuania

Vaiku Linija

116 111

<http://www.vaikulinija.lt>

Luxembourg

Kanner Jugendtelefon

116 111

<http://www.kjt.lu>

Malta

Kellimni.com

Support Line 179

179 / 116 111

<http://www.fsfs.gov.mt/en/appogg/Pages/support-line-179.aspx>

Netherlands

De Kindertelefoon

0800 0432 / 116 111

<http://www.kindertelefoon.nl>

Poland

Telefon Zaufania

116 111

<http://116111.pl>

Portugal

SOS Criança

116 111

<http://www.iacrianca.pt>

Romania

Telefonul Copilului

116 111

<http://www.telefonulcopilului.ro>

Slovakia

Linka Detskej Istoty

116 111

<http://www.ldi.sk>

Slovenia

TOM

116 111

<http://www.e-tom.si>

Spain

Teléfono ANAR de Ayuda a Niños y Adolescentes

900 202010 / 116 111

<http://www.anar.org/necesitas-ayuda-telefono-ninos-adolescentes/>

Sweden

BRIS

116 111

<http://www.bris.se>

United Kingdom

NSPCC - Childline UK

0800 1111 / 116 111

<http://www.childline.org.uk>

BEAT

0808 801 0677

<http://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk>

The Mix

0808 808 4994

<http://www.themix.org.uk>

Muslim Youth Helpline

0808 808 2008

<http://www.myh.org.uk/helpline>

116 111 - Six Digits to Remember

116 111 is the number reserved for child helplines in the EU. This number is currently operational in 24 out of 28 Member States. The EU Commission has identified child helplines as a service of social value, and the harmonised 116 111 number is an important part of a reporting system to tackle abuse and exploitation of children and young people. The Council of Europe has included child helplines in integrated national strategies to protect children from violence. For children and young people, having a short, easy-to-remember number is very important to make child helplines accessible.

In 2017, the University of Suffolk and Child Helpline International conducted a study on the awareness of child helplines and the 116 111 number. The study concluded that between 25% and 50% of children were aware of child helplines and/or the 116 111 number.

It is of the upmost importance that children and young people are aware of the existence of the 116 111 number. Child Helpline International currently hosts the 116111.eu – a website with contact information for all child helplines in the EU. In 2018, visits to this page doubled compared to those made in the previous year. Further awareness raising is crucial. Governments, children's rights partner organisations, telecoms and industry partners should use their platforms to promote awareness of the 116 111 number to make sure that every child is heard.





Every child has a voice.

No child should be left unheard.

We are the international network of child helplines, a global collective impact organisation with 175 members in 145 countries and territories around the world (as of June 2019).

Every year, child helplines around the world field millions of individual cries for help. Until the founding of Child Helpline International in 2003, these organisations did their great work in isolation, and with no access to one another.

Now, we are working together every day to bring children's voices to policy makers and influencers. We make sure the world listens to these voices. And we listen to the listeners – our members – helping them to support one another.

Child Helpline International

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