

WHO, WHY AND HOW?

20 questions and answers
on Child Helpline International
and the work of Child Helplines



Child Helpline International

1. Who is Child Helpline International?

We are the global network of 181 members in 139 countries (as of December 2016), which in 2015 alone received over 20 million contacts from children and young people in need of care and protection. You can find more information about our member child helplines [here](#).

2. Why does Child Helpline International exist?

Put simply, not every child's voice is heard and we want to change that. When their voices are heard, children are empowered to participate in society and fulfill their potential. We believe that no child should be left unheard.

The first global meeting of child helplines was held in the Netherlands in 2003, when 49 child helplines got together to form Child Helpline International. Today, our worldwide network is more than 180 members-strong, an international collective of civil society and governmental organisations that listen to children every day.

3. What are Child Helpline International's values?

Our identity is centered on our four values, which permeate throughout our strategy and our daily activities of engaging with our member child helplines and partners.

Agile: we are dynamic and flexible.

Driven: we are purposeful, we speak out.

Transparent: we are open and trustworthy.

Diverse: we represent many voices, members, cultures.

4. How does Child Helpline International contribute to ensuring children's voices are heard?

Since our founding in 2003, we have supported the creation of new child helplines and strengthened our network by sharing with all of them what we have learned from the best of them.

We have also collected and interpreted **data** from our members, which in 2015 alone received over 20 million contacts from children and youth in need of help and guidance. These millions of individual stories and reports form a mosaic of how and where in the world children and young people are suffering injustice, abuse, and dangers. We then present those stories to policy influencers to bring about the changes that improve conditions for children in meaningful ways, both globally and locally.

In addition, we listen to children and young people's voices through our Youth Advisory Council. You can meet the members of the Council and learn more about their projects, [here](#).

5. How does Child Helpline International collect data from its members?

Children and young people tell their real-life stories – millions of them every year – to child helpline counsellors, who are there for them when it feels like there is nobody else to turn to. Child helplines record these stories as confidential data, and at Child Helpline International



we gather it through annually-distributed standard questionnaires. We turn national-level information recorded by individual helplines into internationally comparable data about children and young people around the world, then, finally, into stories we share in publications and reports.

6. What are the trends that the data collected from child helplines show?

Every year the number of children and young people contacting a child helpline has been on the rise. In 2015 alone, child helplines received more than 20 million contacts – six million more than the previous year. This happens because children trust child helplines and contact them willingly to share their concerns or simply to reach a familiar voice they can talk to.

From searching for general information to suffering from abuse and violence in school or at home, children and youth call child helplines for a myriad of reasons. Our child helpline data shows that psychosocial, mental health, and peer relationships are recurrent concerns amongst young people; so too is sexuality. Abuse and violence has consistently been one of the top reasons for contact with child helplines across all countries and regions of the world. Physical abuse, sexual abuse, and bullying have been the most common types of violence reported to child helplines globally.

Another leading reason for contact with child helplines is general requesting of information. Children and young people are curious and want to know more about themselves and the environments in which they live. However, experience of these conversations shows that there are often underlying deeper issues for which the child has contacted the helpline. The request for information is often also a test

to gain confidence before speaking about the real issues and problems with which the child is troubled.

Finally, a significant trend of the past years has been an increase of contacts about cyberbullying and other forms of online abuse. Social media and mobile communication are evolving rapidly and represent a new way of socialising with peers and communities. Web and mobile-based messages reach children and young people in the privacy of their own home, twenty-four hours a day, making bullying inescapable and even more threatening than before. As a result, an increasing number of children and young people have reported online-related issues.

Are you interested in reading more?

Take a closer look at our **2015 global highlights**.

7. What does it entail to be a member of Child Helpline International?

A Child Helpline International member is an organisation offering counselling and listening services to children (up to 18 years of age) and young people (up to 25 years of age). A full member complies with optimal quality standards as jointly set by the network.

Full members submit data on an annual basis, pay an annual membership fee of €125.00 and strive to actively participate in our knowledge exchange events. Child helpline members contribute to publications and learning tools, and actively promote our mission and objective of ensuring that no child is left unheard.

Being a member of Child helpline International is very beneficial to member organisations. They can access influential policy and decision-making platforms, share knowledge and obtain capacity



building support, as well as be part of a network with a high sense of community. There are two types of membership at Child Helpline International: full and associate.

Are you interested in becoming a member of Child Helpline International or want to find out more about our two types of membership? Write us an email at membership@childhelplineinternational.org. We are happy to hear from you and provide you with more information!

Youth

8. How does Child Helpline International engage with the youth?

Active youth participation is a key element in Child Helpline International's 2016-2020 strategy. This translates to meaningfully engaging young people in our internal planning and decision-making processes. It also entails a strong belief that our youth representatives are an essential element in all collaborations, projects, and initiatives of which we are a part. Launching the Youth Advisory Council in 2014 was a significant first step in following these goals. All of our youth members have since been providing valuable feedback and insight for Child Helpline International and its network and leading a large number of projects. Their skilful interventions and positive influence have further solidified our intention to become youth-led by 2020.

All of our youth members are skilful, dedicated, and passionate about promoting the rights of children and young people locally and globally, so we make sure their voices are heard!

9. What is the role of Child Helpline International's Youth Advisory Council?

They are the ones speaking out for today's young people. They make a difference for generations to come.

Initially consisting of six members, the number of youth representatives has subsequently more than doubled, but the core belief of the Council has remained the same – all youth members are actively contributing to the success and well-being of their generation and the ones to come. They are embodying meaningful youth participation and encouraging their peers to believe in their potential and become leaders in their communities.

We launched the Youth Advisory Council at the International Consultation of Child Helplines in 2014 (London, UK). Since then, they have been speaking up loud and clear, providing valuable feedback for us and our network organisations. As outlined in our **Manifesto**, our youth have actively aimed to:

- Empower young people.
- Inspire the growth of the global movement of youth.
- Ensure meaningful participation of young people for sustainable development and societal change.

The youth members have led a number of local and global projects on behalf of Child Helpline International. The first of these was the launch of our flagship campaign – **Free Our Voices**. You can find out all about them and the projects they have been a part of [here](#).

10. In what projects is the Youth Advisory Council involved?

Since their launch in 2014, the Youth Advisory Council members have been involved in various projects and initiatives, where they have



made sure the voices of children and youth are represented and listened to.

You can find all of the #Youth's projects [here](#), but some notable examples include:

- The #Youth Manual and Manifesto
- Chapter on Child Online Protection for the publication “Voices of Children and Young People: Heard and Unheard”
- Social Media Takeover 2016 & 2017
- Launch of Free Our Voices campaign
- Participation in various regional and global events representing the voices of #Youth, for example: during the International Consultation of Child Helplines 2014 and 2016; events at the European Parliament; regional meetings for Leadership in Empowering and Activating child helplines in Protecting children online (LEAP) programme, etc.

11. How can I become a member of the Youth Advisory Council?

We're glad you've asked! We always accept open applications but as a general rule, our #Youth are appointed for a 2-year term (unless a specific project requires otherwise). Whenever a new term is about to start, you will be able to find a call for application on our [Vacancies](#) page, so make sure you check the website regularly!

Below are some general requirements for interested candidates.

Candidate profile:

- Between 18 and 22 years.
- Fluency in English (written and spoken).
- Some knowledge on child helpline activities.

- A young person committed to contributing to the success and well-being of their own generation
- Possibility to invest a minimum of 8 hours per month (phone calls, skype meetings, emails, output, etc.) to this position.

Application procedure:

We ask for a minimum commitment of 2 years.

Applications should be submitted to Denitsa Gancheva at denitsa@childhelplineinternational.org and include:

- A recent CV
- Maximum of 250-word essay describing the candidate's opinion on the role of child helplines in children and young people's lives nowadays
- Maximum of two-sentence answers to the questions below. It's optional but we would appreciate a video message with the answers! Nothing fancy, a phone recording would do, just to help us know you better
 - How would you describe yourself?
 - What motivates you?
 - What change in the life of children would you like to contribute to?
 - Why are you interested in this position?

If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact Denitsa Gancheva, our Youth Participation Coordinator at denitsa@childhelplineinternational.org.



Child Helplines

12. What is a child helpline?

Child helplines are organisations offering counselling and listening services to children (up to 18 years of age) and young people (up to 25 years of age), run by civil society organisations or government bodies.

Child helplines assist children and young people through a myriad of communication channels: phone, texts, online chats, e-mails, online forums, letters, and one-on-ones. To make sure that children and young people know about the services that the child helplines provide, counsellors often organise outreach programmes in schools.

13. What services do the child helplines provide?

Child helpline counsellors actively listen to children and young people who wish to express their concerns, and link them to resources and emergency assistance as needed. Where necessary, child helplines also directly intervene, providing shelter, education and legal support.

In addition, child helplines raise awareness of their services and of the issues that children and young people face every day.

14. Who can contact a child helpline?

Every child and young person who is in need of care and protection and/or wants to talk to someone about anything.

15. How many contacts do child helplines receive every year?

Every year, child helplines listen to more than 19 million children and young people.

16. How much does it cost to call a child helpline?

Most of the child helplines are toll-free, which means that the caller is not charged for making the call.

However, the costs of the call (e.g. registration, access fee) are often supported by the child helpline. We are working in partnership with the **ITU** and the **GSMA** in order to ensure that all child helplines are granted the operation of a toll-free number by their National Telecommunications Regulatory Authority and that telecom operators are covering the calling costs.

17. What is Free our Voices?

Free Our Voices is Child Helpline International's global advocacy campaign aimed at improving the access to child helplines for all children and young people everywhere. We launched Free Our Voices in 2014, and since then, with support from our regional partners the GSMA and the ITU, 10 child helplines achieved a toll-free status and a waiver of costs from their in-country telecom operators, while more than 13 child helplines are in ongoing negotiations with telecom operators.

Other campaign achievements include the launch of a practical guide on how child helplines and telecom operators can work together to protect children's rights, the launch of a series of online safety guides dedicated to child helplines, and a wide range of global and regional work with telecom operators and the wider ICT industry, whose



support to child helplines extends beyond the waiving of calling costs (e.g. joint online safety activities, trainings, infrastructure and financial support).

Child Helpline International's Youth Advisory Council is playing a crucial role in the development of Free Our Voices, actively participating in the campaign's advocacy activities. Free Our Voices was endorsed by our member child helplines and launched at the national level in more than 25 countries. We will soon launch a multimedia Free Our Voices toolkit that showcases the campaign goals and achievements, facilitating the use of the campaign materials by child helplines.

Structure of the Network

18. How is Child Helpline International governed?

Child Helpline International operates under the Dutch legal system as a registered foundation in the Netherlands and has a distinct division between advisory, supervisory and management functions within the organisational structure.

The current governance of Child Helpline International consists of the following:

- General Assembly of Child Helplines
- Supervisory Board with five Regional Representatives and three Supervisory Committee members
- Management Board
- Child Helpline International Team

Here you can find more information about Child Helpline International's governance.

19. How does Child Helpline International involve the membership and other experts in carrying out your strategy?

We have a number of taskforces and working groups, bringing together child helpline representatives and other experts in child protection with expertise across a wide range of topics, including youth participation, advocacy, and academic research.

The Quality Assessment for Child Helplines Advisory Council (QACHAC) is the most recently established council, starting its activity in the second half of 2017. Involving child helpline representatives, child rights NGOs, experts, and research institutions, as well as a member of one of our Youth Council, QACHAC will review the quality of child helpline services, ensuring that the impact of child helplines on children's lives is measurable. The latter task will be jointly run with the Impact Assessment Advisory Council, who provides know-how on methods and tools used to define and measure impact.

The European Advocacy Taskforce supports our network in achieving our advocacy goals at the European level. This taskforce consists of four representatives of European child helplines.

The Youth Advisory Council is another key group with which we engage, ensuring that youth participation is a theme that cross-cuts all the aspects of our work.

20. Who does Child Helpline International work with?



To ensure that children all over the world are heard and appreciated, we work with key partners at the global, regional, and local levels. We believe in the power of togetherness and we know that only by joining hands can we make sure that children and young people will become active participants in society and achieve their potential.

These are the entities we work with:

- United Nations bodies, such as Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- Influential child protection networks: partnering with other organisations to advocate for child helplines as a key player in child protection, such as InHope, Missing Children Europe, International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (ISPCAN), ECPAT International, Plan International
- Telecoms and the wider ICT sector: GSMA, Telenor, Millicom, Zain, Facebook, Google
- National governments: advocating for the importance of channelling resources to child helplines and their role in national child protection systems

You can find more information about our partners and donors [here](#).