

"Firstly, it's free and discrete. Although money is not always the issue, paying in secrecy is extremely hard. Secondly, hands down, to take time to talk to teens with mental issues and do it constantly, and with the same amount of enthusiasm every day is just amazing"

Margaret Harley, Research Officer, Strategy and Research, **yourtown**

yourtown is committed to ensuring that all of its services are evidence-based and client centred. The terms of the current funding contracts with the Queensland Department of Communities and the Western Australian Government require **yourtown** to measure the level of satisfaction amongst children and young people concerning Kids Helpline. Consequently an online survey is conducted annually to measure service user's satisfaction with Kids Helpline as well as the effectiveness of the service. This report outlines the findings from the 2016/17 survey.

The data reported upon in this document has also been summarised in the Kids Helpline Insights 2017 National Statistical Overview.

Methodology

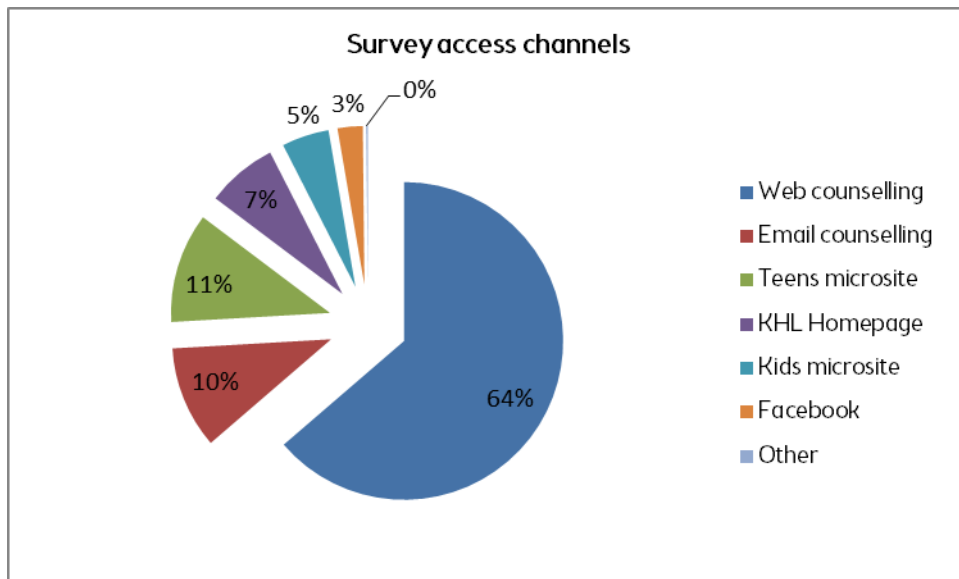
The Survey

A brief online survey, comprising a combination of open response and fixed response items was conducted over a nine and a half week period (November 14, 2016 to January 18, 2017). The survey was open to any individual who had accessed the Kids Helpline counselling and support service or visited the Kids Helpline website within the last 12 months. In total 625 respondents completed the survey.

A hyperlink to the survey entitled "Have Your Say" was placed on the front page of the Kids Helpline website and on both the Kids' and Teens' microsites. In addition, the survey was promoted to potential respondents through invitations located in:

- the final exchange of web counselling sessions
- the concluding email of email counselling sessions
- a phone call wait message for children and young people waiting to speak to a counsellor
- the closing statement of counsellors to children and young people who participated in phone counselling (this was at the counsellor's discretion) and
- one post on the Kids Helpline Facebook page during the data collection period.

Overall, 64% of respondents (n=398) accessed the survey at the end of web counselling by selecting the survey link located in the last interaction sent to them by the counsellor. Ten percent (10%) accessed the survey via an invitation on their final email correspondence. Around 7% used the "Have your Say" button on the front of the KHL Home page. A further 16% came to the survey via the "Have your Say" button on the Teens and Kids Microsites and 3% accessed the survey through an invitation that was posted on the KHL Facebook page. See Graph 1.



Graph 1 Channels through which children and young people accessed the KHL 2016/17 Satisfaction Survey (N=625)

Extra questions were added this year which asked children and young people if after reading a Tips and Information sheet they:

- found it interesting
- felt more motivated to deal with their problems and
- were more likely to seek further help from other people or places as a result

Tips and Information sheets are located in both the Kids and the Teens Microsites. They are written by counsellors and provide information, ideas and activities to suit the developmental level of children using the Kids Microsite (5- 12 years) and young people using the Teens Microsite (13 – 25 years). Examples of topics on the Teen's Microsite include: "Coping with a breakup", "Healthy family relationships", "Sexual and gender identity" and "Handling stress at exam time". Examples of Tips and Info sheets on the Kids Microsite include: "Getting along with brothers and sisters", "Coping with holiday hassles", "Feeling scared-the facts" and "Dealing with life's changes"

The Sample

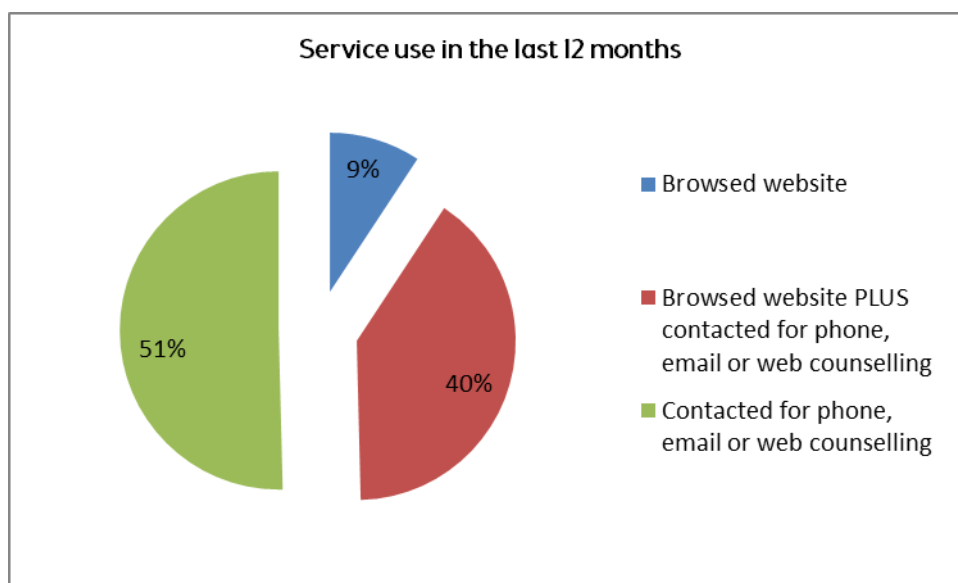
The sample of 625 children and young people was a mix of males and females with 83% female, 13% male. 3% identifying as intersex, trans or gender diverse and 1% declining to respond to this item. Male representation in the 2016/17 satisfaction survey was below the KHL overall contact rate for males which for 2015 was 28% (2016 data was not available at time of writing).

Respondents' ages were predominantly 13-18 year olds (71%), 5 -12 year olds (14%) and 19-25 year olds (14%). The higher numbers of 13-18 year olds making contact is reflective of the overall contact rate for KHL.

Of the respondents 7% were of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, fifteen percent (15%) reported that they were culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD), and 78% responded as neither indigenous nor CALD. Respondents were from New South Wales (30%), Victoria (28%), Queensland (19%), Western Australia (8%), South Australia (7%), Tasmania (3%), Northern Territory (1%), and ACT (4%)

Of the 625 respondents only nine percent (9%) browsed the website alone, 51% chose to make contact with a counsellor (either through phone email or web counselling). While 40% browsed

the website for information as well as made contact for counselling either through phone, email or web counselling. See Graph 2.



Graph 2 Did you talk to a counsellor by phone web or email and/or browse the website for information in the last 12 months? (N=625)

In summary, not all respondents contacted Kids Helpline to talk to a counsellor through phone email and/or web counselling only as around 49% of respondents also utilised the online materials available on the website.

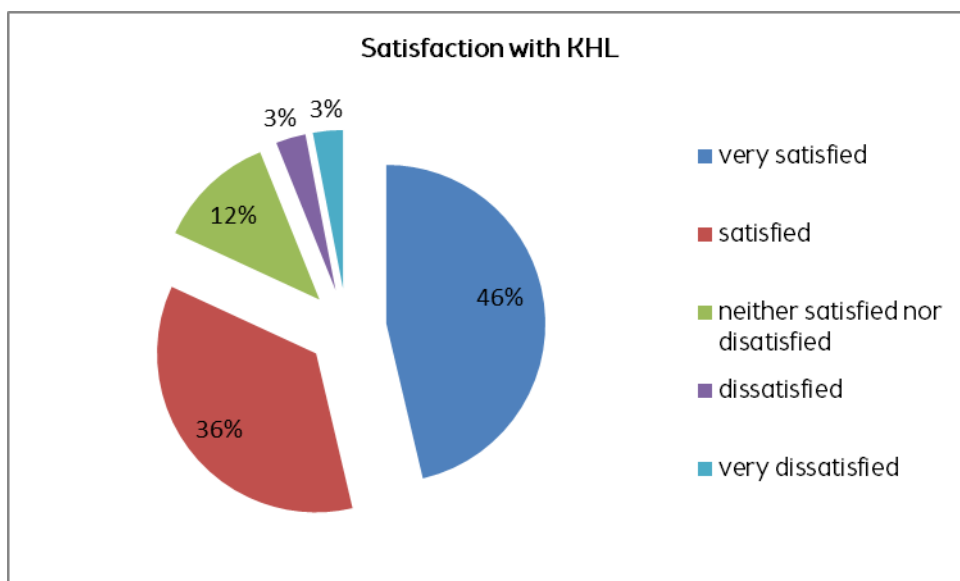
Findings

Client satisfaction is gauged by asking respondents "Are you satisfied with Kids Helpline?" and "Would you recommend Kids Helpline to a friend?" **Service effectiveness** is drawn from respondents' answers to two questions namely: "Did you get ideas about how to deal with your problems?" and "Did you feel more capable of dealing with your problem than before? Three extra questions were posed this year to gauge **service impact** through the Tips and Info Sheets, in terms of whether respondents' interest was maintained by the way in which the topic was presented; if they were motivated to continue to seek answers to their problems after reading the tips and info sheet and whether this may involve utilising other services or people.

Findings in relation to satisfaction, effectiveness and impact are dealt with separately below followed by a thematic analysis of qualitative feedback about the service.

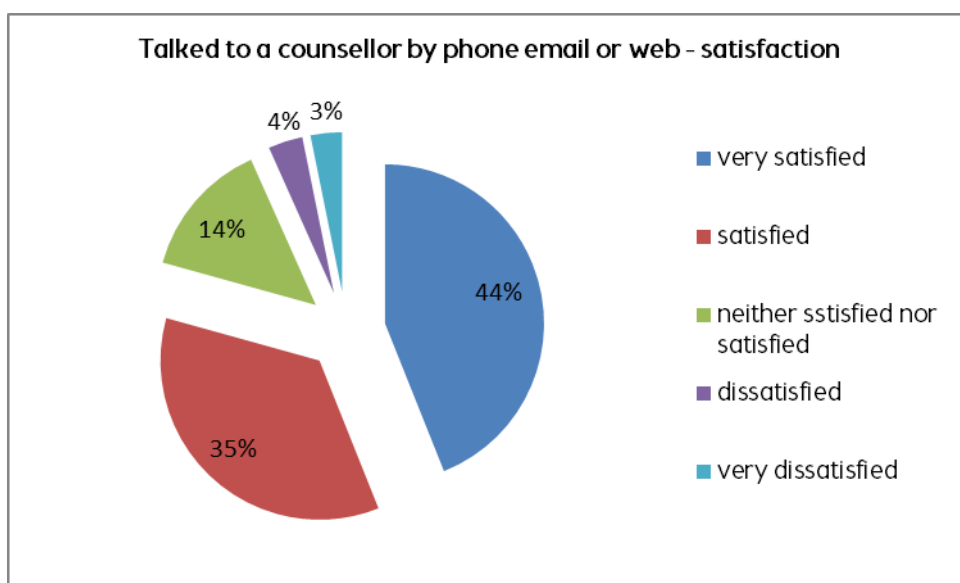
Client Satisfaction

Overall 82% of respondents were satisfied to very satisfied with the KHL service. See Graph 3. Of the remaining respondents almost 6% were dissatisfied to very dissatisfied and 12% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Of the entire cohort 91% would recommend KHL to a friend.



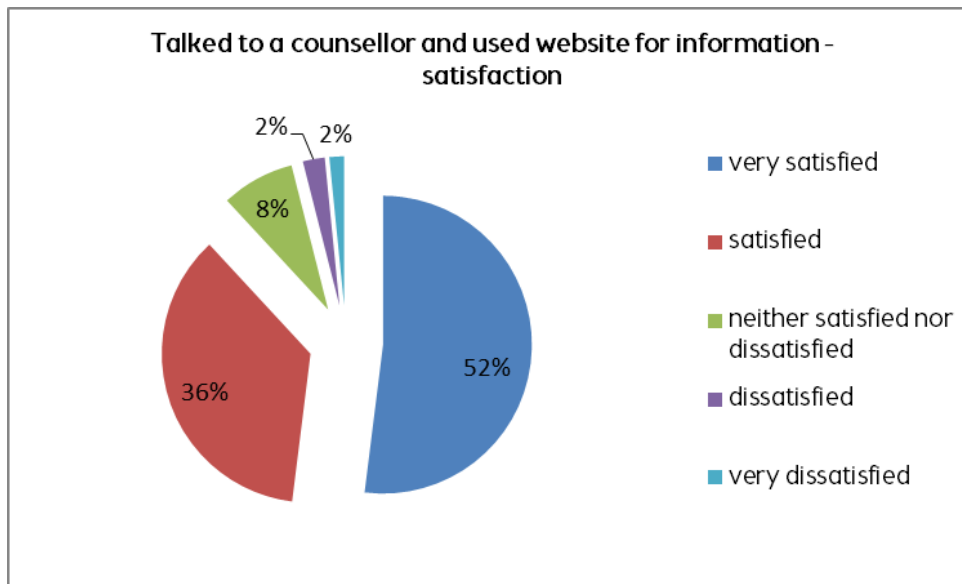
Graph 3 Are you satisfied with Kids Helpline? (N=625)

In the 2016/17 satisfaction survey those who contacted **only** by phone, email or web (314) reported a 79% satisfaction rate (ie. satisfied to very satisfied). See Graph 4.



Graph 4 Are you satisfied with Kids Helpline? (These respondents made contact by phone, email and web counselling only) (n=314)

Of the group who contacted KHL for phone, email or web counselling and **also** used the website for help seeking information (n=252) the satisfaction rate was 88%. See Graph 5. This is higher than for the group who contacted for counselling only where the satisfaction rate was 79% and also higher than the satisfaction rate for the overall cohort which was 82%. The small group that browsed the website only and did not contact for phone, web or email counselling experienced the lowest satisfaction rate overall of 68%. These findings suggest that young people who engage in the wider range of KHL help seeking activities on offer have a more satisfactory experience.



Graph 5 Are you satisfied with Kids Helpline? (These respondents browsed the website and also spoke to a counsellor through phone , web or email) (n=252)

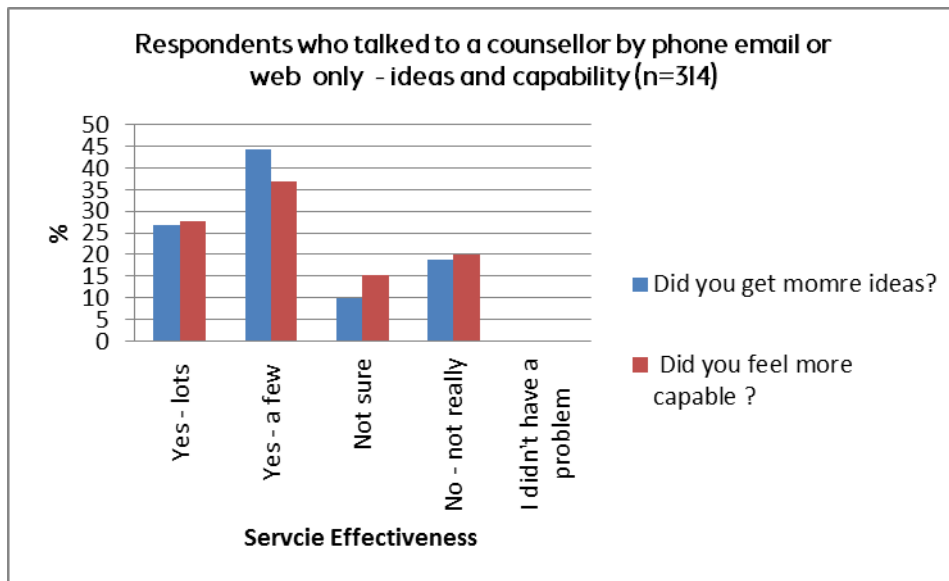
In summary the overall satisfaction rate for 2016/17 was 82% which is lower than for 2015/16 (84%). However, those who accessed the wider range of KHL self-help options (both counselling contacts and use of the website for self-help information) reported higher levels of satisfaction at 88%.

Service Effectiveness and Impact

Service effectiveness was drawn from respondents' answers to two questions namely: "Did you get ideas about how to deal with your problems?" and "Did you feel more capable of dealing with your problem than before?"

1. Service effectiveness for those who made contact by phone, email or web counselling only.

Of the 625 respondents, 315 contacted KHL for phone, email and/or web counselling **only**. Seventy-one percent (71%) of these indicated that they had gained more ideas about how to deal with their problems as a result of the contact while 29% were either unsure, or had not acquired ideas from the contact. Around 65% felt more capable of dealing with their problems and just over one third (35%) stated that they were unsure or did not feel more capable after talking with a counsellor. See Graph 6.



Graph 6 When you talked to a counsellor by phone web or email did you get more ideas and feel more capable of dealing with your problems ? (n=314)

A qualitative content analysis using thematic coding of comments from those who reported that they did get more ideas and felt more capable revealed a central theme that Counsellors listened to their problems, and were understanding and helpful in assisting them to find solutions.

"It helped me see my problems from a different perspective"

"They are helpful and give you the support that you need and feel comfortable with"

".. they took the time to listen and understand the situation. If the situation wasn't resolved they recommended you to come and talk again whether it be with the same person or different [one]"

When this group were asked what could be done to improve KHL, responses included a large number of comments about shortening the wait time for web counselling, and for counsellors to include techniques and ideas while also offering support. Suggestions from respondents included:

"By maybe having more people available for web chat, as it was a bit of a wait"

"Quicker at replying, cancelled a chat because it took too long for them to reply after saying hi"

"Have some actual advice instead of just acknowledging that you're listening"

"Maybe make a few more suggestions about actions I could take to deal with my problem"

"I'd have liked more advice and techniques to deal with my problem, Kids Helpline seemed to only give support which is great but a bit more might improve it"

"Not paraphrase every single problem I have back to me in the attempts to show understanding/care. It might help for some, but those, like me, who are fairly educated, can find it patronising and annoying"

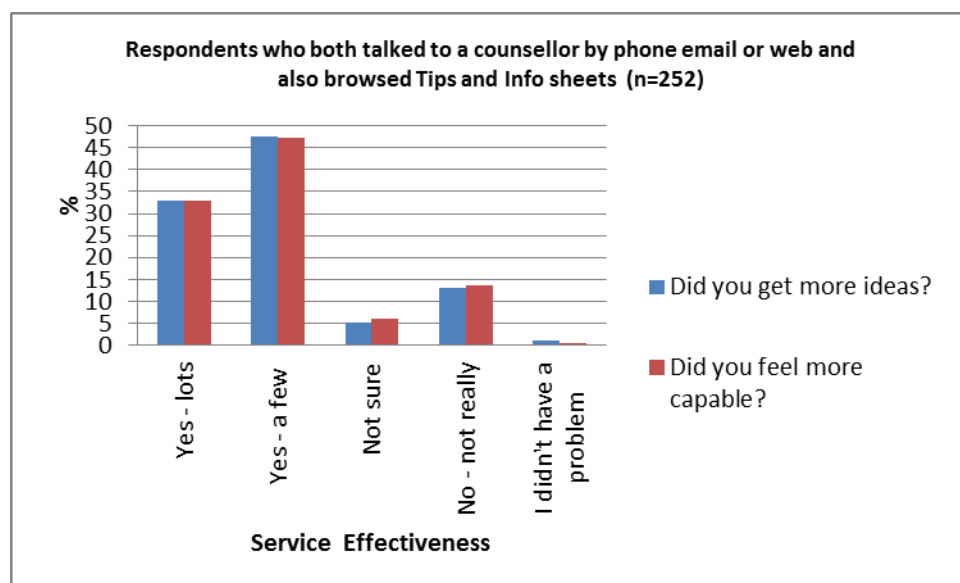
"Maybe some advice or options I could think about doing to help me"

"they don't help they just want information"

“Be more supportive. Give more guidance. Be more helpful”

2. Service effectiveness for those made contact with a counsellor by phone, email or web and also browsed the Kids Helpline Website.

Of the 252 young people who accessed a counsellor for phone, web or email counselling and **also** browsed the website, 81% indicated that they had more ideas for solving their problems while 18% were unsure or did not get more ideas. Around 80% of the group reported that they felt more capable of solving their problems while 19% were unsure or did not feel more capable. See Graph 7.



Graph 7 When you talked to a counsellor by phone web or email and also viewed tips and info sheets did you get more ideas and feel more capable of dealing with your problems ? (n=252)

Qualitative responses revealed that the friendliness and kindness of counsellors as well as accessibility and availability of support were important themes for this group.

“I like how you’re always accessible. Staff are so professional and they don’t always just give you the answers but ask you questions that allow yourself to figure it out yourself when you don’t realize it. Also you can come back to the same person. The kids help line have thought deeply about how they can satisfy us the most. For example keeping us entertained and making us feel comfortable by allowing us to design our page while waiting for a web chat counsellor! Great job guys”

“I love how friendly the counsellors are on the web chat. The information provided on the website is fantastic and relates to every topic. It is a fun friendly website and I use it every time I have a problem going on.”

“[I like } The compassion shown, and the understanding and no judgement. Being able to help in highly distressful situations and also just have a nice chat when feeling lonely and like you need someone to listen to you. Kids help line has saved my life multiple times, and I’ve recommended you to numerous people. I used to only be able to web-chat because of anxiety, but now I call kids helpline a lot and every single call has been helpful”

“They give young people a variety of different ways to easily get help and the counsellors are very friendly, supportive and nonjudgmental”

An examination of comments from those who were “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied” and “very dissatisfied” with the service revealed the following two themes:

- i) The delay in receiving email responses and complications with web chat
- ii) Wanting more resources and ideas that help them with their problem

Service effectiveness for this group is tied in with the time it takes for the email response to be generated and their assessment as to whether they felt that they had been offered adequate resources and advice to deal with their problems. Comments included:

“.....give me more resources and ideas and ways to cope with mental illness “

“Respond quicker to email. Just because somebody is more shy doesn't mean that their problems aren't as valid”

“Give more tips and motivation”

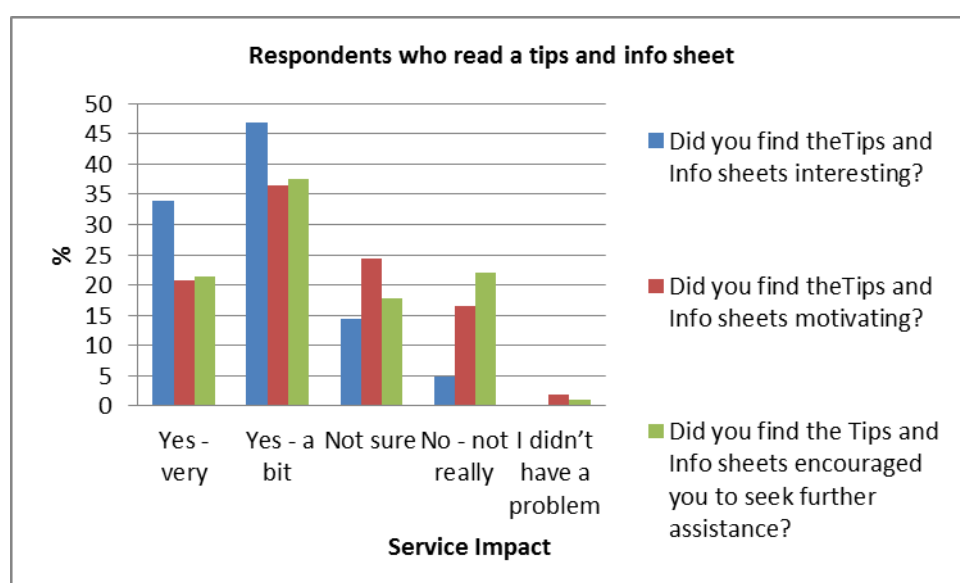
“Be able to actually help kids”

“Provide more stories, make the web chat easier to use I didn't even get to talk to someone”

3. Service Impact for those who reported having read Tips and Info Sheets.

Service impact refers to changes in the young person that can be attributed to their interaction with the service. To this end we analysed 272 responses to three questions about whether the Tips and Info sheets were interesting, motivating and encouraging for seeking further assistance. This revealed that:

- 81% found them interesting
 - 58% found them motivating
 - 59% said that they would seek out further assistance as a result of reading them.
- See Graph 8.



Graph 8 When you read a Tips and Info sheet was it interesting? Did it motivate you? Did it encourage you to seek out further assistance? (n = 271)

Respondent's comments included:

"I like that I can go on the website and look at information about it. I feel anxious to call but looking at the website helps me"

"They [counsellors] gave me the moral support I needed as well as lots of ideas to fix my problem. The website article also made me feel a lot better as well as providing plenty of solutions, Thank you for the support Kids Helpline!"

"I like kids helpline because it provides lots of information, tips and lots of support!! If I didn't have kids helpline my problem would be worse than it is now"

"It's a website that helps people no matter what, they don't judge and they care about any of your problems"

"It gives you information on how to deal with your issues, and you can talk to someone anytime you like"

In summary, in terms of gaining ideas and feeling more capable of dealing with their problems those who accessed counsellors for email, web or phone counselling as well as sought information from the website experienced a more effective service than those who contacted for counselling only. This group also expressed higher levels of satisfaction with the Kids Helpline service. Qualitative responses showed that service effectiveness for this group was related to the safety they felt on accessing the site, ease of access to the service and the skilfulness of the counsellors to offer practical ideas and suggestions for resources. More respondents found the Tips and Info sheets interesting than motivating or encouraging of seeking out further assistance. Planned updates of Tips and Info Sheets in the 2017/2018 year aim to increase the impact of these resources especially in terms of motivating change and further help seeking.

What respondents said they liked about Kids Helpline:

When asked what they liked about Kids Helpline the responses ranged across a number of themes the top four being:

- the service provides kids with someone to chat with who will take the time to talk and to discuss the things the child wants to talk about (159 counts);
- kids can raise their problems with the counsellors and be heard and listened to in a caring way (145 counts);
- the service is confidential, safe and non-judgemental (101 counts);
- KHL is an accessible and available service (64 counts).

Comments from respondents included:

- **Someone to chat with, to talk to and discuss things with**

"How caring the counsellor was and how patiently she talked with me and how appropriately she asked questions to get to what was bothering me"

"I can chat to someone who actually has all their time to listen to me"

"...you talk to a stranger that's also a professional and you have someone to listen to you"

"I like how laid back and easy going to counsellors are. They're willing to help anyone and everyone and even if you're taking ages to explain they don't rush and they read every bit of detail you provide"

- **Counsellors listen and hear their problems in a caring way**

"Their willingness to listen to what you have to say about issues you have and then help comfort you and help you overcome those problems"

"They work through your problems with you and they really care about you it's one place I know I'll be safe to reach out"

"The counsellors' willingness to listen, help, and care about whatever problems I'm having. Great information and coverage on very major problems in my own life"

"I like how they listen. I also like how they act like they understand even though sometimes you know they don't know what to say or how to answer, but they still answer and try and understand and it makes you feel better that people are putting time and effort into helping you"

"How understanding and attentive the counsellor was with my problem. Also made me feel calm and I was able to gather my thought process better"

- **The service is confidential, safe and non-judgemental**

"I have social anxiety, using web counselling makes it easier to be open as you are speaking to someone anonymous, the lady I spoke to gave me some advice I will consider and she listened without judging, so I appreciate that "

"I love the web chat feature - you can get help without talking on the phone so it's discreet when it needs to be".

"... they will listen to anything you say and won't judge you"

- **The service is accessible and available**

"The counsellors take the time to ask questions and understand your situation"

"Friendly staff, ease of access"

"I really appreciate that it's in a web format, I hate calling people. I like that it's really casual, free, and easily available, it's really helpful"

"Convenient and confidential "

"It's a safe, free way to talk about what you're going through"

"Accessible at all hours and no limit on amount of times to contact"

What respondents said would improve Kids Helpline:

Two dominant themes emerged when respondents were asked what they thought KHL could do to improve the service. These were: to shorten the waiting times for web counselling and email

responses and for more solution focussed options and ideas from the counsellors. Young people also commented on various other aspects of the service. Comments from respondents included:

- **Shorten the waiting times for web counselling and email responses**

"More people on web counselling please"

"I think if there was less waiting time to set it up it would be easier to talk to someone, I understand that there are lots of people that also need help but I think being on hold for up to an hour can feel like a bit too long"

"Being able to talk to a counsellor longer in web chat"

"Get more counsellors, the waiting times are rather long"

"I'd prefer to know an approximate time on the web counselling like you used to have. That made me have a slight idea on how long I'll be waiting."

Shorten the connecting time for web chat and lengthen the talking time"

"By speeding up wait time on the web"

"Please decrease the waiting time. Also, although I was able to talk about my problems, I didn't find a solution on how to solve them"

"Quicker at replying, cancelled a chat because it took too long for them to reply after saying hi"

- **More solutions and options**

"Sometimes I wish that the counsellor I'm talking to would give me more advice"

"By linking more solutions and by not asking so many questions"

"Give more options of advice"

"Give more tips and motivation"

"By providing me with suggestions and possible resolutions to my issues"

"Perhaps by linking more effective techniques to deal with problems, and by having the chat feature "

"Give more strategies so people can help themselves at home available 24 hours a day"

"Maybe some advice or options I could think about doing to help me"

"By providing you with tips on how to deal with your problem"

"By not just listening to problems and feelings, but offering advice on how to deal with them" by providing help and ways to prevent your mental illness from getting worse/taking over

- **Comments on policies and practices of the counselling service**

"Providing a better wrap around service when fading out and [when] other supports are identified to be more suitable"

"I find in the web counselling most of the time the counsellor is just repeating exactly what I say instead of giving tips or helping solve the problem. I know you probably want us to solve our own problem but instead of just repeating what we've just stated ask more questions, suggest more coping mechanisms etc."

"Asking me more questions and relating with me more :)"

"I think further knowledge of where to refer people to when they are aging out would be helpful"

"I think sometimes they repeat what you say too much. Like if I say yeah this week has been hard then they will reply with, I understand this week has been hard. That is just an example, but instead of saying that they could maybe say what made this week hard etc. Only some counsellors do this - most are really good"

"I think some of the information on the website is very shallow level information. Like it may help in very simple situations but not when things are more difficult or you're trying to get real information on issues. I also think that sometimes some things make it hard to follow through with making contact. Like for instance the comments on the emailing links basically saying that it can be a first step but making a phone call can be more beneficial. This can come across like you don't really want people to email, even though writing out stuff might be the easiest or only way they can make contact"

The new website which commenced in February 2016 will address some of the technical concerns expressed by young people as it continues to be developed. The new approach to Tips and Info Sheets which is being planned will make finding information easier for young people browsing the website for online help.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Kids Helpline Annual Satisfaction Survey for 2016/17 revealed high levels of satisfaction amongst respondents especially those using the full range of counselling offerings available through the service, and the online information and self-help assistance. Young people appreciate counsellors who are caring and non-judgemental, and have the time to hear them and to really listen as they discuss their problems. They appreciate counsellors with skilled counselling techniques, who assist them to develop strategies for dealing with their problems.