

KIDS
HELPLINE

INSIGHTS 2016

Insights into young people in Australia

“We believe every young person has the right to a brighter future”

About this report



“We very much pride ourselves on our dedication to the protection of children and young people through our advocacy work and services like Kids Helpline”

Tracy Adams - CEO, yourtown

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yourtown is proud to present **Kids Helpline Insights 2016**, providing valuable insights into the key issues affecting children and young people in Australia.

Kids Helpline (KHL) is Australia’s only free, private and confidential 24/7 phone and online counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25. We give children and young people choices, support and someone to listen.

For more than 25 years, KHL has been listening to children and young people, providing support, education and protection. Our work with more than 7.5 million contacts to KHL has allowed us to better understand the views and needs of children and young people, inform our advocacy agenda, and evolve the KHL service.

Kids Helpline Insights 2016 is supported by the **Kids Helpline Insights 2016 - National Statistical Overview**, which provides extensive data about the issues affecting children and young people. State and Territory based reports about contacts to KHL are also available along with information about the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Access these at www.yourtown.com.au/reports.

Thank you for your interest in Kids Helpline and in the wellbeing of children and young people needing help and support.

Introduction by Tracy Adams CEO, **yourtown**



KIDS HELPLINE - DEALING WITH THE BIG ISSUES

We very much pride ourselves on our dedication to the protection of children and young people through our advocacy work and services like Kids Helpline. We care and we listen, any time and for any reason.

In 2016, we were honoured to receive both National and Queensland child protection awards that recognise the critical role KHL has played and continues to play in protecting children and young people.

Children and young people know they can contact us about anything, including the big issues. KHL is here when they're feeling unsafe, are being abused, or feel like hurting themselves or others.

Our role is exceptionally important. We respond to many thousands of children and young people every year, about issues like suicide, abuse, family and domestic violence, self-injury and bullying.

We answer immediate calls for help initiating duty of care interventions that save young lives, and work hard to prevent the hurt from happening in the first place.

Our partnerships with the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner, specialist

mental health providers and child protection services help us protect children from harm.

We believe our advocacy work is also a vital part of protecting children and young people. Suicide is the leading cause of death amongst 12–25 year old young people in Australia and mental health the number one reason young people contact our service. Our research in this area is unique and is shared at key mental health forums nationally.

The impact of technology continues to create both innovation and concerns about safety. To better understand the safety experiences of those contacting KHL, in July 2016 we began gathering data on the prevalence of bullying in this space.

At the same time, our new WebChat counselling interface was launched. In collaboration with the University of Sydney, we also built the new social media platform 'KHL Circles' to provide group counselling and peer support for young people experiencing mental health issues.

More about what we've learnt and evolved through our work at KHL is outlined throughout this publication. We share these insights with you so we as a community are informed and continue to do the best job we can to protect children and young people in Australia.

Key Insights 2016

We believe every young person has the right to a brighter future. Kids Helpline (KHL) gives children and young people choices, support and someone to listen any time and for any reason.

Counsellors responded to over 3,400 contacts each week from children and young people seeking information, support or counselling.

5 MOST COMMON REASONS KIDS AND YOUNG PEOPLE SEEK HELP¹

1. Mental health
2. Family relationships
3. Emotional wellbeing
4. Suicide-related
5. Dating and partner relationships



CONCERNS OF THOSE WHO RECEIVED COUNSELLING

- **1 in 8** contacts were about **suicide-related issues**
- **1 in 12** contacts were about **child abuse**
- **1 in 13** contacts were about **self-injury concerns**



VIRTUAL LINK-UP CONTACTS



14,822 primary school students participated in video link-up class sessions with a counsellor

WEBCHAT COUNSELLING

Young people are using WebChat in increasing numbers.

151% growth in WebChat contacts over **5 years**.

12,643 in **2012** to **31,765** in **2016**.

**151%
GROWTH
IN WEBCHAT**

NUMBER OF CONTACTS TO KHL

- **356,595** attempts to contact the counselling service with **181,165** answered¹
- **580,562** unique visitors to the KHL website with **2,104,298** page views

Of the **177,591** contacts we answered from children and young people aged **5–25** years

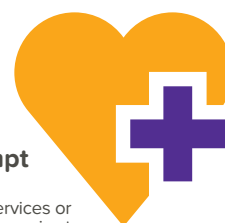
- **110,628** (63%) were seeking information, referral or other support
- **66,963** (37%) were seeking counselling support



DUTY OF CARE INTERVENTIONS

1,907 (3 out of 4) were Duty of Care* interventions. **37** Duty of Care interventions a week. Of these:

- **38%** were related to **child abuse**
- **34%** were related to a **suicide attempt**

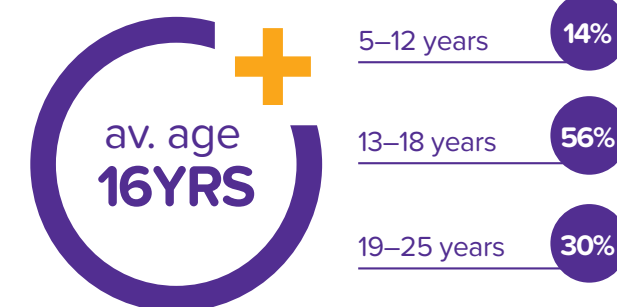


*A duty of care intervention involves contacting emergency services or another agency to protect a young person who is experiencing or is at imminent risk of significant harm.

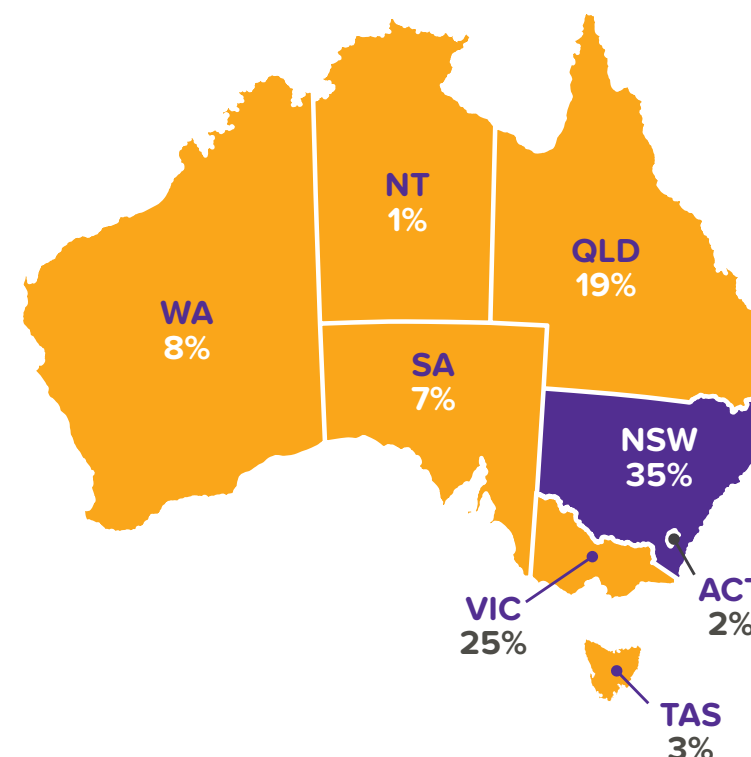
157% increase in the overall number of Duty of Care interventions initiated by counsellors from 2012 to 2016

Child abuse has overtaken suicide attempts as the most frequent category of Duty of Care intervention over the last 5 years between 2012–2016.

AGE (N = 98,911)



WHERE DID THEY COME FROM? (N = 163,323)



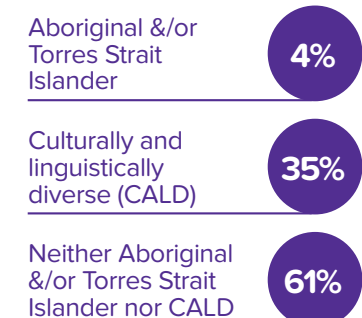
WHO CONTACTED US?²

GENDER (N = 114,299)

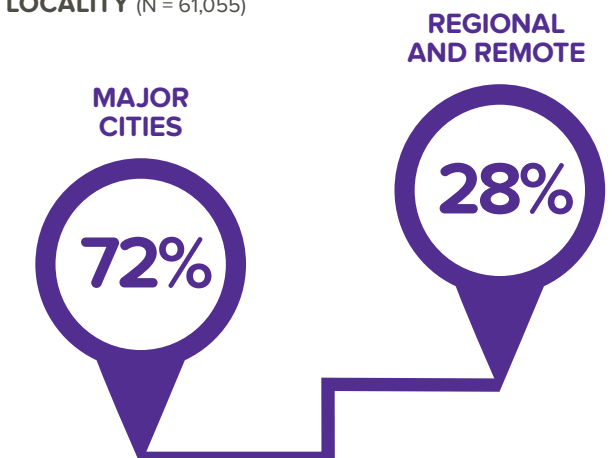


Intersex, trans & gender diverse 1%

CULTURE (N = 40,660)



LOCALITY (N = 61,055)



1. Percentages are based on a total of 66,963 contacts seeking counselling support in 2016.

2. Proportions reported here are based on contacts for which the information is known (Ns reported above each table are the number of contacts for which this information is known, out of the total 177,591).

Protecting children and young people

We believe it's important that the voice of young people—their needs, concerns and aspirations—is heard by the Australian community. Kids Helpline plays a critical role in protecting children and young people across Australia.

KHL's response to protecting children is multi-faceted and comprehensive. We provide support and information to reduce vulnerability to harm before it happens, crisis intervention, and long-term support to help young people navigate significant issues impacting their wellbeing.

DEALING WITH THE BIG ISSUES. UNSAFE, ABUSE, SELF-HARM, SUICIDE, BULLYING.

Children and young people contact us when they're feeling unsafe, when they're being abused, or when they're feeling like hurting themselves or others.

In 2016, KHL counselled, supported and protected young people reaching out to us for help with some big issues.

SUICIDE

8,750 COUNSELLING CONTACTS (13% OF ALL COUNSELLING CONTACTS)

168 counselling contacts a week or 24 a day

77% (6,719 contacts) included discussion of suicidal thoughts or fears

7% (572 contacts) involved immediate intentions of suicide

2% (193 contacts) were from people attempting suicide at the time of the call

34% of all duty of care interventions* initiated by Kids Helpline counsellors involved suicide concerns.

*A duty of care intervention involves Kids Helpline counsellors contacting emergency services and/or other agencies to protect a child or young person from significant harm or imminent risk of significant harm.

38% of all duty of care interventions initiated by Kids Helpline counsellors involved child abuse concerns.

CHILD ABUSE AND FAMILY/DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

5,387 counselling contacts (8%)

104 contacts per week or just over 14 a day

69% (3,736 contacts) from people currently experiencing abuse or at risk of abuse

1 in 10 (11% or 589 counselling contacts) were about another person experiencing or at risk of abuse

KHL also helps young people manage the long-term impacts of child abuse

1,077 (20%) counselling contacts about child abuse focused on support in relation to the impacts of past abuse

Children and young people who have experienced abuse and are dealing with the effects receive ongoing counselling support and case management from KHL. The most common concerns for which young people sought ongoing support in 2016 were:

- mental health (30%)
- emotional wellbeing (19%), and
- suicide-related concerns (17%).

Six per cent (6%) of ongoing contacts were specifically about child abuse.



“The impact of technology continues to create both innovation and concerns about safety. In July 2016, we began gathering data on the prevalence of bullying in this space.”

Tracy Adams - CEO, yourtown

SELF-INJURY

4,431 counselling contacts
(7% of total counselling calls)

85 contacts a week or 12 a day

78% (3,472 contacts) were about seeking support to avoid acts of self-injury

4% (184) were about the need for medical assistance following self-injury

11% (485) were contacts to do with a concern about another person's self-harming

BULLYING

3,828 counselling contacts
(6% of total counselling calls)

74 contacts a week or 11 a day

2,698 (70%) of these were from people experiencing bullying

Types of bullying behaviour being experienced included: verbal abuse, exclusion, isolation and/or spreading of rumours, intimidation, extortion or threats of personal harm, and physical aggression or assault.

CYBERBULLYING AND FEELING UNSAFE ONLINE

In July 2016, KHL expanded its data collection to understand the prevalence of cyberbullying among contacts from young people concerned about bullying.

560 (28% of 2,016 contacts from July to December) sought help in relation to bullying happening online or via text.

From July to December, **1,566** counselling contacts (or 5% of 33,525 counselling contacts received over the period) were from children and young people concerned, worried or feeling unsafe as a result of online or texting activity. In addition to bullying, the kinds of cybersafety issues that children and young people sought help on included:

- participation in sexting
- receiving unwanted online contact
- uncontrolled or excessive use of online gaming or social networking
- viewing disturbing content online
- disclosure of personal information
- harassment/blackmail/solicitation/suspected grooming
- concerns about their own behaviour online and their digital reputation.

Keeping our children safe

PREVENTION

Kids Helpline has a number of initiatives to protect children and young people through education and information. Prevention and early intervention is key. Being informed, teaching help-seeking behaviour and empowerment is proven to reduce vulnerability to harm before it happens.

KIDS HELPLINE @ SCHOOL

Kids Helpline @ School is an innovative early intervention and prevention program that uses technology to connect primary school children with knowledge that can positively impact their mental health literacy, digital literacy, resilience and ability to seek help if they need to.



Kids Helpline counsellors interact with children in their own classrooms via video link. Teachers work with the counsellor to develop a session based on the needs of the students. Topics include bullying, staying safe online, cyberbullying, transitioning to high school, friendships and feeling sad.

During the time the program has been running, Kids Helpline has seen a significant increase in contacts from primary school aged children (from 8% in 2013 to 14% in 2016). This suggests that more children have knowledge of Kids Helpline and have the confidence and trust to reach out to the service when they need help.

In 2016, 14,822 primary school students from 170 schools participated in a total of 539 classroom sessions with a Kids Helpline counsellor.

WORKING WITH PARENTS

Parentline offers confidential telephone and online counselling to educate and support parents and carers.

Families are a critical source of support for children and young people. The aim of the service is to enhance the safety and wellbeing of children and young people by educating, guiding and supporting parents and carers to develop and enrich their parenting strategies and skills.

Parentline is available to parents and carers across Queensland and the Northern Territory, seven days a week in partnership with the Queensland and Northern Territory governments.

In 2016, Parentline responded to 7,876 contacts from parents, carers and other adults who care for children and young people.

Of these, **5,846** required a counselling response.

19% were contacting about challenging behaviour/discipline issues

12% were concerned about their child's mental and emotional health

5% had child abuse concerns

2% were concerned about the drug or alcohol use of their child

2% were calling to discuss concerns with domestic violence

<1% were concerned about risk-taking/suicide of child

SELF-HELP RESOURCES ON THE KIDS HELPLINE WEBSITE

Kids Helpline provides a wide range of age-appropriate resources on its website for independent help-seeking by children and young people.

Resources and information topics are developed to reflect current issues.

There are topics that focus on mental and emotional wellbeing—like anxiety, depression, self-harm, suicide, domestic violence and loneliness. Others are more general in their preventative focus, supporting children and young people in building resilience and establishing respectful relationships.

In 2016, the KHL website featured:

- 46 Tips & Info topics targeted at children, receiving 54,394 page views.

The most commonly viewed Kids' Tips & Info in 2016 was Staying Safe Online.

- 51 Tips & Info topics targeted at teenagers, receiving 211,346 page views.

Two topics relating to cybersafety received substantial numbers of page views including Cyberbullying (11,351) and Sexting (10,059).



RESPONDING

DUTY OF CARE INTERVENTIONS

We work with emergency services, generalist and specialist mental health and child protection services to protect children and young people who contact us experiencing, or at imminent risk of significant harm.

In 2016, there were 2,451 records of counsellors attempting to contact an external agency to support a child or young person to protect them from significant harm.

More than 3 out of 4 or these (1,907 or 78%) were duty of care interventions.

That's more than **35** emergency care interventions a week.

Child abuse and suicide attempts were by far the most common reasons for duty of care interventions in 2016 (38% and 34% respectively).

There has been a 157% increase in the number of duty of care interventions initiated by counsellors from 2012 to 2016.

CHILD PROTECTION PARTNERSHIPS

We liaise closely with child protection authorities in every state and territory to ensure that our interventions will be most effective in keeping children and young people safe. This includes participating in system reform processes in each of the states.

POLICE REFERRALS

We have an arrangement with the Queensland Police Service to provide outreach phone support to children and young people referred for support or counselling by Police.

WEB REFERRALS

Kids Helpline works with other organisations who interact with young people seeking help or information. We receive large numbers of referrals of young people to our website every year from other organisations' websites.

- **10,000** (approximately) referrals came from youth and generalist mental health and counselling websites
- **2,000** (approximately) referrals were received from the Australian Government's Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner website
- **2,600** (approximately) referrals came from other cybersafety and anti-bullying websites (i.e. Bullying No Way, Take a Stand Together, National Centre Against Bullying).

CYBER SAFETY PARTNERSHIPS

We have an active partnership with the Commonwealth Government's Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner to ensure that children and young people who contact eSafety with cybersafety concerns receive priority access to Kids Helpline web counselling (WebChat).

eSafety has provided Kids Helpline counsellors and managers with specialist training in cybersafety issues, including procedures for raising formal complaints with relevant organisations and internet service providers where a client seeks this kind of support.

REFERRALS FOR ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

KHL endeavours to provide a holistic service to children and young people, linking them when appropriate and possible to other support services they may need.

36% of all counselling contacts were identified as requiring referral to other services and professionals for additional support.

PROFESSIONAL COUNSELLING - BEING THERE WHEN KIDS NEED US MOST

Kids Helpline counsellors have a strong foundation in theories and approaches related to trauma, abuse and the developmental issues faced by children and young people.

Counsellors come to KHL with a minimum of an undergraduate degree (social work, counselling or psychology) and at least one year of counselling experience. Our internal training enables them to focus on providing services by phone or online.

This ensures that each young person who contacts KHL receives the very best of care.



RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY

PREVENTING YOUTH SUICIDE

Suicide is the leading cause of death amongst 12–25 year old young people in Australia. Many organisations and individuals are working hard to develop strategies that will make a difference, but the voices of young people are often missing from the conversation.

In 2015, we surveyed 472 young people with lived experience thinking about, planning and/or contemplating suicide to get their feedback about what support they found helpful or think would have been helpful.

This is the first time in Australia such a comprehensive survey has been conducted with young people who have a lived experience of suicide.

Young people gave us detailed responses as to how to listen more effectively to their concerns and how they wanted to be cared for.

In 2016, this information has been used to help KHL improve our responses to young people. We have also used this feedback to develop a range of information and advocacy publications, including a series of 'Insight' papers on suicide prevention. These have been presented at numerous conferences and in community and policy forums.

PROMOTING RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

Pornography consumption makes up approximately 30% of all internet traffic, and whether intentional or accidental, children's exposure to pornography has dramatically increased as a result of the internet.

Kids Helpline collaborated with the Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner in 2015–16 to investigate the impacts of increased online pornography consumption by children and young people.

We shared our analysis of contacts to Kids Helpline from young people exposed to pornography with the Senate Inquiry into the harm to children caused by exposure to pornography on the internet.

Our research showed exposing children and young people to pornography had a damaging effect on their quality of peer relationships and in some cases, encouraged sexual abuse by young people of other children and youth. We made a number of recommendations about how these concerns can be effectively managed within our community. This included community and educational awareness programs encouraging respectful relationships and providing children and young people with the skills they need to critically analyse sexualised media and empower them to challenge gender stereotypes.

CYBERSAFETY

In July 2016, our data collection system was expanded to gather information about the prevalence of cyberbullying and cybersafety issues generally.

As this continues, the findings and trends will be used to inform and improve Kids Helpline counselling practices and advocacy work in this area.

"We believe our advocacy work is also a vital part of protecting children and young people. Our research is unique and is shared at key mental health forums nationally."

Tracy Adams - CEO, yourtown



Innovation

At Kids Helpline innovation is central to our efforts to support, care for and listen to our young people in a way that is relevant and timely.

We continue to blend data, the voice of young people and a diverse range of expertise to create new, innovative and effective supports to empower children and young people to deal with issues and concerns they are facing in a highly connected world.

Kids Helpline is proactively adapting our service to the changing needs of children and young people. This involves keeping pace with changing social, cultural and technological realities so that we remain both relevant and accessible to children and young people—**we want to meet them where they are.**

NEW WEBSITE

The new KHL website was launched in response to the increasing demand for online information resources. Children and young people's preference to receive information based support is increasing steadily. Much research and consultation has gone into making the KHL website accessible and useful to the different age groups who contact us, including optimising content for mobile devices.

A wide range of content for independent help-seeking has also been developed. KHL constantly monitors the topics and tip sheets that receive the most traffic to ensure that the site is delivering the right information for our young people.

In 2016, there were 580,562 unique visitors to the KHL website.

WEBCHAT

WebChat has greatly improved access to counselling and support via a communication medium that many young people are more comfortable with. Demand for WebChat counselling continues to increase.

To improve young people's access to web counselling, KHL has done the following:

- **Extended operating hours.**
In early 2016, WebChat service delivery hours were extended. Young people can now contact KHL via WebChat from 8am to midnight, seven days a week.
- **Upgraded technology.**
The Kids Helpline website was upgraded in February 2016 to optimise its usage for mobile devices, and an improved interface for the delivery of WebChat counselling was introduced.
- **Shorter wait times.**
Over the last five years, average wait times for WebChat contacts being answered have reduced substantially (from 78 minutes in 2012 to 22 minutes in 2016).
- **Improved response rates.**
Over the last five years, response rates for WebChat have increased markedly (from 30% in 2012 to 48% in 2016).
- **More contacts answered.**
Over the last five years, the number of answered WebChat contacts has grown considerably (by 151%, from 12,643 in 2012 to 31,765 in 2016).

KHL CIRCLES

In partnership with The University of Sydney, KHL is piloting 'KHL Circles'—a social network for group counselling and peer support for Kids Helpline clients aged 13–25 years. This project is made possible by the generous support of the Future Generation Investment Company (FGX).

This world first innovation will provide young people with support by peers and qualified KHL counsellors on a purpose-built social media platform. The aim of this platform is to reduce common mental and emotional health symptoms such as depression, anxiety and stress.

INTERACTIVE MOBILE TOOL KIT

In partnership with the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) School of Design (Creative Industries Faculty), we are working to design and evaluate a visual interactive mobile tool-kit that links credible health information to mobile devices. We are aiming to improve the quality and credibility of stand-alone digital interventions and service delivery for young people. The partnership was recently awarded an Australian Research Council grant to conduct the project.

BREAKUP SHAKEUP

KHL, with the Queensland University of Technology and the Young and Well Collaborative Research Centre, has developed an App to help young people deal with 'break-ups'.

In 2014, KHL conducted a national survey to understand the impacts on young people of breakups with romantic partners. The e-tool helps reduce the mental and psychological effects of breakups.

We listen and respond to young people

KHL AWARDED CHILD PROTECTION AWARDS

We were honoured and proud to receive two child protection awards in 2016.

Kids Helpline has been honoured for the critical role it plays in protecting children and young people across Australia in the National and Queensland Child Protection Awards.

The **NAPCAN Play Your Part Awards** recognise organisations that have played their part to prevent child abuse and neglect through promoting the safety and wellbeing of children and young people in Australia. The Governor-General Sir Peter Cosgrove presented Kids Helpline with the national award at a ceremony in September.

KHL received the NAPCAN Award because of its significant work over the last 25 years in providing early intervention strategies that help prevent child abuse and harm, and for being there 24/7 for children and young people needing counselling and support.

KHL is the only national winner of this award in 2016!

The **Queensland Child Protection Week Committee** also recognised KHL for its outstanding contribution to promoting child protection in its 2016 honours, receiving the Award from Minister for Child Safety Shannon Fentiman at Parliament House, Brisbane also in September.

GROWING COMPLEXITY OF NEED

The intensity of support required by children and young people contacting Kids Helpline is increasing.

The number and proportion of contacts approaching Kids Helpline for counselling support (the more intensive kind of support provided by the service) has steadily increased over the last decade. In 2007, counselling contacts made up 18% of all contacts, while in 2016 this reached 37%.

Not only is the demand for counselling support increasing, the issues young people are seeking counselling support for are on average becoming more complex.

Analysis of the main concern of counselling contacts from 1997 to 2016 over five yearly intervals indicates that there has been a:

- **487%** increase in the frequency that mental and or emotional health/illness, including self-injury, is the main issue for counselling
- **208%** increase in the frequency that suicide is raised as the main issue for counselling.

We are also constantly up-skilling our counsellors to respond more effectively to these issues. In 2016, counsellors undertook specialist training in trauma, online safety, grief and loss, case management, homicidal presentations and bullying.



DURATION OF COUNSELLING SERVICES

To meet this increased need, KHL is providing longer counselling sessions to give children and young people the time and space to discuss these issues.

Counselling sessions have increased steadily in length from an average of **10 minutes in 1991 to 37 minutes in 2016**.

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

We continue to evolve KHL to respond to the changing demographics of children and young people who contact us.

- Culturally and linguistically diverse contacts have increased from 11% in 2007 to 35% in 2016.
- **1,260** contacts were received from children and young people identifying as intersex, trans and gender diverse in 2016.

We have conducted more cultural sensitivity training with our counsellors and have introduced specific training for counsellors about strategies for working sensitively and effectively with gender diverse and same-sex attracted young people.

What young people say about Kids Helpline

KHL asks children and young people about what they think about KHL via an annual survey. A total of 611 children and young people aged between 5 and 25 years responded to the 2016 survey.

91% would recommend Kids Helpline to a friend.

After speaking to a counsellor:

- **72%** of respondents reported feeling more capable of dealing with their problem
- **75%** felt they had more ideas for what to do about the issue.

After reading a Tips & Info topic on the KHL website:

- **55%** felt they had more ideas for what to do about the problem
- **57%** felt more motivated to deal with the problem
- **59%** said they would be more likely to seek further help for the problem

NRL State of Mind campaign

Mental health is the number one concern of children and young people contacting KHL with one in five counselling contacts needing help about this issue.

KHL has been a national partner of the National Rugby League (NRL) State of Mind Campaign, bringing together Australia's key mental health service providers to help break down mental health stereotypes and stigmas.

Other partners include the Black Dog Institute, Headspace and Lifeline.



Our funding

KHL costs \$10.5 million a year to operate.

yourtown provides approximately 78% of the funding thanks to the generosity of supporters of the Art Union, donations and corporate support.

The Australian, Queensland and Western Australian Governments also provide funding support.

We care and we listen, any time and for any reason. This is the promise KHL has made to young people for 25 years.

We need your help to continue to meet this promise and enable us to invest in new programs and technologies.

Help children and young people nationally. Support Kids Helpline - www.kidshelpline.com.au/support



Australian Government



Queensland Government



24/7 HELP FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 5–25 YEARS

Kids Helpline
1800 55 1800
kidshelpline.com.au

Kids Helpline Insights 2016 provides invaluable insights into the key issues affecting young people in Australia.

It is supported by the **Kids Helpline Insights 2016: Statistical Overview** which provides extensive data about the issues affecting children and young people as well as regional based **State and Territory Reports**.

These can be accessed at
kidshelpline.com.au/reports

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