

Media release



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Youth-led support guides Kids Helpline for better mental health outcomes

Mental Health Month (October 2020) is a compelling time to raise awareness around the number of mental health related issues reported to Kids Helpline, says **yourtown** Chief Executive Officer Tracy Adams.

Kids Helpline says the level of ongoing contacts to the service during the pandemic accounts for an increase in demand of 24% nationally between March and August compared to the same period last year.

“It illustrates that Kids Helpline is playing an important role within the mental health ecosystem, by providing children and young people in need with 24/7 access to qualified counsellors who they trust using channels of communication that work for them, be that phone, email or WebChat,” said Ms Adams.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the importance of young people connecting with others in support of their mental health.

“Between March and August this year we have provided 3,444 or 36% more counselling responses to mental health concerns than in the same period of 2019. Adolescents with mental health problems report higher rates of suicide ideation and other risky behaviours,” said Ms Adams.

“Our concern is that this may be just the tip of the iceberg, we need to elevate help-seeking and continue the focus on reducing the stigma associated with seeking support. Early intervention is critical.”

Between 1 March and 31st August 2020 Kids Helpline initiated 1,194 actions to ensure the safety of children and young people nationally. This is 39% more actions initiated than the 857 undertaken in the same period of 2019.

The majority of duty of care actions were initiated in response to Suicide Attempts and Child Abuse.

“We are in an exceptional position of engaging with a group of courageous young people who have a lived experience of mental health issues, who are now helping Kids Helpline to better understand that critical time in their life when a Duty of Care was actioned. Kids Helpline is proud to work with these young people and their families as they hold practical insights into how better to respond in the critical time of need and promote recovery,” said Ms Adams.

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“Young people shouldn’t feel ashamed to seek help. Kids Helpline acts as a ‘safety net’ for children and young people in a broader social support system, having a unique position of being the only national free and confidential 24/7 counselling service available to those aged from 5 to 25 years of age. An expert in the field of early intervention services, Kids Helpline has undertaken 120,893 responses to help children and young people in the first eight months of this year,” said Ms Adams.

“Additional funding from the Commonwealth and NSW governments as well as the community has enabled Kids Helpline to employ over 50 additional counsellors since March with additional counsellors currently being recruited to deal with the increased demand on our counselling and support service,” said Ms Adams.

If young people want to talk to someone they can call Kids Helpline on 1800 551 800, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week or use email or web counselling services. www.kidshelpline.com.au.

Facebook: @kidshelpline, Insta @kidshelplineau, Twitter @KidsHelplineAU

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INTERVIEW/FILMING OPPORTUNITIES:

Tracy Adams, **yourtown** CEO.

LIVED EXPERIENCE CASE STUDY AVAILABLE.

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