

Media release



Increase in children as young as 5 contacting Kids Helpline

Data from a Kids Helpline six monthly report identifies a 200% increase in counselling contacts from 5-year-olds over the first six months of 2021, when compared to 01 January to 30 June 2020. Citing issues including emotional wellbeing and loss or grief concerns, national numbers spiked from 14 contacts from 5-year-olds in the first six months of 2020, to 42 counselling contacts to Kids Helpline in the first six months of 2021.

With homes going into lockdown across the nation to help flatten the coronavirus curve, many stressors have been potentially felt by children and young people, putting them at risk of mental ill-health.

“The upheaval and stress Australian children and young people are experiencing from the pandemic is a cause for concern. Over the past six months we have identified that 1,610 contacts to Kids Helpline were from young children aged 5-9 years of age up from 1,588 for the first six months of 2020,” said **yourtown** CEO Tracy Adams.

The number of answered contacts requesting counselling support from four age cohorts – 5-9 years of age, 10-14 years of age, 15-18 years of age and 19-25 years of age – have all increased in the first half of this year compared to the first half of 2020.

Each age group list mental health concerns as the top reason for making contact with Kids Helpline, while self-injury/self-harm for 15-18 year olds has crept into the top 5 reasons for contacting Kids Helpline increasing of 34% from 1,217 to 1,635 over the first six months of 2021 compared to the first six months of 2020.

“Children and young people are increasingly experiencing mental health concerns, including suicidal ideation/behaviour and self-harm,” said **yourtown** CEO Tracy Adams. “Responding to concerns children and young people have in relation to their mental health and wellbeing is a major area of Kids Helpline’s work. The third most common reason for making contact is relating to suicide concerns,” Ms Adams continued.

Data just released reveal that Kids Helpline answered 1,788 more contacts from children and young people related to suicide concerns in the first six months of 2021 compared to the first six months of 2020. This figure equates to 69 times per week a child or young person is making contact with Kids Helpline’s professional counsellors about suicide concerns.

Ms Adams said Kids Helpline counsellors acted upon 37 emergency care actions on average every week in 2021 related to a suicide attempt. This figure jumped 95% from the 19 emergency actions taken by counsellors each week in the first six months of 2020 related to suicide attempts. An emergency intervention is an instance where Kids Helpline counsellors make contact with police, child safety or ambulance services because a young person is deemed to be at imminent risk of harm.

Kids Helpline, a service of **yourtown** plays a critical role in areas like mental health and child protection. Free call 1800 55 1800 or www.kidshelpline.com.au