

Humans of child helplines:

Our plan of action



We, the #Youth of Child Helpline International, believe in a world where all children and young people's voices are heard. Constantly impassioned by our [Manifesto](#), we strive 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.

But first...

Who are the #Youth and what do we do?

We, the Youth Advisory Council or #Youth, are a group of motivated young individuals from all over the world. We speak on behalf of our peers and make sure they are heard. Together, we strive towards a better future for children and youth.



For more information about us, our previous projects, blogs and tools we use, check out our website [here!](#)

Below is an introduction on the general structure of child helplines and the role that their counsellors play.

What is a child helpline?

A child helpline is a service that lends an ear to young people in need of support. These contacts can be made through phone, in person, email or WebChat.

It is a private and confidential service that allows young people to talk to someone on a variety of issues, big and small. These issues can range from: abuse, (cyber)bullying, teen pregnancies, emotional guidance and 'being on the move' across borders. When needed, child helplines have the capacity to link relevant child protection services and resources to children in high risk.

The ultimate goal of child helplines is to realise the rights of the child, which are rooted in the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child, and empower children to express themselves.

Who responds to the contacts made by young people to child helplines?

Trained counsellors are there to provide support and advice to young people on a wide range of issues. These counsellors usually come from diverse backgrounds but their common mission is to serve young people in need. They are genuine, open and friendly people who know a lot about the problems that young people can face.

What is the nature of the work done at child helplines?

The work of child helplines can pose an unknown territory for many. In practise, they ideally operate alongside a myriad of referral services, including: family protection units, educational facilities, hospitals, judicial services, shelters and other child-related services.



In reality, however, such an extensive network of services is not always available and so child helplines have to redefine resourcefulness, employ unconventional creativity and ingenuity in challenging circumstances. This is in spite of limited financial means, capacity and resources but ultimately with the aim to work in the best interests of the child.

Child helpline counsellors face a variety of complex issues on a daily basis. Their issues and stories remain confidential but this [#Youth-led project aims to shed light on both the rewarding and challenging nature that counsellors face in their determination to ensure every child is heard and supported.](#)



“Child helpline counsellors are people we need to talk with if we want to know and understand children and young people all over the world. Young people place a special trust in the counsellors, which allows them to feel free to talk with them. Without this we would not understand what young people go through. I believe that the stories of these counsellors will help us in knowing and understanding what our fellow young people are facing and appreciate the work of child helpline counsellors.”

Patuma Tonex, member of Child Helpline International’s [#Youth](#).

"Every day through every phone call, thousands of child helpline counsellors have become the voice of saved childhoods through their determined spirits, motivating stories and unparalleled experiences.

I am very happy to be a part of a project that allows us, the Youth Advisory Council at Child Helpline International, to learn from their selfless efforts."

Divyansh Dev, member of Child Helpline International’s [#Youth](#).



How will our project take form?

Our project can be distinguished into two phases.

Phase one is for us, as members of the [#Youth](#), to approach as many child helpline counsellors as feasibly possible in order to collect their stories. This [#Youth-led initiative](#) that will take place across a 12 month period. Simultaneously, we will preview this data in form of enlightening



'photoblog' entries on the social media platform, Facebook. The Facebook page shall be titled "Humans of child helplines".

At the end of this 12 month period, we will analyse the most popular stories, selected through active social media engagement, to be published into a book. This should be distinguished as phase two of the project. These stories will be arranged thematically and in a visually-pleasing format; we envision the employment of a cartoonist, who will be able to bring some of these stories to life.

Ultimately, this book will be used as a powerful tool for generating awareness on the services of child helplines and their counsellors but also as a means to educate children about their rights.

In our role as #Youth members, we wish to facilitate this knowledge and work pro-actively to introduce the book to schools. Therefore, the book must be both youth-friendly and visually-appealing to ensure our message is well-received.

This is strictly a not-for-profit project; all donations are solely to generate the publication of the book, including the employment of editors, publishers and a cartoonist.

Why do we believe this is worth publishing?

We hope that by publishing these experiences, it will highlight common plights that many young people share. It will help them to recognise that they do not stand alone.

Many children and adults are still unaware that child helplines exist, even though child helplines represent the first point of contact for many young people in distress.

The work of child helpline counsellors, who in some cases are volunteers, often goes unnoticed. While every story and case is personal, they do incredible work on a daily basis to ensure children are able to realise healthy and happy futures that lie ahead of them.

Their work reinforces our belief that **"no child's voice should be left unheard!"**

What do children and young people say?

Here are a few stories taken from children and young people who contacted child helplines in 2016:*

"I am 14 years old and I called the child helpline because I was feeling so anxious and needed help. I was unsure if my feelings were serious enough to see a professional or where to find one. The counsellor listened to me and we talked about my feelings and rights to seek help. Then she gave me a list of the professional people in my area that I could contact."

Ronja, Finland.



“Because I wanted to say I was sorry to my parents over a big fight we had and I didn’t know how, I called the child helpline. My dad was angry and explosive and yelling at me. I still don’t know if the fight was my fault or theirs, but I wanted to apologise. The counsellor listened carefully and asked me many questions. We figured out a way I could apologise and talk to my parents together because my mother makes it easier to talk to my dad. I was ready to take action after the call.”

Jan, the Netherlands.

“I am 15 and when I saw a programme about divorce on TV, I became anxious and depressed; so I called the child helpline. The counsellor listened and helped me realise that maybe I was upset because of my feelings about my parents’ divorce a few years before. I felt better realising that my parents will remain my parents no matter what and that I could always talk to my school counsellor.”

Diva, Israel.

*To preserve the trust and confidence that children and young people place in child helplines every day, any personal detail cited in the above case studies has been altered to protect their identity.