

3rd Child & Adolescent Mental Health Conference
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Abstract

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TITLE: Early intervention with NZ children by telephone counselling: the "What's Up?" experience.

ABSTRACT:

"What's Up?" is a free, professional telephone counselling service for 5-18 year olds throughout New Zealand that was established in September 2001. Unlike many health services, "What's Up?" was vigorously and directly offered to its target client group using methods commonly associated with commercial marketing. This rapidly generated a high level of service utilisation, with over 429,000 calls from children and young people forecast to be received by the service by the end of its second year. What's Up was launched with the intention of providing easily accessible, early intervention and prevention services for younger children in particular. Its guiding principles are child-centred practice, empowerment and confidentiality. Callers are also able to ask to speak to the same Counsellor again. Almost two years on, the profile of call and caller characteristics suggest that it has been successful in reaching a very large number of children and young people and has the opportunity to build a sense of support, help-seeking behaviour, and problem-solving skills in young callers dealing with everyday problems. It is also able to provide counselling processes of considerable depth with regular callers who engage with one primary Counsellor over an extended period of time. This paper will briefly present the marketing materials associated with the service, outline its operating principles and procedures, and summarise the call and caller characteristics that suggest that it is fulfilling an important role in providing primary mental health services for a young population.

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What's Up is a free, national telephone counselling service for 5-18 year olds that was launched on 21st September last year. It is provided by the The Kids Help Foundation Trust, a registered charity that was set up specifically to provide this service.

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Board

0800
What'sUp!
9 4 2 8 7 8 7

Founder - *Jocelyn Covern*

- ☒ **Allan Barber**, Management Consultant - Chair
- ☒ **Trevor Carlyon**, Executive Director, Kids Help Line, Australia
- ☒ **Andrew Davidson**, Deputy Director, Westfield (NZ) Ltd
- ☒ **Ian Hassall**, Children's Advocate, former Commissioner for Children
- ☒ **Natalie Innes**, General Manager, Kellogg's NZ
- ☒ **Jude Mannion**, Director, Robin Hood Foundation
- ☒ **Tony Nowell**, Managing Director, Griffin's Foods Ltd
- ☒ **Grant Taylor**, Executive Director, Kids Help Foundation

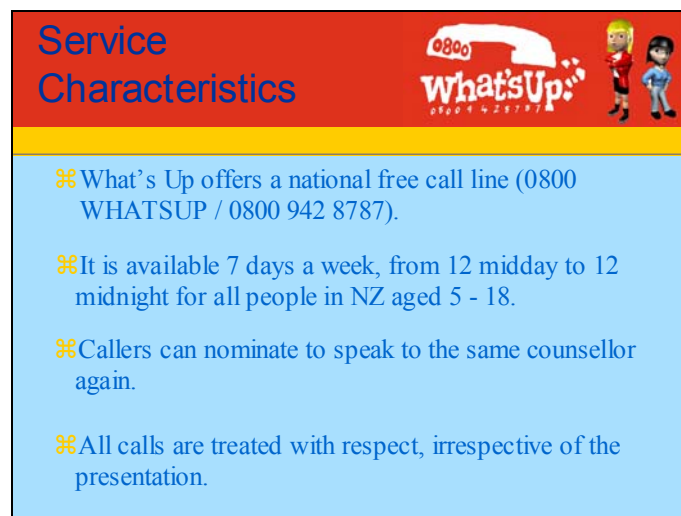
The Trust was founded by Jocelyn Covern, who is involved in early childhood education. It is governed by a Board composed of people with expertise spanning tele-counselling, non-profit management, business management, marketing, advocacy and public policy.

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A distinguishing feature of the Foundation is its strong partnership with three major corporate sponsors. These businesses provide KHF with a reliable funding base and access to extensive business resources in exchange for the marketing benefits of a relationship with a high-profile good cause.

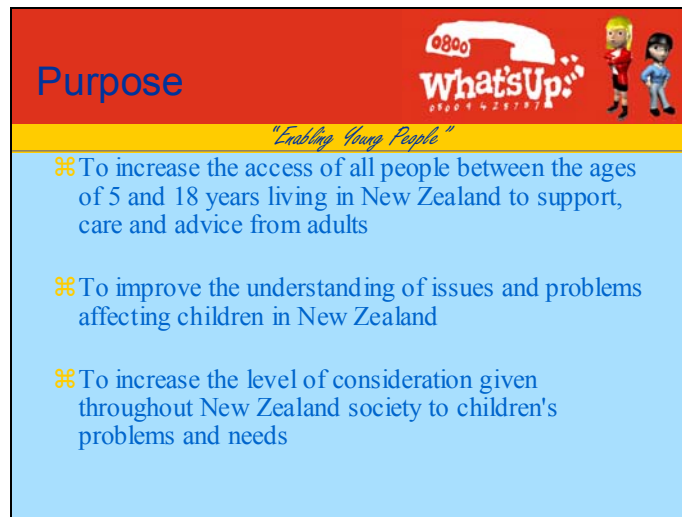
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What's Up is accessible free of charge from any telephone in NZ, including mobile phones, seven days a week from mid-day to mid-night. Callers can ask to speak to the same Counsellor again, and many develop quite advanced counselling relationships over an extended period of time. Our aim is to provide a highly accessible service, lowering physical barriers by utilising telephones and a national freecall number, and lowering psychological barriers by treating all calls with respect. We place emphasis on early intervention and prevention rather than crisis intervention and regard 7-12 year olds as our core client group, although we accept calls from anyone aged

between 5 and 18. Our marketing conveys the message that no issue is too small to justify a call – ring us with “any issue, any time” – “its your call”.

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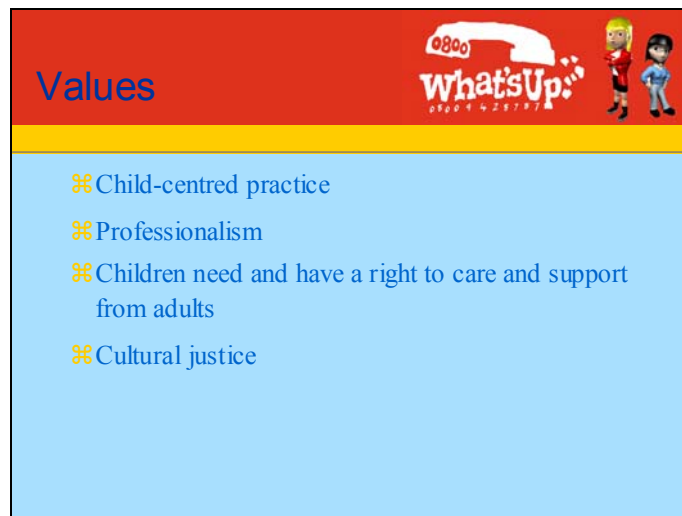
Purpose

"Enabling Young People"

- ⌘ To increase the access of all people between the ages of 5 and 18 years living in New Zealand to support, care and advice from adults
- ⌘ To improve the understanding of issues and problems affecting children in New Zealand
- ⌘ To increase the level of consideration given throughout New Zealand society to children's problems and needs

Our over-arching rubric is “enabling young people”, which breaks down to increasing the access of 5-18 year olds to support, care and advice from adults; improving the understanding of issues and problems affecting children in NZ; and to increasing the level of consideration given to children’s problems and needs.

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Values

- ⌘ Child-centred practice
- ⌘ Professionalism
- ⌘ Children need and have a right to care and support from adults
- ⌘ Cultural justice

Our core values are child-centred practice, professionalism, that children need and have a right to care and support from adults, and cultural justice.

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Basic Principles

- ☞ Child-Centred practice
- ☞ Empowerment
- ☞ Confidentiality*

* Duty of Care considerations apply

We have three basic principles that form a filter through which all our policies and activities must pass: child-centredness, empowerment, and confidentiality. Consistent with our aim to achieve a preventive effect, our counselling practice centres on the caller's point-of-view and strives to help the caller conceptualise and solve his or her own problems, rather than be given advice. We have Duty of Care protocols that apply when a caller is at risk of imminent harm and under these circumstances we may elect to break confidentiality in the best interests of the caller.

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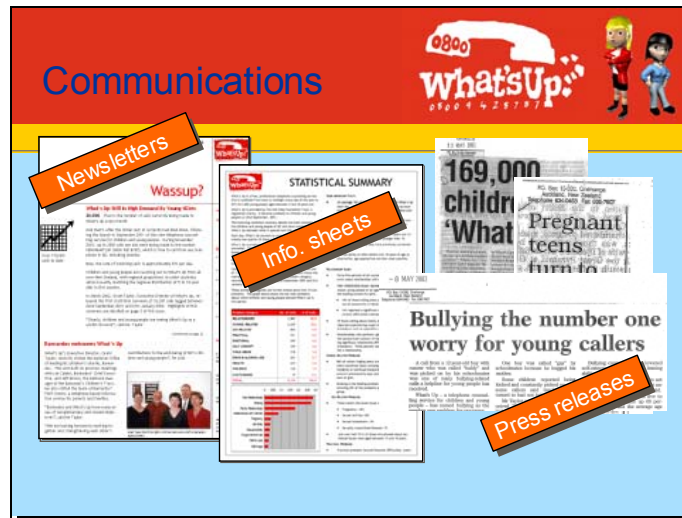


Professionalism

- ☑ The service is a paid, professional rather than an unpaid, voluntary organisation.
- ☑ This supports delivery of consistently high-quality counselling and supervisory standards.
- ☑ The service is benchmarked with the operating policies and standards of Kids Help Line Australia.

Unlike many non-profit organisations, we have a policy of paying all staff involved in service delivery. We believe this brings benefits in stability of staffing, attitude, quality assurance and accountability. As an organisation, we seek to benchmark ourselves against best practice standards and specifically use Kids Help Line, a similar telephone counselling service in Australia as a benchmarking organisation.

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We place emphasis on the utilisation of information gathered in the course of our work to fulfill our objectives, publishing regular newsletters, statistical summaries and information sheets, and making press releases informing the general public about the issues brought to us by our callers.

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We also have a website with extensive information about our organisation and the issues raised with us by our callers.

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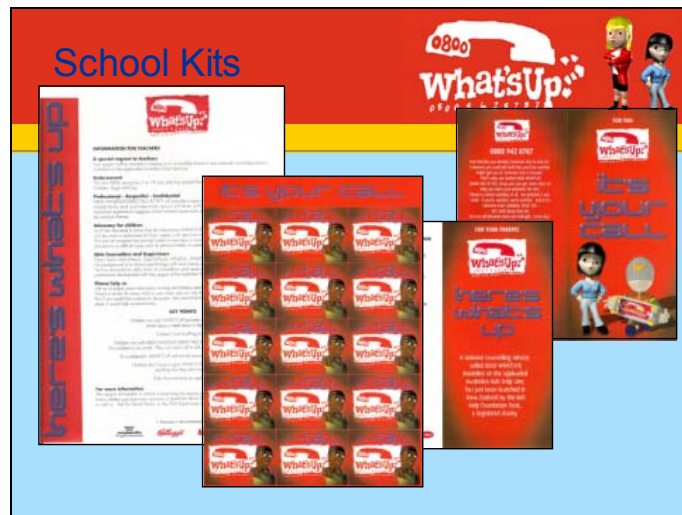


The slide features a red header with the word "Marketing" in white. To the right of the header is the "What'sUp" logo, which includes a white telephone handset icon with the number "0800" above it, the text "What'sUp" in a stylized font, and the phone number "0800 421 217" below. To the right of the logo are two cartoon characters, a girl and a boy. Below the header is a yellow horizontal bar. The main body of the slide is light blue and contains three bullet points, each preceded by a yellow square icon with a white checkmark.

- Together with its corporate sponsors, the service launched with a robust marketing campaign in October 2001.
- TVCs and 41,000 classroom information kits.
- Immediate, strong response from client group all around NZ.

The service was launched towards the end of 2001 with a major marketing campaign that ran through October and November. A series of TV commercials were produced and screened with the support of TV3 and kits of information and publicity materials were distributed to 41,000 classrooms in schools throughout NZ, bringing a strong and immediate response from our client group throughout NZ.

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The slide features a red header with the text "School Kits" in white. To the right of the header is the "What'sUp" logo, which includes a white telephone handset icon with the number "0800" above it, the text "What'sUp" in a stylized font, and the phone number "0800 421 217" below. To the right of the logo are two cartoon characters, a girl and a boy. Below the header is a yellow horizontal bar. The main body of the slide is light blue and contains three overlapping images of school kit materials: a white instruction sheet for teachers, a red and white pamphlet for students, and a red and white pamphlet for parents and caregivers.

The pack contained instructions for teachers, pamphlets for the students, for their parents and caregivers, and perforated stickers for the students to help them keep our service and telephone number in mind. Since then we have done no direct promotion of the service to children and young people, although we receive a steady stream of requests for further copies of the school information packs from teachers and other professionals working with children. A printer-friendly file can be downloaded from our website to reproduce the basic information pamphlet for children. In addition, our

sponsors have promoted their relationships with What's Up on their packaging and advertising from time to time.

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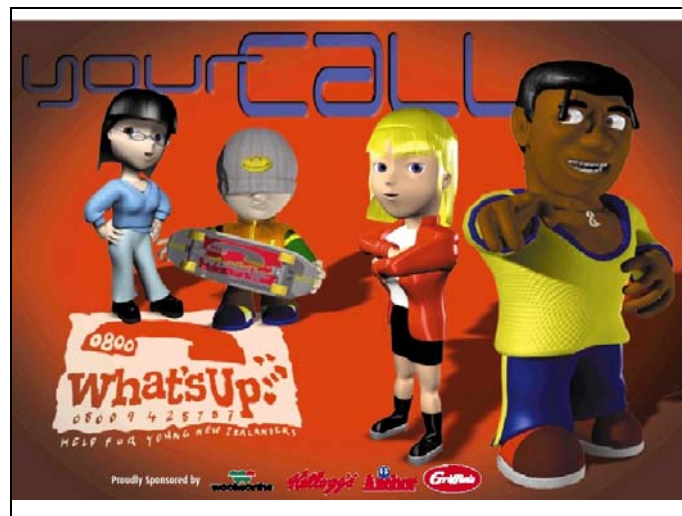


Market Differentiation

- ☑ The counselling services provided are specifically targeted at children and young people.
- ☑ The service is associated with a positive, friendly, supportive approach (“call us with any issue”) rather than a problem-focused, negative connotation.

As you can see from the look of the materials we used, the service is specifically targeted at children and young people and conveys a positive, friendly, up-beat image. We wanted to get away from the usual tragic, doom and gloom associations of counselling to reduce the psychological barriers impeding access to the service. The use of music was chosen to provide a way of conveying serious messages in an attractive and approachable manner. A pop song was commissioned and recorded and cartoon characters representing a virtual band created to model social diversity and act as “ambassadors” of the service. The characters have been animated into a pop video to accompany the song, which was used in the television advertising campaign. I won't show you the video today, but I can present a snippet of the music and the lyrics to illustrate the concept.

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As at 30th August, 2003	
Calls received	410,804
Calls answered	219,642
Average calls received per day	452
Average calls answered per day	314

In November 2001 we were receiving up to 2,500 calls a day as our client group, and some adults, checked us out. The dust settled at about the end of December at about 600 calls per day and the twelve month average has gradually declined to 452 calls per day at the end of August this year. We are able to answer about 80% of incoming calls each day with current resources and answer about 70% within 60 seconds.

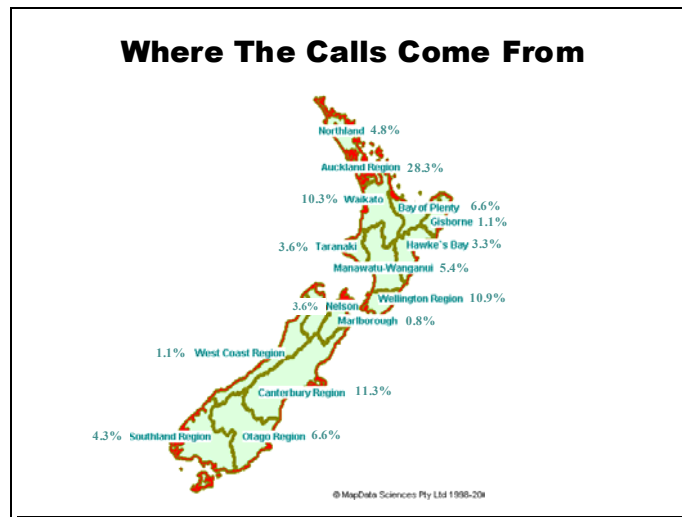
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- ⌘ Non-identifying information is collected opportunistically on every call received
 - ⌘ 45 variables
 - ⌘ 38 problem categories

Our counsellors collect non-identifying information on all calls received. Information is gathered as it arises in the course of the counselling session – the callers are not submitted to a questionnaire of any kind. The information gathered is entered into a database at the conclusion of each call, according to structured variable definitions

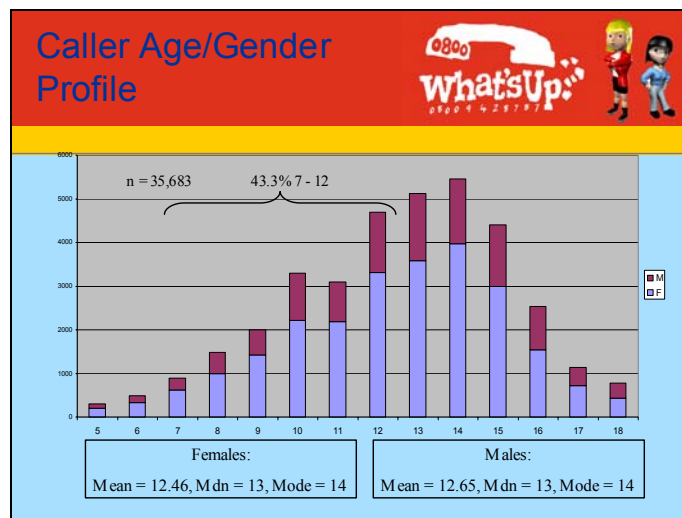
and pre-defined pick lists. There is also room for counsellors to enter free text notes, as they feel it is necessary and appropriate.

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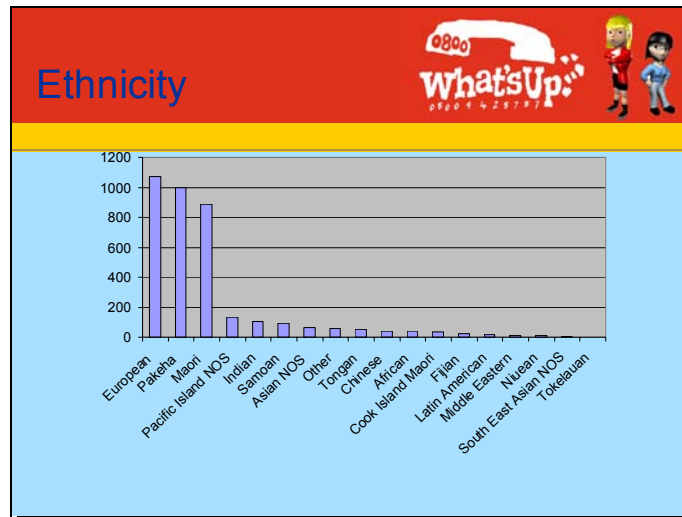
Geographical origin of our calls almost exactly matches the proportion of 5-18 year olds living in each region, indicating that our service is perceived as being equally accessible in all parts of the country.

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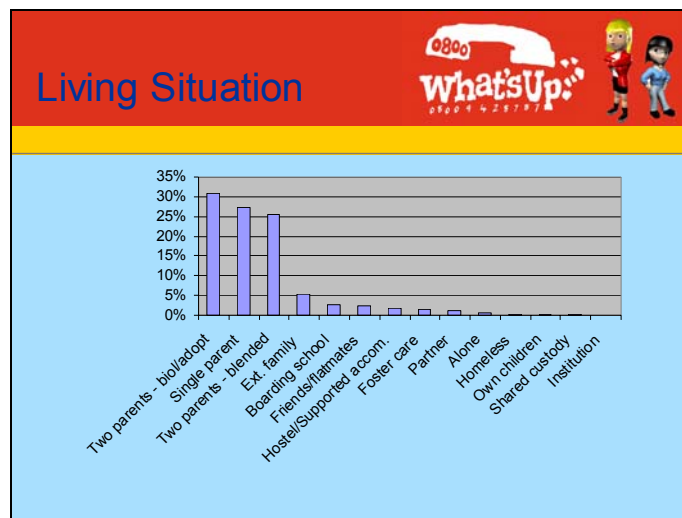
We have achieved our objective of engaging younger callers, with approximately 75% of our callers being younger than 15 years of age and over 43% in our target 7 – 12 age range. The gender ratio is approximately 2:1 females to males, with some variations from this within specific age year groups.

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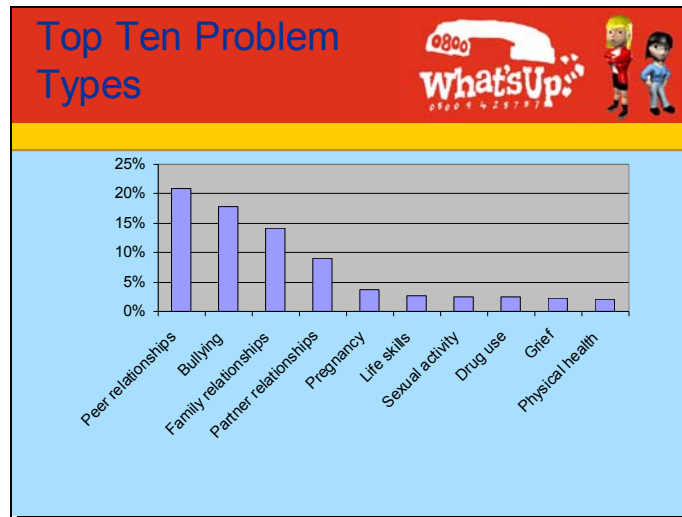
Here we can see that many different ethnic groups use What's Up. Because we gather information opportunistically, this distribution is probably biased. It is much more likely that non-pakeha ethnicity will become evident through speech accent and perhaps the issues associated with immigration or the experiences of belonging to a social minority. It is nevertheless pleasing that children and young people of a wide range of ethnic backgrounds identify What's Up as a useful resource.

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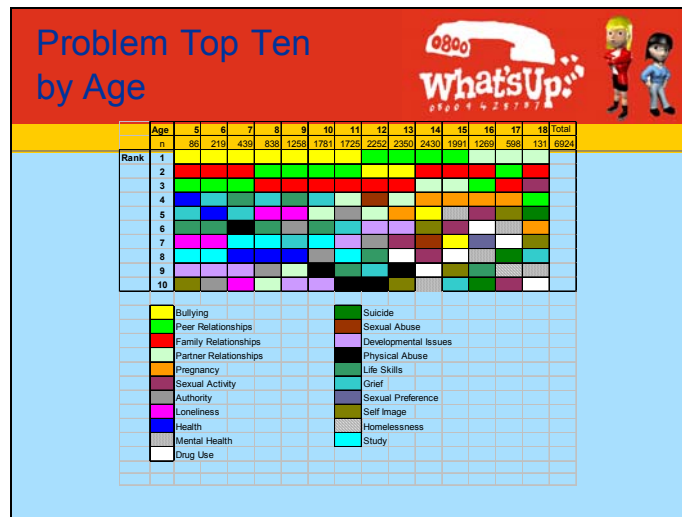
Here we see that the living circumstances of our callers are quite varied, but the great majority are living with at least one parent.

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Over 50% of the problems presented concern relationships with others. Across all age groups combined, peer relationships is the most common presenting problem, closely followed by bullying. Family relationships and relationships with partners follow, with a long tail of less common problems, each making up just a few percent of the calls.

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The picture is a little more complex on examining problem precedence with age, however, with 21 problem types appearing in the top ten lists of all the year age groups. Among these, there are some striking if not entirely surprising patterns. Bullying becomes a steadily less important issue in adolescence, disappearing from the top ten after 15 years of age. Peer and family relationship problems are among the top 4 reasons for calling in every age group. Relationships with partners becomes steadily more prominent after its appearance at age 8, eventually displacing peer

relationships in top spot at age 16. Pregnancy and sexual activity become prominent issues from 13 onwards. Issues are primarily presentations of early childhood. Problems with authority, loneliness and worries about physical health are more significant in pre-adolescence. Conversely, concerns about mental health, drug use and self-image are a primary feature of adolescence. Suicide rises quickly in importance between 16 and 18.

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As a Clinical Psychologist with many years experience working in the public health system, it has been an interesting and illuminating change to work in an organisation that has had a very “market-oriented” approach. One of the things I have learned is that the people who make products and services, like Clinical Psychologists and other health professionals, tend to be very “product focussed”. They tend to be concerned about what it is they do or produce rather than with what the consumers of the services or products want and how these consumers perceive the services or products they are being offered. The hard realities of making a profit in very competitive environments compel commercial businesses to understand consumer needs very well. Although this approach does not map directly on to health services, I think we as mental health professionals have a lot to learn from the marketers that would benefit our consumers. I would like to leave you with a few questions that might help you to reflect on this with respect to your own service:

- Does your service conduct market research with your client group?
- Is access to your service as easy as possible and on the client’s terms?
- Is your service presented as attractive and suggestive of a positive experience?
- Do you encourage repeat contact from your clients?
- Does your community say, “Yeah. They’re really good”?