

March 2006

**In this issue:**

Problems with friends still head the list .....2

Mobile phones essential communication tool for today's kids .....2

What's Up head to tour world childlines .....3

White Pages art a winner for What's Up .....3

Steps to becoming a What's Up Counsellor 3

Family relationships hot topic over Christmas/ New Year .....4

Childline part of disaster Relief .....4

The Kids Help Foundation Trust

PO Box 56-642  
 Dominion Road  
 Auckland

Phone: (09) 630 4144  
 Fax: (09) 630 4840  
 Email: info@whatsup.co.nz

www.whatsup.co.nz



**What's Up Counsellors reflect varied society**

**What's Up is all about the children who ring. But the most important resources of What's Up are those people who take the calls, the anonymous Counsellors at the end of the line. Have you ever wondered who they are and how they train?**

When recruiting new Counsellors, What's Up looks for the right attitudes and aptitudes, rather than specific qualifications and experience. This means that What's Up Counsellors come from more diverse backgrounds than they might otherwise.

"We have our own training system to provide Counsellors with the necessary skills to work well with children and young people on the telephone. Even trained and experienced Counsellors must complete this training programme," says What's Up Executive Director Grant Taylor.

The starting qualifications of What's Up Counsellors are wide ranging, including a PhD in psychology, New Zealand Association of Counsellors membership with many years of experience, and secondary school qualifications only.

"Provided applicants can show us that they are capable of successfully completing our training programme and demonstrate attitudes towards children and young people which are consistent with our organisational principles and values, we will consider them for training," said Grant.

The result is a team of men and women of varying ages and from a range of cultural backgrounds, whose diversity matches that of the callers to What's Up.

Training begins with the pre-employment, 'Skills-Based Training Course' which concentrates on the core skills and processes of telephone counselling with children and young people. This is followed by a further twelve training modules on specific issues, such as child development, mental health problems, risk assessment and crisis management.

All Counsellors must undergo at least 250 hours of supervised practice before they graduate from basic training. Frequent performance feedback and mentoring are an integral part of the training and two formal



Laurence's picture for What's Up.

performance reviews are held during the basic training period. Counsellors must meet set criteria on all aspects of the training programme in order to graduate. The training period is flexible beyond the minimum time to allow for differences in individual rates of achievement.

Once on the phones, What's Up Counsellors have unparalleled support from the Shift Supervisors and the Personal Supervisor. A Shift Supervisor is always present when the What's Up lines are open. These supervisors help the Counsellors manage challenging calls, provide on-the-spot emotional support for the Counsellors, and ensure that organisational practice standards are met. They are also able to contact the Executive Director for consultation on particularly challenging situations at all times.

The Personal Supervisor guides the development of each Counsellor through regular, confidential meetings. Counselling is an occupation that requires a high level of self-awareness and understanding and contact with clients always has the potential to challenge Counsellors' beliefs about themselves. The Personal Supervisor helps the Counsellors handle these consequences of their work so that they can be most effective with What's Up clients.

For more information on becoming a Counsellor read our feature on page 3.

## Problems with friends still head the list

The annual summary of calls to 0800 WHATSUP was recently published for 2005. Once again, peer relationship issues were the most common issue, followed by bullying, family relationships, relationships with girlfriends or boyfriends, and pregnancy. As in previous years, these five problem types made up around 70% of all the issues presented to What's Up's Counsellors.

This has been a stable pattern at What's Up since it began answering calls in September 2001 and reflects patterns in the calls to What's Up's Australian counterpart, Kids Help Line. This suggests that these issues are the main day-to-day problems affecting children and young people in societies like Australia and New Zealand. Data from other childlines around the world also leads to this conclusion. Rigorous comparisons are difficult to make, however, because of differences in the way data is collected in different centres.

The proportion of male callers increased to 38 per cent in 2005 compared with 35 percent in 2004. This is a trend that might be related to an increase in the proportion of male Counsellors working at What's Up during this period.

The average age of callers in 2005 increased slightly over the previous year, from 12.79 years to 13.02 years. The proportion of callers aged between seven and 12 years, What's Up's 'target' client age group, similarly dropped from 44% to 35%.

Many younger children may not be so aware of What's Up as they were not yet at school at the time of the nationwide publicity campaign which launched What's Up in 2001. A new campaign to inform younger children about What's Up is planned for 2006.

## Mobile phones essential communication tool for today's kids

Look around at any group of children and the chances are several of them will be using a mobile telephone. Text messaging, photographing friends-present for transmission to friends-absent, and talking on the phone are central activities for youngsters wherever they may be. The mobile telephone has provided an excellent means for them to stay in touch with friends and family at all times.

An online survey of New Zealand school students, carried out in 2005 by Statistics New Zealand, Auckland University and the Ministry of Education, revealed that 60 percent of the survey respondents owned a mobile phone.

As well as using their mobile phones to contact friends and family, children also use them to contact What's Up. During 2005, 74 percent of calls to 0800 WHATSUP were made from mobile telephones. A landline where no-one can overhear you speaking is not always available, but it is usually possible for a child with a mobile to find a quiet spot at the time when help is needed.

The primary aim of What's Up is to provide children with easy, confidential access to a Counsellor. Mobile phones make it so much easier for children to get help on their own terms that The Kids Help Foundation Trust made a policy decision at the outset to accept calls from mobile phones, despite the higher charges associated with these calls compared with landlines.

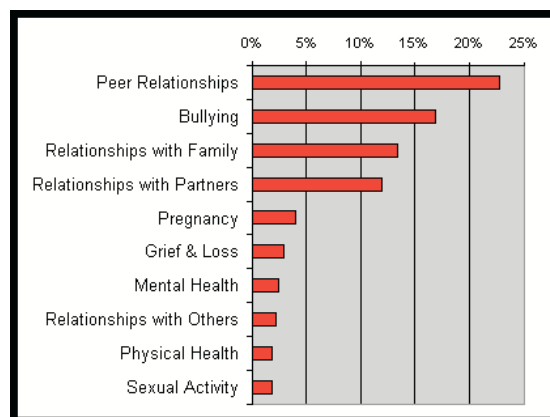


Figure 1. The ten most common problems presented to Whats Up during 2005.

## Some facts about friendship in childhood

- Having friends is a necessity for healthy development – children with friends feel happier, feel better about themselves and have fewer social problems as adults
- Childhood friendships are built on what they do for one another
- Children with friends achieve better at school and cope better with changes between schools
- Friends are important role models and have a big influence on how children behave
- Helping children deal with pressure from friends is better than protecting them from it

## Bullying and mobile phones

Here are some tips from the Telecom New Zealand website ([www.telecom.co.nz](http://www.telecom.co.nz)) to prevent and deal with bullying on mobile phones:

- Be careful about giving your mobile number to anyone except trusted friends and family.
- If you get a message from an unknown number, don't reply. Also, don't reply to a known number if you're unhappy with the content of the message.
- Tell someone who can help, such as a parent or teacher or call 0800 WHATSUP or NetSafe on 0508 638 723.
- If necessary Telecom can swap you to a new number, send a warning to the bully or even block that person from our network.



## What's Up head to tour world childlines

In April, What's Up Executive Director Grant Taylor heads overseas on a six-month unpaid sabbatical. While away, he will take the opportunity to visit as many childlines in other countries as possible.

"It will be a great opportunity to follow up the contacts made at last year's Child Health International conferences and see how other services operate," says Grant. "I am sure that I will return with many new ideas about how What's Up can best serve the children and young people of New Zealand."

While Grant is away, What's Up will be under the able directorship of Marlies Puentener, on secondment from Kids Help Line in Brisbane, Australia. Marlies, an ex-patriate Kiwi, is a qualified social worker and therapist with extensive experience in a wide range of management and clinical roles.

Kids Help Line is recognised as a world-leader in telephone counselling for children and young people. It was the inspiration and working model for What's Up and the organisations have maintained close contact since What's Up's launch in 2001.

Many of What's Up's performance measures, policies and service standards are benchmarked against those of Kids Help Line.

"Marlies' tour of duty at What's Up will be a good check that our ways of doing things are up to best practice standards. It is likely that Marlies will return to Kids Help Line with some of our good ideas, as well," says Grant.

"The management team at What's Up is very experienced at running the day-to-day service. With Marlies' leadership and clinical skills behind them, I am certain that the hundreds of kids around the country who call 0800 WHATSUP every day will continue to receive the usual high standards of service that keep them ringing in such large numbers," he added.

To find out more about childlines around the world, visit the What's Up website at [www.whatsup.co.nz](http://www.whatsup.co.nz). Click through to the Links and Resources page and click on the Help Lines link.

## White Pages art a winner for What's Up

The auctioneer's hammer was red-hot and bidding fierce at the annual White Pages Arts Charity Auction where \$48,000 was raised for What's Up.

Held at the Ellerslie Convention Centre in Auckland last November, the auction saw people bid for a wide array of artworks from 18 regions in New Zealand. All the artworks were entries in the 2005 White Pages Art Awards, a nationwide competition in which artists vie to have their work featured on the cover of their local White Pages phone book.

Guests were greeted with drinks and nibbles before being addressed by Yellow Pages General Manager Dudley Enoka and What's Up Executive Director Grant Taylor.

After the formalities, the auction kicked-off and the bidders didn't need any persuasion to get their hands up in the air and by doing so support What's Up.



The auction kept cashiers busy

Top price paid was \$2,250 for Venetian Glory, Tyne Street, by Oamaru artist Donna Dementé-Ogilvy, followed by \$2,000 for Raglan Harbour by Waikato artist Jacquie Haselden, and \$1,600 for Green Pearl by Wanganui artist André Brönnimann.

"The amount raised will make a real difference with every \$20 paying for 17 calls to be answered," says Grant.

"We are delighted to assist What's Up in this way," says Dudley Enoka. "So much hard work, pride and passion goes into these artworks and our artists tell us how much satisfaction they take from the sale of collective entries benefiting so many young New Zealanders."

Further information on the 2006 White Pages Arts Charity Auction and White Pages Art Awards can be found at [www.whitepagesarts.co.nz](http://www.whitepagesarts.co.nz).

## Steps to becoming a What's Up Counsellor

1. Register your interest with the What'sUp office on 09 630 4144 or [admin@whatsup.co.nz](mailto:admin@whatsup.co.nz). This will ensure that you are informed when recruitment is taking place. You can also check the What's Up website employment page [www.whatsup.co.nz/get\\_involved/employment.html](http://www.whatsup.co.nz/get_involved/employment.html).
2. Attend the free information session that begins each recruitment programme to find out all that you need to know about working as a Counsellor at What's Up.
3. Send in your completed application, available only from the information session.
4. Congratulations, you have been invited to attend a selection interview.
5. Congratulations again! You have been invited to participate in the nine day pre-employment training programme. Nearly half the trainees who successfully complete this programme will be offered positions immediately. The rest will be wait-listed for future positions.
6. After a minimum of 250 hours supervised practice on the phones, a further 24 hours of classroom study and approximately 20 hours of supervision, you will be a fully-fledged What's Up Counsellor.

## Family relationships hot topic over Christmas/New Year

The period from Christmas Day to the first few days of the New Year saw calls to What's Up about family relationship problems take over from peer relationships as the leading issue. This is to be expected as the holiday season brings families together without school, work or people outside of the family to dilute or distract from tensions.

Family relationships are usually the third most common issue presented to What's Up's Counsellors, after peer relationships and bullying.

At a much lower level of calling, significant increases were also seen in the proportion of calls about physical assault, sexual assault and domestic violence, perhaps also reflecting the boiling over of tensions at this time of the year.

Many sources of stress can become focussed at Christmas time and not everyone is well-prepared to cope with them. Relationship problems and financial pressures can combine with the availability of unusually large quantities of food and alcohol to cause harmful reactions, such as arguments, physical violence or sexual impropriety.

People or activities that help us cope throughout the rest of year by providing distractions or a 'reality-check' on our

thoughts and feelings might also be absent during this period because of vacations.

Children and young people can be caught up in these dynamics. Their own thoughts, feelings and behaviour are directly affected and they can be exposed to their parents or caregivers reacting poorly.

What's Up's Counsellors worked from noon to midnight throughout this period, so that kids faced with an unhappy holiday season had the opportunity to get some help with these issues. On Christmas Day alone, they answered 419 calls.

For information on identifying stress and other signs that a young person is having trouble coping, visit the New Zealand Mental Health Foundation website at [www.mentalhealth.org](http://www.mentalhealth.org), especially the information sheet <http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/resources/mhaw7.pdf> or contact the Mental Health Foundation, PO Box 10051, Dominion Rd, Auckland. Tel 09-300-7010.

### What's Up key facts

- What's Up is a free telephone counselling service for children and young people aged five to 18 years.
- The What's Up help line number is 0800 WHATSUP (0800 942 8787).
- What's Up operates seven days a week from 12 midday to 12 midnight.
- What's Up receives about 1,500 calls every day – current funding enables its Counsellors to answer about 500 of these.
- What's Up is unique in that it offers early intervention, rather than picking up the pieces later.
- More than 40% of the problems children and young people call What's Up about involve relationships with others – peers, family, partners.
- What's Up counsellors are paid professionals, trained specifically in techniques and skills for counselling children and young people by telephone.
- What's Up is operated by The Kids Help Foundation Trust, an independent New Zealand-registered charity, based in Auckland. What's Up works in association with Barnardos New Zealand and is supported by funding from Griffin's, White Pages and the Child Health Services Trust.

### Childline part of disaster relief

What's Up's colleagues at Childline India Foundation (CIF) took an active role in caring for those affected by the October 2005 earthquake in Jammu and Kashmir.

CIF sent in a team to assess the needs of those affected by the earthquake, and to liaise with other organisations involved in the relief effort. The team spent nearly two weeks in the quake-affected areas of Jammu and Srinagar.

Working with Indian not-for-profit organisations such as the Youth Technical Training Society (YTTS) and Army Wives Welfare Association, along with the Housing Development Finance Corporation, CIF distributed immediate relief material. This included nearly 3,950 blankets, 165 tons of milk powder, and winter jackets for children affected by the earthquake.

The relief team faced major challenges from high security measures, restricting movement in Srinagar and the inaccessibility of the region.

CIF has set-up a new childline call-centre in Jammu in association with the India Red Cross Society so the children of that area will have a number to call for assistance when they need it. The foundation is also negotiating taking on the role as coordinating organisation for the long-term relief effort.

To find out more about the Childline India Foundation visit [www.childlineindia.org.in](http://www.childlineindia.org.in).

To donate funds, call the What's Up office on (09) 630 4144 with credit card details, call the What's Up donation line 0900 YOUR CALL (0900 96872) to have an automatic \$20 donation charged to your telephone account, or post a cheque to What's Up at PO Box 56-642, Dominion Rd, Auckland.