



507,171

calls answered to date

March 2007

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Tena koe

This year, the rights and status of children have dominated the headlines as New Zealand grapples with a distressing summer of child and family killings, with the news of children going to school hungry, 53 percent of Maori boys leaving school without qualifications, of child bullies, and whether parents should be allowed to continue legally claiming they exerted 'reasonable force' when charged with assaulting their children.

The myth of 'the best country in the world for raising children' has been shattered. We all have reason to be concerned about the reality with the dismal safety record of kiwi kids recorded in the latest Unicef report. While community and Government agencies work to improve the prospects for children, it seems only now that the rest of the country is waking up to the reality that they too have a responsibility when it comes to the welfare of our children. And a large part of that responsibility is treating others as we would want to be treated ourselves.

At What's Up we are very aware of the issues many young New Zealanders face. Last year our counsellors answered on average 429 calls a day from children and young people seeking someone to talk to for support and advice on family and peer relationships, bullying, family violence, depression, eating disorders, sexual orientation, and other issues. Almost twice as many calls did not get through because the line was busy, but that is another issue.

What heartens us is the increased willingness of children and young people to seek help rather than suffer in silence. And they get it. Our paid professional counsellors are trained to help children identify the problems, and develop the skills, strengths and resilience so they can better handle the challenges they face now and in the future. We also talk with callers about where to seek hands-on help and in cases of crisis, work with emergency agencies to ensure the caller's safety.

And the benefits of free confidential counselling at the end of a phone line are very tangible. We hear it in the feedback we receive, from those callers who call again, and assume it from the increasing numbers of calls 0800WHATSUP receives each year.

We also know that none of this would be possible without the support and commitment of our staff, of the Kids Help Trust Foundation, of our corporate sponsors Griffins, White Pages and the Child Health Services Trust, the hands-on assistance of Barnardos New Zealand, as well as the donations of many New Zealanders. We thank all those who support What's Up in our endeavour to improve the lives of kiwi kids and welcome any who wish to join them.

## Rap for What's Up

Christchurch Kids 'Rap for What's Up' at Aranui High School in Christchurch turned up some star talent at the end of 2006 in the form of Year 7 and 8 students Kevin Haimona, Horan Vaifale and Joseph Semuelu.

As part of a DARE programme run in the school by Police Education Officer Belinda Barrett-Walker, Kevin, Horan and Joseph composed, performed and recorded a rap song about What's Up.



The Aranui rappers Horan Vaifale (left) and Joseph Semuelu (right) meet Grant Taylor.

The team at What's Up was so impressed by the boys' efforts that the song has been put on rotate as the hold music for the What's Up call centre along with the original What's Up song. Both pieces of music can be downloaded from the What's Up website www.whatsup.co.nz.

Kids Help Foundation Executive Director Grant Taylor visited the boys at their schools in Christchurch recently to thank them for their fine work.

"It really means a lot to the Counsellors to get this feedback that children and young people really care and appreciate the work we are doing at What's Up," he said.

## Things kids are bullied about

- ethnicity
- resistance to pressure to behave in a certain way
- physical differences
- high achievement
- being new
- sexual orientation
- socio-economic background
- religious beliefs

"M phoned us earlier last year about being bullied. He rang today to say thanks for our help. Things have improved heaps since and he is looking forward to university next year. He said the most helpful thing What's Up did was to encourage him to be himself – it really worked for him and he is very grateful."

### What's Up Counsellor

"K called back to let me know that the bullying at school had stopped. She spoke to the teacher and principal who then spoke to the bullies and they apologised. K says things are going well now."

### What's Up Counsellor

An information sheet on bullying can be downloaded from [www.whatsup.co.nz](http://www.whatsup.co.nz).

**Tip:** Don't promise to keep your child's tale of bullying a secret, but reassure them: ask him or her how they would like you to handle or help with the problem.

## NZ Violence felt at What's Up

One in four of the 14,167 calls answered by What's Up counsellors in 2006 concerned violence.

These calls underscore the seriousness of violence as an issue for New Zealand children and young people.

Bullying was by far the most common type of violence reported, making up 81% of the calls. This was a dominant concern for pre-teen callers, with the most common age of callers about bullying being 11 years. Of those who called about bullying, 37% talked about frequent or continual attacks.

The children who call What's Up about bullying identify various reasons for their mistreatment. Children who have low self-esteem or little personal power may be especially targeted. The nature and extent of bullying can vary from direct to indirect harassment, from minor irritants to assaults, and include illegal acts (sexual harassment, racial abuse, deprivation of human rights). It can include physical, verbal and gesture bullying, extortion and exclusion. The most common form of bullying is verbal harassment.

Assault and physical abuse made up another 7% of calls about violence.

What's Up counsellors provide support to callers, who are often very distressed by what they have seen or suffered. The callers often feel helpless, hopeless and alone. Many report that others have done little or nothing to help them deal with the problem; witnesses to bullying stand and watch, teachers take no action, and parents adopt a 'harden up' attitude.

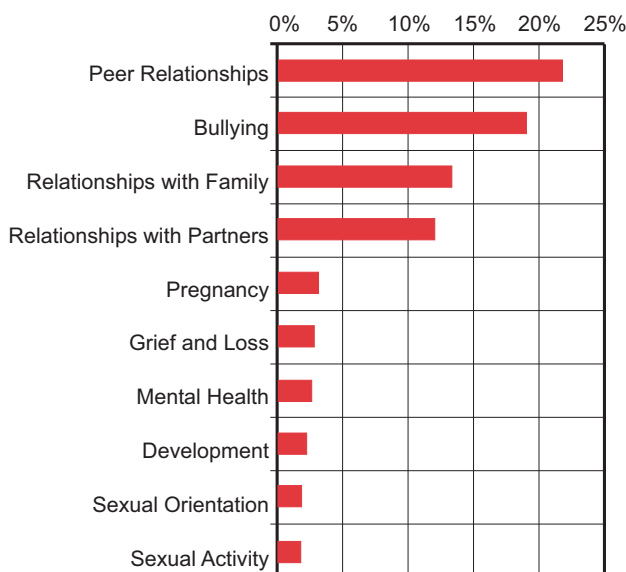
The counsellors help the children who call, talk about what has happened. They help the children make sense of their reactions to these events and together work out ways for the children to deal with them. The counsellors provide the callers with information about legal and human rights and connect them with agencies, which can help address an ongoing problem. In cases where the caller or others are at risk of imminent harm, What's Up will make an urgent referral to an appropriate agency to ensure the safety of the caller.

Calls are confidential and can remain anonymous, which provides a safe environment for young people to openly discuss their concerns.

Many community and government initiatives are afoot to stem the tide of violence in New Zealand. Until our country is a safe place for all children, 0800 WHATSUP will continue to offer information, support and guidance to children and young people exposed to its damaging effects.

## Some key call statistics for 2006

- On average, 1721 calls were made to 0800 WHATSUP each day, of which 27% were answered.
- Males made 49% of calls and females 51%
- The average age of callers was 14 years. Thirty-eight percent of callers were 12 years or younger.
- Of those whose calls were answered, 81% said they had contacted What's Up before.
- Almost half the counselling calls involved concerns about relationships with family or peers.
- Of those calling about family relationship problems, 49% reported frequent family conflict or family breakdown such as separation or divorce.
- Bullying is the second most frequent reason children and young people call What's Up, although its significance diminishes with age.



## Childhood maltreatment linked to adult inflammation

Maltreated children suffer the harmful physical and psychological health effects into adult life, long after the maltreatment ends, according to research published by the Dunedin Multidisciplinary Health and Development Research Unit (University of Otago) in January 2006.

The study, based on the unit's on-going study of 1000 children born in 1972/73 in Dunedin, compared adult inflammation levels to childhood maltreatment experienced by study members while they were growing up.

Inflammation, or swelling, is the body's natural response to stress. It helps prevent the spread of infection and promote tissue repair after an injury. But inflammation is also a response to psychological stress, such as feeling threatened or frightened. If the inflammation does not switch off quickly enough (particularly if there is no actual physical harm) it ends up being a health risk. Increased inflammation in adults is predictor for adult diseases, such as heart disease and respiratory illnesses.

The researchers found that children suffering psychological maltreatment were twice as likely to show high adult inflammation levels as children who were not maltreated.

For more details about the research (published in the leading American journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*), visit <http://dunedinstudy.otago.ac.nz>

## International report recommends helplines

"Telephone helplines through which children can report violence, speak to a trained counsellor in confidence and ask for support and advice should be established and the creation of other ways of reporting violence through new technologies should be considered," is one of the recommendations in the *World Report on Violence against Children*, released late last year.

Child Helpline International (of which What's Up is a member) took part in the United Nations study upon which much of the report is based. To read the report, visit [www.violencestudy.org](http://www.violencestudy.org).



What's Up Executive Director Grant Taylor meets National Child Abuse Hotline Director Cheryl Mayer in Phoenix.

## Touching base with childlines overseas

**While on his six-month overseas sabbatical last year, What's Up Executive Director, Grant Taylor, took the opportunity to visit child help lines in the United States, Germany and Italy.**

"Although we know a lot about other lines through our membership of Child Help International, nothing beats visiting in person," said Grant on his return. "Childlines in other countries are a great source of inspiration, ideas and benchmarks of best-practice, so the opportunity to visit some of these was very valuable."

In America, Grant visited the National Child Abuse Hotline in Phoenix, Arizona, run by Childhelp, a large not-for-profit organisation dedicated to the treatment, research and prevention of child abuse and neglect as well as Nineline, run by Covenant House, a children's charity dedicated to caring for and providing a range of programmes for homeless young people in New York.

While in Germany he caught up with the national help line Nummer Gegen Kummer ('number against grief'), which receives more than 8 million calls each year (of which 900,000 calls are answered) despite being open only between 3pm and 7pm weekdays. And in Milan, Grant visited the main centre for the national child help line Telefono Azzurro ('blue telephone').

The difference in cultures was evident through the delivery of each service. "Nineline offers counselling in both English and Spanish to cater for the large number of homeless Spanish speaking children and young people in the United States," said Grant, "while Telefono Azzurro located its second call centre in Palermo, Sicily, because of the regional differences between northern and southern Italy." Grant was also impressed by the effectiveness of the Italian line's integrated telephone/computer counselling service and dedicated fundraising team.

"But the issues the lines dealt with were very similar, with family and peer relationships problems dominating calls. What's Up also compared very well, particularly its high standard of training and supervision, and much lower administrative overheads for the quality of service delivered."

"What really shone through though was the commitment of the staff on all the child lines to the well being of children, and their concern that the vulnerable, neglected and/or deprived are cared for and protected.

What's Up is one of 89 childlines registered with Child Helpline International. For more details visit [www.childhelplineinternational.org](http://www.childhelplineinternational.org)

## Art for What's Up fetches \$50,000

The auction of 115 great artworks, including those featured on the covers of the 18 regional White Pages, raised more than \$50,000 for What's Up, at the annual White Pages Arts Charity Auction in November 2006.

Entries are now welcome for the 2007 White Pages Art Awards. Visit [www.whitepagesarts.co.nz](http://www.whitepagesarts.co.nz) for details.



Above: Rowing stars Georgina and Caroline Evers-Swindell show off the Auckland winner, "Between The Sea And The Sky" by Jenny Jeffries.

"At first, working at What's Up was new and exciting. I hung onto every word of the clients in those first few days. Then, a sense of disillusionment and frustration set in for a few weeks, especially in regard to the testing calls. Gradually, however, I began to understand how to build rapport, especially with testing callers, and find it a privilege to be able to share in the lives of these kids. I am also grateful to the supervisors and older counsellors who are able to guide me through it all. Each day, I discover more and more the psyche of youth out in the 'wild'. For me, work here is an exploration of the human mind, a direct experience of theoretical ideas on psychology. It is a direct connection with people potentially on deep and profound levels, and that is in itself, quite satisfying." **Ellen, Trainee Counsellor.**



## 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.
- \* Current funding enables What's Up Counsellors to answer about 429 calls per day.
- \* What's Up 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 peers, family and/or partners.



## In celebration of our supporters

The counsellors at What's Up would not be able to answer 112,000 calls a year if it wasn't for the many New Zealanders who support our work with children and young people.

The diversity of our callers is reflected in the diversity of our supporters, and the various ways they provide assistance. Some provide us with funding, which is always welcome and needed, while others provide goods or services which are valuable well beyond their cost. Others provide expertise and effort, enhancing our service with a wealth of knowledge and experience.

To all of them we give many, many thanks. Your assistance allows us to continue our fantastic work improving the lives of New Zealand's children and young people.

### Grants and Donations

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