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Insafe Helplines: Operations, Effectiveness and Emerging Issues For Internet Safety Helplines

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INSAFE HELPLINES

Operations, effectiveness and emerging issues for internet safety helplines

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Executive summary

1. **This report presents findings of research undertaken by EU Kids Online on behalf of European Schoolnet (EUN) on the operations, effectiveness and impact of Insafe helplines.** Helplines form an integral part of the Safer Internet Centre (SIC) in each country within the Insafe network of 31 national awareness centres. Helplines provide a confidential counselling and support service and offer information, support, guidance and referral for young people as well as adults with responsibility for children.

2. **The purpose of the study was to undertake research that would assist Insafe helplines to develop their effectiveness and demonstrate their impact.** This study looked at both the wider context in which helplines operate, the new and emerging risks that internet use may pose for children and young people, the support required and the resources needed to respond effectively, as well as the implications for operational effectiveness. Respondents in the research, which included helpline professionals and volunteers, contributed to a discussion of successes as well as gaps in order to assist in the identification of strategies to support better awareness and monitoring of effectiveness.

3. **Case studies of helplines chosen for geographical spread and diversity of service type are included in the study**. The report provides a brief profile of helplines in **Belgium, Ireland, Malta and Romania** with a discussion of their organisational structure and the services and activities provided. There are substantial differences across the Insafe network in the nature and size of helplines. Most in fact are general service helplines with a smaller number of helplines of more recent origin specialising in internet safety issues.

4. **Evaluating success and effectiveness is recognised as an important yet challenging task for helplines.** Given the sensitive settings in which helplines operate, the development of indicators must combine a range of quantitative and qualitative measures. Possible indicators considered include capturing log data of calls to helplines, the number of calls to the service, the number of successful or resolved calls, levels of public awareness of the helpline, and the quality of input from other stakeholders. Using feedback from callers to gauge the effectiveness of the service is presented as especially important. A third of the helplines who participated in the study do not currently record such feedback and recommendations are made about how to take this forward. In addition, the benefits of working within the Insafe network and the capacity to share best practice on improving the evaluation process and enhancing the relationship between stakeholders and helplines is noted.

5. **Helplines are in an ideal position to identify new and emerging risks in relation to internet safety**. Through their close interactions with young people, they hear at first hand problems that young people experience online. Collecting this information and using it to develop effective safety responses is now a central part of what helplines do. The report summarises the most prominent current and emerging risks reported by helplines. It also documents the challenges that staff and volunteers encounter in implementing the helpline service. Recommendations for service enhancements are made focussing on better data collection, knowledge exchange, publicity and embedding of monitoring and evaluation activities.

1. Introduction

1.1 Context

Insafe is a network of 31 internet safety national awareness centres (27 of the EU member states, plus Iceland, Norway, Russia and Serbia). Supported by the European Commission's Better internet for Kids Programme, each national centre carries out educational and awareness-raising campaigns, runs a helpline to support internet users and works closely with youth to ensure an evidence-based, multi-stakeholder approach to creating a better Internet.

Helplines form an integral part of the Safer Internet Centre (SIC) in each country within the network, playing a key role in responding to calls from young people linked to their experiences online. In the nine month period between January and September 2013, over 60,000 contacts were made with helplines using chat, email and phone. Issues dealt with included cyberbullying, love, relationships and sexuality, pornography, as well as privacy and harmful content, or financial concerns. Although the majority of calls come from children and young people, parents and teachers also contact helplines for information and support.

In 2015, European Schoolnet approached EU Kids Online, the multinational research network that seeks to enhance knowledge of European children's online opportunities, risks and safety, to conduct research to assist Insafe helplines in terms of their operational effectiveness and impact. With support from the Kaspersky Helpline Fund, a team of researchers from the EU Kids Online network undertook a six-month study to explore the challenges that helplines face in the delivery of their services. How can helplines know they are having a positive impact? How can they build more awareness of what they do? What new challenges are helplines coming across in terms of young people's experiences when they go online? These were questions the research team posed to the Insafe network and to the helplines in four countries selected as case studies in Belgium, Ireland, Malta and Romania.

It is important that helplines have evidence that the service they provide is proving effective and that the information they gather about young people's internet concerns from the frontline, as it were, is used to inform better policies and support. In undertaking this research, EU Kids Online drew on its experience of conducting multinational research and developed a comparative framework using case studies in four countries, as well as a survey of the full Insafe network to assist in the identification of strategies that helplines can implement to demonstrate good performance and impact.

1.2 This report

This report presents the main findings of the study *Insafe helplines: operations, effectiveness and emerging issues for internet safety helplines*. The report is organised into six main chapters as follows:

> **Chapter 1 - *Introduction*** sets out the main structure and organisation of the project, introducing the key research questions and the research methods used.

> **Chapter 2 - *Background*** incorporates a brief review of the literature on the subject of helplines and their role in providing a range of social support services, not just for internet safety. The chapter sets the context for the findings of the study and includes further background on the Insafe network with a summary of helpline activities and statistics.

Chapter 3 - *Country case studies* introduces the more detailed analysis of helplines in the four sample countries of Belgium, Ireland, Malta and Romania. Case studies were chosen to include a geographical spread and ranges of services. A profile of the service is given with information on each helpline's mission, range of services and activities. Key findings and recommendations are included for each case study.

Chapter 4 - *The role of helplines* presents a summary of the findings of a survey of all helplines in the Insafe network. Survey findings include the range of services provided by helplines, awareness-raising activities, stakeholder relationships and challenges faced.

Chapter 5 - *Evaluating success* presents findings from qualitative research undertaken with helplines by researchers in Belgium, Ireland, Malta and Romania. Respondents discuss some of the main strategies employed and case studies of examples that have proven effective. Findings also refer to the relationship between helplines and other stakeholders involved in supporting young people's online safety.

Chapter 6 - *Emerging risks and challenges* summarises some of the emerging issues identified by helpline staff in the course of their work in supporting young people and the challenges they pose for provision of helpline services. The chapter concludes with recommendations for consideration by Insafe members.

1.3 Research questions

The aim of the study was to undertake research that would assist Insafe helplines to develop their effectiveness and demonstrate their impact. The research examined how helplines articulate their mission and design services to support its attainment. This study looked at both the wider context in which helplines operate, the new and emerging risks that internet use may pose for children and young people, the supports required and the resources needed to respond effectively, as well as the implications for operational effectiveness. Respondents in the research, which included helpline professionals and volunteers, contributed to a discussion of successes as well as gaps in order to assist in the identification of strategies to support better awareness and monitoring of effectiveness.

The main research questions for the project may be summarised as follows:

RQ1: What are the main services that helplines provide?

RQ2: How do helplines measure the impact and effectiveness of their work?

RQ3: What are the key emerging issues and challenges that helplines are dealing with?

RQ4: What strategies should helplines employ to deal effectively with these issues and challenges?

1.4 The research process

Drawing on the experience of EU Kids Online in conducting multinational research, a comparative case study approach was adopted for detailed analysis, supplemented by a survey of the full Insafe network. Four countries, drawn from different parts of Europe and representing different organisational service types within Insafe, were selected.

The project was coordinated by EU Kids Online with the Irish team providing the lead. Teams in Belgium, Malta and Romania participated in data collection and research following an agreed template set out by the coordinator. The approach adopted was qualitative in nature and involved desk research on helplines, including a review of the academic literature related to the field, focus groups and interviews with participation from helpline professionals and volunteers.

In order to ensure effective consultation with all helplines, an online survey was circulated to the full Insafe network and included items related to the main research questions. Data from the survey was used to supplement findings from the case studies and the qualitative data from interviews and focus groups.

1.5 Methodology

The research comprised a detailed comparative study of four helplines combined with a survey of the Insafe network of helplines to examine the most important emerging challenges both in terms of internet safety risks and operational effectiveness. The main elements of the research consisted of:

- A literature review of international practice in the area of internet safety helplines.

- Desk research including analysis of documentation about the work of the helplines, annual reports and EC guidelines.

- Qualitative methods including interview and focus group discussion with key helpline personnel and national stakeholders (see Appendices 1, 2 and 3). A total of 18 interviews and focus groups were transcribed, translated and analysed using Nvivo 10. Data collection lasted for two months, from October 2015 to the end of November 2015.

- An online questionnaire was distributed to the Insafe network (see Appendix 4) and remained open for four weeks, until mid-December 2015.

- A half-day consultation workshop with the full Insafe network staff took place in Warsaw on 8 December 2015.

Insafe provided logistical and technical support for the study including compiling relevant documentation and statistics about the work of helplines, distribution of the online survey to Insafe members and coordinating a workshop with the Insafe network at which preliminary findings were presented and discussed. Researchers from EU Kids Online in each of the four countries were responsible for conducting, transcribing and translating interviews and focus groups. Each team was also invited to contribute findings and observations that they have made in their countries to the final report.

Research commenced in September 2015 and lasted for approximately five months. Preliminary findings in the form of a short report were published to coincide with Safer Internet Day (SID) on 9 February 2016.[1] The final report was submitted to European Schoolnet in March 2016.

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1   Dinh, T., Farrugia, L., O'Neill, B., Vandoninck, S., & Velicu, A. (2016). Internet safety helplines: exploratory study first findings [Monograph]. Available at: http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/65358/

1.6 Caveats

This study is exploratory in nature and has a number of inherent limitations. Firstly, due to the limitations of resources, case studies were restricted to just four of the 31 countries within the Insafe network. Secondly, the focus of this research was limited to service providers (helpline staff and volunteers). Future research into the impact of helpline services should ideally include both service providers and service users, especially young people. Thirdly, the focus group and interview method also has limitations and limits the ability to generalise findings. With just four detailed case studies, the findings presented here should therefore be viewed as preliminary and only applicable to the current study.

2. Background

Helplines have been a vital component of the effort to make the internet a safer and better place since the very first initiatives commenced under the European Union's Safer Internet Programme. Internet helplines were first conceived as part of a wider strategy of developing an integrated network comprising hotlines to report and identify illegal content and helplines that would support internet users with problems they may encounter online (Waltermann & Machill, 2000). The idea of a helpline builds on a concept well established in other fields of social care and describes a service that provides listening and emotional support as well as information to assist users with issues they may encounter in their lives. The academic literature on the subject deals primarily with the different forms of support provision and approaches to gauging their effectiveness.

In the first part of this chapter (2.1 and 2.2), relevant themes from the literature are reviewed and discussed as a backdrop to specific topics addressed in this research. Secondly, the chapter (2.3 - 2.5) gives further background to the Insafe network and an overview of the network of Insafe helplines.

2.1 Helpline support services

Helplines in the area of social care support have their origins in intervention efforts by benevolent organisations, especially in the field of suicide prevention, to provide counselling support to people in distress. Organisations such as the Salvation Army operating in the early twentieth century were, for example, among the first to provide an organised support service (Mishara & Daigle, 2001) and form part of a tradition of philanthropy to provide mutual aid to individuals in crisis.

In the aftermath of World War II, the first telephone helpline was opened in London in 1953 by the Reverend Chad Varah. This quickly became known as the now famous Samaritan helpline, a '999 for the suicidal'.[2] The inspiration for the helpline came from Reverend Varah's personal experience of the death of a 14-year-old girl who had committed suicide. He started his work by placing an advertisement in a newspaper offering help to suicidal persons from his church in central London. The national press, in addition to advertising the telephone number, encouraged people to volunteer at his church, to provide listening and counselling support to those contemplating suicide. Within a decade, the service had grown to 40 branches, eventually increasing to the current 201 branches across the UK and Ireland. The Samaritans - the name used by the newspaper while promoting Reverend Varah's counselling service - became its official name. The organisation now offers support through over 21,200 trained volunteers (2015) and is entirely dependent on voluntary support. One of their key successes is their motto: 'We don't just wait for people to get in touch with us - we make sure as many people as possible know who we are and how we can help them' (Samaritans Annual Report 2013/14).

This model for counselling support has extended rapidly to a variety of areas of social support including health care, clinical practice and mental health counselling (Sanders & Rosenfield, 1998). Helplines primarily offer support via telephone and while new technologies have created different channels for communication and contact, the advantages of the telephone as a medium for counselling support are frequently cited in the literature (Reese, Conoley, & Brossart, 2006; Rosenfield & Smillie, 1998). The following characteristics are often noted:

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2   'The history of Samaritans | Samaritans.' 2012. 30 Dec. 2015. At: http://www.samaritans.org/about-us/history-samaritans

1. Anonymity reduces the psychological barrier that prevents many from seeking help;

2. Callers have more control over the helping situation since they can terminate the interaction whenever they choose;

3. Accepting calls from anyone on any topic may ease the decision to seek help;

4. Hotlines are staffed by volunteers or professionals, who have proven their effectiveness in helping people in crisis due to their spontaneity, warmth, and authenticity;

5. Assistance, in many cases, is available at the callers' convenience, 24 hours a day; and

6. Geographical barriers are easily bridged since callers may receive help or support wherever their location.

Much research has been conducted on the comparison between face-to-face communication and computer-mediated communication in the operation of helpline support services (Walther, 1996). Telephone communication holds a middle position on the channel continuum between face-to-face and computer-mediated communication. In other words, computer-mediated communication may be said to both faceless and voiceless, telephone communication is faceless but not voiceless, whereas face-to-face contact is neither faceless nor voiceless. These characteristics are particularly important in the context of a child helpline service as children often tell an emotional story and, additionally, they expect an emphatic response from the volunteer or counsellor.

A trend towards web-based counselling is much in evidence for services that traditionally relied on telephone support (Hsiung, 2002; Kraus, Zack, & Stricker, 2004; Rochlen, Zack, & Speyer, 2004; VandenBos & Williams, 2000). There has been much debate, however, about whether computer-mediated communication, including chat, can be fruitfully applied in the context of counselling and providing support. There is some empirical evidence to support the view that the virtual environment can enhance self disclosure and induces disinhibition of emotional expression, both positive and negative, thereby creating new opportunities for offering support online through chat fora and other interactive channels (Tidwell & Walther, 2002; Wright, 2002; Castelnuovo, Gaggioli, Mantovani, & Riva, 2003).

The creation of safe environments that are confidential, accessible and reduce the barriers for those seeking access to help is especially important for children. Affording emotional safety has been found to be a key factor in creating a supportive environment for callers. Studies show that helplines aimed at children are more successful in conducting confidential conversations with children and young people if they empower them (Butler, Potter, Danby, Emmison, & Hepburn, 2010).

Assessment of the effectiveness of online counselling and support is still at an early stage, despite the growing interest in this relatively new and rapidly expanding domain (see, for example, Barak, 2007; Castelnuovo, Gaggioloi, Mantovani, & Riva, 2003; Hsiung, 2002; Kraus et al., 2004; Rochlen et al., 2004). This is an important issue given that online support is a new method of offering assistance, inherently different to that provided through face-to-face contact or telephone helplines. Research points to some of the unique features of computer-mediated communication in facilitating empathic communication such as the ready access to a supportive audience and ability to gain emotional support in ways that are easier than other situations including face to face or through voice communication (Caplan & Turner, 2007).

2.2 Child helplines

Telephone helplines to support children are of more recent origin. The Dutch Kindertelefoon, set up in 1979, was Europe's first dedicated helpline for children. In the United Kingdom, ChildLine has become one of the most well-known examples of a telephone counselling service. ChildLine was set up following the exposure by the popular television programme *That's Life!* of widespread abuse and cruelty to children across the UK. The programme was so inundated with calls that children's charities and child care professional services, along with the BBC, came together to establish a permanent telephone helpline service (Harrison, 2000). Now part of the service provided by the NSPCC in the UK, ChildLine provides a private and confidential service for children and young people up to the age of 19 on a range of platforms.[3] In 2014-15, ChildLine conducted a total of 286,812 counselling sessions and received over 3.2 million visits to its website for a range of issues such as family relationships, low self-esteem/unhappiness and abuse.[4]

Worldwide, child helpline services are estimated to take nine million calls on an annual basis. Many child helpline organisations have also introduced web-based support (Child Helpline International, 2007). Recently, Kindertelefoon has extended its service to include a confidential one-to-one chat service alongside their telephone-based service. Each year, Kindertelefoon volunteers hold more than 200,000 conversations in which children ask for emotional support, information, or advice.

The Australian children's counselling agency, *Kids Help Line*,[5] is also a pioneer of telephone and web-based counselling for children and has undertaken considerable evaluation of those services. A large-scale evaluation of its online counselling service was carried out, involving consultation with young people on the benefits and limitations of the existing system complemented by analysis of transcripts of sessions. Observation of traffic and access allowed comparison with the telephone service. Among the innovations resulting from the evaluations was a pre-counselling questionnaire with basic demographic and history information which was more efficient than spending the time with the counsellor providing that background.[6]

2.3 Insafe helplines

In 2004, the Insafe network was formed by just 11 European countries with the aim of empowering children and young people to use the internet and mobile technologies positively, safely and effectively. The network has grown to encompass national awareness centres, helplines and youth panels in 27 EU member states plus Iceland, Norway, Russia and Serbia, and now consists of a total of 31 participating countries. Helplines within the Insafe network provide a service whereby parents, children and educators can obtain advice and assistance on online safety issues that may concern them. Insafe members work closely together to share best practice, information and resources. The network interacts with industry, schools and families with the aim of empowering people to bridge the digital divide between home and school, and between generations. Having established strong and effective links with key industry partners, the Insafe network facilitates direct

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3   'About ChildLine | ChildLine.' 2009. 30 Dec. 2015 https://www.childline.org.uk/pages/about.aspx

4   ''Always there when I need you': ChildLine review ... - NSPCC.' 2015. 30 Dec. 2015 https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/annual-reports/childline-annual-review-always-there-2014-2015.pdf

5   www.kidshelpline.com.au

6   Merriman, B, Robins, I., Canavan, J., and Dolan, P., The development of monitoring tools for ISPCC services, Child and Family Research Centre, NUIG, 2008

access for members to some of the main providers of social media and online services used by children, enabling them to offer an even higher level of support and advice (Insafe Annual Report 2011).

Insafe helplines were formed to provide information, advice and assistance to children, youth and parents on how to deal with harmful content, harmful contact (such as grooming) and harmful conduct (such as cyberbullying or sexting). Helplines are accessible via a variety of means - telephone, email, web forms, Skype and online chat services, and provide specialist resources in safer and better use of the internet by children and teenagers. Issues dealt with by helplines include, for instance, assistance with cases such as sexting or cyberbullying. The issues covered by online safety are constantly expanding but child protection remains a central focus, mirrored by the fact that over one third of all Safer Internet Centres come from a child protection background (Insafe Annual Report 2011/2). A good mix from academia, government and industry ensures that all aspects of online safety are well represented, helping to create a stronger and more effective network.

Close interaction between awareness centres - responsible for educational support to build awareness of internet safety - and helplines is a distinctive feature of the Insafe network. Helplines gather valuable information about new and emerging trends regarding online risks. Helplines regularly refer callers to awareness centres for further advice and guidance and, similarly, awareness centres will highlight the helpline as a source of information and support through their awareness-raising campaigns.

In addition to cross-promotion, helplines' own online presence is ever more important. In Denmark, for example, the helpline has developed the 'Media Den', an online space where young people can meet over common interests.[7] Helpline staff encourage discussions on safe use of the web and mobiles, highlighting digital bullying, among other things, in the debate. Likewise, recognising that the future will be much more mobile, the Bulgarian Helpline has developed an Android application for smartphones.[8] This provides easy access to website content and the helpline's Facebook page as well as one-touch access to the helpline's emergency number.

Helplines also undertake their own awareness-raising activities. In France, the helpline, for example, launched an interactive video on YouTube which encourages positive use of the internet, mobile phones and video games by young people.[9] Users choose a response to a given situation and are given appropriate advice as a result. The video has had over 24,000 views at the time of writing.

While offering a counselling and support service is the primary function of helplines, their function to provide guidance and advice is also very important. In the UK, for example, the helpline's main task is to respond to the increasing calls from teachers for help and support with online issues.[10] The UK Helpline is somewhat different to other safer internet helplines in that its main aim is to support professionals (rather than young people) with issues around protecting their reputation online. The helpline offers advice on issues that professionals encounter when working with young people, such as misuse of social networking sites, cyberbullying, sexting, online gaming and child protection online.

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7   http://sikkertinternet.dk/

8   http://helpline.bg/

9   http://www.internetsanscrainte.fr/

10   http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/about/helpline

2.4 Organisation and structure

Child helplines comprise a variety of different types, yet all have in common the provision of a confidential service that offers information, support, guidance and referral. In the case of Insafe helplines, this involves offering advice about staying safe online and just-in-time assistance for young people (and in some cases adults) who encounter risks when using the internet.

Insafe together with INHOPE constitute a network of Safer Internet Centres (SICs) across Europe - typically comprising an awareness centre, helpline, hotline and youth panel in each country. All countries within the Insafe network have a helpline as part of their Safer Internet Centre, although these vary widely in terms of their organisational structure and their target audiences. For example, the UK helpline addresses the needs of professionals working with children and young people while the Finnish helpline provides a separate service specifically for parents alongside the helpline for children and young people. In some countries (such as the Netherlands, Malta and Luxembourg) the helpline and hotline are run by the same organisation (Insafe, 2013).

Helplines may be divided into four main groups as follows:

1. General helplines: These helplines cover a wide range of issues including those related to safer internet issues. They are usually well-established organisations which are well known to children and young people.

2. Helplines focussed on internet safety issues, integrated within the Safer Internet Centre: These helplines deal specifically with safer internet issues but are integrated within the Safer Internet Centre as a whole. This means that helpline staff will often take on awareness-raising tasks as well (e.g. the Bulgarian helpline delivers awareness-raising sessions in schools on behalf of the awareness centre while also promoting the work of the helpline).

3. Helplines dedicated to internet safety: These helplines deal only with safer internet issues and, while part of the Safer Internet Centre, they are managed by a separate organisation.

4. Helplines which have a specific target audience or focus: These helplines specialise in providing a service for a very specific audience (e.g. the UK provides support for professionals who work with children and young people). Some offer support for very specific issues (e.g. the helpline in the Netherlands only deals with online sexual abuse).

A number of helplines have been in existence for many years prior to the development of Safer Internet Centres (such as Sweden's BRIS or Germany's Nummer gegen Kummer). These typically have a general focus and incorporate internet safety within a general counselling service. Those created for the Safer Internet Programme tend to deal specifically with online safety issues. This diversity of backgrounds consequently brings different needs and strategies according to the nature of the service involved.

2.5 Helpline statistics

The most recent Insafe data on helplines covers the period from October 2015 until December 2015. There was little significant change in the issues being dealt with by helplines although some countries reported a rise in the number of calls relating to cyberbullying and privacy issues.

For the period October-December 2015[11]:

- A total of 9,274 contacts with helplines relating to online issues were received.

- 12-18 year olds continue to be the group which contact the helplines most often, with this age group accounting for almost half of all calls.

- Only 40 per cent of calls came from males during this period. This shows a marked reduction on the 57 per cent which were received from males during the previous reporting period, reinforcing the more usual trend of more females contacting the helplines. 21 out of the 28 helplines that submitted data had more calls from females than males.

- Telephone is still the main contact platform, with 66 per cent of contacts made via phone. However, this shows a noteworthy reduction in the use of this platform; in the previous report, three quarters of the calls were made by phone.

- Cyberbullying remains the most common reason for contacting a helpline with 17 per cent of all contacts being categorised as cyberbullying. Interestingly, the number of calls relating to cyberbullying increased by 3 per cent compared to the previous reporting period (14 per cent vs. 17 per cent).

- The second most frequent issue in calls to helplines related to privacy. 16 per cent of calls concerned abuse of privacy or how to protect one's privacy. This represented an increase of 2 per cent since the previous quarter.

- Helplines reported an increasing number of calls from parents related to their children's use of technology.

- Sextortion remains an area of concern, with several helplines making specific reference to this.

Further information on the latest helpline data can be found at https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/web/portal/practice/helplines/statistics - this information is updated on a quarterly basis. Comparisons can be made between different countries as well as between different categories of call.

INSAFE HELPLINE CONTACTS[1] BY TOPIC

Period 4 2015	Period 3 2015	Poland

COMMERCIAL RISKS/THREATS - 0%
CYBERBULLYING - 24%
EATING DISORDERS (BULIMIA, ANOREXIA) - 0%
E-CRIME - 6%
EXCESSIVE USE - 19%
GROOMING - 2%
ILLEGAL CONTENT, REFERRAL TO HOTLINE - 2%
LOVE/RELATIONSHIPS/SEXUALITY (ONLINE) - 8%
ONLINE REPUTATION - 1%
POTENTIALLY HARMFUL CONTENT - 7%
ONLINE PRIVACY - 15%
RACIST - 1%

INSAFE HELPLINE CONTACTS BY CHANNEL, GENDER AND TARGET GROUP:

TELEPHONE - 62%
ONLINE FORM - 0%
EMAIL - 31%
CHAT - 7%
SMS - 0%
OTHER - 0%

MALE - 51%
FEMALE - 49%

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11   Insafe, 3rd quarterly report October-December 2015

3. Country case studies

Four countries - Belgium, Ireland, Malta and Romania - were selected as case studies for this research. The selected examples were chosen for geographical spread and diversity of service type. In this chapter, a profile of the helpline in each of the four countries is given, followed by a discussion of their organisational structure and the services and activities provided. Profiles conclude with the main findings and recommendations for each helpline service.

3.1 Belgium

3.1.1 Child Focus

In Belgium, the Safer Internet Centre (SIC) has three components: a hotline, a helpline and an awareness centre. These three elements are run by an organisation called Child Focus, which is also known as the Centre for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children.[12]

- Hotline: In 2002, Child Focus initiated a civil hotline in Belgium to combat child abuse images on the internet. This hotline is called www.stopchildporno.be and it works closely with law enforcement agencies. Child Focus has also developed an online filter which automatically scans content while a user is surfing the internet. The filter traces images of sexual exploitation and deletes them, so the user doesn't have to see risky content. A second hotline www.nupraatikerover.be can be used by children to chat with consultants about cases of sexual exploitation.

- Helpline: The Child Focus helpline was launched in June 2011, the aim of which was to offer children, young people, parents and the general public advice on how to manage harmful contacts and risky content online. The helpline works in close conjunction with the Child Focus awareness centre. Child Focus' services can be accessed via the website, by phone, SMS and email. Another helpline in use is www.116000.be, which is a chat service. It serves the same purpose as the emergency number 116 000.

- Awareness centre: Child Focus provides children, parents, teachers and other professionals with advice and tips on how to manage the internet safely and use it to its full potential. All of their material is accessible on their portal (www.clicksafe.be) and is available in Dutch and French, and occasionally in German (i.e. the three national languages of Belgium). The website is divided into four components, each focussing on a different target group: children, young adults, parents and professionals. The aim of the Clicksafe portal is to inform members of the general public how children and young adults can, and should, use the internet safely and efficiently. It offers educational material concerning internet safety and connects visitors with the helpline.

There is a difference between the helpline and the hotline. The helpline answers the questions and concerns of young people who have come into contact with harmful or illegal information online, whereas the hotline allows members of the general public to report illegal content found on the internet. The hotline passes this

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12   http://www.childfocus.be

information on to the appropriate body, such as the police, who can then take action. In this project, we focus on the activities of the helpline and the awareness centre via the clicksafe portal (www.clicksafe.be).

Since the establishment of the centre in 1998, the two main goals of Child Focus are (1) finding missing children and (2) combatting sexual exploitation of children, both online and offline. The organisation has an emergency number, 116 000, which is a free hotline in Belgium and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This number is not only used in Belgium. It is also operational in 27 EU countries and can be used to report missing children or a case of (online) sexual exploitation concerning children. According to the annual report of Child Focus, 19,228 calls were registered to the emergency number in Belgium, and that was just in 2014. The two groups of people who are most likely to report missing children are parents and family members (35 per cent) and the police (14 per cent). Because of this historical context, the public still associate Child Focus with its task of tracing missing children.

Child Focus is a private foundation partially subsidised by the Belgian government and the funds are renegotiated each year. The remaining two thirds of its funding is subsidised by various organisations and the general public. In 2014 Child Focus received €4.51m in funding. The money comes from five financial sources, i.e. the National Lottery (28 per cent), additional government funds (11 per cent), donations from private organisations (25 per cent), donations from the public (35 per cent) and net financial proceeds (1 per cent) (Child Focus Annual Report, 2014).

In 2002, Child Focus opened a department on internet safety for children. With the signing by European governments of a protocol on cooperation concerning child pornography, Child Focus initiated a civil hotline to combat child abuse images on the internet. 2007 marked the first Safer Internet Day (SID) in Belgium and in 2009, Child Focus launched its free telephone hotline 116 000.

In 2011, Child Focus launched www.clicksafe.be, a new online platform to inform children and young adults about safer internet use. Child Focus used the occasion to start a helpline, closely connected to the clicksafe platform. Also in 2011, Child Alert was launched. This system is used to spread Amber Alerts efficiently and quickly. It is used when a child is deemed to be in a life-threatening situation. All possible communication channels are opened for 24 hours: email, social media, a smartphone app, national radio and TV, business networks, etc.

In 2014, the online helpline www.116000.be was opened in response to the increasing use of social media and online chat applications. According to the annual report of Child Focus, 106 chat conversations were recorded within the seven months after the launch. Notably, youth use this online helpline more than they use the phone number. It seems that girls find their way more easily to the helpline than boys.

In 2015, a protocol on more intense cooperation between Child Focus and the police concerning cases of online sexual exploitation was discussed. Child Focus receives between 1,300 and 1,600 notifications per year on this issue, but until now they have not been allowed to actively combat child pornography sites. Working together with the international network INHOPE, Child Focus hopes to intervene quicker and be able to remove harmful sites from the internet in a more efficient way.

3.1.2 Child Focus helpline activities

Child Focus has specialised consultants who are available to answer questions and give advice concerning internet safety for children. They can be contacted by telephone (116 000) or via chat (www.116000.be). In total, 161 files or cases were registered in 2014, which is in line with the figures from the previous years. Most cases related to grooming (43) and sexting (41). The other cases mainly cover privacy (24), unwanted sexual solicitations (13) and unwanted contact via the internet (8) (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Helpline files/cases (Source: Child Focus Annual Report 2014)
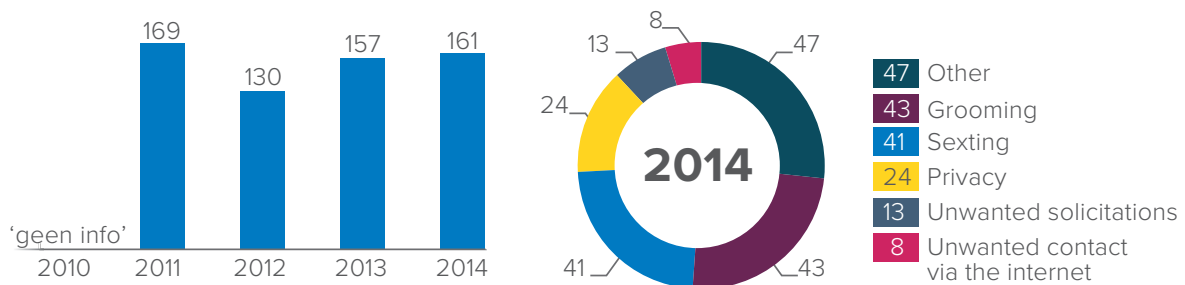
60 per cent of the cases in 2014 were of a sexual nature (grooming: 43 cases, sexting: 41 cases, sexual intimidation: 13 cases). Sexual intimidation occurs when an adult asks a minor for a nude picture. Grooming occurs when an adult approaches a minor online with sexual intentions. The latter has been a criminal act in Belgium since April 2014.

The target group that is most likely to contact the Belgian helpline are mothers: 18 cases concerning sexting, 21 cases concerning grooming and 26 cases concerning other internet safety topics. The child him/herself comes in second place, with fathers coming in a close third. Other parties who contact the helpline are family members, the police or teachers. Thus, the majority of people who contact Child Focus to learn more about internet safety are parents (54 per cent) whilst children who are themselves involved in a case of eSafety only make up 14 per cent of the contact initiators.

The helpline is also involved in a number of projects, in close collaboration with the awareness centre:

- De Juiste Click (The Right Click): The aim of this game is to indicate to children what the risks are of internet use. By playing an educational game, children learn what the impact of social media can be on their lives (http://mediawijs.be/de-sector/de-juiste-click).

- Safer internet in schools: Employees from Belgacom (Belgian Telecom Company) and Microsoft give courses about safer internet use to children in the fifth and sixth grade of primary school (10-12 years old). This project started in 2011 (http://www.proximus.com/en/news/belgacom-and-microsoft-raise-kids_per_centE2_per_cent80_per_cent99-awareness-safe-Internet-use).

- E-cards: This game package offers four games concerning sexuality, relationships and new media. Children collaborate in teams to learn more about the aforementioned themes (http://mediawijs.be/de-sector/e-cards).

- Kids in Cyberland: This is a curriculum for primary school teachers to teach their pupils more about internet safety. The curriculum is divided into three sections: self-presentation and privacy, communicating respectfully and critical use of online images and information. It started in 2009, in association with Sensoa (Flemish expertise centre for sexual health) (http://mediawijs.be/de-sector/kids-cyberland).

- Veilig online (Safe online): In collaboration with the Gezinsbond (family association), Child Focus organises information sessions for parents who want to promote responsible and safe internet use amongst children and young adults. Child Focus organised around 180 information sessions in 2011 (http://www.childfocus.be/nl/preventie/veilig-Internetten/ouders/infosessies-onze-kinderen-veilig-online).

3.1.3 Main findings

Child Focus believes that specialist coaching for helpline staff is important to enhance the helpline's professionalism and reputation among the public. Child Focus was established in the aftermath of the Dutroux crisis in 1998.[13] Due to this historical context, the Belgian public still associates the helpline (Child Focus) with the organisation's parallel activities of searching for missing children. Their activities as an online helpline are less well known among the public, and certainly not among youth.

In Belgium, most calls come from parents. It seems that young people do not like to call on the phone, so the helpline would like to invest more in promoting the chat function. In 2014-2015, the helpline organised several activities to inform young people and raise awareness. They hope to convince more young people to contact the helpline, but this will require a continuous effort in providing resources for online support. However, if there were to be a significant strong increase in online interventions, the service would require more staff.

Currently, the Belgian helpline has no 'formal' assessment for effectiveness, but helpline staff at Child Focus have informal debriefings on a regular basis where they discuss how they handled certain cases and which impressions they had concerning the impact of the intervention. These debriefings allow them to reflect about what could be done better.

Sextortion is a rising phenomenon in Belgium, and the helpline has noticed a serious increase in sextortion cases during the last year (2014-2015). The helpline has done a lot of work to gather detailed knowledge about sextortion and about the most effective ways to deal with it. Child Focus would like to receive more support on this issue, for example tools, guidelines, best practices or a roadmap.

Child Focus strongly believes in the benefits of participation in sharing experiences with other helplines, for example in international conferences, webinars or conference calls. The Belgian helpline was inspired by the usage of an online *help wanted*-form in the Netherlands, and by the Swedish approach of online peer-to-peer help with a moderator. Also, the international database with tools for prevention and awareness raising is much appreciated among helpline staff.

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13   Marc Dutroux was a notorious Belgian serial killer whose case provoked outrage at the lax response of law enforcement agencies.
     See: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/jan/25/worlddispatch.dutroux

3.2 Ireland

3.2.1 Childline

The Childline service was introduced to Ireland in 1988 by the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC), one of Ireland's oldest and most well-known children's charities. Its launch followed the successful introduction of similar services in a number of European countries, including the United Kingdom, where the first ChildLine service started in 1985. Initially available from 10am to 10pm daily, it expanded to a 24-hour service in 1998 and is now the only listening service in Ireland available for children 24 hours a day, 365 days a year (Whyte, J. and Smyth, C., 2004).

The original aim of the service was to cater for the needs of children who were in trouble or danger, or who might be suffering from various forms of abuse or neglect. In the early stages of its operation, the service promoted itself as a 'Samaritans for children'. However, from this initial beginning, the service has evolved into what it now calls an 'active listening service' where fully trained call facilitators provide a 'non-directional, non-judgemental listening service' (Childline, 2010).

The Childline service is an active listening service for children and young people provided by the ISPCC. Its objective is to empower and support children and young people through the medium of information technology and telecommunications. The online service is child-centred and confidential. According to the ISPCC Professional Practice Guidelines (5.1) "the goals and objectives for each child are based exclusively on the needs and wishes of the child" (ISPCC, 2006, p.7).

In 2014, Childline had a total of 493 volunteers in various roles within the ISPCC, including volunteering for Childline counselling, mentoring and advocacy. Childline volunteers are highly trained and enthusiastic and are at the heart of its work with children and families.

A number of different services are offered to children under 18 years of age (ISPCC, 2015):

- Telephone: This is a free phone service available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Childline also operates the European Helpline number 116 111.

- SMS text: Teentxt is a live, interactive, one-to-one text messaging support service for young people. By texting the word 'Talk' to 50101, a young person from anywhere in Ireland can avail of this free confidential service.

- Automated text: This is a free service which provides a young person with support on a variety of issues via an automated text system. Children can ask for information about eight different subjects including danger, bullying, pregnancy, sexuality, relationships, parents, loneliness and suicide. The information from the automated service is then sent to the young person's mobile phone as a text message. This service was launched in April 2005.

- Childline also provides a range of internet-based support services, including a one-to-one live chat option via www.childline.ie. Childline also has support pages which contain information about the Childline service and about children's rights.

In December 2012, the Missing Children's Hotline or Amber Alert service became operational in Ireland. With support from the Daphne Funding Programme and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the 116 000 hotline operates on a 24/7 basis and provides emotional support and advice for children who are missing, their parents or others who are responsible for the missing child.

In August 2014, *Childline Online* - a live chat service for young people up to the age of 18 - with support from the National Office for Suicide Prevention, extended its opening hours from 10am until 4am. The impact of increased opening hours was immediate with an increase of 33 per cent in contacts to *Childline Online* in the latter part of 2014 (ISPCC Annual report 2014).

An independent review of the Childline service undertaken in 2004 (Whyte & Smyth, 2004) examined the development of evaluation mechanisms for the service. Specifically, the review addressed ways in which the effectiveness of interventions for children using Childline were measured. The empowerment of children through their contact with Childline was identified as key, yet measuring this was largely done on a subjective and anecdotal basis through feedback from volunteers and call facilitators (2004, p.24). As such, a recommendation was made to "devise ways of measuring the extent to which the service is empowering and helping children" (2004, p.26).

3.2.2 Childline activities

In 2014, a total of 652,382 calls were received by Childline across the full range of its services. A total of 462,505 of these calls were answered, giving a response rate of 71 per cent, compared to just 15 per cent in early 2000. The number of text conversations was 11,555, with 6,225 web engagements and 70,300 hits to their website. In its 2014 Annual Report, the ISPCC highlighted its concern at the rising trend and called on the government to do more to tackle online bullying and abuse of children online (ISPCC, 2014).

A key area of concern noted by the Childline service is the 'scale and complexity of mental health issues for children', including cases of children at 'high risk' of suicide. "Over 20,000 contacts in 2014 related to psychosocial and mental health issues, with over 1,000 contacts to Childline in 2014 related to suicide with 303 calls from children at high risk of suicide" (ISPCC, 2014).

While noting a decrease in the number of children making contact because of face-to-face bullying, it emphasised that this is still a 'major issue' for children, particularly in relation to cyberbullying.

Table 1 gives a summary of the nature of all 'Level 3' calls to Childline for the year 2014:

Table 1: Profile of Level 3 calls from January 2014 to December 2014

Reason for contact	Number of calls	Percentage
Everyday life	118,243	45
Information requested	45,338	17
Sexuality	29,167	11
Abuse and violence	27,804	10
Psycho-social, mental health	8,530	3
Family relationships	7,975	3
Peer relationships	7,587	3
Physical health	6,058	2
Child substance use and abuse	5,033	2
School related	4,318	2
Bereavement/loss	1,662	1

Reason for contact	Number of calls	Percentage
Homelessness/runaways/basic needs	1,038	0.39
Discrimination	526	0.20
Internet issues	430	0.16
Legal matters	413	0.16
Differently-abled children	392	0.15
Commercial exploitation	271	0.10
HIV/AIDs infected/affected children	34	0.01
Total	**264,819**	**100**

Source: Childline
Note 1: There were 154,555 Level 0 Calls, 9,826 Level 1 Calls, 33,305 Level 2 Calls, and 264,819 Level 3 Calls recorded for the period 01/01/2014 to 31/12/2014 giving a total of 462,505 calls answered.

Childline's Annual Report for 2014 also revealed that almost 30,000 contacts made in the previous year related to sex and sexuality, with queries about a range of issues including their own sexuality, sexual behaviour and contraception. The children using these services had a range of issues, including behavioural problems, anxiety and emotional issues. Meanwhile, the ISPCC support line, which provides advice to parents and members of the public who are concerned about the welfare of a child, answered 370 calls in 2014. Issues of concern raised included neglect, physical abuse and bullying.

Table 2 provides a summary of the nature of all contacts made online to Childline for the same period:

Table 2: Profile of online contacts from January 2014 to December 2014

Reason for contact	Number of contacts	Percentage
Everyday life	6,784	38
n/a	2,937	16
Psycho-social, mental health	2,015	11
Family relationships	1,208	7
Information requested	1,086	6
Abuse and violence	1,030	6
Peer relationships	1,030	6
Sexuality	596	3
Physical health	327	2
School related	324	2
Bereavement/loss	166	1
Other	131	1
Internet issues	119	1
Child substance use and abuse	77	0.43
Homelessness/runaways/basic needs	34	0.19
Legal matters	8	0.04
Discrimination	6	0.03

Reason for contact	Number of contacts	Percentage
Commercial exploitation	3	0.02
Differently-abled children	2	0.01
HIV/AIDS infected/affected children	0	0.00
Total	**17,883**	**100**

Source: Childline

As Childine is a high profile, general service helpline for children and young people, the number of calls categorised as internet specific are a relatively small proportion of total contacts made to the service. In 2014, 430 contacts via telephone (0.16 per cent) and 119 contacts via web and text (0.665 per cent) were primarily related to internet issues. However, due to the nature of the call logging system, only one category or 'reason of contact' is recorded, potentially leading to a lower number of calls categorised as internet issues. Even when the primary reason to contact the helpline may not be directly related to the internet, there is, as acknowledged by helpline staff, frequently an aspect of the case which is associated to the internet or social media.

3.2.3 Main findings

Childline first opened in Ireland in 1988 and is now one of the most well-known support services for children in the country. Childline is the only listening service in Ireland available for children on a 24/7 basis. Its services are promoted across all mass media and it has attracted strong support through its many high profile campaigns. The internet safety aspect of its helpline service is of more recent origin and was introduced in 2006.

Childline staff state that internet problems are now an increasing feature of issues presented to its service by children. Almost every call or contact from children, staff say, now has some online or digital aspect. Yet, this is under-represented in Childline statistics primarily because of the limitation of its CRM (Customer Relationship Management) system which doesn't allow more than one option to describe the reason for contact.

There are no internet specialists among the staff or volunteers at Childline and as a general listening service, staff need to respond to all queries from children regardless of the type of issues raised. This can pose challenges to volunteers and the organisation as a whole in responding to very diverse queries from children. It requires the organisation to provide suitable ongoing training to staff and places a big emphasis on volunteers keeping up to date with issues facing children. This was raised by volunteers during the research as one of the challenges they face on an ongoing basis.

There is no formal procedure in place to assess the effectiveness of the internet safety dimension to the Childline service. Staff and volunteers employ a range of strategies in seeking to capture the effectiveness of their work. For example, callers are offered the opportunity to express their feelings and reflect on how they feel before and after the calls. Moreover, staff have regular supervision sessions where they discuss how to improve the outcome of calls and what more could be done to achieve better outcomes for children who contact Childline.

Childline believes it has a good working relationship with other stakeholders including government agencies and other services that work with children. However, it does feel its relationship with industry is still limited and an aspect that could be improved.

3.3 Malta

3.3.1 Background and mission

Malta's Safer Internet Centre, BeSmartOnline! was launched in October 2010. The Centre is coordinated by the Malta Communications Authority (MCA) and supported by APPOGG, National Agency for Children, Families and the Community, the Commissioner for Children, the Directorate for Educational Services (DES), the Secretariat for Catholic Education, and the Malta Police Force. It operates campaigns aimed at raising awareness of online threats and risks targeted at children, parents and teachers alike.

Together with the consortium, a number of strategic partners such as the Cybercrime Unit and the University of Malta constitute the BeSmartOnline! Advisory Board.

The Safer Internet Centre's goals are the empowerment and protection of children and youth from online risks, mainly through increasing awareness and combating harmful behaviour and illegal content on the internet. BeSmartOnline! achieves this by coordinating the efforts of various national stakeholders in the field. Together, the partners focus on raising awareness and educating children, parents and educators about using the internet safely.

As with other Safer Internet Centres, BeSmartOnline! also incorporates a hotline aimed at receiving reports about illegal content online, alongside its helpline service which provides support and advice about online safety. BeSmartOnline! has also aimed to establish a system where online abuse could be reported and victims could obtain the necessary support. For this reason, the national helpline *Supportline 179* was extended to offer support related to internet safety matters. The helpline is operative 24 hours, 7 days a week and is operated by professionals. This also now incorporates the hotline where illegal child sexual abuse material online can be reported. As from 2015, a helpline service is also offered through kellimni.com. This offers youth the possibility to interact anonymously with trained volunteers via chat or an online forum.

As part of the government-funded Foundation for Social Welfare Services (together with Aġenzija Sapport (www.sapport.gov.mt), and Aġenzija Sedqa (www.sedqa.gov.mt)), the helpline can easily access the services offered by the Foundation to help provide the necessary support to callers.

Supportline 179

Supportline 179 is the national Maltese helpline offering support, information about local social welfare services and other agencies, and a referral service to callers who require support. It is also a national service available to people who are in times of difficulty or crisis. The primary mission of the Supportline 179 service is to provide immediate and unbiased help to those seeking information, support, or require a referral to social service agencies. It runs 24 hours, 7 days a week, including public holidays.

Supportline 179 has been in operation since January 1996. Over the past 20 years it has been developed and extended to open up its service to other lines such as the EU Emotional Support Helpline 116 123 and EU Child Helpline 116 111, both of which divert to Supportline 179. The service is run by a team of professionally trained volunteers who are supervised and administrated by a professional team of social workers and psychology officers. Currently, there are 55 volunteers manning the line. Supportline 179 handles calls which range in their severity. Calls can be related to child abuse over the internet, emotional, neglect and physical violence; domestic violence; homelessness; and suicide ideations; as well as loneliness and information-giving calls can all be handled by this service.

Supportline 179 has extended its services to internet safety matters. Calls related to issues such as cyberbullying, sexting, inappropriate content, privacy matters and other internet-related issues are mostly addressed by two professionals that are specifically focused on internet safety issues. Immediate action is often taken and, when necessary, callers are also asked to meet a professional for a one-to-one session to discuss further.

Volunteers are continuously supported by the professional workers with supervision, support groups, training and refresher training courses along their volunteer service on the line. Even during the late hours, at no point during their shift are they left without support as they can always contact a supervisor on call for continuous guidance.

All calls directed to Supportline 179 are anonymous. Volunteers are guided to log calls on a strictly confidential database. The clients are given an option for their information to be referred to a different service which could cater for more in depth and specialised support for their individual needs, strictly with their consent. Confidentiality is broken only in situations where there is the risk of harm to self or harm to others. In such situations, interventions take place, through liaising with the police, medical professionals and currently with the pilot service of a 'social worker after hours on call' service if needed.

3.3.2 Helpline in numbers

Since the internet helpline began operations in 2011, calls have increased every year as portrayed in the chart below.

Figure 2: Recorded calls from 2011-2015
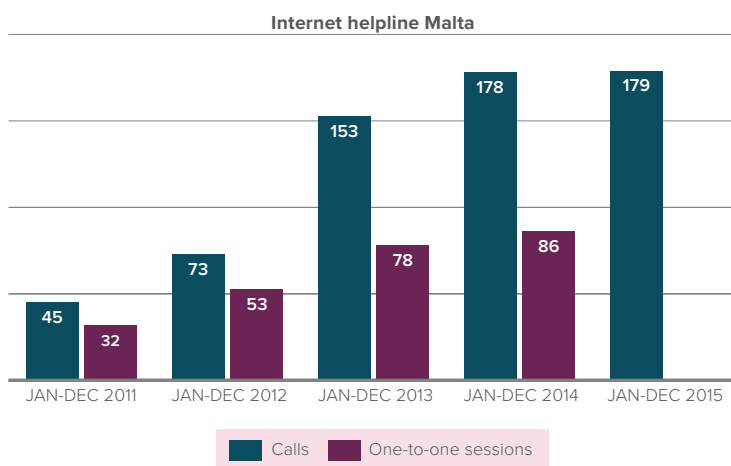
Source: BeSmartOnline!

Each year, around 50 per cent of the calls received by the internet helpline are followed up with a one-to-one session with the individual caller.

Between January and September 2015, the internet helpline received 179 calls that were distributed as follows:

Figure 3: Recorded calls from January to September 2015

Internet helpline calls 2015

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
18	16	18	30	19	36	18	12	12
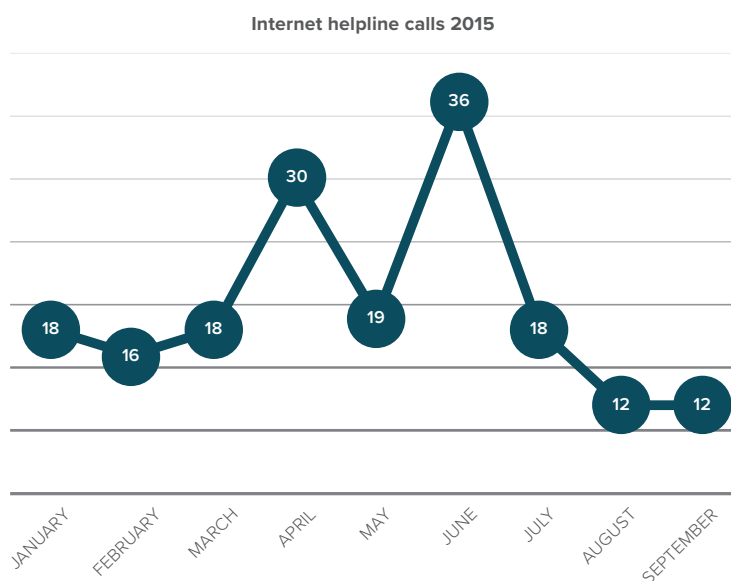
Source: BeSmartOnline!

3.3.3 Main findings

Since its introduction, the internet helpline has been part of the national general service helpline, thus benefitting from the already-established set up and existing awareness of the service within the Foundation for Social Welfare Services, and from the easy access to the services offered by the Foundation itself.

The two professionals employed to work on the internet helpline follow up internet safety calls by taking immediate action, and this immediacy is often one way to establish whether the service is being effective. They often also have one-to-one meetings with the persons involved, and this is possible due to the fact that Malta is a small country. Operating in a small country also makes close collaboration with other stakeholders relatively easy.

One of the challenges the helpline faces is how the public perceive it. There is sometimes a stigma or taboo attached to using the helpline and, in the public mind, it is associated with child abuse issues among others. Such misperceptions can deter those who need support about internet-related issues from calling the helpline.

Notwithstanding the invaluable role of the volunteers within the service, the fact that the service is operated mainly by volunteers also has drawbacks. Volunteer turnover is one of the main issues: volunteers who leave are not always replaced and new volunteers need to fit specific criteria. Knowledge and training need to be ongoing. Financial, technological and physical resources are also among the challenges cited by the helpline.

Sextortion and self-made material (often photos) were considered to be emergent issues related to internet safety by the Maltese helpline.

3.4 Romania

3.4.1 Sigur.info

The Safer Internet Centre in Romania is called the Sigur.info project. Since September 2008 it has been managed by a consortium of three institutions: Save the Children Romania, FOCUS - the Romanian Centre for Missing and Sexually Exploited Children and Positive Media**.** The project has three parts: (1) information and awareness raising, (2) the helpline, for counselling and offering support for online problems, and (3) the hotline for reporting illegal content encountered on Romanian websites. The Sigur.info helpline is a specialist helpline for internet safety issues and targets children and adults with responsibility for children (e.g. parents, teachers). The helpline has been in operation since May 2009. Since the beginning of the Sigur.info project, the helpline and the hotline have functioned separately, the latter being operated by FOCUS.

The Sigur.info project has support from the private sector (e.g. Kaspersky Lab, Orange, UPC, Vodafone, Microsoft, ECDL Romania), as well as from state institutions (The Ministry of Education and Scientific Research. The Ministry for Information Society, The National Authority for Child's Protection) and academic institutions (e.g. The Institute of Sociology).

The helpline forms part of the overall project to provide the public with a variety of options to access support in relation to risks, technical problems, and to report abuse and infringements of the law. In the latter case, the information is taken, analysed and forwarded to the hotline or, depending on the severity, to relevant law enforcement agencies.

The helpline guarantees confidentiality to callers for all forms of contact. As discussed by staff at the helpline, this can prove to be a challenge in further reporting of cases. However, it is also an operational advantage and an important feature of encouraging callers to contact the helpline.

Over time, the helpline has tried to optimise the means by which one can contact it. Thus, from 2009-2010, those who wished to call the helpline could use four main forms: (1) a mobile-phone line (from Monday to Friday, 11.00-15.00; it was not a free line); (2) two chat platforms (Yahoo Messenger and Meebo; from Monday to Friday: 10.00-16.00); (3) email: helpline@sigur.info and (4) the forum: www.forum.sigur.info. From 2012, the helpline expanded its offering, providing more phone numbers. A universal free telephone line was not possible and, as an alternative, the helpline offers the less expensive solution of a free telephone line for fixed line calls, and one number for each of the mobile providers. This has allowed the helpline to maintain its service availability for most networks to which it has now added a Skype ID. Opening hours have also been extended but still remain only available from Monday to Friday.

The Sigur.info helpline is a relatively small service, functioning with just one full-time employee and one or more volunteers, depending on the period (e.g. when a public campaign to promote the helpline service is running, an increase in the number of calls is expected and accordingly, the helpline recruits more volunteers to answer the calls).

The helpline offers three types of counselling to callers: (1) psychological (in the most demanding cases through the guidance of Save the Children counsellors); (2) legal counselling - about legislation and legal procedures that may be undertaken in difficult cases; (3) technical counselling - most frequently helping callers to manage devices or apps. Besides these, helpline operators also offer general information about the Sigur.info project, its activities as well as general eSafety advice.

The helpline is well connected with other stakeholders working in the field of online safety. However, as put forward by staff in the helpline, this often takes a dyadic form (e.g. helpline-Ministry of Education; helpline-the police etc.) as opposed to a more comprehensive or systematic approach of coordinating across all relevant

stakeholders.

Besides Sigur.info, *Salvati Copiii* (Save the Children Romania) takes part in other projects and in research regarding the online activities of Romanian children and the risks they encounter on the internet. Thus, in 2012 and in 2015, it conducted a study regarding internet usage in the family, the methodology of which was modelled on the EU Kids Online survey. In 2010, *Using internet in Romania by children and adults* was published followed in 2012 by the *National study regarding internet usage among students with hearing impairments.*

Re-branding the helpline
In an attempt to improve the service, in June 2013 the helpline was re-launched and rebranded supported by a media campaign and public face-to-face meetings.

The campaign launched the helpline's free telephone number (however, still only for calls in the same network). The website www.helpline.sigur.info was re-launched with a more user-friendly interface and with more informational and educational resources. In addition, an information campaign was launched comprising:

- A press conference for the campaign launch and press release (news taken over by 21 online and printed newspapers).

- Re-launching of the website - banners of partner websites and online banners.

- Establishing a local celebrity as a Sigur.info ambassador (Andrei Leonte).

- Informative materials (flyers) disseminated in activities with parents and children.

- Outdoor posters (city lights; at 25 locations of 5 important cities) and schools (in 14 cities).

- Andrei Leonte's tour in 6 big high schools in Bucharest (over 1,500 participants, students and teachers).

- Andrei Leonte's tour in the country (5 important cities, over 2,500 participants; 33 mentions in online and print press).

Some of the success indicators for the campaign for the period June 2013 to July 2014 included: more than 90,000 unique site visitors, growing visibility of the Facebook page http://facebook.com/SigurPeNet (over 5,640 likes), and directly reaching 7,056 children, 19,826 teenagers, 1,962 parents and 2,188 teachers.

3.4.2 Helpline statistics
The helpline formally began operations in May 2009. During the period from May 2009 to September 2011, the helpline received 650 contacts related to various internet safety issues. Table 3 below provides details of the contacts made through different platforms and the reason for contacting the helpline service.

Table 3: Helpline cases/category 2009-2011

Problem reported (May 2009-September 2011)	Chat	Email	Forum	Phone	Total
Cyberbullying	85	113	12	8	**218**
Blackmail, scam	17	3	0	0	**20**
Informing	23	7	0	0	**30**

Problem reported (May 2009-September 2011)	Chat	Email	Forum	Phone	Total
Data theft	56	89	0	4	**149**
Illegal content reporting	19	11	0	0	**30**
Cases of fraud/spam	10	25	0	0	**35**
Technical problems	20	11	3	0	**34**
Pornography	1	23	0	0	**24**
Other problems	96	14	0	0	**110**
Total	**327**	**296**	**15**	**12**	**650**

Source: Sigur.info

As recorded by the helpline, the average caller during the period between 2009-2011 was female and aged 17 years[14]. The report of the helpline for the period 2011-2014 shows an increase in the number of contacts received up to 3,326.

Table 4: Reasons to contact the helpline (2011-2014)

Problem reported	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Cyberbullying	105	101	36	221	**463**
Grooming	9	34	2	19	**64**
Dependency	15	15	5	19	**54**
Internet security and confidentiality	170	161	95	257	**683**
Illegal content	14	10	9	8	**41**
Potentially damaging content and behaviour	186	41	8	56	**291**
Technical abilities	49	43	40	93	**225**
General information	279	632	64	417	**1,392**
Other problems		2	6	56	**64**
Total	**827**	**1,039**	**265**	**1,146**	**3,277**

Source: Sigur.info

During the period from 2011-2014, a total of 3,277 contacts were made to the helpline. The majority of cases referred to problems of cyberbullying, social networks and the lack of digital competence of Romanian children. The majority of callers were children and teenagers, aged between 13 and 18. In 2014, there was an increase in the number of adults calling to request advice related to unpleasant situations in the online environment.[15]

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14   Sigur.Info *Activity report of the helpline - sigur.info, 2009-2011*

15   Sigur.Info *Internet Helpline 2011-2014 Report*

3.4.3 Main findings

The Romanian Safer Internet Centre has its own dedicated helpline for internet safety issues. The helpline functions with very limited resources; it has one full-time staff member, one coordinator of the volunteer group on an occasional basis, and a coordinator of the 'Save the Children' aspect of its work.

The Romanian helpline does not receive as many calls to its telephone service as might be expected. It would appear, as relayed by helpline staff, children prefer to write an email or use the online forum to contact the helpline. Despite all the efforts made to include free telephone access on every network across the country, the number of calls does not show any signs of increasing. This confirms the fact that using the telephone helpline for internet safety is still a relatively new thing for children in Romania and that barriers remain in making direct contact. Accordingly, the helpline makes great efforts to organise trips to schools to promote the helpline and talk to both children and parents about safety and online risks.

No formal assessment of effectiveness of the Romanian helpline has been undertaken to date. In fact, measuring the impact of the helpline through numbers of contacts does not apply in this case. Most children only contact the helpline after they have had a negative experience and therefore, in the case of Romania, numbers of contacts does not necessarily measure the effectiveness of the helpline in preventing risk but rather responding to children in a post-risk situation.

Staff also expressed their concern about the low level of internet skills and awareness among both adults and children in Romania. According to helpline professionals, there simply is not enough awareness raising or technical support available to parents, teachers and adults.

Other issues raised by staff referred to difficulties in reporting procedures to other local and national authorities due to the lack of comprehensive protocols or legislation.

4. The role of helplines

Drawing on data from interviews and focus groups in the four country case studies, as well as from the survey of helplines across the Insafe network, this chapter presents a discussion of the role and function of helplines, as outlined by helpline professionals. This chapter takes account of the diversity of services that helplines offer to various target audiences (4.1). It discusses the level of public awareness of helplines and the kind of awareness-raising activities that are used to promote better public awareness (4.2). The chapter ends (4.3) with recommendations on how to best demonstrate the role of helplines in the public domain as well as to improve their awareness-raising activities.

4.1 The diversity of helpline services

In general, Insafe helplines share a common aim of providing information, advice and assistance to children, youth and parents on how to deal with potentially harmful content, harmful contact (such as grooming) and harmful conduct (such as cyberbullying or sexting). In the past decade, helplines have expanded the ways in which contact can be made, from telephone, text message, website, email and online chat, to name but a few. The ultimate goal of helplines is to ensure that all children have a positive experience of childhood in the online world.

It is important to view the work of helplines holistically, and not just as a telephone/online counselling service for online safety. Contributors to the research pointed out that helplines are not just a stand-alone intervention, but a 'front door' to a range of community and social initiatives. Helplines can be the 'first point of contact' for young people and adults providing immediate support, information and referral. Consultations and the support given are not solely focused on online issues but often extend to other aspects of children's lives.

Supporting safe and responsible online use

Insafe helplines primarily aim to empower children and young people to use the internet, online and mobile technologies positively, safely and effectively (Insafe report, 2013). These objectives are reflected strongly at the national level and in the mission of each of the helplines surveyed for this study. This was further exemplified in interviews and focus groups with the four case study countries, including the helplines in Belgium and Romania specialising in internet safety and the helplines in Ireland and Malta that are based on a general service.

> *Our first goal is to support people and to teach the youngsters on a prevention level enabling them to show their best possible behaviour on the internet and also teach them good reflexes. (Belgium)*

> *I'd say it is supporting children and teenagers and sometimes parents and professionals with internet-related issues. It can be an internet-related issue or an internet abuse, an online abuse, there's an abuse going on. So I still call it support. So the mission is supporting and helping the person who goes through a particular situation. (Malta)*

Sigur.info, while it has a particular focus on internet issues, is aware that its service cannot be restricted to that alone:

> *We can be contacted about anything... because that's the way we operate. We are there to talk to any young person, who has any issue........we are there for young people who would present with a different type of abuse... with a school-related issue, a family-related issue, an internet-related problem, eating disorder, mental health. (Romania)*

Moreover, internet and online support provided by the helpline is viewed by staff as an extension of its promotion and awareness-raising activities with young people:

> *As a support space for children, as a continuation of what we promote in schools. Basically in informative sessions we talk about benefits, risks, and also we talk about solutions to what they encounter online. (Romania)*

In addition to being a 'listening ear', helplines such as *Supportline 179* in Malta follow up calls to its service with offers of further support, sometimes involving contact with industry, schools and/or the police. *Supportline 179* offers callers the opportunity of a one-to-one session for follow up counselling. Such support is offered both to victims and to perpetrators, a feature that is unusual for helplines but facilitated through the helpline's role in the Foundation for Social Welfare Services:

> *It's [Supportline 179] the Maltese national support line. It started originally to take cases of child protection and domestic violence but as time went on, for the past 17 years now that it has been operating, the social problems are increasingly including online safety. Its primary mission is to provide a service to the general public, information, help in crisis situations and referral to other services. We also provide support to people who are going through specific problems.... (Malta)*

Childline in Ireland and *Supportline 179* in Malta may both be described as general service helplines. In principle, they play a similar role in offering a wide range of support services, covering all different aspects of children's lives of which internet safety is just one of the issues supported.

> *[Childline] is the place, where they (children) can return to. They have that secure base, where they feel safe talking about anything that's going on in their life, and know that they can come back. ......[just like] a mother and a toddler, where the toddler is exploring their environment, the toddler will look back to see is mum still there while they go off and explore, and then they come back and every now and again, touch mum and go off again. Well, in the same way, in that scenario, the child uses mum as a secure base, the Childline service is a secure base for all young people in Ireland. (Ireland)*

Target audiences

Helpline services, in general, have as their primary target group children and young people. However, in practice, helplines vary in terms of the different groups they target and address. For example, the Safer Internet Centre's helpline in the United Kingdom addresses the needs of professionals working with children and young people. In Finland and Ireland, there are distinct helpline services specifically for parents alongside the helpline for children and young people. In other instances, helplines are available to the general population to address their queries in relation to internet safety matters.

> *Parents are people who contact our helpline most… for example, Kind & Gezin (Child & Family) and Proximus (telephony and internet services provider) have been trained by us and they provide training in schools. We also try to educate parents and teachers. (Belgium)*

> *We were entering forums and starting conversations with parents, thinking they have no place [to access] information about the internet and using technology. (Romania)*

A survey of helplines in the Insafe network conducted for this study (n=26) found that almost two thirds, or 17 of the 26 helplines that responded, offer their services to all ages, including children, parents and carers. Just one stated that its service was for children only while three stated their service was targeted to a specific group such as teachers or parents only.

Figure 4: Target audiences for Insafe helplines

Q.3 Who do you provide services to?
[n=26]

- Anyone, including children, parents, carers
- Only children (under 18)
- Certain type of people (parents/teachers)
- Other (please specify)
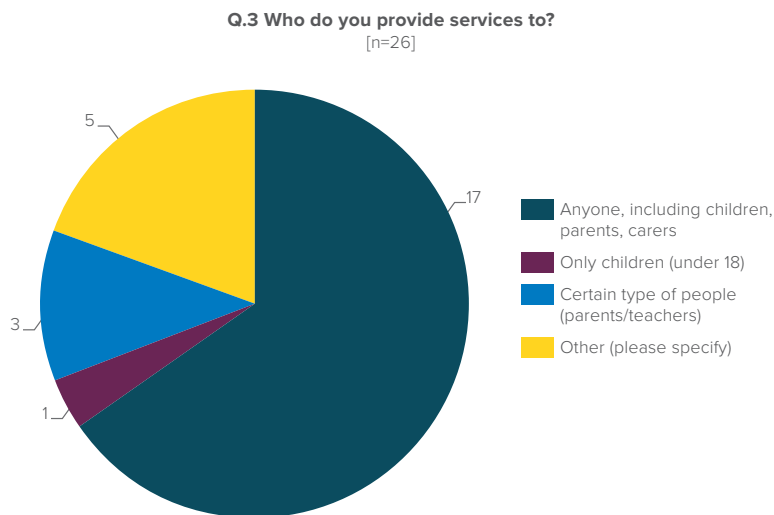
Operating times

There is a wide diversity in the operating times of Insafe helplines and times of availability for helplines vary significantly from country to country. Operating times depend on the target audience, the availability of staff and volunteers, and the availability of funding. In the four case study countries, the general service helplines in Ireland and Malta are available on a 24/7 basis. Across the Insafe network, a third of all helplines offer support services on a 24/7 basis (Figure 5).

> *Our services run 24/7... we always have staff or volunteers there on call. (Ireland)*

> *We run it 24/7, but sometimes we are short of volunteers and callers have to wait on the line... they call back or occasionally, they can't wait and come in to the office. (Malta)*

Figure 5: Helpline operational hours

Q.2 What are the working hours for your helpline?
[n=26]

- Normal working hours: 9am-5pm
- Outside working hours
- 24/7
- Other (please specify)
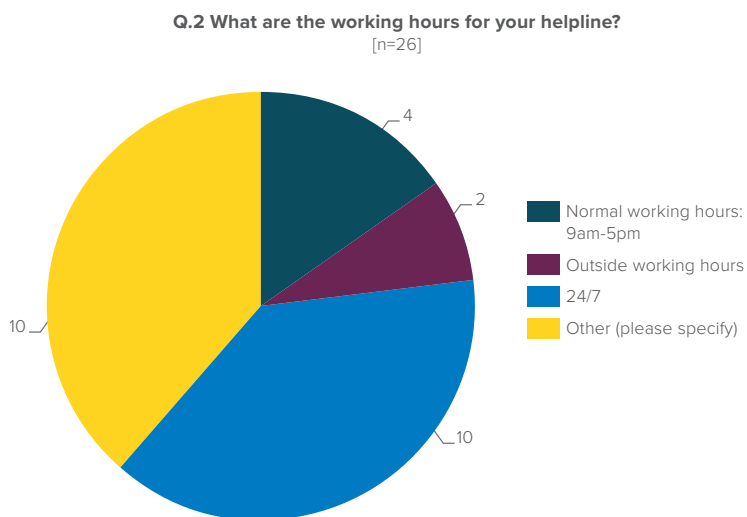
Platforms

A key issue for helplines is the platform or channels used to provide support services. Helplines have their origins in the provision of telephone support and, for many years, this was the only available way for children and service users to get in touch with the helpline. Now, helplines across the Insafe network offer their services across multiple platforms including: telephone counselling services, email, support using online chat, text services, online forum, peer support, social networking and in some instances face-to-face support:

> *We do more with emails... we visit schools. (Romania)*

> *I'm aware that other helplines just offer a listening ear but the fact that Malta is so small and distances are so short we can offer also immediate help as in support, come over to the office, let's speak let's see what we can do etc. (Malta)*

The online survey showed that most helplines offer, in addition to their telephone support service, at least one or two other platforms, such as a text/SMS service, an online forum, chat or face-to-face consultation. The most common forms of support are via telephone and email (96 per cent) and chatroom (65.4 per cent). Other support platforms also play a significant role (e.g. online forum, peer support and social networking sites, see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Type of support or counselling

Q.7 What type of support or counselling does your helpline provide? *(tick as many as apply)* [n=26]
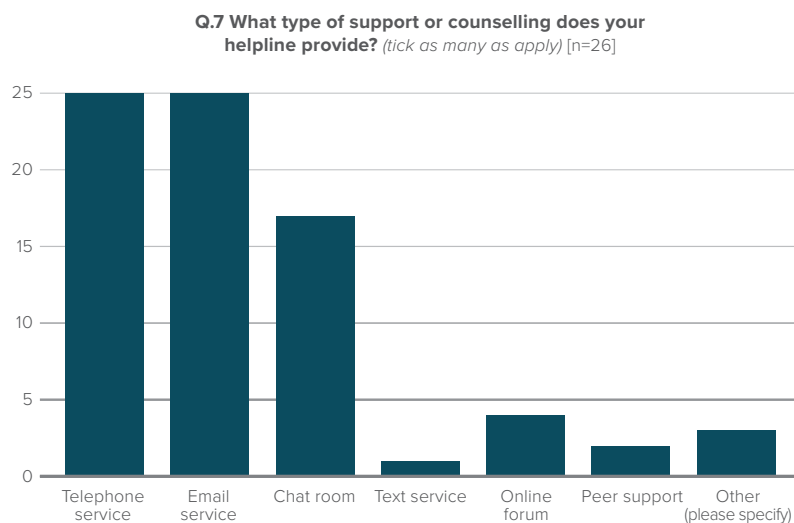
4.2 Public awareness of helplines

Many helplines began as counselling support services dedicated to the needs of vulnerable children and young people. This important function was, according to the helpline staff and volunteers interviewed, recognised and supported by the general public. There is, however, less awareness of the role of helplines in providing internet safety support, reflected in the lower volume of calls to those specialist service helplines compared to those with a wider remit. Increasing public awareness of the work that Insafe helplines do is, therefore, a priority.

Helplines linked to a national or European service such as the Child Helpline International number 116111 (http://www.116111.eu/) enjoy a number of advantages arising from their connection to well-established high profile services.

> *Everyone knows 1800 666 or 116 111... In Ireland it's the Childline number that's most commonly known, and it's been there for years. And that is by word of mouth. So we will do some advertising, but we would be widely known in Ireland. [It] would be one of the biggest numbers in children's frame of mind already. Whereas when you promote a new number specific to internet issues, and see. It can be... it gets lost.... Whereas, because the Childline service is so well known... for us, and see, covering a broad... every topic. (Ireland)*

> *So, the Supportline 179 has been established for the past 18 years now and its primary mission is to provide a service to the general public, information, help in crisis situations and referral to other services. We also provide support to people who are going through specific problems - I don't know... such as loneliness, mental health and then we also have the crisis situations, suicide, homelessness, domestic violence. (Malta)*

Helplines in Belgium and Romania have a specific focus on internet safety issues. Their respective experiences of public perception vary. Child Focus in Belgium has gained strong public awareness while the Romanian helpline struggles in this regard:

> *We are becoming better known, as there are more and more cases. When we go to schools or give training, for example, we also notice that some of the teachers and parents already know about 'Clicksafe' and that they also know the number they can call if they have a question. (Belgium)*

> *Some still don't know what an internet safety helpline is.... It's how you translate.... Even parents, teachers. (Romania)*

Childline is one of Ireland's best known children's support services. However, there is much less awareness of its role in supporting internet safety, as acknowledged by staff and volunteers:

> *Still when we come in to school, kids say they didn't know about the online service....I think it's a fabulous service, but we've only kind of been...it's still in its infancy compared to the phone. (Ireland)*

Embedding internet safety within an all-purpose service has advantages and disadvantages. Positively, it offers benefits through the ease with which referral to other services can be supported as well as the ability to draw on wide experience of supporting children in need. On the other hand, staff may lack the specialist knowledge to keep abreast of technology and the range of online risks that continue to evolve. Volunteers for such all-purpose support services need to be prepared for any topic that children may present, requiring a vast knowledge on different issues and the different services available.

> *Since it is so generic (the helpline), maybe you might know a lot about a subject and not so much about another. (Malta)*

Volunteers claim this is beneficial to them since it keeps them alert and provides them with opportunities for better career development. It also helps to improve the holistic nature of the support they provide. By contrast, a disadvantage of being part of a national generic helpline is the need to deal with a large volume of calls that may not be directly related to the work of the helpline at all.

Awareness raising

Awareness raising is a significant factor that contributes to the level of publicity of helplines' work. Awareness-raising activities are recognised as the most efficient and effective means of information communication to the general public.

Helplines engage in a variety of public awareness campaigns. All helplines who responded to the survey adopted more than one awareness-raising activity at both a national and local level. Awareness-rising activities were implemented through both online and offline platforms, from direct contact, person to person to public audiences. Figure 7 summarises the most common awareness-raising activities consisting of: information sessions in communities, schools, public events (92 per cent), information dissemination on their own websites (88 per cent) and online adverting (76 per cent). Over half of all helplines reported advertising on national broadcast media.

Figure 7: Public awareness raising

Q.8 Which of the following does your helpline run to improve [public] awareness of your service? *(tick as many as apply)* [n=25]
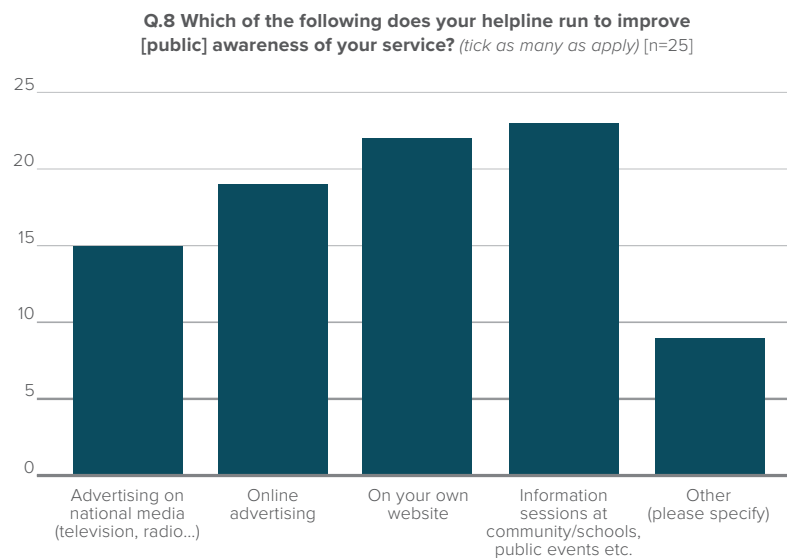
Helplines are committed to ensuring that information on their work reaches a wide public audience. To support this, they have adopted different strategies spanning from mass media means to door-to-door visits. The following quotations further illustrate this diversity:

> *We do various activities. We go to schools, we go to parents' meetings, we go to like festivals, for example, like spring festival or trade fair. ....During these five years I think we've tried quite a lot of things. We've tried social media. We've tried, um... banners on bus stops, bus shelters, we... we went to big events such as the Trade Fair where there are a lot of people attending. (Malta)*

> *We give out those cards that they can put in their wallet with the contact details, and we know we probably give out near a thousand cards at that every year, and engage with*

probably five or six hundred, actually stop and talk. That's the feedback I get from staff. We also...there is Teen Aware in the Midlands, it's kind of a festival for young people, that's a non-alcoholic festival, and it's for under 18s. We always have a presence there as well as having a stand there. And other events, like, one of the staff was out in Blanchardstown shopping centre yesterday, coz they are having this 'keep Blanchardstown safe' kind of campaign. (Ireland).

We hope to have a collaboration with a good advertising agency who would come up with a good marketing concept, so that we can promote this side. At this moment we are collaborating with an agency and at some point in January we would like to launch the campaign, including these films and materials. (Romania)

Advertising the work of helplines through national media or participating in a specialised media programme or event appears to be a particularly effective way to promote the services, according to staff and volunteers. However, this can be out of reach for many services:

Obviously we increase awareness especially on TV, by marketing it on TV, it's more effective because people tend to phone more during particular programs... I realise this especially when the parents call and they tell you 'I saw you on TV' or 'you were saying this on TV'. So you realise that you've been doing this for all these years but this seems to be the first time that they heard because they saw it on TV. (Malta)

I still think that media is the most effective, especially when it comes to adults, to parents, because they are very hard to reach.... But it can be expensive too. (Ireland)

The main problem is indeed with money, because what we planned in the project is not much for this sort of campaign. (Romania)

Support from government and from public figures can be a distinct advantage in raising public awareness. In Belgium, for instance, such activities received support and attention from the relevant Ministry in government, resulting in a positive outcome:

The government is aware of everything we do. The Minister of Digital Commerce, Alexander De Croo, is a big supporter of our initiatives and he comes along to promote and support us. So, we certainly feel that our work is supported. (Belgium)

I think that our helpline is getting better known in general. This summer, we did a surf-safe campaign to promote the helpline and we can see that this has had an impact. But, I think it would be interesting to develop something more to see if people are satisfied with their calls to Child Focus. (Belgium)

Yet, such recognition and/or investment from government is not always forthcoming. For example, in the focus group with helpline staff and volunteers in Malta, one of the issues brought up and discussed was the

setting-up of a new helpline for gambling issues by the online gaming industry. Staff and volunteers were particularly critical about this and regarded it as a duplication of a service that already exists. Instead, in their view, the investment could have been better put towards increasing the number of staff members or for strengthening the services and functions of Supportline 179.

> *Instead of creating a lot of new services, you have to strengthen what you have. If what you have is working well but needs some more resources, you put those resources into something which has been working for the past 18 years but which obviously needs some back up, you know? ...and some more resources. You don't create something new from scratch...and invest in resources elsewhere. (Malta).*

Awareness raising, it was recognised, should not solely focus on children and young people. In fact, findings from the Romanian helpline raised concerns with regard to parental understanding of internet safety issues and argued that more emphasis should be given to targeting parents:

> *And it's important to work not only with children, even though we are a helpline for children, it's essential to work with their parents. .... Parents' perceptions, when it comes to the online environment, tend to be a little limited. Maybe with the rejuvenation, as generations like mine are coming, generations that were somewhat exposed to technology, things will change. But still, in my opinion, there is still quite a large number, of parents who don't realise what's with this internet. (Romania)*

It was acknowledged that parents are not only difficult to reach, but also believed to have a limited understanding of what internet safety means or to motivate them to take the topic seriously:

> *Media for the parents. Otherwise I don't see any other way to reach them. It's a routine in which we struggle. As a society we are not that healthy. We also work in the evening... we slug a little in front of the television and that's about it. It's not easy to get people out of their houses, it's hard to waken their interest. And this thing with investing in your development as an individual is problematic and I say this because I work in the field. It's very hard to bring people together, to gather them somewhere and talk to them or teach them things, it's increasingly difficult. They are not willing anymore. Even for free, even if you pay them to come, they don't come. People don't want to come, they are not interested anymore. Because we are distracted with other things. (Romania)*

Public misperception of what helplines do was often mentioned in the course of the research. Initially, in Malta, the national helpline started as a place to report child abuse. In the public mind, this association is still strong and few are aware of the diversity of support services offered. For many people, contacting the helpline in Malta can be a sort of a taboo. Further, some parents fear revealing problems they are encountering to social services will have adverse consequences for them:

> *..unfortunately, the 179 [number] brings about its own baggage when it comes to the perception people have of this service. Being the national helpline people still associate that with if children are molested you call 179 for help. So it could be one of the stigmas that carries and people are put off calling because of that. People are scared to call*

because they think they're going to involve the police straight away, they think it's going to open up a can of worms they won't get out of. Yes, I think that is a major challenge that the helpline needs to break out of. (Malta)

Similarly, in Belgium, Child Focus is still regarded as an organisation that helps to trace missing children and which is mainly targeted at parents and professionals. Their activities as an awareness centre and online helpline are less well known among the public, especially among young people.

Reaching out to new target audiences is also recognised as an ongoing challenge. Beyond parents and educators are many who do not necessarily have a sound understanding of technology and who require support. Awareness raising is therefore essential to a helpline attaining its goals. Mobilising support from a broad range of stakeholders - members of the community, local and central government, schools, teachers and employers - is therefore required. Their commitment and participation can establish or reinforce appropriate resources to support the helplines both in the immediate and the longer term.

4.3 Recommendations

- **Awareness raising** is an important task and an outcome of the service provided by helplines. Many helplines work closely with Insafe awareness centres in national awareness-raising campaigns. These efforts should be reinforced to inform parents, teachers and children about the role of helplines and the services they provide in order to build wider public awareness on the issues and the resources/facilities available.

- **Methods** for disseminating information about the work of helplines vary. Information can be advertised through national media platforms, such as television, radio, or programmes and can include mailing letters to parents, providing children and young people with stickers and posters, or conducting contests and activities through the helplines.

- **Involve the participants:** It is important to use multiple means of promotion and to involve children, young people, parents and teachers in the planning and preparation of the activity.

- **Extend the target groups of audiences in advertising helpline activities:** The impact of awareness raising is greatly enhanced if clear targets of the awareness activities are identified, for example parents, children, teacher groups, etc.

- **Engage the media and other institutions:** Engaging the support of the media in raising awareness considerably broadens the impact and reduces the cost.

- **Commercial support for promotion** not only can provide additional funds and outlets (e.g. television, newspapers) but it can also allow for the development of community-school links.

- **Language:** Awareness messages are most effective when they adopt the language best understood by the target audience. Speaking the language of children when advertising or advocating the work of helplines can be the most effective way to deliver information.

- **Involve other governmental agencies/lobbying governments.** Every effort should be made to involve the participation of government agencies in spreading the messages to reach a large group of people. In that way, helplines will be able to gain more attention and help inform policies in this field.

5. Evaluating success

Evaluating success and effectiveness is an important yet challenging task for helplines. It is important that helplines have evidence available to demonstrate good performance that it can disseminate to a wider audience. Half of the helplines consulted in the online survey for this study stated that they had commissioned independent assessments of their service in the past.[16] For those that had undertaken such research, the results proved extremely valuable and helped in gauging awareness among target groups, testing new products such as chat services and giving useful feedback on performance of the helpline. The primary reasons given by those helplines that had not undertaken any research was a lack of resources or the relative newness of the service.

Developing indicators that can apply across such a diverse range of contexts is challenging. Given the sensitive settings in which helplines operate, it is difficult to quantify the impact that helplines make in keeping children safe online and therefore other metrics must be used. The first section of this chapter (5.1) examines a number of indicators that may apply to helplines. The second section (5.2) describes the relationship between helplines and stakeholders and the role that stakeholders play in supporting the effectiveness of helplines' work. The benefits of working within the Insafe network are noted (5.3). Finally, the chapter outlines a number of recommendations (5.4) on how to improve the evaluation process and to enhance the relationship between stakeholders and helplines.

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16   23 helplines responded to Q.14 in the survey (Has your organisation undertaken any independent assessment or evaluation of the helpline service in the past?). Of those who responded 12 had commissioned such a review. 11 stated that had not undertaken any such research and there was no response from a further 3.

5.1 Recording and measuring impact

In the survey of helplines, nearly a third of the helplines who responded (9 of the 24) stated that they did not record any feedback from callers to the service (Figure 8). For those that did record feedback, this was mostly done on the call logging system (12 of the 25 who responded) and/or using a separate evaluation form (10 of the 25).

Figure 8: Recording caller feedback

Q.10 How do you record feedback after a call or contact from a client? *(tick as many as apply)* [n=25]
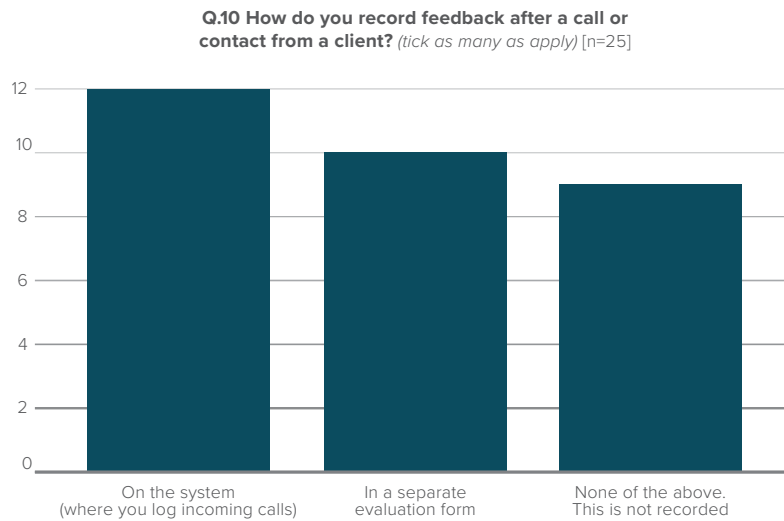
When asked to rank the factors that they felt could assist in measuring the success of helplines, respondents to the survey ranked in order the following attributes (Figure 9):

Figure 9: Ranking of factors to assess helpline success

Q.10 How do you record feedback after a call or contact from a client? *(tick as many as apply)* [n=25]
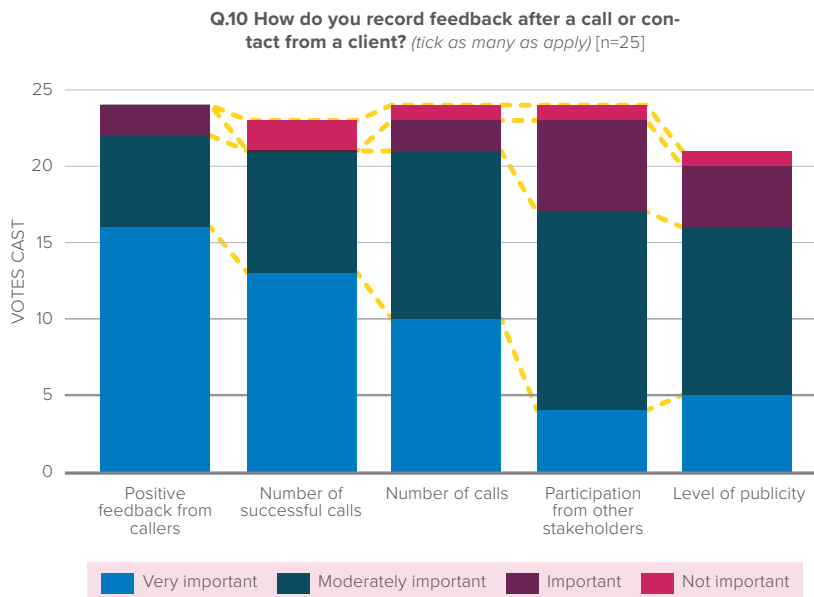
Receiving positive feedback from callers was identified as the most important, direct means of gauging successful impact and was deemed by 16 of the 24 who responded as 'very important'. This was followed by the number of calls with a successful outcome (13 of the 24 stated this was 'very important') followed by the overall volume of calls (10 of 24 regarded this as very important). Other factors considered included participation and engagement from other stakeholders and levels of awareness or publicity.

In the following, we take each of these in turn and examine their applicability to the work of helplines.

Volume of calls

One indicator used by nearly all helplines is the number of calls a helpline receives. 'Calls' are interpreted here as all attempts of contacting the helpline, both via telephone and online communication.

> *Every call should have a positive outcome for the child... sometimes the child may be crying still at the end of the call, that doesn't mean it wasn't a positive call for that child. So you can't measure it that way, it may mean the child actually felt listened to, felt heard, had their feelings validated, was giving information that empowered them, so these are the kind of things that you could measure on any call, if you had the appropriate kind of questionnaire and ask children to actually go to our website and complete this questionnaire. (Ireland)*

With the exception of Romania, most helplines reported an increase in the volume of calls received over the course of recent years. The number of contacts has particularly increased in the countries which have expanded ways to contact the helpline through, for example, online communication, text or chat. An increase in the number of calls suggests that more people are aware of the helpline and that inhibitors to making contact have decreased, indicating a higher overall impact. When interpreting such data, however, it is vital to take the history of the helpline and the particular national context in which it is located into account. Comparative data is of relatively little use in this instance given the very specific position of each helpline and its relationship to the wider public in which it operates.

Logging call data

Another important set of indicators is provided by data collected by helplines in the process of receiving calls. Most helplines register some general information about each incoming call using a call logging system. Common parameters logged include:

- The age and gender of the caller.

- The main topic or issue presented.

- Whether it is a request for information/refers to a particular incident.

- If referral to another organisation for further assistance is required/sought.

Such information, while necessarily limited due to the anonymity of the services, can be helpful in providing follow up assistance to callers, as explained by a volunteer at the Romanian helpline:

> *Especially if they call again with new information... we do a case tracing. If there is an evolution of the case, if it continues, they come back to us. (Romania)*

In Belgium, Child Focus uses this data to monitor its performance and inform its promotional activity. Currently, the majority of its calls come from parents, whereupon the helpline now intends to invest in strategies to encourage more young people to contact the helpline. However, helplines often lack the resources to analyse caller data in detail and use it in this strategic way. Limitations to the current logging system in place are noted by Childline in Ireland which, despite the large volume of contacts to the service, the system has limited ability to capture more than a single descriptor for each call:

> *Our system doesn't allow us to record more than one reason to contact... a primary reason to contact. We talked to our IT guy, we tried to have it in a way that we can add more than one, but he said no, it can't be done.... We log our calls. All our calls are logged in the CRM.....So we need to be able to know what it is they will have talked about, what options were looked at previously. So that you are not starting all over again. So we do... we log our information and we then all each have access to that. So you know, we have case files as well, where if the child is a regular, we can just bring up their previous chats and calls and see what it was. (Ireland)*

Caller feedback

Feedback from callers on the quality of the interaction and its outcome is a crucial source of information and was ranked by helplines as one of the most important factors in measuring success (see Figure 9). Receiving positive feedback (both verbal and written, through telephone, email or feedback) is both encouraging and rewarding for staff 'to know that we are doing a good deed for them'. This can be a useful indicator in assessing the effectiveness of the work of the helpline. In practice, however, systems to record such feedback are not in place in all instances and it is not always possible to fully capture callers' responses.

Noting that nearly a third of helplines do not record any feedback at present (see Figure 8), we asked those that do seek feedback, how this was actually done (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Options to capture feedback

Q.11 Which of the following do you offer to callers in order to give an opinion about the service at the end of a session? *(tick as many as apply)* [n=25]

10 of the 25 helplines who responded used an online form to collect caller feedback. Eight helplines stated that they used verbal feedback after the call to gauge its success. A text-back service was cited by two of the helplines. Other options mentioned include web-based surveys available on the helpline website.

In some instances, the outcome to a particular intervention may be immediate and relatively easy to record. Technical issues such as dealing with queries about privacy settings may have a straightforward solution, whereupon helpline staff can objectively conclude the intervention was successful:

> *I know there were a lot of cases when the people thank us afterwards. There were the simple cases, like the ones with the viruses…there the feedback is very rapid, you give them a simple technical solution that they apply and they say yes, it worked, thanks! Or all is alright now! So 100 per cent solved and with positive feedback. (Romania)*

> *We can evaluate in that we get the results. So if I've taken down a photo of someone or if I reported a Facebook profile and it was taken down or Facebook took their action and the situation has improved, or… So, in a way we can see there was progress so for us it was a success. (Malta)*

Self-assessment of impact

More often, the effectiveness of an intervention is more subjective, especially when it concerns more complex issues with greater emotional content. In the course of interviews, helpline staff referred to situations *'where the victim feels better after the helpline intervention'*. Despite this rather vague description, there is a consensus that many staff are capable of assessing whether or not an intervention was a positive experience for the caller. This may be based on subtle hints, such as expressions of gratitude or tone of voice. When a situation is more complex, the expectations of the initiator definitely play a role. Those who mainly want to 'tell their story' tend to feel emotional relief after the intervention, even if the problem may not be completely solved. In contrast, those who expect a ready-made solution may feel disappointed or frustrated.

Helplines were asked in the online survey to rank various factors that might help them to identify if a call had been successful (Figure 11).

Q.12 Which of the following help you to identify if a call/consultation has been successful or not? *(tick as many as apply)* [n=25]
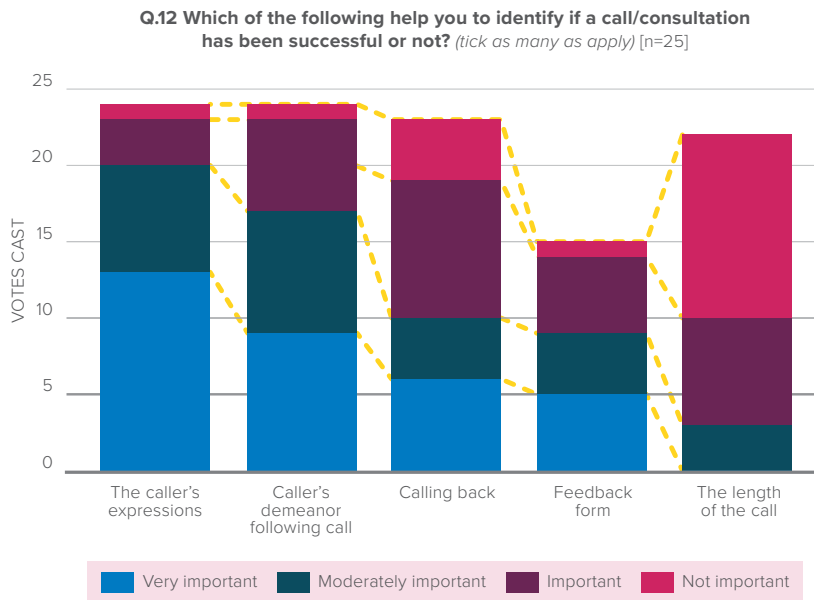
The caller's expression during a call was regarded by the majority of helplines (13 of the 24 who responded to this item) as 'very important' in knowing if a call had been successful or not. The caller's expression following a call was also identified as moderately or very important by most helplines. By contrast, length of the actual call was regarded by half as either irrelevant or not important.

Helplines varied in how they used this feedback. In Belgium for example, Child Focus staff organise debriefings on a regular basis in which they discuss cases with each other and reflect how they could improve a similar intervention in the future. Although these debriefings are informal and based on subjective assessments, they are, according to staff, useful and informative. Many helpline staff have also developed their own informal strategies to capture the outcome of a contact to the helpline by asking callers and eliciting their feedback.

> *So if you are summarising the conversation, so how was this call for you today? You know ... how did you feel at the start of the call? How are you feeling now? It could be all part of that winding down process. (Ireland)*

Follow-up calls

A more *objective* instrument to confirm the *subjective* self-assessment feeling of the success of an intervention may be achieved through follow up calls (text, chat, email, etc.). In some instances, people spontaneously call back to inform the helpline they are feeling better and/or the problem is solved. On other occasions, helpline staff may plan a follow up, predominantly by email, text or chat rather than by phone, in order to check how the person is doing and how the situation evolved. In both cases, the follow-up call provides the helpline with useful information on the outcomes of the intervention. Such a practice is dependent on the standard operating procedures in place, and given the anonymity of most helplines, is less established as a practice and not available as a consistent source of data.

5.2 Working with stakeholders

Helplines work within an environment in which effective partnerships with multiple stakeholders are of great importance. Safer Internet Centres are typically based around consortia representing a mix of skills and specialist expertise. A good relationship with diverse external actors including industry, educators, other governmental agencies etc. is vital to achieving successful outcomes.

Helplines identified successful collaboration with other stakeholders as an indicator of success (see Figure 9). Helplines in our four case study countries commented that collaboration between helplines and other stakeholders has been consistently improving. However, there is still room for improvement:

> *The cooperation has not always been intense in the past, in the context of projects on internet safety. There were at least two meetings a year. Then came the exchange of different stakeholders around online safety together and there was information, products proposed and sought cooperation opportunities. That was very fruitful, if only to know each other and be able to do at each others profession. (Belgium)*

> *In terms of the interactions with industry, more of course, what we need is the kind of people who are designing these products or providing these services, more interactions with them can be a great support for our work. (Ireland)*

> *The fact that we are on Facebook, as a service, doesn't help us do much. Facebook does not remove your commentary or picture except only in some very, very few cases. Facebook has on the level of Insafe a collaborator who allegedly can get in touch with our operator about delicate situations. But from my point of view, this collaboration is only on a formal level, because not many things are changing. (Romania)*

In Malta, the BeSmartOnline! consortium is coordinated by the Malta Communications Authority which provides the opportunity for close collaboration with other stakeholders including the Malta Police Force, the Directorate for Education Services, the Commissioner for Children and others. The advantage of working in a small country like Malta makes it relatively easy to collaborate and build mutual trust:

> *When we mention this abroad they are amazed. That's very positive, even the relations with the other partners - the Commissioner of Police, the Office of the Commissioner for Children etc.... We meet very regularly to discuss - each in his own role. The Malta Communications Authority is more the awareness centre which we also support, we have the casework and the Commissioner for Children is the voice of the children and brings forth their ideas - what they would like to see more in this area or what they think of the brochure we've just made, if it's to their liking or not good or what would they add to it. (Malta)*

In Romania, the situation was found to be quite different. In spite of effort made, there is no collaboration or agreement between the general helpline and the internet safety helpline.

First of all, I would like to say that we contacted the Child Helpline association who owns and administrates in Romania 116111 European number for a future collaboration. We proposed them to share good practices among us, to forward calls that are in the competences of the other helpline, for having a good evidence of the cases which involve internet safety. Unfortunately, they declined any kind of collaboration. (Romania)

Effective relationships with industry were regarded as particularly important. Having a direct connection with a specific contact person within a company facilitates proactive initiatives and quick responses to urgent problems (e.g. removing pictures form a platform in case of sexting incidents). Indeed, a benefit of helplines working together collaboratively through the Insafe network is the closer connection with industry to deal with issues that arise. Helplines argued that it would be even better if industry take the initiative to contact the helpline and, for example, provide training about the opportunities and risks of their platform or service for youth. Helplines pointed out that some providers have been very open to collaboration, but others had been less forthcoming.

Helplines also indicated that greater collaboration with parents would be beneficial. Parents, it was recognised, are ideally placed to advocate and support the work of helplines:

[Helplines] could recruit parents as volunteers, to keep in touch with authorities, with the Ministry of Education and insist on having these informative activities in schools. As for parent-formation… there are housewives who spend a lot of time in the school. I am convinced they would agree to come to these courses. And of the people who work, some of them would come too after hours or in weekends. Yes, parents would be very interested. I came across situations of cat and mouse play between parents and children. When parents no longer knew how to impose restrictions and then they discovered that it is possible. That's why I am convinced that if parents were instructed when their children are young things would be better. (Romania)

Much work has been achieved in the last decade to establish good links between helplines and stakeholders. Overall, helplines have developed relatively strong stakeholder collaborations with industry partners, parents and teachers. At the European level, good connections with other helplines through Insafe and with INHOPE hotlines have led to a strong network to facilitate information sharing and knowledge exchange through joint events, international conferences, webinars or conference calls. At the national level, more could done, it was argued, to actively identify and focus on stakeholders who have an interest in, and could contribute to, the success of the helpline.

5.3 Benefits of Insafe

The distinct advantages and benefits of working within the Insafe network were mentioned by nearly all helplines. The network was widely praised as a learning community in which helplines get invaluable knowledge through sharing experiences and ideas with other helplines in other countries:

Being part of Insafe is very helpful for us because it's important to get to know what is going on in the other countries. You can get prepared for new trends, you get ideas how to react and you must not always reinvent the wheel. So we get a lot of ideas, information and know how out of the network.

Access to expert information; close cooperation and exchange of knowledge, ideas, good practices within the network; training on important issues; support from the coordination team.

Being aware of new trends related to online risks and safety and how best to approach them was regarded as especially important. Helplines could be inspired by the work of their counterparts in other countries and learn from others' experiences in how they have responded to new and emerging trends. Training sessions offered at workshops were regarded as very valuable, helping to build expertise, enabling access to expert knowledge and hearing about new developments in policy. It was also felt that being part of Insafe created more impact at the national level: being part of a European network could reinforce the position of the helpline in the national ecosystem, and enhance the trust of various stakeholders. It was felt that Insafe could further develop its role as an international representative platform on behalf of all helplines and lobby for the creation of new policies about eSafety support and child protection. The development of generic best-practice guides directed to all helplines was also recommended.

At the same time, some commented on the fact there is a lot of diversity among helplines. The issues that each has to deal with can vary greatly. For example, risks that are flagged in one region as an important new area (e.g. sextortion) may not feature at all in other parts of Europe. It was also acknowledged that there are significant cultural differences across Europe and that adopting what is best practice in one country is not always useful or appropriate in another.

5.4 Recommendations

Internet safety helplines can be an effective and valuable resource that provides children, young people and adults with caring responsibilities with essential information and counselling support. Monitoring and evaluation on an ongoing basis is needed in order to assess how well the helpline is achieving its aims, what works and doesn't work, how to improve service delivery and how to build public awareness and trust. The following recommendations build on discussions with helplines and other stakeholders and are offered to assist helplines in the process of ongoing quality enhancement.

- **Technical support**: Helplines would benefit from an update of the current system of recording and classifying calls and counselling sessions. It is important to ensure that all helplines have access to the same level of technology.

- **Call logging:** it is essential that helplines employ a comprehensive recording template to collect all relevant data about service users including the timing and frequency of calls and repeat calls, the frequency of calls for specific content areas and, importantly, caller satisfaction. Referrals should also be recorded as a form of evaluation.

- **User surveys and questionnaires** would be a good way to obtain information for evaluation purposes. These should be administered on a regular basis, at least once a year. Furthermore, follow-up qualitative studies (e.g. telephone interviews, focus groups) with staff and users of helplines would also provide valuable feedback on the performance of the helpline. Results of user feedback would also be useful for other helplines and could be disseminated via the Insafe network.

- **Exchanging experiences and lessons learnt** with other countries, with adaptation to the particular social-cultural context, has been found to be a very useful tool for enhancing staff capacity.

- **Best Practice Guide**: the development of a Best Practice Guide would supplement the excellent work of Insafe in disseminating guidelines, best practices, tips & tricks, do's & don'ts.

- **Train-the-trainer initiatives** are needed to ensure high quality support is available to volunteers who could go to schools or youth organisations to talk about safer internet issues. Industry has a particular responsibility to ensure helplines are informed about their latest innovations and new services to ensure staff have access to the latest knowledge in technology support for internet safety.

- **Advocacy and lobbying**: In order to have a real impact on policy makers, it would be useful to support helplines with reliable (academic) data on new emerging trends, so their advocacy is well informed and based on the best evidence available.

- **Strengthening stakeholder partnerships** is essential to the collaborative effort to build a safer and better internet. Stakeholders can be involved in evaluation planning, and they can inform helplines about what is working and what is not working from their perspective.

- **Based on stakeholders' feedback and other evaluation findings**, helplines can take the cycle back to the beginning and engage those stakeholders in additional planning, refining, and refocusing of their work.

6. Emerging risks and challenges

Helplines are often the first to identify new and emerging risks in the online arena. Through their close interactions with young people, they hear at first hand problems that young people experience online. Collecting this information and using it to develop effective safety responses is a now central part of what helplines do. The first section of this chapter (6.1) summarises the most prominent current and emerging risks reported by helplines for this study. The second section (6.2) documents the challenges that staff and volunteers encounter in providing a helpline service to children and young people. Finally, 6.3 offers recommendations for consideration by helplines to support staff in undertaking their role of providing independent support service to internet users.

6.1 New and emerging risks

The rapid pace of technology change brings with it new trends, including both opportunities for positive online experiences as well as emerging internet safety risks. Helplines are at the forefront in providing a listening ear for young people who, as early adopters, are often the first to experience such challenges. Helplines function therefore as an alert system for new and emerging risks for which they can provide an early warning system for other stakeholders and users.

Helplines were asked in the online survey (Q.15) to identify which risks they believed likely to be of concern in relation to internet safety in the future (Figure 12):

Figure 12: New and emerging risks

Q.15 Which of the issues listed below are likely to be of concern in relation to internet safety in the future? *(tick as many as apply)* [n=26]
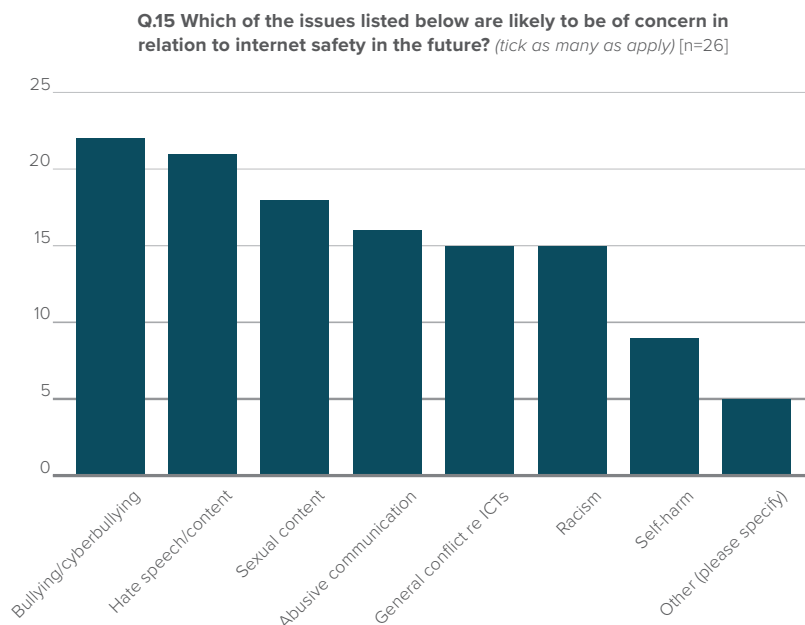
The vast majority of helplines believe that bullying/cyberbullying and online hate speech will continue to be major concerns for internet safety into the future (22 and 21 respectively of the 24 who responded to this item. Three quarters (18 of the 24 helplines) stated that sexual content was a cause of ongoing concern while abusive communication, racism and generational conflict between parents and young people regarding their use of ICTs was cited by 15 of the 24 helplines. Distribution of drugs and other prohibited substances to minors as well as online radicalisation were also mentioned as other risks that helplines would expect to have to deal with in the future.

Some of the comments which featured in discussions with helpline staff and volunteers in relation to new and emerging risks included the following:

Cyberbullying

Data from Net Children Go Mobile (2014) showed that 12 per cent of children have experienced cyberbullying. While it is still a minority of children who reported being bullied online, research shows a steady rise in cyberbullying compared to EU Kids Online in 2010 (Mascheroni and Oflasson, 2014). Cyberbullying is reported as a dominant issue for all helplines:

> *...cyberbullying and bullying, of course, they have increased as well, and the nature of it. I mean, it's everywhere now, online, especially...That's one of the things that we are not capturing properly. (Ireland)*

> *We usually get cyberbullying, sexting. (Malta)*

Sexual-related content and sexual messages

Sexual content featured prominently in focus groups with helpline staff as among the most common issues they have to deal with.

> *No matter how long you are on the line in Childline, it's still quite shocking to hear a very young child being highly sexualised. Now, whether they understand what they're saying, but they are just getting a very distorted view of sexuality, you know... from these exposures, websites. (Ireland)*

Such sexual content also included concerns regarding grooming and sexual exploitation as issues of serious concern by helplines:

> *It's still quite shocking to hear a very young child being highly sexualised because from talking to staff and volunteers that are on the phones, you know, one of the things that staff said to me probably 18 months ago, was they are seeing the change in the language, sexualised language that children are using. (Ireland)*

Further examples of grooming and sexual exploitation were provided by helplines in Belgium and Malta:

> *More sexting. Actually, more sexual exploitation is now happening online. An exhibitionist, for example, does not have to be on the street anymore; it's now easier online. That is another form of sexual exploitation. Two of the biggest problems, I believe, are grooming and sexting. (Belgium)*

> *I see sexting as expanding more and more. And grooming...it's related to this phone that...now that I've been through schools outside Bucharest, I realised that not everyone with a smartphone also has an internet connection, like I imagined, but soon, very soon. (Romania)*

Sextortion is a new serious type of risk that, according to the helplines consulted, is on the rise. This refers to young people who are approached online and asked to engage in sexualised behaviour online (e.g. masturbate in front of the webcam). The perpetrator then captures the images and then blackmails the victim, requesting an amount of money by threatening to share the video. Victims of sextortion are frightened about their reputation and may panic.

> *New trends, such as sextortion, we have to be able to offer a preventative response... They tell us that a lot of nude pictures are circulating and ask us how they should react: what they should do, which message they need to convey. (Belgium)*

> *We had a number of cases of sextortion, especially with males, and you had these females, mostly Asian, contacting this person and chatting with this person. Then they would ask for a photo of this person naked and this person would send this photo and then they ask for money. (Malta)*

In many sextortion cases, the perpetrator is located in another country making it additionally difficult to help the victims. Helpline staff indicated they do not currently have the necessary resources or tools to handle sextortion cases in an efficient way. New targeted guidelines would be helpful and additional support to develop preventive material, in collaboration with organisations that focus on awareness and prevention.

Personal misuse/fraudulent use of data

Personal data misuse is identified as an older risk that now appears to be developing a new pattern, manifested in different forms. For example, abusing or misusing personal data may start as a joke among a group of friends, but then develops into a more serious and complicated issue:

> *This case, the child complained that her photo was used as a joke among friends, but it got out of hand, it spread around... she was very upset to see her photo was mocked on different sites. (Ireland)*

Such abuse of personal data can develop further into a monetary exploitation or sextortion:

> *One of the emerging trends that we have seen is that nowadays fraudsters and perpetrators are not interested in sending out a large amount of messages and trying to get 100/200/300 euros off a large amount of people, but they will invest some more time into their particular actions and try to get a larger amount from fewer people. (Malta)*

Racism and hate speech

Racism and hate speech in all instances were recorded as being on the rise in issues raised by callers to helplines.

> *I don't know if it's still emerging, but definitely present and highly visible in the last period of time is hate speech or discrimination based on race, religion, or concerning the refugees. (...) I saw girls and boys commenting not aggressively, but effectively swearing... at the nationalities. I wanted to see who were the ones being so tempestuous and I find the picture of a 12-13 year old. Okay, they assume the general language commonly used in comments of that kind, that are aggressive and threatening. And it is clear that this would become a problem. It's not a direct threat to an individual, it's an evasive matter and they find reasons. Also, it perpetuates very, very much, because, if they aren't deleted or censored they are like a snowball which continues and gives the aggressor confidence. (Romania)*

Concerns about hate speech also related to its contribution of a more generalised climate of hate which impacted negatively on children and adolescents online experience. This extended also to the increased attention being given to risks of extremism and racism online. Here, the concern is not only to help children as possible victims online, but also to educate and thus help children to act responsibly and be more resilient.

> *We had these two particular girls who were being contacted by someone who was Muslim and who was trying to brainwash them about Islam. And since we had had a training in one of the Insafe meetings related to the recruiting of ISIS, of the Islamic State, we were very careful about it... ... So we also had those two particular cases which were quite... shocking I must say. (Malta)*

Concerns for younger users and digital skills

Sometimes the emergent risks are not necessarily new risks, but older risks faced by younger children. Thus, one of the problems that helplines encounter is children experiencing online risks at an ever younger age:

> *I think mostly what changes is the age where problems appear, that younger children have access to the internet. The problems are the same as ever. (...) with age dropping so much, of course things that are not so dangerous at 15-16 can be truly dangerous at 5-6 years old. (Romania)*

Finally, digital illiteracy and children's misjudgement of their own skills levels emerged as an important topic of concern among helplines.

> *The biggest problem is that we are digital illiterates, and that's a problem that no one wants to take seriously. …. it's said that for a child using a computer is no longer a secret. At the age of three he uploads drawings on YouTube on his own. What more do you want? And this is false. I find this to be the biggest risk: the fact that we don't realise that we're actually digital illiterates. (Romania)*

> *Parents, in many cases, are far behind with all new devices and apps…. It's not easy for anyone trying to keep up with this. (Ireland)*

6.2 Supporting the work of helplines

Helplines were given the opportunity to comment on the challenges they, as organisations, faced in undertaking the complex role of providing an independent listening support service to internet users. In the online survey, helplines were asked if there were any areas in which they needed more support:

Figure 13: Areas in which helplines need support

Q.17 Are there areas in which you feel you need more support? *Please elaborate.* [n=25]
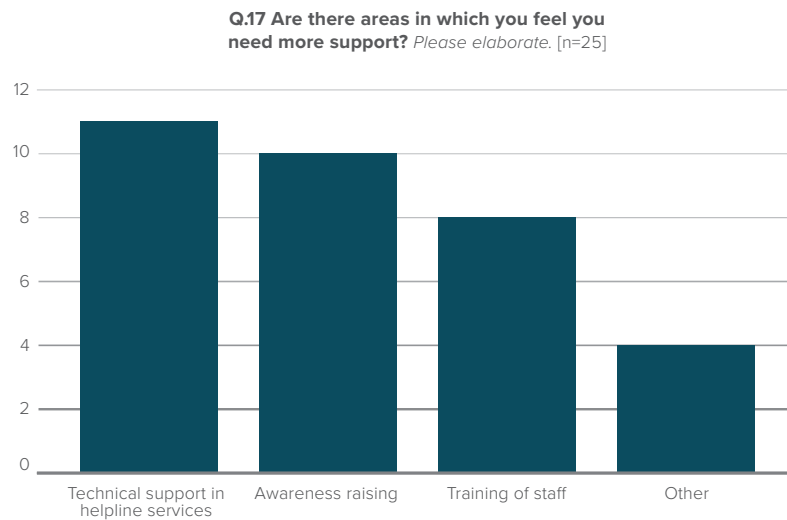
Technical support

Over half of the helplines that responded (11 of the 18 who responded to this item) stated that they would like more technical support in delivering helpline services. Such technical support could include training in new technologies and devices as well as assistance with technical functions on the helpline including support for app development or improving the functionality of services. Helplines also included in this category further support from industry, including social media companies, about the best way to ensure safety for children.

Training of staff

Having trained staff with the appropriate knowledge and skills to follow through on issues related to problems with internet services was acknowledged by all helplines as vital to their service. Training of staff was an issue that a significant number of helplines raised as something in which they needed further support (8 of the 18 who responded to this item). Regular training is needed to keep pace with fast changing developments in the field.

While the valuable role of volunteers to helplines was acknowledged, it was noted that supporting a large volunteer base was also a challenge. Ongoing training and support is essential. A large turnover in volunteers creates additional burdens for services and many reported difficulty in finding replacements. As the following example from Malta illustrates, matching the necessary life experience needed to engage in counselling and familiarity with online issues is a challenge:

> *You can't obviously oblige a 70-year-old person who is volunteering on the line to know about Snapchat. So that's why we're constantly there for them. So that's why also we tell them 'don't worry, you can refer, if they're willing to give us their contact details we will call them back'. Um… So we try to reassure them because we cannot pretend that they know everything about the internet or about online safety. So, um… yes, that is another challenge, especially as we said before, that we have a wide range of, there are different ages, people coming from different fields, fields completely different to social help and working skills and psychology. So you cannot pretend that all of a sudden they're there to know everything. (Malta)*

Language barriers were also cited as a barrier in availability of training and resource material for helpline volunteers. Many helpline staff would like to benefit from training from Insafe but are unable to do so as most material is in English. A recommendation made was that the Insafe eSafety Bulletin should be translated into a number of different languages.

Awareness raising

Assistance in awareness raising was also mentioned as an area in which helplines would benefit from further support. While cooperation between the partners within the Safer Internet Centre was a given in terms of maximising promotional opportunities, promoting the visibility of the helpline to young people, especially vulnerable youth and other harder-to-reach audiences was a particular challenge.

Part of the awareness-raising challenge is to encourage young people to come forward and talk about the issues affecting them. Some children are hesitant because of the fear of being exposed; others may feel that they don't want the attention, that 'it will be okay and no need to make a big deal out of it' (Ireland). Other children, it was reported, might be too afraid to pursue the issue:

> *And many times the idea was: no, no, I don't want to complicate matters with the police, I just want the pictures not to appear. This is difficult and where the helpline can't help, There is also a reticence, a mistrust in the State and the authorities…it's a cultural thing. That and the fact that they might not want their parents to know. (Romania)*

Dealing with prank calls

Conversely, another issue noted by many helplines was the experience of having to deal with a large volume of 'prank calls'. It was noted that while new services such as text and chat increase ways to contact the helpline, it also increases the number of nuisance calls received. With text and chat also, because of the limited information available, it was more difficult to distinguish between serious callers and children having fun. Prank calls impede the work of helplines but it was accepted that every interaction with young people was valuable in and of itself. A variety of strategies about how to screen out such calls have been developed by individual helplines. This was raised in the workshop with the helpline network and further sharing of information and operational strategies would be helpful.

Financial sustainability

Finally, financial sustainability and support for fund-raising efforts were noted as foremost issues for many helplines.

In qualitative research with the case study countries, both the Romanian and Ireland helplines noted the financial constraints to trying to hire more staff to take on extra work with schools and training. The Malta helpline claimed to lack both financial resource and physical space. During the course of this study, the Maltese National helpline had just moved and new offices were not yet ready to support their operations. Moreover, after having recently introduced the call-waiting system, more technological developments might be in the pipeline. To keep pace with recent trends, the service would like to extend its set up to include support via chat. Kellimni.com is a Maltese service that provides specific times where online assistance is available via chat. This is increasingly becoming popular with children and young people, and is indicative of the trend of their internet use. For this reason, it might be useful to have the Supportline 179 provided via chat as well. Obviously this would require investing several resources towards setting it up and manning it.

6.3 Recommendations

The evidence of this research shows that helplines provide a wide range of accessible and valuable sources of support for children as well as adults and professionals about how to keep safe online. Overall, helplines have delivered positive outcomes that are consistent with their goal of providing information, support and reducing risk or potential risk of children and service users in relation to internet safety.

Helplines also deliver additional outcomes and benefits that may go unrecognised by the wider community. Complementary modes of access by web, email, text and telephone enable children and young people to access support when and where they need it. In a fast-moving digital era, helplines play a vital role in awareness raising and in delivering flexible and effective help to young people and the community.

- **Create an alert system for new risks**: an online reporting form should be developed so that young people or other internet users can more quickly notify helplines when they identify potential risks, encounter new problems or technical challenges. This can act as a valuable resource for helpline staff to share information across the network and to inform other stakeholders (researchers, policymakers, industry) about new and emerging risks or challenges among young children and users.

- **Provide regular information briefings and training programmes** to assist helpline staff in dealing with new arising issues and challenges. Industry technologists and academic partners could provide a useful resource in this regard.

- **Develop skills and understanding of evidencing and recording consultation activities** in support of a culture of continuous evaluation and quality enhancement.

- **Measures of success** should be routinely built into provision so as to facilitate evaluation based on attention to the outcomes for service users and thereby facilitate ongoing support for quality services based on best practice.

- **Information exchange among helplines**: Insafe, as the coordinating body, provides an excellent opportunity for helplines to share best practices, to support knowledge exchange and to build wider public awareness of the valuable services provided by individual helplines. All efforts to support this networking will be beneficial for the overall service.

- **Setting up close collaborations with experts in the field**: especially when new challenges and issues arise. Helplines need to work closely with awareness centres and other experts in the field. But they also need to respond quickly with informational material and have access to expertise on risk prevention.

- **The Better internet for Kids (BIK) community and the BIK platform**[17] can be used to gather and share information on new trends or issues that arise with new devices/applications. This platform would be a good resource for keeping track of young people's online activities and also to anticipate potential risks. Such a platform could also be a useful conduit to industry expertise and assist helplines getting in touch more easily with relevant contact points from companies.

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17   https://www.betterInternetforkids.eu/web/portal/about

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Appendix 1: Interview guideline with helpline staff

Interview guide - single interviews with key helpline representatives (CEO, Director etc.)

Introduction

This is to give some background to the helpline service, its history and mission. In particular, how it distinguishes between general support vs. internet safety support.

- Can you outline the history of how [the helpline] developed? When was it set up? Has it undergone any significant change since it was set up?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- What is the mission of [the helpline]?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- What are the advantages and disadvantages of being a general service/or focussed on internet safety (delete as appropriate)?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

Evaluating effectiveness

Our main interest here is to know how the helpline understands and measures the outcomes of the service. What does success mean? Is it the number of young people reached? A successful resolution to a counselling call? We would like to find out what systems are in place and how helplines would like to improve them.

- Has the helpline given attention to how you evaluate the success/effectiveness of the service?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- Do you have criteria for measuring success? How did you decide on these criteria?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- Are there national guidelines or requirements that you need to comply with?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- How do you capture success indicators/effectiveness?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- What methods (if any) have you employed? (e.g. survey, call-back, outcome, volume of calls etc.)

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- Have you changed or updated criteria/indicators in the recent past?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- How would you like to see success measurement improved?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

Awareness

Awareness of the service is also a possible success indicator. How do helplines promote and measure awareness? How do they view their position and role vis a vis other stakeholders?

- How well known is [the helpline]?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- What activities do you undertake to promote awareness of the helpline?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- Which are the most effective?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- Do you measure awareness and if so how?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- How could more general public awareness be improved?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- Is there sufficient awareness - and cooperation - between the helpline and industry/government/other agencies? How could it be improved?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- What are the benefits and the challenges of your involvement in the Insafe network?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

Emerging issues/support needed

We would like to hear from helplines about the current challenges they face as well as new and emerging risks on the horizon that they have identified through their engagement with young people. What are the implications for helplines and how should they/policymakers respond?

● What challenges are you experiencing in providing helpline support?

_____
_____
_____
_____

● Are there new internet-related risks/issues emerging that you haven't encountered previously?

_____
_____
_____
_____

● What are the training supports in place for employees/volunteers?

_____
_____
_____
_____

● What are the areas in which you need more support and guidance?

_____
_____
_____
_____

● What improvements would you like to see to [the helpline] to strengthen its role in internet safety?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix 2: Focus group discussion guideline

Focus group discussion - for staff and volunteers for helplines

These are indicative questions to guide the focus group. Encourage a free-flowing discussion to brainstorm and stimulate ideas on the topics below.

In general, we would like to encourage participants (volunteers and employees) to reflect on the role, success and impact of the helpline. Open the discussion by focusing on the experiences of the helpline - what is it attempting to do, is it making a difference, what makes for a successful session?

The role of the helpline

- Can you talk about the mission of the helpline: what is it trying to achieve? What need is it responding to?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- What are some of the main reasons people contact [the helpline]?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- How much of your work is specifically related to internet issues? Please elaborate.

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- How does the helpline support those who contact it?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- In what areas has [the helpline] been most effective (in general and internet related)?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

Evaluating impact

We would like to hear your views about what is best practice. Also we would like to know how you assess the effectiveness of your services and how to improve it.

- What, for you, is a successful call/response/listening session?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- Can you give some examples of situations where you feel the helpline has really helped or worked well?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

● By contrast, are there situations where you feel the helpline is not able to assist? Please describe some typical examples.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

● Do you offer any opportunities to callers to give an opinion about the service/consultation at the end of a session?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

● How do you record your assessment or evaluation after the call?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

● How do you follow up the call?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

● How do you identify if the call/consultation is a success or not? Do you have any criteria to compare the level of success?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

- What more could be done to document and capture the work of [the helpline] in internet safety support?

  _____

  _____

  _____

  _____

  _____

Emerging issues

We would like to hear from helplines about the current challenges they face as well as new and emerging risks on the horizon that they have identified through their engagement with young people.

- What issues have been the most difficult/challenging to deal with? Why?

  _____

  _____

  _____

  _____

  _____

- What trends have you identified that are likely to be of concern in the coming period?

  _____

  _____

  _____

  _____

  _____

- Are there areas in which you feel you need more support (technical, education, training etc.)? Please elaborate.

  _____

  _____

  _____

  _____

  _____

  _____

Appendix 3: Interview guideline with stakeholder

The role of the helpline and the nature of their service

Other stakeholders in the field of internet safety can offer a valuable perspective as fellow professionals in the field. Given that internet safety is built upon multistakeholder cooperation, there are different roles and functions and different perceptions of how safety can be best promoted. All views are valid and - of course - will be treated in confidence. Possible stakeholders may include: law enforcement, education, children's charities, government personnel, industry representatives, youth leaders etc.

Firstly, we would like to hear from the stakeholder's perspectives their perception of the role, importance and contribution of the helpline in supporting internet safety in the country. Stakeholders may wish to address the role of the helpline from a more general point of view (what they think the role of a helpline is) or alternatively talk about the specific service provided by the national helpline.

- Can you briefly describe your own position as a stakeholder within the field of internet safety?
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- What in your view is the function of [the helpline] in providing support for internet safety?
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- How important is that role?
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- Are there features or aspects that the helpline service that, in your view, the helpline does not currently deal with and should consider?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- What additional services could/should the helpline provide? Why are they important/how could they help build greater levels of internet safety?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

Evaluating impact

The focus of this research is on identifying ways to measure impact, effectiveness and success for helplines. So, in the following questions we are interested to hear how other experts in the field view success and impact. Their perception from an external perspective of the helpline's achievements would be interesting, for instance, and help set the context. We would also like to probe the experts to get their sense of the priorities that helplines might focus on.

- What in your opinion have been the most important achievements of [the helpline] in recent years?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- How would you measure the success of the helpline?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- Is there sufficient public awareness of [the helpline]? How could it be improved?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- What do you think could make the helpline more successful in its mission?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

Emerging issues

Finally, we would also like to know from the specific vantage point of the stakeholder about any new challenges or emerging risks that they have identified and in which the helpline might have a role now or in the future.

- Have you identified any new trends, risks or challenges that are likely to be a concern for internet safety in the coming period?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- How do you think the helpline might deal with these?

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

- Are there areas in which you feel that the helpline needs more support (technical, education, training etc.)? Please elaborate.

  _____
  _____
  _____
  _____

Appendix 4: Online survey to helplines

Online survey to helpline services

Introduction: your organisation and the service provided

1. Is your helpline? *(Tick as many as appropriate)*
   a. General helpline
   b. Specific helpline (dedicated to internet safety)
   c. Other (specify): ....

2. What are the working hours for your helpline?
   a. Normal working hours : 9am-5pm
   b. Outside working hours (specify): ....
   c. 24/7
   d. Other (specify): ....

3. Who do you provide services to?
   a. Anyone, including children, parents, carers
   b. Only children (under 18)
   c. Certain type of people (parents/teachers) (specify): ....
   d. Other (specify): ....

4. How many full-time staff does your helpline employ (only internet related)?
   a. 1-3 people
   b. More than 3 people

5. How many volunteers work for your helpline?
   a. 1-9 people
   b. 10 to 20
   c. More than 20 people

6. What type of number do you use for callers to contact you?

   a. Your own helpline/Insafe number

   b. Use the general helpline number

   c. Both

   d. Other: ....

7. What type of support/consultation does your helpline provide? *(Tick as many as appropriate)*

   a. Telephone service

   b. Email service

   c. Chat room

   d. Text service

   e. Other (specify): ....

Evaluating impact

8. Which of the following does your helpline run to improve public awareness raising? *(Tick as many as appropriate)*

   a. Advertising on national media (television, radio)

   b. Online advertising

   c. On your own website

   d. Information sessions at community/schools, public event etc.

   e. Other (specify): ....

9. With regard to operating procedures, which of the following do you use?

   a. Your own procedure/operational manual for internet safety related issues

   b. Guidelines for general helplines

   c. Other (specify): ....

10. Do you record feedback or evaluation after the call? *(Tick as many as appropriate)*

   a. On the system (where you log all incoming calls)

   b. In a separate evaluation form

   c. Other (specify): ....

   d. None of the above. This is not recorded

11. Which of the following do you offer to callers in order to give an opinion about the service/consultation at the end of a session? *(Tick as many as appropriate)*

   a. Online form

   b. Verbal feedback just after the call

   c. Text service

   d. Other (specify): ....

   e. None

12. Which of the following help you to identify if a call/consultation has been successful or not? *(Please rank in priority order, option 1 as the most important indicator, 2 as the second etc.)*

   _ The length of the call

   _ The level of calm/relaxed air of callers after the calls

   _ The caller's expression

   _ Calling back

   _ Feedback form

   _ Other (specify): ....

13. Which of the following would help in measuring the success of the helpline? *(Please rank in priority order, option 1 as the most important indicator, 2 as the second etc.)*

   _ Level of publicity

   _ Number of calls

   _ Number of successful calls

   _ Positive feedback from callers

   _ Participation from other stakeholders

   _ Other (specify): ....

14. Has your organisation undertaken any independent assessment or evaluation of the helpline service in the past?

    a. Yes (please enclose the main findings/evaluations) ....

    ....

    b. No (please state the reason) ....

    ....

Emerging issues/challenges

15. Which of the issues listed below are likely to be of concern in relation to internet safety in the future?

    a. Generational differences - conflict at home vs technology

    b. Bullying/cyberbullying

    c. Sexual content

    d. Abusive communication

    e. Hate speech/content

    f. Racism

    g. Self-harm

    h. Other (specify): ....

16. What issues have been the most difficult/challenging to deal with?

    a. For consultation by telephone (specify) ....

    b. For consultation by texting (specify) ....

    c. For consultation by chatroom (specify) ....

    d. Other (specify): ....

17. Are there areas in which you feel you need more support? Please elaborate.

    a. Technical support in helpline services

    b. Awareness raising

    c. Training of staff

18. What are the advantages and benefits for your helpline in being part of the Insafe network?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

19. What are the disadvantages, if any, of being part of the Insafe network?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____