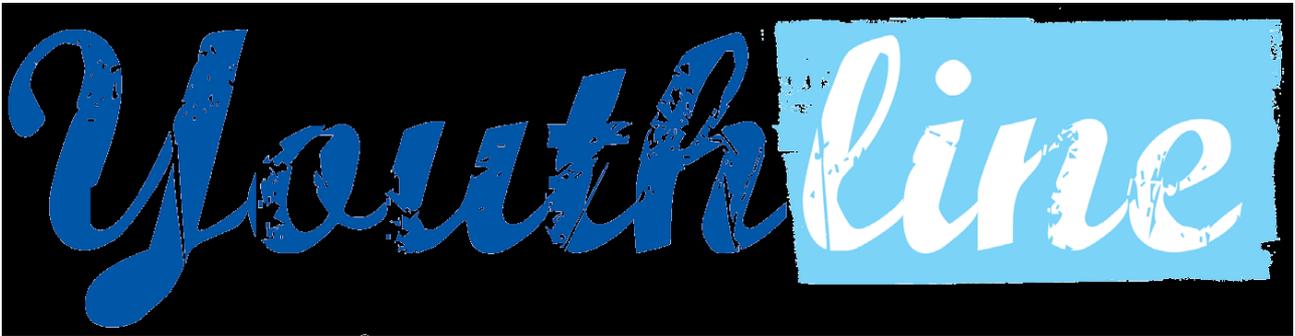


# Evaluation of Youthline Wellington

## Qualitative Exploration



Prepared for Youthline Wellington  
30<sup>th</sup> March 2018



# Acknowledgements

Youthline Wellington was supported by generous funding from NZ Lottery Grants Board and the Lottery Community Sector Research Committee, for this Evaluation of Youthline Wellington.

We also received generous assistance, information and feedback from many individuals and organisations:

- College counsellors and students from the Wellington and Hutt Valley regions
- Youthline Wellington funders, supporters, referrers
- Youthline Wellington staff and volunteers
- Youthline Auckland administration

# Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is for Youthline Wellington to better understand its market and stakeholders to increase its effectiveness and efficiencies.

Research Services Ltd undertook a mixed method approach to evaluate Youthline Wellington, with a mainly qualitative approach to the objectives to enable deeper insights to emerge, but also to be teamed up with on-line surveys to provide weighting to the insights. This involved activities with college students, funders, referrers, supporters and Youthline Wellington Volunteers.

The main findings are:

- Youthline Wellington plays an essential role in improving mental health among youth
- Youthline has an extremely positive heritage and legacy, with a brand that is trusted, familiar and recognised.
- To continue to be at the forefront of people's minds, Youthline needs to increase its relevance, presence and reassurance among youth.
- Youthline Wellington needs to increase available funds, shift funds from elsewhere, or to develop stronger partnerships with other counselling brands so resources can be shared.

This report has definitely provided valuable information that will help Youthline Wellington stay connected and relevant to young people. Also highlight reasons why funders, referrers, supporters, need to continue funding, supporting or referring Youthline Wellington.

# Contents

Purpose and objectives	5
Background	6
Methodology	7
Formation of Evaluation Plan	7
Evaluation Plan	7
Main research findings	12
Contextual Considerations	12
Inside-out analysis of Youthline Wellington: Volunteers & Supervisors perspective	21
Outside-in analysis of Youthline Wellington: Stakeholders perspective	24
Outside-in analysis of Youthline Wellington: Young People’s perspective	29
Conclusions	42
Appendix	51
Definitions	55
References	56

# Purpose and objectives

Youthline Wellington wants to better understand its market and stakeholders to increase its effectiveness and efficiencies. In particular:

1. To assess if the Youthline Brand/Service continues to fit with the needs of young people. Is it still connecting with young people?
2. To generate information that will contribute to better services outcome
3. To target funders with valid reasons why Youthline is an important service to invest in.

Therefore, the main purpose of this research and evaluation is to really understand from a young person's perspective, their connection and relevancy to Youthline Wellington. In addition to that we wanted to check from stakeholders (funders, referrers, supporters and other organisations that support young people) how they viewed Youthline Wellington and why they fund, refer or support Youthline.

The evaluation objectives are as follows:

- Show how Youthline is working [ie numbers interacting with Youthline, methods of interaction etc.]
- Determine if Youthline wasn't available what gaps or impact would that leave for potential users
- Assess perceived relevancy and impact of the Youthline services for young people.
- Show what's not working, what is working and what other services stakeholders think Youthline Wellington should provide.

# Background Research

Youthline Wellington is a not for profit organisation who provide safe, youth-centred support services for young people. The mainstay of the organisation is the youth helpline, a confidential phone/text/email and webchat counselling service for young people. Youthline Wellington also provides youth development training, information and resources, education and training for schools, volunteers, and the wider community. Youthline Wellington has provided phone counselling since 1971.

Youthline provide an important service for young people in New Zealand. Youthline responds to a wide range of issues that matter to young people such as stress, self-esteem, relationships, violence, bullying, peer-pressure, confidence, drugs and alcohol. National Youthline data indicates a strong need for Youthline services. In 2016-17 Youthline counsellors responded to 18,050 calls and 126,485 incoming texts nationwide (increase of 2,568 texts from previous year – 123,917). Of these, Youthline Wellington responded to 871 calls and 6,793 texts.

Research conducted by Colmar Brunton in 2014 indicated that nationally Youthline has strong brand presence with 50% of survey respondents identifying Youthline as an organisation that supports young people.<sup>1</sup>

Youthline Wellington operates through volunteers. There are currently over 100 volunteers and 2 paid staff members. Volunteers are trained and supported through the Youthline Wellington personal development process and training programme. Youthline Wellington trains up to 40 volunteers per year.

Although there is clear demand for and use of Youthline phone services, Youthline Wellington has limited research and evaluative data to demonstrate the impact, relevance or efficiency of their services. This data is important to improve Youthline Wellington services for young people. Therefore, Youthline Wellington has hired an independent party, Research Services Ltd to perform an Evaluation of Youthline Wellington.

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<sup>1</sup> Colmar Brunton. (2014). Youthline - The State of the Generation report. Retrieved from <https://www.youthline.co.nz/assets/Uploads/PDFs/2014-Youthline.-The-state-of-the-generation.pdf>

# Methodology

## Formation of Evaluation Plan

The research and evaluation plan was discussed with Youthline Wellington (including Governance Team, staff and key volunteers). To ensure Youthline Wellington has input into the research and evaluation methods, a Youthline Evaluation Team was formed consisting of four Youthline Wellington staff/volunteers and researchers Lisa Errington and Karline de Boer. The Youthline Evaluation Team's role was to:

- Discuss and decide on:
  - Methods and format of the Evaluation Plan
  - Who to obtain feedback from and how
  - Questions for each activity
- Assist with gathering of data, contact details and information pertaining to the Evaluation Plan.
- Assist with application to NZ Ethics Committee for approval of Youthline Wellingtons Evaluation Plan (methods and questions).

## Evaluation Plan

It was and is imperative RSL is an independent and neutral party to understand what key stakeholder groups are thinking, therefore the research was mainly conducted from an outside in perspective versus inside out. With Youthline Wellington's key stakeholders being young people, plus supporters, referrers, funders.

The additional stakeholders included in this evaluation were Youthline Wellington volunteers and Group Supervisors, to ascertain if there were any additional ideas coming through that we didn't get from young people and other stakeholders.

We undertook a mixed method approach to evaluate Youthline Wellington, with a mainly qualitative approach to the objectives and purpose to enable deeper insights to emerge but also to be teamed up with on-line surveys to provide weighting to the insights.

Youthline's policy and the confidentiality agreement Youthline has with its users (young people), meant we couldn't access or map data of their users. Therefore, we had to design other activities where we could obtain insights and ideas from young people in an ethical, anonymous and supportive manner.

For the online survey to be more effective, it was designed after the college focus groups had been conducted with key thoughts and perceptions emerging from it.

The Evaluation Plan methodology is an ten-step process:

Tool development – Design the plan for the evaluation, including the sample, information sheet, consent forms if needed and design interview discussion guides/questions for College Focus Groups, College Student Online Survey, Individual Stakeholder interviews and YL volunteer workshop.



Programme administrative data - The Evaluation Team (mainly YL staff/volunteers) will obtain and analyse anonymised data from the service to provide a picture of the components of the service and service users.



College Focus Groups – to explore Awareness/Knowledge/Contact with agencies who offer help to young people? Perceptions of Youthline? Strengths/weaknesses (with other agencies)? Key perceived contact points for Youthline Wellington? Suggestions for improving?

To be performed at Aotea College, St Pats College Silverstream and Wellington East Girls College, with one focus group (2 hours duration) with 8-10, Year 12/13 (16+years) students per college:

- Participants self-selected via daily news.
- Student to sign consent form when they attend the focus group.
- Counsellor to be available within the College grounds for the duration of the focus group.



College online survey - To build a database of 'evidence' we will make the online survey available to all Year 12/13 students (16+years) who weren't able to attend the College Focus Group at the above 3. This online survey will be conducted after the College Focus Groups.

This survey is to explore Awareness/Knowledge/Contact with agencies who offer help to young people? Perceptions of Youthline? Strengths/weaknesses (with other agencies)? Key perceived contact points for Youthline Wellington? Suggestions for improving

At the end of the online survey form, Youthline's phone number will be shown for students that need any support.



Stakeholder interviews - Research Services will undertake in-depth 45 minute interviews with 8 stakeholders to determine the relevance and perceptions of the efficiency of Youthline Wellington. Interviews will also assess how Youthline Wellington integrates with other relevant services in Wellington. Interviews will be undertaken with 8 stakeholders, including funders, referrers and Wellington organisations that serve young people and other people in the community.

These interviews will be held after the College student focus group and after information has been drawn from the programme administration data. Insights from these two areas will be shared with the stakeholders to discuss how Youthline Wellington is perceived and relevant to young people and the efficiency of Youthline Wellington services.



Youthline Wellington volunteer workshop - with up to 10 Youthline volunteers (phone counsellors, youth workers, Expo volunteers). This workshop will be held after the college students and after information has been drawn from the programme administration data. Insights from these two areas will be shared with volunteers to discuss further why they are emerging and what could be done to combat any issues. Also, to understand from their perspective:

- The strengths and weaknesses of Youthline/ Youthline system?
- How they feel Youthline could improve
- How they believe the Youthline brand is perceived in the market vs other counselling brands?
- What is driving these perceptions?
- Any discrepancies between what young people think/feel and volunteers think/feel?



Youthline Wellington Group Supervisors – to be contacted by email, after all research activities have been conducted, to understand from their perspective, and obtain feedback on:

- The strengths and weaknesses of Youthline/ Youthline system?
- How they feel Youthline could improve?
- How they believe the Youthline brand is perceived in the market vs other counselling brands?
- Youthline’s uniqueness?
- How to promote Youthline Wellington?



Analysis of data and information activity sources:

- Immediately after each activity, analyse findings in relation to objectives. Present YL Evaluation Team with a snapshot of the findings relating to objectives.
- On completion of all activities, review analysis and synthesis across all data and information activity sources, against the evaluation objectives.



Presentation of findings & facilitating Workshop. This workshop will involve Youthline Wellington (governance group, staff and volunteers) to discuss the findings of the evaluation, key learnings and improvements.



Write up report: Executive Summary; Aims; Objectives; Background; Methodology; Results; Discussion; Conclusions.

## Selection of participants in research activities:

### College Focus Groups

- One college from Porirua, Hutt Valley and Wellington were selected. With one being a co-ed college (Tawa College), a female college (Wellington East Girls College) and a male college (St Pat's Silverstream). All three colleges have used Youthline Wellington for Youth Development programmes in the past.
- The College counsellor and College Principal was informed of the Youthline Wellington Evaluation Plan and asked if they would like to participate. An outline of what was required from them and the process was discussed. With the students' well-being as paramount.
- The advert requested Y12/13 students (16 years or older) who have previously experienced feeling low or stressed, or have related with others who have, to contact their school counsellor if they are interested in participating in a quickfire brainstorming session with a marketing/research company. Who are currently doing an evaluation on a youth service and in need of their opinion and thoughts, to ensure the youth service is relevant to the youth of New Zealand.
- The Counsellor assisted in the recruiting of the college students by firstly ensuring no students volunteering were currently vulnerable (going through physical or emotional issues). If the number of students volunteering exceeded 10, Counsellor to select a diverse group of cultures. Provide further information for students (background information, consent forms).
- The students were not asked personal questions. Their feedback was anonymous. They could pull out of the Focus Group at any stage. A College Counsellor was available on the campus if a student needed support.

### College Online Survey

The College Counsellor at each of the three colleges were asked to advertise (via College newsletter/notice board) and provide a link to an online survey for Y12/13 (16 years old plus) students, that weren't able to participate in the Focus Group, but would like to give feedback.

Only the first three questions were mandatory (agreement to participate, college and gender). After which they could choose what they wanted to answer. No personal questions were asked.

### Stakeholder interviews

Eight stakeholders were selected, including two funders, two referrers, two supporters and two Wellington organisations that service young people. Process;

- Youthline Wellington provided RSL with a list of their stakeholders and how they are involved with Youthline Wellington.
- RSL researched these stakeholders and selected the 8 stakeholders ensuring (apart from funders) they provided a diverse mix of services for young people.
- RSL firstly emailed these stakeholders an introduction to the Evaluation Plan (purpose, request for their participation, confidentiality, flow of the questions). Then contacted by phone and asked if they would like to participate and a suitable time for the interview.
- The 8 stakeholders selected, and their feedback is anonymous to Youthline Wellington. This was to ensure more open and honest feedback.

### **Workshop with Youthline Wellington Volunteers (Phone Counsellors, youth workers, expo volunteers) –**

An advert was published in Youthline Wellington newsletter and Facebook for 8-10 Youthline Wellington volunteers to participate in this workshop.

To entice more participation and feedback from volunteers, a homogeneous group of volunteers as possible, from a hierarchical position, was needed. Therefore, no Youthline Wellington Managers or Group Supervisors were invited to this workshop.

### **Youthline Wellington Group Supervisors**

Youthline Wellington's eight Group Supervisors were contacted by email to ask if they would like to participate in the Evaluation of Youthline Wellington, by answering the questions outlined above. The questions were designed after the Youthline Wellington Volunteer Workshop had been conducted, due to the key thoughts emerging from the research activities. We wanted to understand the Youthline Wellington Group Supervisors perspective on the key thoughts emerging.

## **New Zealand Ethics Committee**

Due to young people being involved in the evaluation activities, the Youthline Wellington Evaluation Team felt it was important to get approval from NZ Ethics Committee for the Youthline Wellington Evaluation Plan. We needed to ensure our methods and questions were ethical and supportive not only to young people but to other stakeholders involved in this research and evaluation.

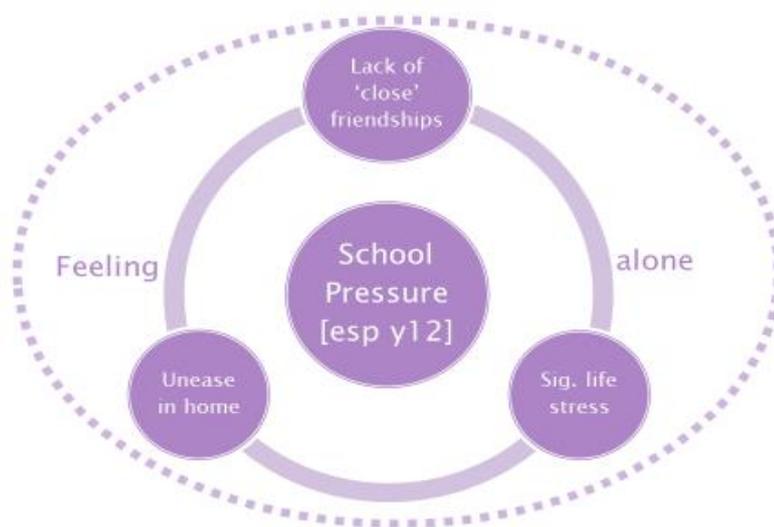
Therefore, after the Evaluation Plan, methods and questions were discussed and agreed to by the Youthline Wellington Evaluation Team, a request was presented to the New Zealand Ethics Committee for the Ethics Review of Youthline Wellington's Evaluation Plan. Approval was given on the 10<sup>th</sup> January 2018.

# Main research findings

## Contextual Considerations

The research identified six key points that won't surprise experts in the mental health field but are important to consider when developing and/or refining Youthline's strategy and various touch points of the brand going forward.

1. Reason for depression is influenced heavily by academic stresses among young people



Among all young people interviewed, almost everybody claimed it was school pressures, particularly in year 12, that caused them to start feeling anxious, stressed, low and depressed.

*"It's like being under a block of ice...I can't breathe...everything tunnels. It feels like white hot...it's just under my skin and anything can trigger it [St Pats, y12]"*

*"It's like Olympic runners holding my goals and no matter how hard I sprint I can't catch up with them and the further you get a way the more anxious you get...you're in a tunnel getting smaller and smaller" [St Pats, y12]"*

*"For me it was when I was achieving higher than other kids and then people put a spotlight on me and I didn't really want it" [St Pats, y12]"*

Many claimed these pressures came initially from their parents having underlying expectations of their academic achievements, themselves, as well as the school constantly reinforcing the importance of y12 and

the downsides if standards are not met. Added to this anxiety is decisions around career pathways especially if others around them seem to have clarity.

*“What catches me out a lot is the future. Stuff is now starting to get serious and its time to start thinking about it. It really stresses me out...it looks like everybody is further ahead with their plans and goals and that is stressful” [St Pats, y12]*

*“The external exam month is really bad. You know everything hinges on your end of year result. If you stuff up then it will wreck you for next year” [St Pats, y12]*

*“Parents expect certain things of you. They believe what you should be doing is above what you can do which can really stress you out trying to please them, but you don’t want to tell them that” [Wgtn East, y13]*

Interestingly, yet sadly, most said there was little-no information around the school to encourage them to seek help and where to go. Generally, this information could only be found in the school counselling offices or in health rooms which many senior students don’t participate in or are not eager to visit.

Other stresses acknowledged as either triggering the start of depression, or tipping them into a more crisis state if they are already feeling pressured by academia, were:

- Death and/or Serious Illness
- Uneasiness in home: tensions between parents and older siblings, tensions between parents etc
- Lack of close friendships: feeling isolated, alone

Compounding and often exaggerating these low feelings was the stresses caused by social media. Interestingly those spoken to felt teens today are worse off than generations ago. They felt the main issue was an underlying insecurity of ‘who they are’ versus ‘who they should try to be’.

*“On social media everybody’s lives are perfect – that adds to your negative feelings. If you are feeling bad and you see all these photos of people’s perfect lives then you feel even worse” [Wgtn East, y13]*

*“There’s advanced ways now of being judged...you put something on the internet and its gone in seconds and you can’t take it back – it’s really daunting” [Tawa, y13]*

*“We try so hard to fit in...we have all this social media which encourages us to conform to lots of different ways rather than just being happy with who we are” [Tawa, y13]*

*“If you’re not watching the same show, same games, same media stuff it can outcast you. It can force you into a person you’re really not which takes a lot of energy” [St Pats, y12]*

Key takeaway:

- a) Greater visibility of “helpline” posters/workshops etc is needed in schools. Messages need to mirror their problems to encourage propensity to call.
- b) The more presence Youthline and other helplines can have in key social media sites – i.e. Instagram - the better.

## 2. There is more acceptance of depression

Whilst depression appears to be increasing among some young people, so is the acceptance of it and the interest in talking, at a general level, about it. Indeed, the two points are likely to be mutually inclusive, with the rise of media attention around mental health and depression driving a rise in numbers of people considering and/or acknowledging their feelings more. However, as highlighted in the next point, this may be creating a double-edged sword with a fear of speaking out and seeking help as many young people claimed they don't want to be seen as 'jumping on the band wagon'.

*"It's much more normal now to say I'm depressed without feeling stink" [Tawa, y13]*

*"5-6 years ago I was a really unhappy kid and nobody knew what to do with me. They sent me to professionals, but I hadn't had a bad life, so they couldn't work out what was wrong. However, there is more awareness now of mental health. I used to feel really alone and my parents used to think 'we've got a broken kid'. They tried to find a reason...but there was none and they've finally realised that is ok" [Wgtn East, y12]*

Young people feel this growing acceptance of depression is being driven obviously by media, but also the commitment in schools to offering guidance via in-house counselling service, health classes and talks from external helpline services.

Key takeaway:

- a) Important for Youthline to continue to be seen as a key contributor to these changes, especially if they want to grow their funding resource.

## 3. Many are still resisting seeking external help until they reach crisis point

There still appears to be many, and possibly more pronounced among boys, resisting seeking help early. A common thought sadly running across most groups was *"It's ok to seek help when you're close to committing suicide...but not before"*.

*"I let things bottle up like there was no tomorrow. There have been times that I have broken down literally screaming" [Wgtn East, y13]*

*"When I had anxiety, I wanted to bottle up my emotions...but I got so bad that I tried to commit suicide. I blacked out. I now know I can't do that again...I value my life too much" [St Pats, y12]*

*"I've always been told to bottle it up...my mum says to let it out for 5 minutes and then get over it" [Wgtn east, y12]*

This insight was reinforced further by:

- Australian Research: *"75 of mental illness and substance abuse occurs in the young yet only 29% seek help" [funder]*
- NZ's State of Mind Research, 2014: When asked the question if youth felt supported for each issue that caused depression 'no' strongly outweighed 'yes'
- Youthline Volunteers: *"We have a lot more high-risk calls than we used to", "In the short time that I have been solo I have had lots of suicide calls"*

And the

- Youthline Wellington survey

Q. Have you ever contacted an outside service for help when you were feeling low/stressed/anxious, regarding emotional issues?  
[279 answered]

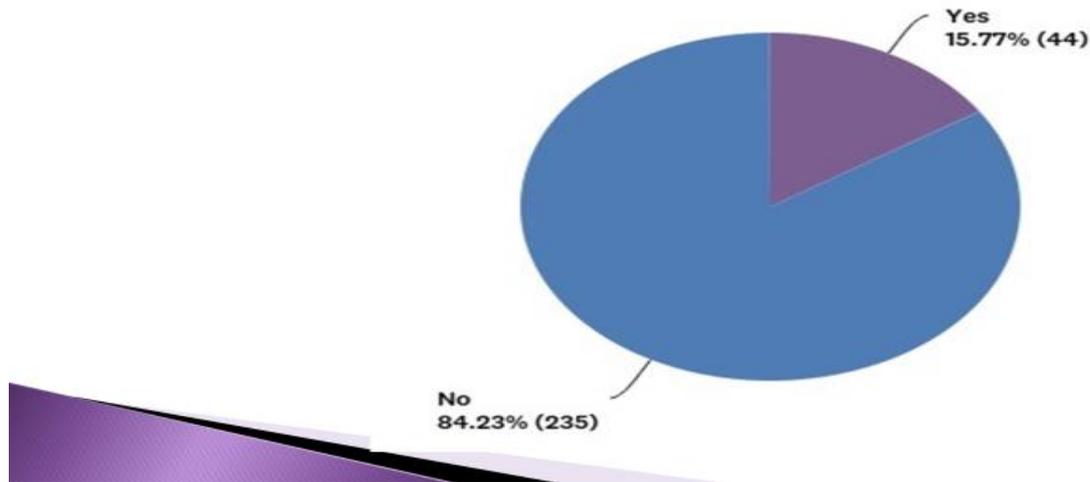


Table 1: College Online Survey – Have you ever contacted an outside service for help?

Three key barriers apparent to seeking help early:

A

### 65% rate embarrassment as the key barrier to seeking help

[State of Nation study: Colmar Brunton, 2014]

*"It's still uncool to be asking for help"*  
[Tawa, y13]

*"I feel my mates would say I'm attention seeking if I went to counselling"* [St Pats, y12]

My issues are not big enough

*"Its hard to know if you have valid feelings..whether you have true anxiety/depression and you don't want to be called an attention seeker"* [Tawa, y13]



*"I feel my problem isn't worthy enough...people will say I'm over reacting"* [St Pats, y12]

I may not be taken seriously

*"There seems to be a mental health epidemic so its embarrassing to admit you're feeling those thoughts as people will just think you're jumping on the band wagon"* [Wgtn East, y13]

## B Fear of aftermath also apparent

All guys procrastinate and don't open up early but its because we don't want to get **rejected** [St Pats, y12]



"I don't want to be treated differently because of how I'm feeling. **Having a spotlight on you** and treated like you're **not stable** is scary...knowing your friends are acting different, too afraid to even joke, it actually makes you feel worse..." [St Pats, y12]

## C Uncertainty of who to turn to still exists [but weakening]

"I don't like talking to people face to face or on the phone so I just try and deal with it on my own" [Tawa, y12]



"I don't think I've seen any posters or information around our school that says who to contact if you don't want to see the school counsellor" [St Pats, y12]

Overall there was a need emerging among the young people spoken with, for more education in schools, especially in the latter years. While there has been significant movement in opening the doors about mental health a lot more budget and time needs to be invested to continue the conversation and encourage our youth that it's 'good to talk'.

*"It's hard. Nobody has taught us about the signs...that its everyday people getting on with their lives" [Tawa College, y12]*

*"We need more awareness on it. Explained more in class....not just talked about once and then forgotten about" [Tawa College, y13]*

*"People don't really know what it is. We've had one seminar on it" [Tawa College, y13]*

Key takeaway:

- a) Vital for more money and attention to be given to these three barriers if we want young people to seek help earlier

#### 4. Websites are creating a shift to when young people seek help

With the ongoing trend of web presence in young people's lives, more are starting to turn to websites, health forums and self-help apps for reassurance before they make the 'next step' to seek help or in many cases, to hopefully avoid [from their perspective] having to seek external help. They are motivated by the fact that it is:

- More instant
- More anonymous
- Less invasive

Interestingly, Lowdown's strong advertising presence and motivating imagery appears to be driving some of this earlier interest in self-help.

**An important note.** Most rely on their phones, versus computers, when looking at self-help web sites [for privacy and/or ease of use reasons]. Regardless of whether the website is attractive or useful, it will turn our audience off if it is not mobile-friendly. Young people appear to have very high expectations of what a website should look like aesthetically and be like technically. If a site doesn't meet these expectations, then it will be judged harshly and a disconnect between the brand and the audience will occur. Layered on top of this is the highly emotional state of a young person when seeking help via the web - depressed, stressed, unconfident, embarrassed, even fearful [of not finding help and being fixed – which needs consideration when designing the site.

*"I want to see that they actually want to help me, and they understand me" [St Pats, y12]*

*"I don't want to use a site that just talks about themselves" [Tawa College, y13]*

*"Happy images annoy me as it's not my reality" [Tawa College, y12]*

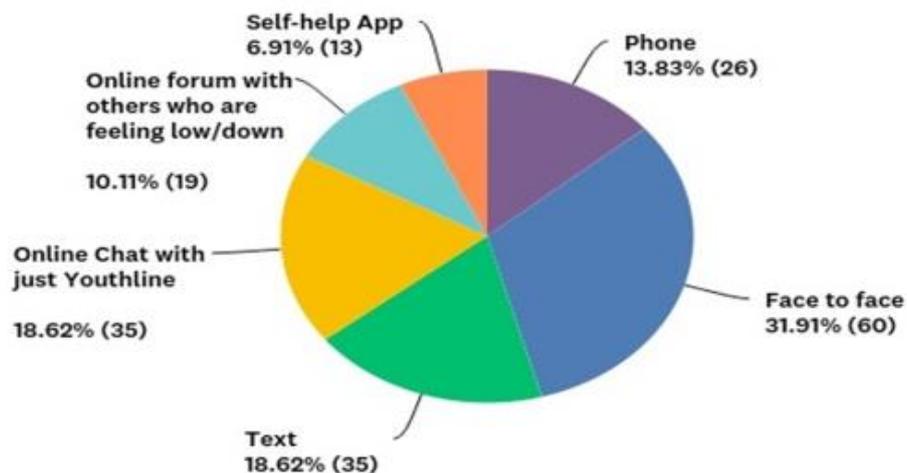
**Key takeaway:**

- a) Websites are starting to represent a crucial first touchpoint for a brand and seeking help. It is imperative they are designed with youth in mind otherwise connection and hope can quickly be lost.
- b) Vital that all websites are mobile friendly.
- c) The design of the site is critical. It needs to meet aesthetic and technical expectations as well as play a crucial role in reassuring and massaging emotional needs. See “Areas to Improve on” for further information on this.

**5. All channels have their place when serious help is sought.**

*“I just want some sympathy...somebody to validate that my feelings are real” [Wgtn East, y13]*

Q. What is your preferred option for receiving help from Youthline [or any helpline service]? [188 answered]



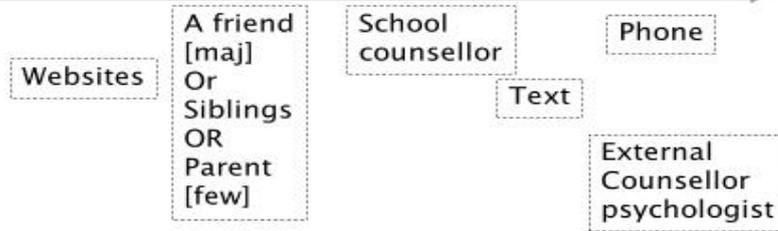
**Table 2: College Online survey – What is your preferred option?**



Start of depression



Suicidal thoughts



NB: this is a qualitative guideline from the 26 students spoken with

Views on the different service channels depend on personality and/or experience.

	Face to face	Phone	Text
<b>Positives</b> [some]	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More personal</li> <li>• Evokes high level of connection</li> <li>• Perceived greater likelihood of success</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anonymous: devoid of judgement and stigma</li> <li>• Easier to express emotion without feeling embarrassed</li> </ul> Volunteers perspective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to create rapport [cf text]</li> <li>• More effective [cf text]</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More discreet</li> <li>• Can work through own emotions while typing</li> <li>• Can delete</li> <li>• Minimal fear of somebody finding out</li> </ul> Volunteers perspective: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can continue throughout the day</li> <li>• Can think about responses</li> </ul>
<b>Issues</b> [others]	[Esp. School Counsellors]: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too easy to be seen and therefore labelled as depressive/suicidal</li> <li>• Embarrassing</li> <li>• Too hard to express feelings face to face</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign to many</li> <li>• Difficult to assess their interest/authenticity</li> <li>• Impersonal</li> <li>• Experience and/or word of mouth that can take a while to get through</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High scepticism it will make you feel better</li> <li>• Lacks emotion</li> </ul>

Key takeaway:

- a) Being seen as 'just a phone service' will alienate many. Important to promote all service channels available to motivate a broad spectrum of people.

## 6. A growing issue with supply and demand of face to face counselling

Two key points emerged here:

- More community support groups and schools' counsellors are observing more demand for their services every year.
- Some community support groups are full leaving many young people in need, exposed.

In all cases these support groups and school counsellors are reliant on having motivating collateral on site of alternative channels and brands, that their clients can turn to if they are unable to be seen by them.

Key takeaway:

- a) Important for brands such as Youthline to have high visibility so if a person is turned away from a face to face counselling service they will feel reassured and motivated to contact them.
- b) Important to retain close connections with all face to face counselling services to ensure collateral stock remains available and the Youthline brand remains top of mind when alternative channels are suggested.
- c) The more visual and bolder the brand advertising the better. Brochures and Branded service cards are heavily reliant on other medium such as posters to portray a strong motivating brand message. In isolation they will do little to reassure and connect.

## Inside-out analysis of Youthline Wellington: Volunteers & Supervisors perspective

Importantly the volunteers and supervisors' faith and commitment in the Youthline brand and service remains high. This was reflected not only in the information emerging from the exit interviews that are held when a volunteer leaves, but also in the comments emerging from the recent workshop held with current volunteers for this study.

### Positive work experience reflected in exit interviews

- Fantastic training process instilling desire to commit to YL & bonding with cohort.
- Buddying process really prepares me.
- Opportunity of becoming a buddy to new volunteers made the buddy feel like they achieved a lot.
- Supervision groups helped in many aspects including life outside of YL. Monthly would be ideal.
- YL Wgtn Management processes are effective.
- Communication within YL Wellington is very good and up-to-date (upcoming events, education)

### Youthline's strengths...



It's volunteers



It's training



It's inclusive structure & values

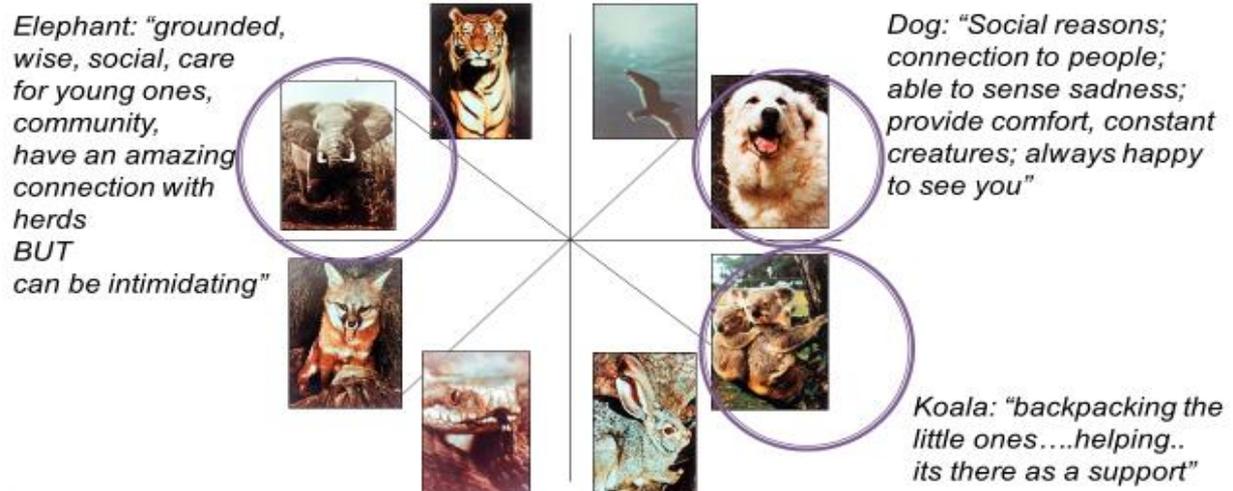


It's strengths-based counselling



It's anonymous counselling service

Their enthusiasm for the brand was further reinforced by the types of animals chosen to reflect the Youthline brand and why those animals were chosen. The adjectives used to describe the brand [as seen in the quotes below] reflect key drivers for why this group volunteers in general and with Youthline specifically.



## Going forward

Whilst there was a strong commitment to the brand and its values there were some clear thoughts of areas Youthline could work on to ensure commitment to the brand remains strong, among volunteers as well as its core audience: young people.

### 1. Improvements to the helpline arm of the business

Specific requests centred around broadening the efficiency and effectiveness of the Wellington service by introducing:

- A face to face service
- A triage person
- 24/7 triage availability
- Webchat
- Same training across all branches [so internal language used is consistent]
- More training on high risk calls
- Headsets for volunteers: "Sometimes we can be on a call for 2 hours, so it gets tiring holding a phone for that length of time"

## 2. Better visibility and connection with Youth

Most of the volunteers felt the promotion of the Youthline brand/service to young people could improve:

*“Comms is everything ...it’s the most important part of our business as if people don’t know about us then they can’t use us”*

*“We need to be more approachable, so young people don’t feel embarrassed or intimidated by calling. I love getting calls from those who ‘just want a sounding board’...they are amazing”*

*“We are always linked to articles on suicide, so it could make people think I’m not that bad, so I won’t contact them”*

## 3. Greater focus on funding

All felt there has been a lot of positive effort put into funding to date and traction has been made.

However, they are also aware that availability of funds is limited; that the ability to address specific issues with the service and the brand and make more of a difference to young people in Wellington, is restricted.

There is a feeling that to grow funds and opportunities further it probably requires a full time dedicated person.

*“There is a real desire to keep up with the changes...but it’s just having the support to be able to do it”*

*“Vicky does a great job looking after external relationships – it’s a huge job and ideally needs 1 person focusing on it”*

*“It’s incredible what has been achieved but there are more opportunities to take further”*

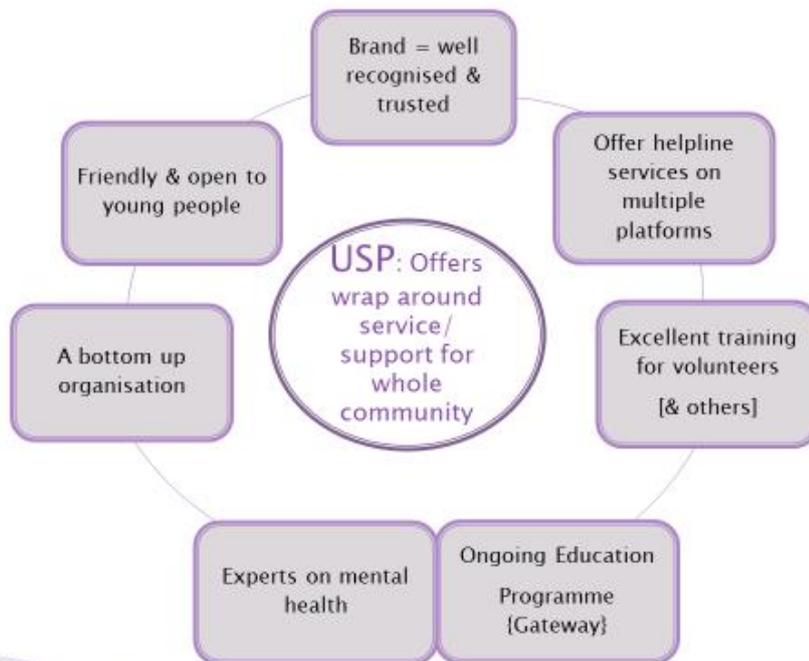
There were also thoughts shared on who Youthline could target and how:

- Capitalise on political opportunities – esp. the Prime Ministers interest in mental health
- Target corporate and large companies with larger budgets to help reduce the time spent with funding
- Ensure all communication is value based and personal.

## Outside-in analysis of Youthline Wellington: Stakeholders perspective

The stakeholders we spoke to included Funders, Supporters and Referrers.

Overall the perceptions of Youthline Wellington were very positive for a range of reasons:



*“They are always available and willing to help if you contact them” [Supporter]*

*“They are an alternative to school counsellors – a no shame alternative and anonymous. A lot of kids don’t think their problem is big enough for a counsellor” [Referrer]*

*“They are very people focussed” [Supporter]*

*“In their training sessions it hits you how giving their counsellors are” [Referrer]*

*“They train and select their volunteers well – they have a real range...those that have had troubled pasts but have worked through it and those who haven’t” [Supporter]*

*“Youthline has a real teen focus” [Referrer]*

*“We see them as an invaluable organisation in the city” [Funder]*

*“Youthline makes a big difference to a range of other youth organisations” [Funder]*

*“I get the sense that the Youthline brand is quite strong” [funder]*

*“They’ve been around so long that they MUST be good at what they do” [Funder]*

*“I like that they are using different channels to communicate with young people” [Funder]*

*“They are very engaged with the youth engagement network” [Funder]*

*“I think it’s good that they are not a faith-based organisation – they traverse all religions and all walks of life” [Funder]*

*“Their brand is really well recognised. It is synonymous with health and support” [Funder]*

*“Their uniqueness lies in their dedicated 24/7 youth support. Also, the data Youthline collects” [Funder]*

At a brand level they feel Youthline, rightly or wrongly, has the most visibility and presence. In many cases links with Youthline to their childhood –incl. colouring competitions, presence on What Now, Link with Shortland Street - is creating positive nostalgic perceptions and connections.

Most importantly, Youthline’s service is considered second to none among the stakeholders interviewed, and crucial to the wider Wellington region. When asked “Would Wellington miss Youthline if it didn’t exist” there was no question of its importance to the region and youth specifically.

*“Given many face to face counselling is full, having a backup like Youthline is vital to help the youth until they can actually see somebody. Most don’t want to see their GP” [Supporter]*

*“Youthline provide support outside of our capacity at the college. They provide a lot of support and education on how to deal with issues. Without this service, less students would have the ability to deal with their issues.” [Referrer]*

*“I think we’d notice if Youthline wasn’t there. Yes 7000 texts definitely not being supported would leave an impact and youth more stressed” [Funder]*

*“Young people experience a variety of issues, so they need choices of who can help them” [Referrer]*

*“Without YL services helping youth with issues before they become huge would put a lot of strain on other youth organisations and 2<sup>nd</sup> [CATS] and 3<sup>rd</sup> tier organisations [HOSPITALS]. If Youthline wasn’t there, then young people’s stress levels and mental health would be very high when they eventually contact the 2<sup>nd</sup> level” [Referrer]*

*“They help young people...but the fact they have a really good volunteer programme and develop their volunteers is really strong and important to Wellington. It’s a great volunteering opportunity that will be missed” [Funder]*

*“Having a backup like Youthline is vital to help the youth until they can actually see a counsellor. A lot of youth don’t want to see their GP” [Supporter]*

*“With outside counsellors fully booked more students are using inhouse college counsellors [200-300 students each year]. So, we need the support of Youthline to back up the help needed for*

students outside of school. Plus, Youthline is 24/7 which is essential as most students feel stressed outside of school” [Referrer]

“I’d hate to think if Youthline services weren’t there 24/7” [Referrer]

Funders, in particular, are interested in and motivated by the leadership role they perceive Youthline has in the community. In many cases, whilst they appreciate the helpline arm of the business they are motivated by its holistic focus – offering an amazing training channel for volunteers, ongoing preventative education programmes, as well as its helpline service for those in need.

“I see them as a valuable organisation for the city”

“They are making a big difference to a range of other youth organisations”

“I like how they have connections to other youth development organisation’s; I don’t think they should over extend themselves though”

“The speech they gave at the community awards was really heartfelt”

“A general feeling that I get from volunteers is that satisfaction is very high”

## Going forward

Moving forward stakeholders felt there were a few key areas that Youthline would benefit from focusing on:

<p><i>Increase awareness of Youthline’s service to youth</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More promotion/presence in schools [incl. tapping into internal online/intranet options]</li> <li>• Greater use of social media</li> <li>• Share the various options to contact</li> <li>• Improve visibility of who the volunteers are</li> </ul> <p>“Their greatest weakness is probably the branding of their service – e.g. how many people know that you can contact Youthline using text?” [Funder]</p> <p>“Youthline is seen as only dealing with really serious issues like suicide or mental health. They need to promote all their services and the types of issues – big or small” [Referrer]</p>
<p><i>More focus on its web presence</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure the website is up to date and relevant</li> <li>• Appear more connected</li> </ul> <p>“Youth are looking at help-seeking online so Youthline needs to make sure they are matching their needs” [Funder]</p>
<p><i>More education in schools</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Peer to peer support</li> <li>○ Resilience</li> <li>○ Mental health [what it is? How to cope?]</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<p><i>"Set up talks /interactive workshops and then market those to schools and at a cost. I have a reasonable budget. Attitude charges \$250 which seems fair, but I know Youthline could do it much better" [Supporter]</i></p>
<i>Promote annual data/stats</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Showcase how many people are using Youthline</li> </ul>
<i>More communication to wider stakeholder audience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offer training to external stakeholders</li> <li>• Contact counsellors/health teachers direct</li> </ul> <p><i>"I like their wee cards which I take for the kids, but I have to ask for them. I reckon they should contact counsellors/admin staff not just principals with info on how they can help" [Supporter]</i></p> <p><i>"They need to communicate more. Their training courses are amazing but unless you are in the know then you'd have no idea they are on" [Supporter]</i></p>
<i>More assertive with funding requests</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be more direct at training events in asking for donations</li> <li>• Tap into Youth week opportunities more</li> </ul> <p><i>"Youthline is more into giving, not receiving, so they're too shy to have the donation box upfront" [Supporter]</i></p> <p><i>"A lot who go to the training sessions aren't volunteers so they should be paying" [Supporter]</i></p>
<b>From funders:</b>	
<i>Tap into wider funding options</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eg. There is twelve community Trusts across NZ and currently they have a surplus of funds available</li> </ul> <p><i>"Pokie money is dropping so it's changing the landscape. I'm assuming Youthline won't have a lot of reserves, so they do have to look hard at where they're going" [Funder]</i></p>
<i>Focus on bigger funders versus little</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More time spent on servicing versus chasing the funding dollar</li> </ul>
<i>Share how the counselling market is working</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funders are keen to see if their funding spend is working effectively &amp; efficiently <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Who is driving the market and its direction and programmes?</li> <li>○ Who is doing what, where are the overlaps and gaps?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Regarding funding applications, the three funders spoken to felt that what Youthline currently provides fits with their needs.



What's the issue? What's the response? Do we think its worthy?  
Does it fit with our strategic focus?

*"They do tap into funding opportunities quite well. Vicky has a strong relationship with funders and people in the sector. She's been there a long time and is trusted. She's doing the relationship stuff really well" [Funder]*

*"Their reporting is really comprehensive. They have been around a long time, so they know how to report well and how to sustain relationships – they are doing a good job" [Funder]*

Going forward though, when submitting applications to both new funders as well as current, there was a strong call to ensure the application clearly fits with [or twisted to fit] the funders' strategic focus.

*"The issue for us is that the sector is busy, so new people come along with new approaches and new programmes and we do take a look at them. It can push other organisations aside. Our question is – what is the realistic burden rate payers should pick up? If it's a health service should the rate payers be picking up the bill or the government/health industry?" [Funder]*

## Outside-in analysis of Youthline Wellington: Young People’s perspective

The appeal of Youthline as a trusted, familiar brand remains high among young people.

Q. Which of the following groups did you contact when you needed help?

[27 answered]

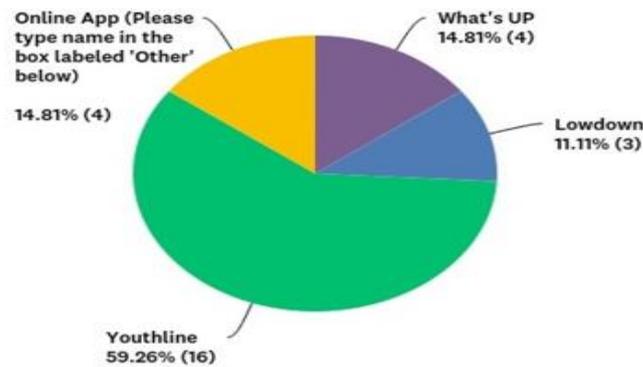
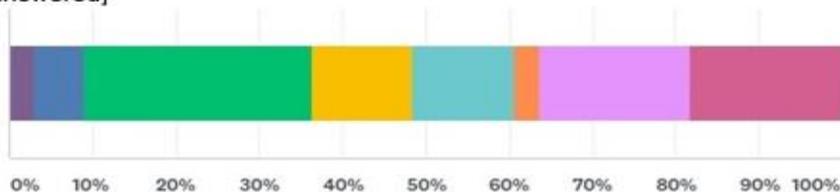


Table 3: College Online Survey – Which groups did you contact?

Q. What was the key reason why you contacted them in the first place?

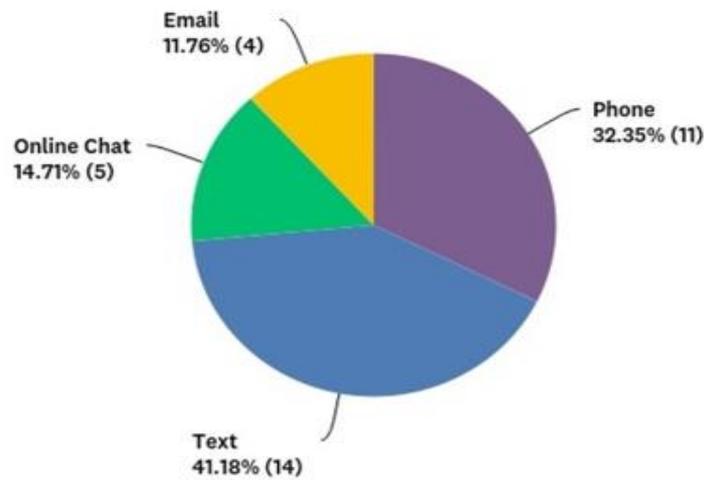
[33 answered]



- I knew of somebody else who had had a good experience with them
- I had a feeling that they'd be good at listening
- I associated them with mental health, so felt they could help me
- I knew they helped with a wide range of problems, big or little
- School always emphasised that if we needed help/support to contact Youthline
- I liked the option to talk to somebody
- I liked the idea of texting and not talking
- Other (please specify)

Table 4: College Online Survey – What was the key reason to contact them?

Q. How did you contact them?  
[34 answered]



**Table 5: College Online Survey – How did you contact them?**

Note: the sample size for the above three questions was small; Across the 300 that participated in the survey only 33 had sought help.

When asked what first comes to mind when they think of Youthline the following positive points emerge:

- ▶ Teens calling for help
- ▶ Telephone
- ▶ Been around for a long time [Primary School, Y9 talks, What Now]
- ▶ Mental Health... Suicide



- ▶ Most familiar
- ▶ Trust that YL works hard to help youth
- ▶ Serious and focused

However, whilst there are many young people that do contact Youthline in times of need, there are significantly more that haven't or wouldn't.

Q. Have you or a friend been in touch with Youthline in the past?  
[279 answered]

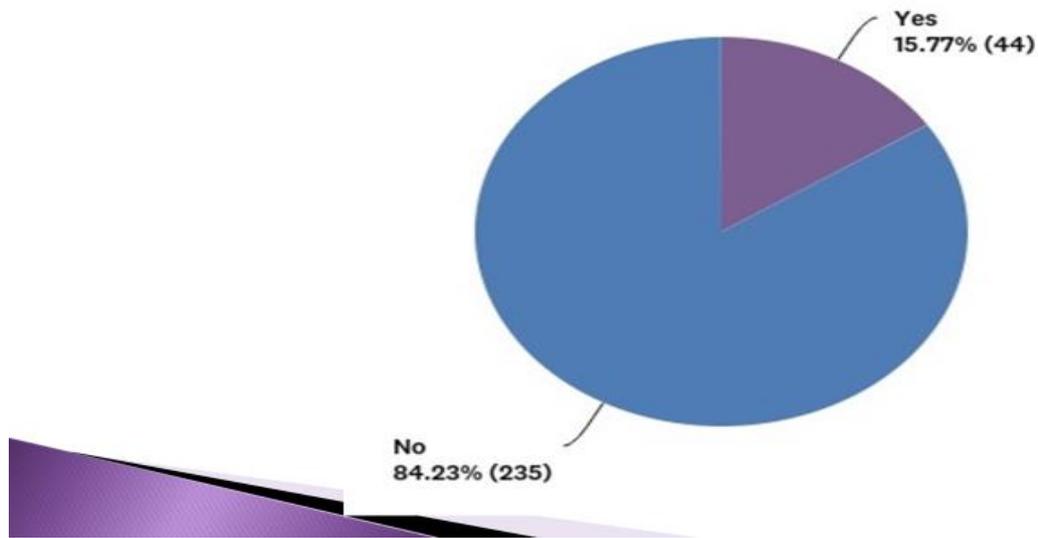


Table 6: College Online Survey – Have you been in touch with Youthline?

Q. Has there been times when it may have been useful for you to talk to an 'outside' person when you were feeling low/down about things in your life?  
[176 answered]

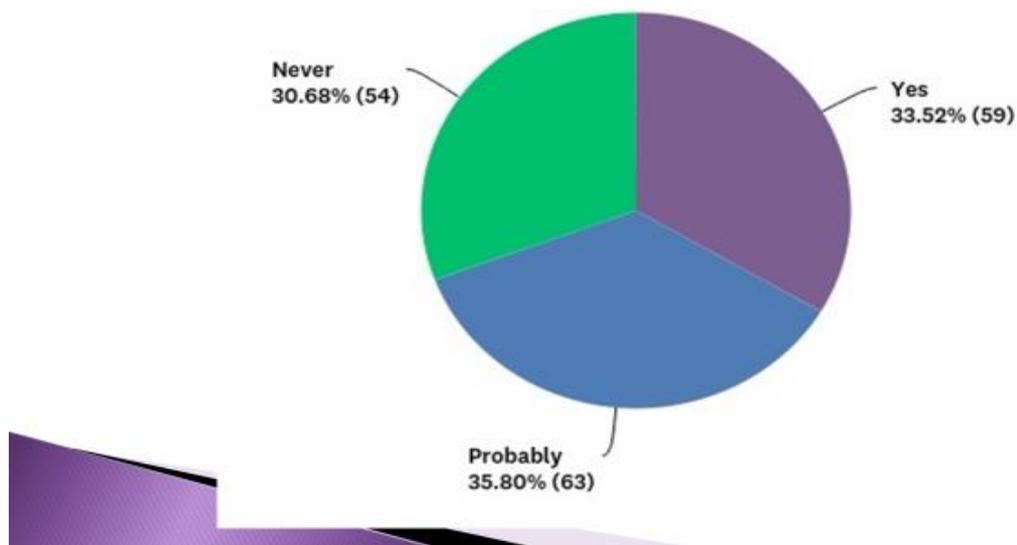


Table 7: College Online Survey – Has there been times when it may have been useful to talk to an outside person?

Q. If yes or probably, what were the key reasons why you didn't think about contacting YL? Please select up to 2 key reasons. [104 answered]

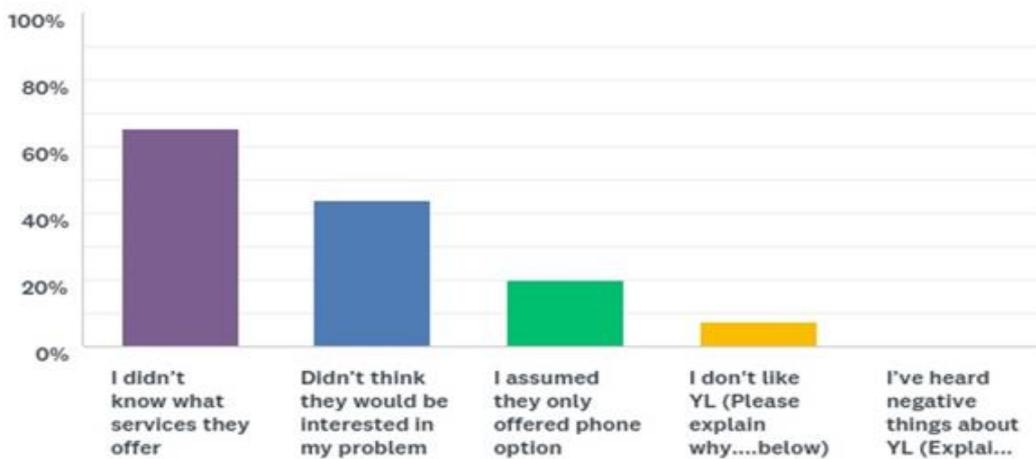
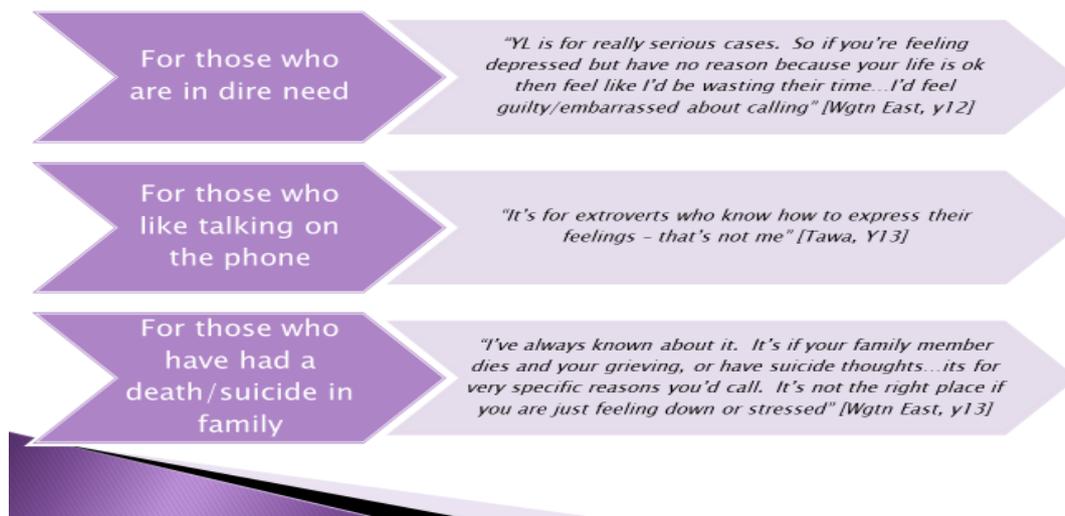


Table 8: College Online Survey – if yes what were the key reasons?

There are four overriding barriers to contacting Youthline. The barriers appear to be driven by:

- Lack of [perceived] visible promotion [and lack of funding to address this?]
- Connection with Suicide in newspapers etc [and no other wider stories being told]

### 1. Limited target audience



## 2. Limited visibility

At a practical level, lack of [perceived] visibility and a clear story of what Youthline does is keeping Youthline off many young peoples' minds when considering who to contact, when in need. However, it is also causing a growing disconnect and discomfort, at an emotional level, with its audience: ultimately there are too many unanswered questions:

- Who will I be talking to?
- Will they actually care about me and my problem?
- Will they help me or just refer me on?
- Will they be able to relate? And will I be able to relate to them?

*"Before you mentioned them I actually never thought of them" [Wgtn East, y13]*

*"I have been at the lowest of low and NEVER thought about calling Youthline" [St Pats, y12]*

*"They need to get Youthline people into schools. We see other people who are really funny but not YL" [Wgtn East, y12]*

*"I imagine they are trying really hard but it's just a feeling as we don't actually know what they're doing" [Wgtn East, y12]*

*"I used to hear about them in Y9 and Y10, but I don't hear about them anymore" [St Pats, y12]*

## 3. Brand positioning too serious

*"As soon as you call them it's a massive deal. If your friends find out, then they think I'm in a really bad state .... it's too embarrassing" [St Pats, Y12]*

*"If friends knew I contacted Lowdown they'd have a bit of a laugh and think I haven't been feeling the best. But, if they knew I contacted Youthline then they'd get super serious and think something is really bad about me" [St Pats, y12]*

*"Think most of the time you want to convince yourself it isn't that bad ...and because of the name 'youth'-line' you don't want to call it up cos it's for really serious cases where people have no way out. It's there for you if you're actually going to commit suicide" [Wgtn East, y12]*

*"They should be targeting all feelings. When you are at a low point you don't want to analyse who you should and shouldn't call" [Wgtn east, y13]*

## 4. Association with the phone off-putting for some

Out of all the helpline channel options, the phone was considered the most alien. Most claimed they rarely use the phone these days so if the need arises it does rouse additional feelings of discomfort and nervousness. All claimed they may have been more comfortable contacting Youthline if they were given prompts on what to say.

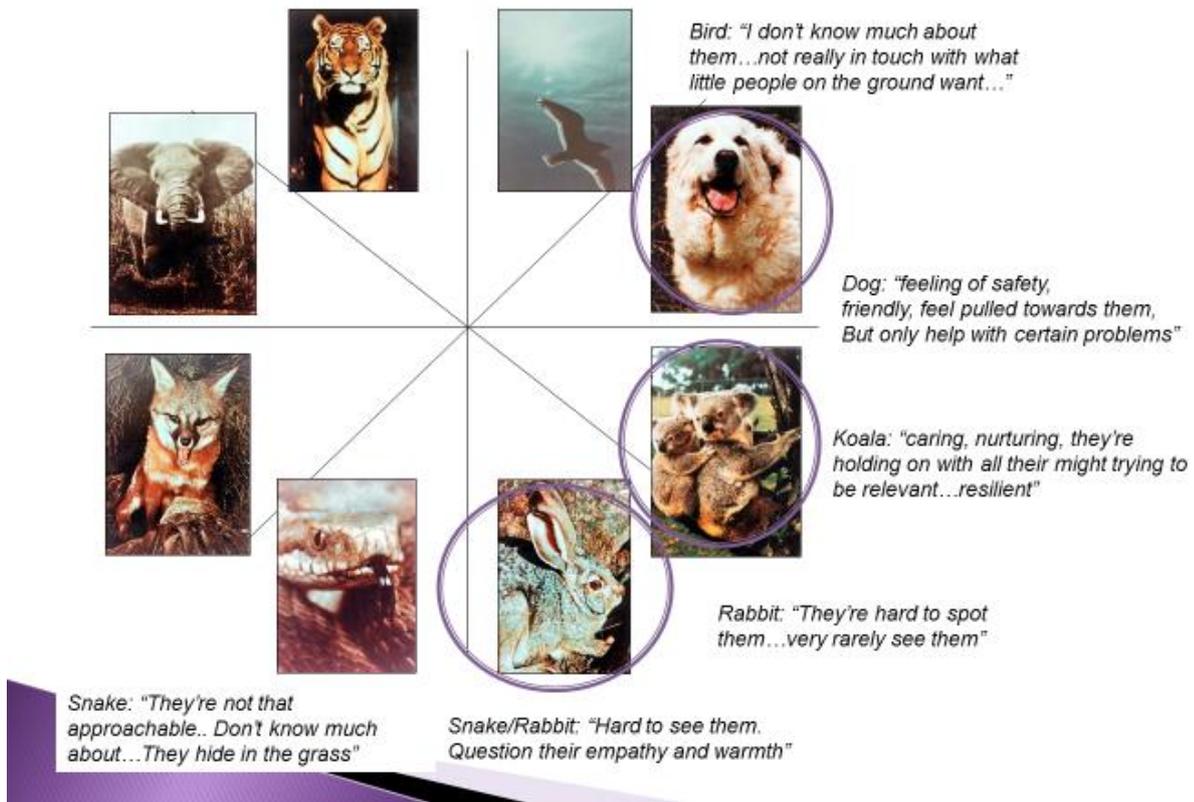
*"Everything was so overwhelming...I didn't know where to start. What to say. I had so many bad things happen I didn't know how to express all the stuff. And to a complete stranger!" [Wgtn East, y13]*

*"If you're stressed it is hard to articulate everything then you don't get the whole picture and it could make it worse" [Tawa College, y13]*

*"They're too unknown – it's hard to let emotions and feelings out if it's not face to face" [St Pats, y12]*

*"I would not want to call, so Youthline is wiped off my radar" [St Pats, y12]*

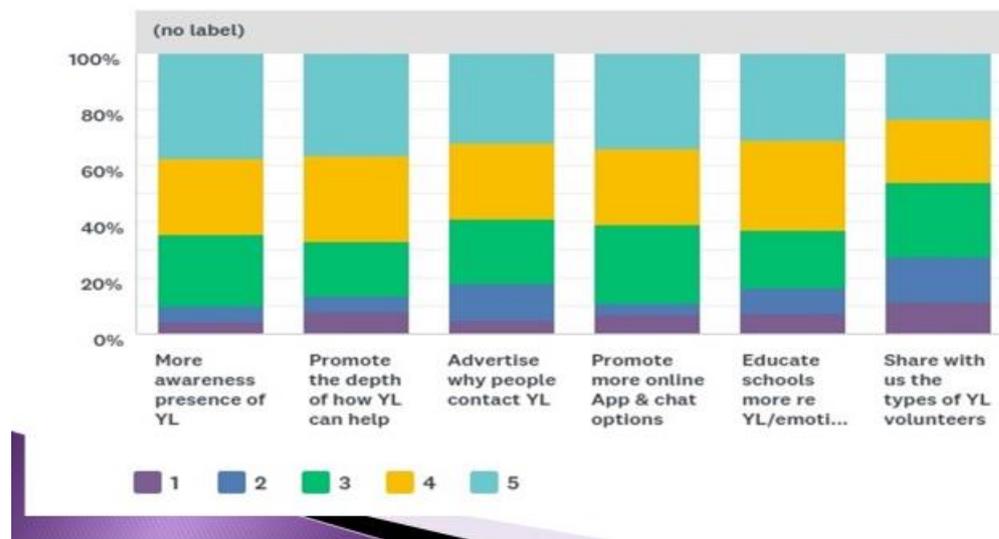
While the brand remains familiar and trusted through its longevity in the market and its focus on helping, the above barriers are starting to erode the warmth and strength of the brand. This was revealed via the animals young people chose to reflect Youthline and the reasons why they chose them.



## Thoughts on overcoming issues

When asked how the brand can overcome these issues and encourage contact especially at an earlier stage several key suggestions were given from the young people spoken to.

Q. What would you suggest YL needs to do to encourage more young people to contact them when they need help and/or emotional support? Please rate according to level of importance from your point of view [1 = not that important for YL to focus on vs 5 = very important for YL to focus on]. [182 answered]



**Table 9: College Online Survey – What does YL need to do to encourage more young people to contact them?**

Almost all suggestions centred around further investment and attention to the key touchpoints of the brand: the website, marketing collateral [esp. posters] and the strapline. In all cases they felt Youthline needed to be more consumer vs brand focused in the messages portrayed, and within this, more simple, emotive, contemporary and real.

*“I don’t want anybody to falsely make me happy. Everybody is trying to get our spirits up, like in PE/health. Now that I’m older I want somebody to recognise that I’m sad rather than instantly trying to make me happy. I want ways to manage my feelings. I don’t want short term fixes...I want a path to make me feel better” [Tawa College, y13]*

### 1. Youthline’s website needs significant changes

Unlike Lowdown, and in a few cases What’s Up, no one had spontaneously gone on to the Youthline website. Unlike the other brands there has been no message or pull factor which has roused their curiosity enough to seek, search and connect. On the one hand it could be argued that this is positive as it highlights the trust they already have in a brand that has been around a long time. However, the downside is that perceptions surrounding Youthline’s focus is likely to remain limited and unmotivating and therefore heavily reliant on advertising budget to change these views.

When young people were asked to compare Youthline site versus Lowdown, What's UP and in a few cases Attitude, responses emerging were alarmingly negative.

*"Hard to find what interests us...heaps of clicks to get through to anything...it's so time consuming"*

*"Everything is blue and white – I can't tell what is drop down bars and what's not. It's really difficult to navigate."*

*"It feels like a government website about money. I just want help! Are you there for me or not?"*

*"This could be my dentists website – it lacks any emotion"*

*"It needs to be more personal as opposed to be trying to be hip"*

*"Think I looked at the Youthline website, but it didn't engage – seemed more serious and clinical compared to Lowdown"*

*"If you are feeling stressed you don't want to hunt for information to help yourself – the info needs to be a lot more obvious"*

*"If its targeting youth it needs to be more relevant to us. We don't want to buy pens or be a volunteer. Who is this website for?"*

*"Using numbers instead of words is so try-hard...it's not a thing anymore. They're obviously trying to be cool, but it so isn't"*

*"It's really hard to tell what is ads and what is information"*

*"I'd prefer to see – how are you feeling today? Make it more personal as opposed to trying to be hip"*

*"They haven't done any research into what young people want"*

*"It's not interactive or innovative enough. They need to update their technology"*

*"At first glance doesn't look like they are going to help me with my issues. Reminds me of a holiday destination. Why are they trying to sell pens as the first thing we see?"*

The only positives mentioned were:

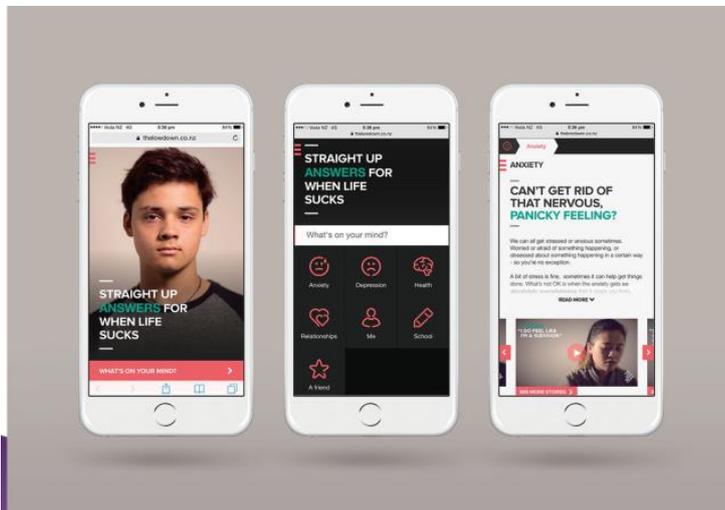
- Reference to Youthline's partnership with Stan Walker. This really surprised and impressed those spoken to.
- The Quick Exit button.
- The fixed "need help" line so regardless what page they were on it was obvious how to call [although some felt this should be at the top].
- Reference hidden in the site that "whether big or small Youthline is there to help"

The key issues for the site were:

Top Issues for y12s and 13s	
Information hierarchy poor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too focused on Youthline [&amp; stakeholders?] not the needs of youth</li> <li>• No clear message</li> </ul>
Too busy, involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too many clicks/scrolls needed to find information interested in [not phone friendly!]</li> <li>• Too many changing words/pictures</li> </ul>
Lacks contemporary edge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not interactive...innovative enough</li> <li>• Trying to be cool [eg good2great] but not connecting</li> </ul>
Lacks connection/ relevancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lacks emotion and reassurance</li> </ul>

NB: Nobody went to Youthline Wellington when asked to review website.

In comparison other websites received high praised.



Lowdown



I feel so SAD, will i ever feel better...

What's Up

	LowDown	What's Up	Attitude
Easy to navigate	👍 👍 👍	👍 👍	👍 👍
Leads & answers key questions	👍 👍 👍	👍 👍	👍
Emotional & personal [encouraging]	👍 👍 👍	👍 👍	👍
Contemporary & aesthetically appealing	👍 👍 👍	👍 👍	👍
Helpful = initial counselling buddy	👍 👍 👍	👍 👍	👍
Right level of information	👍 👍	👍 👍	

some had spontaneously checked out!

*“They both come across as really personal. What’s Up uses fingerprints with faces which feels individual and personal...and Lowdown has photos of real people with faces. Youthline though has all their faces covered which suggest impersonal and anonymous” [Wgtn east, y13]*

*“Lowdown’s poster prompted me to go on their website. They’ve got little questionnaires and quizzes and lots of pictures of people and colloquial language. So relatable with straight up answers when life sucks. They give really good advice. It’s not too formal or scary” [Wgtn East, y12]*

*“Lowdown’s facebook page is really awesome. Everything they do is clearly targeted at our generation and they are more present” [St Pats, y12]*

The points above start to represent an important ‘checklist’ when reviewing and designing Youthline’s website.

## 2. Youthline's advertising needs reviewing

A range of posters were shown to the young people spoken with, to glean what attracts their attention and why.



Low  
relevance  
& appeal



High  
relevance  
& appeal



Overarching learnings emerging from this exercise included:

- Simplicity is important in getting young people to stop and think: *"If it's too busy I wouldn't bother reading as its too chaotic, too overwhelming...it makes me feel more stressed"*
- The more emotive the message the better [either via the visuals and/or words]
- The message needs to be single-minded and solely focused on youth. *"Why are they telling us about donations?" [Youthline poster]*
- Real photos are likely to create greater connection than illustrations [esp. faceless ones!]: *"Why doesn't he have a face...that still feels cold to me"*
- Pictures if used need to connect/engage: *"He looks like he is still trying to decide whether or not to call Youthline. It doesn't give me much confidence to call Youthline" [Youthline blue poster]*
- Advertising needs to have a strong story/theme versus telling random messages.

*"Lowdown is targeting everybody who is stressed....not depressed....posters are up everywhere...they are funny, they hook people in with memes. It's weird, they are so good" [Wgtn East, y12]*

*"The serious picture on the poster mirrors how we feel...it doesn't undermine our feelings...it makes us think that could be me" [Wgtn East, y12]*

It could be argued that there is a strong correlation between perceived presence in, and connection with, the community. If we look at the number of Facebook followers for the different counselling brands

Youthline's numbers trail Attitudes and Lowdown's significantly which highlights further the need to be seen to be more present [and in a motivating way].

- WhatsUp = 1,354 followers
- Youthline = 13,850 followers
- Attitude = 36,365 followers
- Lowdown = 37,742 followers

### 3. Youthline's strapline – *changing lives* - may need a visit

Interestingly, most of the young people spoken with, commented unprompted, on the strapline. All felt that it reinforced their stereotype of the brand and prompted more concern than reassurance as to what the brand had to offer. In most cases they felt it was too serious and extreme, intimidating, and felt like it was more focused on the brand versus the user.

*"Sounds like they are helping the homeless or kids who are juve who have been through Youthline and are now changing their life around" [Wgtn East, y12]*

*"Changing lives suggests your life is really shit...something really bad has happened and we will change your life. But what about if your life is ok and its just your feelings that aren't? [Tawa College, y13]*

*"If my issue is a whole lot of little feelings of overwhelm-ness and upset-ness then how are you going to change me?" [Tawa College, y12]*

*"I just want to delete my shitness, not my life" [Wgtn East, y13]*

Some insight for future straplines can be sourced from the deeper reasons they gave for contacting Youthline [in the past or in the future]:

*"To feel better, worthy, happy, valued and appreciated"*

*"To feel happy again ...be dragged away from depression"*

*"To receive empathy not sympathy"*

*"Because they want us to be ok"*

*"Because we matter"*

*"Because they understand my feelings"*

### 4. Youthline's helpline service may need further review

Whilst only a few people in the survey answered the question about how they would rate their experience with Youthline, the ratings weren't as high as initially predicted.

- 37% rated Youthline experience as 4 or 5 [very effective]
- 38% rated Youthline experience as a 3 [it was ok]
- 25% rated Youthline experience as a 1 or 2 [they weren't that useful]

Q. How would you rate your experience with them on a scale of 1-5?  
 [1 = they weren't that useful... 5 = they were very effective/useful to me]?  
 [32 answered]

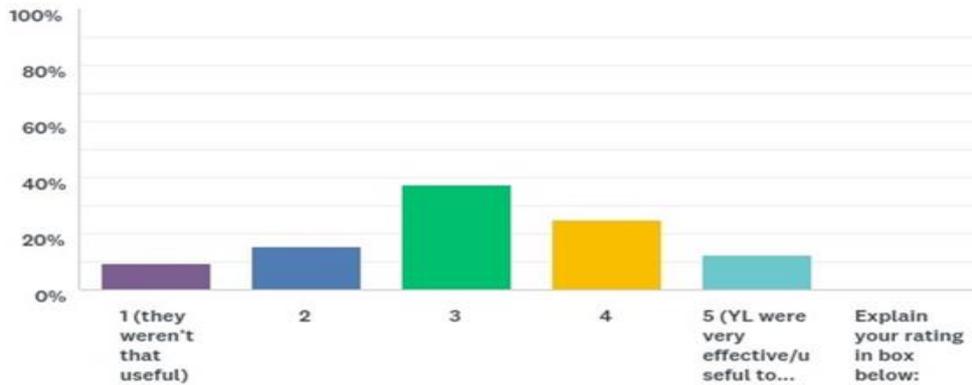


Table 10: College Online Survey – how would you rate your experience with YL?

Potential reasons for these ratings are highlighted in the diagram below but this may be worth exploring if any further surveys are conducted.

### Reasons for ratings [very few answered]



*"I've had some mates call in the past and it's taken 2-3 hours to get through, so it feels like they don't care" [St Pats, y12]*

*"I texted them, but they took ages to respond back...that put me off ... I never contacted them back. It ruined it for me" [Tawa College, y13]*

# Conclusions

## Summary of recommendations from Young people, Stakeholders and Volunteers

There are several positive points surrounding Youthline to remember when going forward:

- It plays an essential role in improving mental health among youth [esp. from a stakeholder's perspective]
- There is no question that Youthline has an extremely positive heritage and legacy
- Its brand is still the most trusted, familiar and recognised.

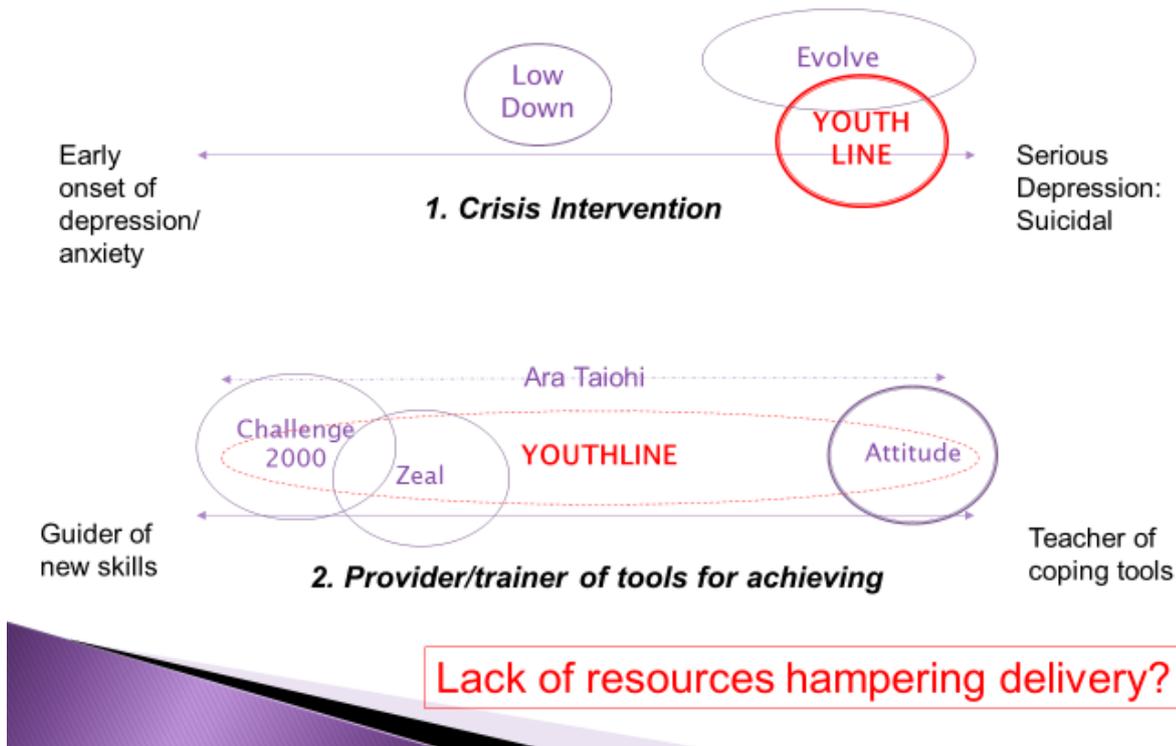
However, to continue to be at the forefront of people's minds some key considerations are apparent:

- Primary consideration: To increase relevance, presence and reassurance among youth.
- Secondary consideration: To increase available funds, shift funds from elsewhere, or to develop stronger partnerships with other counselling brands so resources can be shared



# 1. Strategic review

Youthline has two essential arms of their business. However, meeting the needs of both arms requires a lot of physical and financial resource which needs considering if budgets remain tight.



The overarching question at hand is whether Youthline is trying to do too much, especially given their restricted budget? This thought was supported by some of the stakeholders spoken to. The specific questions to consider include:

1. Who is [and should be] Youthline's priority audience: At risk youth? All youth? Schools? The wider community?
2. What is Youthline's primary focus and identity: Youth development space? Mental Health/Suicide space? Prevention space?
3. What is Youthline's priority service: It's helpline? Education in schools/community? Training?

These questions need to be assessed against the backdrop of:

- Primary drivers of funders?
- Primary needs of young people?
- Where the gaps in the market are?
- How much man power and funding Youthline has available? Or could access?

The research suggests that Youthline's crisis intervention arm may need priority IF Youthline wishes to be seen as a service for all stages of depression, not just those at crisis point? Within this the key priority should be increasing visibility of Youthline to young people and helping Youthline make headway in encouraging young people to seek help earlier.

Ultimately the focus will come down to the bottom line:

- How much is in the current spending pool?
- Where is there opportunity for more?
- Does Youthline Wellington have man-power to focus on growing this funding pool?

Two suggestions were made to help with funding:

- A Nationwide fundraising manager?
- A one-stop shop model focusing on mental health of youth to increase effectiveness and efficiency of all services.
  - a. Youthline to lead with Ara Taiohi
  - b. Widen collaborations with all service providers.

## 2. More fundraising [and storytelling]

The research gathered a Wishlist of initiatives for Youthline going forward:

<b>Volunteers</b>	<b>Supporter/Referrers</b>	<b>Youth</b>	<b>Counsellors/Schools</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headsets</li> <li>• Triage person in Wgtn 24/7</li> <li>• 24/7 triage and availability</li> <li>• Face to face service in Wellington</li> <li>• Webchats in Wellington &amp; more online presence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better promotion of all service [&amp; value of work]</li> <li>• Keep up to date with various technology platforms to connect</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review website</li> <li>• Review all communication</li> <li>• Increase presence &amp; visibility of Youthline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More seminars/workshop to youth [across age groups]</li> <li>• More awareness &amp; access to Youthline training</li> <li>• Easy access to resources &amp; posters etc.</li> </ul>

Further fundraising is likely to be necessary if Youthline wishes to deliver over and above their current focus and expenses.

Several suggestions were given:

Focus on larger funding pools:	Focus on smaller but more regular funding opportunities:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Government</u>. Tap into Labours commitment to lowering Mental Health stats</li> <li>• <u>Corporates</u>. Target those who will help create long-term meaningful relationships [eg Spark/Vodafone: <i>it's good to talk &amp; keep in touch</i>; Apple etc]</li> <li>• <u>Community</u>. Ensure all dollars available are tapped into.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Sponsors</u>. Choose those who will create meaningful relationships [eg those that are already focused on youth – eg clothing and technology brands]</li> <li>• <u>Schools</u>. Tap into counselling and training budgets</li> <li>• <u>Youth/Schools</u>. Encourage mufti days each term [and be the brand behind this]</li> <li>• <u>Parents</u>. Piggy back off school messages about mufti days or seminars to sell the importance of funding. Utilise intranet sites etc</li> <li>• <u>Events</u>. Own unique events – eg mid-winter swim, colour run, concert with young singers</li> </ul>

When delivering funding messages a few key points to consider:

- Ensure the tone is assertive and confident. Youthline is a respected, trusted brand among adults/stakeholders so there is no need to be passive or shy in delivery.
- The messaging needs to be more value-led and intrinsic. Tell stories and encourage buy-in at an emotional level.
- Capitalise on Youthline’s data collection to support the stories being told: the more data, the more success.
- Consider showcasing and promoting the data to a wider public.

Key messages and reminders for funders could be centred around Youthline being an essential lifeline for youth who need help and advice but have nowhere to go:

- There are more counsellors and funders closing their books to new clients.
- The demand on college counsellors has increased.
- Waiting times has increased.
- Even with the new government helpline ‘1737’ demand for Youthline remains high.
- Children are contacting Youthline younger.
- Many of our youth don’t feel comfortable going to parents or even school counsellors for help – they are looking for anonymity.
- Youthline’s training and knowledge of mental health is considered essential to the wider community.
- It is essential to have a variety of channels available to meet differing preferences.
- A lot more resource is needed to:
  - Overcome ongoing stigma’s for asking for help early
  - Reach young people before crisis point.

Other cost cutting measures mentioned from Youthline’s stakeholders included:

- Creating a centralised helpline model versus branches for call centres.
- Send funding applications [incl. annual reports] digitally.
- Have a national admin coordinator to cut down on admin time of branch staff. This could be useful for:
  - Communicating about and delivering available resources
  - Communicating about specific events/workshops that are coming up and coordinating registrations etc.

### 3. More presence and help for youth

If more attention is not given to increasing Youthline’s visibility and connectedness with youth the Youthline brand as well as the stability of the youth market may be at risk long term, i.e. it may prompt:

- A decrease in the number of helpline contacts? Therefore:
- Less funding dollars available [if funders begin to shift funds to services that are seen to be more visible, more effective]? Therefore:
- More at risk individuals long-term?

Currently Youthline has a really positive heritage and legacy especially among adults/stakeholders. However, this will begin to erode and put into question if the visibility of the brand is not lifted among youth. Fortunately, there still appears to be a good window of opportunity to make changes while positive perceptions still exist.

The primary focus for youth needs to be on:

- Reducing stigma and embarrassment in seeking help early:
  - The more presence, from more brands, the more it will seem ok to contact.
  - More association with positive role models [Stan Walker, Shortland Street etc] will reinforce the notion that Youthline is *there for us and understands us*.
  - More association with ‘cool’ events [mufti day, concerts etc] will highlight that “*they understand us*”.
  - More reassurance given at all key touchpoints with the brand the better, highlighting “*It’s good to talk*” “*We’re here to listen*” “*It’s not Ok to leave it*”.
- Reducing misconceptions: Youthline IS available to help with all problems, big or small. It won’t be intimidating.
- Keeping up to date with what young people like and what brands are getting their attention.

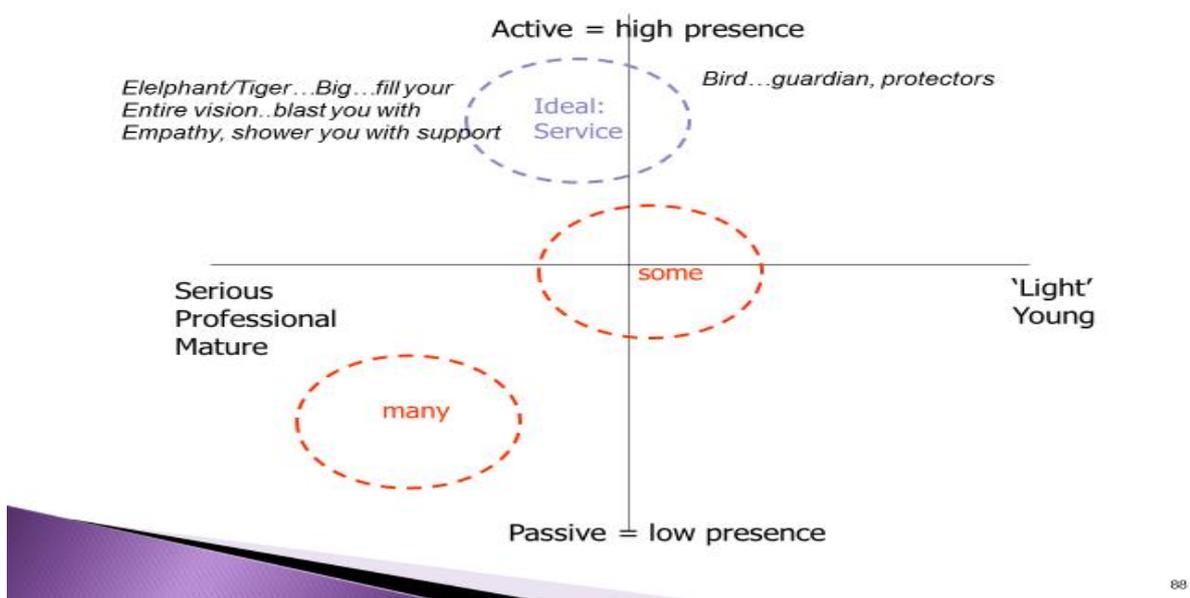
Close attention needs to be given though to what messages are communicated and how:

- A range of messages [and misconceptions to overcome]:
  - Youthline is interested in supporting all issues big or small
  - Youthline has different options for contact: phone, text, webchat
  - It’s important to talk early. We’re here to listen and help.
- Be a story-teller when delivering messages = more interesting, more emotional and will encourage more connections
  - For stakeholders/parents etc – share the good and bad news
  - For youth – share with them the importance of talking [early] and remind them it’s ok

- Be much more present and visible
  - More posters [perhaps flyers] – around schools [eg PE rooms, libraries, toilet doors, counsellors offices], around community [shopping malls, shops], at funerals etc
  - More use of online media – eg 30 second videos on Facebook, Instagram etc
  - Backs of buses etc.
- Be engaging and interactive

*“They need to advertise more ...make it more of a trend to talk about stories and how you are feeling. If you know other people are calling then you’re more likely to call yourself” [St Pats, y12]*

#### 4. Design review of all touchpoints of the brand



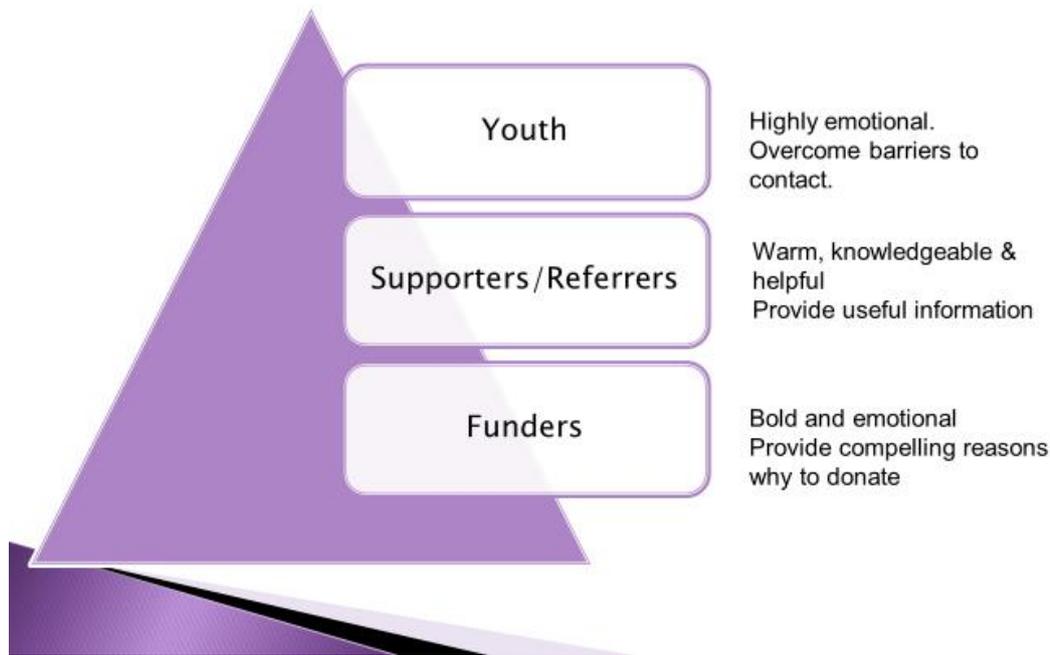
Importantly there is a fine line between being serious and sincere, versus young and light-hearted.

*“...a fine line between sincere and insensitive. Lowdown falls on sensitive side...most of the time” [St Pats, y12]*

*“If dealing with somebody who puts a light air on depression I’m not sure if good...its putting a slight cloud over it” [St Pats, y12]*

*“But if too serious then feel it could be too intimidating....they’ll get to the heart of the matter straight away which would make me nervous...versus Lowdown who will ease you into the discussion” [St Pats, y12]*

There are three distinct audiences to consider YET currently it appears Youthline has a one-size fits all approach to most of its communications [especially its website]. Each audience deserves and needs its own core message and tone of voice in order to connect at a deeper more effective level.



Differences in tone of voice and message is particularly important for Youthline's website. The table below highlights:

- The core message for each audience
- The key questions they are looking for when entering, and exploring, the website
- Other considerations when designing the user section/experience for each audience.

Youth: "YL will care & understand regardless of problem"	Supporters & Referrers: "YL is behind me 100%"	Funders & volunteers: "YL plays a vital role in our youth thriving"
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do they want to hear from me?</li> <li>2. Can I help myself or should I contact?</li> <li>3. Ways to contact?</li> <li>4. What should I say?</li> <li>5. Who am I contacting?</li> <li>6. How can I help others?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How can YL &amp; I help youth better?</li> <li>2. How can YL help me? [training etc]</li> <li>3. Resources?</li> <li>4. How can I help YL?</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How to donate and/or help?</li> <li>2. Why donate? Focus? Programmes delivering?</li> <li>3. Effectiveness? [how many people reaching, highlights from previous years, success stories]</li> </ol>
Highly emotive & reassuring Minimal text Like reviews [esp stars] Dedicated focus to helping [no ads!] Love quizzes, games etc to see Like videos/stories Mobile friendly [min. swipes] Up coming events, campaigns	Emotive/personal Clear Contact details	MissionAustralia.au Emotive/personal BUT assertive and bold Values driven: young people need us Honest Stories/photos will always engage More visually engaging the better

As highlighted earlier young people want stories. This will not only reassure them that their problem is valid and they won't be discarded but encourage them to seek help earlier. Youthline needs to become a better story-teller of the news they wish to share.

*"I want to get a sense that they have helped other people that are similar to me. This is how many people we have helped...their stories" [Wgtn East, y13]*

*"I need to get a sense that they care...that they want to be rung" [St Pats, y12]*

*"They need to be more personable. For example, tell a story about the types of volunteers at Youthline and why they've joined. Also tell a story about some of the issues youth contact them for" [Referrer]*

When advertising some mandatories emerged when targeting y12 and 13 specifically:

Youthline Checklist	Implications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs emotion, warmth</li> <li>• Needs a face</li> <li>• Needs to have a single-focus</li> <li>• Needs to be contemporary</li> <li>• Needs simplicity</li> <li>• Interactive</li> <li>• Being real: NB happy/cheerful images done necessarily motivate: <i>"I just want people to recognise that I'm sad"</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To reassure</li> <li>• To show understanding</li> <li>• To suggest it won't be scary or hard: youth won't be doing all the work</li> </ul>

The logo/strapline may need consideration in the future, but it is certainly not the most important focus on the 'to do' list. Currently the strapline risks prompting more barriers to contacting than actually aiding, especially among those who need early intervention. If the strapline is reviewed, two creative routes could be considered:

Offering a promise to the user  
[an end benefit]. E.g.

*Feel better*  
*Feel happier*  
*Feel stronger*

Offering a reason for contacting  
Youthline specifically. E.g.

*It's good to talk*  
*You matter*  
*Big or small, we're here*

## Final thoughts

Simply by conducting this research Youthline Wellington has made headway in making a difference to some young people's lives [who participated] as well as raising its profile among the wider community.

*"Next time I probably would look for more help at an earlier stage" [St Pats, y12]*

*"I have more awareness now of the availability of services. I just thought Youthline was available if you really needed help but now I know that's not the case. They are there if you're just feeling stressed" [Tawa College, y13]*

*"I feel more open to phone lines now" [St Pats, y12]*

*"I feel more comfortable going into this year now knowing that there is a buffer. The option is there...it definitely helps to ease anxiety. I don't feel quite alone now" [St Pats, y12]*

*"It's good they are doing the exercise they are doing as it will help them to re-evaluate where they fit and where they need to focus" [Funder]*

All stakeholders were interested and are excited to hear the findings. It would be particularly beneficial communicating the key insights to schools and their counsellors in order to:

- Encourage more to put up posters/communication around the school
- Encourage more to tap into Youthline's website and services for ways to help.

It may be worthwhile conducting the online survey in 18-24 months to track improvements.

# Appendix:

## NZ Ethics Approval letter

10 January 2018

Karline de Boer  
Research Services Ltd  
6 Foster Crescent  
Belmont  
Lower Hutt 5010

### **NZEC Application 2017\_42:** *Impact of Youthline Wellington services for young people*

Dear Karline de Boer

The New Zealand Ethics Committee has reviewed your application for *Impact of Youthline Wellington services for young people* and has agreed that the project meets appropriate ethical standards for social research.

The ethos of the NZEC is to see ethics review as an ongoing iterative relationship. After the formal ethics review the research questions and the research design often change. We encourage you to return to the committee at any time if any ethical dilemmas arise in the future.

This approval expires three years after the date of approval.

We wish you every success in your research.

Kind regards

*Sue Fish*

NZEC Administrator

<http://www.nzethics.com/>  
[nzethicscommittee@xtra.co.nz](mailto:nzethicscommittee@xtra.co.nz)  
48 Glendevon Place, Dunedin 9013  
A registered Charity #CC50073

## Evaluation of Youthline Wellington & The Government Helpline 1737

The Government Help line 1737 was launched on 29th June 2016.

In general calls and texts to YL do fluctuate throughout the year. However, the data below shows calls to YL since June 2016 have decreased each month compared to the same month in 2016. But from 1610 down to 1855 in Dec 2017, finishing with 1150 in Feb 2018.

Whereas texts have fluctuated 8539 in Jul-16 ..ending with 9028 in Feb-18. However, Feb-17 YL received 9539 texts

	Total Calls nationally	Wgtn Calls answered	Total text nationally	Wgtn Texts answered
Jul-16	1610	59	8539	256
Aug-16	1562	81	10063	481
Sep-16	1980	95	9916	552
Oct-16	1968	56	12014	307
Nov-16	1933	91	10299	652
Dec-16	1783	98	9124	643
Jan-17	1521	53	9791	459
Feb-17	1433	49	9539	559
Mar-17	1743	132	10270	741
Apr-17	1638	106	10812	780
May-17	1517	93	11815	695
Jun-17	1460	71	10773	602
Jul-17	1539	51	9632	378
Aug-17				
Sep-17				
Oct-17	1440	35	11034	279
Nov-17	1230	63	9512	441
Dec-17	1267	61	8576	405
Jan-18	1855		9551	
Feb-18	1150		9028	

*“The text numbers listed are the total number of texts Youthline has received and the total number Wellington answered which is why there is such a significant difference. There are multiple centres who all have similar numbers and in total reply to roughly 60% of texts per month. There are multiple reasons for this 60% figure, such as texts not relating to Youthline counselling, people sending multiple texts and us replying to the latest one (we currently can't link them together in our stats), or auto-replies for texts when no one is on shift.*

*When people are on shift all texts relating to Youthline counselling or info should be replied to, but the multiple texts thing will probably have a large impact on the numbers, for example someone could reply with 3 or four separate texts, and we simply reply to the last one, meaning that 2-3 of the texts would count as unanswered in our stats.”*

## Evaluation of Youthline Wellington – primary call issues

There haven't been any particularly striking shifts in the numbers of calls and texts by issue. Texts has seen a small spike in terms of Mental and Physical Health, but this is not large. There have been a 6% decrease in the number of texts relating to relationships but this difference is also not large. The reasons people contact us seem to have remained stable from 2016-2017, however they may vary seasonally.

Primary Call Issue	2016	2017
Not specified	213	
Abuse & violence- Emotional	63	61
Abuse & violence- neglect	9	8
Abuse & violence- physical	125	78
Abuse & violence- Sexual	80	76
Abuse & violence- witness	9	6
Abusive call- verbal	56	34
Abusive call- sexual gratification	40	25
Anger	98	84
Body image/weight concerns	12	17
Bullying	141	114
Cyber bullying	32	19
Depression & sadness	710	497
Discrimination	17	6
Eating Disorders	42	21
Education / academic	61	37
Employment issues	89	80
Fear & anxiety	456	413
Financial Stress/unemployment	51	58
Gender identity	36	18
Grief and loss	139	116
Homelessness	48	42
Identity & purpose of life	65	33
Incorrect number	101	70
Information & referral	870	889
Legal information	38	26
Loneliness & isolation	471	216
Medical health	99	87
Miscarriage support	1	3
Pregnancy	96	88
Relationship with child/ parenting	322	311
Relationship with parents/ caregivers	270	172
Relationship with other family members	187	123

Relationship with partner	419	394
Relationship with peers	382	296
Run away	12	12
School	53	34
Self esteem & confidence	40	36
Self harm	147	106
Sexual & reproductive health	56	45
Sexual decision making	36	30
Sexual identity/ orientation	50	27
Silent Caller	74	52
Stress	142	195
Substance use- alcohol & other drug	58	42
Suicide	414	476
Support for friend/s	178	185
Psychological distress/mental health	164	109
Termination support	5	6
Testing the service	180	217
Transitions/ career pathway	16	18
Transitions/ life	67	49
Unknown	1774	1632
Youthline non-helpline enquiry	480	465
Hang up	71	81

<b>TOTAL no of calls logged</b>	9865	8335
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	2016	2017	2016 Percent	2017 Percent	Difference
Abuse & Violence	286	229	2.90%	2.75%	-0.15%
Mental and Physical Health	924	841	9.37%	10.09%	0.72%
Relationships	1775	1487	17.99%	17.84%	-0.15%
Career/School/Employment	288	238	2.92%	2.86%	-0.06%
Information	1568	1597	15.89%	19.16%	3.27%
Sexual Health & Identity	280	217	2.84%	2.60%	-0.23%
School/Bullying	287	204	2.91%	2.45%	-0.46%
Emotional Support	2068	1574	20.96%	18.88%	-2.08%
Unknown	2061	1684	20.89%	20.20%	-0.69%
Other	268	210	2.72%	2.52%	-0.20%
Living Situation	60	54	0.61%	0.65%	0.04%
Total	9865	8335			

# Definitions

RSL – Research Services Ltd

YL – Youthline

YL Wgtn – Youthline Wellington

YP - young people

Young people refers to 16 to 24 year olds

Y12 or y12 - year 12

# References

Williams S., McCarter, D., Youthline - The State of the Generation report (2014). *Colmar Brunton*, retrieved from <https://www.youthline.co.nz/assets/Uploads/PDFs/2014-Youthline.-The-state-of-the-generation.pdf>

Young and Well CRC, 2010. Retrieved from <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/programs-and-projects/young-and-well-cooperative-research-centre>

This research and evaluation of Youthline Wellington was performed by Karline de Boer and Lisa Errington. We thoroughly appreciated everyone's time, feedback and assistance with the evaluation of Youthline Wellington.

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