

Parentline report

Call data analysis July 2008 – September 2008

Introduction

Parents ring Parentline at times when they are most in need of support and information, often about situations which they experience as highly distressing. Two independent evaluations undertaken by the Thomas Coram Research Unit demonstrate that parents ring us either at a time of crisis and/or with deeply entrenched and chronic difficulties. As a result, call data shows, from parents' own descriptions, a range of serious difficulties and how parents are feeling.

Call takers use a helping process to enable callers to unburden themselves, explore the reasons for their children's difficulties, and consider further actions they could take to improve their situation. When appropriate, callers are signposted to more specialist sources of advice, and can be referred for further help from our own Individual Support Service or for specialist child mental health advice to Young Minds, for family legal advice to the Children's Legal Centre, education advice from ACE, or to One Parent Families/Gingerbread for employment and financial advice for lone parents.

A total of 14,233 calls were answered by a call taker and forms submitted during the time period July 2008 – September 2008. 5,076 of these were short calls and 9,157 were long calls¹.

The long calls form the substantial part of this report but here is a breakdown of short calls showing the reasons for calling and the gender of the caller (if known). A third of short calls are interrupted or cut short. We do not know what happens to these callers but we hope that they try to call again and that they receive the support they are seeking.

¹ Many parents ring Parentline for a short call – seeking information for example. Anonymous case records are kept of all calls lasting over 12 minutes; such calls are termed 'long calls'.

The following table shows the breakdown of short calls made during this period.

(n=5,076 but please note that some data is recorded twice if for example a caller is sent a leaflet and is signposted to another organisation.)

Type	Total	% of short calls
Call interrupted \ Did not expand	1,286	25%
Repeat caller	604	12%
Sent leaflets	20	<1%
Signposted to other organisation	1,332	26%
Calls for general information about Parentline Plus or our offices	1,933	38%
Callers referred to Useful Website Links	76	1%

Gender of callers making short calls during this period (n=5076)

Male	1,113	22%
Female	3,533	70%
Gender not specified	430	8%

Long calls

The format of this section of the report largely follows the sequence of the form used by call takers to record details of the call. It should be noted that call takers collect as many details as possible and we are working to reduce the number of 'not asked' questions but it is not always appropriate to ask for demographic information.

Over the course of a call, the call taker collects details on the following:

- Relationship of caller to person causing concern
- Family make-up of the family causing concern
- The subject of concern, including their age and gender
- Any child issues: the main reason for the call or any supplementary issues
- Any adult issues: the main reason for the call or any supplementary issues
- Referrals to other Parentline Plus services or other organisations, if relevant
- Demographic information
- How did they find out about Parentline Plus
- A free text box to record any other feedback

Also, please note that at the moment the pie charts are sequenced in alphabetical order. We are investigating whether or not this can be altered to sequence the pie charts from the largest share to the smallest.

The following table shows that in the clear majority of calls to Parentline, it is the mother of the family who is calling for support and information. It is interesting to note that men are more likely to make shorter calls. The percentage of men making short calls is 22%. This may be a reflection of the differences between the ways that men and women approach seeking information and support.

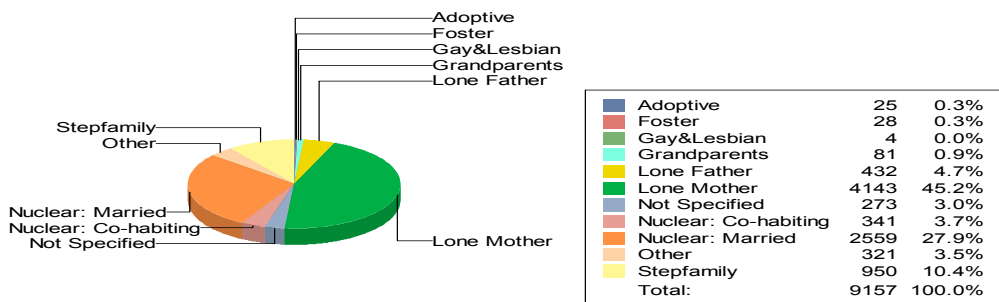
The responses in this section total to over 100% due to the fact that callers sometimes see themselves as having dual roles within a family. A caller for example, may be both a mother and a stepmother.

Caller	Total	% of long calls (n=9,157)
Mother	6,813	74%
Father	1,056	12%
Stepmother	129	1%
Stepfather	73	1%
Non-resident father	235	3%
Non-resident mother	162	2%
Partner of non-resident father	58	1%
Partner of non-resident mother	9	<1%
Male relative	46	1%
Female relative	433	5%
Male friend	15	<1%
Female friend	73	1%
Professional	25	<1%
Other	114	1%

Family status

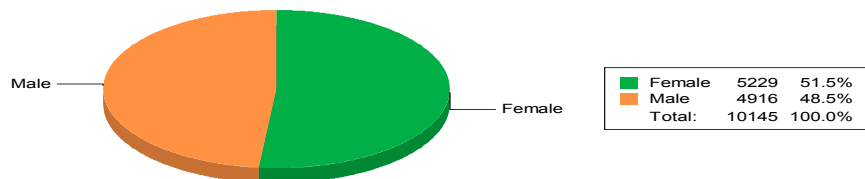
This graph shows that all types of family units have difficulties from time to time, although lone parents make up the largest percentage of callers to Parentline. This may reflect two things: firstly, the increased isolation and lack of support that lone parents may feel when bringing up their children and secondly that lone parents may use Parentline more proactively – before their difficulties become a crisis – because they do not have a partner to talk to about their concerns. If one combines lone mother and lone father together, we see that lone parents represent 50% of family types causing concern.

It is also interesting to note that stepfamilies represent a significant percentage of callers at 10% of all long calls.



Gender of the person causing concern

This chart demonstrates that there is an almost equal balance between the concerns parents feel for their daughters as their sons. This is what we would expect but it will be interesting to note any cyclical changes over the year as we are able to analyse the data more closely. When gender of the person causing concern is matched with age another pattern emerges (see page 5).

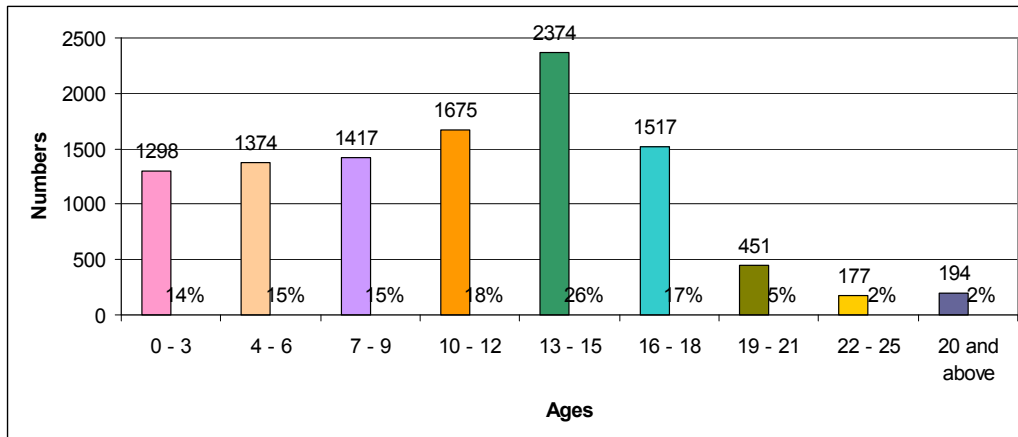


Age of the children causing concern

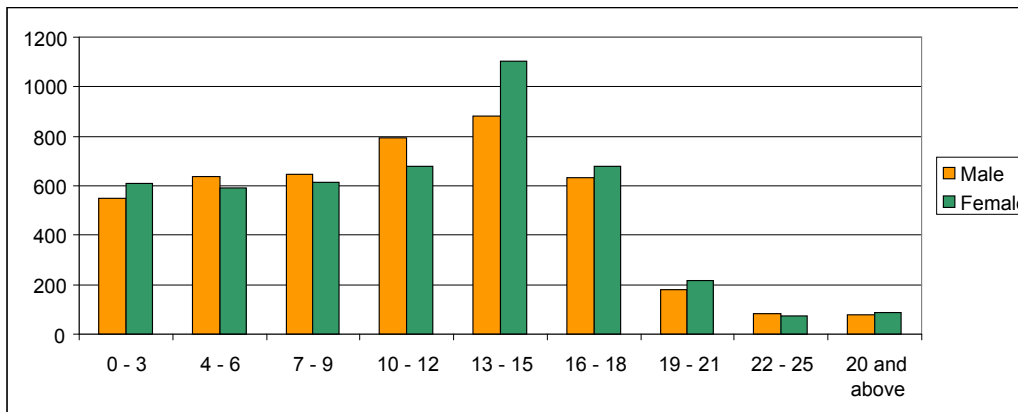
The table indicates that the most challenging period for parents is the teenage years with 42% of parents who called concerned about teenagers aged between 13 and 18.

Ages	Total	% of total number of children causing concern (n=10,477)	% of long calls during this period (n=9,157)
0 - 3	1,298	12%	14%
4 - 6	1,374	13%	15%
7 - 9	1,417	14%	15%
10 - 12	1,675	16%	18%
13 - 15	2,374	23%	26%

16 - 18	1517	14%	17%
19 - 21	451	4%	5%
22 - 25	177	2%	2%
26 and over	194	2%	2%



Age brackets by gender



Reasons for calling Parentline

Parents call for a wide variety of reasons which we sub-divide into children's issues and adults' issues. During the quarter July 2008 – September 2008 the top ten reasons for calling were:

Reason for call	% of all long calls (n=9,157)
Adults' mental health	36%
Children's behaviour	27%
Children's emotional health	18%
Children's conflict	15%
Children's concerns about divorce and separation	13%

Adults' concerns about divorce and separation	13%
Adults' couple disagreements of calls	11%
Adults' isolation and loneliness of calls	7%
Children's mental health	6%
Children's issues about school/education	4%

Children's issues

During July 2008 to September 2008, we recorded 9,157 long calls and recorded the issues that parents consider to be the main reason why they have called Parentline.

The primary reasons for calling Parentline:

Issue	Number of calls about children's issues during this period (n=9,149)	% of long calls (n=9,157)
Children issues		
Children: behaviour	2,478	27%
Children: emotional health	1,656	18%
Children: conflict	1,378	15%
Children: divorce/separation	1,187	13%
Children: school/education	379	4%
Children: mental health	557	6%
Children: bullying	274	3%
Children: sexual behaviour	334	4%
Children: abuse	360	4%
Children: developmental	360	4%
Children: physical health	104	1%
Children: disability	82	1%

The table above highlights the range and complexity of problems that parents face on a day to day basis.

The main issue parents called Parentline about between July 2008 and September 2008 was their children's behaviour. The location and type of behavioural concerns can be broken down further as shown in the following table

Behaviour	Total of all long calls (n=9,157)	% of long calls during this period (n=9,157)	% of long calls about behaviour during this period (n=2,478)
Location			
At home	2,192	24%	88%

At school	402	4%	16%
Other location	290	3%	12%

Type of behaviour	Total for this section	% of long calls in this period (n=9,157)	% of long calls about behaviour (n=2,478)
Verbal aggression	1,474	16%	60%
Physical aggression	765	8%	31%
Other	485	5%	20%
Lying	438	5%	18%
Bad crowd	397	4%	16%
Staying away from home	461	5%	19%
Stealing	334	4%	13%
Alcohol	276	3%	11%
Drugs	284	3%	11%
Peer pressure	191	2%	8%
Wanting to leave home	239	3%	10%
Smoking	216	2%	9%
Runaway/threatening	141	2%	6%
Involved with Youth Justice System	113	1%	5%
Internet misuse	99	1%	4%
ASBOS	4	<1%	<1%

The main type of behaviour that callers spoke about was the verbal aggression of their child/ren. This type of behaviour represented 60% of long calls about children's behaviour. A range of serious concerns are highlighted above, and the data also shows that parents are most concerned about children's behaviour in the home rather than anywhere else.

The main reason why the 'other' category is quite high is that it includes general misbehaviour that would not be considered aggressive, for example, disobedient, disrespectful, non cooperative, lazy and just generally naughty.

Adults' issues

During the quarter covering July 2008 – September 2008 mental health was the main adult issue. This reflects the anxiety and stress that parents feel as mental health is almost always the top adult reason for using Parentline.

Adult issues	Total of all long calls (n=9,157)	% of all long calls (n=9,157)
Adults: mental health	3,340	36%
Adults: divorce/separation	1,190	13%
Adults: couple disagreements	978	11%

Adults: isolation\loneliness	654	7%
Adults: abuse	311	3%
Adults: financial	240	3%
Adults: physical health	106	1%
Adults: disability	25	<1%

Adult: mental health

Mental health	Total (n=3,340 calls about 5,383 issues)	% of all long calls in this period (n=9,157)
Anxiety and stress	2,992	33%
Anger	916	10%
Other	534	6%
Depressed feeling (Identified by a health professional)	294	3%
Depressed feelings (not identified by a health professional)	303	3%
Grieving	171	2%
Suicide-attempted feelings expressed	67	1%
Postnatal depression	46	1%
Panic attacks	43	<1%
Self-harm	17	<1%

Actions taken by our call takers

Call takers respond to the individual needs of the caller. Some 50 parents (1%) are sent leaflets from the current range published by Parentline Plus; 29% (2,633) are referred to other organisations. These referrals are administered differently according to the organisation being referred to.

245 callers were referred to organisations from our Useful Website Links which represent 3% of all long calls.

Callers needing further educational support are referred to ACE (Advisory Centre for Education) via a separate telephone number given to the caller which acts as a hotline to ACE. It is different from ACE's regular helpline number and is part of the partnership arrangements between ACE and Parentline Plus.

Callers needing the support of Young Minds, Children's Legal Centre or One Parent Families\Gingerbread are referred directly by the call taker via an online form which guarantees that the caller will be contacted by the other organisation within a specified timeframe (different for each organisation but usually within one week).

The following table shows the top 10 organisations that we signposted callers to.

Organisation	Total all long calls (n=9,157)	% of all long calls in this period (n=9,157)
CLC	885	6%
Young Minds	463	3%
CAB	357	3%
Get Connected	317	2%
NSPCC	255	2%
ACE	233 (to a dedicated line)	2%
Connexions Direct	213	1%
OPF\GB	204	1%
Childline	178	1%
Relate	160	1%

The table below shows the number of callers that were referred on to our own extended services and to partner organisations for additional call-back support.

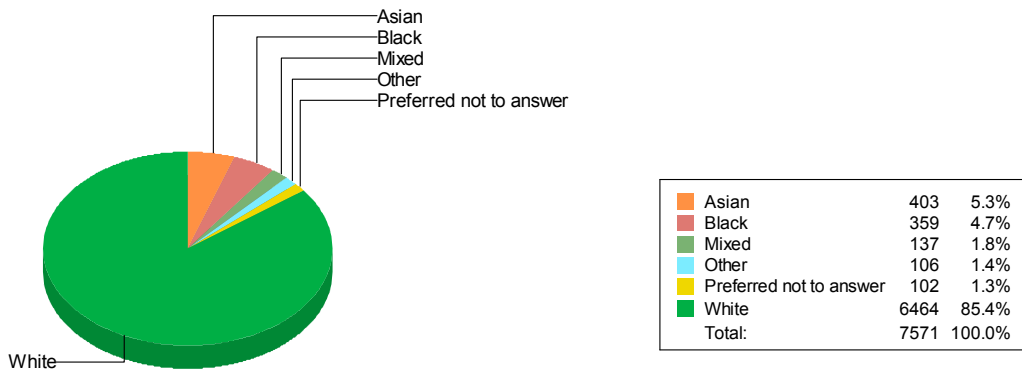
Organisation	Total all long calls (n=9,157)	% of long calls in this period (n=9,157)
NSCT for individual support or telegroups	531	6%
CLC	240	3%
YM	115	1%
OPF\GB	0 * (capacity issues)	0%

Demographics

The following section provides information about the callers who call Parentline. We collect this data in order for us to understand our client group better; to be sure that we are reaching all the parents we need to reach, and so that we can provide a service that is tailored to their needs. The demographic questions include their ethnicity and some details about their location and household income.

Ethnicity

This pie chart shows the ethnicity of callers calling Parentline, please note that this chart is listed in alphabetical order. We use the census categories to collect this information in order that it can be compared with census information. The total percentage of black and minority ethnic callers was 13% of callers who answered the question.



Household income of callers

The following table shows a breakdown of the information provided to our call takers by callers on their overall household income. We are working to reduce the number of 'not asked' in this category.

Income bracket	Total of all long calls (n=9,157)	% of Long Calls (n=9,157)	% of asked and answered (n=7,050)
0 – 5,000	559	6%	8%
5,001 – 10,000	897	10%	13%
10,001 – 15,000	908	10%	13%
15,001 – 20,000	800	9%	11%
20,001 – 30,000	1039	11%	15%
30,000 and above	1596	17%	23%
Not sure	786	9%	11%
Preferred not to answer	465	5%	7%
Not asked	2107	23%	NA
Asked and answered	7050	77%	NA

Disability

The table below shows the breakdown on whether or not callers classed themselves as having a disability.

Disability	Total	% of long calls	% of answered
Yes	816	9%	11%
No	6269	68%	88%
Preferred not to answer	73	1%	1%
Not asked	2000	22%	NA
Asked and answered	7158	78%	NA

How caller found out about Parentline

Type	Total (n=9157)	% of long calls (n=9157)
Phone book	3182	35%
Not asked	1800	20%
Other	917	10%
Website (Internet)	1030	11%
Other organisation	661	7%
Friend	428	5%
School	119	1%
GP surgery	179	2%
Family	174	2%
Magazine	129	1%
Book	138	2%
Television	84	1%
Local Authority	109	1%
Newspaper	78	1%
Children's Information Services	76	1%
Course	26	<1%
Campaign	16	<1%
Radio	11	<1%