



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT - 040-010-NPO & A REGISTERED CHILD PROTECTION ORGANISATION

NOT FOR PROFIT COMPANY REGISTRATION NUMBER – 2015/173593/08

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REPORT ON CHILDLINE HELP LINE SERVICES FOR COVID-19 LEVEL 5, 4, 3, 2 & 1 (Including relaxed measures as announced by President Ramaphosa)

LOCKDOWN PERIODS REPORTED ON:

- LEVEL 5: 27th March 2020 – 30th April 2020: 35 Days
- LEVEL 4: 1st May 2020 – 31st May 2020: 31 Days
- LEVEL 3: 1st June 2020 – 18th August 2020: 79 Days
- LEVEL 2: 19th August 2020 – 20th September 2020: 32 Days
- LEVEL 1: 21st September 2020 – 28th December 2020: 98 Days
- LEVEL 3: 29th December 2020 – 28th February 2021: 63 Days
- LEVEL1: 1st March 2021 – 31st March 2021: 31 Days

(369 DAYS OF AROUND THE CLOCK SERVICE)

**SERVING CHILDREN & FAMILIES 24/7 & 365 DAYS - IMPLEMENTING SECTION 28 OF THE
BILL OF RIGHTS (1996)**

AND

ESSENTIAL PART OF THE COMMUNITY ETHOS “YOUR CHILD IS MY CHILD”

1. INTRODUCTION – CHILDLINE SERVICES



Childline Gauteng continued to serve vulnerable children and families 24/7 and 365 days a year with telephone counseling on our Help Line and taking children in life-threatening circumstances into Sunlight Safe House, including over the Festive Season. Our Community Based Counselling Centres provide psycho-social services and community support in Soweto, Sebokeng, Orange Farm, Tembisa, Katorus, Tembisa, and Inner City Johannesburg.

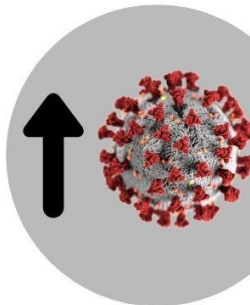


TOTAL CALLS

During the period under review, trained and professional counsellors captured 215 916 contacts on our data system of calls dialed to the Childline 08000 5555 /116 number in Gauteng. This is an increase of 55% compared to same period in 2019-2020.

COVID-19

Callers demonstrate great anxiety and stress. A total of 45 220 clients called in about Physical Health, COVID-19 and related issues compared to 175 calls for the same period in 2019/2020.



The Help Line 215 916 calls were captured, 10 924 cases opened and 63 171 counselling sessions with 131 586 testing the Childline response before being brave enough to disclose their problems.

COVID-19 is the main priority for clients and clients seeking services (often COVID-19 related). All forms of abuse are the second-highest category and family problems third.



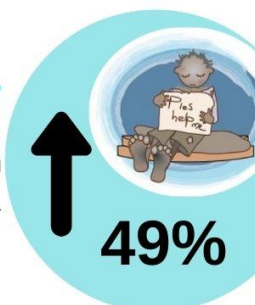
ABUSE

Abuse is the second highest category at 4,234 cases and pertains to: physical abuse (1,530), exposure to criminal violence (36), sexual violence – rape, assault, verbal and exposure to porn (969), emotional (2,189), abduction (58) and domestic violence (327).

The structural inequality in our country results in the impact on vulnerable families being extreme with a great need for psycho-social and economic support.

POVERTY & NEGLECT

Poverty related issues (724) resulting in hunger, homelessness, lack of winter clothes and food insecurity. This is aligned to cases of neglect at 1,434



As we collectively engage to assist the children of our nation, to emerge from the pandemic physically, mentally and emotionally stable, ensuring their positive growth for a sustainable future, Childline is committed to providing hope, counselling, access to protection and support services and information to deliver their basic needs. Together we can ensure a positive outcome for our youth and enhance their resilience to further their future goals.



FAMILY & LEGAL ISSUES

A total of 2,314 family problems and 878 related legal issues, pertaining to: family aggression; custody issues; single mothers struggling with great responsibilities; fathers feeling alienated; increase in corporal punishment; sibling rivalry and bullying; separation from parents; and home fires.

We thank you for your support of children and hereby report on our analysis of child and family issues, as reported to Childline, since the declaration of the National State of Disaster, 27th March 2020 – 31st March 2021.

2. CHILDLINE HELP LINE SERVICES

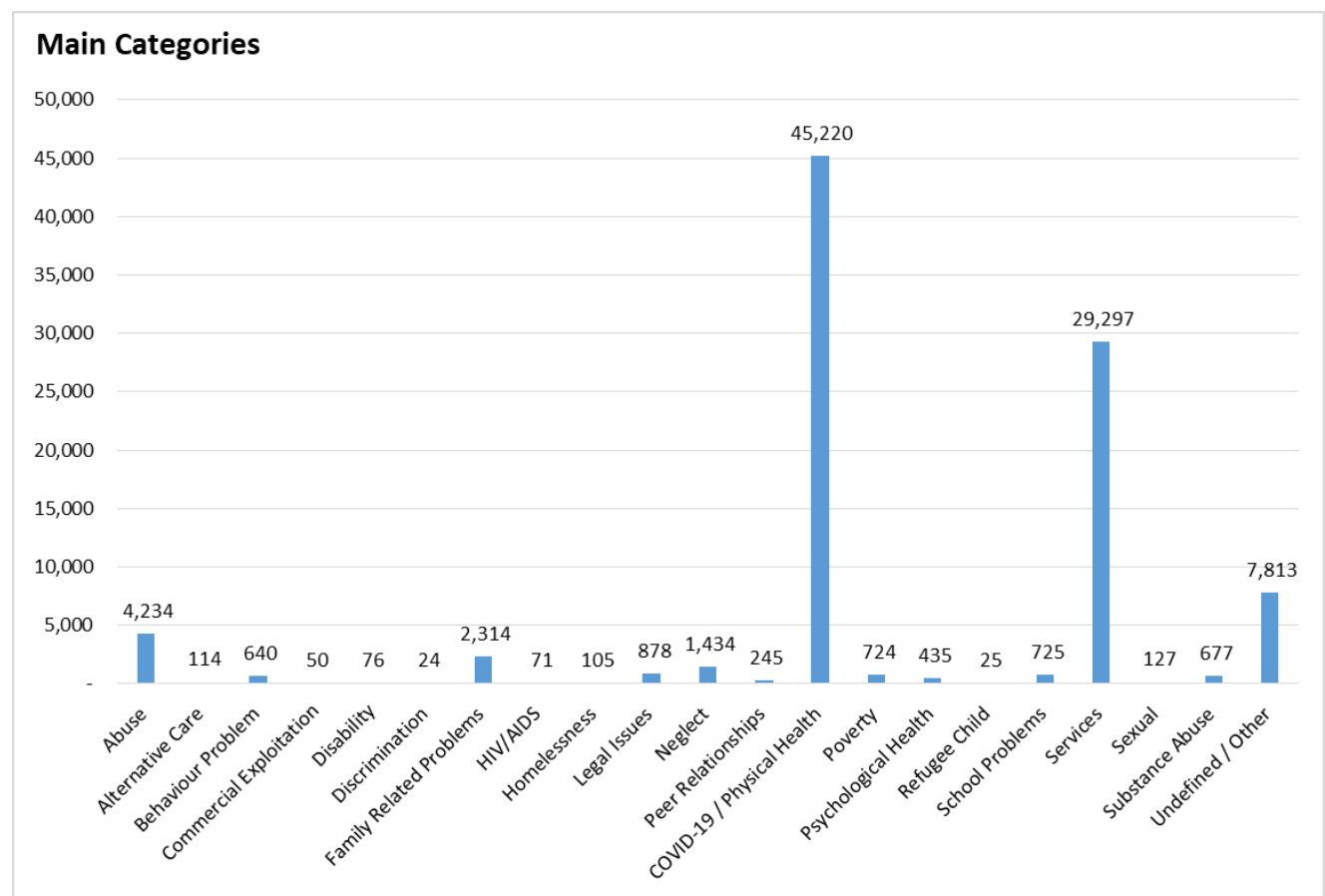
2.1 Number and Categories of Callers Assisted – 27 March 2020 – 28 February 2021

During the period under review, trained and professional counsellors captured 215 916 contacts on our data system categorised, as follows:

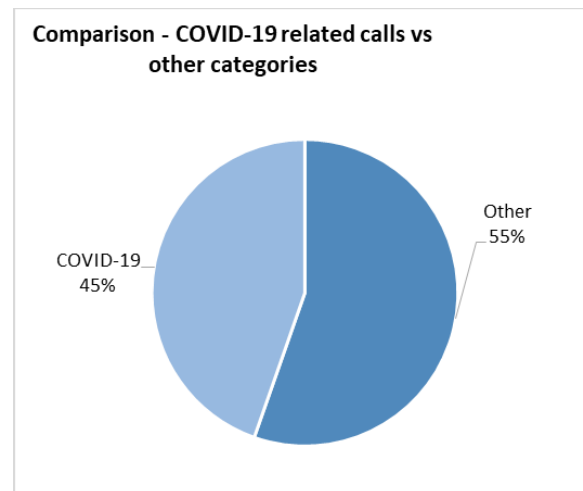
- 10 924 cases opened
- 63 171 counselling sessions issues
- 131 586 silent, testing or hang up the counsellor response - being unwilling or not ready to discuss their concerns. This aligns with international research indicating children will phone up to 20 times before they are brave enough to talk. We welcome this opportunity to promote positive relations with young people.

In summary:

- Health and COVID-19 (45 220) and requests for services (29 297), many COVID related;
- All forms of abuse (4 234); family issues (2 314) linked to legal problems (878); neglect (1 434) and poverty (724);
- Substance abuse (677) is linked to children with behavioural problems (640); amongst others.



2.2 COVID-19 Related Cases



Callers demonstrate great anxiety and stress, with an increase in COVID-19 related cases (45 220), linked to requests for services at 29 297, mostly related to the pandemic, i.e. a total of 74 517 clients requiring information to deal with health problems and some needing urgent medical care.

We continually update the Childline Resource Manual on COVID-19 with accurate information as well as lists of emergency services for Institute for Communicable Diseases, DSD, SAPS, DOH reporting lines, CYCC capacity for emergency placement of children, mental and health facilities, Presidential line and services available to communities.

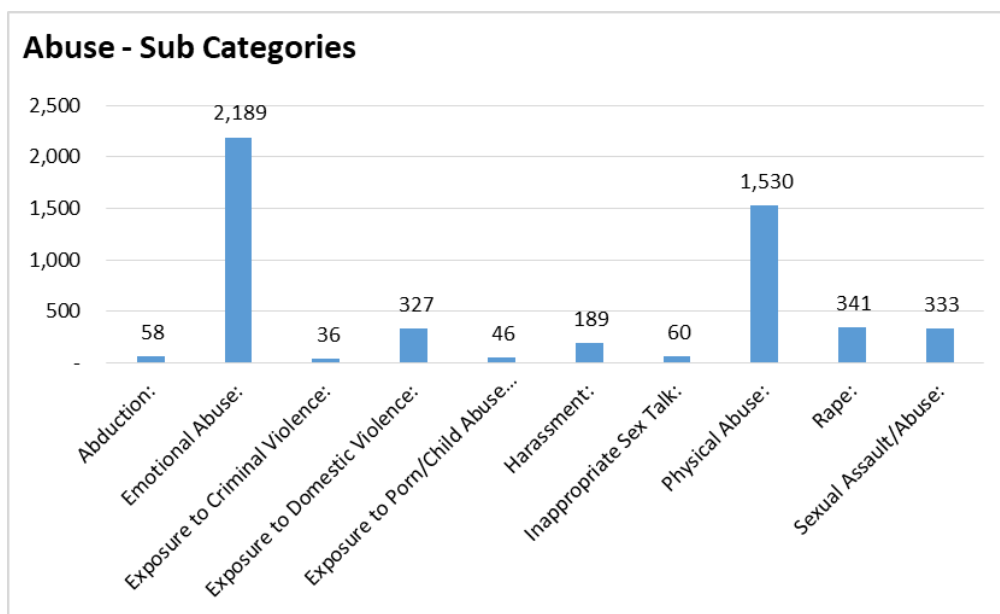
The counsellors dispense valuable **COVID-19 information**; safety and prevention measures; health information re symptoms, testing and quarantine sites. **COVID-19 cases** include community members in mourning due to the loss of loved ones, ambulance procurement/hospital services; fears for their own and family's health, concerned about their test results, fear of discrimination and stigma when they test positive, worried about children playing in the streets without masks; children or partners refusing to stay home posing a risk to the family.

The pandemic exacerbates all other child and family problems, such as abuse, psychological issues and GBV. Poverty-related concerns due to job losses, such as hunger requests for food parcels, neglect of children and information to access government support services.

2.3 Physical, Sexual and Emotional Abuse

Abuse is the second-highest category at 4 234 cases and pertains to physical abuse (1 530); sexual violence – rape, assault, verbal and exposure to porn (1 296), emotional (2 189), abduction (58), and domestic violence (327).

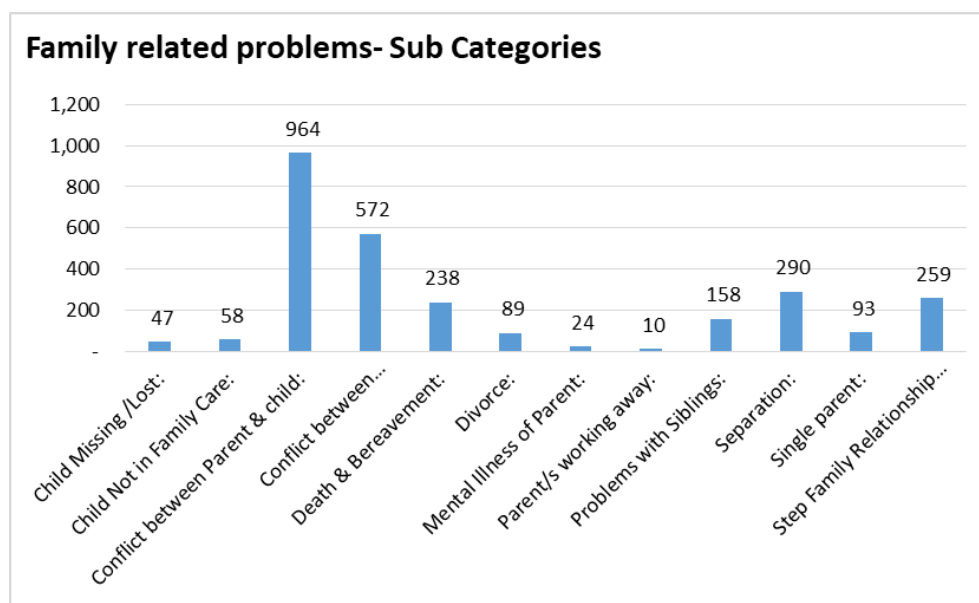
Clients are supported and risk assessment indicates the level of danger, after which, SAPS or child protection services from DSD are sought.



2.4 Family Related Problems

A total of 2 314 **family problems** and 878 related **legal issues**, pertain to family aggression; care, parenting plans and custody issues; single mothers struggling with great responsibilities; fathers feeling alienated; increase in corporal punishment; sibling rivalry and bullying; allegations of stepfathers treating their non-biological children with contempt; mothers who have given birth in this time feeling very vulnerable; separation from parents; and home fires.

This gives rise to 435 **psychological problems** of depression, suicidal thoughts, anxiety and parents recalling traumatic childhood experiences which impact their parenting.

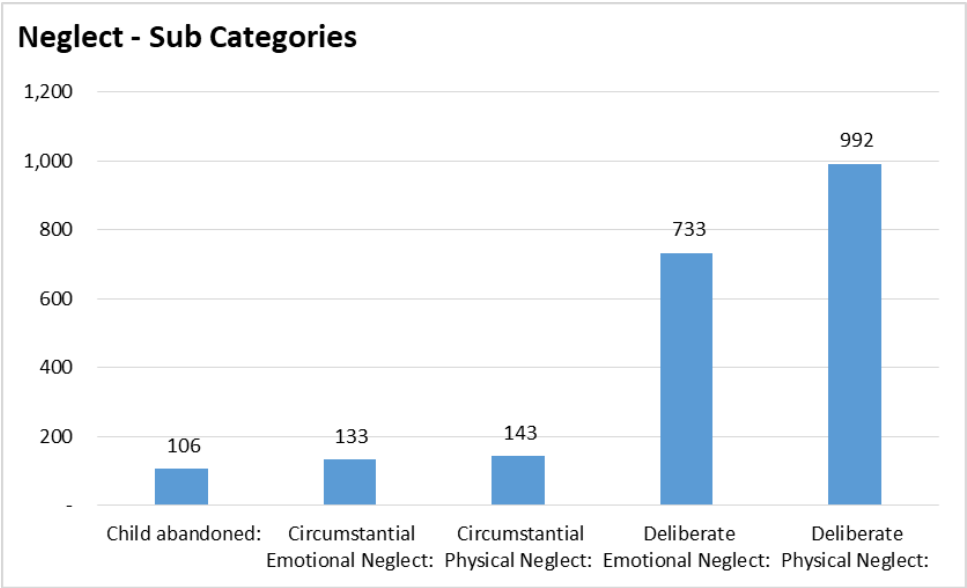
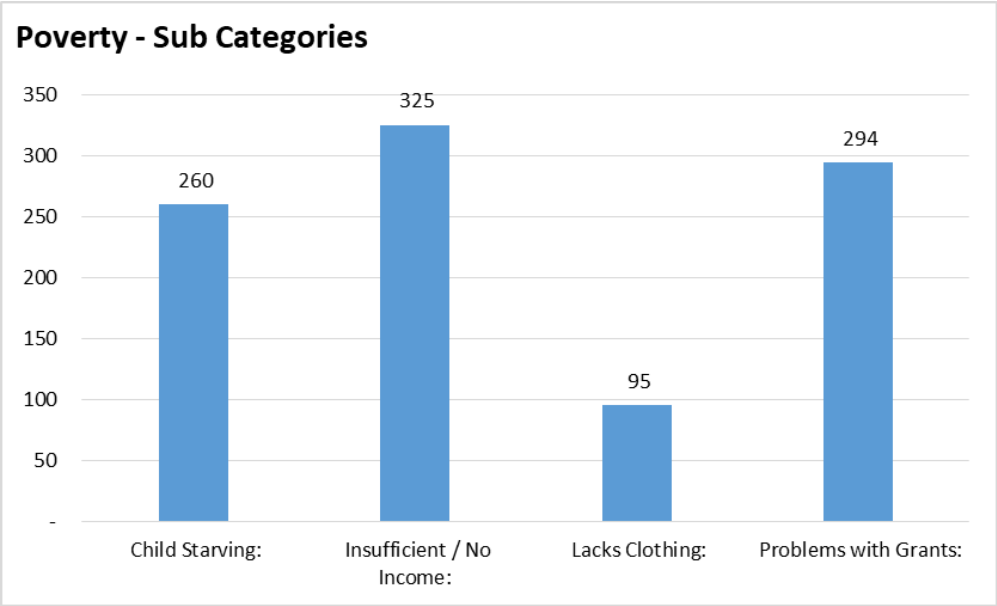


2.5 Poverty Related Concerns

Poverty related issues (724) cases resulting in hunger, homelessness, lack of clothes and food insecurity. This is aligned to cases of **neglect** at 1 434. We have been able to source food parcels from the HCI

Foundation, Tzu Chi Foundation, D G Murray Trust, Afrika Tikkun and African Children’s Feeding Scheme which we distributed to the most desperate families.

Cases pertaining to neglect and poverty include: toddlers being left alone at home with no caregiver; parents out partying; children left with grandparents for extended periods of time, with no support. Concerns regarding aggression by loan sharks; request for assistance in getting IDs from Home Affairs and grants; abuse of the Child Support Grant by parents; delay in grant payments; and, difficulty in accessing the unemployment grant.



2.6 Children with Behavioural Problems

640 children with **behavioural problems**, placing additional pressure on already overwhelmed families is gravely concerning. This behaviour is often a result of early childhood trauma and reflects in: teens refusing to stay at home; runaway children; refusal to do chores or school work; disrespecting caregivers; and even child physical violence towards family members. **Substance abuse** (677) cases including drinking, smoking dagga and ‘nyaope’. There have been several successful cases where counsellors have spoken to

disobedient youth where they apologized and promised to behave better. Counselling to address early emotional trauma and tough love is helpful.

2.7 School-Related Concerns

Children are happy to be back at school but are concerned about infections and exam stress has been a major problem. 725 **school problems** and **peer relationships** (245). Many children are so appreciative of the feeding schemes which are currently operative.

The Childline services provide an individualized assessment and risk analysis with all callers. This allows for reflection on the best plan of action for each client based on standard operating procedures for all issues.

Solutions are devised with callers to mitigate the tremendous challenges they face. We rely on DSD and the SA Police Services (SAPS) and child protection services. The counsellors have persisted with follow-up calls until they are sure that children at risk have a safe solution.

Our focus is to build family resilience with counselling and information that assists them to deal with the challenges of the times. This enhances their coping skills and emotional intelligence and enables children to play a role in supporting their families.

We honour our partners in child protection: community members, who often step up and assist the children in need; the health workers, SAPS and DSD who assist in finding solutions to children's problems. The African spirit of humanity is fully operational at this time.

3. TRENDS

Analysis of the Childline Help Line statistics (27 March 2020 – 31 March 2021) indicate the following:

- 55% increase in the number of calls dialled to the Help Line compared to the same period last year with a 112% increase in cases opened and 554% increase in the need for counselling/information calls.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated psycho-social- economic challenges across all projects, with an increase of 25 740% health-related calls on the Help Line.
- Help Line calls pertaining to abuse has increased by 26% and has been heightened in all projects with emotional dominating, physical being second-highest and sexual violence being the highest among the Childline Community Based Centre, face to face Counselling clients. Our intervention often heals the rifts in families caused by abuse and is very helpful in limiting further behavioural problems in survivors. Domestic violence also features high on all projects.
- Children with behavioural problems increased by 34% and substance abuse up by 16% on the Help Line. Delinquency is usually associated with underlying trauma, a feature high in Counselling Services. These youth make themselves very vulnerable to further problems. Helping them to deal with their underlying trauma, often repairs their relationships with their parents, preventing further problems.
- Poverty and neglect are major contributors to heightened family and psychological problems in all the Childline programmes and has increased by 177% on the Help Line

4. MYTHS THE COUNSELLORS ADDRESSED WITH CORRECT INFORMATION

- Children believing that the corona crisis is over or that masks and hand washing precautions don't help
- Suggesting various cures, from the rain to standing in the wind to blow it away
- COVID-19 virus only affects rich white people as they travel a lot
- COVID-19 is spread through the phone or by mosquitoes
- All people who test positive will die
- COVID-19 will kill us all because of the number of people dying every day and God is punishing us
- Red cheeks mean you have COVID-19
- Requesting Childline to fetch them as they are tired of corona and this violates their rights
- Only old people get sick from COVID-19 and children don't die from it

5. SUCCESS STORIES

We are heartened by the many children and parents who phone to: thank the counsellors; say a prayer; sing a song; wish our counsellors well and tell us to prevent COVID-19. We continue to be inspired by the resilience of our children, the high levels of care from community members and the support we receive from our extended Childline partners in finding solutions for every caller.

We honour the counsellors who have been tirelessly serving on the lines since the beginning of Lockdown, day and night, despite their fears and family members falling ill and passing away.

6. CHALLENGES

Childline has been able to offer services for the entire period of Lockdown which has been eleven **months**. Whilst we are privileged to be able to assist, the counsellors are overwhelmed with the extent of suffering in our communities whilst having to deal with their own family's vulnerability to COVID-19. Ensuring staff safety at this time has been a major challenge. We have provided staff transport, changed the roster to ensure greater safety, provided periods of isolation for those exposed, and all PPE required.

Some of our staff tested positive for COVID-19 and apart from transferring the calls to KZN for two days while we tested all counsellors and sanitized the offices and electricity outages for two days, the service has continued uninterrupted.

The following issues are of major concern to many of our callers, with levels and extent of violence increasing:

- Fear, stress and anxiety due to the high infection and death rates requires our counsellors to contain the high levels of emotion and assist in making positive choices regarding the way forward
- GBV and child abuse tends to be perpetrated by persons known to them, often within the family
- Economic hardships culminating in hunger is devastating and ensuring access to food parcels or vouchers is critical
- Many family problems are exacerbated at this difficult time and counselling services enable them to deal with these in a more emotionally intelligent manner
- Comparative studies for the same period last year indicate a massive increase in the number of calls and all categories of calls received. Ensuring child safety is a critical service at this stage. We follow up to ensure all children receive the necessary statutory services as per the Child Care Act. We have relied on community members, DSD and SAPS to assist. Many of the GBV shelters and

Child and Youth Care Centres are full and finding a place for mothers and abused children is always a challenge

- Troubled children and teenagers are refusing to remain at home and are reportedly abusing substances. Their single mothers are finding it difficult to discipline them. This is putting the entire family at risk. Each case is handled according to the specific needs of the caller to find a solution

7. CONCLUSION

Childline Gauteng is extremely grateful to our partners who have assisted us to extend our capacity on the Help Line, enabling us to provide these vital services.

Vulnerable families bear the brunt of the pandemic and structural inequality in our country, with increased psychosocial and economic problems of family functioning undermined by gender-based violence, emotional abuse and criminal violence; neglect, hunger and poverty; great anxiety regarding health issues; children behaving inappropriately; and difficulty in accessing support services at this critical time.

We continue to receive great support from community members demonstrating their concern and care for children, often to the point of putting themselves at risk, by taking them into their own homes. We are humbled by their spirit of African Humanity and are proud to be an essential part of “the village raising all children” at this time.

The SA Police Service and DSD have delivered services to children and families at this time. We honour them, the medical workers, the essential services organisations and the many people who have risen to serve those that are vulnerable at this time.

We thank our partners for your support in enabling Childline to render these critical psycho-social and child protection services. Despite the many challenges that we know you are facing in terms of the difficult economic climate and troubling COVID-19 statistics.

We trust that we will collectively overcome this traumatic time and a new South Africa will emerge from the lessons learned during COVID-19 where: compassion; equality, dignity, and life is assured; a reduction of gross economic inequality; increased services, and support for vulnerable people; and a restoration of pride in our country and our people working together to build a great nation demonstrating our African Humanity.

Lynne Cawood
Director
1 April 2021

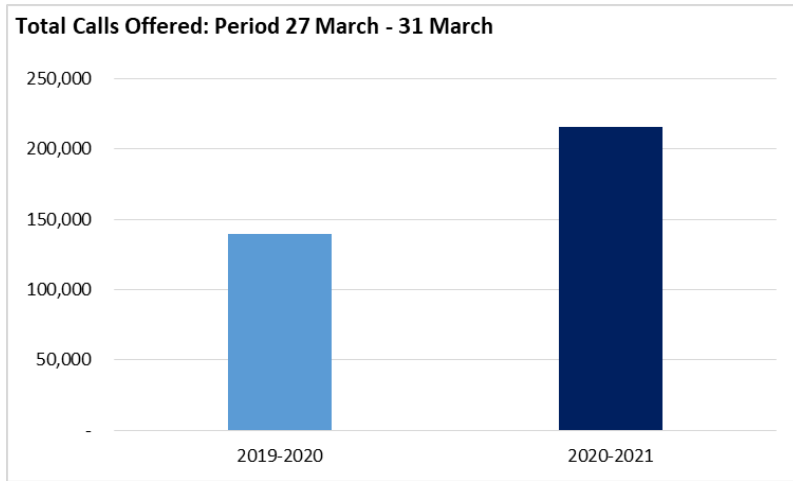
**ADDENDUM 1 – COMPARISON OF ALL CATEGORIES OF HELP LINE ACROSS ALL COVID-19 LEVELS:
27 March 2020 – 31 March 2021**

	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 3 Jun - 17 Aug	LEVEL 2 18th Aug - 20 Sep	LEVEL 1 21 Sept - 28 Dec	LEVEL 3 29 Dec - 28 Feb	LEVEL 1 1 March - 31 March	TOTAL
MAIN CATEGORIES								
Abuse	552	358	843	392	1,140	647	302	4,234
Alternative Care	24	13	26	9	18	19	5	114
Behaviour Problem	67	51	143	57	171	93	58	640
Commercial Exploitation	8	6	5	4	20	4	3	50
Disability	6	12	24	8	13	9	4	76
Discrimination	6	2	4	2	5	3	2	24
Family Related Problems	267	211	508	239	590	360	139	2,314
HIV/AIDS	16	7	15	7	14	9	3	71
Homelessness	18	15	20	7	24	14	7	105
Legal Issues	145	85	233	92	176	105	42	878
Neglect	168	104	296	141	398	199	128	1,434
Peer Relationships	31	24	47	32	64	38	9	245
COVID-19 / Physical Health	1,316	2,167	8,688	7,339	16,736	6,763	2,211	45,220
Poverty	166	108	148	58	156	59	29	724
Psychological Health	60	43	96	39	109	59	29	435
Refugee Child	2	1	7	3	5	6	1	25
School Problems	49	32	145	63	277	97	62	725
Services	1,109	1,605	6,605	3,541	9,256	5,110	2,071	29,297
Sexual	11	15	34	7	43	10	7	127
Substance Abuse	87	50	133	75	179	102	51	677
Undefined / Other	583	867	2,427	928	1,836	732	440	7,813

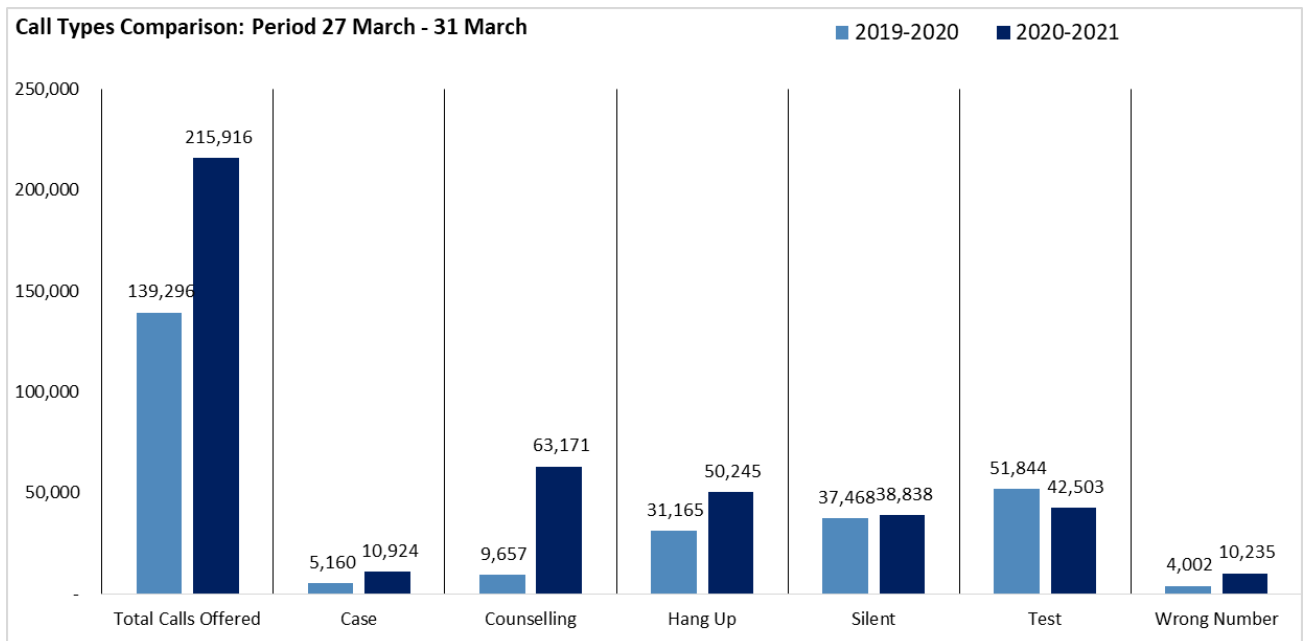
ADDENDUM 3 - COMPARATIVE HELP LINE STATISTICS

Period: 2019-2020 vs 2020-2021

1. Total calls received

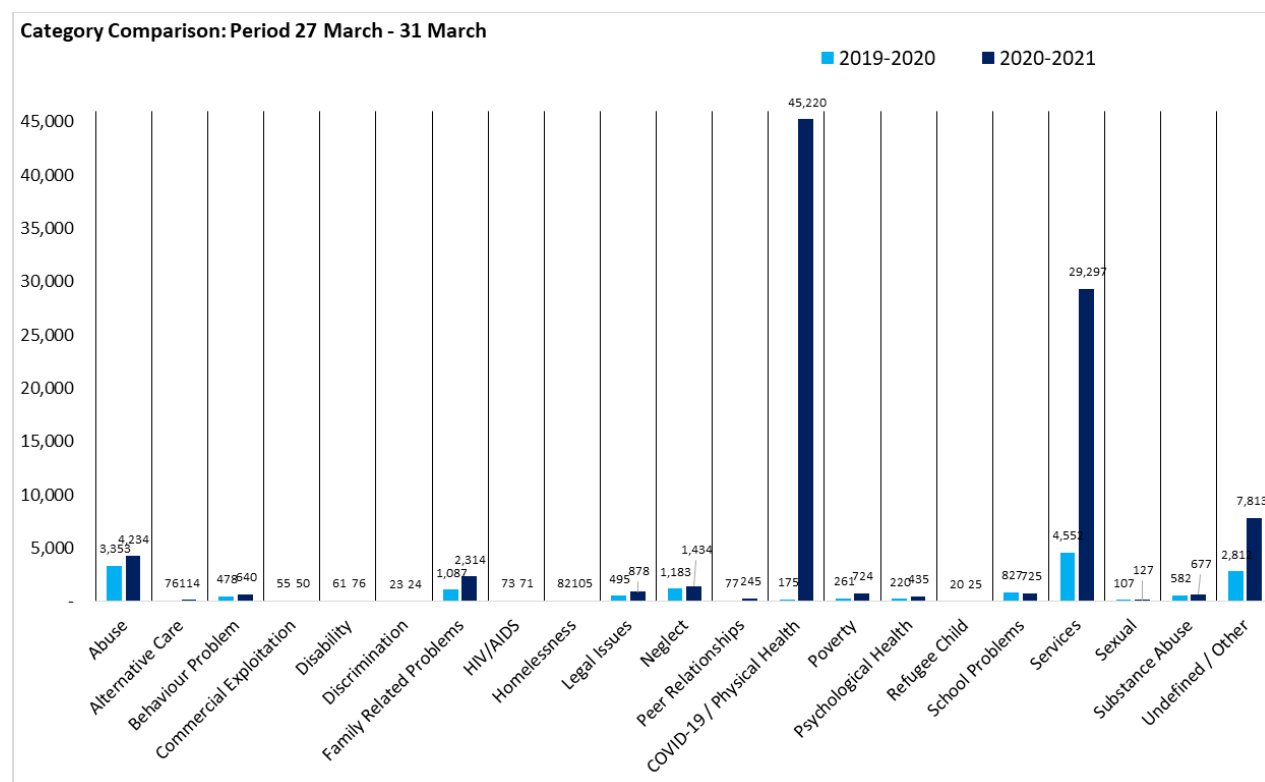


	2019	2020	%
Case	5,160	10,924	112%
Counselling - Want to Talk	9,657	63,171	554%
Hang Up	31,165	50,245	61%
Silent	37,468	38,838	4%
Test	51,844	42,503	-18%
Wrong Number	4,002	10,235	156%
Grand Total	139,296	215,916	55%

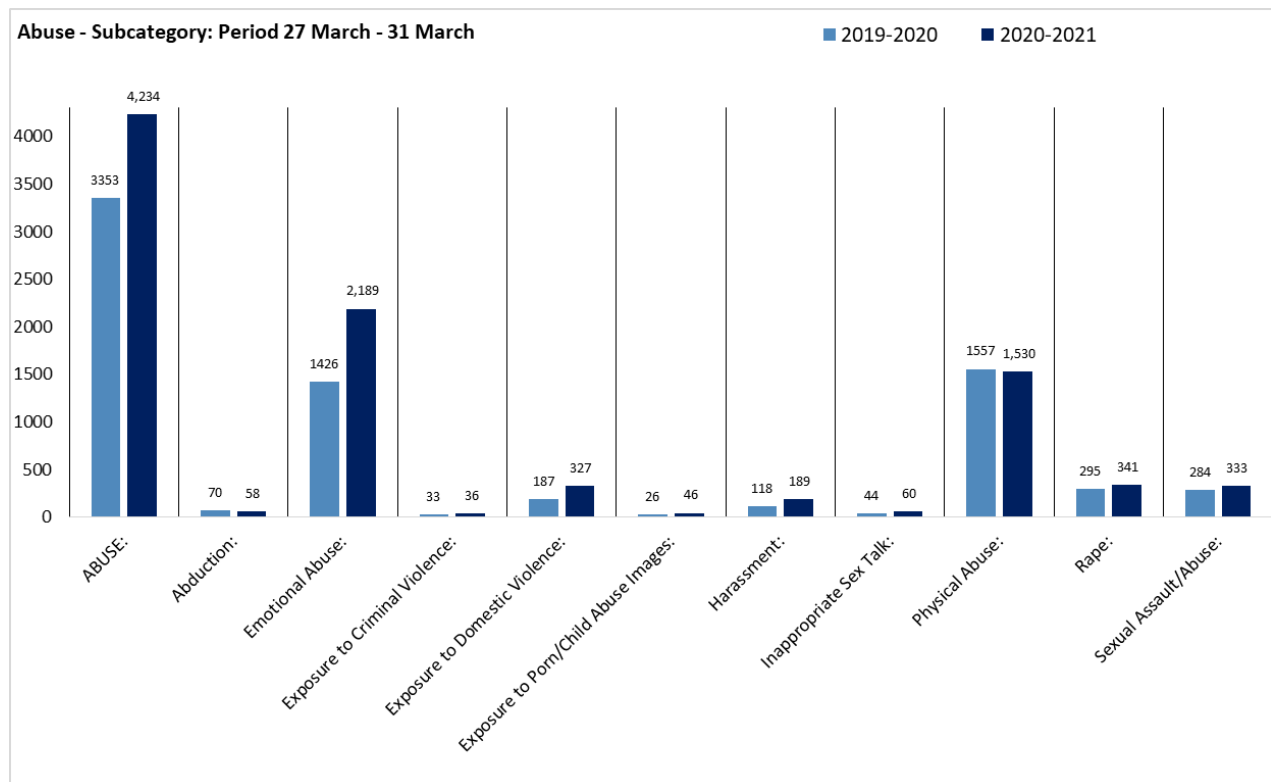


2. All Categories comparison

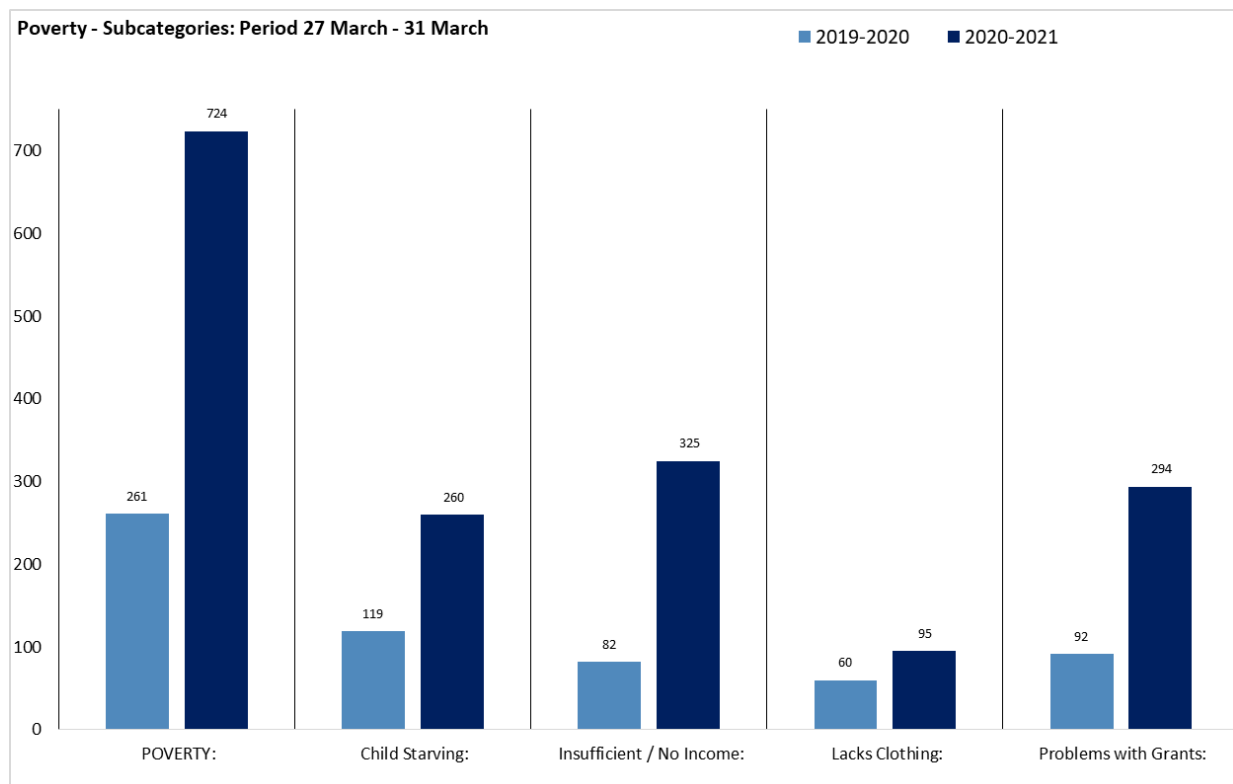
	2019-2020	2020-2021	% Increase
ABUSE:	3,353	4,234	26%
ALTERNATIVE CARE:	76	114	50%
BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS:	478	640	34%
COMMERCIALISATION	55	50	-9%
DISABILITY:	61	76	25%
DISCRIMINATION:	23	24	4%
FAMILY REL PROB:	1,087	2,314	113%
HIV/AIDS:	73	71	-3%
HOMELESSNES:	82	105	28%
LEGAL ISSUES:	495	878	77%
NEGLECT:	1,183	1,434	21%
PEER RELATIONSHIPS:	77	245	218%
PHYSICAL HEALTH:	175	45,220	25740%
POVERTY:	261	724	177%
PSYCHOLOGICAL HEALTH:	220	435	98%
REFUGEE CHILD:	20	25	25%
SCHOOL PROBLEMS:	827	725	-12%
SERVICES:	4,552	29,297	544%
SEXUAL:	107	127	19%
SUBSTANCE ABUSE:	582	677	16%
UNDEFINED / OTHER:	2,812	7,813	178%



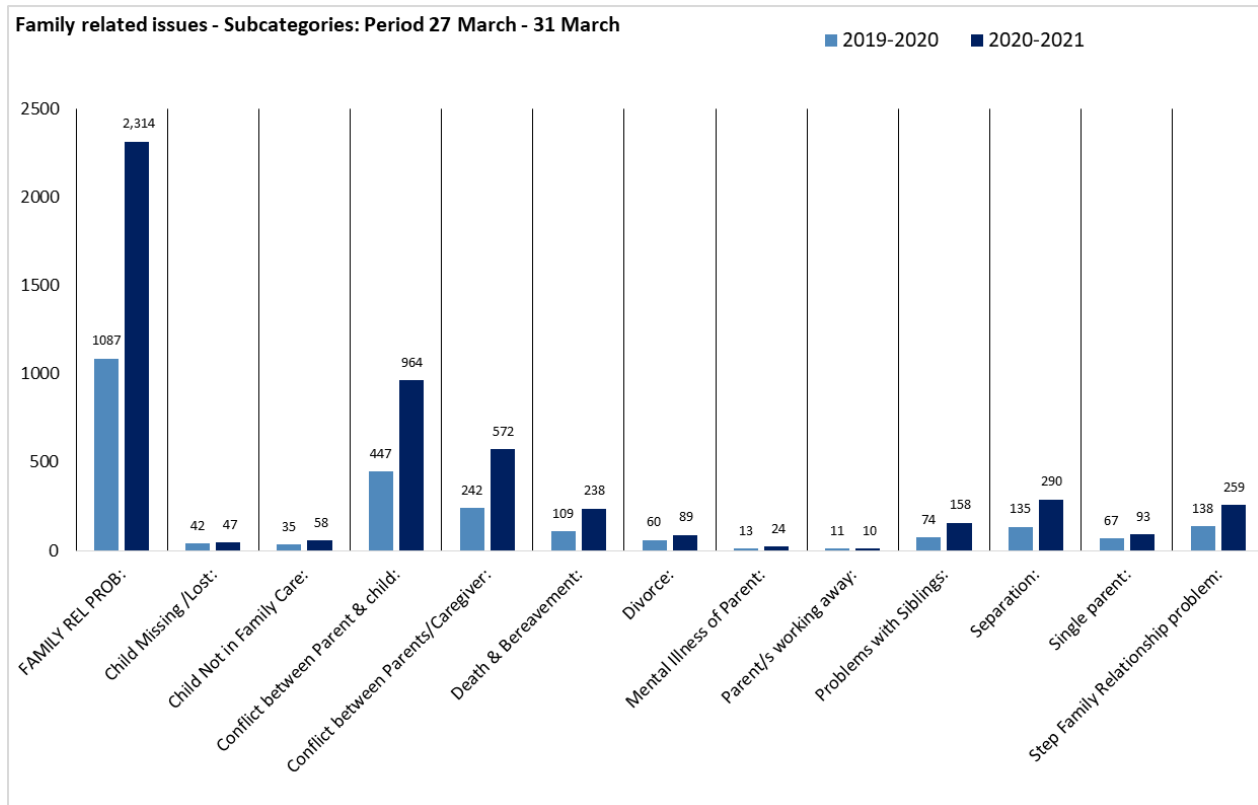
3. Abuse sub-categories



4. Poverty sub-categories



5. Family related issues sub-categories



6. Suicide / Psychological Health sub-categories

