

# Challenges and opportunities Children, the mobile internet and helplines

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# The world in 1986

- Photo of girl using an old-fashioned telephone handset

ChildLine's logo

# What is ChildLine?

- **ChildLine – the UK’s free, 24-hour helpline for children and young people – is now 16 years old!**
- **Every day we talk to nearly 2000 children.**
- **Children call ChildLine about a wide range of problems. The most common problems are abuse (both sexual and physical), bullying, serious family tensions, worries about friends’ welfare and teenage pregnancy.**
- **Launched in 1986, ChildLine has counselled more than one million children, saved children’s lives, brought abusers to justice and found refuge for children in danger on the streets.**



# Why children contact ChildLine

- they don't have to look up or find the number – recent research shows that more than 90% of children over the age of 11 know ChildLine and the freephone 0800 1111
- we are accessible, and 'open' 24 hours, 7 days a week, 365 days a year
- we will listen to them and take what they say seriously
- they still have some say and can maintain a degree of control over actions
- we are a confidential and trusted service

# So what are the dangers and challenges?

- internet
- email
- mobile phones
  
- not the technologies but people who abuse them

A big question mark

# Mobile worries

## Sample of calls to ChildLine concerning mobile phones (Apr 2001-Mar 2002)

Main Problem	Sample of calls	Percent (rounded)
Bullying	139	30%
Family relationships	79	17%
Partner relationships	42	9%
Problem with friends	38	8%
Sexual abuse	30	7%
Risk of abuse	21	5%
Others	107	23%
<b>Total sample:</b>	<b>456</b>	<b>100%</b>

This confirms other ChildLine findings, that danger of abuse lies mostly within the personal circle of children and young people themselves. 'Stranger danger' must be seen in this light.

Challenges:

# Finding out about parent's mobile phone use

Photo of  
hand  
holding  
mobile

Boy, 13: is angry with his mum as she's breaking up the family which includes stepdad and siblings. Mum sits up all night texting a man in another city. Mum has once flown down there without telling anyone.



Challenges:

# Wanting mobile-related / or emotional advice

Photo of boy  
looking at his  
mobile

Girl, no age given:  
Wanted to know how  
old you need to be to  
register a mobile  
phone

Boy, 11: phoned to  
say his mobile phone  
was not working

Challenges:

# Health concerns

Photo of a black  
child using a mobile

Girl, 11: she was thinking of getting a new mobile phone for her birthday and was worried that it might damage her brain. She thinks having a mobile will help her find new friends.

Challenges:

## Not having a mobile

Photo of a group of boys (Middle Eastern?) without any mobiles

Girl, 18: she is a Muslim and is very unhappy at home. Her mum found alcohol in her room, so she banned her from going to college, working or going out. Mum also beats her and she is not allowed to have a mobile.

Challenges:

# Trouble over excessive use/expense

Boy, 15: lives alone with his mum. They argue often and it got worse during the holidays. Yesterday he started texting on his phone and mum took it away. "I live for my phone". His last bill was £160. Mum doesn't understand how important it is to him

## Challenges:

# Dating and date rape

Photo of a  
smiling  
boy

Girl, 14: after celebrating her birthday a few months ago they returned to her friend's house. She thinks something was put in her drink and was raped by a boy 'of about 16'. She remembers exactly what happened and how she couldn't stop him although she tried.

Her best friends are urging her to go to the police. She doesn't want him to get away with it.

She's still having problems with him. He sends text messages like "did you have a good birthday?" and hangs around school.

## Challenges: **Privacy**

Photo of a  
free-  
standing  
mobile

- Software programmes available can give parents a powerful tool to
- record and analyse every word typed into a computer while a child surfs the net
  - see if their child has sought access to unsuitable websites
  - discover what children typed into chatrooms, emails or message board, and what replies he or she has received.
  - Parents may also discover what their children think about them.

Challenges:

# Privacy

Surfing cartoon  
character

## Need for a balanced approach

Children are far more likely to be abused by someone they know. Last year, 8402 children (6122 girls, 2280 boys) called ChildLine about sexual abuse. 87% of them said they knew the perpetrator – 57% of sex abusers were in the caller's family and 30% were known but not in the family. 13% were strangers.

**Children have rights too. The UN convention on the rights of the child says children have a right to privacy.** Parents want to protect their child but should also respect children's privacy.

**Challenges:**

# **Threats when things don't work out with boyfriends – or girlfriends...**

**Boy, 16: he split up with his girlfriend. She's been saying things about him to her friends, which aren't true. She turned up to a football game he was in and started hassling him with her friends.**

**She left abusive text messages but says she wants to get back with him. She was always possessive of him when they were together.**



# Challenges:

# Stalking

**Girl, 16, is being stalked. She doesn't know who the man is. He sent her a birthday card, flowers – and pornographic pictures.**

**He makes phone calls to her landline and mobile. He has actually told her that he has followed her during his phone calls.**

**The police know but at the moment they can't take any action.**

Challenges:

# Sexual abuse

Cartoon of a photo-enabled mobile

Girl, 15: “I'm having sex with my friend's uncle. I don't want to, I don't like it. He threatens me if I say no. He always phones me on my mobile. He says he'll kill me or he'll hurt my friend.” She is supposed to go round to his house tonight.

## Challenges: **Safety**

Photo of a distressed child calling from a public phone box

Girl, 14, was phoning ChildLine from youth club.

A drunken man phoned her mobile and said “I'm going to get your Mum.” She was also worried that she had been followed.

Challenges:

# Running away from home - or being thrown out

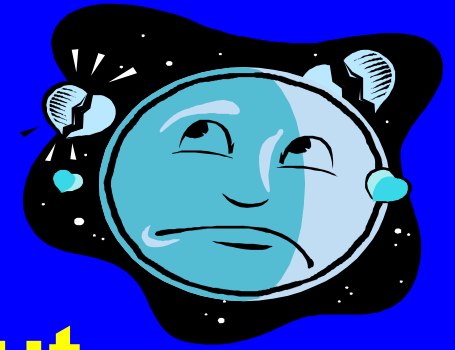


Photo of  
lost-  
looking  
boy

Girl, 12: ran away a week ago. She is staying with a friend. Her dad has called her mobile and knows she's there. She ran away as mum accused her of taking money, when in fact it was her brother.

Boy, 13: his mum wouldn't let him in yesterday. He slept rough last night. He called the police from his mobile.

Challenges:

# Mobile technology - the link between chatroom approaches and meeting offline - including for sexual abuse

Photo of two children using PCs

Photo of boy using mobile

Challenges:

# Loss, theft and robbery

**For children, mobile phones are very valuable items**

**Boy, 12: was worried about telling Mum he's lost the mobile phone she got him for his birthday recently.**

**Girl, 13, was asked by a group of older girls to open her bag - they wanted her mobile .**

Photo of mobile phone  
and a young person  
grabbing it

**Boy, 16: “I got jumped on my way home from a school sports event. They stole my mobile phone and broke my nose.”**

Opportunities

# The future is here

Two happy looking girls  
using a conventional  
telephone inside their  
home

- **Citizenship**
- **Opinions**
- **Independence**

Opportunities

# The future is here

Photo of girl holding mobile to her ear and credit card in other hand

- Shopping
- Gaming
- Gambling?



Opportunities

# The future is here

Photo of girl  
smiling as she  
looks at her  
photo-enabled  
mobile

- **Safety**
- **Self-protection**

## Opportunities

# Prevention – the role of young people

## ChildLine in Partnership with Schools (CHIPS)

Photo of 3 school children in school uniform

- Very early on, ChildLine recognised that young people turn to their friends in times of crisis
- Friends often call ChildLine worried about their friends and asking how they can help them
- Having someone available within their school can make a real difference to a young person worried about **online and mobile technology experiences**

### 1998 launch of CHIPS:

- Peer counselling and support among young people
- Development of active listening skills
- With identified staff to back it up

# The mobile future



Photo of two  
very young  
children looking  
at colourful  
market shop

Photo of 3 children  
smiling at the camera

THANK YOU

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GOZAIMASU

**Dr Ute Navidi**  
**ChildLine**

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ChildLine logo



home