



BoysTown

# Parentline Annual Client Satisfaction and Outcomes Report 2014



BoysTown

BoysTown is committed to ensuring that all services meet client needs and are evidence-based in their practice. This survey of the Parentline service (PL) has been undertaken with a focus on client satisfaction and client outcomes.

## Methodology

A total of 105 clients participated in the survey, including a mix of males (15.4%) and females (84.6%), first time callers (55.2%), and repeat callers (44.8%). All participants in the survey were recruited by Parentline (PL) counsellors at the end of their counselling sessions. These willing participants were then phoned by BoysTown researchers who conducted the survey. All interviews were undertaken between 4<sup>th</sup> August and 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2014.

The survey consisted of a 5-10 minute semi-structured questionnaire, designed internally at BoysTown in 2007, and based on a definition of service impact generated by staff, a review of clinical literature relating to parenting interventions, and an audit of standardised parenting outcome measures. The questionnaire was designed to capture client satisfaction with the service and perceived effectiveness of Parentline in assisting with a broad range of parenting support needs.

Overall, results indicate that parents and carers experienced high quality counselling, had high levels of satisfaction and that the counselling provided by Parentline was effective.

## Client Satisfaction with the Parentline Service

The Parentline survey contained two indicators of client satisfaction: (i) overall satisfaction; and (ii) likelihood to recommend the service to a friend. A very high number of the 105 respondents reported satisfaction:

- 96.2% of surveyed Parentline clients expressed overall satisfaction with the service, of which 81.9% claimed to be 'very satisfied'.
- 98.1% of clients said that they would recommend Parentline to a friend.

This was comparable to the 2013 survey which found that 95% of PL clients surveyed expressed overall satisfaction with the service, of which 84% claimed to be 'very satisfied' and in which 95% said that they would recommend Parentline to a friend. Only 3.9% (4) of the 2014 survey respondents expressed dissatisfaction with Parentline.

## Perceived effectiveness of Parentline in increasing parenting confidence and ability

Along with client satisfaction measures, the service's effectiveness was also measured. This was achieved by asking respondents to give a rating on effectiveness.

Across the total number of parents surveyed, Parentline was rated by 96.2% as being either 'effective' or 'very effective' with 74.3% rating the service as 'very effective'. The 2014 rate of those who felt Parentline was either 'effective' to 'very effective' was comparable to the rate found in 2013 (94%).

It is worth noting that 45.7% of survey respondents were repeat callers, and of these 99.9% rated the service as "effective" to "very effective", with 77% rating it as "very effective".

Respondents were also asked to rate the service's effectiveness in its ability to assist them in six specific areas. These were parenting confidence; parenting strategies and skills; understanding children's needs; personal capacity to cope; improving their relationship with their children; and improving their ability to care for their children. Overall, 83% of clients surveyed rated Parentline as 'effective' or 'very effective' at assisting them with at least one of these six areas.

As Parentline provides a broad range of assistance in terms of information, counselling, support and referral depending on client needs, not all of the service outcomes noted above are relevant for every contact. Additionally 34% of respondents reported needing more time to pass before feeling able to assess the effectiveness of some measures.

For those participants who did find that the measure applied to their counselling session, the following rates of 'effective' to 'very effective' were given:

- 81% for increasing parenting confidence;
- 81.25% for increasing parenting strategies and skills;
- 58.5% for improving their relationships with their children;
- 79% for increasing their understanding of their children's needs;
- 92.5% for increasing their personal capacity to cope; and
- 70% at improving their ability to care for their child/children.

## **Benefits for parents and carers from contacting Parentline**

Three themes emerged from a qualitative content analysis of the ways in which clients described the benefit of Parentline to them, their parenting, or their family. These revealed that parents valued an opportunity to talk to someone who could validate their capacity to parent and who offered them informed perspectives from which to think through their strategies:

### **1) An opportunity to talk to someone who would listen:**

*"The Counsellor I spoke to listened very well - didn't interrupt. She was calm but she had personality. She reassured me that what I already knew was OK - I needed that reassurance. She gave that to me in a professional way with the human side of it".*

*"It was a moment when we were feeling quite stressed. We've had quite a few years of this sleep issue - it takes its toll. It was nice to speak to someone who gave us some new ideas and answers. And it was nice for someone to say our child was a bit of mystery - in a nice way. He was quite calm and ready to listen".*

*"To have someone listening attentively and very patiently and to then confirm what I had said - just that was extremely helpful: and then we had an intelligent conversation. He raised good points. It was a huge weight lifted and I should have made the call earlier".*

*"It was good to be able to talk through the problem with someone. The Counsellor was very good at listening and came out with some good practical solutions we could use and try - she was very understanding".*

*"Having someone to talk to - someone to listen to the situation. The Counsellor was very empathic and she did give me some suggestions as to what I might do about the situation".*

**2) Validation about the service users own capacity to think of strategies and building confidence that they were on track with their thoughts and ideas for how to manage things:**

*"Reiterated for me I was on the right track. Made me more aware of how a child would be thinking. Let me know I can call and talk to the same issue and expand on it as they have it recorded in the system".*

*"It gives support and the confidence to see a way forward. It's the only line I know of that deals with parents. My parents are not here and it gives me someone I can talk to for an objective perspective".*

*"It's easy to lose confidence in yourself. But the Counsellor assured me all the supports I am putting into place are good - on the right track".*

*"It did give me the confidence to keep going through with a situation that was difficult - to keep going with what I was doing. It reaffirmed things I thought I knew and gave me some tips on some other ways to continue with. It was very clear advice and I got what I needed".*

*"It helped me to reassert my confidence. Definitely helped me sort out what the next steps are to take. I gathered my own self-assurance and it was really nice to have someone to share in this with me".*

**3) Gaining a new, informed perspective from which to think about their parenting:**

*"When you're really struggling to get advice i.e. more than your friends can give you, it's helpful to get a neutral perspective. It gives support and the confidence to see a way forward. It's the only line I know of that deals with parents. My parents are not here and it gives me someone I can talk to for an objective perspective".*

*"It was someone objective to listen to the situation and to be able to offer a different perspective on it - a sounding board really to clarify some of the things I was thinking and feeling and if there's some other way I could reframe them".*

*"I understand sometimes as individuals our view of things can be pre-programmed - and just getting another perspective was incredibly beneficial to me"*

## **The impact for children and young people**

Qualitative content analysis of responses to a question that asked about observed changes in children and young people as a result of parents/carers contacting the Parentline service found the following three themes:

**1) Behaviour change in the child:**

*"Yes - I gave my daughter space - and it changed. Too early to tell for the big picture but in this instance on the weekend it worked."*

*"Yes there's been a change - the [other children] sense it as well - he must feel there's a new direction or clearer way to address what he's going through"*

*"Yes - I've been able to reason with my daughter - and she tends to calm down a lot quicker"*

*"Yes seem to be working - the older one is being a lot more cooperative"*

*"Within minutes I saw changes in my grandson - just by being a little firmer with him".*

*"It's only been a week and a lot has changed. So maybe I just needed that phone call".*

## **2) Emotional changes in the caller which positively impacted on the situation with the child:**

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*"Yes - I have [noticed changes]. One of my issues is I have had so much stress - I haven't been able to be present with my son - and I needed to share it in a confidential space which I did with Parentline. So that afternoon I was able to speak to his teacher. We were able to talk about strategies to do with him and school. Would not have been able to do that if I hadn't made the call to PL"*

*"I've noticed some changes in myself"*

*"Yes - we don't seem so nervous together"*

*"My apprehension level has decreased - it did give me time to reflect on how to pass on all of the strategies I've gathered for my daughter - it is up to her now".*

*"I listen better when she's getting upset. I can focus on her and her needs rather than getting caught up in myself".*

## **3) Family changes generated as a result of the call to Parentline:**

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*"Yes - I have two happier children. Routine is back to normal".*

*"That night I was able to communicate with my son rationally. We agreed to just take it from here one step at a time".*

*"Changes have begun to happen - subtle. I am still reacting but I really understand why. I have also lined up specialist help".*

*"Definitely changes already - better communication. More contact and more interaction. I spent some time with them one on one - and my daughter has rung me twice since I've been home".*

## **General feedback about the Parentline Service**

Qualitative content analysis of clients' general feedback revealed themes about the positive quality of the counsellors and about the quality of the service.

### **Positive Quality of Parentline Counsellors**

From the feedback provided it is obvious that the quality of Parentline Counsellors contributes to satisfaction with, and the effectiveness of the service. Whilst there is no survey question that asks about the counsellors specifically, respondents often gave feedback about particular counsellors. Two qualities that were mentioned consistently included being non- judgemental, and being reassuring and calming in their approach

### **1) Non-judgemental:**

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*"It was just good to be able to talk to someone I didn't know that wasn't judgemental - in a time that seemed hopeless to me. It was someone to download to. Other families have worse problems - it put things in perspective".*

*"Where do I go with this sensitive topic? Needs to be independent and safe. I wish probably more people knew about it and I hope it never loses its funding - because the long term impact of it probably can't be measured. I'll call back in the future - I feel safe to access again".*

## **2) Reassuring, helpful and calming in their manner and style:**

*"This is brilliant - other services don't have the opportunity to call back and talk to the same Counsellor. I nearly didn't ring because it's so hard going back over all the tragedies in my life - it's like rubbing salt into my wounds. [Name of Counsellor] is the most extraordinary human"*

*"It's been very, very helpful for me - and I come from a distressed background - so triggers can come out of anywhere and you need a Counsellor who can understand that. The ability of the person I have talked to each time has been incredibly helpful. The Counsellor's ability to reflect back what I was saying was brilliant - I really felt listened to".*

### **Quality of the Parentline Service**

Parents also commented about the service: its accessibility, quality, uniqueness and impact:

## **1) Accessible – good hours and no waiting times:**

*"It's a really good service and great to be able to ring and be able to talk to someone. Good that it's free. Otherwise you might be thinking it's too expensive to go and get help - but you can just ring them".*

*"I wish I had thought to call them earlier. I was just very pleased with the service and that we can access it for free - we are just so fortunate – it's professional and free".*

*"I was emotional so just talking to someone was great. All the other interstate lines say they can't help someone from the NT and this is the only one that takes our calls".*

*"It was easy to find you and really good to talk to you"*

## **2) Quality service:**

*"Hope it keeps going - it's a good resource"*

*"[The Counsellor] was very good. When I think back it was good general advice that I got and I appreciate that there was someone there who could take the time to talk to me when I needed it".*

## **3) Offers a unique service:**

*"It's an extraordinary service. I've had the hardest two years and there have been times when it's been invaluable to me"*

*"I think it's good to get the feedback- service providers should be checking in to see if changes are needed to their service. When people are vulnerable it's hard to complain if there's something you're not happy about. I think Parentline ticks all of the boxes".*

## **4) Has impact on the parents/carers who use it:**

*"It's a good service because parents can be their own worse critics and any support you can get is good".*

*"I don't have family - I had this hideous relationship and I am just so grateful that you guys are there. I wasn't well parented myself and having your experience to draw on is great. For a single mum - it' so helpful to have your help. I am here to help you too - and am happy to recommend you guys".*

*"I find some of the tip sheets helped me look at stuff from a different angle - a new perspective. I'm approaching things differently now. It's made it easier for my own stress levels as well. I'm approaching my daughter and talking to her and dealing with everything. Keep up the good work - what you do is amazing. I tend to try to do things on my own - I don't like to ask for help. Things would not be as good as they are now if I hadn't talked to you guys in the first place when I made my first call".*