



# Health of the Sector 2023

---

Ruthlyn House, 90 Lincoln Road, Peterborough PE1 2SP.

Registered Charity No: 1125840. Registered Company No. 6484279

# FOREWORD

Helplines Partnership is the membership body for organisations that provide information, support or advice via phone, email, text or online. We have approximately 350 members in the UK and internationally varying from large national charities to smaller local and specialist charities as well as some businesses.

We are committed to supporting organisations that provide non-face-to-face advice, support and information to improve wellbeing for over 20 years. We champion the interests of our members and help them to build sustainability and deliver the best service they can for their users.

Helplines across the UK and beyond need data like this in order to continue offering the best service to communities and individuals. This data can help develop services and recognises the challenges faced by organisations working in the third sector.



**Paula Ojok**  
Chief Executive of Helplines Partnership

# METHODOLOGY

We produced a survey using a number of questions from our 2011 report and distributed it to both members and non-members through social media, e-mail newsletters, events and word of mouth.

We had responses from all four UK nations and a good split in terms of organisation size. For some questions we have extrapolated data across the whole sector and sought to account for the presence of outliers. We also included publicly available information where possible to strengthen the data. Where we have done this, we have clearly stated this. Limitations of the survey include:

- As with all surveys of this nature the data is self-reported
- Number of responses were lower than when the last survey was conducted in 2015
- There are a higher proportion of members than non-members who completed the survey.

**108**

**organisations  
responded to all or  
part of the survey**

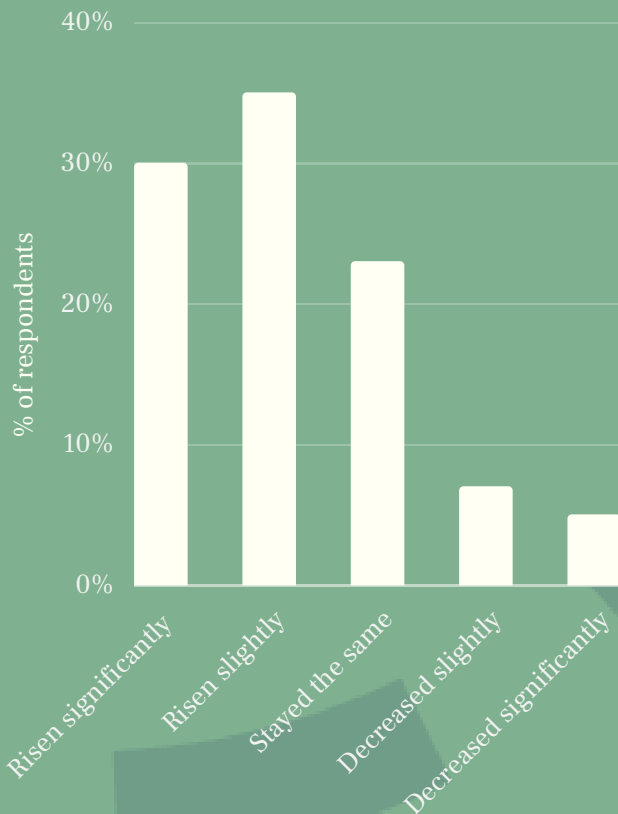
# HEADLINE STATS

Do you feel you have enough staff/volunteers to meet the demands of the helpline?

72% have a free to call helpline



How has your helpline budget changed since 2019?



Numbers of contacts handled by telephone and email are increasing

Over three quarters of helpline staff work remotely or have a hybrid work model

Helplines are seeing more crisis/suicidal calls

# STAFFING



We know that volunteers play a crucial role in many of our helplines. In some cases, helplines are entirely operated by volunteers with perhaps a single paid member of staff to coordinate things. Other respondents indicated that they do not use any volunteers but plan to introduce them to the helpline shortly. On average, **75%** of helpline operatives are paid employees.

A new question in this survey asked about where helpline operatives work. Just **10%** are purely office based with half (**51%**) working in a hybrid way and the remaining (**38%**) working at home. With this shift towards more flexible ways of working we need to be on top of the latest technology and best practice. We hope to be securing some new partnerships looking at this in the near future.



Our respondents said that just over a third (**38%**) of their helpline operators require a professional qualification. This included social work, nurse, doctor or similar healthcare professional, counsellor or safeguarding.

Recruitment and retention is a challenge across the sector so we asked about where people are advertising their roles. **33%** are now using LinkedIn to recruit staff, **40%** are using social media and **20%** rely on word of mouth. Helplines Partnership recognises this challenge and members can utilise us to advertise their vacancies for a small fee.



# SALARIES

We asked about what salaries people who work on the helpline receive and have looked closer at the roles without a qualification. We last asked this question in 2011 and have included the data from that survey underneath for comparison. The median full time salary for a Helpline Worker has increased by 10% in 12 years whereas for Helpline Managers it is 15%. This means that the median salary for Helpline Managers has been increasing faster than that for Helpline Workers.

## 2023

Helpline Role	Minimum	Median full time salary	Maximum
Helpline Worker (no qualification needed)	£19,500	£24,721	£32,000
Helpline/Service Manager	£26,500	£35,275	£45,000

## 2011

Helpline Role	Minimum	Median full time salary	Maximum
Helpline Worker (no qualification needed)	£11,000	£22,100	£33,310
Helpline/Service Manager	£26,500	£30,000	£45,000

# CALLS AND CONTACTS

**55%** of helplines report an increase in the number of crisis/suicidal calls since 2019

**1 in 4** helplines are receiving more than 50 nuisance calls a year

	Phone	E-mail
Average handling time	20 Minutes	15 Minutes

**80%** quality assure calls

**75%** carry out a regular feedback survey

**15%** have no process for monitoring demographics, diversity or equality of users

Respondents show us that there is a lot of discrepancy when it comes to the evaluation and monitoring of helplines. Our training courses can demonstrate best practice and give your teams the tools to measure impact and outcomes. Visit our website for more details

<https://www.helplines.org/training/book-a-training-course/>

# WHAT NEXT?

We still have more data to analyse and we will be releasing it over the next year on our Member Dashboard. This includes topics such as the process for responding to crisis/suicidal callers and the times helplines are operated.

We have already started planning for our next survey which will go live in April 2024. If you have any feedback, suggestions for questions, or would like to join the steering group, then please get in touch with our Policy and Engagement Manager, Sam Bromiley at [sam.bromiley@helplines.org](mailto:sam.bromiley@helplines.org).

Our final thanks goes to all the members who work hard every day to support people across the country and internationally.

Ruthlyn House, 90 Lincoln Road, Peterborough PE1 2SP.

Registered Charity No: 1125840. Registered Company No. 6484279