MAKING IT WORK!
Our story on active youth participation

Every child has a voice!
We believe that no child should be left unheard.
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1. WELCOME MESSAGES

1.1 Message from Child Helpline International’s Executive Director

It is not just a privilege but a real pleasure for me to contribute to this manual. I was present at the birth of the first Youth Advisory Council in London in 2014. Since then, I’ve had many chances to work with all of the original members of the Council, whether in meetings, presentations, social media outreach or developing our strategy for the coming years. I have learnt a great deal from them, and I highly value their opinions and insights, many of which have been incorporated into Child Helpline International’s everyday work and advocacy.

But we still have a lot more to learn and a lot more to accomplish with our young colleagues. This manual will guide us all in finding our way to a truly youth-led network, where your ideas, your values, your experiences will always be at the core of our successes.

My heartfelt thanks to all the original members of the Youth Advisory Council. You’ve done exemplary work, you’ve been our pioneers, our listeners and our activists. And this manual, both legacy and practical guidance, will show the way not only for your successors but for all of us at Child Helpline International.
1.2 Message from the members of the Youth Advisory Council

This manual has a two-fold purpose. Firstly, it is the handover document from the pilot group of youth to the new members – it is our legacy to them. Secondly, it is the first youth-led document within Child Helpline International, which focuses on establishing and participating in a youth council. It includes practical information on our activities and achievements. The manual is to be updated yearly to reflect new information and achievements from all youth groups at Child Helpline International. Importantly, this manual is a building block for subsequent youth-related or youth-led documents.

We believe that nothing about us should be decided without us! 👉

organization that deals with children and youth.

We hope that the next Youth Advisory Council leaders will be even more involved in organisational decision making processes, both within Child Helpline International and their local contexts and communities.

We envision the Council’s members tapping into their creativity and knowledge and implementing new models of interaction and cooperation with one another, with peers and organisations and with Child Helpline International. As a way of encouraging such progress, our aim with this manual is to create a practical, approachable guide on formulating a global youth team. We also share our personal observations and experiences on working together as a team in producing content and outputs.
2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 What is a child helpline?

A child helpline is a support and intervention service for children and young people, run by civil society organisations and governments alike. The goal of a child helpline is first and foremost to realise the rights of a child by enabling and empowering children to exercise their rights, to take their lives into their own hands, and to resolve their problems with professional counsellors who refer them to appropriate services and offer protection from threatening situations.

Every child’s right to express their views and have them taken seriously is enshrined in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The concept of child helplines is deeply rooted in the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 12 outlines the Right for all children to be heard and participate meaningfully in society. In addition, all childcare services, including child helplines, operate for the best interest of the child (Article 3). UNCRC describes that all children in the world have basic human rights which include the inherent right to live and develop (Article 6). It is an obligation of all States and State Parties to prioritise securing these rights and the proper operation of childcare services.

Child helplines ideally operate with a myriad of referral services at their disposal, and work closely together with family protection units, educational facilities, hospitals, judicial services, shelters, and other child related services. In reality, such an extensive network of services is not always available and so child helplines have to redefine resourcefulness, and employ unconventional creativity and ingenuity in challenging circumstances – in spite of limited financial means, capacity and resources – in order to continue working in the best interest of the child.

Evans, Kenya

Today’s youth are the people who can not only change the world, but are already doing it!
2.2 What is Child Helpline International?

Year after year, child helplines field over 15 million individual cries for help from children in crisis when no one else will listen. Until the founding of Child Helpline International in 2003, these organisations did their work in isolation, with little influence, no access to each other, or to those in power. Child Helpline International is transforming that, in order to change the lives of children worldwide. Currently, Child Helpline International is a global network of 183 members in 143 countries (December 2015).

**Mission**

To make the voices of children heard, respected and acted upon. To help those on the front lines give the comfort, compassion, guidance and life-saving support children depend on when there is no one else to listen.

**Vision**

A world where technology allows children to be heard, one by one, and through their voices shape the world and realise their rights.

When a child finds the courage to speak, two things happen:

**Child Helpline International makes sure the world listens.**

Child Helpline International aggregates and interprets the data coming in from child helplines in 145 countries. These millions of individual stories and reports form a mosaic of how and where in the world children and young people are suffering injustice, abuse and dangers. We then present those stories to policy influencers, and effect the changes that improve conditions for children in meaningful ways, both globally and locally.

**Child Helpline International listens to the listeners and helps them help each other.**

No one knows how to make a difference in troubled young lives like the people who listen to these heart-rending stories every day. Child Helpline International harvests all the best practices from child helplines around the world, from how to counsel an abused child to how best to staff a call centre and train workers. Child Helpline International also supports individual child helplines by sharing information and knowledge from the best of them with all of them, so they can do their critically important work even better.
3. OUR STORY

The beginning of the Youth Participation Model at Child Helpline International

2011
Child Helpline International’s Supervisory Board meets to discuss the idea of establishing a Youth Advisory Council

2012
Additional research conducted by staff members of Child Helpline International

2013
International Consultation Durban: Terms of Reference for the Youth Advisory Council developed and approved by members

2014
A Youth Advisory Council Coordinator appointed. The pilot group of seven youth members recruited. The Youth Advisory Council launched during the International Consultation in London.

2015
A year of building momentum and welcoming new youth members

2016
A year of solidifying partnerships and welcoming the second generation of youngsters in the Youth Advisory Council family
3.1 2011-2014: The Beginning

The idea of forming a Youth Advisory Council was approved by Child Helpline International’s Supervisory Board in April 2011. Following this initial step, extensive research on youth participation was conducted by staff members, leading to the International Consultation in Durban in 2012. During this event, Child Helpline International’s membership also approved the idea of more actively involving and listening to the voices of children and young people. It was then decided that this discussion would feed into the dialogue at the respective Regional Consultations in 2013. In 2013 the initial Terms of Reference document for the Youth Advisory Council were developed. The decision was taken to launch the pilot Youth Advisory Council during the International Consultation of Child Helplines in London in October 2014.

So it was there, in London, when we first came together and met face to face, just two days prior to our official launch in front of Child Helpline International, its network members and partners. Our group formed a unique structure of young people from around the world – from Kenya, Malawi, New Zealand, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Mongolia, and the United States (seven members at the time of launch). We quickly realised that we were responsible for representing the voices of youth worldwide, so we immediately became invested in our work and tasks together.
Some of the activities we engaged in during the International Consultation included:

- Launching Child Helpline International’s Free Our Voices campaign
- Presenting in two parallel sessions, one focusing on child trafficking and the other on global trends in usage of mobile apps by youth;
- Individually introducing ourselves at the opening of the International Consultation and during meetings of Child Helpline International’s Supervisory Board;
- Planning the course of action for the following years and some of the projects we would work on together.

This significant participation showcased an essential effort to institute youth presence within the governance and structure of Child Helpline International and its wider network. It further proved that we have a great dynamic as a group and communicating with one another was smooth and natural. The potential to successfully develop the youth participation initiative within Child Helpline International was solidified.
3.2 2015: A Year of Building Momentum

Not wanting to lose momentum after the International Consultation in 2014, we worked hard together in order to keep growing throughout 2015 and continue establishing ourselves as a well-known, skilful and experienced youth council. Guided by Child Helpline International, we participated in many national and international activities.

- Developing and launching the children’s book “Adam’s New Adventure” aimed at educating and raising awareness among primary school children about the services provided by local helplines and on the Free Our Voices campaign
- Participating in International Youth Day 2015 via a video message on the theme of the year - “Youth Civic Engagement”
- Creating the Youth Advisory Council’s website aimed at sharing our opinions on current-day issues and on empowering peers to become active members of society
- Advising and providing feedback on Child Helpline International’s key publications and notably, the new 2015-2020 strategy
- Participating in a meeting held in Amsterdam in November 2015 to creatively discuss future projects and the way forward in incorporating youth participation even more successfully within Child Helpline International’s structure and promoting youth engagement on a global level
- Youth-led launch of the Free Our Voices campaign during the Asia Pacific Regional Consultation in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

These and the many other successful projects and initiatives paved the way for the launch of the first regional Youth Advisory Council – in Europe – which at the time of its launch in 2015 consisted of four members from different European countries.
3.3 2016: A Year of Solidifying and Welcoming New Youth Members

Active youth participation is one of the key elements in Child Helpline International’s 2016-2020 strategy. In accordance with this, 2016 was the year the Youth Advisory Council became an “institution” of its own, a transversal element in all of Child Helpline International’s activities and projects. It was the year when the hard work showed results and the youth members became better known for their successful work in their communities and among Child Helpline International’s partners and stakeholders.

2016 was also the year of collaboration. With the increased numbers of Youth Advisory Councils, we had to start looking for creative ways to interact and engage with one another in our projects and initiatives.

Some important activities that took place in 2016:

- We worked with the European Youth Advisory Council to organize and carry out Child Helpline International’s first social media takeover on the theme of staying safe online, which took place in February. Each member had personal messages with tips and tricks we use in order to stay safe online. These messages flooded social media every hour through Child Helpline International’s Facebook and Twitter;

![Image of group of people]
• We participated in numerous events regionally and globally, representing the voice of youth. Worth mentioning is the participation in the Leadership in Empowering and Activating Child Helplines in Protecting Children Online (LEAP) regional meetings, coordinated by Child Helpline International. Faith from Malawi, Evans from Kenya and Teryn from the USA attended the regional meetings in Kenya and Paraguay respectively;
• In May, Kiran from New Zealand, together with representatives from the European Youth Advisory Council, had a significant role in the annual multi-stakeholder meeting and workshop, organized in collaboration with the GSMA in London;
• We contributed to the WADADA News for Kids project by providing feedback on its media collaboration toolkit and launching it at the International Consultation in Bangkok.

The term of membership of our group ran until November 2016, when the second generation of young representatives officially joined the team in line with tradition - during the International Consultation of Child Helplines 2016 in Bangkok, Thailand. The call for applications for the four new members attracted the biggest interest from youth to-date: we received more than 80 applications. We participated actively in the selection of the new members, both during the screening process and in the interviews.

Due to the huge interest from youth worldwide, Child Helpline International, in discussion with all current youth members, decided that the time is right to form and launch its second regional Youth Advisory Council – of the Asia Pacific region. This Council currently consists of six members from the region – from Myanmar, India, New Zealand, Malaysia, Bangladesh, and Nepal – and was launched during the International Youth Day 2016. This increased the number of total young people actively involved in the core councils of Child Helpline International to seventeen!

Evans, Kenya

It has come to my realization that a society in which youth lead, through a network supported by a solid agenda, is destined to resolve conflicts and offer solutions to any country or any social challenge. Today’s youth are the people who can not only change the world, but are already doing it. Social change led by young people is not all about the young people themselves. Instead it’s also about their communities, families, cities, and the world. Action that is focused on youth does not discriminate based on race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation.
4. BUILDING ON SUCCESS: NEW YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCILS AND NEW PARTNERSHIPS

The European and Asia Pacific Youth Advisory Councils have already started on a path of their own, which best reflects the needs and current developments of their respective regions. Notable examples of recent work of the European Youth Advisory Council are:

- Live broadcast on the topic of meaningful participation and volunteering of youth in September 2015
- The group gave feedback on the development of a website on the harmonized European number of child helplines – 116 111
- Furthermore the group has written a spotlight on Child Online Protection, featured in The Voices of Children and Young People in Europe 2015 publication

The Asia Pacific Youth Advisory Council, although only operational for a couple of months, has already been involved in a number of activities and collaborations, notably a collaboration with SOS Children’s Villages regional offices.

A key milestone for us, as the first Youth Advisory Council, has been the recognition of the importance of the Youth Advisory Councils by partners and governments.

All youth groups, in different points of time, have been involved in a number of cross-cutting projects, like WADADA News for Kids and LEAP (Leadership in Empowering and Activating child helplines in Protecting children online) and are developing strong collaborations with some of Child Helpline International’s partners like SOS Children’s Villages, Safe magazine, War Child, Free Press Unlimited, UNICEF, ECPAT and many local child helplines.
5. GOVERNANCE AND STRUCTURE

5.1 Membership Requirements

- Between 18 and 22 years old at the start of the term
- Commitment to contributing towards the success and well-being of their own, and future, generations
- Have knowledge about child helplines
- Have good English comprehension and communications skills (written and verbal)
- Ability to commit a minimum of 4 hours per month to Youth Advisory Council activities

5.2 Selection Process

Required documents for a valid application are:

- Recent CV
- Maximum of 250-word essay describing the candidate’s opinion on the role of child helplines in children and young people’s lives
- Maximum two-sentence answers to the following questions, for which applicants are encouraged to submit a video message:
  - How would you describe yourself?
  - What motivates you?
  - What would you like to change about a child’s life?
  - Why are you interested in this position?

Applications are screened by the Youth Advisory Councils Coordinator at Child Helpline International, with the assistance of the youth members. Interviews are then organized, also including the participation of current Youth Advisory Council members. Based on the shared feedback between the youth members and the Coordinator, a final decision is made.

5.3 Term of Membership

Members are generally asked for a minimum commitment of two years. Following this initial term, members who have reached 25 years of age hand over to the new team. Members below this age maximum, may remain part of the Council for one additional year, provided they and Child Helpline International agree.

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1 Essay topic and questions can vary per application round and involve, for example, request to send in a video statement or answer to the questions above.
The duration of membership can occasionally vary depending on the requirements of specific projects and grants. The European Youth Advisory Council is for example appointed for a three year period, in accordance with the project which funds their activities.

Did you know? Child Helpline International is always approached by many talented and skilful applicants during the recruitment periods. Only a limited number of these become active members of the core Council groups. However, Child Helpline International would like to involve this larger number of young people as well. For this reason the establishment of an Academy Network is currently being researched, where a broader youth network, together with the Councils' alumni, will have the chance to become or remain involved with the youth participation initiatives within Child Helpline International.

5.4 Structure

Our structure, and this of the other Youth Advisory Councils, is designed to be fluid and meaningfully address ongoing projects and topics, from the perspective of both Child Helpline International and us, as youth members. In line with Child Helpline International's 2016-2020 strategy, we are prioritising thematic focus and collaborations, rather than regional division.
We are Child Helpline International’s young advisors, experts, partners and collaborators! This means that some of our roles are to:

- **ADVISE** Child Helpline International’s Management and Supervisory Boards;
- **FOCUS** on important issues globally and regionally, express opinions on them and suggest interventions and solutions;
- **PRODUCE YOUTH-FRIENDLY DOCUMENTS** and other output that is aimed at youth peers and intends to increase awareness on specific issue;
- **PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY IN CHILD HELPLINE INTERNATIONAL’S FREE OUR VOICES** campaign by organising local launches and sessions and putting efforts into implementing the campaign into respective organisations and communities;
- **PREPARE INTERVENTIONS FOR IMPORTANT YOUTH DAYS** throughout the year (e.g. International Youth Day; International Helpline Day);
- Carry out **WORKSHOPS AND PRESENTATIONS** at events organized by Child Helpline International or on behalf of the organisation;
- **DISCUSS WITH AND INFORM** Child Helpline International on trending social issues among young people and children across the world;
- **LEAD** Child Helpline International into becoming a truly youth-led organisation by 2020;
- **PROVIDE FEEDBACK** on Child Helpline International’s strategic documents and reports;
- **PARTICIPATE** in ongoing projects on important issues concerning child protection and rights.

We are here to always ❤️

- Truly represent the views and opinions of young people that are helped by child helplines;
- Encourage young people to share Child Helpline International’s advocacy efforts;
- Increase awareness of Child Helpline International;
- Improve services to young people by representing a youth voice in decision-making;
- Sincerely try to improve the lives of children and young people worldwide.

Every child has a voice.
childhelplineinternational.org
7. MAKING IT WORK: WORDS OF ADVICE ON WORKING AS PART OF A GLOBAL NETWORK FROM THE CURRENT YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

With distance and time difference between us, there is a whole new set of challenges to consider. Time difference, for example, makes e-mails response times vary and sometimes make finding a good time for a skype call tricky. Always consider everyone in the team when setting up the meetings, even if most people are on a similar time zone. The different time zones we are all living in is something to take into account when contacting one another. On another note, English is the official language of communication we use but quite naturally our levels of proficiency differ. Being patient and helpful to those of us who do not converse as smoothly in English is a necessary condition for successful group work.

Varying Internet connections in the different regions where we operate is also something that could complicate the logistics of any meeting. A good way to overcome this is to give a try to different applications and programs and ultimately settle on the one that works best. In our case, we found out that Facebook, Skype and Google Hangouts have alleviated some of the issues surrounding communication, to a different extent in different time periods. For simultaneous collaboration, Trello and Google Docs have proven useful. For quick and short personal communication, WhatsApp is probably the best.

Kiran, New Zealand

It was challenging initially communicating solely over email as the use of language differs from country to country and due to the frequency of emails and time difference it was difficult to communicate. Though upon discussions with the whole team, moving towards Facebook and Google Hangouts seemed to alleviate any issues around communication.
Finally we are one group but different personalities. Some of us are more outspoken and brave, others more timid and quiet. We are all however knowledgeable, dedicated and active in promoting the rights of children and youth locally and globally. Approaching one another with respect and patience, allowing for each one of us to have a say and contribute equally is the biggest key to any event we have executed and any successful project we have initiated.

We all have our lives going on next to our Youth Advisory Council membership, so communicating with the team if any other activities are coming up that will temporarily prevent us from participating actively is what we strive to always do and also pass on to the next groups.

We are happy that throughout these two years most of our challenges have been logistical and not a matter of motivation or clarity of what we are doing and why. We hope that the youth members to come after us will continue this legacy of genuine involvement and interest and of open communication between the group members but also with Child Helpline International’s staff.

**Jasmine, Malaysia**

We are mainly able to do what we do because we are passionate and committed to the cause and of course communication is key essential to making anything work! As we form partnerships to work on issues, causes and presentations within the YAC Members as well as in our respective countries and its greater child protection scene. In regards to the mediums used, first and foremost come e-mails. Then we use Skype as a platform to have our meetings, after having explored Google Hangouts for some time. To me however, the tool that helped the most is Facebook and our Facebook page. As it’s a global tool so embedded in our daily lives, connecting and having discussions is literally at our fingertips at all times, in real time. Personally, I keep in touch with my council members via iMessage or WhatsApp on the side too. Moving forward, we have a blog that can be viewed by all, which helps in increasing awareness too!
8. MESSAGE FOR FUTURE MEMBERS

To all future youth members, we want you to know that our time with the Youth Advisory Council has been a life changing experience! We want to leave you with some thoughts on how the YAC has changed us, challenged us, and helped us grow.

**Faith, Malawi** Being a Youth Advisory Council member, there has been substantial growth for me as an individual, tons of experience gained and confidence acquired, as well as exciting new opportunities. It also has provided me with the opportunity to learn and create good programs that affect not members only but our peers as well.

**Jasmine, Malaysia** Being a Youth Advisory Council member, we are able to cross borders and collaborate through sharing knowledge, best practices and make the best of the opportunities at hand. It’s good to know that we are not battling youth-related issues and challenges alone!

**Kiran, New Zealand** Being a part of the Youth Advisory Council with Child Helpline International has opened my eyes to the prevalence of the adverse situations children are put in all over the world. It has also empowered me to speak up for those who can’t and advocate for equality and for every child to have a voice.
Every child has a voice.

Teryn, USA  A year after I joined the YAC, I was listening to a news report talking about a recent university attack in Kenya. I caught myself thinking, "I should change the channel. This doesn't matter to me." Then I remembered Evans, one of my colleagues from the Youth Advisory Council. He is someone I know and care about and want to be safe. He is someone I've hugged and shook hands with. Once I realized that, the radio story became much more important to me. Being part of the Youth Advisory Council has made me think more about people in other parts of the world. And the reason I care now is because I was given the chance to meet people from various countries. My experience with the Youth Advisory Council has made me realize how important it is for youth to get exposed to different cultures. Once you meet people from all over the world, you start feeling connected to the whole world.

Evans, Kenya  Being part of the Youth Advisory Council Family, I feel connected globally and enlightened with diversity in experiences and youth participation activities. I have exchanged and developed commendable ideas while working with Child Helpline International. Launching the Free Our Voices campaign in 2014, was a milestone in activating the voices of children and young people in a way that makes them heard and their concerns addressed. I am grateful for being part of a network that is propagating such issues.