

CHILD DEATH HELPLINE

Operated from:

- Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Trust
Great Ormond Street, London WC1N 3JH
- Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust,
Eaton Road, Liverpool L12 2AP

The Child Death Helpline is a partnership of professionals and parents working together to provide a listening service to all those affected by the death of a child of any age, from pre-birth to adult.

This newsletter is for professionals involved in the care of families.

Here are a few experiences of Helpline volunteers (Some details have been changed to preserve confidentiality).



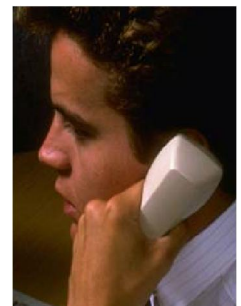
A mother had been told that morning that her grief was “abnormal”. Her 5 day old baby had died very recently. He was the youngest child. The caller liked to go to the grave each day, maybe only for a minute or two, because she passed the cemetery on her way taking the other children to and from school. Her husband and other children often go too, to tell the baby they love him or to say goodnight. She had been coping really well but was very, very upset now and hurt by this person’s attitude who said that her graveside visits were excessive. She felt she was wrong or was going mad. We discussed how everyone grieves differently and that whatever gives the family comfort is right for them.

There is a regular caller who likes to keep in touch with the Helpline. Her daughter died over ten years ago, from a blood clot, and her grandson, who lived with her, died unexpectedly a few months ago. Although the caller has some local support she seems to find consolation in talking to the Helpline, and generally sounds by the end of the call as if some of the weight has lifted.

One evening I took a call from a man whose stepson had died a week earlier. In the background, I could hear his wife crying and the caller kept encouraging her to speak to me as well. Like most bereaved parents, he was able to recall the minute details of the afternoon leading up to the moment when the child was discovered dead. He had been looking after the child whilst his wife was at work and had spent the afternoon playing with him. Early in the evening the child had been unwell and had been put to bed. Later on, the child had woken and shortly afterwards, collapsed. The caller had tried to resuscitate the child, the ambulance service had been called and the police had arrived – all of which is normal procedure in the case of a sudden death. He then said that he had been charged with the murder of the child and had been given our details by a probation officer.

This Lady’s son died several years ago as a result of a fatal accident at home. The support we were able to offer at that time has continued regularly through the years, and has helped her to rebuild her life and work through her continuous feelings of grief and anger. She is finding it helpful to be able to ring at any time, knowing that we will always be there to listen.

This caller’s youngest son had collapsed and died from an aneurism the day before his 17th birthday. His wife had been unable to face returning to work and since the time of their son’s death, had been affected by many stress-related health issues. He spoke about the time leading up to when life-support was discontinued, and that he had agreed to allow his son to become an organ donor. He told me about almost every recipient of every organ, and how he had received letters from all of them, via the transplant coordinator, thanking him for changing their lives.



WORKING WITH PROFESSIONALS

The Child Death Helpline has a continuous training programme. Four times a year, volunteers are invited to attend meetings for the purpose of workshops, or to hear from, amongst others, other healthcare professionals. These meetings have included pathologists, mortuary supervisors, hospice carers, police family liaison officers, and those who work with bereaved children.



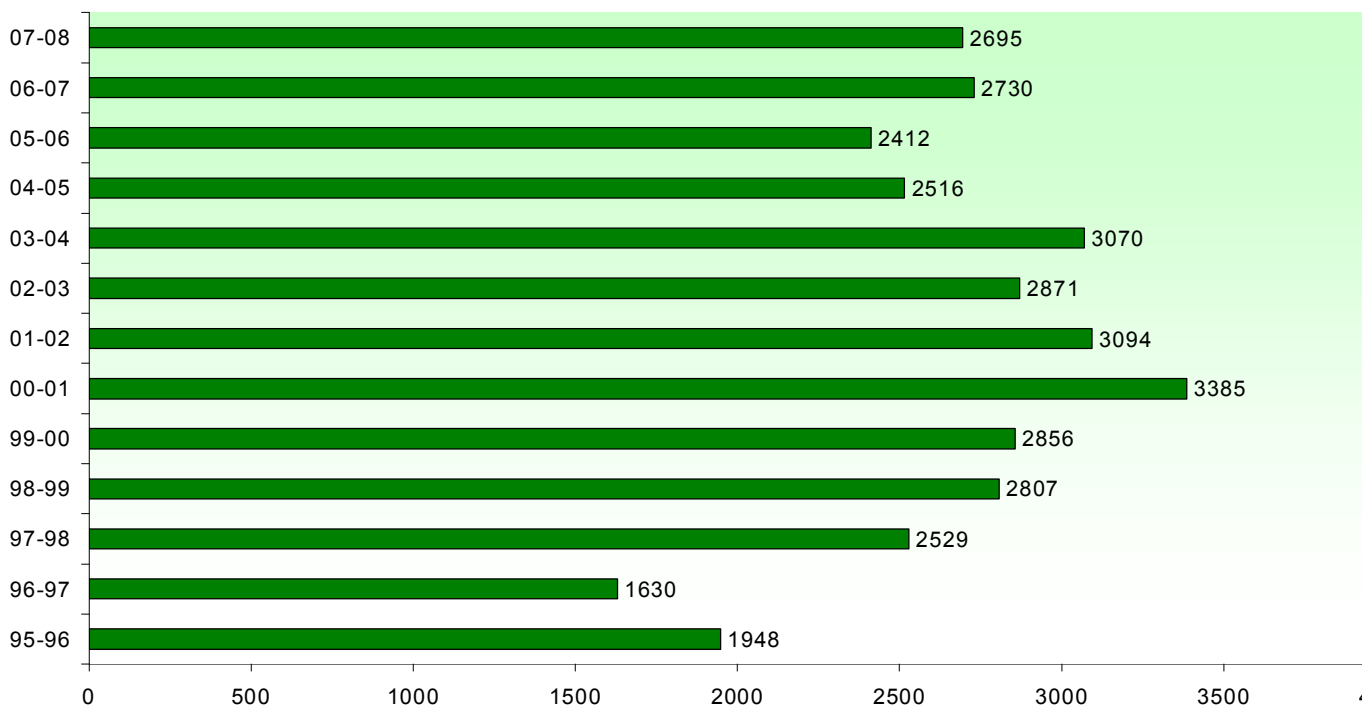
ARMED FORCES

Although the armed forces have had a good support system in place for bereaved families, this is aimed mainly at children and partners of those killed in action, leaving parents somehow with less support than many of them may need. Following contact with the MoD, our information was disseminated to all Welfare Officers. It can also be found on the Royal Navy, RAF and Army websites.

POLICE FAMILY LIAISON OFFICERS (FLO)

Child Death Helpline staff working with police forces in Merseyside and Greater London are seeking to create awareness of the support available to anyone is affected by the death of a child.

No. of Calls Per Year (1 Oct - 30 Sep)



MEDIA ISSUES

Occasionally there will be issues around the children's deaths that raise interest in the media – examples being the Bristol Royal Infirmary enquiry, the shootings at Dunblane, the Redfern report into organ retention. Worried callers can always be assured of a listening ear. Such events may stir up memories and prompt more calls. Extra opening hours can also be activated when a “high profile” child death occurs, as media coverage inevitably reawakens sadness for all potential callers.

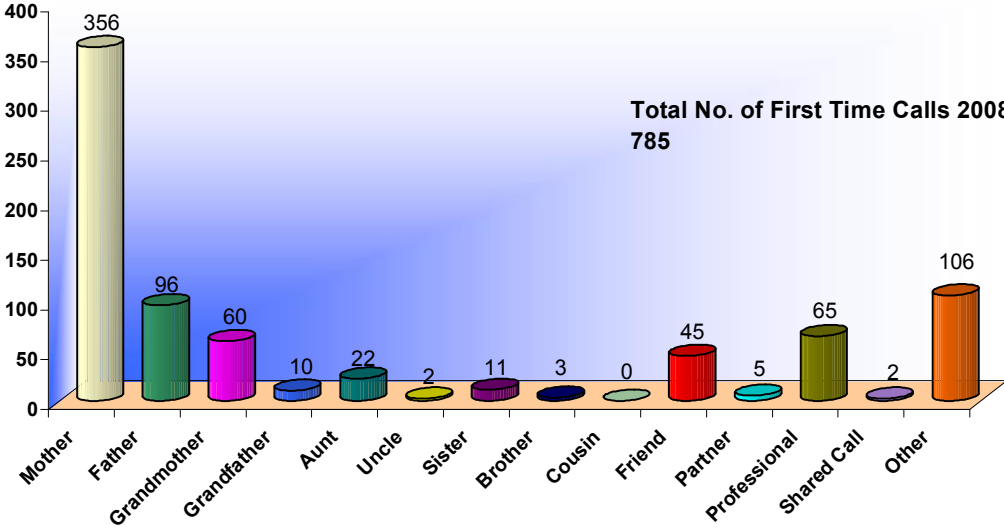


For further information contact the CDH administration on (London) 020 7813 8416
or (Liverpool) 0151 252 5391 or email: contact@childdeathhelpline.org

The Child Death Helpline aims to provide a quality freephone service to all those affected by the death of a child under any circumstances, and however long ago. Callers to the Helpline might be parents, grandparents, siblings, other family members, friends or professionals involved with the dead child.

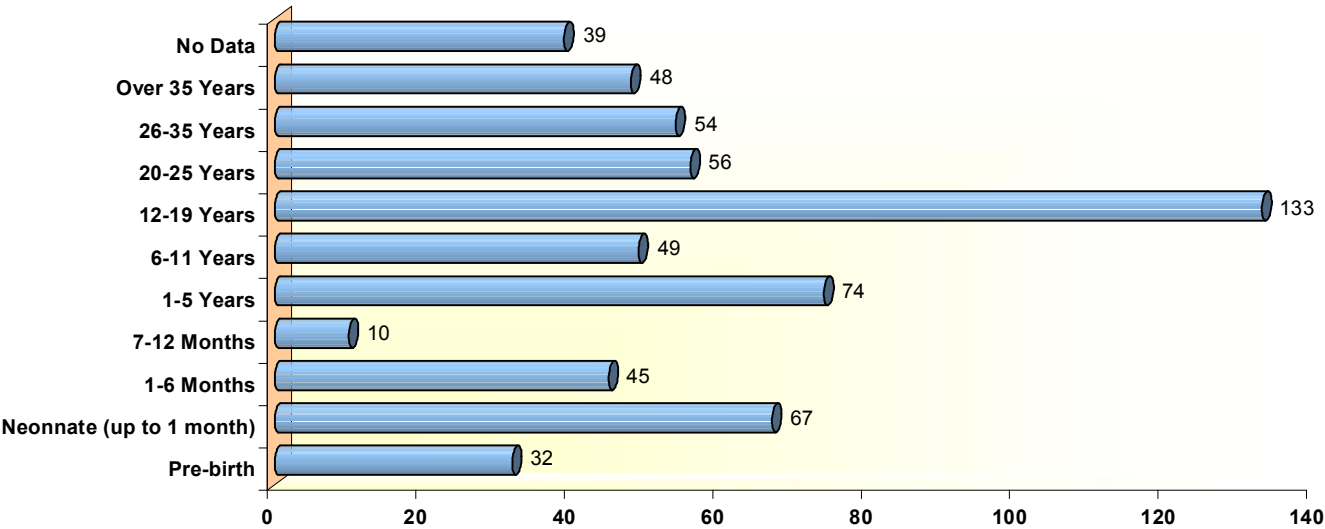
Here we provide statistics based on first time callers to our Helpline with regard to the age of the child, how long ago the child died, and the cause of death.

Caller Profile (1 Jan - 31 Dec 2008)



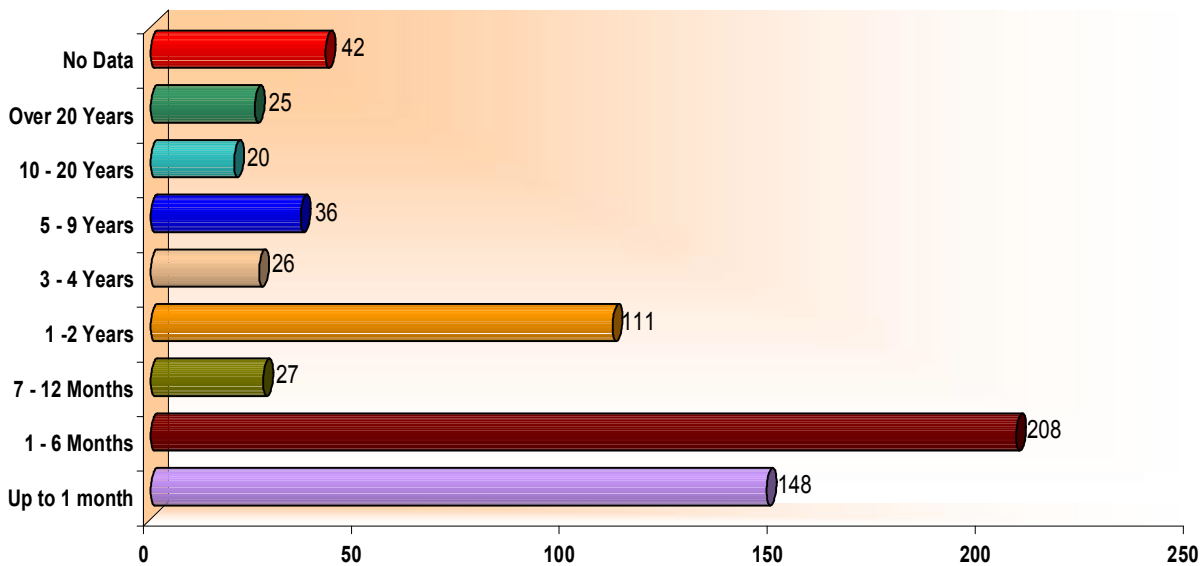
The following three graphs contain a column marked 'no data'. This is because it is not always possible to find out this information during a call.

Age at Death (1 Jan - 31 Dec 2008)



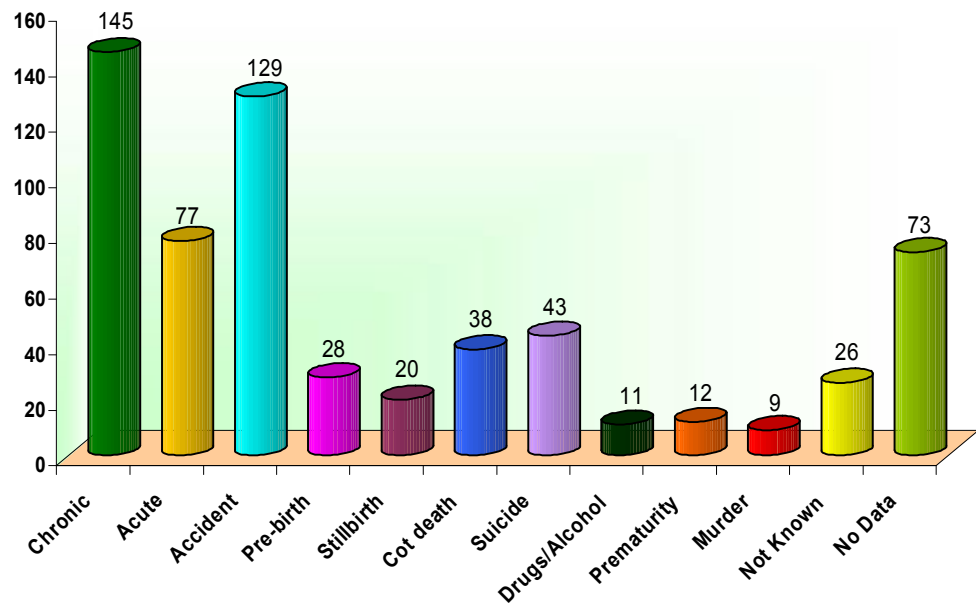
For a parent, their son or daughter will always be their child, irrespective of age.

Time Since Death (1 Jan - 31 Dec 2008)



Organisations offering support to those bereaved of a child frequently hear from people where such a death occurred twenty, thirty or even more years previously. We have indeed received calls from parents whose child died over forty years ago.

Cause of Death (1 Jan - 31 Dec 2008)



- Chronic Illness includes long term illnesses, such as cancer, tumours, leukaemia, chronic health conditions and syndromes.
- Acute Illness includes any type of sudden and unexpected death, such as heart attacks, sudden infections, short onset illnesses, Sudden Arrhythmic Death Syndrome (SADS).
- Cot Death (Sudden Infant Death (SIDS)).
- Pre-birth includes miscarriage and termination.