

spunout

text about it

**250,000
Conversations**

**A Real-Time View of Youth
Mental Health in Ireland**

What young people are telling us,
and why it matters for Ireland's
mental health landscapes

May 2026

Need Support?

Text **HELLO** to **50808** or WhatsApp **0861800280** to start a confidential conversation with Text About It, available free, 24/7 across Ireland.

Find out more at textaboutit.ie or through spunout.ie.

If it matters to you, it matters to us.

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Executive Summary

‘250,000 Conversations: A Real-Time View of Youth Mental Health in Ireland’ presents five years of insights from Text About It by spunout, a free, anonymous, 24/7, empathic and non-judgmental listening service funded by the HSE, providing human-to-human support to anyone who needs someone to talk to.

Drawing on 250,000 conversations and 7.9 million message exchanges between 2020 and 2025, the report provides a unique real-time view into the experiences, pressures and emotional well-being of young people in Ireland today. Over that five-year period, trained volunteers and staff supported an average of 135 conversions a day. More than 30,000 people reached out with thoughts of suicide, while 60% of texters reported that it was the first time that they had ever shared what they were going through. The report highlights that 44% of conversations took place between 8 pm and 2 am, demonstrating the importance of accessible support outside traditional service hours.

The findings reveal increasing demand for immediate, accessible digital mental health support, growing levels of distress and complexity and the critical role of timely human connection in moments of vulnerability and crisis. The report also highlights the essential contribution of our trained volunteers and clinical staff in delivering early intervention, signposting, suicide prevention and safeguarding support at scale.

The report identifies three key priorities to ensure Ireland can respond effectively to the changing mental health needs of young people:

1. Sustained multiannual investment to maintain and scale accessible 24/7 support

2. Support to strengthen the use of the real-time service data and insights to inform policy, early intervention and national mental health planning

3. Expanding the reach and accessibility for underserved and harder-to-reach groups who face additional barriers to support

At the core of the report is both a reflection of what young people are experiencing and a call to ensure accessible human-led digital mental health support remains a central part of Ireland’s mental health landscape.

Key Highlights of 250,000 Conversations

By numbers: June 2020 - June 2025

Core Impact over 5 years

250,000
conversations supported

7.9 million
messages exchanged

135 conversations
every day

1 conversation
every 11 minutes

Peak demand:
654
conversations
in one day (Covid)

Young People Reaching Out

55%+ of texters aged 13-25

60% shared their problem for the first time

44% of conversations happened between 8pm and 2am

86% connected with support in under 5 minutes

Suicide Prevention & Safeguarding

30,087 people reached out with thoughts of suicide

90% of suicide-related conversations were safely de-escalated

2,922 emergency interventions coordinated

1,303 safeguarding reports made to Tusla

Mental Health Concerns

Most common topics:

27.6%
Anxiety

19.4%
Stress

16.9%
Suicide

17.6%
Isolation/Loneliness

15.9%
Depression

Why Young People Use Text About It

26.6% had nobody else to talk to

25% wanted to speak anonymously

18.3% felt more comfortable texting

16% could not access therapy

Volunteers Behind Every Conversation

1,246 volunteers

137,381
volunteer hours

89,019 hours spent directly supporting texters

Equivalent of 10 years of continuous listening

86.8% felt genuine concern from their volunteer

1.

Introduction

**250,000
conversations**

**7.9 million
messages**

**135 conversations
a day**

Behind every number in this report is a young person who reached out in distress and found someone there to listen. This report marks 250,000 of those moments.

Over the past five years, Text About It by spunout has become a vital part of how young people in Ireland seek and find support. For many of those connecting with our service, this was the first time they had ever shared what they were going through. Behind each of these conversations is a trained volunteer, showing up day and night to listen, support, and respond with care. Their commitment has made this service possible, and this milestone belongs to them.

Findings from this report show that more than 30,000 texters reached out with thoughts of suicide. Our report shares how anxiety, stress,

isolation and suicide are the most common topics texters reach out about. These are moments of acute vulnerability, where timely, compassionate human connection made a critical difference. This milestone not only shows the scale of need, but also a clear shift in how and what support is being sought by young people.

The insights in this report offer a real-time view of youth mental health in Ireland today. They reveal increasing demand, growing complexity and a level of distress that cannot be ignored. They also demonstrate the unique value of real-time data in understanding what young people experience as it happens and the opportunity to strengthen how these insights inform national policy and response.

At the same time gaps remain. Some young people still face barriers due to identity, stigma or access. Ensuring that support reaches those most at risk must be a shared priority. Services like Text About It are no longer complimentary, they are essential infrastructure in our mental health landscape. Sustained multi-annual investment is critical to maintain and scale this support, deepen the insights it can provide and extend its reach to those who need it most.

This report is both a reflection of young people's lived distress and a call for a national response so that, together, we can create an Ireland where all young people are supported and empowered to thrive.



Sinéad Keane
CEO



Dr. Tara Logan Buckely
Director of Clinical Services

2.

About Text About It

Text About It by spunout is a free, anonymous, 24/7, empathic and non-judgmental listening service funded by the HSE, providing human-to-human support to anyone who needs someone to talk to. Our service provides everything from a calming chat to immediate support for mental health and emotional wellbeing.

At the heart of the service is a simple belief: that everyone deserves to feel heard.

When someone reaches out, they are connected with a trained volunteer or member of our clinical staff team. Their role is to listen without judgment, help the person make sense of what they are experiencing, and support them at their own pace.

Each conversation begins with a simple question “We are here for you! What’s going on?” From there, the texter is guided gently into a one-to-one conversation with one of

our dedicated volunteers. Volunteers are supported in real-time by our expert clinical staff team, ensuring that every person who contacts us receives a consistent, safe and high-quality standard of care.

Many young people do not feel they have someone to confide in. Some are reluctant to pick up the phone and connect with traditional support helplines. For many, speaking out loud feels unsafe, traditional services can feel inaccessible and the wait for an appointment can feel too long when distress is immediate.

Text About It meets them where they are, in a format that is accessible and without judgement. We exist to support people in moments of overwhelm and to bridge the gap between distress and further support.

Text About It fills a critical gap in Ireland’s mental health support system by providing immediate, 24/7, digital-supported, human connection at the time of need.

3.

Our 5-Year Impact

Since its launch, Text About It has become a trusted and consistent source of support for young people in Ireland. This report provides a five-year analysis of service delivery and impact, drawing on routine service monitoring data, usage metrics, anonymised conversation insights, and voluntary post-conversation survey responses.

Between June 2020 and June 2025, our trained volunteers and staff supported 250,000 conversations, and around 7.9 million text messages were exchanged, reflecting both the scale of services and depth of engagement.

While Text About It is designed with young people in mind, it is available to anyone who needs support. Over 55% of our texters are aged 13 - 25, positioning the service as a vital component of Ireland's youth mental health infrastructure.

Demand for the service is both consistent and sustained. On average, 135 conversations took place each day, equating to approximately one person reaching out every 11 minutes.

**135 conversations
per day**

**5 conversations
per hour**

**1 conversation
every 11 minutes**

These figures indicate a continuous need for immediate, accessible support. For many young people, Text About It serves as a primary point of contact, particularly in moments of distress when other supports may not be available or accessible.

At peak demand, we have supported up to 654 conversations in a single day, equivalent to an average of 27 conversations per hour. This demonstrates both the service's capacity to respond at scale and the level of trust young people place in it.

Behind this demand is a workforce of trained volunteers and staff operating within a clinically-supported model. During the five year period, the service was delivered by 1246 active volunteers and 67 staff, including real-time clinical supervisors providing supervision. This structure ensures that support is not only immediate but also safe, consistent and evidence-informed.

Each of the 250,000 conversations represents a moment when someone reached a point where they needed support and chose to seek it.

Taken together, these interactions provide a clear indication of both the scale of unmet need and the essential role of accessible, youth-centred, digital mental health services within Ireland's wider system.

4.

**Supporting
National Mental
Health Strategy**

Text About It by spunout shows how national mental health policy can be delivered in practice in real time, every day. The service not only responds to immediate needs but actively delivers on Ireland's national mental health priorities.

spunout's Text About It service aligns closely with key government strategy, including **Sharing the Vision: Digital Mental Health Strategy 2026-2030, Pathways to Wellbeing: National Mental Health Promotion Plan 2024-2030** and **Connecting for Life: Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015-2024**. These strategies emphasise the importance of digital mental health supports and providing targeted, early, accessible supports to young people at risk for mental health difficulties. We actively deliver on the new digital mental health strategy by:

- Providing free, 24/7 digital mental health support; and
- Using real-time anonymised data to identify emerging mental health trends among young people

Through continuous risk assessment and structured support, the service contributes to the delivery of Connecting for Life. Volunteers and staff play a key role in de-escalating high-risk situations and supporting young people to access further care where needed. In doing so, Text About It provides evidence-based support for individuals at risk of suicide and contributes to national understanding of suicide and self-harm. While national strategies set out the vision for mental health support in Ireland, Text About It demonstrates how that vision can be delivered in practice every day in real time.

Sustained investment is essential to deliver on Ireland's mental health ambitions for universal, accessible mental health care can be delivered and that young people can access support when and how they most need it.



“This is a free service that I have been proud to support as Minister for Mental Health, fully funded by my Department through the HSE. I want to pay particular tribute to the dedicated spunout team and extend my heartfelt thanks to every volunteer who has given their time to show compassion to their peers. The ‘Text About It’ volunteer community embodies the very best of humanity, and this service would not exist without your valued contribution.”

-Mary Butler TD



5.

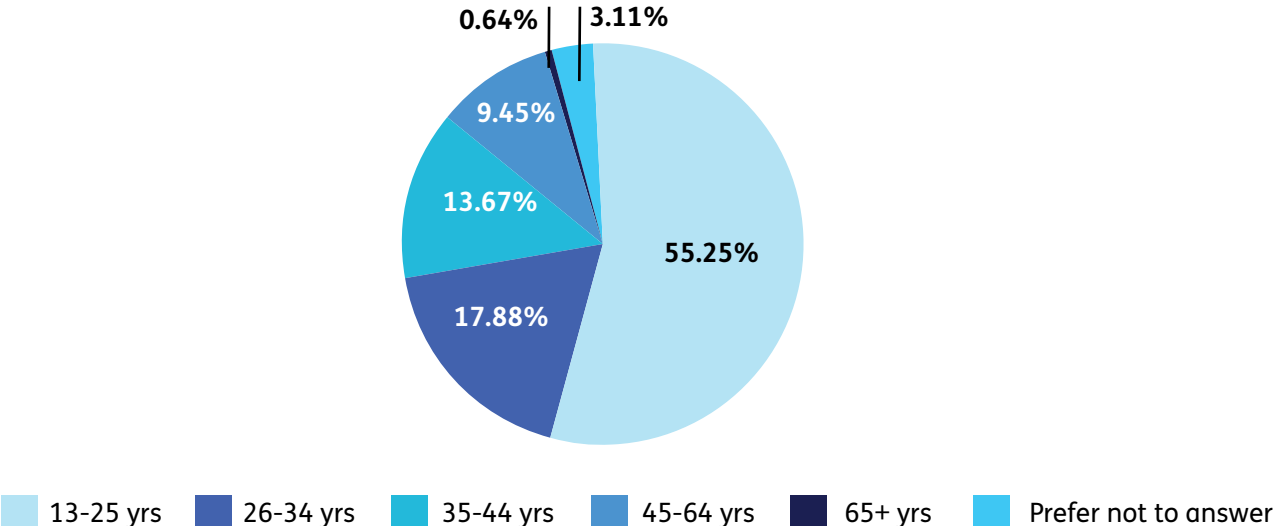
**Real-Time Insights
into Young People's
Mental Health**

Text About It provides a unique and immediate, real-time view into the emotional well-being of young people in Ireland. Unlike traditional datasets, which are often retrospective, this service captures help-seeking behaviour as it happens. It offers immediate insight into the experiences, pressures and challenges facing young people today.

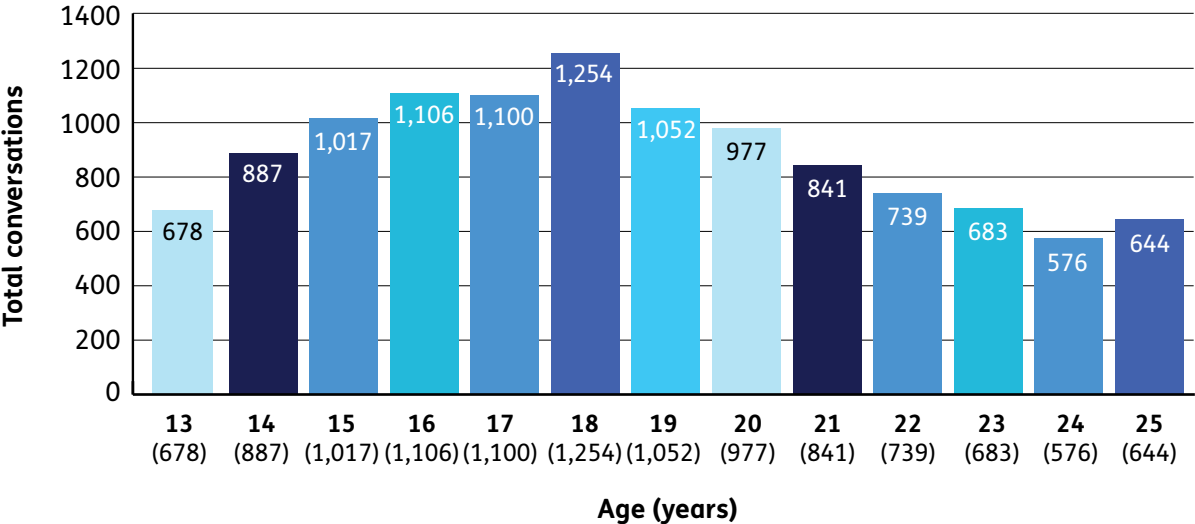
Over time, this data not only reflects individual needs, but also reveals broader patterns in how, when, and why young people seek support.

Who Uses Text About It?

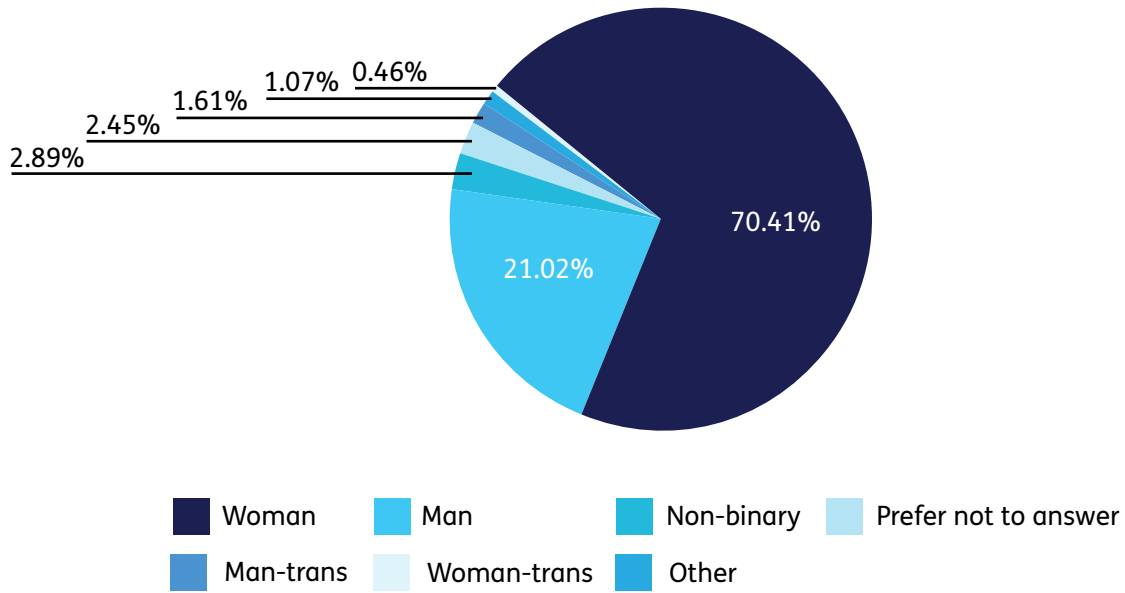
Age of Texters Who Contacted Text About It (June 2020 – June 2025)



Distribution of Conversations by Texter Age 13-25 years (June 2020-June 2025)

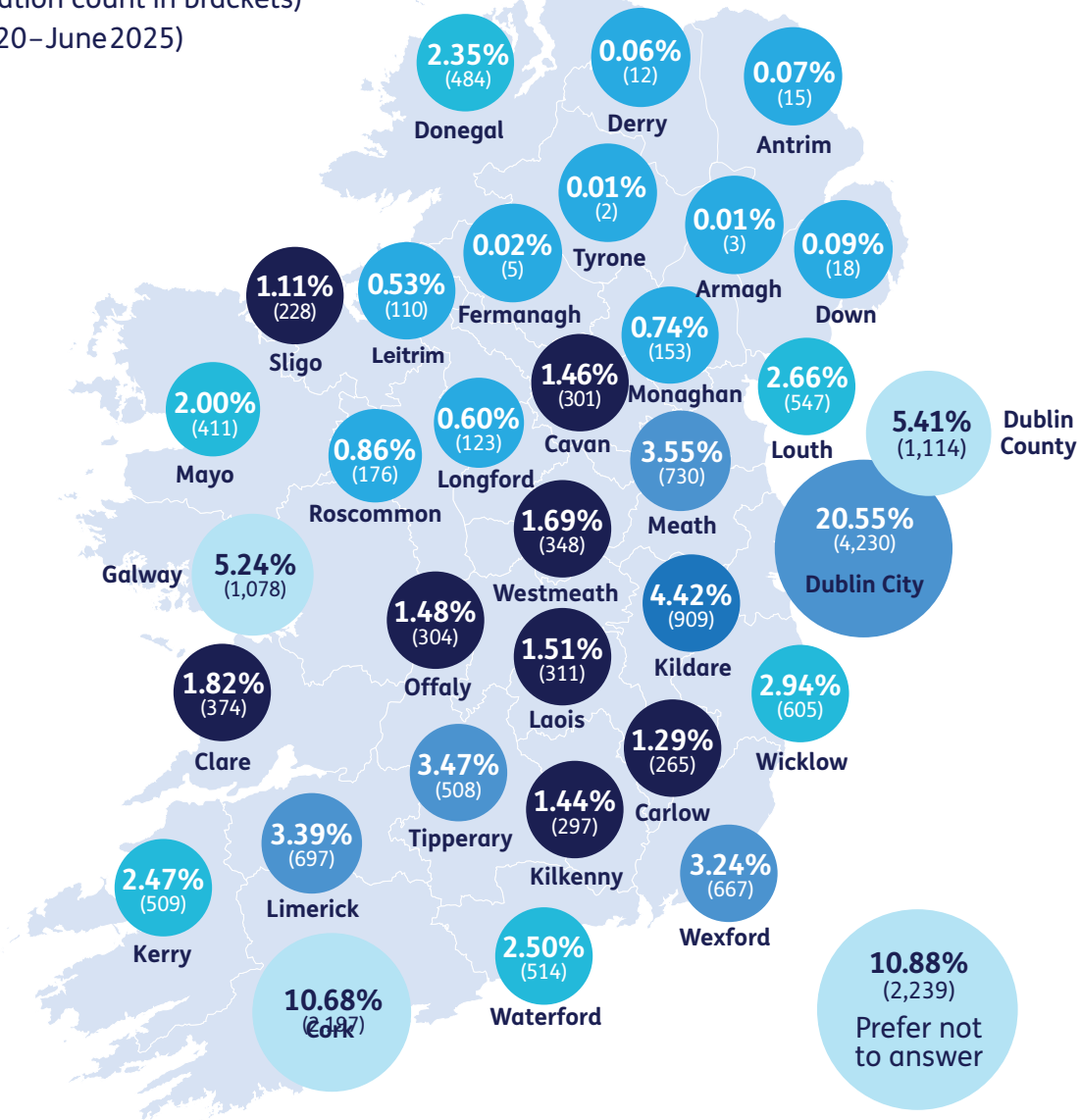


Gender Identity of Texters



Where Texters Are Reaching From

Percentage of total conversations by county.
(conversation count in brackets)
(June 2020 – June 2025)



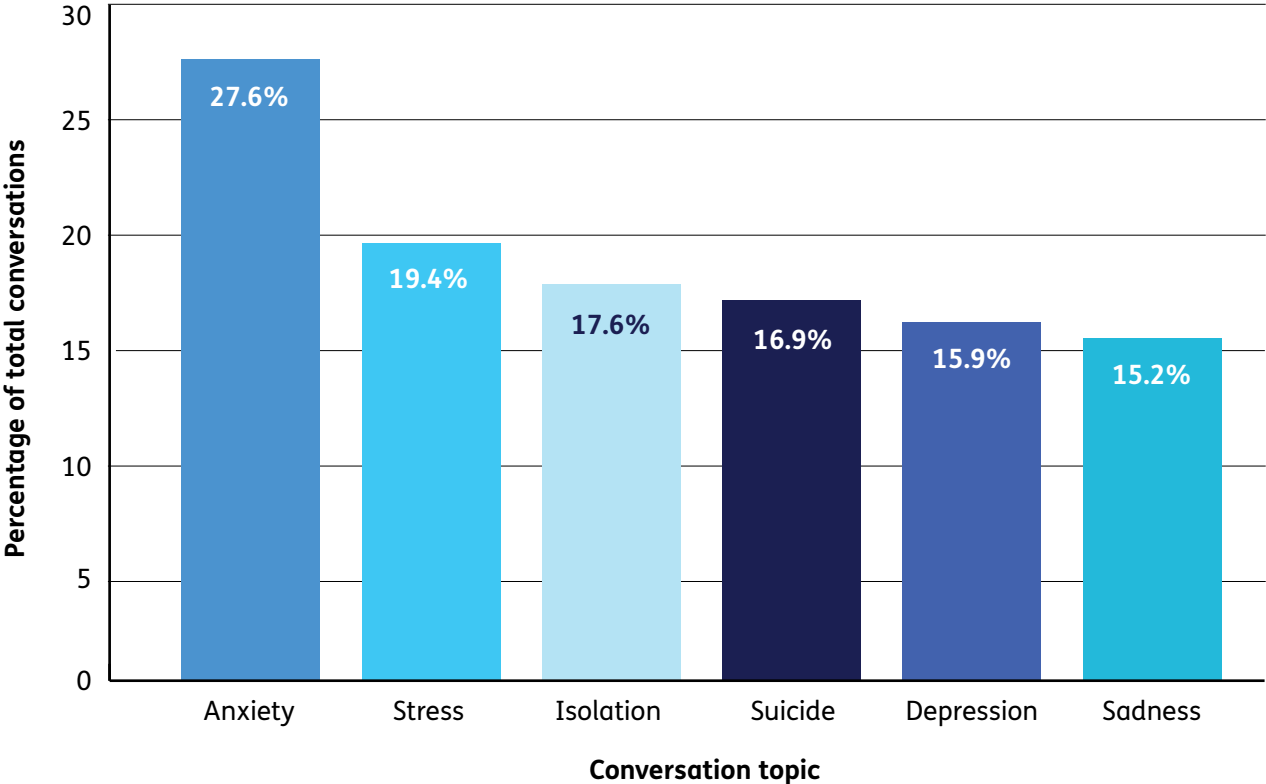
These patterns indicated that Text About It is reaching young people nationwide including those who may not otherwise engage in traditional in-person services. At the same time, the demographic trends highlight opportunities to further expand reach among underrepresented groups.

Service data provides insight into the most common issues raised by texters. These findings indicate that young people most frequently seek support for emotional distress, including anxiety, stress, and feelings

of isolation. A significant proportion of conversations relate to suicide and depression, pointing to the level of vulnerability within the population accessing the service.

The range of topics demonstrates that Text About It supports both early-stage emotional difficulties and acute presentations, reinforcing its dual role as a preventative and crisis-responsive service.

Most Common Issues Discussed During Conversations



Based on coded conversation topics, June 2020 – June 2025.

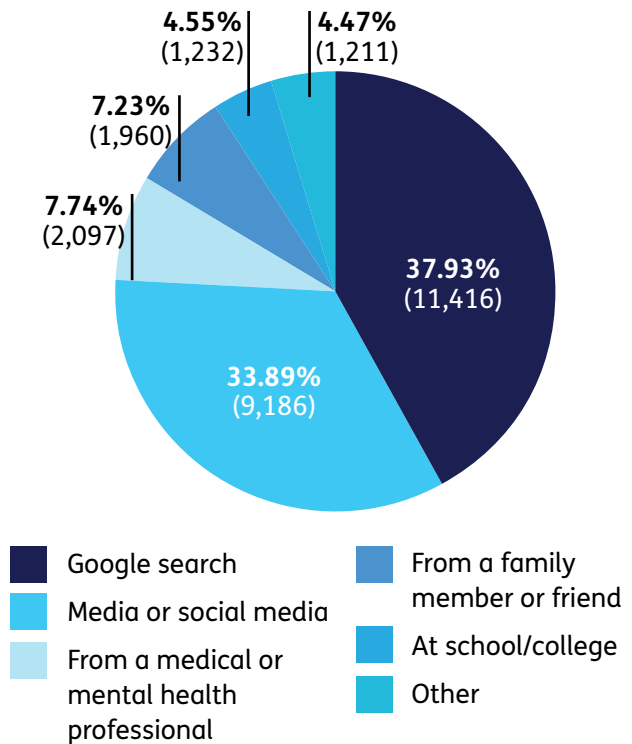
Where Do Young People Hear About Us?

We monitor referral pathways to understand how young people access the service. Understanding how young people find our service is central to assessing our reach and impact. This allows us to ensure our support remains accessible and responsive to their evolving needs. The majority of our texters find our service through social media (56%) or a simple Google search (29%), as opposed to in-person referrals through family or friends (10%). This underscores the importance of providing digital support pathways to align with the broader help-seeking trends among young people.

We continue to optimise our digital presence to ensure that young people can access timely support in online spaces. From a service perspective, these findings reinforce the need to meet young people within the digital environments they already use, rather than relying solely on referral-based pathways.

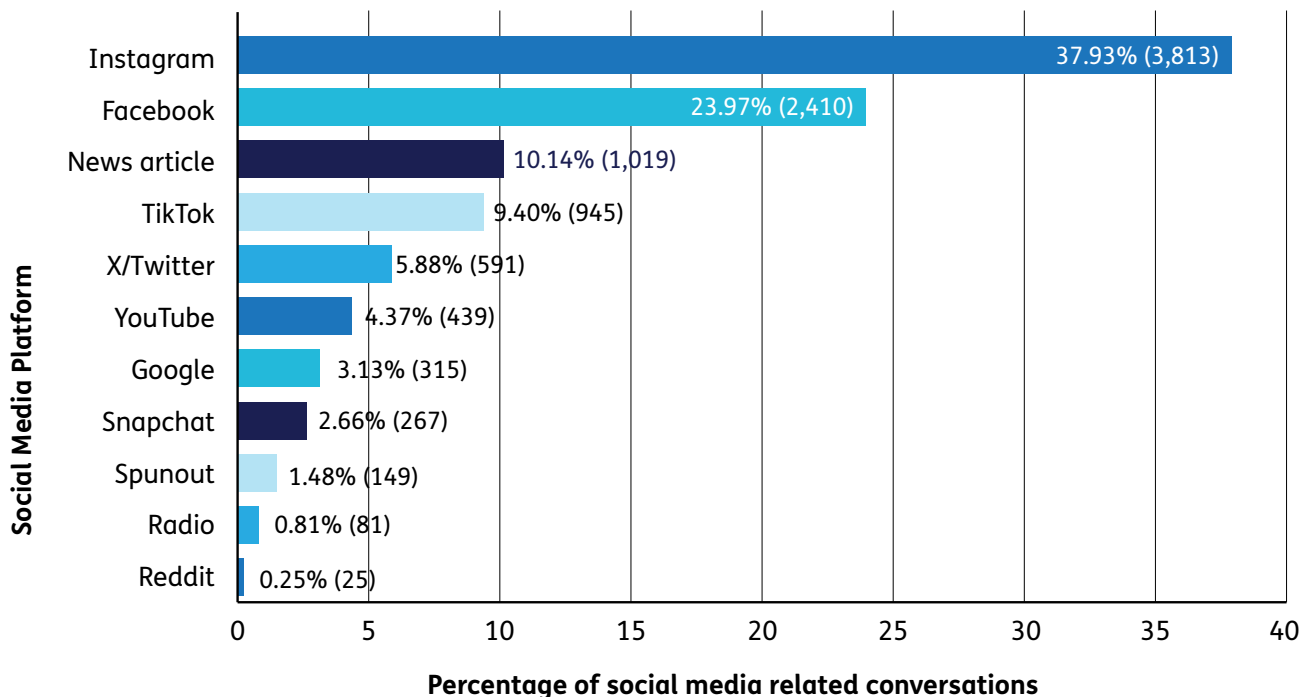
How Young People Heard About Text About It

(conversation count in brackets)



Social Media Platforms Leading to Text About It

(conversation count in brackets)



When the World Shifts, Young People Reach Out

Our real-time data clearly demonstrates a clear relationship between external events and help-seeking behaviour. Time and again, spikes in demand on Text About It align directly with moments of national and global uncertainty, from public health crises, to exam periods and other significant major events. In these moments, young people turn to us, and we are there.

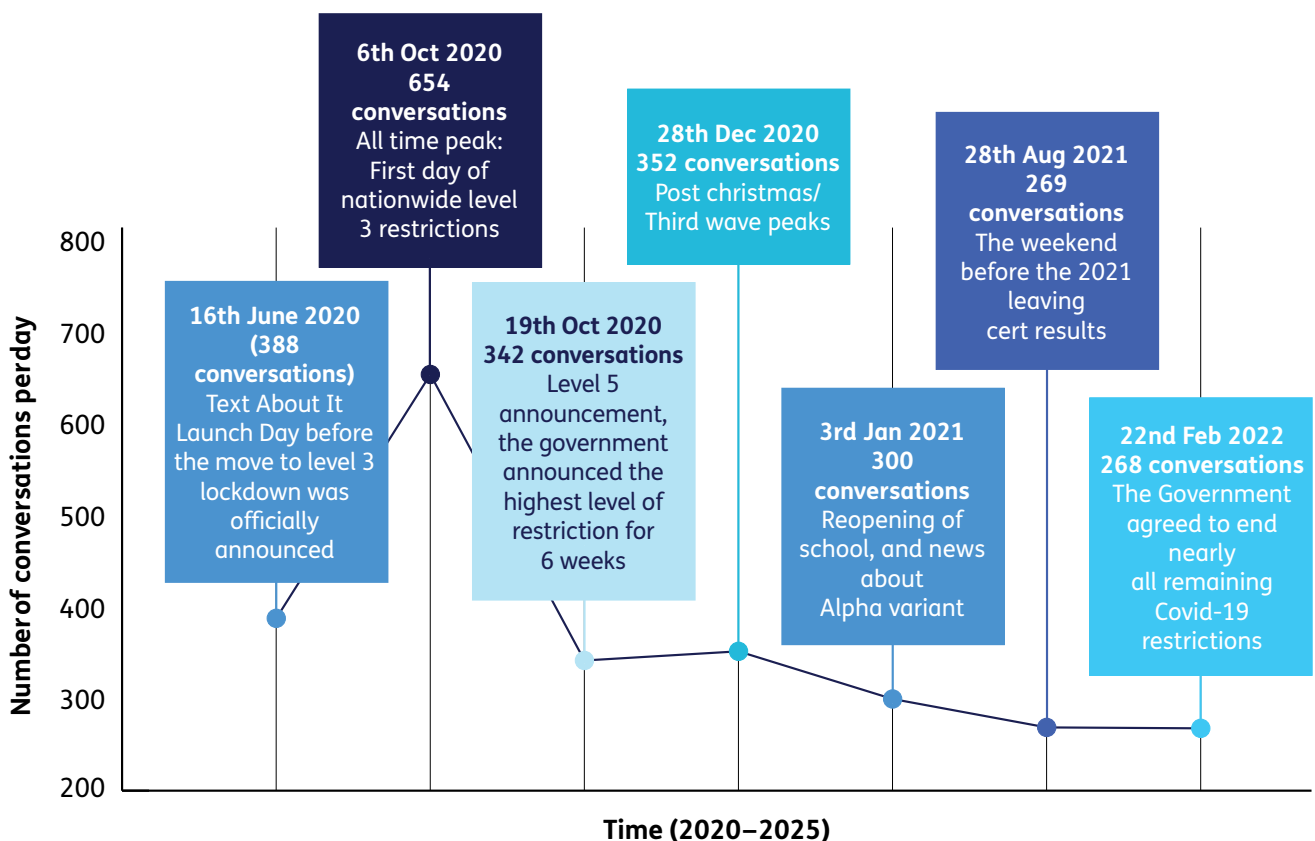
This responsiveness highlights the importance of maintaining flexible, scalable services that can adapt to sudden increases in demand, particularly during periods of national stress or uncertainty.

“I felt very calm after using the text about it service I was having a serious panic attack at the time and I felt taken care off in a way that put me in a better place. I’m so grateful for the service to exist.”

- **Texter Feedback**

Our data show that whenever uncertainty rises, young people reach out - and someone is always there.

Conversations Over Time: Peaks in Demand During Periods of National Stress



Case Study

Our Impact During Covid

The launch of Text About It marked a critical step in providing accessible, immediate digital mental health care to young people in Ireland.

Our unique data allows us to monitor the impact of Text About It during times of societal change and uncertainty. The Covid-19 pandemic is a key indicator of Text About Its ability to provide immediate, evidence-based support during times of uncertainty. Our data shows that the service's all-time peak in conversations was on October 6th 2020, on the first day of nationwide Covid-19 restrictions.

Throughout the pandemic, Text About It continued to deliver round the clock care to young people in Ireland, with conversation peaks observed to align with

restriction announcements, and news of emerging Covid-19 variants. Through this challenging time, Text About It was there to provide reassurance, support and compassion during times of uncertainty.

These peaks in conversations during Covid-19 are unsurprising, given the pandemic represented a time of unprecedented challenges. However, our data suggests that the peaks observed during the pandemic were not an anomaly. We continue to observe recurring peaks in conversations that align with major social events and challenging times for young people like exam results. This data reflects the ongoing and evolving mental health needs of young people in Ireland and underscores the essential role of Text About It in providing a 24/7 text-based service. Our response during Covid-19 clearly demonstrates the capacity of Text About It in delivering crucial real-time interventions in exactly the right moment.

**Covid-19 restrictions
October 6th 2020**

654 conversations

**Volunteers handled
27 conversations per
hour on this day**

There When It Matters Most

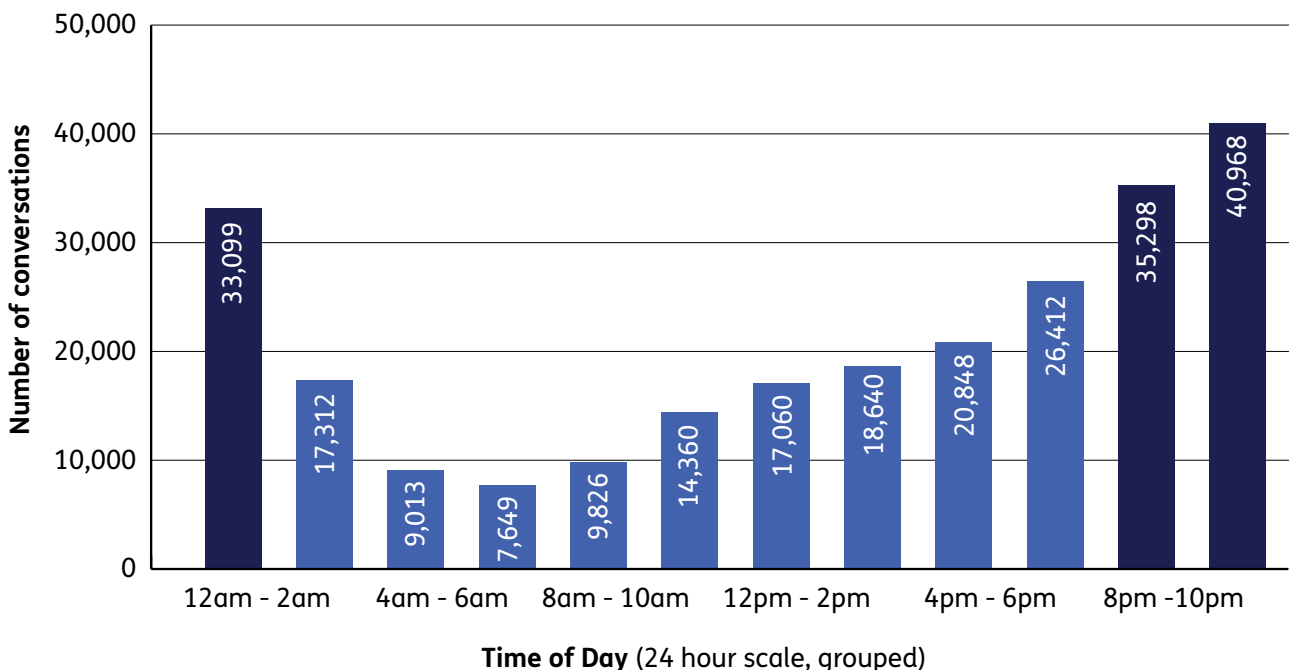
Analysis demonstrates a consistent pattern in the timing of help-seeking behaviour. Demand for support is highest during late evening and night-time hours, with 44% of all conversations occurring between 8 p.m. and 2 a.m. This indicates that that young people are significantly more likely to seek support outside of standard service hours. This reflects a broader trend in mental health, where distress can intensify at night due to reduced social contact, fewer distractions, and limited access to in-person or scheduled services.

“I have used this text app lots of times, especially at odd hours, there are amazing volunteers who have helped me through many horrible days and nights”

- **Texter Feedback**

44% of conversations occur between the hours of 8pm and 2am

When Young People Reach Out for Support



“I want to thank my volunteer for listening to me late at night when the rest of the world was asleep and I had nobody to talk to”

- Texter Feedback

86%

of texters are supported by a volunteer in under 5 minutes

This demonstrates a structural misalignment between when support is needed and when many services are available. While traditional models of care are often delivered within daytime hours, the data indicates that peak demand occurs when these services are least accessible.

Text About It addresses this gap by providing free, 24/7, real-time access to trained human support at the point of need, without waiting for appointments or navigating referral pathways.

From a service delivery perspective, timeliness is critical. Over the reporting period, 86% of texters were connected with a trained volunteer in under five minutes, enabling early intervention, de-escalation of distress and support in moments of heightened vulnerability.

For volunteers and staff, this pattern underscores the importance of consistent, high-quality support throughout all hours of the day and night.

From a policy perspective, these insights point to the necessity of integrating 24/7 digital services as a core component of Ireland’s mental health infrastructure, ensuring that support is available exactly when young people need it.



6.

**Text About It and
Suicide Prevention**

Globally, suicide remains one of the leading causes of death among 15 - 29-year-olds.¹ For too many young people, moments of crisis arrive without warning and are experienced in isolation, without immediate access to support.

Text About It is designed for exactly these moments. It provides a confidential space where young people can reach out, be heard, and be kept safe. Every conversation is subject to ongoing risk assessment, and all volunteers are trained to recognise and respond to varying levels of risk with appropriate care and escalation.

Responding to Crisis in Real Time

Behind many of the 250,000 conversations are moments of acute distress for people in crisis, some experiencing suicidal thoughts, others self-harming or at immediate risk of harm. They reached out and Text About It was there to support them.

“My volunteer made me feel safe, they made me feel comfortable and helped me out of a suicide crisis in a way that made me feel heard”

- Texter Feedback

Service data shows that 30,087 people (17%) contacted Text About It about suicide. In 90% of those conversations, our trained volunteers provided immediate support and safely de-escalated the situation. De-escalation in this context means reducing immediate risk, supporting emotional regulation and enabling the texter to identify next steps toward safety, including engagement with further support and referral to emergency services when needed.

These findings demonstrate the capacity of Text About It to function as both an early intervention and crisis de-escalation service, particularly for individuals who may not otherwise engage with other mental health support. For many, the service represents a first and, in some cases, only point of contact during a suicidal crisis, making Text About It a critical component within the broader suicide prevention ecosystem, particularly in reaching individual outside of the traditional care pathways.

30,087 people
reached out with
thoughts of suicide.

90%

of those
conversations were
safely de-escalated
by our trained
volunteers and
clinical team.

Emergency Response and Safeguarding

In some cases, a young person is at immediate risk for suicide, requiring urgent intervention to keep them safe. While the majority of high risk conversations can be escalated within the service, some texters require immediate external intervention.

Where a person presents at immediate risk of suicide or self-harm, Text About It escalates swiftly and decisively to keep people safe. Our staff work in close partnership with the emergency services to coordinate urgent Emergency Service Interventions, ensuring that no person in crisis is left without the support they need to feel and stay safe. We know that every second counts.

Over five years, Text About It has coordinated 2,922 emergency interventions for young people at immediate risk of suicide and/or immediate harm. Alongside this, as a mandated reporter under the Children First Act (2015), Text About It has filed 1,303 safeguarding reports to Tusla, The Child and Family Agency, over the same period.

These figures reflect a consistent level of high-risk presentations requiring statutory and emergency response, underscoring both the severity of need among service users and the importance of integrated safeguarding pathways. This collaboration, across emergency services and statutory child protection, sits at the heart of our safeguarding approach, ensuring that when people are most vulnerable, they are seen, protected, and kept safe.

“The volunteer quite possibly saved my life, I was not in the right state of mind and too scared to admit that I needed help from emergency services. You contacted them for me, and within 5 minutes they had contacted me. I am now on the mend, and thankful for your fast action”

- Texter Feedback

2,922

Emergency service interventions

1,303

Safeguarding reports to Tusla

A Structured Approach to Keeping Young People Safe

Each conversation is underpinned by a structured and continuous risk assessment model, supported by real-time clinical supervision. Our Text About It volunteers are extensively trained and supported by our Clinical Support Team to assess and respond to risk in real time.

Key components of our approach include:

Continuous risk assessment throughout every conversation.

Skilled, compassionate responses that help young people feel heard and safe.

Supporting in identifying coping strategies and next steps.

Providing resources and signposting to relevant services for additional support.

Clear escalating pathway to emergency services where risk to life is present.

Mandatory reporting in line with safeguarding legislation.

This model ensures a safe, consistent, compassionate and empathic response, that activates the right support at the right time, aligned with best practice in suicide prevention and safeguarding.

Role of Text About It in Suicide Prevention

For many texters, Text About It is the first place that they feel safe enough to disclose suicidal thoughts. In these moments, having immediate access to trained, compassionate listeners can make a profound difference, reducing risk, preventing escalation, and in some cases, saving lives.

By reaching young people who might never engage with traditional services, Text About It plays a vital and irreplaceable role in suicide prevention in Ireland. It does this through providing:

- Timely intervention by providing immediate support at the point of crisis
- Accessibility in reaching individuals who may not engage with traditional pathways to support
- Risk reduction through de-escalation and stabilisation during acute distress
- Provision of a bridge to emergency and statutory services when required

While Text About It is designed to support anyone who reaches out, it is an empathic listening service rather than a clinical or crisis treatment service. The service complements rather than replaces clinical or crisis services. Its impact lies in intervening early, de-escalation and facilitating pathways to further help seeking. Where a texter presents needs that fall outside our model of care, our team will always ensure they are safely supported and directed towards the most appropriate services for their situation.

In a mental health system often constrained by waiting times and access barriers, a 24/7 digitally delivered human-led service like Text About It has never been more essential.

7.

**Breaking the Silence:
Enabling First-Time
Help-Seeking**

Text About It plays a vital role in reaching young people who have never spoken about what they are experiencing. A consistent pattern emerging across Text About It data is the extent to which the platform facilitates first-time disclosure of distress. 60% of all texters told us this was the first time they had shared a problem, not with a friend, family member, or clinician. These early moments of disclosure often open the door to longer-term engagement, underlining the power of accessible, compassionate first contact.

60%
of our texters
shared a problem
for the first time
with our volunteers

**“I never told anyone
about what happens,
and I feel so relieved
now”**

- Texter Feedback

**“I have never spoken
to anyone about my
problems, and being
able to text someone
that will listen is what
I needed”**

- Texter Feedback

Our texter feedback indicates that for many, Text About It is a safe space to disclose experiences and emotions that they would not feel comfortable sharing in person. Without accessible, youth-centred entry points like Text About It, many young people may not open up and seek support at all.

For many young people, a first disclosure is the beginning of a broader help-seeking journey. Research shows that feeling heard and understood during that moment significantly increases the likelihood of engaging with further support². Text About It acts as both a safety net in moments of distress and a gateway to continued care. This early connection is critical not only for the support of individual wellbeing, but for reducing escalation and supporting a more responsive mental health system in Ireland. Without accessible anonymous entry points like Text About It, many of these young people may not seek support at all.

Without such entry points, unmet need is likely to persist and escalate, placing increased pressure on higher-intensity services over time. Text About It addresses this gap directly, providing a scalable, accessible, and evidence-informed model that supports both early intervention and system navigation.

As we look ahead to the next phase of growth, these insights highlight both the achievements and the remaining challenges.



8



**The People Behind
Each Conversation**

Our Team

At the heart of Text About It is a dedicated, highly-skilled Clinical Support Team, working alongside colleagues across spunout to deliver a safe, high-quality service. They oversee every aspect of service delivery, recruiting, training and supervising volunteers, managing safeguarding and risk, and holding overall responsibility for clinical governance and quality assurance.

Our Clinical Support team provides real-time supervision, guiding escalation decisions and ensuring quality and safety across all interactions. Volunteers are never alone in managing complex or high-risk conversations; our team is present, responsive, and experienced. With expertise spanning psychology, mental health nursing, social work, and psychotherapy, they maintain the highest clinical standards and safeguard the wellbeing of both texters and volunteers.

Continuity is one of the service's greatest strengths. Many of our staff have been with the Text About It since launch, carrying deep institutional knowledge and unwavering commitment. Our Training and Coaching team play a key role in facilitating volunteer training, supporting onboarding and ongoing development, while our dedicated Clinical Support Facilitators and Team Leaders provide round-the-clock guidance so volunteers are never without experienced guidance to help support young people.

Text About It is further strengthened by the wider spunout organisation, including its Executive Leadership Team. Our People and Operations team underpin the service through people and culture, technology and governance. Our Digital Content team, including Youth Participation and Digital Marketing ensure the service reaches and resonates with young people across Ireland.

It is through the collaborative and integrated work across spunout that Text About It is made possible.

Our Volunteers

Text About It would not be possible without our dedicated volunteers. Behind every one of the 250,000 conversations is a volunteer who chose to show up and commit their time to listen to a young person who needs support. That is not a small thing. **This service exists because of them, and this milestone is theirs.**

250,000

conversations =

250,000

moments of human connection

Between June 2020 and June 2025, 1,246 volunteers gave their time, compassion and skills at an extraordinary scale to support the mental health of young people in Ireland. This is all made possible by the guidance and support of 67 dedicated staff members and supervisors.

In just half a decade, our volunteers have listened continuously for the equivalent of 10 years. They have spent 137,381 hours delivering the service which is the equivalent of 10 years of continuous listening. Of that time, 89,019 hours were spent listening, responding and supporting young people in distress. Each hour is one less hour where a young person is alone.

Volunteer impact highlights:

137,381 hours
supporting
Text About It

89,019 hours
spent in direct
conversation with
young people
in need

59,194 hours
of training
completed

1,246
volunteers
contribute to
service
delivery

Together our volunteers have been listening, every hour, every day for the equivalent of 10 years non-stop

It was nice knowing that I helped someone, even a little bit”
- Text About It Volunteer

Text About It volunteers are highly trained to support young people in complex and often high-risk situations. Each volunteer completes approximately 34 hours of training before engaging with texters. Each volunteer receives training covering:

- Text-based active listening
- Risk identification and assessment
- Crisis response and de-escalation
- Safeguarding procedures and practice
- Structured conversation models

This training is reinforced through ongoing coaching, feedback, and continuous development, ensuring volunteers maintain and strengthen their skills. This is to ensure that every texter, regardless of when they reach out or what they bring, receives a safe, consistent and evidence-informed response.

Supporting in Moments that Matter: Volunteer Impact

Our volunteers make everything possible. We have a diverse range of volunteers with our service, who bring unique life experiences to the role and something irreplaceable to every conversation. They show up and provide support late at night, during periods of heightened emotional distress, in moments of crisis, and at times when alternative support may not be immediately accessible or within reach. They do so willingly, generously, and with remarkable skill. That deserves not just acknowledgement, but celebration.

Volunteer feedback highlights the reciprocal value of this model, with volunteers reporting increased confidence, emotional awareness and interpersonal skills through their participation. At the same time, texter feedback consistently reflects high levels of perceived empathy, validation, and helpfulness within conversations. Their contributions have a meaningful and lasting impact on the well-being of those they support and on the volunteers themselves.

These findings reinforce the effectiveness of a model that combines human empathy with structured clinical oversight, ensuring that every interaction is both compassionate and safe.

Real Care, Real Impact

Genuine Empathy:

87%
felt their volunteer was genuinely concerned for their wellbeing

Validation:

80%
felt heard and their experiences validated by our volunteers

Helpfulness:

86%
found the conversation helpful

Meet Our Volunteers



Maïke Schwiddessen, 35, joined Text About It in autumn 2020 after moving to Ireland.

“My journey with Text About It began in autumn 2020. I had moved to Ireland about a year before and was looking for an opportunity to volunteer when I heard about Text About It. I immediately felt that this was something for me. I liked the flexibility of being able to do shifts according to my own schedule and I liked the idea that really anyone can help someone in need, without having to study psychology first.

Volunteering with Text About It had a huge impact on me. Chatting with texters puts things into perspective. I became a much better listener, and I developed a deeper understanding of people and their individual situations. Volunteering also helped me to be more understanding and accepting of my own feelings. I am more patient with myself, and I have learned to validate my own feelings more. I love being on the platform, even after all these years. It does not matter what is going on in my own life, after a shift I always feel stronger, calmer and happier than before.

You never know what to expect in a shift. It can be busy or quiet, it can be several tough conversations or just one deep conversation. That makes every shift special and challenging. I still learn and grow with each conversation. The most beautiful moments often happen at the

end of a conversation: sometimes you get a ‘thank you’ message that goes straight to your heart. For one person the world is a tiny little bit brighter because we were here to listen. That is the most rewarding feeling.

When I first started, I wondered if we could really make a difference just through ‘a chat’. But it is amazing the connection you can build with people just via texting. It is only a moment and I know, we cannot change the world in one conversation, but we are there in this little moment and that is what counts.

What I love most about volunteering is the ‘Text About It family’. Supervisors, all the volunteers, coaches, everyone on the spunout Team - even though we have never met in person, it feels like we are one big family. There is so much support and kindness from everyone. You can have the best chats on the platform with other volunteers and supervisors and you know that you are never alone - the supervisors always have your back, and you can always reach out to your coaches, too. We are all here to support people, but you get so much back as well. That is the magic of Text About It.”

Delaney Keene, is a 19-year-old psychology student from Dublin who began volunteering with Text About It in 2026.

“I have always had a passion for listening to others, and seeing people feel understood has always brought me joy. This, in combination with my interest in psychology, inspired me to begin working with spunout.

For me, volunteering with spunout has helped me with my own mental health. Devoting my time to helping others has boosted my self-confidence and reminded me to have a positive perspective. Being a part of a mental health care system, as someone who has personally benefitted from one, feels like the perfect way for me to give back and hopefully give others the chance to trust in themselves too.

The opportunity for free mental health care for all ages in Ireland is incredibly special, and the care and devotion to training volunteers that spunout has makes this service one of a kind. Volunteering has taught me endless life skills in helping others, but has

also shown me ways to calm myself down in crisis too. It is an incredible hands-on approach to mental health care experience, and I would urge anybody thinking about volunteering to try it, even if it’s scary.

Candidly, it IS scary to trust yourself enough to help others, but the team working at Text About It are incredibly supportive and kind. I look forward to many years ahead of me helping out on the text line, and feel so incredibly grateful to be part of a community that values making everyone feel heard and welcomed.”

“The opportunity for free mental health care for all ages in Ireland is incredibly special, and the care and devotion to training volunteers that spunout has makes this service one of a kind.”



**Meeting Young
People Where
They Are: Breaking
Barriers Through
Digital Innovation**

Patterns of help-seeking among young people are evolving. Increasingly, young people are turning to the digital space for mental health support.³ This is often attributed to young people's preference for the anonymity and confidentiality offered by online services as opposed to face-to-face supports.³

For many young people, reaching out for support is not straightforward. Barriers such as stigma, fear of judgment, and uncertainty about where to seek help can prevent people from accessing support, particularly through traditional in-person or phone-based services.

Text About It is built around this reality. By providing free, anonymous, text-based support, spunout meets young people where they are. It offers a space where they can express themselves in their own time and in their own words, without judgment. As demand for digital mental health support continues to grow, so too does the need for accessible services like Text About It.

Insights from our texters demonstrate a clear preference for text-based communication. When asked why they reached out, over a quarter (26.6%) said they didn't have anyone else to talk to, while 25% wanted to speak to someone who did not know them. Nearly one in five (18.3%) said they feel more comfortable texting than discussing private matters verbally. Others pointed to challenges accessing formal support, with 16% reporting they did not have access to a therapist and 14% saying they felt too embarrassed to seek help in person or over the phone.

Qualitative feedback adds further depth to these findings. Recurring themes include long waiting times, the high cost of therapy, and difficulty finding support that feels approachable and timely. These experiences underline the importance of providing immediate, low-barrier options that young people feel comfortable using.

“This conversation was so helpful, it is easier to talk to a stranger over text than a family member in-person”

- Texter Feedback

“I felt it was easier to talk being anonymous, if was in-person I feel I might not have been able to talk as much”

- Texter Feedback

“I find this service wonderful, I hate talking about my illness in-person, I find texting gives me a chance to better articulate how I'm feeling without the pressure”

- Texter Feedback

These findings highlight the unique accessibility of text-based support and affirm the importance of services that provide safe, anonymous spaces for connection. spunout remains committed to meeting this need head-on, delivering support that is accessible, youth-friendly and human-led.

The Role of Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is playing an expanding role within the digital mental health landscape, often as an initial entry point for individuals seeking information or initial support.

Our data and insights from affiliates in the UK, US, and Canada, indicates a consistent rise in referrals to text-based services through AI chatbots, suggesting that AI is increasingly influencing how people look for help.

However, current evidence highlights clear limitations in the use of AI for mental health support.³ AI systems are not designed to:

- Conduct dynamic risk assessment
- Respond to complex emotional nuance
- Safely manage high-risk or crisis situations
- Initiate safeguarding or emergency interventions

At the same time, our data reflects a parallel trend: texters are presenting with greater complexity, including higher levels of distress and a need for longer, more involved conversations. This depth of engagement is vividly illustrated by our expansion beyond traditional text messaging. Since launching WhatsApp support, texters now send long, detailed messages describing their feelings in full paragraphs rather than quick texts with a depth and openness that goes far beyond brief exchanges. This shift is not incidental; it reveals a growing need for space, patience and genuine human presence in mental health support.

Crucially, this complexity has driven an increased need for safeguarding and emergency service interventions. The

demand for skilled human support is not diminishing; it is growing precisely as more people seek support through AI. That human connection is not interchangeable. Our survey data highlights that 86.8% of respondents highlighted the genuine concern they felt from their volunteers, highlighting the distinct quality of empathetic, attentive and safeguarding care that AI cannot replicate.

This picture is reinforced by recent developments in the Irish professional landscape. In 2026, every major professional body in Ireland has called for a pause on the use of AI in therapeutic contexts. This collective position is not a rejection of digital innovation but as a recognition that human connection remains irreplaceable at the heart of effective mental health care.

While AI may facilitate access to digital mental health supports and information, it does not replace clinically informed, human-led intervention. Equally, the data makes clear that digital help-seeking is not a temporary behavioural shift but a structural change. Demand for real-time, digital mental health support has grown consistently and shows no sign of reversing. This has profound implications for how mental health services are funded and designed. Digital, human-delivered services must now be understood as a core infrastructure of mental health, not a supplementary or stopgap offering.

Text About It sits at exactly this intersection. Combining digital access with real-time human support, the service can safely assess risk, respond to distress and support young people to take their next steps. The combination of digital accessibility and human care is not simply valuable; it is essential for effective mental health support.

As we look ahead to the next phase of growth, these insights highlight both the achievements and the remaining challenges.

10.

**Towards Half
a Million
Conversations**

The data presented throughout this report points to a clear and consistent trajectory. Demand for immediate, accessible mental health support is increasing, and the nature of the demand is becoming more complex.

Text About It is supporting more people, more often, and at moments of greater vulnerability. There is sustained evidence of high levels of acute and crisis presentations, including increasing suicidal ideation and significant unmet need at earlier stages, with many individuals disclosing concerns for the first time. Furthermore, there is a shift toward digital, real-time help-seeking behaviours.

Taken together, these trends indicate a growing requirement for services that are immediate, accessible and capable of responding across the full spectrum of need.

Increasing Complexity of Need

Our current data indicates not only continued growth in demand, but a measurable increase in the severity and complexity of presentations. Over the past year, we have seen a 39% increase in safeguarding reports, 29% increase in imminent risk conversations and a 30% increase in Emergency Service Interventions.

In 2026 First Quarter:

Emergency Service Interventions increased by 72% compared to 2025

Safeguarding reports increased by 247% since Text About It was launched

These increases reflect a shift toward more complex and higher-risk interactions. Supporting these conversations requires longer engagement times, higher levels of skill and more frequent coordination with external services. This trend reinforces a critical finding that the service is operating within a context of higher acuity of need, not simply increased volume.

+39%
Safeguarding reports

+29%
imminent risk conversations

+30%
Emergency Service Interventions

Reaching Those Most at Risk

While Text About It has achieved significant reach, the data highlights areas where further progress is needed.

Analysis indicates disparities in service usage across certain groups. Our data captures underrepresentation across a range of identities, including gender-diverse individuals, those with neurodevelopmental differences, and people with disabilities. These are groups for whom existing evidence consistently points to poorer mental health outcomes and additional barriers to accessing support.

Qualitative insights from the service also suggest engagement among members of the Travelling community and people from minority ethnic backgrounds. These patterns reflect wider inequalities across Ireland's mental health system. While these groups are not yet fully captured in our current data collection, their experiences are no less real or significant. Text About It is committed to developing more robust and inclusive data practices to ensure the visibility and needs of all communities are reflected in how the service is designed, monitored, and improved.

Addressing these gaps will require:

- Targeted outreach and partnership development
- Continued service design informed by user needs
- Ensuring accessibility for diverse and marginalised groups

Expanding reach in this way is essential to ensuring that the service remains equitable and responsive.

A Critical Component of Ireland's Mental Health Infrastructure

The evidence presented in this report demonstrates Text About It as a critical component of Ireland's mental health support system. It provides:

- Immediate access to support at the point of need
- Early intervention for emerging distress
- Effective response to crisis and high-risk situations
- A bridge to further help-seeking behaviour and support pathways

As demand continues to grow and evolve, the role of services such as Text About It will become increasingly central to how mental health support is delivered.

Sustained investment is essential to ensure that this model can continue to operate at scale, respond to increasing complexity, and meet the needs of young people across Ireland.

Scaling Text About It

Demand for immediate, accessible mental health support is growing and the need for services like Text About It is becoming increasingly urgent. This report highlights not only the scale of demand but the increasing complexity and acuity of need among young people in Ireland. Text About It has demonstrated a proven, scalable model of 24/7 support combining trained volunteers with real-time clinical supervision to deliver safe, consistent, high-quality care.

To meet the need outlined in this report, three priority areas for investment emerge:

1. Sustained, multi-annual funding

To ensure continuity of a safe, 24/7 service and support long-term planning and workforce stability.

2. Strengthening real-time data into actionable insights

To translate service data into actionable insights that inform policy, early intervention, and system planning.

3. Expanding reach to underserved groups

To ensure equitable access for those facing additional barriers to support, including marginalised groups and those less likely to engage with existing supports.

Together, these priorities represent a shared national opportunity to secure lasting, equitable mental health support for every young person in Ireland.

As demand continues to grow both in volume and acuity, maintaining and strengthening this model will be essential. Without sustained investment, the gap between demand and available support is likely to widen, with implications not only for those seeking help, but for the wider mental health system.

Text About It demonstrates what is possible when digital access, human connection, and clinical governance are combined to deliver timely, effective support. The need outlined in this report is not temporary. It reflects a structural shift in how young people seek help and the level of support required.

Without sustained, multi-annual investment, the gap between demand and available support will continue to grow. This will place increased pressure on already stretched services and leave too many young people without support at critical moments. Ensuring that accessible, real-time mental health support is available to all young people must now be understood as a core part of Ireland's mental health infrastructure.

11.

Our Partners

Text About It is strengthened by a diverse network of partner organisations who play a vital role in connecting young people with support.

Over the past 5 years, these partnerships have been central to extending the reach of the service across Ireland and contributing to the milestone of 250,000 conversations. They reflect a shared commitment to ensuring young people know where to turn when they need support. Our partners span multiple sectors, reflecting shared commitment to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people:

Higher education institutions: Including members of the Psychological Counsellors in Higher Education Ireland network, such as Trinity College Dublin, University College Dublin, Maynooth University, Dublin City University and University of Galway.

Mental health and suicide prevention organisations: Including 3TS (Turn the Tide of Suicide), Connect MH, St John of God Hospital, and St Patrick's Mental Health Services.

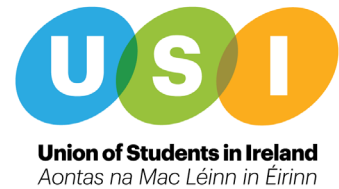
Youth and community organisations: Including Foróige, Youth Work Ireland, Belong To - LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland, Pavee Point and the Trim and Walkinstown Greenhills Resource Centres.

National and representative bodies: Including the Health Service Executive, National Women's Council, Union of Students in Ireland and the Gaelic Players Association.

Media and corporate partners: Including AIB, Yahoo, and Gay Community News.

These partnerships support awareness, visibility, and access across trusted community, education, and workplace settings. They enable the service to reach diverse and, in some cases, harder-to-reach groups.

Together, they have helped establish Text About It as a trusted, accessible support for young people across Ireland.



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- HSE
- National Office for Suicide Prevention
- Department of Health
- Department of Rural and Community Development
- Department of Education and Youth
- Pobal



National Office
for Suicide
Prevention



An Roinn Sláinte
Department of Health



An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth



pobal

government supporting communities

“The volunteer quite possibly saved my life, I was not in the right state of mind and too scared to admit that I needed help from emergency services. You contacted them for me, and within 5 minutes they had contacted me. I am now on the mend, and thankful for your fast action”

- Texter Feedback

If you need to talk right now?

Text **HELLO** to **50808** or WhatsApp **0861800280**
free, anonymous, 24/7 support.
A service by spunout, funded by the HSE and partners.

Visit textaboutit.ie or spunout.ie.

If it matters to you, it matters to us.

spunout

www.spunout.ie

info@spunout.ie

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