

RECORD numbers of kids are calling a helpline as the recession piles pressure on families.

Childline Ireland now receives 16,000 calls a week – up from 12,000 a week last year.

But spokeswoman Margie Rowe revealed only 60pc of calls can be answered due to a lack of resources.

She said: "The number of calls we are receiving each week is certainly on the increase.

"The number of texts we get is also on the up. There were 13,000 received last year in total but this year it's at 14,500 already, and the year hasn't even come near to an end yet.

"We would love to be able to answer all the calls we receive but unfortunately it's just not possible.

PROBLEMS

"The youngsters calling in have a huge range of problems, from bullying to their parents divorcing.

"However, we are also getting a lot of calls in that appear to centre around the financial strain being placed on households due to the current economic situation.

"As pressure is put on families, including job losses, more kids are having to deal with parents venting their anger towards the situation they are in."

The number of calls Childline received last year jumped by 25pc from 2008 and it is expected to increase further this year.

Margie said: "We receive no Government funding, yet are helping the most vulnerable in society.

"If it wasn't for the public's help in fundraising we would not exist."

The shocking statistics come in the same week that International charity, One Child, visited Ireland to try to encourage the Government to distribute free leaflets on child abuse to every household.

Founder of the charity, Evin Daly,

EXCLUSIVE

By EMMA McMENAMY

said people need to be made aware of the warning signs in order to protect kids from all forms of abuse – physical, mental and sexual.

He said: "The Irish Government has spent more than €150 million on preparing multiple reports on clerical child abuse.

"It hasn't spent anything on the most important aspect of child protection, telling the public exactly what abuse is.

"Even professionals in Ireland are not on the same page regarding exactly what abuse is.

"Our leaflets fix that by providing a level of understanding that speaks to everyone.

"Any policy of child protection must be based on a foundation of knowledge of abuse. That is the purpose of our information package.

"We write simply and illustrate the four types of child abuse – physical, sexual, emotional and neglect.

"After reading these leaflets the reader will be left in no doubt."

DEMAND

Mr Daly has called on the Government to act.

He said: "The Government has a responsibility

to educate people about this but has chosen not to.

"It hides behind reports, non-governmental organisations and committees and everyone blames the HSE. This is wrong. It has nothing to do with the HSE.

"The Government has a responsibility to the public particularly to the parents who are the gatekeepers to their children's lives and to their children's protection.

"Our material is available free by emailing a name and address to info@abusewatch.eu. Brochures can be read online at abusewatch.eu.

emma.mcmenamy@notw.ie



Help... Margie



Advice... Evin