

Press release

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Over 13,500 people seek help from charity to stop viewing sexual images of children online

In just one year 1,615 people with concerns about their online behaviour called the confidential Stop it Now! Helpline, and 12,057 visited the Stop it Now! Get-Help website to access self-help resources. As a result of the advice they received, callers and web visitors reported taking steps to control their behaviour, including stopping all internet or pornography use, installing controls and filters on devices and informing partners or family members.

In the face of the proliferation of indecent images of children online, and the rapid growth in numbers of people viewing and sharing such images (1), the police have praised the work of child protection charity, the Lucy Faithfull Foundation to tackle online offending by offering confidential, anonymous support to stop – and making people aware of the help available.

National Police Chiefs' Council Lead for Child Protection, Chief Constable Simon Bailey said: **“Viewing indecent images of children is illegal and it is not a victimless crime - children in these images are abused when an image is first taken and repeatedly victimised every time that image is viewed.**

“In 2013, it was estimated that 50,000 people were viewing these images but we fear that number could have increased significantly. In response, forces are arresting more offenders and safeguarding more children than ever before. But enforcement alone cannot solve this problem – more needs to be done to prevent abuse in the first place. There are many people who offend or are yet to offend and want help to stop their behaviour; the work of the Lucy Faithfull Foundation is vitally important in supporting these people and giving them access to appropriate services.

“Our message to people viewing indecent images of children is get help or get caught.”

The charity's current UK-wide campaign launched in October 2015. In the past 12 months there have been 3 million online views of campaign films designed to deter illegal behaviour and direct people towards the Helpline and website (2).

Child sexual abuse prevention expert and founder of Stop it Now! UK & Ireland, Donald Findlater, said: **“Men, young men in particular, need to think about their online viewing of any sexual material and make sure their behaviour is and stays legal. Stop it Now! is in touch with many such men who started out looking at adult pornography but who ended up looking at sexual images of increasingly younger people, including children.**

“We want people to keep their viewing legal, but if they have looked at sexual images of anyone under 18, they need to stop and stay stopped. And if they are struggling to do this, they also need to know that confidential help is available on the end of a phone or online from Stop it Now!”

'David', who accessed help from Stop it Now! to stop looking at online sexual images of children following his arrest, said:

“There were many times I shook myself and told myself ‘this is not right’... I withdrew from my family, on a downward spiral.

“Then I was arrested...Then there was Stop it Now! Talking to Stop it Now! was the beginning of my understanding of what I did and why – and why I will never do it again... My actions caused a world of pain... If you are currently in the position I was in, my advice is to call Stop it Now!”

To note: additional case study included in Notes to Editors

In the second year of the campaign, the Lucy Faithfull Foundation will be working closely with professionals within the health and education sector, as well as the police, to encourage more people with concerns about their online sexual behaviour to seek confidential, anonymous help to stop.

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Notes to Editor:

- (1) A threat assessment issued by the then Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) in 2013 indicated that 50,000 individuals in the UK were involved in downloading or sharing indecent images of children. The CEOP threat assessment is available in full [here](#). The Lucy Faithfull Foundation understands that The National Crime Agency, of which CEOP became a command in October 2013, is working with partners to update this figure.
- (2) The campaign films can be viewed on the Stop it Now! Homepage: <http://www.stopitnow.org.uk/> The films are based on key findings from a Lucy Faithfull Foundation survey of men arrested for accessing indecent images of children. The survey identified many of the reasons people both access indecent images, and persist in downloading and sharing them. These include a failure to understand that all indecent images of children under 18 are illegal and a lack of awareness of the harm their actions caused to the children involved, as well as the damage which could be done to their own family and friends should they be arrested. Many expressed a desire to stop, but had little awareness of Stop it Now! which can help. Key messages include:
 - viewing or sharing sexual images of anyone under 18 is a crime
 - that these aren't "just pictures", children are harmed when they are first made and also when they are viewed
 - the many consequences for offenders who come to attention are serious, including arrest, loss of job, loss of family and friends becoming a registered sex offender
 - and that confidential and anonymous help to stop is available.

CASE STUDY: An offender's journey to Stop it Now! - 'Sean'

'Sean' first heard about Stop It Now whilst watching BBC news, where he saw a film clip which depicted an offender walking blindly past a series of stop signs before falling into darkness. For years Sean had told himself that his actions were wrong, but he felt powerless to change his ways on his own.

The film prompted him to visit the Stop it Now! website and then build up courage to call the helpline. After explaining his fears, Sean was given advice about steps he could take to reduce the risk of reoffending in future, including visiting the Get Help section of the website and working through the self-help modules.

Sean called back several weeks later and said he felt much more positive about his ability to change. He had confided in his girlfriend, and now only uses the internet when she is there. He has also worked through the online Get Help modules and said **he now understands that looking at indecent images of children is not a victimless crime**. He says this gives him another reason not to lapse back into his old habits.

About The Lucy Faithfull Foundation

Named after its founder, Baroness Lucy Faithfull of Wolvercote, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation is the only UK-wide child protection charity dedicated solely to preventing child sexual abuse. It works with entire families affected by or concerned about abuse including: adult male and female sexual abusers; young people with inappropriate sexual behaviours; victims of abuse and other family members. Drawing on expert knowledge about child sexual abuse the charity offers a broad range of services for professionals and members of the public. These include: assessments, intervention and treatment of known offenders, case specific advice and support, training and development courses and workshops, educational programmes for internet offenders and their families, circles of support and accountability, internet safety seminars for schools (teachers, parents and children) and Parents Protect! training for professionals, parents, carers and other adults. It also runs the Stop it Now! Campaign and Helpline (0808 1000 900). www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk, www.stopitnow.org.uk and www.parentsprotect.co.uk

About Stop it Now!

Stop it Now! UK and Ireland is a national campaign, Freephone confidential Helpline and website run by child protection charity, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation. It aims to prevent child sexual abuse by increasing public awareness and empowering people to act responsibly to protect children. Stop it Now! believes that it is the responsibility of all adults to take positive action to prevent the sexual abuse of children. Stop it Now! works with the government and child protection agencies, to promote public education and prevent child sexual abuse. The Stop it Now! helpline has been operating since 2002 and aims to prevent child abuse by encouraging abusers and potential abusers to seek help and by giving adults the information they need to protect children safely. Since 2002 the Helpline has provided advice and support to 31,500 callers and emailers, who together, made 60,000 contacts. 55% of contacts were from people concerned about their own behaviour. www.stopitnow.org.uk and www.get-help.stopitnow.org.uk

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