



****Embargoed until 21:00 GMT on Thursday 14 December 2017****

Successful awareness campaign leads to sharp rise in number of people from Scotland seeking help to stop looking at online sexual images of children

There has been a sharp rise in recent months in the number of people from Scotland seeking help to stop themselves or another person from viewing sexual images of children online. The rise follows a successful awareness raising campaign.

The increase in numbers is reported by Stop it Now! Scotland, a child sexual abuse prevention project run by child protection charity, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation.

The charity reports today that its [Get Help website](#) (a website providing online self-help resources, advice and information for those concerned about their online behaviour) received 953 visits from people in Scotland in the three months after June 25th 2017, compared to 556 in the three months before – **an increase of 71%**.

There has been an even steeper increase in the number of people from Scotland calling the Stop it Now! Helpline. In the three months up to the end of May 2017, 30 people from Scotland called the Helpline seeking help for themselves or another. In the three months to the end of September, however, this number jumped to 55, **an increase of 83%**.

Awareness campaign to make public aware that help is available to stop

The rise in the number of people seeking help to stop looking at sexual images of children has been driven by a major **public awareness campaign** across Edinburgh, the Lothians and Scottish Borders.

Launched on 26 June, the campaign was put together by professionals working across Police Scotland, the City of Edinburgh Council, the University of Edinburgh and the NHS, as well as Stop it Now! Scotland.

The campaign aimed to reinforce key messages to the public: that accessing indecent images of anyone under 18 is illegal; that the consequences for people accessing such images are severe; that it causes great harm to the children in the pictures; and that help is available for those who want to stop.

It used a variety of methods including traditional media, social media, radio advertising, posters and programmatic advertising to reach offenders and potential offenders, as well as their family and friends, and signpost them to specialist self-help resources on the Get Help website and via the Stop it Now! Helpline.

Social media was particularly successful in getting campaign messages to large numbers of people. Stop it Now! Scotland's Facebook posts were collectively seen almost 185,000 times by people living in Edinburgh, the Lothians and Scottish Borders. Comments from people receiving posts on their Facebook pages were generally positive. When one person complained about receiving a Stop it Now! post on his page, a friend replied: *"...get a grip, this is no laughing matter, this is about children being tortured."*

Reflecting on how the campaign had been successful in persuading large numbers of people to seek help either for themselves or for another, National Manager for Stop it Now! Scotland, Stuart Allardyce, said:

"Stop it Now! Scotland is determined to protect children from abuse and the devastating impact of having their image repeatedly shared across the internet. The best way to do this is to deter people from looking at these images in the first place, and to get those who are looking to stop. What our campaign shows is that you when you make people aware that help is available to stop, people will take up that offer of help. We work with many men arrested after downloading huge numbers of abusive images of children. Many of them say they would have been unlikely to have become so addicted if they had known sooner about the help that's available to stop. So I'd urge anyone out there worried about what they are looking at online to get in touch - via the Stop it Now! Get Help website, or via our confidential Helpline on 0808 1000 900."

DCI Martin MacLean of Edinburgh Division's Public Protection Unit, and chairperson of the committee which developed the campaign, said:

"The results of this preventative campaign are very encouraging, demonstrating that offenders or potential offenders do want help to stop. Our campaign has proved to be very effective in promoting the awareness of support services such as Stop It Now! Scotland and its Get Help website."

"Every time a sexual image of a child is viewed, that child is re-victimised and further demand is created for indecent images. It is therefore vital that we work closely with partners and use all available resources to protect children and, wherever possible, prevent offending."

"Enforcement remains a priority for specialist Police Scotland detectives at both local and national levels. Being arrested, charged and convicted is life-changing for offenders and their families."

"Anyone having inappropriate thoughts about children needs to seek help, or should expect to face serious consequences."

And one of the men who contacted Stop it Now! Scotland to get help to stop looking at sexual images of children said:

“I’d really encourage anyone struggling with their online behaviour to call Stop it Now! Scotland or to visit the Stop it Now! Get Help website so they can get the help they need to stop looking at sexual images of children.”

Ends

For further information, and to discuss interview opportunities with Stop it Now! Scotland, please contact:

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To discuss bids for interviews with a spokesperson from Police Scotland, please contact:

Hannah Mallin (Communications Officer) on 0131 311 3423 or via

media.edinburgh@scotland.pnn.police.uk

Notes to Editor:

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! UK and Ireland

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 35,000 callers and emailers, who together, make up 65,000 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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#stopitnow

<https://www.facebook.com/stopitnowukandireland>