



STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 WEDNESDAY 3 MARCH 2010

Lucy Faithfull Foundation response to child sex offender disclosure scheme – start of national roll out

March 3, 2010: Director of Research and Development at the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, Mr Donald Findlater said:

“Following publication of the Home Office’s Child Sex Offender Review, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation, and others, had initial reservations about the likely value of the Disclosure Pilots and about possible negative consequences – thinking of registered sex offenders failing to cooperate in their proper management or, indeed, going underground; or vigilante activity following disclosure; or false reassurance of applicants told that the person they were enquiring about was not a known sex offender, but could still pose a risk to children.

I am glad to say that, as far as the evaluation can establish, those negative consequences have not materialised. I believe that is testimony to the planning and delivery of the Disclosure process by the four Police Forces involved, supported by the Association of Chief Police Officers and others.

Whilst the total number of Disclosure applications to the Police across the twelve months was not massive, I have to say I am pleased at the clear evidence that members of the public, where they do have concerns about possible abuse, feel confident to approach the Police not only for information but also to share their concerns. And those twenty or so people who did receive disclosure information were not only assisted to protect their children but also have evidently handled that information responsibly.

My initial concerns about possible false reassurance have not been directly answered by the Disclosure Pilot evaluation itself. We know the main danger to children is from people not known to the authorities and we need all adults to be alert for worrying behaviour. If someone is told that the person they have enquired about is not known, we do not want them to ignore the signs that child sexual abuse could be taking place.

That said, I am delighted in the decision taken by the Home Secretary that public education programmes be made available alongside the Disclosure Process. These programmes were launched at the same time as the Disclosure pilots as part of the Child Sex Offender Review and have been successfully piloted in Surrey and Birmingham over the last year. I believe they add an important component to the Disclosure Process – helping all adults to play their part in

preventing child sexual abuse. Public education seminars for parents and carers provide factual information about child sexual abuse – including who does it, how and why. It identifies signs to look out for, in children but also in those close to our children, that might give cause for concern, with information on where they can turn to for help or to make a report.

Together, Disclosure and public education make a great combination and should go a long way in helping to reduce child sexual abuse. We can also learn lessons from those who come forward to make a disclosure application and we would like to see information gathered on what behaviours are causing people concern.

But finally, a note of caution. It is still early days in work on Disclosure and it is important that scrutiny continues as the work is rolled out nationally, to ensure that the good practice developed in four pilot areas becomes the practice implemented and sustained across the country. Our children deserve that we make this work a continuing success.”

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Notes to editors:

For further information and interviews please contact Deborah Denis on 01372 847160, 07540 690 315 or ddenis@lucyfaithfull.org.uk.

1. Named after its founder, Baroness Lucy Faithfull of Wolvercote, the Foundation is a child protection charity operating UK-wide and specialising in safeguarding children from sexual abuse. The Foundation's policy is to collaborate with individuals and agencies internationally to develop a more child sensitive and offender aware culture in our societies. The Foundation contributes to legislation and to policy and procedure reviews concerned with safeguarding children in faith communities, in schools, in leisure facilities, on the Internet and living away from home. www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk and managed the national campaign Stop it Now!

2. Stop it Now! UK and Ireland 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! is an alliance of leading children's charities, working 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. The helpline is funded by the Ministry of Justice and the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. The England campaign is supported by the Department of Children, Schools and Families. The Stop it

Now! campaigns in Wales and Scotland are supported by the Welsh Assembly Government and the Scottish Government respectively. www.stopitnow.org.uk.

3. In June 2007, the government published the Review of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offenders. The disclosure pilots fulfil Action 4 of the review. Two public education pilots were conducted in Surrey and Birmingham to fulfil Action 1 of the review. Further information can be found at:

<http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/documents/CSOR/chid-sex-offender-review-130607>

4. The year-long Surrey-wide 'SMART enough?' and Birmingham based 'Educate 2 Protect' pilots were funded by the Home Office and were run jointly by child protection charity the Lucy Faithfull Foundation and its campaigning arm Stop it Now! UK and Ireland. More information on each project can be found at www.smartenough.co.uk and www.educate2protect.co.uk.