

27 February, 2018

Police forces across South West England join child protection charity in campaign to tackle indecent images of children

Campaign marks multi-agency approach to tackling demand for sexual images of children online

Police forces from Avon and Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, Wiltshire, Dorset and Gloucestershire are today joining forces with a leading child protection charity to launch a campaign to tackle growing demand for sexual images of children online.

The regional campaign represents a multi-agency approach to tackling the growing demand for sexually explicit images of children. It will bring together robust law enforcement work with work already being undertaken by UK child protection charity, [The Lucy Faithfull Foundation](#) (1).

The charity works to prevent people from viewing such illegal material in the first place; and to get them to stop if they have already started. It directs offenders to the charity's [Stop it Now! Get Help website](#) that hosts online self-help resources, as well as the [Stop it Now! confidential helpline](#) (0808 1000 900) where they can get help to address their online behaviour and stop looking at these harmful and illegal images.

Viewing and sharing indecent images of children online is a serious and growing problem. In 2013 the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) estimated that as many as 50,000 individuals in the UK were involved in downloading or sharing sexual images of children (2). Police estimate that the number of offenders has grown since then. In a BBC TV interview in October 2016, National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Lead for Child Protection, Chief Constable Simon Bailey, said that at least 100,000 people across the UK were now regularly viewing online sexual images of children.

The joint campaign launched today will use traditional media, social media, posters and other public relations activities to:

- raise public awareness of the growing problem of people viewing and sharing sexually explicit images of under 18s online
- educate those offending about the harm caused to children in the images who are re-victimised each time their image is viewed online
- highlight the increase in police activity across the South West to tackle the issue
- drive home the consequences of their behaviour to offenders – including arrest, possible imprisonment, break up of family and being put on the Sex Offenders Register
- make people aware that there is help available to stop such behaviour.

Significant numbers of people from the South West seeking help to stop looking at sexual images of children

The number of people in South West England already seeking help from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation is significant. In 2017 2,301 people from the South West visited the charity's online self-help resources or called the confidential helpline to get help with their own viewing of sexually explicit images of children, or that of a loved one.

	Number of people visiting the website in 2017 to get help with their own online behaviour , or that of another	Number of people calling the Stop it Now! Helpline in 2017 to get help with their own online behaviour , or that of another	Total
Avon and Somerset	818	77	895
Devon and Cornwall	512	52	564
Wiltshire	157	38	195
Dorset	285	29	314
Gloucestershire	262	28	290
South West (county not given)	0	43	43
TOTAL for the South West	2,034	267	2,301

The campaign follows similar activity undertaken in other parts of the UK by the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. A campaign, run in partnership with Police Scotland, resulted in a 72% increase in the number of people from Edinburgh, East and West Lothian and the Borders seeking help to address their online behaviour, or that of another (3). It is intended that the campaign being launched today will have a similar effect in the South West by directing more people towards help to stop looking at harmful images.

Chief Officer for the South West Regional Organised Crime Unit (SW ROCU) Assistant Chief Constable, Dave Lewis, said:

“This is an appalling crime. It’s wrong to believe that viewing images in your own home doesn’t harm anybody, individuals viewing indecent images of children are engaging in criminal activity and causing untold harm to the children involved. We are committed to pursuing those involved in the online abuse of children, they are the target of police investigations and we will hold them to account for their actions.

“Anyone who is concerned that they may be at risk of breaking the law should seek help from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation before it’s too late. The organisation is a trusted lifeline for those who need to manage their behaviour and want support in altering their mind-set and living responsible, fulfilled lives.”

Donald Findlater, child sexual abuse prevention expert and spokesperson for The Lucy Faithfull Foundation, said:

“Too many people, especially men across all age groups, seem to think it is okay to view sexual images of under 18s online. It is not. Not only is it illegal, but it causes great harm to the children whose images are used. It also causes harm to those offending and to their families.

“Alongside police activity in arresting more and more offenders, the Lucy Faithfull Foundation has been working over these past two years to develop its response to this growing problem. Whether arrested or not, we want online offenders to stop their illegal behaviour and to stay stopped. Our specialist staff have helped thousands to do this over recent years. We have also helped thousands more family members come to terms with the fact that someone they know and love has engaged in this behaviour.”

Ends

For further information, and to discuss interview opportunities with a spokesperson from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, please contact:

Matt Whitticase (Media and Communications Manager): t: 01372 847169

mwhitticase@lucyfaithfull.org.uk

For further information, and to discuss interview opportunities with Assistant Chief Constable David Lewis of the Regional Organised Crime Unit (ROCU) for the South West, please contact:

Alice Light (Marketing and Campaigns Officer, Avon and Somerset Police) t: 01275 816250

Alice.light@avonandsomersetpolice.uk

Notes to Editor:

Forces participating in the campaign across the South West:

Avon and Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Dorset.

More information on the Stop it Now! campaign to deter people from viewing indecent images of children online, including campaign films that have been viewed over 19 million times, is available [here](#).

(1) The Lucy Faithfull Foundation's staff includes former probation officers, social workers, psychologists and ex-police officers. They help prevent children from being sexually abused by working with victims, families and sex offenders themselves. The charity also runs [Stop it Now!](#) – a public project that enables adults to play their part in preventing the sexual abuse of children through education, training, online resources and a confidential Helpline.

(2) This estimate was based on file sharing activity alone, and did not include open web searches or activity in the dark net. The 50,000 figure comes from the CEOP threat assessment published in 2013, shortly before CEOP became a Command of the National Crime Agency. It should be noted that this is an estimate based on available information and intelligence analysis at the time. The relevant paragraph reads: "Although it is clearly not possible to establish a precise figure, CEOP estimates that there were around 50,000 individuals in the UK involved in downloading and sharing IIOC during 2012." The 50,000 figure was a hypothecated total number based on different data sources and was not a list of individuals. The most recent NCA threat assessment covering child sexual exploitation and abuse can be found [here](#).

(3) In the three months before the launch of the campaign in June 2017, 586 people from Scotland contacted the Stop it Now! Get Help website and confidential helpline for help with either their own online behaviour, or that of another. In the three months following launch of the campaign, this number had jumped to 1,008 – an increase of 72%.

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

@stopitnowuk

#stopitnow

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