



West Yorkshire Police 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

West Yorkshire Police is today joining forces with a leading child protection charity to launch a campaign to tackle growing demand for sexual images of children online. The campaign will also see involvement and support from partner organisations including the Police and Crime Commissioner for West Yorkshire, Local Safeguarding Children's Boards and local authorities.

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 2018 the National Crime Agency estimated the figure to be 80,000 (3).

Police have been working extensively to detect and prosecute people downloading and sharing sexual images of children online.

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 West Yorkshire 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.

The number of people in West Yorkshire already seeking help from The Lucy Faithfull Foundation is significant. In 2018, 1,365 people from West Yorkshire visited the charity's online self-help resources or called the confidential helpline to seek help in relation to illegal online sexual behaviour.

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 West Yorkshire by directing more people towards help to stop looking at harmful images.

Detective Superintendent Jon Morgan, Head of West Yorkshire Police's Safeguarding Central Governance Unit, said:

"Tackling child abuse of all forms is a top priority for West Yorkshire Police. Many don't consider the viewing and sharing of indecent images of children in the same vein as contact offences but behind every image or video is a child who has been abused and continues to be abused with every download.

"We treat this offending very seriously and every year arrest hundreds of people for possession and distribution of indecent images. The Force works closely with the Crown Prosecution Service to take cases to court and ensure offenders face justice, including being made to sign the Sex Offenders Register.

"Our main aim will always be to eliminate the market for indecent images and to protect child victims, what we do find though is that people involved in this kind of offending are often also suffering themselves. Unlike most other crimes, when we arrest people in relation to indecent images offences, some are actually relieved. They have found themselves in a pattern of damaging behaviour that they can't see a way out of.

"The Lucy Faithfull Foundation's work is vital in working with those already offending or about to offend to educate and support them in changing from a path that is hurting themselves and others. This is why we are taking a partnership approach to tackling this issue and launching this joint campaign with the Foundation."

Donald Findlater, Director of the Stop It Now! helpline, 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, it also causes great harm - primarily to the children in the images - but also to the offenders themselves.

"Alongside the police arresting more and more offenders, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation has been working to help online offenders to stop their illegal behaviour and to stay stopped, whether they've been arrested or not. Our specialist staff have helped thousands over recent years. We've also helped thousands more family members come to terms with the fact that someone they know and love has engaged in this behaviour, getting them help to tackle the problem."

Mark Burns-Williamson, West Yorkshire's Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) said:

"I am pleased, along with West Yorkshire Police, to be able to support this crucial campaign which highlights once again the serious ramifications of viewing these abusive images online. It builds on the work already being done in West Yorkshire with partners, including the Police, to ensure offenders know they will be caught and dealt with robustly.

"Safeguarding our young people remains a key focus in my Police and Crime Plan and this campaign spells out in no uncertain terms the profound consequences of viewing abusive images of those under the age of 18.

"It quite rightly sends a powerful message to those accessing and distributing abusive images of children that they will be caught and could face losing everything they hold dear.

"Those accessing illegal and abusive images online are committing a serious offence and it is important that we raise public awareness and educate to ensure all children are being protected from harm."

-Ends-

For further information, and to discuss interview opportunities with a spokesperson from The Lucy Faithfull Foundation, or from West Yorkshire Police please contact:

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Notes to Editor:

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 23 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 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) <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation-online>

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). lucyfaithfull.org.uk, stopitnow.org.uk and parentsprotect.co.uk

About Stop It Now! UK and Ireland

Stop It Now! UK and Ireland is a national campaign, confidential helpline and website run by child protection charity, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation. 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. stopitnow.org.uk and get-help.stopitnow.org.uk

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#stopitnow

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