



First Anniversary of child sexual abuse prevention campaign in Wales

A national campaign committed to preventing child sexual abuse is celebrating its first anniversary. Stop it Now! Wales became the country's first campaign solely dedicated to preventing the sexual abuse of children in Wales on April 29, 2009, and has gone from strength to strength.

National Campaign Manager, Rebecca Wasinski said: "When we launched this campaign we knew from our public survey that 70 per cent of people in Wales wanted to know more about child sexual abuse. We also knew that the more people know about child sexual abuse including the signs to look out for and where they can go for help if they have concerns, the more chance there is of preventing abuse from happening."

Over the past year the campaign has worked hard to provide adults, particularly those closest to children such as parents, grandparents and professionals who work with young people, with accurate information, support and advice to help them play their part in keeping children safe from harm. Along with offering training to professionals, the campaign runs 'Parents Protect' courses in conjunction with Parents' Networks, making sure parents and carers know what things to look out for and where to go for help if they have concerns. In addition, the campaign operates a free phone confidential helpline – 0808 1000 900 – for people to talk through their concerns and ask questions.

Stop it Now! Wales' achievements so far:

- Child sexual abuse awareness training delivered to over 1000 professionals
- 100 presentations given at venues such as the University of Wales, Swansea
- Over 1000 members of the public reached through road shows across Wales.
- Over 550 members of the public attending the National Eisteddfod in 2009 signed up to support our postcard petition (2.)
- 4 'Parents Protect' courses delivered in partnership with Parents Networks reaching over 40 guardians
- 57 calls made to the confidential helpline for information and advice – callers were most likely to be an adult concerned about the behaviour of another adult they know, including family members, or concerned about the sexual behaviour of a child. (3.)

"Getting information to those who need is a critical part of our work," said Rebecca, "but so is making sure services and resources are in place for those who need them most, and that's why we are so excited about the months ahead."

Over the next 3 months Stop it Now! Wales will address the issue of preventing child sexual abuse in Wales by conducting a review of what is happening all over the country to help keep children safe from harm. The review will examine what services and resources are currently available in Wales, what services professions believe should be in place and identify where the gaps are. Stop it Now! will work with agencies such as police, probation, social services, education, health, children's charities and survivor organisations, as well as parents, carers, perpetrators of abuse and adult survivors.

"We recognise that in order to maximise the effectiveness and impact of our work, an All-Wales Strategy for Prevention is required together with the development of a comprehensive approach to prevention," said Rebecca. "A strategy would ensure that all relevant agencies, departments and organisations are working together to tackle this issue, while involving the public as part of the answer, thus achieving greater impact and efficiency when it comes to protecting children and families from the devastating effects of sexual abuse."

When completed, the review will be submitted as evidence to the Deputy Minister for Social Services, Gwenda Thomas AM and the National Assembly for Wales Children and Young People's Committee.

"Our first year was exciting and we're equally excited about the year ahead," said Rebecca.

Gwenda Thomas, Deputy Minister for Social Services said: "I wholeheartedly believe in the work of the Stop it Now! organisation in raising public awareness of child sexual abuse in Wales. They also play a crucial role in helping to reduce the fears that can often stop people, whether neighbours, family or friends from taking action to prevent sexual abuse.

"Last April I was privileged to be at the launch of the Stop it Now! campaign in Wales which is dedicated to preventing the sexual abuse of children. I knew at the time that there was considerable amount of work to be done and I am pleased that early signs suggest that this concerted campaign is having an impact as has been demonstrated by the doubling of calls to its confidential helpline within the last 12 months.

"The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to safeguarding and protecting children and we have recently established the Welsh Children's Safeguarding Forum to provide national and strategic leadership across key public and voluntary sector agencies in Wales. Reporting to me every six months this Forum will take the action needed to strengthen safeguarding arrangements for children consistently across Wales."

Stop it Now! Wales celebrates its anniversary on Monday, May 10 with an event at The Pierhead Building, Cardiff Bay, attended by Gwenda Thomas AM, Deputy Minister for Social Services. Other speakers include:- David Hopkins, Chair of Stop it Now! Wales and retired Director of Education, Caerphilly County Council; Donald

Findlater, Director of Stop it Now! UK & Ireland and Hayley Waters, parent and member of the Caerphilly Parent Network.

The event will also feature a presentation to a number of parents and carers from the Caerphilly Parent Network and the Plant Dewi Llandybie Families Together group who have recently completed the 'Parents Protect' course.

Anyone interested in finding out more about Stop it Now! Wales, or who would like to volunteer for or make a donation to the campaign, can contact Rebecca Wasinski at RWasinski@stopitnow.org.uk.

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Notes to editors:

(1.) Media are invited to attend the anniversary event taking place at Great Hall, The Pierhead Building, Cardiff Bay on Monday May 10 at 1pm. Interview opportunities will be available with speakers and parents. For more information, and to confirm your attendance, please contact contact Deborah Denis on 01372 847160, 07540 690315 or ddenis@stopitnow.org.uk.

(2.) The postcard campaign ran during the 2009 National Eisteddfod for Wales event in Bala. This involved members of the public signing our postcard petition. The postcards were then addressed to their corresponding local Assembly Member, urging them to work with the Welsh Assembly Government to:

- * Develop an All Wales Strategy for child sexual abuse prevention
- * Make the Stop it Now! helpline available to all adults in Wales
- * Make information on how to identify and prevent the sexual abuse of children available to all adults in Wales
- * Make information and resources on the prevention of sexually harmful behaviour among young people in Wales available to all adults in Wales

(3.) Calls to the confidential, free phone helpline are answered by specialist staff. A case study is included below. (Identifying details have been changed to protect caller's identity).

Case Study – Sally's story

Sally and Paul have been married for 20 years and have a son, aged 13. Paul is on remand awaiting sentencing for distribution/making and possession of indecent images. This is Paul's second offence; two years ago he served 11 months and was placed on the Sex Offenders Register for 7 years. He did not undertake any kind of treatment programme. At that time he was in denial and minimised his offending. Sally said they tried to ignore it and not talk about it. Children's Services were involved but their son is adamant that Paul has never behaved inappropriately towards him. Sally says Paul is now in a totally different frame of mind. He recognises the impact of his offending and wants help. He wants to change and manage his thoughts and feelings.

We discussed with Sally:- her relationship with Paul; her feelings; how she was coping; how their son was coping; the role of Social Services and their need to ensure he was not at risk.

We listened to Sally and suggested that she:- take one day at a time and try not to worry about things that have not happened yet; to slow down, Paul isn't going anywhere and no decisions have to be made at this point; to discuss things with her son and answer his questions as best she can; to consider having a face-to-face meeting with our specialist staff; to monitor the situation closely; to ensure that she looks after herself properly; to continue to maintain contact with the helpline for continued help and support when she needed it.

(4.) Stop it Now! Wales 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. Stop it Now! Wales is supported by the Welsh Assembly Government. www.stopitnow.org.uk