



Preventing

child

sexual

abuse

What is Stop it Now?

Child sexual abuse is a serious problem affecting large numbers of our children and young people. With help, many abused children can overcome their experiences, although all of them are profoundly affected for the rest of their lives. But the harm caused is preventable - adults who care for children, and even those who harm them, **can** act now to stop sexual abuse.

Abuse thrives in an atmosphere of secrecy and taboo. Stop it Now! UK & Ireland is a major national and local campaign that aims to stop child sexual abuse by encouraging abusers and potential abusers to seek help and by giving adults the information they need to protect children effectively.

Stop it Now! believes that sexual abuse is a preventable public health problem and challenges adults to create a society that no longer tolerates the sexual abuse of children.

Why do we need Stop it Now?

In spite of increased awareness, child sexual abuse remains a serious public health issue. The latest research reports that 1 in 6 children are sexually abused before they reach the age of 16. The costs are enormous, both to individuals who suffer the trauma of abuse and to their families and communities.

Contrary to popular belief, research shows that children are far more likely to be abused by someone they know than by a stranger. The most common abuser is a member of the child's family or a friend or neighbour. In this situation, children are particularly powerless to protect themselves. Few people realize that many children are abused by older children or adolescents; some of these young people have themselves been abused.

Three quarters of children who are abused do not tell anyone about it and many keep their secret all their lives. Stop it Now! aims to break the walls of silence and give adults the confidence to take action to protect children.

Stop it Now! believes that all adults must take responsibility for protecting children as early as possible - preferably before abuse happens. In order to do this they need to be able to recognise the signs of abuse and understand how abusers behave.

Sex offenders are not monsters, however abhorrent their behaviour, and few are the predatory violent offenders commonly portrayed in the media. Adults who abuse children are responsible for their behaviour and can choose to stop.

Stop it Now! presents a positive approach to this problem. It promotes understanding and responsible action and challenges abusers or those thinking about abusing a child to seek help now.

Who is Stop it Now! for?

As well as raising general awareness about sexual abuse, the Stop it Now! UK & Ireland campaign is aimed at these key groups:

- Adults who have abused or are thinking about abusing a child; to encourage them to recognise their behaviour as abusive and to seek help to change
- Family and friends of abusers; to help them recognise the signs of abusive behaviour and seek advice about what action to take
- Parents of children and young people with worrying sexual behaviour; to give them information about the warning signs and when to seek help

What does Stop it Now! do?

Stop it Now! UK & Ireland is developing a network of local projects across the UK. These projects are based on partnerships between the local community and the agencies that work to protect children, including police, probation, social services, health, housing, voluntary agencies and the courts.

The services delivered by the projects are tailored to local needs and include these key elements:

- Media campaigns to raise awareness of child sexual abuse and how communities and families can protect children
- Information materials explaining child sexual abuse, how to recognise it and how to seek help.
- Public meetings to promote discussion about child protection and the role of individuals and the community.

A centralised telephone helpline supports the local projects and offers confidential advice and support to adults who suspect that someone they know presents a risk to a child and to those seeking help to stop their own abusive thoughts and behaviour.

Stop it Now! is also working with politicians and policy makers at national levels to promote a wider understanding of child sexual abuse as a preventable public health issue and to increase the services available to the victims and survivors of abuse and to abusers.

It is known that sexual abuse occurs across all communities and social groups and Stop it Now! aims to make its campaigns and activities accessible and appropriate to the needs of all sections of the community

Does Stop it Now! work?

Our projects in the UK and Ireland are demonstrating the effectiveness of this approach. Thousands of our leaflets have been requested and distributed. Positive media relationships have been developed. An external analysis of press articles in one of our project areas revealed an overwhelmingly positive replication of key messages prominently placed.

People are contacting our helpline for information and advice in ever increasing numbers. Over three quarters of callers are from our target groups. More than a third of calls are from adults who are worried about their own behaviour and want help to change. A similar number are from adults concerned about a family member or someone they know well. Where appropriate we help callers make contact with treatment and child protection resources in their areas.

Contrary to popular belief, sexual abusers are treatable. Research indicates that those who have completed an accredited treatment programme are significantly less likely to reoffend.

**Stop it Now! calls on anyone who has sexually abused a child,
or who is thinking about doing so to contact our Helpline
as a first step to finding help.**

What can you do to help?

Stop it Now! UK & Ireland is keen to develop its network of local projects. If you are interested in contributing to the development of a project in your area, please contact the national co-ordinator at the address overleaf.

We need money to help us continue with our work to protect children. If you would like to make a donation or to set up a fundraising event please contact us.

If you suspect that someone you know is sexually abusing a child or if you are worried about your own thoughts or behaviour towards children, ring the

Stop it Now! freephone Helpline

0808 1000 900

**If you have concerns about the safety of a child or suspect that they are being abuse, please contact:
The NSPCC Child Protection Helpline**

0808 800 5000

or your local police or social services.