stop it now! UK & Ireland
Together we can prevent child sexual abuse

Case Study: **Parents Protect!**

A 90-minute presentation for parents, carers and other adults to help them better protect their children from sexual abuse.

Developed by Stop it Now! UK and Ireland and the Lucy Faithfull Foundation.

Who we are

Stop it Now! UK & Ireland is a child sexual abuse prevention campaign. It operates a confidential freephone helpline and email service (0808 1000 900 / help@stopitnow.org.uk) and provides accurate information to adults to help them play their part in keeping children safe. It is managed by the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, a child protection charity.

The Challenge

In recent times we have come to understand that children are more likely to be sexually abused by people they know rather than by strangers. These are not the 'monsters' often portrayed by the media, but familiar and trusted adults, which can make disclosure far more difficult.

It is vital that parents, carers and other adults are equipped with sound information to help them protect their children. This includes:- understanding abuser behaviour including how and why people sexually abuse children, the barriers to identifying harmful behaviour and how to overcome them, how sex offenders are managed in the community, and positive actions adults can take to prevent child sexual abuse.

The Parents Protect! Programme

Parents Protect!
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The *Parents Protect!* programme is a 90 minute public education session for parents, carers and other adults to raise awareness of child sexual abuse and provide positive messages about what they can do to protect children.

The session focuses on dispelling common myths about child sex offenders while at the same time arming parents and carers with sound information that will help them keep their youngsters safe. It also offers a better understanding of how convicted sex offenders are managed by the police, probation and other statutory and voluntary bodies on release into the community.

The presentations are supported by a website; **www.parentsprotect.co.uk** and a 30 minute e-learning programme (hosted on the site) which parents and carers can work through in their own time.

Who is involved

Stop it Now UK and Ireland and the Lucy Faithfull Foundation work in partnership with police and probation services, Local Safeguarding Children Boards and other agencies to promote and deliver these presentations.

The problems and how we are tackling them

In spite of increased awareness, child sexual abuse remains a serious public health issue. Research tells us that one in six children has suffered some form of sexual abuse by the time they reach the age of 16*.

It is a difficult issue to think about and even harder for some to talk about. Being able to work in partnership with statutory agencies and community based organisations has helped us to build relationships and trust within communities to alleviate any fears and concerns they may have. It also enables us to deliver messages in a manner that does not 'scare monger' but gives communities factual and up to date information.

**Child Maltreatment in the UK, NSPCC 2000*

The outcomes and impact

The pilots of the *Parents Protect!* programme were extremely positive and feedback has shown that there is an appetite to receive the information provided including recognising signs of abuse and where to go for advice and help.

85% of people who attended a seminar said they felt their awareness of child sexual abuse had either much improved or had improved a little. 86% indicated that their confidence in dealing with child sexual abuse issues was either much improved or a little improved.

Parents attending these events were asked what actions they would take following attending. Responses ranged from very proactive and specific actions, such as; accessing additional information, talking with their children about issues to do with child sexual abuse and keeping safe and talking with their partners and friends, to those that were more general such as being more aware of what to look out for and generally encouraging greater openness with their children.

Direct quotes from those who attended a seminar:

"Thanks for letting parents know about this hugely important subject"

"Very thought-provoking, we all have a responsibility for protection"

Next steps

Stop it Now! will deliver the *Parents Protect!* course with local agencies whether they be statutory or voluntary organisations.

For further information

Marisa Hill
tel: 01372 847160
email: mhill@stopitnow.org.uk
www.parentsprotect.co.uk
www.stopitnow.org.uk

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