

Case Study: Parents Protect Plus

A child sexual abuse prevention programme spanning five weeks (two hours a week for five weeks) for parents, carers, guardians and other adults.

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

Who we are

Stop it Now! Wales is a child sexual abuse prevention campaign which officially launched in April 2009. It is part of Stop it Now! UK & Ireland which 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.

Stop it Now! Wales is based in Cardiff but covers all 22 local authorities across the country. Activities focus on the following areas:

- promotion of the Stop it Now! helpline
- development and delivery of *Parents Protect Plus*
- training for professionals on child sexual abuse prevention
- Welsh Assembly Government lobbying on child sexual abuse prevention
- educating the public about their role in prevention

The Challenge

A public consultation by Stop it Now! Wales highlighted the need for awareness raising and information courses to address a lack of knowledge and understanding of child sexual abuse in Wales. Between December 2008 and March 2009, Stop it Now! Wales conducted an electronic survey coupled with focus groups to understand the needs of the public and to identify the areas of priority for campaign activity as well as our key messages.

The research showed that 40% of respondents would have reservations about acting on concerns that an adult may be sexually abusing a child. Around 50% of all respondents had reservations about taking action if they were concerned that a child or young person were displaying sexually harmful behaviour towards another child - 10% more than if concerns were about an adult's behaviour towards a child.

The Parents Protect Plus Course

Our research told us that a large proportion of the public don't have the confidence to act on concerns or know where to go for advice and information when it comes to the problem of child sexual abuse. Using the expertise and knowledge from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation and NOMS (National Offender Management Service) Cymru, we developed an innovative course to address that gap and help develop the awareness and understanding of parents and carers.

The course is made up of one two-hour session per week, for five weeks. The course is suitable for parents, carers, grandparents and guardians of children and young people.

Course content includes:

- ▶ discussion and information around abuser behaviour including why and how people sexually abuse children
- ▶ the behaviours and indicators of sexual abuse
- ▶ the barriers to identifying and preventing abuse and how to overcome them
- ▶ sexual development in children and young people
- ▶ sexually harmful behaviour in children and young people
- ▶ internet safety
- ▶ the positive actions parents can take to prevent child sexual abuse

Who is involved

Stop it Now! Wales worked in partnership to develop the course with the Lucy Faithfull Foundation and NOMS Cymru. Stop it Now! Wales has since partnered with Plant Dewi, Caerphilly Parent Network, Communities First in Townhill and Bedlinog and Action for Children to deliver the courses.

The problems and how we are tackling them

The issue of child sexual abuse is difficult to think about and even harder for some to talk about. Being able to work in partnership with community based organisations and existing family support services has enabled us to build relationships and trust within communities to alleviate fear of talking about the issue and responding to concerns.

With one in six children experiencing sexual abuse by the time they reach the age of 16*, it is vital that parents and carers are equipped with sound information to protect their children.

*Child Maltreatment in the UK, NSPCC 2000

The outcomes and impact

Our aim is to improve the understanding, knowledge and awareness of parents and carers on child sexual abuse prevention and our *Parents Protect Plus* course allows us to achieve this. The success of our pilot means we continue to deliver courses in partnership with community organisations across Wales. We continue to receive very positive feedback from parents who complete the course, with all participants so far recommending that other parents also attend the course. We also know of two parents who, since completing the course, identified situations of concern within their own families and took action to address it.

Direct quotes from those who completed the course:

"It was very helpful and informative, as some people don't know what signs to look out for or who to contact, like myself."

"Please carry on doing these courses as it is of great value. This was excellently taught."

Next steps

Courses continue to be delivered across South and West Wales, with financial support from Community Foundation in Wales. We are now looking to offer courses across all of Wales and England.

For further information

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