

November 2, 2018

Number of people in the North West seeking help to stop looking at sexual images of children doubles in just six months

Increase prompted by major public awareness campaign across the region

The number of people in the North-West seeking help to stop looking at sexual images of children online has more than doubled in just six months.

In the six months between July 2017 and January 2018 **1,747** people from the North West contacted Stop it Now! (*Stop it Now! is a child sexual abuse prevention project run by child protection charity The Lucy Faithfull Foundation*), seeking help for either their own online sexual behaviour, or for that of someone they knew. In the following six month period that figure had leapt to **3,549**, a rise of 103%. People seeking help and support were able to access it via specialist self-help online resources on the [Stop it Now! Get Help website](#) or via the confidential and anonymous [Stop it Now! Helpline](#) (0808 1000 900).

There were particularly steep increases in **Lancashire, Cheshire and Cumbria** which saw increases of 146%, 193% and 186% respectively in the number of people seeking help from Stop it Now! over the six month period. (*A full count- by-county breakdown of data is available in Notes to Editor.*)

The dramatic rise in the number of people seeking help from Stop it Now! follows a **major public awareness raising campaign launched by Stop it Now! in January this year.**

The campaign was supported by the North West Regional Organised Crime Unit (NW ROCU) and police forces in Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Cumbria and North Wales.

The campaign used 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 the North West 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 via the Stop it Now! Helpline and the Stop it Now! Get Help website.

The NW ROCU and the six police forces communicated these key campaign messages via their social media channels to large numbers of people in the North West. And police forces also worked to engage local partners such as local authorities to further amplify the campaign and its messages via their own social media channels. A major conference, co-ordinated by the NW ROCU, was also held in Leigh near Wigan in April. The conference brought together police, social workers, local authorities and other frontline child safeguarding professionals to discuss strategies for further deterrence and prevention work in the North West.

Assistant Chief Constable Alan Barr, North West Regional Lead for Serious and Organised Crime, said:

“The problem of viewing indecent images of children online has grown exponentially in recent years. Technological advancements, increased accessibility, and the presumption of anonymity have all led to more and more people viewing and sharing illegal images.

“Every time a sexual image of a child is viewed, that child is re-victimised and further demand is created. It is vital, therefore, that we work closely with partners and use all available resources to protect children and, wherever possible, prevent offending.

“We have a duty to protect children from harm and to deter individuals from committing these types of horrific offences and we continue to seek to identify and convict those who engage in this behaviour. But as the results of this campaign show, we can also educate and stop individuals from continuing to offend – or from offending in the first place.

“Enforcement activity remains a high priority for police locally, regionally and nationally. And being arrested comes with life-changing consequences for offenders and their families. To those engaged in this behaviour, I would say consider your actions now and seek help to stop. If not, you should expect to face serious consequences.”

Reflecting on the success of police co-operation with Stop it Now! in the North West so far, Director of the Stop it Now! Helpline, Donald Findlater, said:

“We are delighted with the success of the campaign so far, with nearly 600 people from the North-West seeking help with online sexual behaviour towards children every month. Mostly these will be men seeking help to manage their own behaviour in viewing sexual images of children. But a growing number of other adults – wives, partners and parents – are getting in contact because of concerns about the online sexual behaviour of someone they love.

“But there are thousands more people in the North-West continuing to view sexual images of children online. Just as there are thousands more wives, partners and parents who are, or who should be worried about the online behaviour of someone they love.

“Some of these those engaged in this behaviour will be reading these words now. All of them need to be clear that sexual images of children are illegal, that children are harmed when they are made, and also each time they are viewed. Those who come to the attention of the police for such online offending put at risk everything they take for

granted or have worked hard to achieve – family, friends, work, their liberty. The Stop it Now! Helpline offers them a confidential place to get help so their illegal online behaviour stops and stays stopped. Getting help takes just a phone call.”

Ends

For further information, and to discuss interview opportunities with a spokesperson from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, or from the North West Regional Organised Crime Unit please contact:

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Notes to Editor:

Forces participating in the campaign across the North West:

Lancashire, Greater Manchester, North Wales, Merseyside, Cheshire, Cumbria.

Table 1. Comparison of website and Helpline visitor/caller volumes before and after Stop it Now! campaign launched

	Helpline pre-launch	Website pre-launch	Pre-launch total (Helpline and website)	Helpline post-launch	Website post-launch	Post Launch totals (helpline and website)	Pre and post launch totals: +/-
Lancashire	29	258	287	35	670	705	146%
Greater Manchester	24	759	783	26	1,316	1,342	71%
Merseyside	28	316	344	21	619	640	86%
Cheshire	32	131	163	37	440	477	193%
Cumbria	8	78	86	10	236	246	186%
North Wales	17	67	84	13	126	139	65%
North West TOTAL	138	1,609	1,747	142	3,407	3,549	103%

Pre-launch period: 24 July 2017 – 23 January 2018; Post-launch period: 24 January 2018 – 23 July 2018

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](#).

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

About Stop it Now! UK and Ireland

Stop it Now! UK and Ireland is a national campaign, Freephone confidential Helpline and website run by child protection charity, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation. It 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! 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.

www.stopitnow.org.uk and www.get-help.stopitnow.org.uk

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