



600 POLICE OFFICERS TRAINED TO PREVENT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

(July 30, 2012) Stop it Now! Scotland, the national programme for the prevention of child sexual abuse, has trained over 600 police officers from 8 Scottish police forces to help prevent sexual abuse in communities across the country.

Called 'The Upstream Project', the training is designed to give police officers and others who work with families and children all the information they need about child sex abuse to pass on to members of the public including; what child sex abuse is; adult and child behaviour which might be cause for concern; and actions to take to help prevent it from happening.

Officers act as 'prevention agents' – providing hundreds of adults and families with vital information about how they can help tackle the problem of child sexual abuse and protect the children in their lives from harm - through educative seminars and as part of their day to day work in communities.

The Upstream Project training is delivered as a toolkit, so knowledge is embedded with participants, which features an example child sex abuse awareness seminar, PowerPoint slides to present to parents and a video covering the questions members of the public most frequently ask. Stop it Now! Scotland designed the toolkit to complement the National Community Disclosure Scheme (Keeping Children Safe) - the mechanism that allows members of the public to ask police if a known person is a risk to children. Despite the success of the scheme, a need was identified for education to prevent abuse from happening as the majority of child sex offenders are not known to local police forces as they have not been reported to the authorities. It is estimated that 75 per cent of child sexual abuse victims do not tell anyone about the abuse they suffer.

Following the success of the project, Stop it Now! Scotland is set to expand the delivery of the training throughout 2012/13 in a number of other community facing agencies operating at local level including; faith groups, sports organisations, community theatre groups and parents' groups.

William Manson, Stop it Now! Scotland Project Manager said: "We need to get real about child sexual abuse and dispel some of the myths that are out there. We know that most abuse is committed by people who the children know in the home, not by strangers. So much of this goes unreported and that's why adults need to know the signs to look out for and what to do about it. We cannot leave the child to be the one to take action.

"It is estimated that one in six children across Scotland experience sexual abuse before the age of 16. By working with the police we have been able to spread vital sexual abuse prevention messages at a local level within communities. We are hoping that the expansion of the project and training professionals from other community facing agencies will increase awareness to the issue and, most importantly, protect a greater number of children from harm."

The Upstream Project is supported by the Association of Chief Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) which has worked closely with Stop it Now! Scotland to develop the scheme and improve child abuse prevention initiatives across the country.

ACC Graham Sinclair, of ACPOS, said: "A large part of the work of the police service is protecting the vulnerable in our communities. We work closely with organisations such as Stop it Now! Scotland and welcome the development of the Upstream Project and the opportunities it presents for officers working in the community to learn more about the threats to children and how they can share important information with the people who need to know it."

Stop it Now! UK and Ireland also operates a free phone confidential helpline – 0808 1000 900 – which people can call for advice and support in relation to child sexual abuse issues.

More information on the project is available from the website www.stopitnow.org.uk/scotland.

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Notes to Editors

For further information and interview opportunities please contact William Manson on 0131 556 3535 or williammanson@stopitnow.org.uk.

Notes to Editors

1. Stop it Now! Scotland is part of Stop it Now! UK and Ireland. 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! 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. www.stopitnow.org.uk/scotland

2. Stop it Now! is a project of the Lucy Faithfull Foundation (LFF) - the only UK-wide child protection charity dedicated solely to reducing the risk of children being sexually abused. LFF works with entire families that have been affected by abuse including: adult male and female sexual abusers; young people with inappropriate sexual behaviours; victims of abuse and other family members. Drawing on their expert knowledge about child sexual abuse they offer 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 and internet safety seminars for schools (teachers, parents and children). www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk

3. The Upstream Project and its delivery is funded by the Scottish Government's National Strategy for Survivors of Childhood Abuse (Survivor Scotland).

4. Forces taking part in The Upstream Project scheme are - Northern Constabulary, Fife Constabulary, Grampian Police, Lothian and Borders Police, Strathclyde Police, Dumfries and Galloway Police, Central Scotland and Tayside Police.