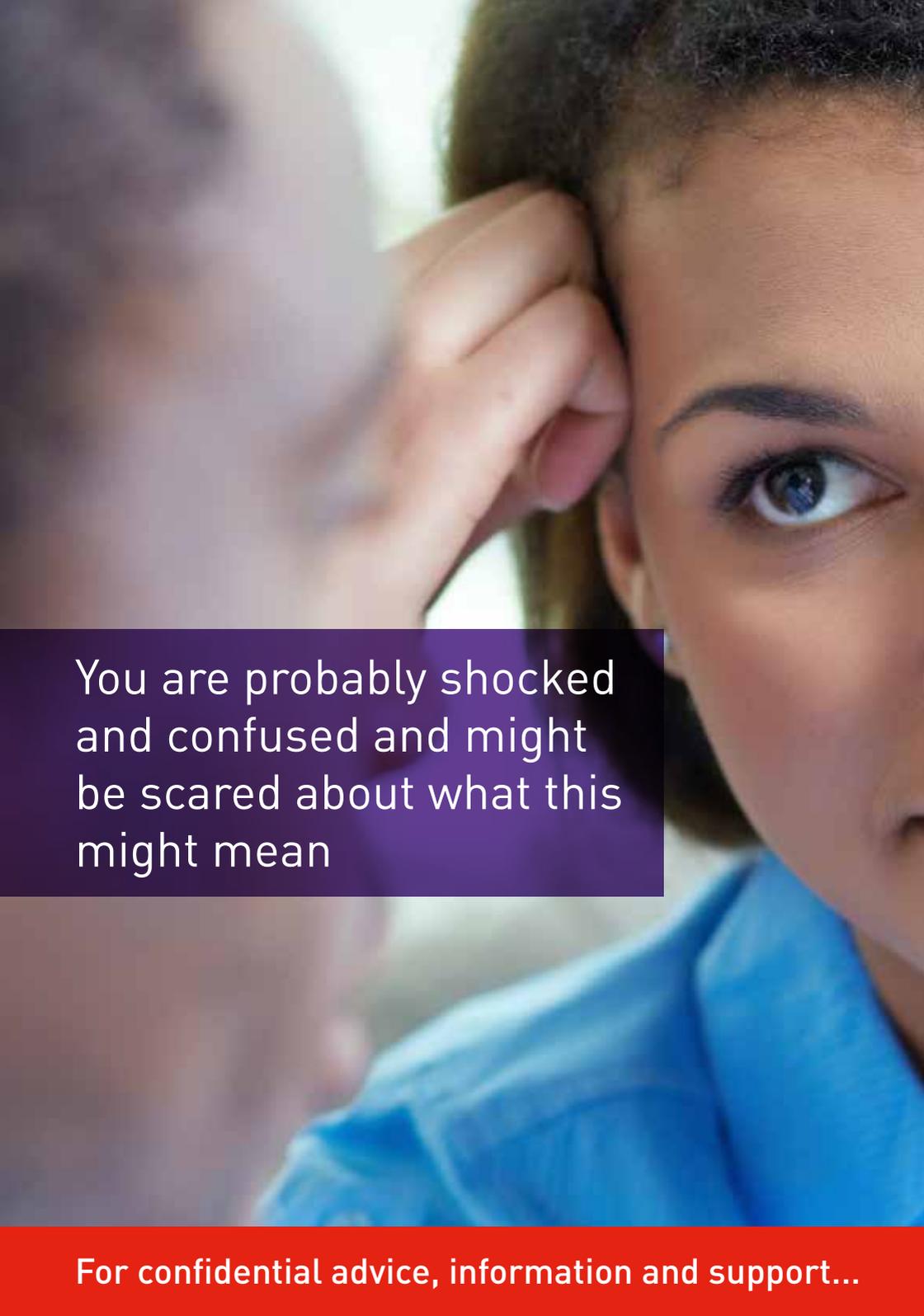


Your first steps to getting the right support  
and advice for relatives and friends

If someone you know  
has been accessing  
sexual images of  
children or talking to  
them sexually online

CONFIDENTIAL FREEPHONE  
HELPLINE 0808 1000 900

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



You are probably shocked  
and confused and might  
be scared about what this  
might mean

For confidential advice, information and support...

## First reactions...

**Someone close to you has just been visited by the police because it is suspected that they have been viewing sexual images of children or talking with them sexually online.** This may be the first time you have come across this type of behaviour, or the first time you have had contact with the criminal justice system. You are likely to be shocked and confused and might be scared about what this could mean. Your first concerns might be about any children at home, whether you can ever trust the person again, and what this will mean for you and the future of your relationship.

**You might also have serious concerns about whether your family can remain together, or if your children might have been at risk.** You might be angry and are likely to have lots of questions about what is going to happen in the immediate or longer-term future. You will almost certainly want the right information to help you think it all through.

## You can talk to someone

The Stop It Now! helpline is run by The Lucy Faithfull Foundation, a leading charity working to prevent the sexual abuse of children. The helpline is staffed by trained operators, who will listen and offer confidential and impartial advice. They offer support and help to the partners, friends or family of people who have been arrested for sexual offences concerning children. They also help and support people under investigation for, or convicted of, accessing sexual images of children or grooming them online. When you call, you don't have to give your name or identifying details if you don't want to.

**This might be the right time for you to call the helpline and start to talk about what help you need**

If someone close to you is under investigation for internet offences, you might feel there is no one you can talk to about it... but you can pick up the phone to someone who understands what you are going through and who is there to listen and support you. **Please call us.**

**Call the Stop It Now! helpline on 0808 1000 900**

## What now?

**The police will have received information that has led to them visiting the person under investigation.** It is likely that they have removed computers, laptops, hard drives, and other internet-enabled devices, such as mobile phones. Photo albums may also be taken for examination. Some of this equipment may belong to you and it will feel difficult seeing it removed, but the police need to examine it in case it has been used for illegal purposes and contains evidence.

**This will take some time to deal with.** The police will investigate any offences that may have been committed, including examining computers and any other devices seized. The length of time this takes will vary, depending on where you live and how busy the police are. This can be frustrating and inconvenient, as well as very worrying at a time when you have much to think about. Ask the investigating officer if you have questions about the process, for example when can you expect to hear from them again or how long will it all take. They will have left contact details with you. If you or someone else in the household needs any of the seized equipment back for work, school or other purposes, you should let the investigating officer know so that this equipment can be dealt with as quickly as possible.

## What about our children?

**If you have children living at home, what has happened is bound to affect them.**

In many circumstances the person under investigation won't be allowed to live with underage children until the police have completed their investigation. When this happens, those left at home face added challenges and uncertainties and so need support and help – which is what we are here for.

Perhaps the children were present when the police visited. Police investigations should have been carried out with sensitivity and care. Understandably children will have questions or worries that need to be addressed. It is important that you think carefully about what to say to them and how to do this, in order to minimise their anxiety and distress. You might want to come up with a very simple answer if the children are quite young. If the children are a bit older, you might feel that they can

**For confidential advice, information and support...**

cope with more information. Helpline staff can help you think these difficult issues through. You can also visit our online Family and Friends Forum and see how other people in a similar situation have faced the challenges you are now facing. Visit: <https://get-help.stopitnow.org.uk/family-and-friends/family-and-friends-forum>

### **In some circumstances, Children's Services may want to talk to you.**

Their first concern is the welfare and safety of any children who have had contact with the person being investigated. They will want to discuss practical steps with you, to ensure that the children are safe.

Sometimes social workers or the police might want to talk directly with any children at home. This is to make sure that they can talk freely about any past or current worries or anything else of concern. You might be worried about possible harm in the past, but also about the possible stress or anxiety caused to them by the present circumstances and being expected to talk with strangers. The most important thing for these professionals is the wellbeing of your children, and they are trained to talk to your children sensitively.

## **Why did this happen?**

**People view sexual images of children and talk sexually to children online for a range of reasons. Sometimes they struggle to explain it to themselves let alone others, including those they are close to.**

While everyone's situation is different, the behaviour is illegal and these are not victimless crimes. Real children are harmed when images are made and viewed, just as they can be by online sexual conversations with someone older than themselves.

**In almost all cases, those close to the person arrested have no idea what they have been doing.** People who commit these offences often find it very hard to admit to themselves that their behaviour is harmful or wrong. Some feel they can't stop and that they are somehow addicted to the behaviour. They rarely consider the risk of getting caught. For some it is a relief when their behaviour is discovered, providing an opportunity for real change, towards a life that is safe and offence-free. They all need help to confront their behaviour, explore the reasons behind it and make the changes that ensure a positive and offence-free future.



**Call the Stop It Now! helpline on 0808 1000 900**

## Will other people find out?

We recognise that you may be worried about others finding out about the illegal online behaviour.

**We suggest that you only tell people you can trust and who need to know, like one or two good friends and family members. They should be people who may be able to offer support and help as well as additional protection to children with whom the person being investigated may be in contact.**

It is possible that the employer of the person under investigation may need to be informed. This will be the case if their work brings them into contact with children or they have access to IT equipment through work.

## What about our relationship and family life?

**You may already have decided that you will continue to offer support to your partner/relative/friend who has been arrested.** On the other hand, you may be wondering if you can ever trust them again and feel betrayed to the point that you are considering ending the relationship (or separating temporarily).

**This is not the type of decision that should be made in haste. You need time to reflect, and perhaps to speak with someone who understands the issues you are facing.** Relationships can and do survive the arrest and possible conviction of a person close to you, although change is needed. It takes time for important and often life-changing decisions to be made, especially when children are involved.

**You are not likely to make the right decisions if you are feeling overwhelmed or confused.** Sometimes the person under investigation will tell you what they think you want to hear. Sometimes they will give you a version of things that puts them in the best possible light. Even when they are being honest, they may not know why they behaved as they did.

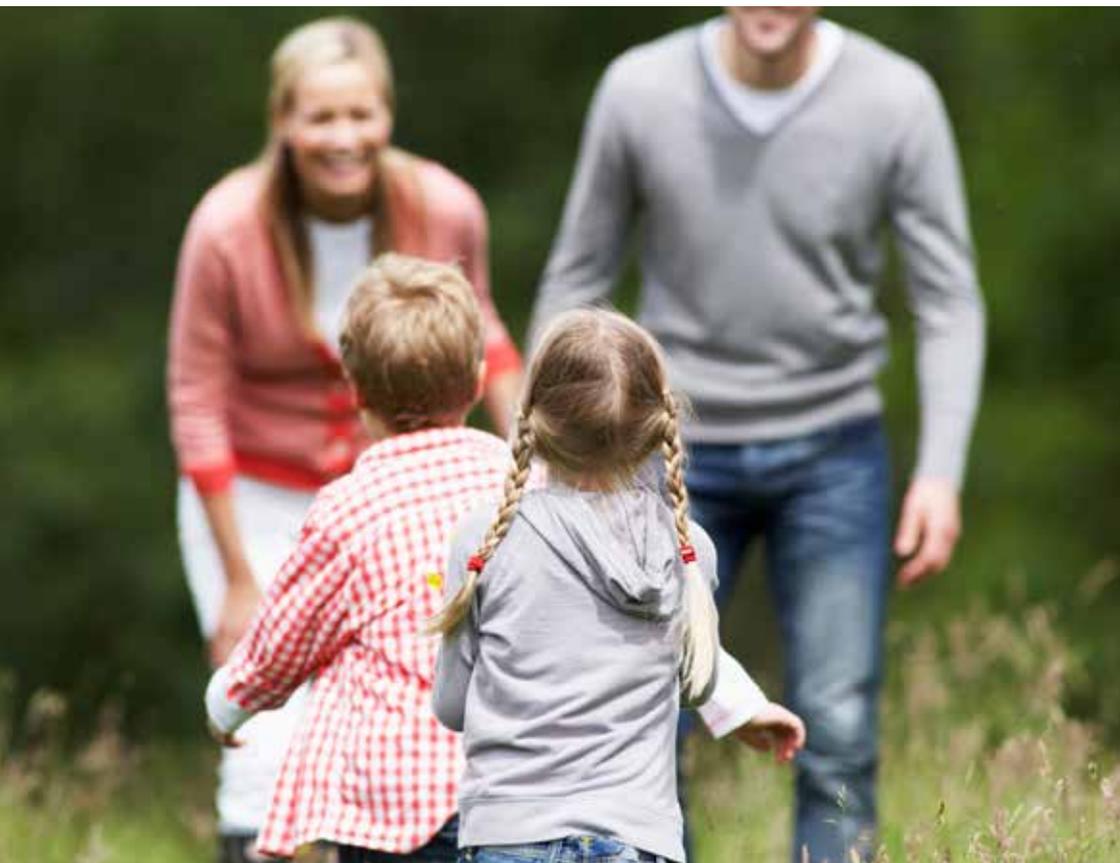
It might seem that this is all too much for you just now. However, talking with someone can assist you in taking calm and considered decisions, over time. The Helpline aims to provide sound information, to reassure and to give you some sense of control.

**Call the Stop It Now! helpline on 0808 1000 900**

## Will things ever get back to normal?

**The arrest of someone for internet offences against children almost always leads to big changes in relationships and in family life, but this doesn't mean that the future needs to be bleak.** This difficult situation can offer the chance of a fresh start with less dishonesty, concealment and risk.

**The start of this process is for everyone concerned to get the help they need.** The person under investigation needs to start to change their thinking and behaviour. We can help with this, but only if the person genuinely sees the need and wants to start to change. You also need to take stock of things and learn more about what has happened so that you can make the necessary changes to your life.



Visit [stopitnow.org.uk](https://stopitnow.org.uk)

# What should I do now?

**The first thing you should do is to call the Stop It Now! helpline.**

You might be feeling angry, shocked, confused or even bewildered at what has happened but you don't have to deal with this alone.

**Our highly experienced helpline operators can give you practical advice and talk you through the complicated and difficult issues that you are facing right now.** They will be able to help with the questions you will have about the behaviour of your partner or family member.

**Our helpline operators will also be able to give you the information and advice you will need regarding the criminal justice system process and the involvement of children's services, if you have children.** Our operators will also give you the support you need to get through this difficult time in your life.

**The helpline is free and confidential.** When you call, you don't have to give any identifying information such as your family name, address or telephone number.

**If you'd rather not call, you can contact us through our confidential messaging service – details can be found on our website: [stopitnow.org.uk](http://stopitnow.org.uk)**

Your email address will not be displayed when you email, making the service confidential. Due to high demand, we can't offer an immediate response by email. If your enquiry is more urgent, please call the helpline.

You will also find much more information about all of the issues covered in this leaflet on our websites: [stopitnow.org.uk](http://stopitnow.org.uk) and [parentsprotect.co.uk](http://parentsprotect.co.uk)

You can see how others have come through these and other issues on our online Families and Friends Forum. Visit:

<https://get-help.stopitnow.org.uk/family-and-friends/family-and-friends-forum>

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**For confidential advice, information and support**