

Wednesday, 24 January 2018

Police forces across North West England join child protection charity in campaign to tackle indecent images of children

Campaign marks multi-agency approach to tackling demand for sexual images of children online

Police forces from Lancashire, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Cumbria and North Wales are today joining forces with a leading child protection charity to launch a campaign to tackle growing demand for sexual images of children online.

The regional campaign represents a multi-agency approach to tackling the growing demand for sexually explicit images of children. It will bring together robust law enforcement work with work already being undertaken by UK child protection charity, [The Lucy Faithfull Foundation](#) (1).

The charity works to prevent people from viewing such illegal material in the first place; and to get them to stop if they have already started. It directs offenders to the charity's [Stop it Now! Get Help website](#) that hosts online self-help resources, as well as the [Stop it Now! confidential helpline](#) (0808 1000 900) where they can get help to address their online behaviour and stop looking at these harmful and illegal images.

Viewing and sharing indecent images of children online is a serious and growing problem. In 2013 the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) estimated that as many as 50,000 individuals in the UK were involved in downloading or sharing sexual images of children (2). Police estimate that the number of offenders has grown since then. In a BBC TV interview in October 2016, National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Lead for Child Protection, Chief Constable Simon Bailey, said that at least 100,000 people across the UK were now regularly viewing online sexual images of children.

Police have been working extensively to detect and prosecute people downloading and sharing sexual images of children online.

The joint campaign launched today will use 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.

The number of people in North West England already seeking help from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation is significant. In 2017 3,507 people from the North West, including North Wales, visited the charity's online self-help resources or called the confidential helpline to get help with their own viewing of sexually explicit images of children, or that of a loved one.

The campaign follows similar activity undertaken in other parts of the UK by the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. A campaign, run in partnership with Police Scotland, resulted in a 72% increase in the number of people from Edinburgh, East and West Lothian and the Borders seeking help to address their online behaviour, or that of another (3). It is intended that the campaign being launched today will have a similar effect in the North West by directing more people towards help to stop looking at harmful images.

Jo Edwards, head of serious crime at Lancashire Constabulary, said:

“Today marks the start of the North West region’s work with Lucy Faithfull Foundation which sees each of our six North West forces coming together with the foundation to help prevent online offending against children, including the sharing and viewing of indecent images.

“The advancement in technology, accessibility to indecent images of children and the presumption of anonymity whilst offending online has seen an increase in the number of people viewing and sharing indecent images of children and seeking to use the internet to engage with children for sexual purposes. This type of offending against some of our most vulnerable members of our communities, our children, is unacceptable, behind every image or engagement is a child.

“As a police service we have a duty to protect children from harm and to deter individuals from committing these types of horrific offences and we will continue to seek to identify and convict those individuals who wish to share indecent images and engage with children online for sexual gratification.

“But we also recognise the need to educate and stop individuals from continuing to offend, or prevent individuals from offending in the first place.

“Our partnership with the Lucy Faithfull Foundation plays a key role in this, providing an online space in which to signpost individuals who are offending or about to offend, to recognise the consequences of their actions and to seek support. Lucy Faithfull Foundation have worked closely with a number of other police forces to successfully divert and prevent offending behaviour, but also support families of offenders in dealing with the wider impact of such offending. I hope that through today’s launch ‘The Stop it Now’ campaign will continue to protect many more children, and reduce offending through the prevention of online offending within the North West region.”

Donald Findlater, child sexual abuse prevention expert and spokesperson for The Lucy Faithfull Foundation, said:

“Too many people, especially men across all age groups, seem to think it is okay to view sexual images of under 18s online. It is not. Not only is it illegal, it also causes great harm - primarily to the children in the images - but also to the offenders themselves.

“Alongside police activity in arresting more and more offenders, the Lucy Faithfull Foundation has been working over these last two years to develop its own response and resources. Whether arrested or not, we want online offenders to stop their illegal behaviour and to stay stopped. Our specialist staff have helped thousands to do this over recent years. We have also helped thousands more family members come to terms with the fact that someone they know and love has engaged in this behaviour and get help to tackle the problem.”

Ends

For further information, and to discuss interview opportunities with a spokesperson from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, or from TITAN 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.

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 19 million times, is available [here](#).

(1) The Lucy Faithfull Foundation's staff includes former probation officers, social workers, psychologists and ex-police officers. They help prevent children from being sexually abused by working with victims, families and sex offenders themselves. The charity also runs [Stop it Now!](#) – a public project that enables adults to play their part in preventing the sexual abuse of children through education, training, online resources and a confidential Helpline.

(2) This estimate was based on file sharing activity alone, and did not include open web searches or activity in the dark net. The 50,000 figure comes from the CEOP threat assessment published in 2013, shortly before CEOP became a Command of the National Crime Agency. It should be noted that this is an estimate based on available information and intelligence analysis at the time. The relevant paragraph reads: "Although it is clearly not possible to establish a precise figure, CEOP estimates that there were around 50,000 individuals in the UK involved in downloading and sharing IIOC during 2012." The 50,000 figure was a hypothecated total number based on different data sources and was not a list of individuals. The most recent NCA threat assessment covering child sexual exploitation and abuse can be found [here](#).

(3) In the three months before the launch of the campaign in June 2017, 586 people from Scotland contacted the Stop it Now! Get Help website and confidential helpline for help with either their own online behaviour, or that of another. In the three months following launch of the campaign, this number had jumped to 1,008 – an increase of 72%.

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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#stopitnow

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