



**UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 00:01 ON MONDAY 21 MAY 2012**

**Media Invite – Research publication, Monday May 21, 2012  
2.30pm at Oriel, The Senedd, Cardiff Bay**

## **Research shows need for more coordination to prevent child sexual abuse**

**(May 21, 2012)** Wales's only national campaign dedicated solely to preventing child sexual abuse is calling for an All Wales Strategy on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention to be developed and implemented by the Welsh Government.

Research published today (May 21) by Stop it Now! Wales suggests that more children could be protected from sexual harm if there was a strategy in place that took a public health approach to prevention and prompted more coordinated service provision and prevention efforts.

The research involved in-depth interviews with over 100 individuals across Wales who had relevant insights and perspectives to offer. These included young people, victims of sexual abuse, adults who had sexually abused children and young people in the past, parents and carers and multi-agency professionals such as the police, social workers and education professionals.

Using the research findings, Stop! Wales has begun to populate a comprehensive framework for the prevention of child sexual abuse, outlining key activities and services that contributors identified as essential in Wales to keeping our children safe.

Some existing activities and services require development or expansion. Other activities are not currently being delivered but have been identified as crucially needed in Wales.

An All Wales Strategy on Child Sexual Abuse Prevention would aim to:

- increase public awareness of the scale, nature and consequences of child sexual abuse in Wales
- facilitate the development and implementation of a comprehensive, co-ordinated response to the sexual abuse of children, both nationally and locally, by including work with all priority target groups
- increase the long term effectiveness and impact of work currently on-going to tackle the sexual abuse of children in Wales
- address the shortage in services and resources required to achieve prevention before sexual abuse occurs

- ensure all aspect of prevention activities are evaluated in order to inform future developments

**Gwenda Thomas, Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services, said:**

“It is vital that all those who care for children are alert to the signs of abuse and that they know where they can seek help and advice.

“Fear and uncertainty can, so often, stop people from taking action to prevent abuse in the first instance and we need to instil people with the confidence to speak out.

“I know that raising the awareness of child sexual abuse is not easy and I value the responsive and sensitive approach Stop it Now! Wales has taken to address this issue in Wales.”

**Stop it Now! Wales National Campaign Manager, Rebecca Morgan said:**

“The problem of sexual abuse is a hidden problem – out of 600,000 children in Wales only 225 are on the child protection register for being at risk of sexual abuse as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011, yet we know at least one in ten children and young people are affected by it.

“We must do more to protect our children and implementing a national strategy to maximise the effectiveness and impact of the preventative work that is going on would be a major step forward.”

**Gaynor Mckeown, Locality Director for Victim Support Central England and Wales said:**

"Offences against children must stop. Detection of offenders is crucial but more importantly is the prevention of the abuse in the first place.

“Stop it Now! Wales ensures that both parents and professionals are better equipped to safeguard children and young people by raising awareness around potential risk, and providing a mechanism to access support. Victim Support is delighted to be working in partnership with Stop it Now! Wales, to reduce the number of child victims in the future.”

During the research:

**A 19-year-old said:**

“To prevent child sexual abuse, my message to adults would be to please talk more openly about it. Educate yourselves and young people about the signs of grooming behaviour.

“Take away the guilt that it could be the child or other family member’s fault. Stop adults holding back from speaking out about their concerns.

To perpetrators I would say to please think about the consequences of your actions before you decide to do this to a child.

“And please listen to young people and children who have been sexually abused. Take them seriously. Hear their voices and listen.”

**A Child and Family Advocate at a SARC in Wales said:**

“We need better education in schools particularly with students with additional needs. This needs to include basic sex education, relationships, self-esteem and individual work.”

**A Health Professional with Cwm Taf Local Health Board said:**

“Health visitors could play a key proactive role in empowering new parents, particularly if those parents have already been identified as vulnerable - this in turn would allow families to develop positive parenting skills their own, in their own home.”

**An adult who had sexually abused a child, North Wales said:**

“Men need somewhere that they can go to get support and friendship when they are in emotional crisis.”

**A Social Worker in North Wales said:**

“The emotional and psychological needs of young people who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviour are not considered – the focus is on the crime and risk and not on supporting that young person to address their needs.”

-ENDS-

**Notes to Editors:**

**1. Media are invited to attend the official launch of the report at Stop it Now!’s 3rd Anniversary celebration event taking place on Monday, May 21 at 2.30pm at Oriel, The Senedd, Cardiff Bay.**

The event will be attended by Gwenda Thomas AM Deputy Minister for Children and Social Services and speakers will include Gwenda Thomas AM, David Hopkins, Chair of Stop it Now! Wales and retired Director of Education, Caerphilly County Council, Donald Findlater, Director of Stop it Now! UK & Ireland, Linda Grace, Chair of Trustees, Jig So Children’s Centre, Cardigan, Parents who have completed the Parents Protect! Plus course, Rebecca Morgan, Stop it Now! Wales National Campaign Manager.

2. For further information, interviews and copies of the report please contact Deborah Denis on 07540 690 315 or [ddenis@lucyfaithfull.org.uk](mailto:ddenis@lucyfaithfull.org.uk).

3. Stop it Now! Wales 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 Stop it Now! Helpline is funded by the Public Protection and Mental Health Group in the National Offender Management Service of the Ministry of Justice, Lucy Faithfull Foundation, charitable trusts and donors. Stop it Now! Wales is supported by the Welsh Government. [www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk).