



Working to Protect Children



South East police forces join child protection charity in campaign to tackle indecent images of children

- **Stop It Now! helpline and website saw 69% increase in contact from South East between 2016-2018**
- **Campaign marks multi-agency approach to tackling demand for sexual images of children online**

Today, police forces across the South East (Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Thames Valley) are coming together to support a leading child protection charity around the launch of their 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](#) (2) and their [Stop It Now! deterrence campaign](#).

The number of people already seeking help from Stop It Now! is significant. In 2018, 383 people from the South East called the Stop It Now! helpline to seek help in relation to illegal online sexual behaviour, and the online self-help resources had 4,393 users from the South East. This represents a 69% increase in contact to the campaign from the South East since 2016, the first full year of the deterrence campaign.

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. Through the Stop It Now! deterrence campaign, confidential helpline (0808 1000 900) and [website](#), it helps people address their online behaviour and stop looking at these harmful and illegal images. The Stop It Now! helpline recently received a £600,000 funding boost from the Home Office.

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 (3). Police estimate that the number of offenders has grown since then. In 2018 the National Crime Agency estimated the figure to be 80,000 (4).

Police have been working extensively to detect and prosecute people downloading and sharing sexual images of children online. The four forces involved in the campaign have specialist teams who are actively targeting those who are viewing, sharing and making indecent images of children. The 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 police activity across the South East 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 work follows similar activity undertaken in other parts of the UK by The Lucy Faithfull Foundation's Stop It Now! campaign. When run in partnership with police forces in the North West, a similar campaign resulted in a threefold increase in the number of people from the region seeking help to address their online behaviour, or that of another. It is intended that the campaign being launched today will have a similar effect in the South East by directing more people towards help to stop looking at harmful images.

Donald Findlater, Director of the Stop It Now! helpline, 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 to the children in the images. Preventing the viewing of these images protects children.

“Alongside the police arresting more and more offenders, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation has been working to help online offenders to stop their illegal behaviour and to stay stopped, whether they've been arrested or not. Every offender who stops, stops harming children. Our specialist staff have helped thousands over recent years. We've also helped thousands more family members come to terms with the fact that someone they know and love has engaged in this behaviour, getting them help to tackle the problem.”

Jon Savell, Temporary Assistant Chief Constable for Surrey Police said:

“I think it's really important that we support the Stop It Now! Campaign, which highlights just how serious an offence downloading or sharing indecent images of children online is. By helping people address their online behaviour, deterring them from viewing abusive images of those under the age of 18, the campaign will assist in protecting children from harm, which is an absolute priority for us. The campaign also offers advice and support for people who suspect, or know of, others who are accessing indecent images of children online.

“In Force, we have a specialist Paedophile Online Investigation Team that will continue to pursue and deal robustly with offenders of this serious offence.”

Detective Chief Inspector Richard Bates of the Sussex Police Public Protection Command said:

"We are fully supporting the 'Stop It Now' campaign because we are talking here about images depicting serious child abuse, and the circulation of the images around the Internet perpetuates and encourages that abuse.

"The experienced investigators in our specialist Paedophile Online Investigation Team (POLIT) target suspects on an intelligence-led basis every day and we will robustly identify and bring to justice such people wherever possible.

"The 'Stop It Now' campaign is an important reminder that there are ways in people can get help to address their behaviour before my team come knocking at the door."

Detective Inspector, Laura MacInnes from Thames Valley Police, added:

"The viewing of abusive images of children online is a very serious crime which has a devastating impact on the lives of those involved – the offenders, their friends and families and most importantly, the young victims."

"We are pleased to be able to support this important campaign which aims to prevent the viewing or distribution of these images and highlight the serious consequences for those who commit these offences. Not only will you face prosecution but you may end up on the Sex Offenders Register which may have the impact of restricting where you live, the type of work you can do and affect your current and future relationships, including what access you have to your children. The consequences are serious and endless.

"We all have a responsibility for safeguarding our young people from harm so if you are concerned about the behaviour of someone you know please encourage them to seek help from the Lucy Faithful Foundation or if you believe there is an immediate risk of harm to a child, please report it to the police on 999."

John, an internet offender who called the helpline, said:

"It can be intimidating to think of calling the Stop It Now! helpline, but I'd strongly encourage anyone who has any concerns about their viewing of online sexual images to do it. If something feels wrong, it most probably is and help is available.

"It's unfortunate that the first I heard of the Stop It Now helpline was from the police – getting help from them sooner could have stopped the damage I did to my own life, my family and to children harmed as my offending behaviour progressed.

"That knock at the door on the day of my arrest felt like the worst day of my life and possibly even the end of it. I still have a lot of work ahead of me, but for the first time in over a decade I feel like I have a future that is worth working towards, and I can't imagine getting to this stage without the support from the Stop It Now! helpline."

-Ends-

For further information, and to discuss interview opportunities with a spokesperson from The Lucy Faithfull Foundation please contact:

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Notes to Editor:

	Website 2016	Callers 2016	TOTAL	Website 2018	Callers 2018	TOTAL	Year on year increase %
			2016			2018	
Surrey	483	97	580	949	101	1050	81%
Sussex	479	51	530	1008	78	1086	105%
TVP	1069	106	1175	1741	107	1848	57%
Kent	449	92	541	695	97	792	46%
South East TOTAL	2480	346	2826	4393	383	4776	69%

Key to data:

*website value is the number of users for the Stop It Now! Get Help website, as returned by Google Analytics.

*Helpline value is the number of people who called the Stop It Now! helpline with either concerns about their own online behaviour, or that of a loved one.

*Year on Year increase – is the percentage increase in the number of people contacting the Stop It Now! helpline and website with concerns about their online behaviour in 2018, or that of a loved one, compared to the number in 2016 (the first full year of the campaign).

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](#).

(1) Police forces involved: Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Thames Valley

(2) 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.

(3) 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](#).

(4) <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/tackling-child-sexual-exploitation-online>

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; front-line workers and professionals. It also runs the Stop it Now! campaign and helpline (0808 1000 900).

lucyfaithfull.org.uk

stopitnow.org.uk

parentsprotect.co.uk

About Stop It Now! UK and Ireland

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

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

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