

Tuesday 4 December 2018

Number of people in the South West accessing help to cut viewing of online sexual images of children increases by 28%

The increase follows a major public awareness campaign across the region that targeted people viewing the images as well as the general public.

In the six months between August 2017 and February 2018, **1,085** people from the South West contacted Stop it Now! (*Stop it Now! is a child sexual abuse prevention project run by child protection charity The Lucy Faithfull Foundation*), seeking help for either their own online sexual behaviour or for someone they knew. In the following six month period that figure had jumped to **1,390**, a rise of 28%. People seeking support were able to access it via specialist self-help online resources on the [Stop it Now! Get Help website](#) or via the confidential and anonymous [Stop it Now! Helpline](#) (0808 1000 900).

The **public awareness campaign launched by Stop it Now! in February this year** was supported by the South West Regional Organised Crime Unit (SW ROCU), and police forces in Avon and Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, Wiltshire, Gloucestershire and Dorset.

It used press, social media and advertising to reach large numbers of people in the South West 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 South 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 via the Stop it Now! Helpline and the Stop it Now! Get Help website.

The SW ROCU also coordinated a major conference in Taunton in May. It brought together police, social workers, local authorities and other frontline child safeguarding professionals to discuss strategies for further deterrence and prevention work across the region.

Reflecting on the success of police co-operation with Stop it Now! in the South West so far, Director of the Stop it Now! Helpline, Donald Findlater, said:

“We’re delighted with the success of the campaign so far, with over 200 people from the South West seeking help with online sexual behaviour towards children every month. Mostly these are men wanting help to stop viewing sexual images of children. But a growing number of wives, partners and parents are getting in contact because of concerns about the online sexual behaviour of someone they love.

“But there will be hundreds more people in the South-West continuing to view sexual images of children online. Just as there are thousands more wives, partners and parents who are, or who should be, worried about the online behaviour of someone they love.

“People engaged in this behaviour need to be clear that sexual images of children are illegal, that children are harmed when they are made, and also every time they are viewed. Offenders put at risk everything they take for granted or have worked hard to achieve – family, friends, work, their liberty. The Stop it Now! Helpline offers them a confidential place to get help so their illegal online behaviour stops and stays stopped. Getting help takes just a phone call.”

Regional Lead for Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, Assistant Chief Constable Damian Kearney, said:

“Every time a sexual image of a child is viewed, that child is re-victimised and further demand is created. It is vital, then, that we work closely with partners and use all available resources to protect children and, wherever possible, prevent offending.

“The number of people accessing help, whether for themselves or someone they know, shows the value of services like Stop it Now! in helping people to stop their behaviour.”

Ends

For further information, and to discuss interview opportunities with a spokesperson from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, or from the South West Regional Organised Crime Unit, please contact:

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Notes to Editor:

Forces participating in the campaign across the South West:

Avon and Somerset, Devon and Cornwall, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Dorset.

Table 1. Comparison of website and Helpline visitor/caller volumes before and after Stop it Now! campaign launched

	Helpline pre-launch	Website pre-launch	Pre-launch total (Helpline and website)	Helpline post-launch	Website post-launch	Post Launch totals (helpline and website)	Pre and post launch totals: +/-
Avon and Somerset (incl Bristol)	37	412	449	27	540	567	+26%
Devon and Cornwall	14	261	275	34	298	332	+21%
Wiltshire	16	20	36	16	55	71	+97%
Dorset	12	136	148	6	206	212	+43%
Gloucestershire	8	168	176	7	199	206	+17%
South West (county not given)	1	n/a	1	2	n/a	2	+100%
South West TOTAL	88	997	1085	92	1298	1390	+28%

Pre-launch period: 27 August 2017 – 26 February 2018; Post-launch period: 27 February 2018 – 26 August 2018

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](#).

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 more than 35,000 callers and emailers, and 55% of enquiries 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>