



What is Stop it Now?

Child sexual abuse is a serious problem affecting large numbers of our children and young people. With help, many abused children can overcome their experiences, although all of them are profoundly affected for the rest of their lives. But the harm caused is preventable - adults who care for children, and even those who harm them, can act now to stop sexual abuse.

Abuse thrives in an atmosphere of secrecy and taboo. Stop it Now! UK & Ireland is a major national and local campaign that aims to stop child sexual abuse by encouraging abusers and potential abusers to seek help and by giving adults the information they need to protect children effectively.

Stop it Now! believes that sexual abuse is a preventable public health problem and challenges adults to create a society that no longer tolerates the sexual abuse of children.

Why do we need Stop it Now?

In spite of increased awareness, child sexual abuse remains a serious public health issue. The latest research reports that 1 in 6 children are sexually abused before they reach the age of 16. The costs are enormous, both to individuals who suffer the trauma of abuse and to their families and communities.

Contrary to popular belief, research shows that children are far more likely to be abused by someone they know than by a stranger. The most common abuser is a member of the child's family or a friend or neighbour. In this situation, children are particularly powerless to protect themselves. Few people realize that many children are abused by older children or adolescents; some of these young people have themselves been abused.

Three quarters of children who are abused do not tell anyone about it and many keep their secret all their lives. Stop it Now! aims to break the walls of silence and give adults the confidence to take action to protect children.

Stop it Now! believes that all adults must take responsibility for protecting children as early as possible - preferably before abuse happens. In order to do this they need to be able to recognise the signs of abuse and understand how abusers behave.

Sex offenders are not monsters, however abhorrent their behaviour, and few are the predatory violent offenders commonly portrayed in the media. Adults who abuse children are responsible for their behaviour and can choose to stop.

Stop it Now! presents a positive approach to this problem that promotes understanding and responsible action, challenging abusers or those thinking about abusing a child to seek help now.

Who is Stop it Now! for?

As well as raising general awareness about sexual abuse, the Stop it Now! UK & Ireland campaign is aimed at these key groups:

Adults who have abused or are thinking about abusing a child; to encourage them to recognise their behaviour as abusive and to seek help to change

Family and friends of abusers; to help them recognise the signs of abusive behaviour and seek advice about what action to take

Parents of children and young people who sexually abuse other children; to give them information about the warning signs and when to seek help

What does Stop it Now! do?

Stop it Now! UK & Ireland is developing a network of local projects across the UK. These projects are based on partnerships between the local community and the agencies that work to protect children, including police, probation, social services, health, housing, voluntary agencies and the courts.

The services delivered by the projects are tailored to local needs and include these key elements:

Media campaigns to raise awareness of child sexual abuse and how communities and families can protect children

Information materials explaining child sexual abuse, how to recognise it and how to seek help.

Public meetings to promote discussion about child protection and the role of individuals and the community.

The local projects are supported by a national telephone helpline, offering advice and support to adults who suspect that someone they know presents a risk to a child and to those seeking help to stop their own abusive thoughts and behaviour

Stop it Now! is also working with politicians and policy makers at national level to promote a wider understanding of child sexual abuse as a preventable public health issue and to increase the services available to the victims and survivors of abuse and to abusers.

Stop it Now! believes that abuse occurs across all communities and social groups and aims to make its campaigns and activities accessible and appropriate to the needs of all sections of the community

Does Stop it Now! work?

Projects in the USA have demonstrated that this approach works. In one area alone, 25 abusers contacted the police and entered treatment programmes. The campaign also recorded a large increase in the number of people able to recognise child sexual abuse and to do something about it.

In the United Kingdom, we are evaluating the effectiveness of the programme. Already hundreds of people have contacted the helpline. A third of these calls are from adults who are sexually attracted to children and seeking help to prevent them abusing a child and the majority are from adults worried about someone they know.

Contrary to popular belief, sex offending is treatable. Research indicates that offenders who have been through an accredited treatment programme are significantly less likely to re-offend.

Stop it Now! calls on anyone who has sexually abused a child, or who is thinking about doing so to contact our Helpline as a first step to finding help.

What can you do to help?

Stop it Now! UK & Ireland is keen to develop its network of local projects. If you are interested in contributing to the development of a project in your area, please contact the national co-ordinator at the address overleaf.

**If you suspect that someone you know is sexually abusing a child
or if you are worried about your own thoughts or behaviour
towards children, ring the
Stop it Now! Helpline 0808 1000 900**

**If you have concerns about the safety of a child
or suspect that they are being abuse,
please contact the NSPCC Child Protection Helpline (0808 800 5000)
or the police or social services.**