

Inform UK



Type of intervention



Individual Work

Group Work

Target group/s, level/s of prevention and sub-group/s:

Tertiary prevention

Communities / Families

Young Adults (18-20 Years), Adults (21 Years +) | Male & Female | Internet Related Only | Individual Work, Group Work | English

Target population

Wives, partners, adult family members and friends of people who have been arrested, cautioned or convicted in connection with accessing indecent images of children on the internet.

Delivery organisation

This programme is delivered by child protection charity, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation, UK.

Mode and context of delivery

The course is delivered on both a group work and individual basis. Group work courses are facilitated by one or two staff, depending on the size of the group (anything from 3-6 participants). Individual and partner courses are also offered, delivered by a single practitioner. Although almost all courses take place in a face to face setting, adapted individual/partner courses can be offered by telephone both within the UK and internationally. Groupwork courses run in a number of locations in the UK. Individual course delivery is geographically flexible, depending on the location of practitioners and their ability to travel to deliver the course or the ability of participants to travel to a suitable venue.

Level/Nature of staff expertise required

Staff are drawn from a wide range of child protection backgrounds and include those with teaching and counselling skills and practitioners with experience in the police, social services and the probation service. Sessional staff with relevant experience are also employed, to whom training is provided. The ability to listen, to deliver information effectively and to demonstrate empathy is especially important, in accordance with the aims and objectives of the course.

Intensity/extent of engagement with target group(s)

Groupwork Course – runs for 5 evening sessions, once a week, of 2.25 hours each. Sessions are timed to coincide with Inform Plus* courses taking place in the same area/location as some family members may be attending this.

(*A course run by The Lucy Faithfull Foundation for adults arrested, cautioned or convicted for internet-related sexual offences against children.)

Individual Courses – tailored to meet the needs of participants, in prior consultation with the course facilitator. Typically, a course comprises 3 x 2 hour sessions and usually takes place during office hours and takes into account as much as possible the participant's own circumstances, including their work commitments and child care needs.

Participants usually access the course via the Stop it Now! Helpline or via The Lucy Faithfull Foundation's Internet Services Line. They may have received information from the police, social services, family members or via a website search. Participants will usually have one or more telephone conversations with a course facilitator, together with a face to face meeting of 1.5 hours duration, prior to the start of the course. This is so that the facilitator can gain as much insight as possible into the circumstances of the participant and so that support and information may be offered prior to the start of the course. Although all the elements of the groupwork course are covered in the individual course, the ability to be flexible means that special emphasis can be given, if necessary, to specific elements. Ongoing support and information is offered via the Stop it Now! Helpline both prior to and following the Inform course.

Description of intervention

The aims of the Inform course are, broadly speaking, to provide information about all aspects of internet sexual offending against children and to offer support to partners, family members and friends of those arrested for or convicted of these offences. Through the work of the Stop it Now! Helpline, facilitators have become aware not only of the increasing need for wives, partners and other family members/friends of internet offenders for information, but also for emotional support, as they struggle to make sense of the emotional and practical consequences of their loved one's offending and of the (typically lengthy) legal process that it triggers. Participation is usually voluntary, but may be a requirement of Children's Services in some instances. The group aims are:

- To dispel myths about internet offending and to provide participants with sound, factual knowledge relevant to the person's online behaviour.
- To explore the issues of motivation to begin to offend and to continue to do so, using clinical models to discuss how pro-offending thinking becomes illegal internet use and how the behaviour often becomes repetitive or may escalate, often over a long period of time. Risk issues associated with this, both online and offline.
- To consider practical issues arising from the legal process, including sentencing outcomes, the requirements and implications of being on the Sex Offenders Register and involvement with statutory child protection agencies.
- To provide information and help with practical strategies to begin to plan for the future, including ongoing risk management and child protection, both online and offline. Provide resources to enable participants to do this.
- To offer ongoing emotional support to help to alleviate feelings of isolation and stress in attendees.
- To enhance recovery by all parties.

Course Content:

5 sessions of 2.25 hours:

- Session 1: Introduction to the group; aims and objectives; ground rules and confidentiality; ‘hopes and fears’/issues; the use of language in the public arena; the role of the Internet in sexual offending against children; motivation to offend.
- Session 2: The Legal Process (Part 1) - what happens prior to a sentence being handed down; the Finkelhor (‘Hurdles’) model, used to illustrate how pro-offending thinking becomes illegal internet use.
- Session 3: The Legal Process (Part 2) - what happens post-sentence, including sex offender registration, treatment programmes, sex offender prevention orders, the role of the National Offender Management Service and of Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA); implications for the wider family. Introduction to Risk Issues, including the possibility of repetition and/or escalation, using the Cyber-Offending Model.
- Session 4: Risk management and practical tools for safe internet use in the future; resources for parents to use with their children; the “*Good Lives*” model.
- Session 5: Time to reflect; discussion through themes and questions relevant to the particular group arising from the course; future support, including signposting to relevant organisations and websites which might assist participants practically and emotionally as they go forward; course evaluation.

Both the group and individual courses aim to provide a balance between information-giving and support. Both make provision for plenty of time to be included for participants to talk about what has happened and the usually devastating effects that internet offending has, emotionally and practically, on family members and others close to the offender, including their children. Ongoing support, both from the Helpline and via one another, is encouraged and has been shown to be very valuable, often for months or years after the course has finished. The course is designed to be flexible and the format of the individual course in particular allows for it to be tailored to the specific needs of participants. There are some common elements with the Inform+ course, which helps to promote a greater understanding of issues relating to offending of this nature and to provide the vocabulary and framework needed to begin to facilitate meaningful communication between the offender and family members, or others close to him.

Evaluation

Positive feedback from group members and individuals indicates that the course consistently achieves its objectives of providing sound information and emotional and practical support to participants, in both group and individual settings. Internal evaluation takes place directly after the completion of each course, with a follow-up evaluation currently being planned, designed to obtain participants’ views some six months after course completion. As yet, no formal evaluation of the Inform course has been undertaken.

Comments from participants include:

“The course has helped me emotionally understand my son’s behaviour.”

"It was our first and only resource. It gave constructive advice and information. It equipped us with strategies to cope with the present and the future."

References

<http://www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk/inform.htm>

Contact details

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