

The Inform Young People Programme (Inform YP) UK



Type of intervention



Individualised Work

Group Work

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

(Potential)
Offenders

Secondary prevention

Young People (12-17 Years), Young Adults (18-20 Years), Adults (21 Years +) | Male & Female
| Individualised Work, Group Work | Internet Related Only | English

(Potential)
Offenders

Tertiary prevention

Young People (12-17 Years), Young Adults (18-20 Years), Adults (21 Years +) | Male & Female
| Individualised Work, Group Work | Internet Related Only | English

**Communities
/ Families**

Secondary prevention

Young People (12-17 Years), Young Adults (18-20 Years), Adults (21 Years +) | Male & Female
| Individualised Work, Group Work | Internet Related Only | English

**Communities
/ Families**

Tertiary prevention

Young People (12-17 Years), Young Adults (18-20 Years), Adults (21 Years +) | Male & Female
| Individualised Work, Group Work | Internet Related Only | English

Target population

Children and young people aged approximately 13 to 21 years, with concerning and/or illegal sexual behaviour on the Internet. Examples include children and young people who are:

- under criminal investigation as a result of their Internet use, e.g. possession or distribution of illegal sexual material
- accessing adult pornography to excess or compulsively
- engaged in risk-taking sexual activities online
- involved in 'sexting' i.e. sharing sexually explicit images of themselves and others

Delivery organisation (e.g. LFF UK, Prison Service of England and Wales)

This programme is delivered by the child protection charity, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation (LFF), UK.

Mode and context of delivery

Children and young people can refer themselves, usually via the Stop it Now! Helpline (a national helpline managed by LFF) or contact might be initiated by their parent/carer. Referrals are also made by professionals e.g. police officer, social worker, teacher or youth worker etc.

An initial appointment is structured to allow time to be spent with the child/young person alone, and if appropriate, with their parent(s)/carer(s) alone, as well as together as a group. Thereafter, the child/young person is offered a further 1 to 5 individual sessions of work, depending on their need. Their parent(s)/carer(s) are invited to attend the final session as a means of sharing the child/young person's learning and strategies for safe and responsible behaviour in the future. Telephone contact and support is available between sessions, either via the Stop it Now! Helpline or directly with the LFF practitioner.

Level/Nature of staff expertise required (e.g. professional background)

LFF staff who deliver the programme have: (1) an understanding of internet-related sexual offending and problematic online behaviour; (2) experience of working with young people and their parents/carers; (3) knowledge of the criminal justice system and safeguarding procedures. They have a range of professional backgrounds e.g. psychologists, probation officers, social workers, but qualifications are viewed as less important than their level of experience, knowledge and ability to engage with this age group.

Intensity/extent of engagement with target group(s)

Appointments are arranged to fit in with the child/young person's other commitments (e.g. school, education, employment) but typically occur weekly. As noted above, the child/young person and/or their parent(s)/carer(s) are able to contact LFF staff between sessions. This is often necessary as the first approach for help and support may be made at a crisis point for the child/young person and their family. The helpline remains available to service users at the end of the intervention.

Description of intervention

Inform YP is not a comprehensive treatment programme. It is a psycho-educational programme through which participants are provided with advice, information and support, with the following aims:

- To provide information, advice and support to children/young people and their parent(s)/carer(s), where there are concerns about the child/young person's sexual behaviour online and/or their use of digital technologies.
- To provide support and alleviate distress arising from the child/young person's behaviour coming to attention.
- To provide children/young people and their parent(s)/carer(s) with information to assist their understanding of problematic online sexual behavior.

- To assist children/young people and their parent(s)/carer(s) to devise strategies to prevent recurrence or escalation of the concerning sexual behavior.
- To give information about the law in this context.
- To facilitate openness and communication between young people and their families.
- To promote safe, responsible use of new media.

The initial appointment with the child/young person and their parent(s)/carer(s) provides an opportunity to explore the extent and nature of the child/young person's concerning behaviour, drawing upon the typology of 'sexting' behaviours proposed by Janis Wolak and David Finkelhor (2011); to gain an overview of their social situation, support and lifestyle, and to identify the parent(s)/carer(s) key concerns. The content of the subsequent sessions is then tailored to the needs of the child/young person and their parent(s)/carer(s) in order to meet the programme aims, as outlined above. In doing so, Inform YP typically addresses the following areas:

- Understanding how and why the child/young person's problematic sexual behaviour developed.
- The legal framework and the criminal justice system.
- The development of strategies to assist children/young people to stay safe when using the internet and new media.
- Assisting children/young people and their parent(s)/carer(s) to talk to each other about new media use and keeping safe.

Evaluation

Inform YP has not been formally evaluated.

The following comments were received from a mother after completion of Inform YP:

"In late 2011 my 17-year-old son was arrested for downloading indecent images. As the police left they handed me a card with the details of the Lucy Faithfull Foundation on saying they might be able to offer us support. I phoned the same day and spoke to someone who spoke very calmly to me, did not judge, and outlined the potential support they could offer. As well as supporting me through the call they gave me a time to ring back for a longer chat and said they could also talk to my son. He phoned on two occasions.

"From my phone calls we were offered some sessions to support both my son and myself to look at the behaviour, and to help us to understand the situation. We had an initial meeting in November and then four sessions with an LFF practitioner.

"For me this was such a time of shock and devastation, very professionally the LFF practitioner took me through various stages of understanding, and how we (myself and my husband) could move forward supporting our son, being very realistic about what had happened and be confident that communication was open between us.

"I cannot stress enough how these sessions helped us to rebuild our lives, for my son it looked at his behaviour and what led him to it, it gave him strategies to lead a good life and for this never to be part of his life again, the sessions allowed us to speak together of what had happened, why it had happened and our great fear of it happening again, I know we would not have been able to have these conversations without the LFF practitioner and the Foundation.

“It is now 4 months since my son received a final warning for his behaviour, he has since finished his A levels and has started a full-time job and there has not been any reoccurrence of the behavior.”

References

J. Wolak and D. Finkelhor (2011) ‘Sexting: A Typology’. University of New Hampshire

Contact details

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