

Stop it Now! UK & Ireland Helpline UK



Type of intervention



Phone



Online

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

(Potential)
Offenders

Secondary prevention

Young Adults (18-20 Years), Adults (21 Years +) | Male & Female | Phone, Online | Internet Related Only | English

(Potential)
Offenders

Tertiary prevention

Young Adults (18-20 Years), Adults (21 Years +) | Male & Female | Phone, Online | Internet Related Only | English

Communities
/ Families

Secondary prevention

Young Adults (18-20 Years), Adults (21 Years +) | Male & Female | Phone, Online | Internet Related Only | English

Communities
/ Families

Tertiary prevention

Young Adults (18-20 Years), Adults (21 Years +) | Male & Female | Phone, Online | Internet Related Only | English

Target population

The Stop it Now! UK & Ireland Helpline protects children from sexual abuse by providing sound information as well as confidential, expert advice and support to all adults within the community who have concerns about child sexual abuse. Calls to the helpline are free for callers from a landline within the UK. Normal telephone charges apply for callers using mobile phones and callers from overseas. The helpline also offers a confidential email service which is accessible globally.

The helpline's principal target groups are:

- Adult abusers and those at risk of sexually abusing children.

- Family and friends concerned about an adult displaying worrying sexual thoughts or behaviour towards a child.
- Parents and carers concerned about a child or young person with worrying sexual behavior.

Additional Target Groups:

- Adults concerned about a child or young person who may have been sexually abused.
- Professionals calling for advice on cases involving suspected or known child sexual abuse.
- Adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

Delivery organisation

The Stop it Now! Helpline is run and managed by the child protection charity, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation (LFF), UK. Similar helplines are available in the Netherlands and in the USA, funded/resourced by organisations based in those countries.

Mode and context of delivery

Callers access the helpline via a freephone number (0808 1000 900) from within the UK and via help@stopitnow.org.uk. Contact details are found on the Stop it Now! website (www.stopitnow.org.uk) and widely advertised via Stop it Now! educational materials and information on relevant websites and in other child protection as well as offender environments. Lines are currently open between 9.00 am and 9.00 pm Monday-Thursday and between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm on Friday. Calls (and e-mails) are answered by trained helpline operators.

Level/Nature of staff expertise required

Helpline operators work on a rota basis. Child protection professionals and practitioners working for the LFF work alongside sessional staff recruited from a variety of backgrounds involved in work with children, families or offenders. Their work is organised by the Helpline Coordinator and day-to-day supervision is provided by senior staff within the LFF. All operators are required to have an existing broad knowledge of child protection and sexual abuse issues. They complete specific helpline training (2 days) plus Local Authority Child Protection Training and are mentored by experienced helpline staff before undertaking helpline duties. Ongoing training is provided - for example, in call handling and in specific issues such as mental health, child development, and the role of Social Services in responding to child sexual abuse.

Intensity/extent of engagement with target group(s)

A caller may telephone the helpline or email help@stopitnow.org.uk on a single occasion or contact may continue over a series of calls/emails. The average number of calls by one caller to the helpline is 3, but in particularly complex cases the number of calls may be greater or contact may take place over a longer period. Examples of this may include those in which an offender and/or their family are engaged in the legal process in the UK; or where an extended family involve a number of adults in responding to inappropriate sexual behaviour by children or historic abuse within the family and there is no involvement of child protection or other statutory agencies. Callers are encouraged to contact the helpline during potential times of stress, sometimes over a lengthy period, when, for example, a family member is on bail for Internet-related sexual offences against children.

Description of intervention

The Stop it Now! confidential Helpline is available to all adults who are concerned about and wish to discuss any aspect of child sexual abuse, whether they are concerned about their own or another adult's sexual thoughts about and behaviour towards children or because they wish to discuss the inappropriate or worrying sexual behaviour of a child or young person.

Stop it Now! originated in the USA in 1992. Fran Henry, a survivor of child sexual abuse, recognized how vital it was for the problem of such abuse not to remain hidden, nor to be seen as something only professionals could do anything about. She founded Stop it Now! US with the aim of giving all adults access to a safe and confidential place in which to discuss their concerns and to receive the advice and support needed to keep children safe. A Helpline was established to provide such a place for adults, including for those who had abused or were at risk of abusing.

Since 2002, led by the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, Stop it Now! UK has built on this visionary concept, developing both the Stop it Now! campaign and the Stop it Now! Helpline in UK and Ireland. The basis of all advice given on the Helpline is that children at risk must be protected from abuse.

During the period 2002-2012 the helpline handled over 31,000 calls from over 14,000 callers:

- 50% of calls to the Helpline were from adult abusers and those at risk of abusing a child, either on or offline (Target Group 1).
- 25% of calls were from family/friends concerned about an adult displaying worrying sexual thoughts or behaviour towards a child (Target Group 2).
- 4.5% of calls were from parents and carers concerned about a child or young person with worrying sexual behaviour (Target Group 3).
- 4.5% of calls were from adults concerned about a child or young person who may have been abused (Target Group 4).
- 8% of calls were from professionals calling for case advice (Target Group 5).
- 3.4% of calls were from adult survivors of child sexual abuse (Target Group 6).

Regardless of which target group a caller is from, the helpline believes they each have a real chance to make a difference to the safety of children, potentially stopping abuse before it happens and ensuring it is not repeated. For those with concerns about themselves or someone close to them within the family, contact with a child protection agency may not feel like an option at the time of calling because of the likely consequences; for example arrest and criminal charges, children removed from the home, or young people with concerning behaviour labelled as sex offenders. The Helpline listens, encourages, supports and agrees one or more actions for callers to take immediately, with the aim of protecting one or more children from sexual abuse. For some callers, a telephone appointment may be made with a specialist member of staff, with the aim of providing a targeted, short-term intervention. Others may be advised to access relevant online or printed resources – for example the *Stop it Now! USA, Parents Protect!* or *CROGA* websites; or *Facing the Future* (a book for parents of young people with harmful sexual behaviour), *Cybersex Unhooked* (a book for internet, child pornography offenders), or *The Exceptional Children's Guide to Touch* (a book for parents wanting to raise issues of boundaries, respect and safe touch with their young children). Callers are also able, via the helpline, to be referred to relevant additional professional services, including assessment and treatment services available from statutory and voluntary organisations, including the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. For those with internet-related concerns, a referral to the LFF's Inform and Inform+ courses may be appropriate.

Stop it Now! UK & Ireland provided training for the helpline launched in the Netherlands in April 2012.

Evaluation

An independent evaluation of the Stop it Now! Helpline was published in 2014. The evaluation was conducted by the National Centre for Social Research, in conjunction with Stop it Now! Netherlands, and was funded by the European Community.

The evaluation was commissioned to assess whether and how the helpline contributes to the Stop it Now! aim of tackling child sexual abuse. Specialist researchers conducted the evaluation which involved gathering users' views through interviews, focus groups and questionnaires.

The research established that the helpline engages a range of users and is valued whether people are concerned about a child's welfare, the risk posed by someone else, or their own risk to children. Study participants who had offended could report feeling more in control of their sexual thoughts and behaviour after using the helpline. Positive change was also reported in areas identified as protecting against reoffending, such as:- improving emotional and psychological well-being; addressing beliefs that can facilitate and maintain sexually abusive behaviour; strengthening motivation to desist; reducing the risk of social isolation and increasing engagement in fulfilling and productive activities. Participants who were concerned about another person's sexual behavior reported feeling supported and reassured about their ability to protect children, and appreciated the practical advice they received.

References

Brown, A., Jago, N., Kerr, J., McNaughton Nicholls, C., Paskell, C. and Webster, S. (2014). Call to keep children safe from sexual abuse: A study of the use and effects of the Stop It Now! UK and Ireland Helpline. *NatCen Social Research, Crime and Justice Team*, 1-91. Available at: http://www.stopitnow.org.uk/helpline_evaluation.htm

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Wortley, R and Smallbone, S, *Internet Child Pornography, Causes, Investigation and Prevention*, Praeger, 2012 (p. 98)
Smallbone, S et al, *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse*, Wiley, 2008

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