

# The NSPCC Underpants Rule Campaign UK



## Type of intervention



*Book/Guide*

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

Children and Young  
People (Victims)

Primary prevention

Young Children (0-5 Years), Children (6-11 Years), Adults (21 Years +) | Male & Female |  
Book/Guide | English, Welsh

Communities  
/ Families

Primary prevention

Young Children (0-5 Years), Children (6-11 Years), Adults (21 Years +) | Male & Female |  
Book/Guide | English, Welsh

## Target population

Parents and carers of children aged 5-11 years.

## Delivery organisation

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), a national charity/NGO in the UK.

## Mode and context of delivery

The NSPCC's Underwear Rule campaign aims to help keep children safe from sexual abuse by providing parents with a simple way of talking to young children (5-11 years old) about staying safe without using scary words. It takes a light hearted approach to help children remember the rule. An acrostic was developed for the campaign, "Talk PANTS", to help parents explain the elements of the Underwear Rule. The campaign has several supporting guidance documents: a guide for parents and carers on the Underwear Rule, supporting guidance for parents on how to talk about keeping safe and a guide for parents to use with their children. Resources are being developed for teachers and for parents for children with disabilities. All the guides are available online and in leaflet form.

## **Level/Nature of staff expertise required**

The materials are designed for use by parents and children without the need for professional involvement. Contact details are provided for support from professional social workers should this be required, either for parents (the NSPCC's Helpline) or for their children (ChildLine).

## **Intensity/extent of engagement with target group(s)**

The guides can be read in a short time (around 15 minutes) but are intended to prompt conversations and provide an opportunity for questions and discussion. The Underpants Rule should ideally be used as a prompt on a number of occasions, rather than as a one-off.

## **Description of intervention**

The NSPCC's Underwear Rule campaign helps parents talk to their children about staying safe from sexual abuse. Simple conversations, such as how to cross the road safely, help keep children safe. The Underwear Rule helps children understand that their body belongs to them, that they have a right to say 'no' and they should always talk to an adult they trust if they are worried. An easy way to understand the Underwear Rule has been created called "TALK PANTS". Each line of PANTS covers an element of the Underwear Rule and provides a simple and memorable message as follows:

- Privates are private
- Always remember your body belongs to you
- No means no
- Talk about secrets that upset you
- Speak up - someone can help

A number of resources are available on-line (see [www.nspcc.org.uk/underwear](http://www.nspcc.org.uk/underwear)) and in print. These include:

- A guide for parents and carers
- How to talk about keeping children safe (for parents)
- A guide for children
- Resources for use by teachers (currently in production)

Links to ChildLine are provided for children who want to talk in confidence to someone outside the family.

Parents were consulted on the barriers to speaking about sexual abuse with children as part of the research that informed this campaign. As a result, guidance on how to talk about keeping safe includes how to raise the subject and learning to listen, being aware of opportunities to talk and finding answers to your child's questions. The approach taken is light hearted and avoids using scary words or mentioning sex directly. Materials are available in English and Welsh.

## **Evaluation**

A number of measures are being used to evaluate parents' confidence about talking with their children about staying safe from child sexual abuse, their knowledge of what to say and the proportion of parents who have spoken to their

children. This research is based on a representative sample of parents of children aged 5-11 years across the UK. Evaluation is not yet complete.

## **References**

The NSPCC's campaign is part of the Council of Europe's One in Five Campaign which aims to equip children, their families/carers and society at large with the knowledge and tools to prevent and report sexual violence against children, thereby raising awareness of its extent. As part of the campaign, the Church of England is encouraging organisations such as the NSPCC to promote the use of the Underwear Rule. [www.underwearrule.org](http://www.underwearrule.org).

Children and young people disclosing sexual abuse: an introduction to the research (Debra Allnock, Child Protection Research Department NSPCC, Fresh Start, April 2010)

Childline Case notes: Children talking to ChildLine about sexual abuse (Nov 2009)

Children experiencing maltreatment: who do they turn to? A summary of research and findings. Brid Featherstone (NSPCC Reader in Applied Childhood Studies at the University of Huddersfield) and Helen Evans (Policy Researcher in the NSPCC Child Protection Awareness Department), Feb 2004

Lorraine Radford, Susana Corral, Christine Bradley, Helen Fisher, Claire Bassett, Nick Howat and Stephan Collishaw "Child Abuse and Neglect in the UK today" (2011)

Wurtele, S.K. and Kenny, M.C. (2010) Partnering with parents to prevent childhood sexual abuse [Article]. Child Abuse Review, Vol.19, Iss.2. pp 130-152

Wurtele SK, Kvaternick M, Franklin CF. 1992c. Sexual abuse prevention for preschoolers: A survey of parents' behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs. Journal of Child Sexual Abuse 1: 113–128

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## **Contact details**

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