



## Stop it Now! Helpline Report Summary 2005-2009

Together we can prevent child sexual abuse



working to protect children



# Stop it Now! UK & Ireland Helpline Report Summary 2005–2009\*

## Introduction

Stop it Now! UK and Ireland is a child sexual abuse prevention campaign, led by the Lucy Faithfull Foundation and supported by a dedicated Helpline. With at least one in ten children affected by child sexual abuse, it is a problem requiring a public health response.

Stop it Now! supports adults to play their part in prevention through its information materials, educational programmes, public messages and access to a freephone confidential Helpline. Target groups for the Helpline include adults worried about the sexual behaviour of other adults or children and young people and those worried about their own sexual thoughts or behaviour towards children.

Trained operators include those with professional backgrounds in work with sex offenders, their victims and families. These staff provide a follow-up telephone and face-to-face service to callers.

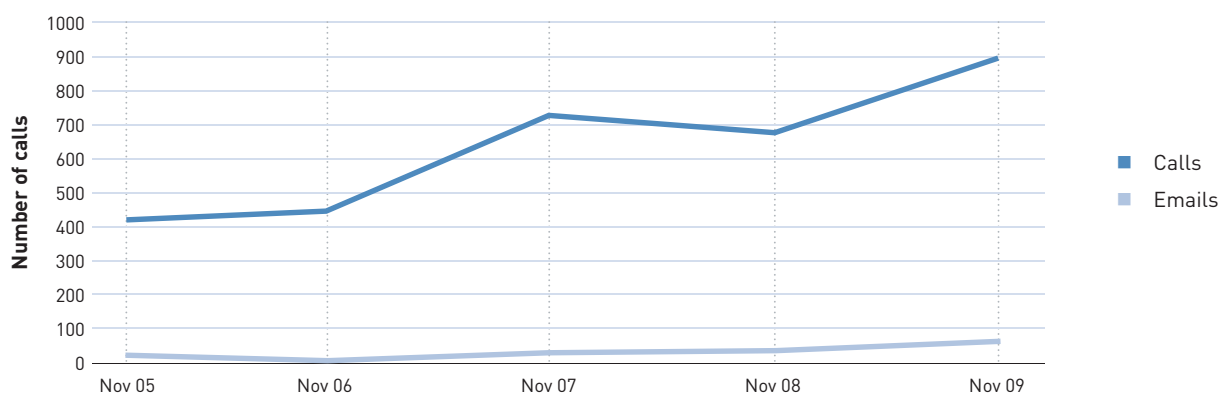
Between 2002 and 2009 the Helpline provided information, advice and support to early nearly 8,000 callers and e-mailers who together made over 16,000 contacts. This Report demonstrates that people can and do take action to prevent child sexual abuse and its potentially devastating consequences when they have a safe place in which they can speak openly. Many remain in contact with the Helpline over an extended period because they value its accessibility and advice. Adults concerned about their own behaviour call on average three times; those concerned about another adult or young person call on average twice. Some decide to give up their anonymity and come forward for face-to-face help, alongside the involvement of statutory child protection or criminal justice agencies.

## We have learned that:

- ➔ Some people who have sexually abused a child want help to manage their behaviour. Others, who have not offended, recognise their thoughts about and behaviour towards children as potentially harmful and seek help to manage these.
- ➔ Some adults are able to recognise inappropriate sexual behaviours and attitudes in family members and friends and will seek help and support in holding them accountable, whilst protecting children.
- ➔ Some adults are able to recognise inappropriate or harmful sexual behaviour in children and young people and will seek help to address this behaviour.
- ➔ However, where a sexual offence may have been committed or a child may be at risk, anxiety about repercussions, for themselves and for their loved ones, causes many people not to report concerns or seek help from statutory child protection agencies.
- ➔ The Internet has become a major vehicle for harmful behaviour by adults, but it is also a place where some offenders and those close to them will seek help to ensure responsible online behaviour in the future.
- ➔ With accurate information and support, adults can be effective agents of prevention within their family and wider community.

## Helpline activity 2005-09

The graph below shows call volume from June 2005 to December 2009.



\* This document summarises data from the Stop it Now! UK & Ireland Helpline Report June 2005 to December 2009. Call examples are included in this report. [www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk)

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### The Helpline's main objectives are to:

- ➔ Assist callers to identify the nature and seriousness of their concerns
- ➔ Provide information and support to callers to help them clarify their thinking
- ➔ Explore options available, including referral to our own follow-up service or to another agency
- ➔ Advise callers about further actions to consider
- ➔ Agree one or more protective actions the caller will take

### Principal target groups

- 1 Adult abusers and those at risk of abusing
- 2 Family and friends concerned about an adult displaying worrying sexual thoughts or behaviour towards a child
- 3 Parents and carers concerned about a child or young person with worrying sexual behaviour

*In response to caller demand, additional target groups now include:*

- 4 Adults concerned about a child or young person who may have been abused
- 5 Professionals calling for case advice
- 6 Adult survivors of child sexual abuse

### All Calls & Callers to Helpline June 05 – December 09

Target Group	No. of calls	% of all calls	No. of callers	% of all callers
1	6043	50.5%	1960	34.8%
2	3013	25.2%	1497	26.6%
3	533	4.4%	311	5.5%
4	550	4.6%	332	5.9%
5	974	8.1%	862	15.3%
6	406	3.4%	316	5.6%
Other callers**	456	3.8%	356	6.3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11975</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>5634</b>	<b>100%</b>

\*\*Callers outside target groups include those with general Internet concerns, requests for general information and calls from children.

## Caller Target Groups

### 1 Adults concerned about their own behaviour

50%  
of all calls

This group includes adults who have sexually abused children or are concerned that they might. Some have committed offences in the home or the community (offline) and others have offended or are at risk of offending online.

**35% of callers (50% of our calls) have come from those worried about their own thoughts and behaviour towards children. 98% of these callers were male, and 2% female.**

#### 1.1 Abusers and potential abusers: offline

Since June 2005, 41% (804) of callers in this group were abusers or potential abusers, with behaviour or concerns unrelated to the Internet. These callers account for 16% of all calls to the Helpline. Of these:-

- ➔ **436 (54%) had previously abused one or more children and wanted help to change their behaviour. 423 (97%) of these callers were men while 13 (3%) were women.**
- ➔ 409 of these callers identified their relationship to the victim. 244 (56%) stated that the victim was a family member and 90 (21%) stated that the victim was a friend, acquaintance or neighbour. 75 (17%) said that the victim was unknown, with their most common offence having been indecent exposure.
- ➔ **368 (46%) had not yet abused a child but were troubled by their sexual thoughts and wanted help to manage both these thoughts and their behaviour. 345 (94%) of these callers were men while 23 (6%) were women.**
- ➔ 112 (30%) of these callers were troubled by thoughts involving a family member; 54 (15%) involved a friend, acquaintance or neighbour; 157 (43%) were troubled by thoughts about children in general.

Information about caller involvement with the authorities, including the Police, was available in 698 cases. At the time of the first call:

- ➔ **249 (57%) abusers had not been arrested and were not in contact with the authorities.**
- ➔ **313 (85%) potential abusers had not been arrested and were not in contact with the authorities.**
- ➔ **81% (562) of offline abusers or potential abusers had not been arrested and were not in contact with the authorities prior to calling the Helpline.**

#### 1.2. Abusers and potential abusers: online

59% (1156) of callers from this group had concerns about their behaviour on the Internet, 3 of whom were women. This group included adults who had viewed, downloaded or distributed indecent images of children; those who had groomed children for inappropriate sexual contact; and those concerned that their online behaviour was becoming risky – for example, through accessing “barely legal” pornography. Over the period June 2005 to December 2009, these callers account for 34% of all calls to the Helpline.

**In 2009 we received 1259 calls from adults concerned about their own behaviour on the Internet compared to 267 in 2005 – a four-fold increase.**

- ➔ 15% (162) of online abusers and potential abusers contacted the Helpline in the absence of any contact with the Police, wanting support and advice to help them combat and manage their behaviour.
- ➔ 85% (884) were calling following their arrest, for advice and help to handle their current circumstances and avoid further offending.

### 2 Family and friends concerned about an adult displaying worrying sexual thoughts or behaviour towards a child

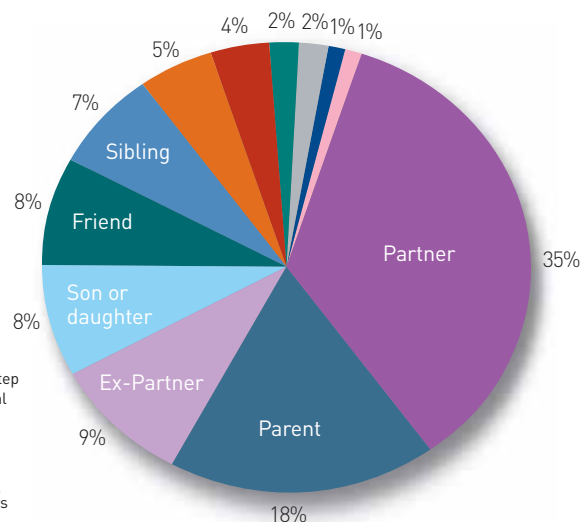
25%  
of all calls

Between June 2005 and December 2009, the Stop it Now! Helpline received 3013 calls from 1497 new callers in this group, 1198 (80%) of whom were women. This group represents 25% of all calls during this period.

Of these callers 1332 (89%) stated their relationship to the person whose behaviour they were worried about. Partners and parents made the highest number of calls in this group – in fact, family members made over three quarters of these calls. This is encouraging as it shows that family members not only notice worrying behaviour in those close to them but also seek confidential help in order to keep children safe.

- Partner
- Parent\*
- Ex-Partner
- Son or Daughter†
- Friend
- Sibling\*
- Acquaintance
- Other Family‡
- Other
- Neighbour
- Work Colleague
- Stranger

- \* Parent includes natural and step
- † Son/Daughter includes natural and step
- ★ Sibling includes natural, step and in-law
- ‡ Other family includes natural, step and in-law grandparents, uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews and cousins





### 3 Parents and carers concerned about a child or young person with worrying sexual behaviour

4%  
of all calls

About one-third of all sexual offences are committed by people under the age of eighteen, most of whom stop offending as they grow older. Some need education about relationships and sexuality, whilst others have more deep-seated problems and need more extensive intervention.

We received 533 calls from 311 callers in this group, 246 (79%) of whom were women. This group represents 4% of total calls to the Helpline. We do not believe that this relatively small number reflects a lack of need, but rather the difficulty adults have in recognising inappropriate sexual behaviour in children and young people. This group, even more than others, also fear sharing concerns in case the young person they are concerned about is labelled 'sex offender'.

➔ **76% of parents and carers concerned about a child or young person's sexual behaviour were not in touch with any child protection agency, statutory or voluntary, at the point of calling the Helpline (74 in 2009).**



### 4 Adults concerned about a child or young person who may have been abused

5%  
of all calls

Since June 2005, the Helpline received 550 calls from 332 callers who were concerned that a child had been abused, either by an adult or by another child. 281 (85%) of these callers were women. This group represents 5% of total calls to the Helpline. We estimate that over half of callers in this group were concerned that a child had been abused by another child.

### 5 Professionals

8%  
of all calls

Workers from the spectrum of roles in both the voluntary and statutory sectors valued access to the expertise available at Stop it Now!. Professional callers were predominantly from Children's Services or Health. These callers were concerned to find out how to work most effectively with offenders, potential offenders, their families and others affected by child sexual abuse.

8% of all calls to the Helpline were from this group; a total of 974 calls from 862 callers.

### 6 Adult survivors of child sexual abuse

3%  
of all calls

Since June 2005 the Helpline has received 406 calls from 316 survivors of child sexual abuse, 198 (63%) of whom were women. This group represents 3% of all calls to the Helpline. They included people wanting to talk about their own experiences, understand the process of abuse and access survivor services. Others were concerned that their abuser might still pose a risk to children and needed support and advice about steps to take. Some callers had suffered abusive experiences and now struggled with inappropriate thoughts towards children, which they wanted help to manage.

Our working relationship with dedicated Survivors organisations is vital in enabling callers in this group to access further specialist advice and support.



## Ongoing services: face-to-face individual and groupwork

The increase in call numbers since June 2005 has been accompanied by a huge increase in demand for face-to-face work with Lucy Faithfull Foundation practitioners, who have expertise in working with sex offenders and their families. This service is particularly beneficial for those who want to change and manage their own behaviour and for family members faced with complex issues and decisions arising from a loved one's offending. Over the past four years we have increased this service, providing 651 days face-to-face work.

In response to an increasing volume of calls relating to Internet offending, we have developed educational group-work programmes for Internet offenders and their families.

Demand for such face-to-face work is considerable. Our ability to provide such services is limited only by funding.

## Stop it Now! UK & Ireland – the campaign

Campaigning and awareness-raising are essential tasks for local, regional and national Stop it Now! projects to empower adults to address personal, family and community concerns. These are also important means of promoting an awareness of the Helpline. Key to our work is building community strength and helping families to know the steps to take to keep their children safe, including how to implement family safety plans.

Our National and Regional Managers engage in a variety of ways with parents, carers, professionals, prisoners and the general public on matters ranging from Internet safety for children to identifying the signs of concerning behaviour in adults. They work with parents and staff in Children's Centres as well as with members of black and minority ethnic communities to develop skills, knowledge and confidence about sexual abuse prevention. With support from the Home Office we have created an online parent education resource, Parents Protect ([www.parentsprotect.org.uk](http://www.parentsprotect.org.uk)), and additional training materials for police officers across England and Wales to use in their communities, aimed at helping parents to keep their children safe from sexual abuse.

Over the coming 3 years, and subject to funding, we look to expand delivery of all of the above. In addition, we are planning:-

- ➔ **A new awareness-raising campaign using social networking sites including Facebook**
- ➔ **Expansion of Internet related services across England, Scotland and Wales**
- ➔ **Revision of the CROGA website (a self-help resource for Internet offenders), to include the creation of materials for families and friends of Internet offenders and for professionals supervising them**
- ➔ **Further development and promotion of Internet-based education materials aimed at preventing child sexual abuse**
- ➔ **Information about the Helpline to be available to all registered sex offenders, via Police, Prison and Probation services (Multi-Agency Public Protection Arrangements - MAPPA)**
- ➔ **Information about the Helpline to be made available to prisoners without current sexual convictions**

## Funding

We are very grateful for the ongoing support of our funders. Stop it Now! receives funding from the governments of England, Scotland and Wales and charitable trusts. The Helpline is funded by the Public Protection and Mental Health Group in the Ministry of Justice, with contributions from Lucy Faithfull Foundation, charitable trusts and donors.

**“Child sexual abuse is preventable, not inevitable”**

To obtain a copy of the full report or for more information, contact:

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