

News story: Funding boost for child sexual abuse prevention helpline following jump in contacts

The Home Secretary has announced £600,000 funding for The Lucy Faithfull Foundation's Stop It Now! child sexual abuse prevention helpline.

The charity offers confidential advice to offenders who want to change their illegal behaviour. The funding boost comes following a sharp 65% rise in callers and visitors to the Stop It Now! helpline and self-help website regarding viewing sexual images of children online.

In a speech in September, the Home Secretary set out his support for the charity. The funding will enable The Lucy Faithfull Foundation to support more people at risk of offending over the next 18 months.

The Stop It Now! deterrence campaign was launched in October 2015 to discourage people from viewing illegal sexual images of children online, and to offer help to those wanting to change their behaviour. It also supports the families and friends of offenders, and professionals.

More than 2,000 people contacted Stop It Now! last year through the helpline and its secure messaging service last year to change this behaviour.

Home Secretary, Sajid Javid, said:

Child sexual abuse is a truly sickening crime and I'm committed to doing everything in my power to eradicate it from society.

It's vital we take action on a number of fronts. That's why we have given police and prosecutors the tools they need to bring offenders to justice, are educating young people on how they can protect themselves and will be legislating to ensure tech giants are fulfilling their responsibilities to protect our children.

But it is also important to focus on preventative measures that stop potential abusers from committing crimes in the first place. The Lucy Faithfull Foundation plays a key role in this work and has my full support.

Director of the Stop It Now! helpline, Donald Findlater, said:

People viewing sexual images of children online need to know this is not a victimless crime – children are harmed when these images are first made, and afterwards when they are viewed or shared again. There are serious consequences for anyone arrested for such

behaviour, possibly including imprisonment, losing their job, friendships and relationships, losing contact with their own children as well as ending up on the sex offenders register.

Confidential help is available to stop viewing these images and to stay stopped. Over these last 3 years thousands of people, mostly men, have come to us for help to get their lives back on track. This additional funding will ensure thousands more get through to stop their illegal behaviour and stay stopped.

Since the start of the deterrence campaign, 5,114 people have called the helpline seeking advice and support to stop viewing online sexual images of children.

A further 2,418 people called for support regarding concerns about someone else's online viewing behaviour.

People can also [access the Get Help website](#), which had over 40,900 users in 2018 compared to around 23,000 in 2016.

Callers agree actions that they can take to manage their behaviour and protect children as well as exploring other services and agencies available. Calls remain confidential and anonymous, unless a child is deemed to be at risk.

While the Stop It Now! deterrence campaign was launched in 2015 to specifically tackle indecent images of children online, the Stop It Now! helpline has been running in the UK since 2002. It deals with all aspects of child sexual abuse prevention, including direct contact abuse, child grooming, and harmful sexual behaviour of a child or young person.

Independent evaluation shows that, as a result of the advice, people take steps to control their behaviour, including stopping all internet or pornography use, installing controls and filters on devices and informing partners or family members.

The National Crime Agency estimates that around 80,000 people in the UK are regularly viewing images of child sexual abuse online.

In October, the Home Secretary travelled to the west coast of the USA to demand that tech firms do more to tackle online CSE and to develop a tool to detect and remove child grooming sites.

Other measures announced include:

- a taskforce, chaired by the Home Secretary, bringing together representatives from ad agencies, trade bodies and brands to ensure criminals don't have access to this funding stream
- a £250,000 innovation call for organisations to bid for funding to assist them in developing innovative solutions to disrupt live streaming of abuse
- new tools to improve the capabilities of the Child Abuse Image Database

(CAID) – the database used by the NCA and UK police forces to search for indecent images of children and increase the ability to identify victims

NCA Director Rob Jones said:

The scale and severity of child sexual abuse and exploitation we are seeing has significantly increased. Helping offenders to stop is really important, but it is absolutely crucial to help potential offenders before they even begin looking at the sexual abuse of children online.

The NCA welcomes this funding to support more people at risk of offending.

This needs to be part of a wider approach that includes the tech industry tackling offending, age appropriate education, and support for children, parents and carers such as in our Jessie and Friends campaign for four to seven-year-olds.