



Hampshire conference to focus on preventing child sexual abuse

Over 120 people will meet at a conference in Hampshire on Monday (March 1) to focus on how agencies can work together to tackle child sexual abuse and protect children from harm.

The Stop it Now! UK and Ireland Conference, hosted in partnership with Hampshire Constabulary, will bring together representatives from various statutory, private and voluntary organisations who have contact with children or families or deal with child protection issues. Police, health, education, child care and probation workers will be joined by those from faith communities and children's charities for the one day event.

Entitled 'Preventing Child Sexual Abuse – Making it Everybody's Business', the conference will feature workshops conducted by specialist staff from child protection charity, the Lucy Faithfull Foundation and will cover subjects including:- female sexual abusers; how the internet is used as part of sexually abusive behaviour; children who display worrying sexual behaviour and where agencies and individuals roles fit in preventing abuse and protecting children.

The conference aims to explore some of today's key issues surrounding child sexual abuse while helping delegates see where their organisation and individual roles fit into preventing abuse.

"The title of this conference says it all. Preventing child sexual abuse *is* everybody's business – it cannot be left to one agency or organisation to address," said Director of Stop it Now! UK and Ireland, Mr Donald Findlater. "The harm sexual abuse causes to children can be profound, not just to their emotional and physical development, but to their trust in adults, especially if their abuser is someone they love. The sooner abuse is identified, the sooner the healing process can begin for all concerned – but the more we can do to prevent it from happening in the first place the better."

The conference is being hosted in partnership with Hampshire Constabulary, and Stop it Now! is delighted to be working with the Service. Detective Chief Inspector Mark Ashthorpe, head of the Public Protection and Offender Management team said: "I am very pleased that Hampshire Constabulary is able to host this important conference; it is vital that people working with children are well informed about the real risks to children. With such an emotive subject it is almost understandable that there are so many misconceptions about child abuse; this conference will go some way to explore and expose those myths and thereby improve child protection."

Stop it Now! UK and Ireland is working hard to engage with statutory, private and voluntary sector workers as well as parents, carers and other members of the public. The campaign believes that child sexual abuse is preventable, not inevitable and England Campaign Manager, Liz Maslen, says it's vital everyone gets involved and informed. "To stop child sexual abuse, we need to start talking about it," she stressed. "Everybody – professionals and members of the public – can protect children by learning how to be alert to warning signs in the behaviour of a victim or would-be abuser and knowing what steps to take. Sound information helps us recognise these signs and take action to stop dangerous behaviour."

The Stop it Now! campaign operates a free phone confidential helpline – 0808 1000 900 – which people can call for advice and support in relation to child sexual abuse issues.

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Notes to Editors

For further information and interviews please contact Deborah Denis on 01372 847160, 07540 690 315 or ddenis@lucyfaithfull.org.uk.

This conference is not open to the general public and is fully booked.

1. Named after its founder, Baroness Lucy Faithfull of Wolvercote, the Foundation is a child protection charity operating UK-wide and specialising in safeguarding children from sexual abuse. The Foundation's policy is to collaborate with individuals and agencies internationally to develop a more child sensitive and offender aware culture in our societies. The Foundation contributes to legislation and to policy and procedure reviews concerned with safeguarding children in faith communities, in schools, in leisure facilities, on the Internet and living away from home.
www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk

2. Stop it Now! UK and Ireland aims to prevent child sexual abuse by increasing public awareness and empowering people to act responsibly to protect children. Stop it Now! believes that it is the responsibility of all adults to take positive action to prevent the sexual abuse of children. Stop it Now! is an alliance of leading children's charities, working with the government and child protection agencies, to promote public education and prevent child sexual abuse. The Stop it Now! helpline has been operating since 2002 and aims to prevent child abuse by encouraging abusers and potential abusers to seek help and by giving adults the information they need to protect children safely. The helpline is funded by the Ministry of Justice and the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. The England campaign is supported by the Department of Children, Schools and Families. The Stop it Now! campaigns in Wales and Scotland are supported by the Welsh Assembly Government and the Scottish Government respectively. www.stopitnow.org.uk.