

***Preventathon!* underway in South Wales to protect children from sexual abuse**

A major campaign to help protect children from sexual abuse is underway in South Wales. Stop it Now! Wales, the country's only campaign solely dedicated to preventing child sexual abuse, is undertaking a seven day *Preventathon!* to spread prevention messages and ensure adults are equipped with the right information to help them protect children from sexual harm.

The week will run from October 4 – 10 and will involve professionals, parents, carers and other guardians completing training and awareness sessions, public education materials such as posters, leaflets and flyers being distributed and the unveiling of a new online tool for adults to use to become familiar with the issue of child sexual abuse, where the risks lie, what they can do to minimise those risks and where they can go for more help and advice. The new website; www.parentsprotect.co.uk, also holds a 30 minute learning programme for parents and carers to work through at their own pace.

Targets for the seven day *Preventathon!* include; visiting seven towns across Wales, collecting 700 signatures for the Commit to Prevent! campaign (see notes below), recruiting 70 new Twitter followers and distributing hundreds of posters and leaflets.

Rebecca Wasinski, Campaign Manager said:

“Research by Stop it Now! Wales suggests that 40 per cent of adults in Wales would have reservations about acting on concerns that an adult may be sexually abusing a child. And with NPSCC research suggesting that one in 6 children are abused in some way before they reach the age of 16 it is clear that something needs to be done.

“These are ambitious plans, but we are an ambitious campaign. We want as many parents and carers as possible to become aware of child sexual abuse issues, including warning signs to look for in children and adults, so that more children are protected.”

David Hopkins, Chair of Stop it Now! Wales and retired Director of Education, Caerphilly County Council said:

“We are aware from research that there is reluctance by many to take action about concerns they may have about the sexual abuse of children. This is a national problem, and is all too often rooted in ignorance of what is regarded as sexual abuse or, in some cases, fear of the repercussions of reporting a person probably known to them.

“The fact is that, as individuals and parts of communities, we have responsibilities towards our children and young people, and we must strive to change the culture of turning away from accepting those responsibilities, and start taking action by reporting worries and concerns. That is why the campaign seeks to raise awareness of the issue, and also the means of dealing with this entrenched and damaging problem.”

Sam Duggan, Project Worker, Plant Dewi said:

“Sexual abuse is happening and we all have a responsibility to protect and care for the wellbeing of each and every child. As an organisation we believe that raising parents’ awareness on such a sensitive issue is vital. Greater awareness means greater protection.”

During the week Stop it Now! Wales’s activities will include delivering training to professionals, conducting awareness sessions with parents and distributing promotional material throughout the community. Activities will take place in Carmarthenshire, Pembrokeshire, Llanelli, Bridgend, Blaenau Gwent and Cardiff. Stop it Now! Wales will also have a stand at the World Mental Health Day Event in Merthyr Tydfil on Friday, October 8.

The learning programme and associated advice and support can be found at www.parentsprotect.co.uk.

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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.

1. Stop it Now! Wales 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 Stop it Now! Helpline is funded by the Public Protection and Mental Health Group in the National Offender Management Service of the Ministry of Justice, Lucy Faithfull Foundation, charitable trusts and donors. Stop it Now! Wales is supported by the Welsh Assembly Government. www.stopitnow.org.uk.
2. Commit to Prevent! launched on July 26 and urges all political parties to include protecting children from sexual harm in their forthcoming manifestos, ahead of the Assembly election in 2011. Members of the public can get involved by signing a petition and helping to spread the word through their social networks such as Facebook and Twitter and also offline through the use of posters, letters and flyers.

Specifically, the Commit to Prevent campaign is calling for:

- A national public information campaign to raise awareness of the scale of child sexual abuse and the steps we can all take to prevent it.
- Education for parents and carers how to help prevent child sexual abuse including resilience building in children, open and honest communication and implementing and respecting boundaries.
- Education for children and young people in schools and youth settings on respectful relationships, sexual boundaries, consent and appropriate touch.

- Specific training on child sexual abuse prevention for those who work with children and families including on how to identify and respond to signs of child sexual abuse
- Therapeutic services for children and families who suffer child sexual abuse
- Intervention services for adults and young people with worrying thoughts / behaviour towards children.

More information is available at www.stopitnow.org.uk.