



Family Safety

A guide for parents to keep children and young people safe from sexual abuse



How can we help you keep your family safe?

Stop it Now! Wales is a child sexual abuse prevention programme funded by the Welsh Government and the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. We work to protect children and young people from sexual abuse by working with parents and carers and multi-agency professionals as well as members of the public through awareness raising and education.

We also offer a confidential helpline to any adult with a concern about child sexual abuse on 0808 1000 900. Our services and resources are relevant to parents, carers, professionals, childcare workers, volunteers, school staff; in fact anyone who has contact with children or families in their personal or professional life.

We understand that child sexual abuse is something we'd rather not think and talk about – but we believe the best way of protecting children is for adults to do just that! By not being afraid to talk about the issues, we become much better able to understand the steps we can take to keep our children as safe as possible.



Parents Protect!

Together we can prevent child sexual abuse



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www.stopitnow.org.uk www.parentsprotect.co.uk www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk

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How can we prevent child sexual abuse?

Create a family safety plan to protect children

If you are concerned about keeping your child safe from sexual abuse, this is your chance to create a safer environment and a support network for everyone in your family. Youngsters are immediately safer when parents and caregivers take the time to learn about sexual abuse and its warning signs.

We talk about risk factors – what puts someone at risk to sexually abuse a child but we must also talk about protective factors – the things a family can do to keep the family safer. Protective factors are the building blocks of your family.

Parents and caregivers who make a commitment to speak up as soon as they have a concern, instead of waiting for certain evidence of harm, play an even more crucial role in a child's safety. Here are some things that you and your family can do to protect children from sexual abuse:

Know the signs

- “Warning sign” is really just another way of saying “opportunity for prevention” – a chance for caring adults to recognise possible risk and to take action to protect children.
- Remember, the most effective prevention takes place before there's a child victim to heal or an offender to punish.



Open lines of communication

- Whether talking with a child, adolescent, or adult, about sexualised behaviours or your concerns, the conversation is just a beginning and not a one-time event.
- Let everyone in the family know it is OK to ask questions. It is important for adults to set the tone for everyone by talking about the range of healthy sexual behaviours and speaking up about sexual abuse.
- Remember to teach children that their body belongs to them, they have a right to say no, and that they should tell a safe adult if they're upset or worried.
- Using some of our suggested books can help you start some really important conversations. However, before you read them with your child read them through yourself first, so that you can judge if the information is appropriate for your child and so you are familiar with the story. Finally, see these stories as a springboard to further conversation, discussion and continued teaching and learning.

If you want to talk about what is happening to your family, call the **Stop it Now! Helpline** for confidential advice on **0808 1000 900**



Educate everyone in the family

- Understand healthy sexual development in children as well as the sexual behaviours that may be of concern to you as a parent/carer.
- Learn the warning signs of a child who may have been hurt by sexual abuse as well as the warning signs in an adult, adolescent or child who may be touching a child in a sexual way. Your concerns may be about non-touching behaviours as well (e.g. showing pornography to a child).
- Teach children the proper names for body parts and what to do if someone tries to touch them in a sexual way. Remember to let young children know that no one has the right to touch their private parts (unless for medical reasons) and that they should not touch anyone else's private parts.

Set clear family boundaries

- Talk about and set clear family boundaries with family members and with other adults who spend time around or supervise the children (e.g., if a child does not want to hug or kiss someone hello or goodbye then he or she can shake hands instead).
- If a child is not comfortable with a particular adult or older child then you or some other adult must let that person know (e.g., tell him or her that you don't want your child to sit on his/her lap).

- As a child matures, boundaries within the home may need to change as well (e.g., knock on the door before entering the room of an adolescent).

Get safe adults involved

- Be sure that no one in your family is isolated. Identify one or more support people for every member of the family.
- Research shows that one of the key factors in a child's resilience (ability to bounce back after stressful events) is that he/she had someone to talk with and confide in. Be a safe, responsible and consistent resource person for a child or adolescent.
- If someone is "too good to be true" then ask more questions – this friend or family member may not be a safe person for your child. Unfortunately, unconditional trust cannot protect children from harm.

Take sensible precautions with who has access to your children

- Be aware of who is paying attention to your children and who their friends are.
- Don't ignore any unease you feel about people showing interest in your child.

Seek help and advice – you are not alone

- If you are concerned about the sexualised behaviours in a parent, cousin, sibling, friend, or neighbour, care enough to talk with them. If you are concerned about your own thoughts and feelings towards children, help is available.
- Call the Stop it Now! Helpline on 0808 1000 900 to learn more about the resources in your community.
- Make sure everyone knows that it's OK to talk with you about what may have already happened – that you love them and will help them.

Where can I get further help or advice?

If you are worried about someone's behaviour towards a child, you can:

- **Contact your local police**
- **Contact your local Social Services**
- **Contact the Stop it Now! Helpline**
- **Contact the NSPCC Helpline**
- **Report online to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre**

If you want to talk about what is happening to your family, call the **Stop it Now! Helpline** for confidential advice on **0808 1000 900**



Local Police

If a child is in immediate danger, call 999. If not, all police forces have other ways in which you can get in touch, including a non-emergency phone number which you will find in a telephone directory or online.

You can get in contact with your local neighbourhood police team. Visit your local police force website for details or go to www.direct.gov.uk and search for 'police'.

Children's Social Services

You can also get in touch with your local Children's Services and contact details will be found online or through local telephone directories.

Contact Stop it Now! Helpline 0808 1000 900

This is a confidential helpline for adults worried about the sexual behaviour of others towards children and also those worried about their own sexual thoughts or behaviour towards children. The Helpline also deals with parents and carers worried about the sexual behaviour of their children. The Helpline operates from 9am-9pm Monday-Thursday and from 9am-5pm on Friday. Stop it Now! can also provide help by email on help@stopitnow.org.uk, with a response in 3-5 working days. More information can also be found on www.stopitnow.org.uk

Contact the NSPCC Helpline 0808 800 5000

The NSPCC is the UK's leading charity dedicated to stopping child abuse. You can call their child protection helpline on or via email at help@nspcc.org.uk

Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre www.ceop.police.uk

CEOP is the UK's national police agency for dealing with child protection, particularly tackling offenders who use online technology to abuse children. If you are worried about someone's behaviour towards a child online, you can report this at www.ceop.police.uk

The Internet and children - What's the problem?

The internet has become an integral part of our and our children's lives. A world has opened up which offers many positive opportunities.

Children start using computers from a very early age and are increasingly using the Internet more and more whether it is at home, in school, on their mobile phones or on a games console. With this in mind, Internet Safety

and knowing how to help protect children and young people online is essential. Just as we want to keep our child safe in the real world, we will want to do the same in the virtual world. It is important that we understand enough about the Internet to keep our children safe from harm but is equally important that we equip our children with the skills they need to keep themselves safe so they can experience the Internet positively and responsibly.

Call the **Stop it Now! Helpline** for confidential advice on **0808 1000 900**



Internet Safety Top Tips

Depending upon the age and maturity of your child, consider keeping computers in communal places where you can see the screen. Similarly, you may find it helpful to agree and set boundaries around your child's 'screen-time' i.e. how much time they spend watching TV, on the internet, their mobile phone etc.

Seek advice from your internet service provider to block inappropriate content.

You could consider installing additional software to enable you to manage and monitor your child's internet use. This could also act as a discussion topic.

When buying a new computer, mobile phone, gaming device or any new technological item. Ask a sales assistant which Internet safety devices are available to help manage your child's Internet access.

Help your child to enjoy their time on the Internet but also encourage offline activity; for example – playing with their friends, participating in family activities and developing hobbies.

Teach your child not to give out personal information about themselves. Personal information could include their name, address, telephone number, where they live or which school they go to. If they're signing up for email, chat or on a website, get them to use a nickname and make sure that it's one that does not identify their year/ date of birth or have sexual connotations.

Talk to them about the need to be careful of friends online. Friends online might not be who they say they are. Ask your child to consider if they would talk to their 'real life' friends in the same way they do to online 'friends'.

Be open. Take an interest in their online world just as you would in their offline activities. Talk to them about what they've seen or sites they have visited, just as you might talk to them about a book they've read or a film they've seen.

Encourage your child to report any accidental access to sexual material such as pop-ups, and praise them if they do. Let them know that they can tell you if they become uncomfortable with anything that happens on the Internet and acknowledge that it may be difficult for them to do this. They may have said things they are embarrassed about and wouldn't want you to know. Help them learn that we all make mistakes when growing up and that you can help.

Remind your child that once an image is sent, there is no getting it back. Stress that once they have sent an image, or posted it online, they no longer have control of it and it could end up anywhere. Ask them how they would feel if their teachers, parents, or their whole school saw what they had sent.

Ensure your child understands the danger of meeting up with someone they have only met online. Whether that person says they are a man, woman or child and that they should never go on their own.



Family Safety Plan

Who is going to be involved in this plan? e.g. Mum, Gran, children

Who are we worried about? e.g. Our child

What is it we are worried about happening? (What happened before?)

As part of a Family Safety Plan, what do we already have in place?

Step

Who is responsible for this?

e.g. Read one of the books with my child

e.g. Mum

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