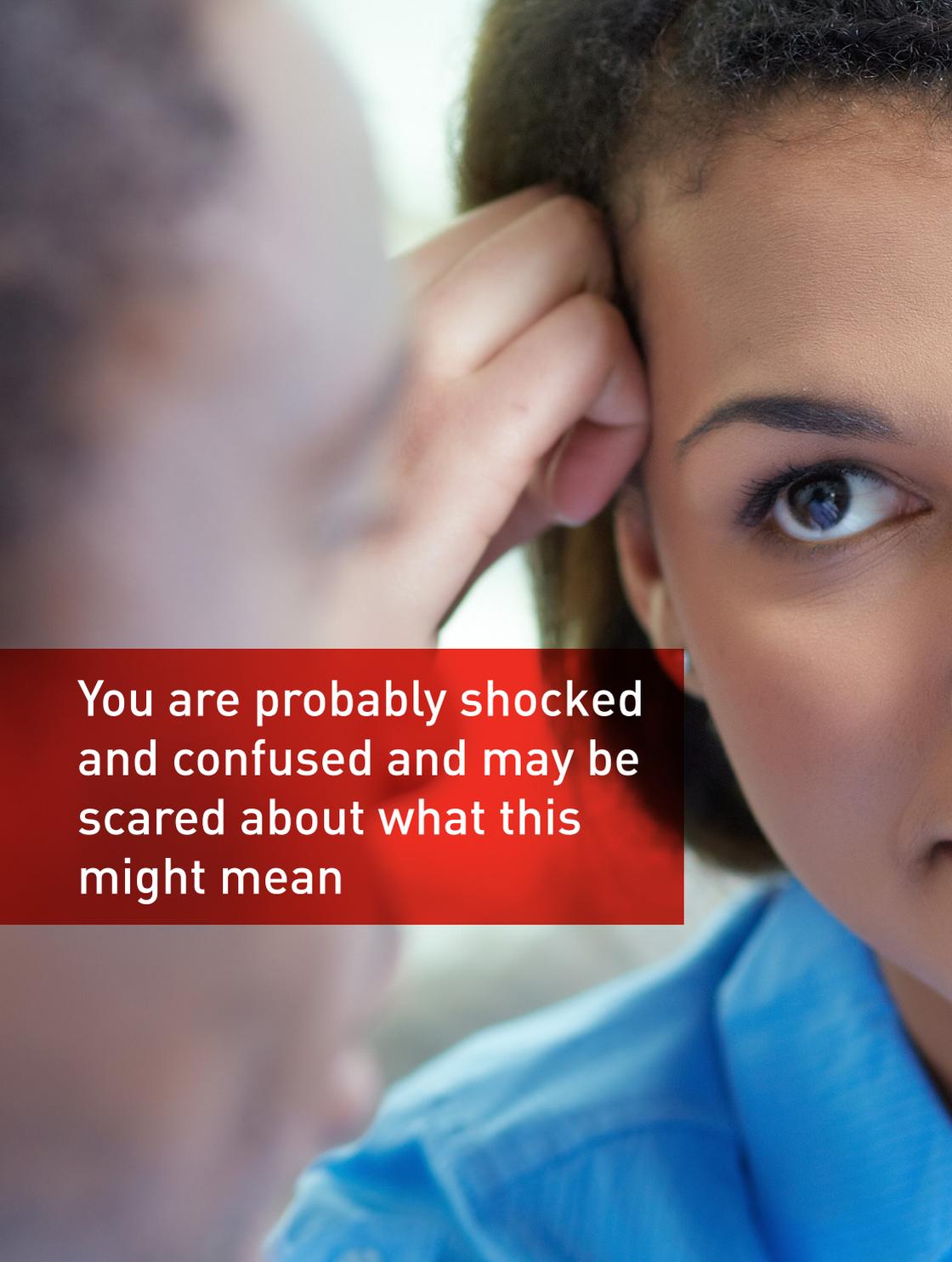


If someone you know has been accessing indecent images of children online

# Your first steps to getting the right support and advice for relatives and friends

FREEPHONE HELPLINE 0808 1000 900

**stop it** UK & Ireland  
**now!**  
Together we can prevent **child sexual abuse**



You are probably shocked and confused and may be scared about what this might mean

## First reactions...

**Someone close to you has just been visited by the police because it is suspected that they have been accessing indecent images of children online.** This may be the first time you have ever come across this type of behaviour, or the first time you have come into contact with the criminal justice system. You are likely to be shocked and confused and may be scared about what this might mean. Your first concerns might be about any children in the household, whether you can ever trust the person again, and what this will mean for you and your future relationship.

**You may also have serious concerns about whether your family can remain together, or if your children might have been at risk.** You may be angry and are likely to have many questions about what is going to happen in the immediate or longer term future. You will almost certainly want the right information to help you think it all through.

## You can talk to someone

The Stop it Now! UK Helpline is run by the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, a leading UK charity working to prevent the sexual abuse of children. The Stop it Now! Helpline is staffed by trained operators, who will listen and offer confidential and impartial advice. The Helpline offers confidential help to the partners, friends or family members of people who are under investigation as well as to anyone who is under investigation themselves or who has already been convicted for accessing indecent images of children online. You do not have to give your name or identifying details if you do not want to.

**This might be the right time for you to call the Helpline and start to talk about what help you need...**

If someone close to you is under investigation for 'internet offending', particularly if they have been accessing indecent images of children, you probably feel there is no one you can talk to about it... **but you can pick up the phone.**

For confidential advice, information and support...

Call the Stop it Now! Helpline on 0808 1000 900

## What now?

**The police will have received information which has led to them visiting the person under investigation.** It is likely that they will remove any computers, laptops, hard drives, and other Internet-enabled devices, such as mobile phones. Photo albums may also be taken for examination. Some of this equipment may belong to you but the police do need to examine it in case it has been used for illegal purposes and contains evidence.

**This will take some time to deal with.** The police will investigate any offences that may have been committed, including examining computers and any other Internet-enabled devices. The length of time this takes will vary, depending on where you live and how busy the police are. This can be frustrating and inconvenient as well as very worrying at a time when you have so much to think about. If you have particular questions about the process, ask the investigating officer, who will have left his or her details with you. If you need your own computer or any other device(s) which belong to you for work but which have been taken away by the police, you should let the investigating officer know so that these can be dealt with as quickly as possible.

## What about our children?

**If you have children living in the household what has happened is bound to affect them.**

Perhaps the children were present when the police visited. Police investigations should have been carried out with due sensitivity and care in respect of any children who may have been in the house at the time, but children will have questions or worries that need to be addressed. It is important that you think carefully about what to say to them and how to do this, in order to minimize their anxiety and distress. You might want to come up with a very simple explanation if the children are quite young. Alternatively if the children are a bit older, you may feel that they can cope with more information. Helpline staff can help you think these difficult issues through.

**In some circumstances, Children's Services may want to talk to you.**



**Their first concern is the welfare and safety of any children who have had contact with the person being investigated.** They will want to discuss practical steps with you, to ensure that they are safeguarded properly.

Sometimes Children's Services and the police may wish to talk directly with any children concerned. This is to make sure that they have the opportunity to talk freely about any past or current worries or anything else of concern. This might also trouble you because you might have fears that something might have happened to your children in the past.

## Why did this happen?

**We don't know for sure why some people look at sexual images of children.**

Whilst everyone's situation is different, the behaviour is always illegal. Nor is it a victimless crime – real children are harmed to produce the images.

**In almost all cases, those close to the person arrested have no idea of what they have been doing.** People who commit these offences often find it very hard to admit to themselves that their behaviour is wrong; or perhaps they feel they can't stop because it has become habitual. Sometimes they believe they will never be caught. But for some it is a relief when their behaviour is discovered, providing an opportunity for real change and the opportunity to work towards a life that is safe and offence-free.

There are many reasons why people choose to look at sexual images of children. Often these are complex. People who commit these offences need help. Perhaps they have other problems that they haven't faced and this might have contributed to their offending behaviour.

## Will other people find out?

We understand that you may be very concerned about what might happen if other people find out that a family member or someone close to you is being investigated for Internet offences against children.

**We suggest that you only tell people you can trust and who need to know. They should be people who may be able to offer support and help as well as additional protection to children with whom the person being investigated may be in contact.**

It's possible that the employer of the person under investigation may need to be informed. This will be the case if their work brings them into contact with children.

## What about our relationship and family life?

**You may already have decided that you will continue to offer support to your partner/relative/friend who has been arrested.** On the other hand, you may be wondering if you can ever trust them again and feel betrayed to the point that you are considering ending the relationship (or separating temporarily).

**This is not the type of decision that should be made in haste. You need time to reflect, and perhaps to speak with someone who understands the issues you are facing.** Relationships can and do survive the arrest and possible conviction of a person close to you, although change is needed. It takes time for important and often life-changing decisions to be made, especially when children are involved.

**You are not likely to make the right decisions if you are feeling overwhelmed or confused.** Sometimes, those close to you will tell you what they think you want to hear. Sometimes they will give you a version of things that puts them in the best possible light. Even when they are being honest, they may not know why they behaved as they did.

It might seem that this is all too much for you just now. However, talking with someone can assist you in taking calm and considered decisions, over time. The Helpline aims to provide sound information, to reassure and to give you some sense of control.

## Will things ever get back to normal?

**Whilst the arrest of someone for Internet offences against children almost always leads to big changes in relationships and in family life, this does not mean that the future needs to be bleak.** This difficult situation can offer the chance of a fresh start with less likelihood of dishonesty, concealment and risk.

**The start of this process is for everyone concerned to get the help they need.** The person under investigation definitely needs to start to change their thinking and behaviour. We can help with this too, but only if the person genuinely sees the need and wants to start to change. You also need to take stock of things and learn more about what has happened so that you can make the necessary changes to your life.



Call the Stop it Now! Helpline on 0808 1000 900

Visit [www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk)

# What should I do now?

**The first thing you should do is to call the Stop it Now! Helpline.**

You may be feeling angry, shocked, confused or even bewildered at what has happened, but you don't have to deal with this alone.

**Our highly experienced Helpline operators will be able to give you practical advice and to talk you through the complex and difficult issues that you are undoubtedly facing right now.** They will be able to help with the questions you will have about the behaviour of your partner or family member.

**The Helpline operators will also be able to give you the information and advice you will need regarding the Criminal Justice System process and the involvement of Children's Services if you have children.** Our operators will also give you the support you need to get through this incredibly difficult time in your life.

**Calling the Helpline is free and confidential.** When you call, you will not have to give any identifying information such as your family name, address or telephone number.

**If you would rather email in the first instance, you can email our confidential email service on [help@stopitnow.org.uk](mailto:help@stopitnow.org.uk).** Your email address will not be displayed when you email, making the service confidential. Due to the high demand for this service, we will not be able to offer an immediate response by email. So if you need to contact us urgently, please call the Helpline. You will also find much more information about all of the issues covered in this leaflet on our website [www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk)

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**VISIT [www.stopitnow.org.uk](http://www.stopitnow.org.uk)**



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**For confidential advice, information and support**