NSPCC

5 goals for 5 years to make 5 million children Safer

With your support, we can change children’s lives.

NSPCC strategy 2016-21

EVERY CHILDHOOD IS WORTH FIGHTING FOR
During our 130 years as a charity we have played our part to help bring about huge changes for children, but we know that, in an ever-changing world, there are more challenges to come. That’s why, over the next five years, we will work harder than ever to make sure we achieve even more.

In order to do this we have outlined an ambitious strategy to **make 5 million children safer by 2021**. That’s 5 million children, each with their own unique smile, their own dreams of what they want to do when they grow up, 5 million children who we can be there for to help turn their life around or keep them safe.

I feel privileged to get glimpses of this happening when I talk to different people across the NSPCC who are working to help children every day. And now we want to make millions more of these life-changing stories happen.

It’s only by working together that we can achieve this. Over the next five years we will focus our work on five goals which set out how we’re practically going to tackle the most important issues that children and their families face in the UK today:

1. Prevent child abuse in families facing adversity.
2. Prevent child sexual abuse.
3. Help children speak out and adults take action about abuse.
5. Make children safe from abuse online.

Of course we can’t achieve all of this alone. So we will form partnerships with other agencies and charities to deliver services to children and families. We will work with politicians to ensure that children receive protection through the law. And we will work with schools, families and communities to build partnerships that can protect children, prevent abuse and transform the society our young people grow up in.

And through all of this, we will need you to support us. I am proud to lead an organisation that keeps millions of children safe, and that is so ambitious in the goals we set for the future. This would not be possible without the passion, skill and expertise of people like you. So thank you so much for being part of our fight for every childhood. Over the pages that follow you’ll read about how those qualities will be invaluable as we aim to make sure 5 million children are safer by 2021.
Abuse robs children of their childhood. Instead of feeling unstoppable it can make them feel worthless, ashamed, frightened and alone. Abuse can derail a child’s development and affect all parts of their life; it stops them doing what children should be doing – like making friends, learning new things, exploring and playing. And, without help, the damage can last long into adult life – affecting relationships, physical and emotional development, learning and wellbeing.

Child abuse is action by another person – adult or child – that causes significant harm to a child. It can be physical, sexual or emotional, but just as often it’s about not providing the things that all children need – like love, care and attention. This is called neglect and we know that it can be just as damaging as other kinds of child abuse. This is because neglect deprives a child of what they need to build a strong and stable foundation for life.

We also know that an abused child will often experience more than one type of abuse, as well as other difficulties in their life. Abuse usually happens over a period of time, rather than as a one-off event. And abuse can happen online. This could be the emotional abuse caused by internet trolls or the sexual abuse that happens every time someone looks at an indecent image of a child.

In the average primary school class, at least two children have suffered abuse or neglect.¹

¹ Radford et al (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today
This is our story: the fight for every childhood

Children may abuse other children too; one third of all known sexual abuse is thought to be committed by another child or young person. The impact this abuse and neglect can have on a child’s life is devastating. But there is also a ripple effect and society as a whole pays a heavy price. For example, in the form of higher crime and poorer health.

What causes abuse and neglect?

What surrounds us shapes us. Severe, long-term problems seriously weigh people down and can make it hard to cope with the challenges that life throws at us. Social isolation, drug or alcohol misuse, poor housing, too little money and mental illness can overload our capacity to manage stress and care for children.

When people are under this weight, one-off events – such as eviction or redundancy – can trigger problems. We know that without support parents may become more likely to neglect or abuse their children. This isn’t to say such problems inevitably lead to abuse, or that child abuse can ever be excused, but that these problems make abuse more likely.

Simply put, abuse can happen to any child but when children and families experience serious long-term problems and have poor relationships, this creates significant risks for children.

The good news is that, because we know that certain things make abuse more likely, we can step in to deal with the root causes and prevent abuse happening. For example, if we provide support to overloaded parents so they can offload sources of stress, or if we help young people to manage their emotions better, we can prevent abuse.

Each of us is also shaped by influences beyond home or school. For example, the rise in the use of social networks has led to an increase in online emotional abuse. But, here too, there are opportunities to address the root causes and prevent abuse. Together we can take on the internet bullies, and work with parents and industry to help keep children safe online.

We are shaped too by our own childhoods. We know that being abused as a child can derail development. The impact can last long into adulthood – making it hard to get and keep a job, or leading to poor parenting skills increasing the risk that they will abuse or neglect their own children. But, of course, being abused doesn’t mean that you will abuse. And the right support, at the right time, can turn a life around.

How can abuse and neglect be prevented?

Better-informed citizens

The better informed we are about abuse, the greater the opportunities to prevent it. One example is the work we do with hospital maternity wards: we give parents strategies that will help them cope with their babies’ crying so they do not shake their baby in anger or frustration.

The law can sometimes help us to send a message as a society about what’s acceptable and what isn’t. Like the change in the law we achieved – together with 50,000 supporters – to make it illegal for adults to send a sexual message to a child.

Changing family circumstances and supporting family relationships

To prevent abuse we also need to make changes that improve people’s lives and wellbeing. This means putting children’s needs at the centre of how we make decisions. This could mean government investing in health visitors so struggling parents get the support they need. Or it could mean community groups helping neighbours build friendships to reduce the isolation that can make neglect more likely.

Supporting strong family relationships will also make abuse less likely. For example, we’ve developed antenatal programmes that focus on relationships within the family and how babies develop. We offer this kind of support because we know strong and stable relationships with carers create a solid foundation from which children are better able to cope with stressful experiences later on.

Earlier and more effective help when problems emerge

To prevent abuse, families need effective help when problems are first identified. For every child in the UK on a child protection plan or register, we estimate there are around eight more who have suffered abuse or neglect. We need to identify these children and get support to them quickly. We will continue to demand that the government makes children’s safety a top priority so that this can happen.

How can children be protected from abuse and neglect?

Responsibility for protecting children goes beyond the child protection system. It involves a wide range of professionals – as well as each one of us right across society.

Protecting children can mean removing children from their families. This not only saves lives, but also means – with the right kind of support – we can help children recover and go on to lead happier lives. For example, we run programmes to help social workers assess when it’s right to remove a child and run other programmes with children who have been sexually abused, helping them cope with their experiences and rebuild their young lives.
There’s a role for all of us to be there for children – to listen when they speak and to take action to make them safe. Our volunteers are there to help children speak up through Childline or their visits to schools, and to raise money for our services that help to prevent abuse and neglect.

It’s never too late to improve a life that’s been affected by abuse. Our work with children who have been abused helps them to recover and get their lives back on track; and help them to be good parents when their turn comes.

What needs to happen now?

Over the last 130 years we’ve played our part in a movement that has brought about huge changes for children. Most people now understand that abuse is widespread and that it can do great harm to children and to communities. And we’ve made significant progress: 30 years ago a child was two times more likely to die from physical assault compared with today; and parents are now much less likely to physically punish their children.\(^5\)

The urgent challenge now is to show that all forms of abuse and neglect can be prevented.

Abuse changes childhood, but – together – so can we.
This is our plan:
5 goals for 5 years to make
5 million children safer

1. Prevent child abuse in families facing adversity
2. Prevent child sexual abuse
3. Help children speak out and adults take action about abuse
4. Help abused children get back on track
5. Make children safe from abuse online
This is our plan: 5 goals for 5 years to make 5 million children safer

Over the next five years, our aim is to make 5 million children safer. We will do this by working towards five goals which we’ll continually measure to ensure we’re making real progress:

1. Prevent child abuse in families facing adversity.
2. Prevent child sexual abuse.
3. Help children speak out and adults take action about abuse.
5. Make children safe from abuse online.

By concentrating all our work on these five goals – goals focused directly on improving the lives of children at risk of abuse and neglect – we want to achieve greater impact and inspire others to join us in our fight for childhood.

The NSPCC is a movement to end cruelty to children – and we want to motivate thousands more people to join us.

Together we have changed laws. We’ve changed attitudes in society. We’ve helped children rebuild their lives. We’ve helped parents keep their children safe. And we know we can do even more. But we can’t do it alone.

We will need every single person to play their part.

That’s why we need you to be part of this movement. We need your passion and expertise. Your determination and support. Only together can we make sure that we achieve our goals.

Watch our ‘What can we do about child abuse?’ animation, which looks at why child abuse happens and what we can all do to prevent it.
Prevent child abuse in families facing adversity

The problem
Domestic abuse, substance misuse and mental health problems create significant risks for all forms of child abuse and neglect — and the more of them that are present in a family, the greater the risk to the child.

We’ll focus on making sure that abuse can be prevented even in the face of real adversity.

We know that, with the right support, abuse can be prevented so we will provide this support directly to mums, dads and carers. We’ll also work hand-in-hand with local partners to create change across the whole system.

We will:
• develop new services such as Pregnancy in Mind, which supports expectant parents, and Steps to Safety, which helps families affected by domestic abuse, to intervene early and support families facing these problems
• establish NSPCC Prevention Centres for families facing adversity where we’ll work collaboratively with local partners, to really focus resources on preventing abuse in that area
• ensure more families and children can access the services we know help.

We will know we’re making progress if:
• more families get early help from the NSPCC to prevent child abuse and neglect
• more families receive NSPCC-tested services to prevent child abuse and neglect
• people who work with children are more confident in preventing child abuse and neglect.

By 2021...

We estimate that up to 1 million children live in families where there’s drug misuse.

and up to 3.5 million children live in families where there’s alcohol misuse.

We estimate that more than 1.75 million children have been exposed to domestic abuse.

6 Manning, V. et al. (2009) New estimates of the number of children living with substance misusing parents: results from UK national household surveys
7 Manning, V. et al. (2009) New estimates of the number of children living with substance misusing parents: results from UK national household surveys
8 Based on the findings of Radford et al (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today

"THE NSPCC CAME TO SPEAK TO ME AND DAD. THEY TOLD ME ABOUT A LOCAL GROUP WHERE I COULD SPEAK TO OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WERE GOING THROUGH SOMETHING SIMILAR TO ME."

Kimberley*, who got support when she needed it most
Prevent child sexual abuse

The problem
Despite growing public awareness of child sexual abuse, not enough is being done to prevent it – stepping in after it has happened is too often seen as the only option. Yet the impact on victims is often significant and long term.

We will focus on developing practical, concrete approaches to prevent sexual abuse.

We'll work in specific locations to test a new approach to tackling sexual abuse. We’ll work with all members of the community, including victims, potential offenders and offenders, children and families to help change people’s behaviour.

The problem

We estimate 1 in 20 children in the UK have been sexually abused.9

In 2012 we estimated the financial cost of child sexual abuse to the UK to be up to £3.2 billion a year.10

We will:
• establish NSPCC Centres for the prevention of child sexual abuse to work collaboratively with local partners to achieve measurable change
• run public education campaigns, including for parents
• develop and evaluate new services to prevent child sexual abuse, including services to help children with harmful sexual behaviour.

By 2021...

We will know we’re making progress if:
• more support is available to prevent harmful sexual behaviours and offending
• we generate good evidence of ‘what works’ in preventing child sexual abuse
• people who work with children are more confident in preventing child sexual abuse.

In 2012 we estimated the financial cost of child sexual abuse to the UK to be up to £3.2 billion a year.10

We estimate 1 in 20 children in the UK have been sexually abused.9

“ANGELA* FROM THE NSPCC HELPED ME TO START THINKING OF MYSELF AS A YOUNG WOMAN WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO SAY NO, RATHER THAN A VULNERABLE LITTLE GIRL.”

Tia*, who received support after being sexually abused by her father

“WHEN I HEARD ABOUT THE UNDERWEAR RULE, I REALISED THIS DIDN’T NEED TO BE AS COMPLICATED AS I WAS MAKING IT.”

Carol, who talked PANTS with her six-year-old daughter Mabel

9 Radford et al (2011) Child abuse and neglect in the UK today. Based on NSPCC research with 11-17 year olds

*This is a true story but names have been changed to protect identity
Help children speak out and adults take action about abuse

The problem
We know from research that some children do attempt to disclose abuse, but they are often not 'heard' or what's happened is not recognised as abuse, or it is not acted on. Sometimes children themselves do not even recognise that what is happening to them is abuse. And, when they do find the courage to speak out, it is often many years after the abuse took place.

We want to motivate hundreds of thousands of people to join us in the fight for childhood. Schools, in particular, are central to children's lives so we want to work closely with them to transform the confidence of the whole school community, from teachers and helpers, through to mums and dads.

We will:
• make sure our schools service Speak out. Stay safe, reaches more primary school children in the UK, aiming to see every one of them if we can. The service will also expand so that we work with staff at the schools we visit
• offer a place for children to talk, be heard and think about what help they might want or need and how to get it at Childline. And we will do more to reach the children who need us the most
• offer adults help and advice on how to take action for children through the NSPCC helpline.

By 2021...
We will know we're making progress if:
• we deliver more Childline counselling sessions
• we answer more NSPCC helpline contacts
• more children understand about abuse and know who to turn to for help.

For every child subject to a child protection plan or register, another eight have suffered maltreatment.

We'll focus on helping children and adults to spot and speak out about abuse – and support adults to take action to protect children.

We want to motivate hundreds of thousands of people to join us in the fight for childhood. Schools, in particular, are central to children’s lives so we want to work closely with them to transform the confidence of the whole school community, from teachers and helpers, through to mums and dads.

We will:
• make sure our schools service Speak out. Stay safe, reaches more primary school children in the UK, aiming to see every one of them if we can. The service will also expand so that we work with staff at the schools we visit
• offer a place for children to talk, be heard and think about what help they might want or need and how to get it at Childline. And we will do more to reach the children who need us the most
• offer adults help and advice on how to take action for children through the NSPCC helpline.

By 2021...
We will know we’re making progress if:
• we deliver more Childline counselling sessions
• we answer more NSPCC helpline contacts
• more children understand about abuse and know who to turn to for help.

Harker et al (2013) How safe are our children?

Help children speak out and adults take action about abuse

We want to motivate hundreds of thousands of people to join us in the fight for childhood. Schools, in particular, are central to children's lives so we want to work closely with them to transform the confidence of the whole school community, from teachers and helpers, through to mums and dads.

We will:
• make sure our schools service Speak out. Stay safe, reaches more primary school children in the UK, aiming to see every one of them if we can. The service will also expand so that we work with staff at the schools we visit
• offer a place for children to talk, be heard and think about what help they might want or need and how to get it at Childline. And we will do more to reach the children who need us the most
• offer adults help and advice on how to take action for children through the NSPCC helpline.

By 2021...
We will know we’re making progress if:
• we deliver more Childline counselling sessions
• we answer more NSPCC helpline contacts
• more children understand about abuse and know who to turn to for help.

For every child subject to a child protection plan or register, another eight have suffered maltreatment.

We'll focus on helping children and adults to spot and speak out about abuse – and support adults to take action to protect children.

We want to motivate hundreds of thousands of people to join us in the fight for childhood. Schools, in particular, are central to children’s lives so we want to work closely with them to transform the confidence of the whole school community, from teachers and helpers, through to mums and dads.

We will:
• make sure our schools service Speak out. Stay safe, reaches more primary school children in the UK, aiming to see every one of them if we can. The service will also expand so that we work with staff at the schools we visit
• offer a place for children to talk, be heard and think about what help they might want or need and how to get it at Childline. And we will do more to reach the children who need us the most
• offer adults help and advice on how to take action for children through the NSPCC helpline.

By 2021...
We will know we’re making progress if:
• we deliver more Childline counselling sessions
• we answer more NSPCC helpline contacts
• more children understand about abuse and know who to turn to for help.

For every child subject to a child protection plan or register, another eight have suffered maltreatment.

We'll focus on helping children and adults to spot and speak out about abuse – and support adults to take action to protect children.

We want to motivate hundreds of thousands of people to join us in the fight for childhood. Schools, in particular, are central to children’s lives so we want to work closely with them to transform the confidence of the whole school community, from teachers and helpers, through to mums and dads.

We will:
• make sure our schools service Speak out. Stay safe, reaches more primary school children in the UK, aiming to see every one of them if we can. The service will also expand so that we work with staff at the schools we visit
• offer a place for children to talk, be heard and think about what help they might want or need and how to get it at Childline. And we will do more to reach the children who need us the most
• offer adults help and advice on how to take action for children through the NSPCC helpline.

By 2021...
We will know we’re making progress if:
• we deliver more Childline counselling sessions
• we answer more NSPCC helpline contacts
• more children understand about abuse and know who to turn to for help.

For every child subject to a child protection plan or register, another eight have suffered maltreatment.

We'll focus on helping children and adults to spot and speak out about abuse – and support adults to take action to protect children.

We want to motivate hundreds of thousands of people to join us in the fight for childhood. Schools, in particular, are central to children’s lives so we want to work closely with them to transform the confidence of the whole school community, from teachers and helpers, through to mums and dads.

We will:
• make sure our schools service Speak out. Stay safe, reaches more primary school children in the UK, aiming to see every one of them if we can. The service will also expand so that we work with staff at the schools we visit
• offer a place for children to talk, be heard and think about what help they might want or need and how to get it at Childline. And we will do more to reach the children who need us the most
• offer adults help and advice on how to take action for children through the NSPCC helpline.

By 2021...
We will know we’re making progress if:
• we deliver more Childline counselling sessions
• we answer more NSPCC helpline contacts
• more children understand about abuse and know who to turn to for help.
Help abused children get back on track

The problem
Abuse and neglect can derail a child’s development, affecting everything from their physical growth to their cognitive and emotional development. Without help, the damage can last long into adult life, affecting relationships, learning and wellbeing.

We’ll focus on increasing our understanding of which children need what help and increasing the availability of that help.

Child abuse is higher on the political and public agenda than it has been for some time, yet many children who have been abused cannot access the most basic support. Through our campaigning, and by providing more effective services, we will work to change that.

We will:
• run a campaign, It’s Time, to lobby for better support to help children who have been abused get back on track
• invest in world-class research to increase knowledge about what works in helping children
• continue to provide therapeutic services to children.

By 2021...

We will know we’re making progress if:
• more help is available to the children who need it
• improvements are made in the justice system so it better meets the needs of children who have been abused or neglected
• we generate more evidence of ‘what works’ in getting children back on track after abuse.

98% of professionals reported there was not enough therapeutic support for children who have been abused.12

We’ll focus on increasing our understanding of which children need what help and increasing the availability of that help.

Child abuse is higher on the political and public agenda than it has been for some time, yet many children who have been abused cannot access the most basic support. Through our campaigning, and by providing more effective services, we will work to change that.

We will:
• run a campaign, It’s Time, to lobby for better support to help children who have been abused get back on track
• invest in world-class research to increase knowledge about what works in helping children
• continue to provide therapeutic services to children.

By 2021...

We will know we’re making progress if:
• more help is available to the children who need it
• improvements are made in the justice system so it better meets the needs of children who have been abused or neglected
• we generate more evidence of ‘what works’ in getting children back on track after abuse.

12 Survey of 1,308 children’s health, social care and education professionals assessing current provision of therapeutic services for children who have experienced abuse and neglect. November/December 2015. NSPCC.
Make children safe from abuse online

The problem
The online world offers many opportunities for children, but it also creates new risks, including the sharing and viewing of child abuse images, and bullying from other children. And the type and scale of the challenge is fast-moving.

We will:
- lobby for change – we’ll push technology companies and government for effective controls for online safety for children
- run public education campaigns substantially extending our reach and approach
- find ways to deter people from viewing child abuse images, including funding research to find the best deterrents.

By 2021...
We’ll know we’re making progress if:
- more communications providers demonstrate best practice in relation to child safety online
- more children know how to keep themselves safe online
- more adults know how to keep children safe online.

At least
70,000
online images of child abuse were shared in the UK in 2012 (1, 13)

Childline will be there for children who are worried about things that happen online – and we will need to invest in keeping pace with digital change so that we’re capable of doing this. While we don’t know the nature of the challenges to come, we do know that finding ways to deter people from viewing child abuse images has emerged as an urgent child protection challenge.

***CEOP (2013) Threat Assessment of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

*This is a true story but names have been changed to protect identity

"THEY SET UP A FACEBOOK GROUP CALLED ‘WE HATE AMY-LOUISE’*. SPEAKING TO CHILDLINE HELPED ME COME TO TERMS WITH WHAT HAPPENED. IF I HADN’T, I DON’T THINK I WOULD BE HERE NOW."

Amy-Louise*, who spoke to Childline after cyberbullying turned her life upside down
So there are our five goals. Five goals to make sure that in five years we will have made five million children safer.

To achieve these goals we will all need to work together. Each one of us fighting for every childhood. But together, we can change children’s lives.

Find out more about our fight for the future and how you can help at nspcc.org.uk/fiveyears