

**For release 00.01 on 25 June 2010**

### **Scots urged to commit to looking out for our children**

The vast majority of Scots say they would contact the authorities if they thought a child was being neglected or abused according to research carried out by the Association of Directors of Social Work (ADSW).

On the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of ChildLine, the counselling service for children and young people, ADSW are urging Scots to act on their instincts and report any potential cases they may be worried about.

The research found that 99% of respondents would inform the authorities with half contacting social work and half contacting the police. Of the small minority who said they would not contact the authorities their reasons included wanting to take the matter into their own hands and confronting the perpetrator.

Andrew Lowe, Vice President of ADSW says people need to be able to recognise a situation that may need to be reported and feel comfortable in doing so.

“It is encouraging that the vast majority of people say they would contact the authorities and broadly know who to contact”, said Andrew Lowe, Vice President of the Association of Directors of Social Work. “Media coverage of tragic cases such as Brandon Muir and Baby Peter has at least highlighted the vital role which neighbours and friends should play in alerting us to children at risk. But, incidents that need the help and involvement of social work are often complex and people should never be afraid to report a situation that they are doubtful about.

“I know that it is not easy to inform the police or ourselves when people are unsure of the circumstances. But, our ability to protect children depends on people letting us know if they are in any way concerned about a child’s welfare. People are the eyes and ears of our communities and they should never hesitate or be afraid to contact us if they are concerned about a child. All reports we receive are confidential and will be treated seriously with care.”

Andrew Lowe warns against people taking the matter into their own hands: “We always need to consider interests of the child first. It is unlikely that taking the matter into your own hands will result in a positive long term outcome”.

If anyone is concerned about a child they should contact the social work department at their local council and also the police if they suspect they may be in immediate danger.

**-ENDS-**

**For more information or to set up interviews please contact:**

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**Notes to Editors:**

- 1) The research was carried out by Scottish Opinion Ltd. with 1037 Scottish adults over 18 using computer aided telephone interviewing (CATI). The sample is weighted to be representative of the Scottish population by age, gender, social grade and region. The interviews were carried out over 8 days from 11 to 18 May 2010.
- 2) Respondents were asked if they would contact the authorities if they became aware that a child was neglected or abused by anyone and who they would contact.
- 3) The research is part of the Social Work Changes Lives Campaign which was launched by ADSW and the Scottish Social Services Council in April 2009. Research they conducted then found that 43% of Scots were unsure about their opinion of social works services. Over the last year this has improved to 31%.
- 4) For more information about child protection visit <http://www.adsw.org.uk/News/Media-Briefings/>