

Vast majority would report child abuse

David Mitchell

NINETY-NINE per cent of people say they would alert the authorities if they thought a child was being neglected or abused, according to a survey carried out by the Association of Directors of Social Work for the Social Work Changes Lives campaign.

The survey of more than 1,000 representative adults in Scotland was released to coincide with the 20th anniversary of ChildLine in Scotland.

It found that half the people would contact their local social work department and half would go straight to the police. Of the tiny minority who said they would not alert the authorities, reasons included wanting to take the matter into their own hands and confronting the perpetrator.

Andrew Lowe, Vice President of the ADSW, said people needed to be able to recognise a situation

that ought to be reported and to feel comfortable in doing so.

He said: "It is encouraging that the vast majority of people say they would contact the authorities and broadly know who to contact.

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."

Mr Lowe acknowledged that it was not easy for people to inform social workers or the police when they were unsure about 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," he said.

"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."

He also warned against people deciding to follow their own course of action. "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."



*Andrew Lowe:
Encouraging*

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