

Reports of child abuse in Scotland on the increase

✖ Reported cases of suspected child abuse and neglect have reached record levels according to the children's charity, NSPCC.

Calls reporting serious cases abuse and neglect to the NSPCC have increased by 37 % between 2009 and 2010. This is the biggest increase the charity have ever witnessed.

Last year the NSPCC councilors working at the free 24 hour helpline reported 16,385 series cases to police and social services.

Research from the NSPCC found that nearly one in five children in Scotland were seriously maltreated.

In Scotland, there are currently around 2,518 children of all ages on a local child protection plan or register.

As a result of these findings, the NSPCC is calling for a change in UK child protection policy which will allow for effective intervention in child abuse cases.

This will mainly involve the swift reporting of cases were children are being mistreated.

Head of the NSPCC Helpline, John Cameron said: "We must pick up on children's problems as early as we can to stop their abuse. Social workers cannot be in the community all the time. But members of the public can be their eyes and ears."

He added, "The increase in referrals over the last year shows more people want to play their part in keeping children safe. We refer only the most serious cases to local agencies for further investigation. More than one in three of these cases involve families previously unknown to local authorities."

The largest rise in referrals last year was for neglect which increased by 81%. Neglect remains the top reason for people contacting the helpline. We also referred 4,113 cases of reported physical abuse, 1,520 cases of sexual abuse and 2,932 cases of emotional abuse.

The ever increasing cases of child abuse cases is why John Cameron feels that the NSPCC free phone line is a valuable tool.

He said "The rise in serious child abuse calls shows our Helpline is needed as much as ever. It only takes a few seconds to contact us. We urge people in Edinburgh not to hesitate even if they have doubts. It could be the difference between life and death for a child."

Anyone with concerns about a child should call the NSPCC Helpline on 0808 800 5000. They can also email help@nspcc.org.uk or make a report online at www.nspcc.org.uk/helpline