

Edinburgh MP calls for Childline Edinburgh closure to be reviewed

✘ Edinburgh South MP, Ian Murray, is calling on the NSPCC to review their planned closure of the Childline office in Edinburgh, amid fears that the move will let down the city's most vulnerable children.

The office, which has 14 members of staff and 10 volunteers, receives calls from thousands of youngsters every year but it is one of a number of Childline centres across the UK earmarked for closure at the end of the month by the NSPCC.

Reports suggest that following the closures Childline intends to offer a greater proportion of their services through the internet, but with 35 per cent of homes across Scotland which do not have access to the internet, Mr Murray fears many of the most vulnerable children will find themselves excluded from the services offered online.

The Edinburgh South MP is appealing to the NSPCC to reconsider their plans. He said:- "The Childline staff and volunteers in Edinburgh answer thousands of calls every year. Many of those calls are made by desperate youngsters who may have felt they had nowhere else to turn.

"If the Edinburgh office is allowed to close at the end of the month the talented pool of highly motivated staff and volunteers will be a serious blow to the voluntary sector. It has been reported that Childline intend to offer a greater proportion of their services through the internet and I can understand how this may initially seem like a sensible approach to take.

"I am concerned that the changes to the Childline service in

Edinburgh are being rushed through too quickly and I believe there needs to be a thorough analysis to make sure that the service remains accessible to all children.”

Government data suggests 35 per cent of homes do not have access to the internet in Scotland. Children living in homes where income is low, where they are cared for by a single parent or where a member of the family has a long-term health problem or disability are among those homes that are less likely to have access to the internet.

Mr Murray has already listed an Early Day Motion expressing his concern at the decision by the NSPCC to close the Edinburgh office and he has called on Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg to meet with [Childline](#) staff and volunteers in Edinburgh to discuss whether the decision could be reversed.

The Reporter asked Childline for their comment and they had this to say:-

“As part of its development programme, ChildLine has reviewed operations at its 14 UK centres in order to meet a growing demand for help from children, especially those making contact online.

Peter Liver, Director of ChildLine said:- “ChildLine provides free, 24 hour, confidential support to all children and young people, wherever they are in the UK, and however they want to contact us. We face growing demand for help and need to adapt to the changing needs of children so we can help more of them.

“To achieve this, we have undertaken a comprehensive consultation and have carefully considered the views of staff, volunteers and supporters. As a result, we will be closing our centre in Edinburgh, but increasing the number of ChildLine volunteers in our remaining centres over the next five years. Their roles will be expanded, so by 2016 we will be delivering significantly more counselling hours in the most cost-effective way.

Our plan is that counselling sessions at the Edinburgh centre will end on 31 July 2011.

“We are fully committed to working with staff and volunteers to identify suitable redeployment and volunteering opportunities wherever possible for those affected.”