

Letter to the editor – from NSPCC

✘ Dear Editor

I would like to say a personal thank you to all of your readers, who have helped support NSPCC Scotland throughout 2013.

While the year ahead is likely to bring significant change, whatever the outcome of the independence referendum, there is much more that we must do to make the lives of children here better, safer and happier.

In recent months and years child abuse has been brought to the forefront of the public consciousness, however the relentless suffering of so many children across this country demonstrates that we have much further to travel.

For many children, life is miserable, frightening, and dangerous. They are denied their most fundamental rights from the earliest days, when abuse and neglect causes profound harm – damage that lasts a lifetime but, in too many cases, is invisible.

This year we launched our Now I Know appeal, to enable our ChildLine Schools Service to visit every primary school in Scotland once every two years. We estimate that over 9,000 primary school children in Scotland are suffering from abuse and neglect right now – 80 per cent of children on child protection registers in Scotland are under the age of 11, yet only 14 per cent of children contacting the charity's ChildLine service are this young. We need to help younger children recognise abuse and empower them to seek help if they ever need it.

We also know that many adults are still not sure where to turn

to or how to report their suspicions, so we would urge anyone who has a concern about a child to contact the NSPCC's helpline for advice and support about any issues relating to child abuse, past or present, on 0808 800 5000 or email help@nspcc.org.uk

These are just some of the many steps we're taking to protect vulnerable children. We have made significant strides to help children this year, but still need the Scottish public's support to continue our work. Visit www.nspcc.org.uk to find out more, and discover the many ways you can help.

Wishing all your readers a safe and happy New Year.

Matt Forde, Head of Services for NSPCC Scotland