

NSPCC UNDERWEAR RULE

Executive Summary

With this award entry we'll share with you how we helped to change British society for the better forever, keeping many children safe from a threat that often goes unspoken.

The alarming statistics are that a third of children who are sexually abused by an adult report that they did not tell anybody else about it at the time. Yet parental conversations with children at a young age about what constitutes abuse are proven to help prevent these things from happening in the first place.

The problem is that this is a conversation that no parent wants to have with their child.

The communications solution that we created for the NSPCC overturned the 'shock' tactics of old, instead looking to encourage and empower parents to talk to their children about this crucial subject.

Our solution was the 'Underwear Rule'.

This simple, child-friendly guide, helped parents explain to children that their body belongs to them by talking PANTS. PANTS is an acronym based script that armed parents with language their children could understand. It spoke to them in a straightforward way that wasn't shocking or frightening.

We introduced PANTS through a two-pronged media approach - as a catalyst for new conversations in broadcast media, and to ladder up existing parental topics through online forums.

As a result, we prompted real action. 94% of parents now agree that it's their responsibility to talk to their children about sexual abuse, and over half of all parents in the UK have subsequently initiated 'that' conversation with their child.

WORD COUNT: 254

LEARN THE UNDERWEAR RULE

TALK PANTS AND YOU'VE GOT IT COVERED!

PRIVATES ARE PRIVATE

ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR BODY BELONGS TO YOU

NO MEANS NO

TALK ABOUT SECRETS THAT UPSET YOU

SPEAK UP, SOMEONE CAN HELP

ChildLine 0800 111111 NSPCC
Credibly to children most stop. FULL STOP.

TALK PANTS AND YOU'VE GOT IT COVERED!

01 | The Underwear Rule | How to talk about keeping safe

THE UNDERWEAR RULE
HOW TO TALK ABOUT KEEPING SAFE

We understand that talking about keeping safe from sexual abuse might feel daunting. But it doesn't have to be, just take a look at [The Underwear Rule: A brief guide for parents and carers](#). Some points – that privates are private – are pretty straightforward.

But others might be trickier. For example, what if your child starts grilling you about the difference between 'good' or 'bad' secrets? For difficult questions like these, talking it through helps. But how, when and what should you say? That's exactly what this guide can help you with. Each section covers:

- How: bringing up the subject and learning to listen.
- When: being aware of the opportunities to talk.
- What: finding the answers to your child's questions.

We hope this guide will help you, but we're always here if you need further advice or support. Call the NSPCC on 0800 800 5000 or see [our online forum](#).

HMMM. UMM. WELL THE THING IS...

ChildLine NSPCC
Credibly to children most stop. FULL STOP.

TALK PANTS AND YOU'VE GOT IT COVERED!

02 | The Underwear Rule | Why it's important

THE UNDERWEAR RULE
WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

The NSPCC's Underwear Rule campaign helps parents and carers talk to their children about staying safe. It's part of our work to prevent abuse from happening to any child.

We know simple conversations – like crossing the road safely, bullying at school and dealing with strangers – help keep children safe, and that's what the Underwear Rule is all about. It helps children understand that their body belongs to them, they have the right to say no, and that they should always talk to an adult they trust if they're worried.

We've created an easy way to remember the Underwear Rule that helps children understand these points – Talk PANTS and you've got it covered. Each line of PANTS covers an element of the Underwear Rule and provides a simple but valuable lesson that can keep a child safe.

Children can find it hard to speak out. That is why it's important to talk to them from an early age, so they can feel confident about saying no to unwanted touches. By encouraging children to talk about issues earlier, and listening to their thoughts and feelings, parents can create the culture of openness that keeps children safe from abuse.

90% OF SEXUALLY ABUSED CHILDREN WERE ABUSED BY SOMEONE THEY KNEW*

1 IN 3 CHILDREN SEXUALLY ABUSED BY AN ADULT, DID NOT TELL ANYONE ELSE AT THE TIME*

“YOU CAN HELP PREVENT ABUSE. SIMPLE CONVERSATIONS REALLY CAN KEEP CHILDREN SAFE.”

*Based on NSPCC research with 11,077 young people. Published on 22/01/14. Child Abuse and neglect in the UK today.

ChildLine NSPCC
Credibly to children most stop. FULL STOP.

Award Entry

It's not often in our industry that we're given the opportunity to drive meaningful and positive change in British society. With this paper we will show how we achieved exactly that.

With our help, the NSPCC took the sensitive subject of child sexual abuse and overturned deep-rooted cultural avoidance behaviour; it really is the conversation that nobody wants to have with their children. In enabling new parent/child conversations, we helped keep more children safe.

The alarming statistics are that one third of children sexually abused by an adult report that they did not tell anybody else about it at the time. However, NSPCC research proves that parental conversations with children at a young age about what constitutes abuse can prevent these things from happening.

Following the Jimmy Savile scandal and the Yewtree investigation that was causing uproar in the media with a tremendous amount of coverage, the NSPCC needed to act fast to inform increasingly concerned parents that they knew how to keep their children safe from abuse. There were few adult conversations between parent and child, and this wasn't helping children to open up about the subject and initiate a conversation.

The challenge has always been engaging parents. The emotional barriers of not knowing what to say or how to start this conversation are hard to overcome. In the past the NSPCC had met this resistance with brute force. Hard hitting communication like '1 in 6 children in the UK are sexually abused' was designed to shock people into action.

However, our research showed that this approach would never overcome the key barriers for parents; the expectations that "it won't happen to my kids"; "it's too hard to think about so I ignore it"; "I don't want my child to lose their innocence" and crucially "I don't know where to start or what to say".

We turned the previous approach on its head, looking to empower parents rather than scare them.

Our strategy represented a fundamental shift from the traditional shock approach - where the intention was to jolt parents into doing something that they ordinarily would prefer to avoid.

Instead, our strategy can best be described as 'Share and Shout'; the campaign empowered parents with a conversation mechanic that could be broadcast to the whole family.

This mechanic became The Underwear Rule.



It offered simple, child-friendly advice, encouraging parents to help explain to children that their body belongs to them in the most approachable and memorable way - by talking PANTS:

- P**rivates are private
- A**lways remember your body belongs to you
- N**o means no
- T**alk about secrets that upset you
- S**peak up, someone can help

PANTS was introduced to the UK through a two-pronged media approach:

We acted as a catalyst for new conversations in broadcast media for everyone to hear, with radio at the heart. And we built on the foundations of existing parental conversations on the topic in online forums.

The primary focus of our campaign was an online video and radio script that armed parents with the language that children themselves use, to engage in more meaningful, effective new conversations. Our tone of voice allowed parents to be involving and straight-forward without being embarrassing; light-hearted and child-friendly, while never shocking or frightening.

Fuelled by this script, the bedrock of our broadcast activity was a spot campaign on Global Radio through Heart and Capital FM and Bauer's Place Portfolio - three of the highest reaching radio networks for parents. Although the spot campaign worked hard to reach 58% of our mums audience, with an emotive subject like this, we felt that our paid-for advertising would work much harder if broadcast in tandem with editorial content. So we negotiated a much deeper partnership, supported editorially by Heart FM celebrity DJ Emma Bunton of Spice Girls fame. Emma is a mother and respected spokeswoman on family issues who spoke eloquently on-air for our cause and worked as an ambassador for our campaign - a trusted voice.

Global Radio research proved that the Heart Network sponsorship landed our key messaging stronger than the radio airtime alone. From the word cloud we can see that people exposed to both airtime and sponsorship took out the key messaging from the Underwear Rule and therefore deepened the engagement of the campaign.

The screenshot shows the Heart radio website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'heart 96-107 more music variety' and 'THE UNDERWEAR RULE' banner. Below the navigation, there are several content blocks: 'Cutest Pictures Of The Week' featuring photos of seals, 'Lawson Brokenhearted' music promotion, and 'Teach Your Child' section with illustrations of a family. On the left side, there are vertical banners with the 'PANTS' acronym: 'PRIVATES ARE PRIVATE', 'ALWAYS REMEMBER YOUR BODY BELONGS TO YOU', 'NO MEANS NO', 'TALK ABOUT SECRETS THAT UPSET YOU', and 'SPEAK UP, SOMEONE CAN HELP'. On the right side, there's a 'Teach your child the 'Underwear Rule'' banner and a 'TALK PANTS AND YOU'VE GOT IT COVERED!' banner.

Online we partnered with the biggest mums forum, Netmums, where there were existing conversations on the subject. This provided a safe and familiar environment for parents to explain and discuss the Underwear Rule. Netmums founder Siobhan Freegard joined the conversation, writing sensitive and supportive content around the subject, which raised the profile of the issue even further.

Tessa Herbert, Head of Marketing at NSPCC explains:

“OMD UK was a key partner in developing the communications strategy for the Underwear Rule campaign.

Their strategic planner and research manager played an important role in helping us to understand how parents were currently dealing with (or not dealing with!) this sensitive issue and which routes were likely to be most effective to encourage the change in attitude and behaviour we needed.

They identified the key insights that empathy and understanding were far more likely to engage parents than more traditional shock and fear tactics, and that by tapping into existing behaviours, parents would find the conversation much easier to instigate with their children.

The broadcast executions we developed with our creative partner told a fundamental truth, that most families have pet names for private parts, and the media strategy brought this to life through finely targeted and highly personal communication in radio and online. The combination of high-reach broadcast and endorsement partnerships with trusted channels ensured firstly that parents were engaged with the light hearted messaging, but crucially, they felt confident enough to move on to introducing the topic into everyday conversations with their children – helped and supported through accessing our PANTS guides via our own or our partners’ websites.

The NSPCC has been extremely encouraged by the results from this campaign, so much so that a second phase has gone into market in January of this year with a similar strategy – early indications are that the results are equally outstanding.”

In combination, we had a rich blend of advertising and content that subverted all the rules of traditional communication of this kind. We were inspired by the key insight that understanding and empathy are far more powerful agents of change than shock and disruption.

The screenshot shows the Netmums website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Rotherham' as the location, user 'Donna', and options for '(0)', 'My profile', and 'Log out'. The main header features the 'netmums' logo and the title 'Whatever they call it' with the NSPCC logo. Below the header is a menu with categories like 'Home', 'Local to you', 'Activities', 'Pregnancy', 'Baby', 'Your Child', 'Work & Childcare', 'Woman & Life', 'Food', 'Support', and 'Chat'. The main content area includes a featured post titled 'Baby Advice' with a sub-header 'Baby Advice' and a list of topics: 'New! The guiding principles of parenting', 'Breastfeeding advice and tips', 'Feeding your baby', 'Your baby and sleep', 'Weaning and recipes', 'Win prizes for babies in our competitions', and 'How to cut the cost of having a baby'. There are also sections for 'Baby sleep', 'Baby feeding', and 'Baby development'. On the right side, there's a 'Today on Netmums' section with a list of recent posts and a 'Netmums now...' section with a post about 'Baked Bean Curry'. The bottom right corner features a large graphic with the text 'Learn the Underwear Rule' and a quote from Siobhan Freegard: 'It's clear, simple and easy for even young kids to understand'.

With a spend of less than £500,000, we have changed UK culture forever and for the better.

Our campaign reached 91% of all mums of kids aged 4-15 in the UK.

National media channels such as The Independent newspaper and MailOnline were quick to pick up on our story and give The Underwear Rule even greater exposure.

We saw a significant rise of 267% in parents seeking advice on the NSPCC website.

YouGov research reported an increase of 22% of parents who said they now know what to say to their children to keep them safe from sexual abuse.

94% of parents now agree that it's their responsibility to talk to their children about sexual abuse.

72% of parents now cite that the most important conversation they need to have with their children is that "private areas should not be touched by others".

But our proudest achievement has been to prompt real action: over half of all parents in the UK have subsequently initiated 'that' conversation with their child, either during or after the campaign period.

We have taken a previously taboo subject for parents, and helped them initiate new conversations that will keep countless children safe in the years to come.

WORD COUNT: 1261

