

## **Has child cruelty ad gone too far?**

**DISTURBING: Leading child psychologist condemns the images of 'brutal violence'**

**By Claire Murphy**

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A LEADING child psychologist said the ISPCC's "horrific" violent ad campaign has spurred him to cancel his subscription to the children's charity.

The advertisement created by the ISPCC shows disturbing images of brutal violence against a young boy in an attempt to show how Irish children can suffer at the hands of people they know.

But consultant psychologist Owen Connolly said he was "trembling" after watching the ISPCC's video.

"It is horrific -- it turned my stomach," he said. "The child is so innocent looking and we're not seeing the aggressive male, we're seeing the hurt child.

"It will provoke all kinds of trauma. It shouldn't be allowed to be broadcast."

Mr Connolly, who has a private practice Connolly Counselling Centre in Stillorgan, said the ISPCC's ad campaign -- to be rolled out this month -- will bring up terrifying memories for abuse survivors. "They are forgetting about the adults, who have suffered abuse who are in their 40s, 50s, 60s, watching the ad," Mr Connolly said.

"When you've got a shocking image like that with an adult and a child, it's very difficult for them to deal with.

"They are not shocking the man who is doing the damage, they are shocking the child who has suffered hurt," he added.

"I think that it's appalling. To show an ad brutalising a child like that -- it's horrific."

But the ISPCC has defended the 40-second 'I can't wait until I grow up' video and said it reflects the kind of stories it hears every day from children.

Childline national manager Lloyd Byrne said the service received more than 837,000 contacts in 2010 and 13pc of these related to abuse.

"The main purpose of the ad was to shed light on the type of abuse that continues to go on, the type of calls we get into Childline," Mr Byrne said.

"You're not talking about the abuse of the past. The child in that video is a representative of some of the children we are working with.

"Yes, it's harrowing to look at, but you can only imagine how harrowing it is for a child who is living through that."

Mr Byrne said the advertisement could affect those who suffered from abuse but he stressed the need to openly discuss abuse in Ireland. "Anyone who has experienced abuse we would encourage them to seek support," he said.

"Obviously discussing such a sensitive subject -- there will be adults who may not have completely dealt with it.

"Should that stop us bringing these issues to light? I don't think so."

Mr Byrne added that the advertisement is currently online but that the ISPCC plans to broadcast it on TV, if funding becomes available.

See [www.ispcc.ie](http://www.ispcc.ie) for the ISPCC's children's rights manifesto and advertisement.

**clairemurphy@herald.ie**

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