

Deborah Meaden took to the sky for NSPCC

Dragon's Den investor, Deborah Meaden took to the skies over Bristol last night (Wednesday 23 June) to launch the Fiesta's 2010 charity partnership with the NSPCC.

As the chair of the charity's South West Child's Voice Appeal, Deborah personally thanked Fiesta organisers at Ashton Court Estate and called on would-be visitors to help raise vital funds for the charity before flying high over Bristol in a hot air balloon.

Deborah Meaden, said: "We are extremely grateful to the Bristol Balloon Fiesta's organising committee for giving a commitment to helping protect children from cruelty and abuse by choosing to support the NSPCC at this hugely popular event."

Muir Moffat, chairman of the organising committee, said: "We felt the fit between the Fiesta and the NSPCC's South West Child's Voice Appeal made it a perfect partnership.

"As well as being a great tourist attraction that provides entertainment for the whole family, the Fiesta is committed to benefiting the local community and wider region. This appeal is focused on a similar audience and by attracting around half a million visitors to the event over the four days, we hope to give more volume to the important voice of this charity."

The NSPCC launched the Child's Voice Appeal in 2008 to raise £50 million nationally to answer more cries for help through its national services, ChildLine and the NSPCC Helpline.

Demand for help is high, so the NSPCC needed to expand the NSPCC Helpline to protect more children who were too young, vulnerable or unable to speak out for themselves. Children were plucking up the courage to phone ChildLine, but were unable to get through to a counsellor. ChildLine wasn't online where children needed the service to be for them.

ChildLine received just over 1.9 million calls from across the UK and Channel Islands in 2008/2009, of which 7,800 landline calls* were received from the Bristol area.

The NSPCC Helpline received in the region of 1032 landline calls** from the Avon area.

A total of £1.6 million is needed in the South West alone and so far the total raised is around £600,000.

Nationally, thanks to donations and fundraising, the NSPCC has raised over half of the £50 million Child's Voice Appeal target.

ChildLine now provides online counselling as well as the phone service, giving children a choice of ways to contact the service, which has a base in Exeter .

Deborah added: "Launching the ChildLine online service has enabled the NSPCC to reach new children who are particularly vulnerable. Many children tell ChildLine counsellors that they didn't want to phone them with their concerns because they couldn't find the words to use, but online they feel more comfortable and able to talk about issues like self harm, suicide and sexual abuse."

Head of local fundraising in the South West, Steve Morton, said: "We want to be there whenever and wherever children need us. To protect even more children in and around Bristol and across the UK and Channel Islands from abuse and neglect, the NSPCC urgently needs more funding.

"By giving to the South West Child's Voice Appeal at this year's Bristol Balloon Fiesta, the public will be helping children at risk of abuse to be better informed, better cared for and better protected. Everyone can support the Child's Voice Appeal at www.nspcc.org.uk/southwest"

If you would like to be part of the NSPCC's charity team at the Fiesta, call 0844 892 0562 or email southwestappeals@nspcc.org.uk

This year's Bristol International Balloon Fiesta will take place from Thursday 12th to Sunday 15th of August.

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