

SEXTING



INFORMATION FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

This information aims to help parents/carers to understand the concerns associated with “Sexting” in order to better equip them to discuss the topic with their child.

“Sexting” is the exchange of self-generated sexually explicit images and messages, through mobile picture messages, webcams over the internet. Some young people also refer to this as Cybersex, sending nudes, dirty pics, or naked selfies. Sexting’ has become an increasingly common activity among children and young people, often considered by them as ‘normal’ harmless fun or flirting; what they fail to see, understand or are unaware of, is the risks and potential consequences that come with this activity.

What are the risks to my child?

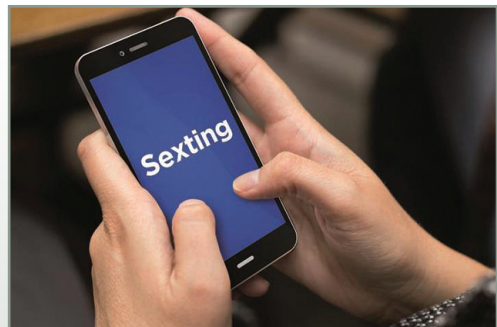
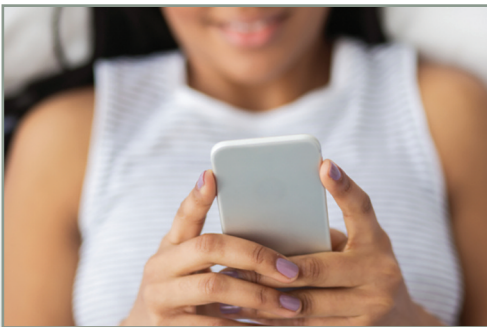
Child Sexual Exploitation is a growing and concerning risk to children and young people in today’s society, increasingly happening online; by playing on individual vulnerabilities, offenders manipulate and coerce children and young people to send indecent images of themselves and in some cases of others.

Is it against the law?

Yes it is illegal, so young people need to be aware that **taking, possessing, sharing, showing and distributing indecent images of a child under 18** is an offence; they don’t need to be an adult to commit these offences.

Sexual offences against a child under 18 can be committed by a child under 18.

The law recognises that this activity is often associated to the growing trend of taking ‘naked selfies’ and sexual images being exchanged as part of social development and pushing boundaries, not as an act of people who have a sexual interest in children.



Although this behaviour is technically criminal, police will always avoid prosecuting/ criminalising young people where possible for sharing 'experiential' images of themselves; however, every case will be assessed individually to ensure there are no underlying aggravating factors, risks, concerns or safeguarding issues. As such, young people need to be aware that under certain circumstances, they could be charged with an offence.

When an incident is investigated by police, and charges are not brought against the young person(s) involved, it is important to know that the matter may still be recorded as a crime and held on police record. Enhanced levels of vetting may disclose this in a CRB check and could still impact a young person's future employment or travel opportunities.

What are the dangers associated with Sexting?

Young people don't always recognise the possible effects that posting or sharing their images online can bring; commonly, people can get nasty and cause them additional distress, examples are:

- **Blackmail (extortion):** An offender may threaten to share the pictures with the child's family and friends unless the child sends more images, videos, money or images of others.
- **Bullying:** Images are sent to, or seen by internet peers or friends at school; this leads to them being bullied
- **Unwanted attention:** Images posted online can attract the attention of sex offenders; they know how to engage young people, search for, collect and modify images.
- **Emotional distress:** Children can be left feeling embarrassed and humiliated, made worse in situations where they are bullied or blackmailed; can lead to depression, self-harm and in some cases suicide.

What can I do to protect my child?

Talk about it - It's not always easy to have discussions of this nature with your child and may feel a bit awkward, but as a parent it's important to ensure they understand the risks of "sexting".

Be supportive - Let your child know that you are always there to support them if they feel worried or pressured by anyone, or if a situation they get involved in gets out of hand they can come to you.

Prevent - Set up parental controls and safety apps on your child's devices whenever you can to help keep your child safe. It's important to be supportive and trusting of your child and their internet use, however, it helps to know how to set controls if you need to block access to certain sites or monitor your child's activity.

Protect - See below websites for factual information, advice and online support for young people and their parents.

Thinkuknow

Thinkuknow is the education programme from the NCA (National Crime Agency) - CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command), a UK organisation which protects both online and offline - <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

Get Safe Online

Get Safe Online is the UK's leading source of unbiased, factual and easy-to-understand information on online safety. This site has a wealth of online safety advice including a section relating to Safeguarding Children - <https://www.getsafeonline.org/>

Internet Matters

Internet Matters is a not-for-profit organisation that has a simple purpose - to empower parents and carers to keep children safe in the digital world - <https://www.internetmatters.org/>

NSPCC - NetAware

Sign up to get emails on the latest social networks, apps and games your kids are using, so you're always up to date - <https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

Childnet International

A non-profit organisation working with others to help make the internet a great and safe place for children - <https://www.childnet.com/>



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