

Information for Parents and Guardians

'Sexting'... what's all the fuss?

This document has been developed to help parents/carers to understand the extent of the concerns associated with 'sexting' in order to better equip you to discuss the topic with their child(ren).

So let's start at the beginning.... What is 'sexting'?

'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. *taken by themselves

What are the risks to my child?

✓ **Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)**

CSE 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.

✓ **It's Illegal:** Young people need to be aware that **taking, possessing, sharing, showing and distributing indecent images of a child U18** is an offence; they don't need to be an adult to commit these offences - sexual offences against a child U18 can be committed by a child U18.

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 avoid prosecuting/criminalising young people where possible for sharing sexualised images of themselves, their friends or others; however, every case will be assessed individually to ensure there are no underlying 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 concerning young people sending indecent images 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.

✓ **Repercussions:** 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; this made worse in situations where they are bullied or blackmailed, this can lead to depression, self-harm and in some cases suicide.

What can I do to protect my child?

✓ **Talk to your child:** 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'. Advise them about staying safe, future impact and reassure them they can talk to you if something ever makes them feel uncomfortable, worried or things go wrong for them. The NSPCC provides guidance for parents on how to approach the conversation. (see P.2)

SECONDARY SCHOOL SEXTING: Posting and Sharing Images Online



- ✓ **Learn together:** There is a wealth of advice and support online for young people and their parents about the risks and dangers online – from speaking with strangers to sending naked images. CEOP has produced some excellent videos for young people and parents to watch, these can be found on the **Thinkuknow** website, so why not watch and discuss these together - links can be found on page.2
- ✓ **Reassure your child:** 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.
- ✓ **Take control:** Set up parental controls on your child's devices and use safety apps to help keep your child safe. It is important to be supportive and trusting of your child, however, it helps to know how to set controls if you need to block access to certain sites or monitor your child's activity; below is a list of sites and tools to help you and your child to stay safe.

Leicestershire Police

Call 101 for non emergency help and advice or call 999 if a child is in immediate danger

NSPCC

CSE or Sexting visit the website for advice and support

Call 0808 800 5000 – help for adults concerned about a child

Web: www.nspcc.org.uk

CEOP - ThinkuKnow

'Exposed' – a video on the ThinkuKnow website to show the consequences of sharing images

[Consequences](#) – a video that shows the consequences of sharing images and how it can evolve into CSE (find on Youtube)

Web: www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Parent Info

Collaboration between [Parentzone](#) (Digital support) and [CEOP](#)

Go to Web: www.parentinfo.org to find out more about understanding 'teen speak' and building resilience online

O2

Have joined forces with NSPCC to provide parents with skills and tools to keep their children safe online

Go to their website and visit the Digital Family homepage

Vodafone

Digital Parenting Resource to provide parents with skills and tools to keep their children safe online

Go to their website and visit the Digital Parenting homepage

EE/T-Mobile & Orange

Keeping Children Safe Online is a resource for both children and their parents; providing videos to help better understand dangers and consequences. Click to their website to visit the homepage.

Three (phones & tablets)

Offering advice and instructions about making your child's device safe to use; Visit the website for further details

'How To' - You may also find these practical guides helpful:

1. Set up the Vodafone Guardian App
2. Set up Blackberry® Parental Controls
3. Check Vodafone content on your child's mobile



Selfie Cop

SelfieCop sends parents a copy of every photo or video taken on their child's Smartphone; this tool helps deter, detect & defuse unsafe behaviour or any temptation for *Sexting*. SelfieCop is NOT Spyware! It is a safe-guarding tool which the child will know is there... To download the app visit www.selfiecop.com

Apps for your child

Empowers kids to take control when they are under pressure to send intimate images of them self online

Send this Instead App



Childline Zipit App

