

## Fact Sheet - Sexting

Sexting involves sharing inappropriate or explicit images online or through mobile phones and has become increasingly common among young people.

These sexually suggestive images have become a form of currency being shared as a part of, or instead of sexual activity, or as a way of starting or maintaining a relationship with a significant other.

Sexual messages and images may be exchanged as a way of flirting, proving commitment, showing off, or even just as a joke. They might not even be considered as sex images by the person who sends them. Images are sometimes passed to friends for their entertainment value, as a joke or for fun particularly by younger children who might find it funny to send a friend a picture of an intimate body part.

### What are the risks?

Children and Young People might not realise that they could be breaking the law by having in their possession, sending, receiving or forwarding on sexual photos and videos of under-18s.

Sex offenders who search for sexual images of young people on the web might make contact, pass the image on to others or blackmail the person in the image into committing indecent acts.

Whilst it is very easy to send a photo or message the young person has no control about how it is then passed on. It could be deleted on social media or may only last a few seconds on apps like Snapchat, but these images can still be saved or copied by others leading to a total loss of control of these personal images.

When images are stored or shared online they become public. Once they are out there on the web these images may never be completely removed and could be found in the future, for example when applying for jobs or university.

### **Useful websites**

[www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk)

[www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

[www.nspcc.co.uk](http://www.nspcc.co.uk)

[www.netfamilynews.org](http://www.netfamilynews.org)

[www.theparentzone.co.uk](http://www.theparentzone.co.uk)

[www.vodafone.com/parents/guides](http://www.vodafone.com/parents/guides) - Invaluable guides for parents, clearly detailing how to set controls on a wide range of internet enabled devices.

[www.telfordsafeguardingboard.org.uk/lscb/downloads/file/1/dangers\\_of\\_sexting](http://www.telfordsafeguardingboard.org.uk/lscb/downloads/file/1/dangers_of_sexting)

Parenting of the child of young person whilst on the internet is no different to any other aspects of parenting however it would appear that parents undertake far fewer basic checks eg who they are talking to, who they are meeting up with and where they are

Police advice for keeping their child safe online include the three W's: Where, Who and What.

**Where?:** Where are they going online. What sites are children visiting, which methods of social media do they use.

**Who?:** Who are they meeting online, who are they talking to, who are they exchanging images with.

**What?:** What are they doing online, are they talking to people they don't know, are they arranging to meet people, are they exchanging photos / images and if so, of what?

**It is the responsibility of all professionals, parents and volunteers to help our young people protect themselves.**

### **Recommended action for parents:**

1. **TALK** about sexting as part of wider conversations about relationships, sex, growing up and respecting others. Don't panic and don't worry if you find it embarrassing – the important thing is to open up the dialogue and begin guiding your child.
2. **BEAR IN MIND** that young people don't necessarily label things in the same way adults might – your son or daughter might not consider something to be 'sexting' even if you do, so choose your language carefully when speaking to them.
3. **DISCUSS** with your child what could happen if they share a sexual image of themselves (like it being seen by someone they don't want to see it, spread around school or even broadcast on Facebook or Blackberry Messenger). Once they share an image on the internet or on a text, it can end up anywhere and they won't be able to get it back.
4. **REASSURE** them that you understand there's a lot of pressure to send revealing photos or videos and work together to come up with ways to try and resist the pressure.
5. **EXPLAIN** that it's illegal to take, hold or share indecent images of under -18s in the UK.
6. **ENCOURAGE** them not to pass other peoples sexts on, as it could be part of a bullying campaign and they could be breaking the law.
7. **CHECK** whether sharing sexual messages and images online and on mobiles is covered as part of your child's sex education classes at school and how the teachers would handle sexting incidents.