

Image-based abuse and sexual extortion

This fact sheet includes information for parents and carers about image-based abuse and sexual extortion and how to get help.

What is image-based abuse?

Image-based abuse occurs when intimate, nude or sexual images are **shared without the consent** of those depicted, or a threat to share the content is made. This includes images or videos that have been digitally altered.

What is sexual extortion?

Sexual extortion, or sextortion, is a serious form of image-based abuse which can be in the form of **online blackmail** where a perpetrator threatens to reveal explicit images of a person unless they give in to their demands.

It is important to know that an offence has been committed as soon as someone asks a young person to produce and send a single explicit image or video. This can be considered child sexual abuse and exploitation material.

How does it work?

In these cases, offenders can be manipulative and make a young person feel there is no way out of the situation, including **blackmailing victims and threatening to share explicit content online** with family, friends, and acquaintances.

In exchange for not sharing a victim's explicit content, offenders are often **seeking additional explicit photographs, videos or even money**.

Fear, coercion, and manipulation keep the crime going and are how offenders can make victims feel like there is no escape.

In addition to the threats and coercion, young victims often feel that they have done something wrong and will be punished by parents or carers or prosecuted by law enforcement if their actions are discovered.

Situations involving image-based abuse or sexual extortion can be complex and difficult, so it is important that parents and carers are supportive and know how to take action.

Where does it happen?

Young people can be targeted through **social networking, image or video sharing apps or instant messaging**, by people known or unknown to them.

An interaction may begin by giving compliments, flattery or offering the child something they value in exchange for sending explicit images.

Tips for staying safe

- If your child receives a personal sexual image from someone, they should know to **delete it** straight away and **not share or store it**
- Talk to your child about how they use their social media accounts; ensure they use **strong privacy settings** if they are sharing content with others
- Find out who your child is talking to online, encourage them to **avoid unknown random 'friend' or 'follower'** requests
- Ensure your child is **critical of online interactions**; not everyone is who they say they are
- Collect as much evidence as you can including **screenshots, URL's, usernames or any other records** to make a report to police.
- Be **open and non-judgemental** if your child comes to you for help. If you react negatively they might avoid coming to you for help with future issues.

What to do

- If your child is or has been a victim, reassure them that it is **not their fault** and that there is **help available**
- Remind them that nothing is so bad that they can't **tell someone**
- Ask them **how you can help** them and what they may need
- Be **open and ready** when they need to talk
- Collect as much **evidence** as you can including screenshots, URL's, usernames or any other records to make a report to police.

Parents and carers may also consider the following options to help their child manage the situation:

- **Avoid** sending any more images, once you have complied with their demands there is nothing preventing them targeting you again
- **Encourage** your child to tell the other person they do not have permission to share their content
- **Block** the person's number/profile/ email address.

Getting help

Online child sexual exploitation, including **grooming** and **extortion**, can be reported to the

The **Childline website and NSPCC** has information and resources to prevent online child sexual exploitation as well as how to report and get help.

If a child is in immediate danger, call the police on 999.

If you become aware of explicit content that has been posted online, including child sexual abuse material, report the site to the NSPCC. They have a range of powers to take action to have content removed.

Childrens Helpline 08001111 is a free, confidential telephone and online counselling service for young people between 5 and 25 years old.

You can call the NSPCC on 02078252505. Contact Helpline on help@NSPCC.org.uk