

Advice and guidance for parents on 'Sexting'...

As parents and as schools, it's important we help educate young people on the danger of social media and their digital footprint. To support parents with this, we will from time to time send out guidance to prompt conversations at home. Please find below some key information that has been published by the NSPCC. Unfortunately sexting and sharing of images happens a lot more than we think amongst young people.

NSPCC

What is sexting?

Sexting is when someone shares sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others, or sends sexually explicit messages.

They can be sent using mobiles, tablets, smartphones, laptops - any device that allows you to share media and messages.

What the law says...

Sexting can be seen as harmless, but creating or sharing explicit images of a child is illegal, even if the person doing it is a child. A young person is breaking the law if they:

- take an explicit photo or video of themselves or a friend
- share an explicit image or video of a child, even if it's shared between children of the same age
- possess, download or store an explicit image or video of a child, even if the child gave their permission for it to be created.



However, as of January 2016 in England and Wales, if a young person is found creating or sharing images, the police can choose to record that a crime has been committed but that taking formal action isn't in the public interest. Crimes recorded this way are unlikely to appear on future records or checks, unless the young person has been involved in other similar activities which may indicate that they're a risk.

Why do young people sext?

There are many reasons why a young person may want to send a naked or semi-naked picture, video or message to someone else.

- joining in because they think that 'everyone is doing it'
- boosting their self-esteem
- flirting with others and testing their sexual identity
- exploring their sexual feelings
- to get attention and connect with new people on social media
- they may find it difficult to say no if somebody asks them for an explicit image, especially if the person asking is persistent



How to talk to your child about sexting...

Every child is different, so your approach should be based on their character and your relationship with them. You could:

- outline your expectations and explain the rules of having a mobile, tablet or smartphone
- ask them what they feel is acceptable to send to people, if they'd be happy for you or a stranger or other children to see certain photos. If the answer is 'no', explain that the image, video or message is probably not appropriate to send.
- make sure they're comfortable saying no, that they know their body is private and being asked to share explicit images is inappropriate
- explain to them about the importance of trust and consent in a healthy relationship. Tell them that it's not ok for someone to make them feel uncomfortable, to pressure them into doing things that they don't want to do, or to show them things that they're unhappy about. Let them know that they can speak to you if this ever happens
- you may find it easier to use real-life examples, such as television programmes or news stories, to help you explain the risks

For more information and ways to support your child with this topic, please visit;

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/sexting/>