

## Cyber Safety — Message for Parents — The Risks of Sexting



Imagine this....Your child sends a nude or semi nude picture of themselves on their phone to a friend or someone they've met. It might be meant as a joke or a bit of "harmless" fun, or because that person says they love him or her. Or maybe the other person asked them to send it. The person receiving the image then sends it on to their friends and now it's on everyone's phone, perhaps spread across several schools and even on a social networking site. Your child is horrified and says they don't want to go to school anymore and they can never go out in public again.

Sadly this isn't an imaginary situation, this is the ongoing concern over what is commonly called "sexting" and that teenagers can get involved in sending sexual photographs of themselves to each other via phones and social networking sites.

### What is sexting ?

- ◆ naked pictures or 'nudes'
- ◆ sexual pictures
- ◆ 'underwear shots'
- ◆ rude text messages or videos.

When people talk about sexting, they usually refer to sending and receiving:

### It's not harmless

Young people may see 'sexting' as harmless activity but there are risks. Taking, sharing or receiving an image, even voluntarily, can have a long-lasting negative impact they may think they know and trust who they send an image to but this could be someone they've never actually met or someone hiding behind a fake profile.

### It's illegal - It may be common but 'sexting' is illegal.

By sending an explicit image, a young person is producing and distributing child abuse images and risks being prosecuted, even if the picture is taken and shared with their permission.

### No control of images or how they're shared

It's easy to send a photo or message but the sender has no control about how it's passed on. When images are stored or shared online they become public. They can be deleted on social media or may only last a few seconds on apps like Snapchat, but images can still be saved or copied by others. These images may never be completely removed and could be found in the future, for example when applying for jobs or university.

### Vulnerable to bullying blackmail or harm

Young people may think 'sexting' is harmless but it can leave them vulnerable to blackmail, bullying, unwanted attention or emotional distress.

Parents should read the latest advice and tips for parents on sexting at :

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

[http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/14\\_plus/need-advice/selfies-and-sexting/](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/14_plus/need-advice/selfies-and-sexting/)



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