

Empowering young people with additional learning needs to connect safely online.

Posting nudes and sexting

Young people may hear that 'everyone is sharing nudes' and feel pressured to do this if they believe they are in a romantic relationship. In fact, this is not true. Nobody should feel that this is expected or that they have to do this to keep a relationship alive.



Less than 10% of teenagers under 16 share nudes, but the percentage is far higher among young people who are vulnerable or have additional needs such as emotional or mental health needs or learning difficulty.

Get insight into the reasons why young people may get involved in sexting and what you can do to support your child on this issue and manage the situation.

How might this happen?

Catfishing

Your child might be 'catfished' by someone who pretends to be someone else online.

This person might seem to:

- Be a young person in love with the child, but is older
- Offer protection and understanding
- Like the same music and have the same interests
- Understand their worries

If they build trust, they might:

- Be quite controlling
- Try and coerce the young person to send nude or semi/nude pictures
- Scam or blackmail a child into sending or giving money
- Threaten to get them into trouble
- Bully or humiliate the child

Signs to look out for on profiles:

- Fake profiles may have a blurry or poor-quality photo
- The profile may have been set up very recently
- The person has very few or no friends or contacts
- The profile has very few photos or other details
- The profile photo hides part of the person's face



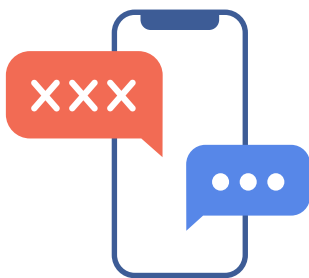
What to look out for

- Your child receiving **many more messages than before** at all hours (controlling behaviour)
- A new relationship that is **moving too fast**
- Your child is asked **to talk on another social media app**
- **Your child looks upset** on receiving messages
- Your child is talking to someone on **video/facetime a lot more than before**
- **Your child hides their phone** or becomes secretive when you approach
- **Your child is seen with a new phone.** In rare cases, a child can be given a smartphone to use to communicate with this person who tells them it is a gift because they love them. The intention is to hide the relationship from parents and carers. Children in care experienced being given a fancy phone by someone who seemed to 'love' them.



What you can do to help them

- If your child is being pressured to send nudes by a person or group from your child's school, **approach the school or other people in charge if it is a youth group, care setting, or other organisation.** They have a duty to safeguard your child
- The person who leads on safeguarding within a school or service should be told and **they will follow the steps that are needed to investigate and report this**
- **Mediation may be used** and a school will try to prevent any further sharing of the image/s by other students
- **Encourage your child** to tell you if anything worries them online or on their phone
- **Do not threaten** to take away their phones or close their social media accounts
- Some young people believe that their online life is their identity and they barely exist without this. **If they fear you will take these steps, they may not confide in you when they most need to do so.** They may also fear that they will lose their friends and sources of support



What the law says about sexting and nudes

- **It is against the law to try to solicit sexual images from a child and to possess or distribute explicit images of a child.** Under the law, anyone under 18 is a child. If the child is under 13 the offence is even more serious. For more information, visit: <https://childlawadvice.org.uk/information-pages/sexting/>
- Since January 2016 the police have the option to record an incident as "Outcome 21", which makes a note of it taking place but not putting it on a criminal record. Many sexting incidents are now dealt with in this way. However, for more serious incidents (for example, deliberately sharing an image to abuse - using the image to coerce or exploit the victim) prosecution may still take place.

Where to go for help



The Zipit app

Can help your child fend off requests to share nudes from young people they know. It provides witty ways to say 'no' and advice.



Childline

A free helpline.



Childnet Project deSHAME

Resources for educators to tackle sexual harassment.



CEOP

If you need to make a report to one of CEOP's Child Protection Advisors.



If you believe it is more serious than one-off inappropriate behaviour between young people who have now apologised and tried to make amends, you are free to report it to the police.