



# What's the problem?

A guide for parents of children and young people who have got in trouble online

THE  
LUCY FAITHFULL  
FOUNDATION

# How is this guide going to help you, as a parent?

Here at the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, we know how hard it is for parents and carers when their child gets into trouble online, either through inappropriate or illegal behaviour. We talk to numerous families on our Helpline who are in this very situation and we have learnt that there isn't a lot of information or help available for families needing to come to terms with what has happened.

The Internet, mobile phones, portable tablets and internet enabled gaming devices have become an integral part of everyday social and working lives. Our children are experiencing the World Wide Web from a young age and although these advances in technology offer a wealth of opportunity, they can also pose risks to our children.

This guide is designed to answer some of the immediate questions you may have after learning about something that is happening, or has happened, in your child's online life. This could be that they have been viewing adult pornography, or have an unhealthy interest in accessing adult material. It could be that your child has sent a naked picture of themselves to someone else or posted it online and is struggling with the consequences, or it could be that your child has been arrested by the police for viewing sexual images of people under 18.

Our experience tells us that parents and carers receive little or no help to understand what has happened and why, as well as little guidance on how they can talk to their child about it and help prevent it from happening again – we hope this guide will help you think about some of these issues.

At any time you can call our Helpline on 0808 1000 900 to talk to an operator about what is happening to your family. Our operators are experienced in this area and calls are completely anonymous.



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# Children and Young People Online

## What's the problem?

This guide will look at three main issues:

- My child exhibits risk taking behaviour by accessing adult pornography.
- My child has behaved irresponsibly by sending or receiving sexual images.
- My child has been arrested for viewing indecent images of children.

We also have three sections of general information.

**Talking about sex** aims to help parents think about talking to their child about sex. We know this is a daunting task for many parents so have included practical tips to help make communicating with your child a little easier.

**Internet safety** gives general advice and guidance around helping to keep children safe online. **The Jargon buster** gives definitions for commonly used terms relating to the Internet.

Finally, we have included an example **family safety plan** which families can use going forward to help prevent a reoccurrence of the behaviour. Each family safety plan will be unique and you can tailor it to your own family circumstances.



# 3 issues you may be dealing with



## My child exhibits risk taking behaviour by accessing adult pornography

Before the invention of the Internet, children and young people curious about sexual terms, phrases or the act itself were likely to talk to each other, or older siblings about it; these days they 'Google it'. Even phrases which seem, on the face of it, rather innocent can lead children towards websites hosting adult content. Research also shows that young people are prone to seeking out sexual material, to discuss with friends or for their own sexual gratification. If your child has been accessing adult pornography which is inappropriate for their age, or has been preoccupied with accessing adult content, this guide is for you.

## My child has behaved irresponsibly by sending or receiving sexual images

'Sexting' is now also known as 'youth produced sexual imagery'. It involves the sending or receiving of sexual images by text, email or social media has drawn a lot of media attention over recent years. It is a phenomenon which did not exist before the internet age. By their nature, children and young people are curious and often, through their development, look to push boundaries. The consequences of 'sexting' to your child can range from mild embarrassment to extreme feelings of shame, particularly if your child has been ridiculed by others for their actions. If your child has been coerced into sending images, there are other factors to consider. Whatever the situation, and the apparent consequences, this guide will help you work through them.

## My child has been arrested for viewing indecent images of children

If your child has been arrested in connection with 'internet offending' – the viewing, downloading or distribution of indecent images of children you will probably be feeling very strong emotions including fear, shame, shock and distress. Whatever your child has done, it is important to remember that they are still a child. It will be as traumatic for them as it is for you, perhaps even more so. However, now that the behaviour is out in the open, your child can be helped to stay safe in future. This guide will help you consider the immediate situation as well as some of the potential consequences.

If you want to talk about what is happening to your family, call the **Stop it Now! Helpline** for confidential advice on **0808 1000 900**



# My child exhibits risk taking behaviour by accessing adult pornography

## What are we talking about?

By adult pornography we mean sexually explicit images and videos featuring consenting adults aged 18 or over.

Websites from around the world operate under different rules and regulations and with varying degrees of access. For example, some UK sites require age verifications before you can access material. However, many websites which operate abroad do not; leaving doors wide open for young people to find all sorts of legal pornography (soft through to hard) and in some cases illegal pornography.



# What you need to know

## Coming to terms with what has happened

It is often a shock to parents when they realise their child has accessed adult pornography

You may be worried about what your child may have seen, the effect it may have on them and how you will talk to them about this. You may feel you are being forced to explain sexual matters a lot earlier in your child's development than you thought you would.

If your child is very young and has stumbled across pornography or been shown something by a friend they may be upset by what they saw. It is likely your child is feeling confused and they may have lots of questions. It is difficult to give a 'one size fits all' approach here, as each child is different and will be at different stages in their development. Nevertheless, it is important to remain calm and talk to your child.

If your child is purposefully accessing pornography it is important to remember that many young people access adult pornography at some point and for most, it is unlikely to have an adverse impact upon their development in the long term.

However, given the increasing ease with which more extreme images can now be accessed, parents need to be extra vigilant in trying to reduce their child's exposure to such material.

When coming to terms with this behaviour, it will be important that you:

- talk to your child about what they have seen
- let them know why you are concerned about their access to such material at their age
- try not to make them feel bad or ashamed about what has happened. This will encourage them to talk to you if they have problems in the future.

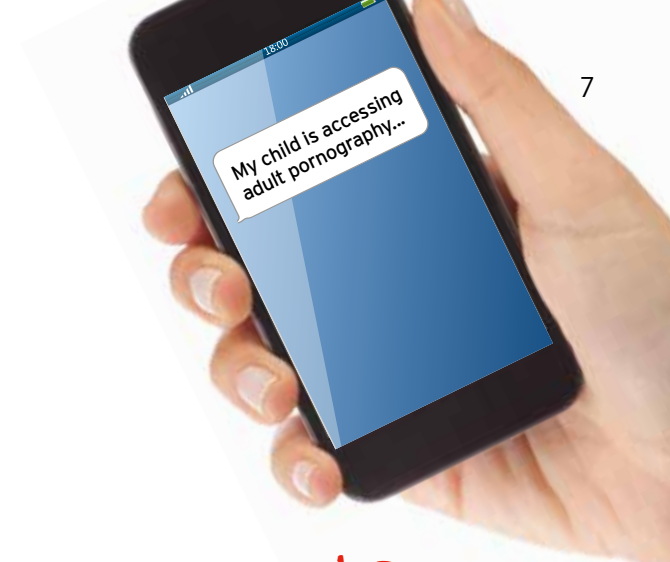
## How safe is my child?

There are many factors to consider such as the age and vulnerability of individual children; how much time they have spent looking at pornography and the nature of the material they have viewed as well as whether they have been influenced by others or if the activity took place in the presence of older children/friends.

Having some initial conversations with your child will help you figure out the extent of what has been happening.

**If you want to talk to someone about this, you can call the Stop it Now! Helpline on 0808 1000 900 for confidential advice.**

Do remember that many young people access adult pornography at some point and for most, it is unlikely to have an adverse impact upon their development in the long term.



**Golden Rule:**  
If it's illegal offline  
it's illegal online



## Telling others, if, when and how

Children and young people will often be very embarrassed when a parent or carer discovers they have been viewing pornography.

It is important not to react in a way that results in the child experiencing extreme feelings of shame. This includes thinking carefully about who needs to know and why. For example, other adults who may be responsible for supervising the child or young person may need to be made aware, but extended members of the family who have no regular direct contact with your child may not need to know.

Try to be as open as you can with your child about who you plan to talk to and why. A key message should be that you have a responsibility to try and keep them safe and that involving other adults is a helpful way of doing this.

## The Law

In the UK, adult video on demand websites are regulated by the Authority for Television On Demand (ATVOD) and sites must keep explicit sexual images out of reach of under 18s. However, the internet is global and websites operated from other countries, many of which have no regulation, can be easily accessed from the UK.

There are a number of legal acts which cover pornographic material. The law applies to the online environment in the same way as it would apply to any other type of media.

**What is illegal offline is illegal online.**



## Extreme material

In the UK possessing extreme pornographic material – such as images depicting rape – is illegal under Section 63 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2008.

## Indecent images of children

Making, distribution and possession of indecent images of children is illegal under section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1978 and section 160 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. This means sexual images and videos of anyone under 18.

## Obscene publications

The Obscene Publications Act 1959 covers material which depicts extreme scenarios ranging from sexual acts with animals to realistic portrayals of rape.





## Discussion topics

Talking about pornography with your child can be daunting and the conversation will differ with children of different ages. Here are some suggested areas for discussion with your child if they have been accessing pornography:

### Impact on future relationships:

You can talk to your child about how the use of pornography can lead to unrealistic expectations of sex and relationships in the future. Perhaps ask them to describe how they would like relationships to be, encouraging them to think about love and trust. You could then consider with them whether love and trust is what they see happening in pornography.

### Pre-occupation:

You could talk about the time they spend looking at pornography and how this may have been impacting on other day-to-day activities. You could talk about what they could have been doing instead of looking at pornography.

**Consider posing the question: How many young people do you think would have chosen to pursue a career in the pornography industry when they were at school?**

This prompt will help you discuss how many vulnerable people end up in the industry.

### The legal dangers of pornography:

It would be a good idea to talk about the risk of looking at illegal images of children or young people. It's important your child understands that it is illegal to view or be in possession of sexual images of people under the age of 18 and if they do so they could end up in trouble with the police. If your child is under 18 it is also illegal for them to send sexually explicit images of themselves to others.

### 'Porn on the Brain' TV documentary:

You could search the Internet for Channel 4's 'Porn on the Brain'. As part of Channel 4's Campaign for Real Sex, *Porn on the Brain* is an authored film by journalist Martin Daubney, who walked away from his position as editor of lad's magazine *Loaded* after becoming a father. Confused by alarming headlines and driven by the knowledge that his boy would soon reach the age at which most children first see porn (10 years), Martin explores the effects of porn on children and young people. Once you have watched this yourself, consider whether it is suitable for your child. This will depend on their age, stage of development and their use of pornography.

## Healthy relationships, consent, compliance and coercion

Viewing pornography can result in young people developing distorted and/or unhealthy attitudes towards sex and relationships. It can also negatively impact on self-image with young people questioning why their bodies do not look like those they see in pornography.

Adolescent girls may have mixed feelings about pornography, and to feel pressure to look and behave like the women involved in pornography.

Young people, both male and female, may develop unhelpful sexual arousal patterns and unrealistic expectations of sex.

Young people are also increasingly more technologically proficient and there is the danger that access to adult pornography could lead to additional risk taking/harmful behaviours on the Internet.

## Specific resources that may help

### Talking to children about porn:

<http://familylives.org.uk/advice/teenagers/sex/porn>

### Internet Matters [www.internetmatters.org](http://www.internetmatters.org)

An internet portal which aims to direct parents and carers to credible information on how to keep children safe online.

### Reward Foundation [www.rewardfoundation.org](http://www.rewardfoundation.org)

Includes information on how to quit porn.

### BISH UK [www.bishuk.com](http://www.bishuk.com)

A guide to healthy sex and love for everyone over 14.

### O2 and NSPCC <http://www.o2.co.uk/help/nsppcc>

Advice on how to keep children safe online



# My child has behaved irresponsibly by sending or receiving sexual images

## What are we talking about?

“Sexting” describes the use of technology to share personal sexual images or videos. It’s a mix of the words “sex” and “texting”. It is also referred to as ‘youth produced sexual imagery’.

It is called this because:

- ‘Youth produced’ includes young people sharing images that they, or another young person, have created of themselves
- ‘Sexual’ because the material is of a sexual nature
- ‘Imagery’ covers both still photos and moving videos

This behaviour involves:

- Someone under the age of 18 creating & sharing sexual imagery of themselves with a peer under the age of 18
- Someone under the age of 18 sharing sexual imagery created by another person under the age of 18 with a peer under the age of 18 or an adult
- Someone under the age of 18 in possession of sexual imagery created by another person under the age of 18

For example, this could be a picture of a boy or young man exposing himself or a girl or young woman in a state of undress; for example, in her underwear.

This sexually explicit material can be sent in a number of ways; via text message, email, through online messaging or chat facilities, or through social networking sites.



# What you need to know

## Coming to terms with what has happened

Most young people today are entirely comfortable with recording their entire lives online – much like other generations used to do in a diary.

These days though, this often includes uploading and sharing photos, status messages or updates on what has been happening in their lives or how they are feeling as well as texting back and forth with friends.

While this 'finger on the pulse, share all' culture has some benefits, it can also create an environment in which teenagers and young people make impulsive decisions without thinking through the possible consequences. Often times, they are only a click away from doing something digitally that they would not normally do in the 'real world'.

There could be many reasons why young people would want to take 'sexy' pictures of themselves and send them to someone else. It could be that two young people who are in a relationship want to prove their love or commitment to each other; it could be that someone is looking to start a relationship with someone else, or it could be that they simply want to show off or fit in with what their friends are doing.

*When coming to terms with this behaviour it's important to remain calm so that your child feels they can talk to you.*

It's likely your child is regretting what has happened and could be feeling embarrassed and ashamed.

It is also possible that your child was pressured or coerced into doing what they did. If this is the case, they'll need help in learning how to respond to peer pressure and having respect for themselves and their bodies.

## How safe is my child?

It is likely that your child voluntarily took the images or videos that have landed them in trouble. If they have posed or acted sexually and then deliberately sent the material to someone else, it is most commonly a real or prospective boyfriend or girlfriend. Be assured that you can help your child realise the dangers associated with this behaviour.

Remember that your child will probably be feeling embarrassed and ashamed of what has happened. They are likely to be regretting their actions. These feelings are likely to help them refrain from acting in this way again but it is important to talk to your child to see if there are any other issues: for instance, if they were coerced into taking and sending the pictures or video.

If your child was coerced in some way, it will be important to talk to them about who this was, how the pressure was applied and how they feel about that person now.







**If you have any concerns about the safety of your child you should talk to someone about this. You could call the Stop it Now! Helpline (0808 1000 900) for confidential advice. If you think your child may be in immediate danger you should call the police. You can also contact Children's Services teams directly.**

It is also important to note that while it is rare, there have been cases of young people being so distressed by what has happened they have attempted or succeeded in taking their own life. Keep a close eye on how your child is coping and seek help if you have concerns about their mental well-being.

Reassure your child that you still love them. Reinforce the message that they can turn things around, and that they are worthy and deserving of help. They may feel like everyone knows what they have done and that they are being judged. It is important to encourage them to connect with their strengths, like sport, music, art and friends.

## Telling others, if, when and how

If your child's 'sexting' behaviour has come to attention it is likely that other people in their life already know. This could be their school, the police and your child's friends.

You need to think about who else needs to know. This may be other adults who may be responsible for supervising your child. Remember though that not everyone will need to know what has happened.

Try to be as open as you can with your child about who you plan to talk to and why. A key message should be that you have a responsibility to try and keep them safe and that involving other adults is a helpful way of doing this.

## The Law

This type of behaviour is illegal – because the material involves people under the age of 18. Under section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1978



and section 160 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988, making, distributing and possessing indecent images of children is a criminal offence. This is the case even if the people involved are under 18 themselves.

However, outcome 21 is a recent ruling by the Home Office. It states that it is not always in the public interest to prosecute in cases of youth produced sexual imagery – for example, where there is **no evidence** of exploitation, grooming, making a profit or malicious intent (such as uploading pictures onto a pornographic website) or if the behaviour was repeated. This means that even though a young person has broken the law, the police can choose not to take any further action if it is considered not to be in the public interest to do so. It also means that police have discretion to respond appropriately to cases of youth produced sexual imagery and to record incidences in such a way that do not have a negative impact on young people.

A police investigation should take place to ensure the young person is not at risk of harm. This could involve the police finding out if the self-taken images have resulted from grooming or facilitation by an adult or if they are a result of children and young people pushing boundaries and experimenting with their friends. This approach is informed by Section 1(1) of the Children Act 1989, which states that within the context of any statutory intervention the welfare of the child is paramount. This approach is reinforced by Section 11 of the Children Act 2004, which places a duty on key persons and bodies to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Involvement in this type of activity can be indicative of other underlying vulnerabilities. Children and young people may be

at risk in other ways. If the police think this may be the case, they may make a referral to Children's Services.

However, young people who persist with this behaviour may find themselves subject to a more robust police response, potentially using police reprimands or even prosecution in certain circumstances.

## Discussion topics

If we think back to our own childhoods we have probably all done embarrassing things in our time. Back then, however, they were probably not recorded online, where they could stay forever. It is important to remember that once something has been put online it will never be fully erased.

Discussions with your child could focus on the fact that when we share something electronically, either online or directly to someone we lose control of it.

## Your experiences:

If you can, talk to your child about things you have done or experienced. Can you think of something that happened when you were their age and what might have happened if it had ended up online? What might the consequences have been? How might you have felt about that?

## Relationships:

You can use this opportunity to talk about healthy relationships. How relationships should make us feel safe and comfortable and should involve mutual respect. No one should feel pressured into doing anything, particularly sexual things. Be open to the possibility that your child may be exploring their sexual identity through their online

behaviour. If you find it difficult to talk to your child about this have a look at the resources available to talk with young people about sex.

## Long-term consequences:

You should consider talking to your child about long-term consequences associated with sexting if the content is shared with others – either by people forwarding it on using messages or emails or by uploading it onto a social networking site or website. You could ask them what a prospective college, university or employer might think if they were to see it.

## Peer pressure:

Peer pressure can be a formidable force so make sure your child knows that you understand that they could be pushed into sending something. Talk to them about making positive decisions and be sure they understand that no matter how great the pressure becomes, the potential social humiliation could be a hundred times worse. Also let them know that they can talk to you about this pressure and how they can go about dealing with it.

## Taking responsibility:

Make sure your child understands that they are responsible for their actions. This includes what they choose to do if they receive a sexually explicit photo. Have them understand that if they do receive one, they need to delete it immediately. Tell them that if they do send it on, and the photo is of someone under 18, they're distributing child pornography – and that they could get into trouble with the police.



Research indicates adolescent girls, more so than boys, sometimes feel pressurised to take part in sexting behaviour

## Healthy relationships, consent, compliance and coercion

As we have discussed, there could be many reasons why your child decided to send to someone else or post online sexual images of themselves – they may have been trying to impress someone or show off, or it may also be a way of exploring their sexual identity.

Any sign that your child was coerced into sending images or posting them online could indicate more serious problems. It could be that they are in an unhealthy relationship, or that they felt they had no choice, or they could be being sexually exploited by someone. It will be important to talk to them about who applied the pressure, how they did it and how they feel about the person now.

Peer pressure can be a strong force among children and young people so ensure your child knows that they can

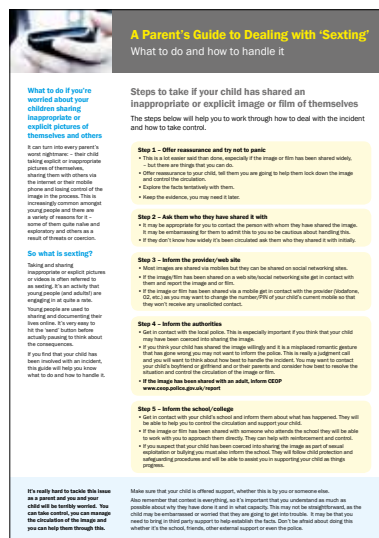
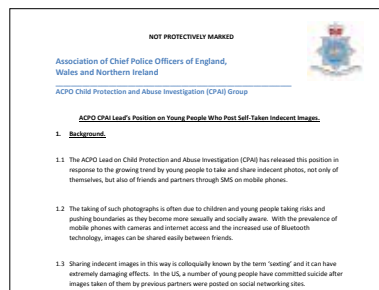
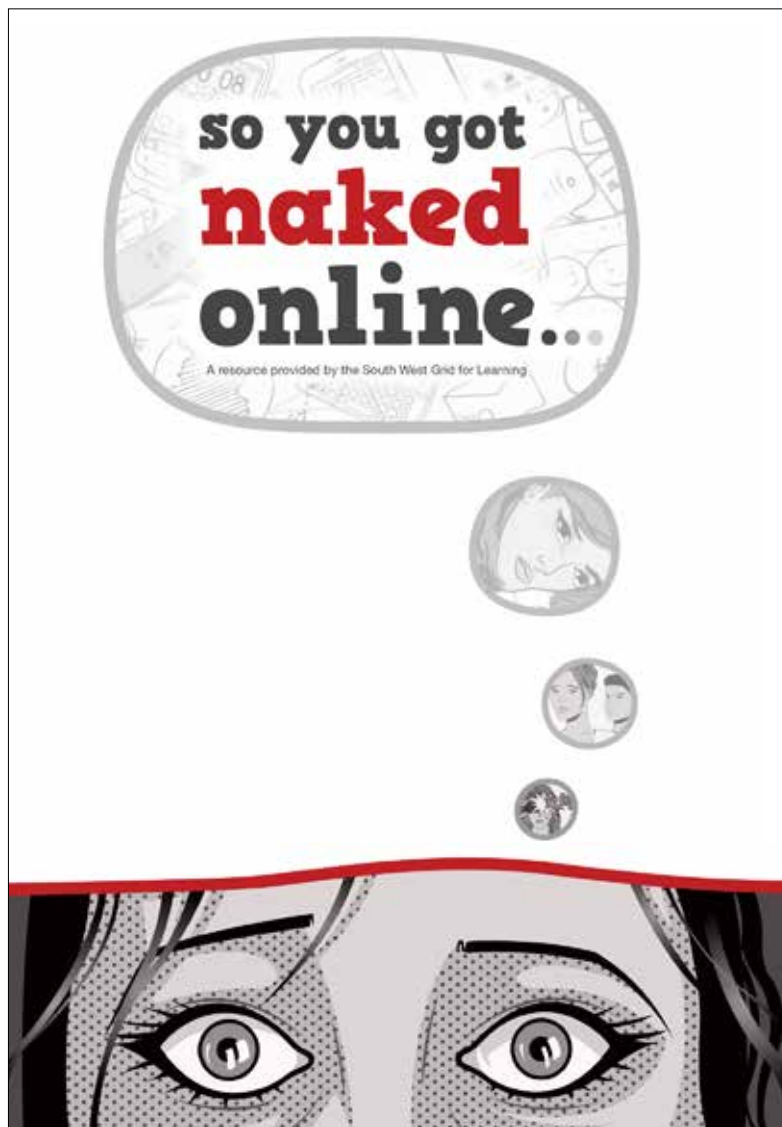
talk to you about being pressured to do things they may not want to. Talk to them about making positive decisions and about having respect for themselves and their bodies. Encourage your child to give themselves 'think time' and remember they don't have to respond to anything straight away.

Research indicates adolescent girls, more so than boys, sometimes feel pressured or obliged to take part in sexting behaviour. Their compliance may mask hidden anxieties and sometimes raises questions about their ability to make positive choices about their sexual behaviour.

Take this opportunity to talk to your child about healthy relationships and how they should make us feel safe, comfortable and loved.



If you have concerns that your child may be being sexually exploited you could call the Stop it Now! Helpline (0808 1000 900) for confidential advice. If you think your child may be in immediate danger you should call the police. You can also contact Children's Services teams directly.



## Specific resources that may help

A leaflet aimed at young people who have posted or sent sexual images:

[www.swgfl.org.uk/Staying-Safe/So-you-got-naked-online/Download-Page](http://www.swgfl.org.uk/Staying-Safe/So-you-got-naked-online/Download-Page)

Association of Child Police Officers guidelines on sexting:

[http://ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/externaldocs/ACPO\\_Lead\\_position\\_on\\_Self\\_Taken\\_Images.pdf](http://ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/externaldocs/ACPO_Lead_position_on_Self_Taken_Images.pdf)

A parent's guide to dealing with sexting:

[www.saferinternet.org.uk/ufiles/A-Parents-Guide-to-Dealing-with-Sexting-26SEP13.pdf](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/ufiles/A-Parents-Guide-to-Dealing-with-Sexting-26SEP13.pdf)

A short video from the NSPCC on how to stay safe online:  
I Saw Your Willy - Be Share Aware - NSPCC

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=sch\\_WMjd6go](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sch_WMjd6go)

# My child has been arrested for viewing indecent images of children and young people

## What are we talking about?

By 'viewing indecent images of children and young people' we mean sexual images of people under 18. These types of images are illegal to look at (view), share with others (distribute) or create (physically take or create the image or video or 'create' by downloading or saving a copy).

If your child has been arrested for viewing such material then it is likely the images involve children being sexually abused (exploited) which have been placed on the internet for others' sexual pleasure.

Images that have been 'self-taken', for example taken by young people and loaded onto the internet voluntarily (e.g. onto a social network, see sexting section) have been known to be 'stolen' from their original destination and circulated and posted elsewhere for the sexual gratification of others.

The number of unique indecent images of children in circulation on the internet runs into millions with the majority being hosted abroad. Efforts are made by police and the Internet Watch Foundation to find, block access to and remove images, but the scale of the problem is much bigger than the capacity to do this.

Responses to this behaviour vary considerably depending upon the circumstances. Criminal prosecutions are often sought. You will need to think about legal representation and ensure your child's rights and best interests are protected.



# What you need to know

## Coming to terms with what has happened

Both you and your child are likely to be experiencing very strong emotions including fear, shame, shock and distress.

You might feel a sense of loss, as if you don't know your child as well as you thought you did. It is important to remember they are still the same child, and they need you to guide them back onto the right path. You may also feel guilty for not noticing. Remember to help your child take appropriate responsibility.

**You may be wondering who you can talk to about what has happened. The Stop it Now! Helpline is available for you to call on 0808 1000 900. The Helpline is confidential and operators are experienced in helping people work through what is happening. They can also advise on support for your child.**

When coming to terms with this behaviour it's important to remember that no matter what your child has done, they are still a child. They will likely need re-assurance that you still love them. Being arrested for offences involving underage sexual images can be a very traumatic experience and your child will need to know you are there for them even if they have done something wrong.

## How safe is my child?

Now that your child's behaviour is out in the open you can help ensure they stay safe. To do this you'll need to have some gentle conversations with your child about their behaviour.

Your child may not want to talk about it and you'll need to reassure them that your interest is in helping to keep them safe.

You could explain that children and young people can access material like this in different ways. How they

accessed the material can have a bearing upon their subsequent wellbeing.

It would be helpful to find out if they were involved in this behaviour with anyone else, perhaps people they met and talked to online, or whether they were operating in isolation. If they have been talking to others the police will likely be interested in this also.

You could introduce the idea of a 'family safety plan' to your child and the family as a whole. As a family, you devise a plan which will help keep people safe. This could involve restricted or supervised internet access, opening lines of communication and planning to have daily catch-ups with your child about how they are feeling.

[See page 27](#) for some ideas around creating a plan. You could call the Stop it Now! Helpline to discuss it.



## Telling others, if, when and how

Being arrested for any offence connected to child sexual abuse carries with it a very heavy stigma. From our experience, parents and young people in this position express great concern about the child being labelled a sex offender.

Your child may also be frightened of the reactions of those close to them and worried about the breakdown of important, key relationships.

During this difficult time, it is vital you consider who needs to know and why. For example, other adults who may be responsible for supervising your child or young person. Not everyone will need to know what has happened. Furthermore, your child will likely need protecting from being judged by others.

If you decide to share what has happened with family or friends, ensure that you plan this carefully. For example, choose a time and place when you will not be interrupted and prepare what you will say in advance.

Prepare your child for the fact that those receiving the information are likely to be shocked and upset and may ask many questions.

There may be people who you have to talk to about what has happened, for example, teachers at your child's school or college. Explain to your child that you need to speak to

some people about the situation and be clear that whilst you are there for your child, you also have a responsibility to ensure other children are kept safe which may require you to share information with others.

Caution your child about sharing too much information with their friends. Whilst a close friend can be a good

support you will need to help your child consider whether that friend may share the information with others.

You may also be struggling with complex feelings and need an outlet to discuss your fears and anxieties, for example, with a supportive relative. Try to be open with your child about who you will tell and why.



## The Law

Making, distribution and possession of indecent images of children is illegal under section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1978 and section 160 of the Criminal Justice Act 1988. This means it is a crime to take, make, permit to take, distribute, show, possess, possess with intent to distribute, or to advertise sexual images and videos of any person below the age of 18.

There are a range of different ways in which the police and courts can deal with children and young people who have been arrested for offences involving indecent images. Much will depend upon the specific circumstances of individual cases.

Your child may be placed on police bail while the police investigate. This will involve police interviews and examinations of computers and other technical devices.

Outcomes vary, and will depend on the specifics of the case. These can include:

- No further action, if the police find no crime has been committed.
- Being cautioned for the behaviour.
- Being charged with a crime, resulting in a court appearance.
- A community sentence which might enable your child to access support and help if considered appropriate.
- A custodial sentence.

A caution or conviction will result in your child being placed on the sex offenders register. The duration will be determined by the sentence they receive.

You will need to think about legal representation to ensure your child's rights are protected. You could contact the Law Society or the Citizens Advice Bureau for help in identifying a suitable solicitor.

## Discussion topics

This is going to be a traumatic time for you and your child. Gently opening lines of communication will be beneficial to both you and your child.

### Your child's feelings:

Acknowledge that your child is likely to be experiencing a range of strong emotions and may feel very vulnerable. Explain that whilst you do not condone the (alleged) behaviour, you still love them and will support them as best you can.

### Let them know it is OK to talk to you:

Your child will probably be feeling rather isolated, particularly if there have been consequences such as not being allowed in normal classes at school or college. Make sure your child knows you are there for them and they can talk to you at any time.

## Sexual development:

Explain how viewing such material can lead to unhealthy and damaging messages about sex and relationships at a time when their patterns of sexual arousal are becoming established.

### Encourage them to continue hobbies and healthy interest activities:

It's important that your child keeps occupied, active and engaged in life. Perhaps talk about your child's interests and aspirations and see if you can find new activities for them to pursue.

### Help and support:

Depending upon the extent of the problem, your child may need professional help. Let them know that if this is the case you will support them in this regard. Children's Services, your GP and/or the police may advise you with regard to professional help. **You can call the Stop it Now! Helpline to discuss this on 0808 1000 900.**

### Be careful not to minimise the behaviour:

Be clear with your child that although it may have been relatively easy to access such material, the behaviour is both illegal and wrong. Explain that they are not 'just pictures' but images of real children, many of whom will have been sexually abused.



## Healthy relationships, consent, compliance and coercion

Viewing sexual images of children and young people can damage future relationships by creating unhealthy sexual interest, arousal patterns and expectations.

In considering the images your child has been viewing, do remember that children and young people cannot consent to such images being taken. They are usually 'groomed' or coerced by adults for financial gain and/or sexual gratification.

## Specific resources that may help

### Stop it Now! UK and Ireland

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

A helpline for people concerned about child sexual abuse, including parents and carers of young people who have displayed inappropriate or illegal online behaviour.

### The Law Society


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

The Law Society is the independent professional body for solicitors. It provides advice on legal issues and can help you find expert help for your legal problem.

### Citizen's Advice Bureau


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

Your local citizens advice bureau could also be a source of help when looking for a solicitor.



**Stop it Now! Helpline**

Together we can prevent child sexual abuse






# Talking about Sex (and the language to use)

We know that for most parents, talking about sex with their children isn't easy. This section aims to give some helpful tips to help make communicating with your child about sex a little easier.



- **Don't think you will make things worse.**

Most researchers and sex education experts agree that there is no evidence to suggest that talking about sex will increase the chance of a young person engaging in sexual activity. In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that talking about sex can actually contribute to young people delaying having sex, because they can make more informed decisions. Young people who have good sex and relationship education are also more likely to use contraception than those who have not received this education. Remember: knowledge is power, and young people need to make informed choices from reliable sources, such as you.

- **Young people need to see intimacy and sex as something that is valued and worth talking about.** Having these conversations about sex sends them an important message, i.e. it matters.

- **If your child is at school, talk to teaching staff about what they are teaching and when.** You can then prepare for any necessary discussions if you are aware of the school sex education curriculum.

- **You know your child best, so remember to trust in your ability to speak to your own child when the timing feels right.** Take the opportunity when relevant situations arise naturally e.g. if a relevant story comes up on TV, in the news, if they are talking about one of their friends.

- **Don't make sex a taboo.** Create an atmosphere in your family home that treats sex as something private and deserving of respect, but also send out messages that sex is ok to talk about and ask questions about it. Whilst parents are expected to exercise some control over the media based sexual content in the home, it is more important that if children see sexual material, they can have this put in context or ask questions of their parents.

- **Don't make assumptions about who your child is attracted to.** Also, don't automatically assume that they know themselves yet.

- **Don't make a big deal of it.** In order to communicate clearly with your child about sex, don't feel pressured to have 'the talk'. This can be daunting for you and your child, and can send quite an unhelpful message about sex. Consider instead opening the lines of communication as opportunities arise or when the subject comes up, using a drip-drip approach. Make it a normal, ongoing thing to talk about sex, when it feels natural or helpful ('little and often'). This will give your child the all-important message that if they need to ask they can. One of the easiest ways to turn the conversation to sex is during everyday activities, making it less of an event. Think about how you can use soap operas, magazine articles, news stories etc.

- **Listen to what your child has to say and ask them questions.** Also remember, young people can ask questions in subtle ways and you might have to help them 'get it out'. Don't be afraid to ask direct questions; sometimes this can make it easier for young people to say what they want to ('is it this?'). Your confidence in asking questions will help them to feel confident in asking questions themselves.
- **Remember that young people need a balance between biology** (e.g. pregnancy, contraception, sexually transmitted infections) **and the relationship side of sex** (e.g. 'how do I ask her out?')
- **At times, it can help to talk one step removed.** Ask what your child's friends think about the subject. This can be a way of talking about your child's thoughts and fears indirectly.
- **Lastly, make sure you know the facts.** If you don't know something, let them know and then try to find out for them.

## Useful resources

### Brook

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

Brook helps more than 250,000 young people every year to make positive and healthy lifestyle choices and to improve their personal health and emotional wellbeing. They publish a series of booklets, leaflets, posters and teaching materials.

### Family Planning

[www.fpa.org.uk/help-and-advice/advice-for-parents-carers](http://www.fpa.org.uk/help-and-advice/advice-for-parents-carers)

Family Planning resources for parents looking to talk to their children about sex.

### NHS

[www.nhs.uk/video/Pages/talking-to-teenagers-about-sex.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/video/Pages/talking-to-teenagers-about-sex.aspx)

Includes a video about talking to teenagers about sex.

### Department for Education

[www.education.gov.uk](http://www.education.gov.uk)

Search the Department for Education website for information and links to resources on sex and relationships education at school, including a downloadable leaflet for parents about sex and relationship education  
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20130401151715/http://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/SRE%20DfES%200706%202001.pdf>

### Family Lives

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

A social networking and advice site giving parents of teenagers a space to support each other through the challenges and successes of bringing up teens.

### Parents Protect

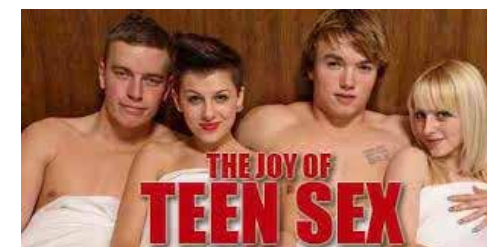
[www.parentsprotect.co.uk/files/traffic\\_light\\_helping\\_you\\_understand\\_the\\_sexual\\_development\\_of\\_children\\_under\\_5.pdf](http://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/files/traffic_light_helping_you_understand_the_sexual_development_of_children_under_5.pdf)

[www.parentsprotect.co.uk/files/traffic\\_light\\_helping\\_you\\_understand\\_the\\_sexual\\_development\\_of\\_children\\_5-11.pdf](http://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/files/traffic_light_helping_you_understand_the_sexual_development_of_children_5-11.pdf)

These traffic light tools help parents to gauge what is "age expected" sexual behaviour in children and when to be worried.

### TV Programmes

Also look out for TV programmes such as 'The Joy of Teen Sex' and 'The Sex Education Show'. You can find some of these online which would be worth watching.



# Internet Safety Top Tips

You can also find more information on how to stay safe online via the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) website: [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

**Depending upon the age and maturity of your child, consider keeping computers in communal places where you can see the screen.** Similarly, you may find it helpful to agree and set boundaries around your child's 'screen-time' i.e. how much time they spend watching TV, on the internet, their mobile phone etc.

**Seek advice from your internet service provider to block inappropriate content.**

You could consider installing additional software to enable you to manage and monitor your child's internet use. This could also act as a discussion topic.

**When buying a new computer, mobile phone, gaming device or any new technological item.**

Ask a sales assistant which Internet safety devices are available to help manage your child's Internet access.

**Help your child to enjoy their time on the Internet but also encourage offline activity;**

for example – playing with their friends, participating in family activities and developing hobbies.

**Teach your child not to give out personal information about themselves.**

Personal information could include their name, address, telephone number, where

they live or which school they go to. If they're signing up for email, chat or on a website, get them to use a nickname and make sure that it's one that does not identify their year/ date of birth or have sexual connotations.

**Talk to them about the need to be careful of friends online.**

Friends online might not be who they say they are. Ask your child to consider if they would talk to their 'real life' friends in the same way they do to online 'friends'.

**Be open.** Take an interest in their online world just as you would in their offline activities. Talk to them about what they've seen or sites they have visited, just as you might talk to them about a book they've read or a film they've seen.

**Encourage your child to report any accidental access to sexual material such as pop-ups, and praise them if they do.**

Let them know that they can tell you if they become uncomfortable with anything that happens on the Internet and acknowledge that it may be difficult for them to do this. They may have said things they are embarrassed about and wouldn't want you to know. Help them learn that we all make mistakes when growing up and that you can help.

**Remind your child that once an image is**

**sent, there is no getting it back.**

Stress that once they have sent an image, or posted it online, they no longer have control of it and it could end up anywhere. Ask them how they would feel if their teachers, parents, or their whole school saw what they had sent.

**Ensure your child understands the danger of meeting up with someone they have only met online.**

Whether that person says they are a man, woman or child and that they should never go on their own.

**Useful resources**

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

A website where you can find e-safety tips, advice and resources to help children and young people stay safe online

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

An internet portal which aims to direct parents and carers to credible information on how to keep children safe online

[www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com)

Advice, information and tips on ways to keep your child safe online.

<https://www.net-aware.org.uk>

A guide to social networks children and young people use



# Jargon Buster

**Address (URL):** An address, or website address is what you type in to find places on the Internet. They begin with www (world wide web), followed by the name of the organisation or company. For example, the education section of the Houses of Parliament is at <http://www.parliament.uk/education>. An email address is different, because it is used to contact an individual. Email addresses always include the symbol @ (pronounced 'at'). A fictional address might look like this: [joebloggs@parliament.uk](mailto:joebloggs@parliament.uk). Read aloud, this would sound like 'Joe Bloggs at Parliament dot UK'.

**App (Application):** Usually downloaded to a mobile device, apps are self-contained programmes or pieces of software designed to fulfil a particular purpose.

**Attachment:** This is a file of information that can be sent as part of (attached to) an email. It may contain text, photos, graphics, sound or video.

**Blog:** Short for 'weblog', a blog is an online personal diary that records the author's opinions on various matters as well as containing links to other websites the author likes.

**Broadband:** An 'always-on' connection to the Internet using specially installed equipment that works with your phone line to deliver online information and images rapidly to your computer.

**Browser or web browser:** This is a piece of software (computer instructions or a computer programme) which lets you explore, or browse the Internet. Examples include Internet Explorer, Google Chrome and Firefox.

**Chat room:** A place on the Internet, accessed through a computer or mobile device, where people communicate by typing messages. People all over the world can communicate in a chat room, where everyone can see

what is being typed by everyone else, either on their computer screen or mobile device.

**Cloud-based storage:** Data can be stored on 'clouds', instead of on your computer – cloud storage is accessed via the internet. The benefit of cloud storage is that it is harder to lose data (for example, if a computer breaks, data stored on the 'cloud' is easily recoverable).

**Cookies:** Cookies are small files automatically downloaded to your computer by websites that you access: cookies can contain information about what you've looked at on that website. The site then 'knows' that you have been there before, and sometimes, cookies tailor what pops up on screen next time you visit the site to suit you more.

**Download:** This means to transfer information to your computer. Often it is free. For example, you may download an image from a website onto your computer so you can print it out. You can also download software that allows you to chat. You can even download a piece of music from music websites.

**Email (electronic mail):** Messages sent electronically (over the Internet) from one computer to another.

**Emoticon:** A combination of characters and punctuation used in typed messages which, when viewed from a certain angle, resembles a facial expression. For example, :) is a 'smiley face' and :( is an 'unhappy face'.

**Facebook:** A social networking site where people can have their own page on the internet, play games, talk to their friends and share information.

**Favourites:** A place on your Internet browser to store web addresses that you use often, or don't want to forget.

**Filter:** Computer software that allows you to block certain material from your computer. You can, for example, block websites with violent, sexual or racist content.

**Firewalls:** Firewalls are used to prevent unauthorised Internet users from accessing private networks or computers connected to the Internet. All messages entering or leaving the computer pass through the firewall, which examines each message and blocks those that do not meet the specified security criteria.

**Flickr:** A website where people can share their photos for others to see.

**Follow/following:** Subscribing to automatically see when a person (who you are following) posts something on a social media site.

**Google:** A company known for providing a popular search engine for people to browse (or 'surf') the internet.

**Grooming:** Online grooming may occur by people forming relationships with children and pretending to be their friend. They do this by finding out information about their potential victim and trying to establish the likelihood of the child telling. They try to find out as much as they can about the child's family and social networks and, if they think it is 'safe enough', will then try to isolate their victim and may use flattery and promises of gifts, or threats and intimidation in order to achieve some control in order to sexually harm them.

**Hacker:** Someone who attempts to access secure information over the internet without permission – they do this by exploiting weaknesses in a computer system (e.g. an insecure password).

**Hashtag (#):** Used on social media sites such as Twitter to identify messages on a specific topic.





**Hotspot:** An area in which you can connect to a wireless internet connection.

**Icon:** A small picture or image, often self-explanatory, which makes something happen when you click on it. For example, clicking on a printer icon will print the page you have on your computer screen.

**Inbox:** The destination of emails you receive; where you can view your emails.

**Instant Messaging:** A way of exchanging typed messages with a friend or group of friends over the Internet, similar to sending text messages from mobile phones.

**Internet:** A worldwide network of computers that connects people and information. Also known as 'the net' or 'the web'.

**ICQ (I seek you):** Internet software you download (from [www.icq.com](http://www.icq.com)) that tells you which of your friends are online and lets you contact them. The software lets users chat, send messages and files, exchange web addresses and play games.

**Instagram:** An online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing and social networking service that enables its users to take pictures and videos, and share them on a variety of social networking platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Flickr.

**iTunes:** A software program, run by the company Apple, that allows you to buy and play a variety of multimedia products, including music and videos, and transfer them to products by Apple (such as iPods and iPhones).

**IRC (Internet Relay Chat):** Another form of online chat. You need to download some software to use it. Visit [www.mirc.com](http://www.mirc.com) to find out more.

**ISP (Internet Service Provider):** You need several things to connect to the Internet: a browser on your computer, a modem (see below) and an ISP to connect you. ISPs are commercial companies that have different ways of charging you for their services. Well-known ISPs include BT, Talk Talk, Virgin and Sky, but there are many others.

**Kik:** An app that lets you send texts for free.

**LinkedIn:** A social network site where people make professional business connections.

**MMS:** Stands for multi-media messages service. This means sending messages between mobile phones or between mobile phones and computer email. These can be text messages, still images, short films or audio clips.

**Modem:** A modem is part of your computer that lets it communicate with others through telephone lines. Some modems are built into computers and some are added on as external devices.

**Moderated chat room:** Chat rooms that have a person or a piece of technology to supervise the chat and make sure it is suitable.

**Newsgroup:** Newsgroup, communities and clubs are discussion groups on the Internet. Unlike chat rooms, users do not communicate 'live', but post messages to each other on a particular topic. They are potentially open to abuse, for example, through people posting illegal material.

**Online/Offline:** Being online means being connected to the Internet. Offline is sometimes used as another term for the real world (i.e. outside the Internet).

**Parental control software:** Software which can help restrict what children or vulnerable people can do and see on the internet: for example, parental control software will restrict access to pornography websites.

**Peer to Peer (P2P):** A method of file sharing over a network, in which individual computers are linked via the Internet.

**Picture messaging:** Many new mobile phones are fitted with digital still or video cameras. You can take pictures with these and send them via the mobile networks to other mobile devices with the same technology or to email addresses via the Internet.

**Profile:** Some chat rooms, and most social networking sites, let users complete a personal profile which others can see. Children and teenagers should never include in a profile

any information that could identify them, or disclose where they are.

**Recycle bin:** A place files go to on a computer before being permanently deleted. So, if you delete something by accident, you can recover it from your recycle bin.

**Re-tweet (RT):** Twitter language for taking a Tweet (a message) somebody else has posted and posting it again on your own profile so that your followers can see it.

**RSS:** A programme which can alert parents/carers when their child updates their blog with new information or a new photo.

**Selfie:** A self-taken photograph (taken, for example, with a mobile phone which has a built-in camera or a webcam).

**Sexting – also known as Youth Produced Sexual Imagery:** Describes the use of technology to share personal sexual images or videos.

**Sharing:** When someone shares content from a website or app using a social networking site, it appears on their 'profile' for their friends to see. Sharing, therefore, helps people using a website to show their friends things that are important to them.

**SMS:** Stands for short messaging service and means sending text messages by mobile phones.

**Smartphone:** A type of mobile phone which can also perform some of the functions of a computer, like accessing the internet, editing files, and playing games. Many smart phones also have touch-screens.

**Snapchat:** An app that allows users to take a picture/short video, and add drawings to these, and send them to friend's mobile devices. The sender can control the



amount of time (ranging from 1 to 10 seconds) that the image/video will be viewable for, once opened. The idea is that once the recipient opens the ‘snap’ to view, it will be hidden and deleted, hence, not able to be viewed again.

**Social Networking Site:** The phrase used to describe any website that enables users to create a public profile within that site and form relationships with other users of the same website. Examples include Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn.

**Spam:** Like junk mail through your door, spam is email you haven’t asked for and don’t want. It can be sexually explicit, which is another reason for children not to give out their email address when they are online.

**Spoofing:** Attempting to get someone to give you their private data over the internet/email by posing as a reputable company (e.g. a bank). Also known as phishing.

**Streaming:** Watching a sound/video file on the internet without downloading it.

**Tablet:** A keyboardless computer displayed on a screen, which you use by touching it with your fingers or a stylus to navigate. Examples include iPads and Samsung Galaxy tabs.

**Tags/tagging:** To label a piece of content (like an image, blog post or video) with keywords so that it is easy to find and ends up in search results.

**Trend/trending:** An internet trend is a topic, event, picture, video, catch-phrase, app, etc. that is being widely used or discussed and mentioned over social media.

**Troll:** An internet term used to describe someone who deliberately posts contentious and offensive remarks online in an attempt to provoke others.

**Twitter:** A social networking website where people can only post short messages of 140 characters or less. These short messages are called ‘Tweets’. People can use Twitter on their phones via an app.

**Upload:** To post something onto the internet.

**Username:** An identifying name you give yourself to log

into services, which you can choose yourself. A username does not need to be your real name.

**URL:** Another term for an Internet, or website address. (It stands for Uniform Resource Locator.)

**Vine:** A short-form video sharing service which allows service users to record and edit five to six-second long looping video clips. These are then shared on social networking sites.

**Viral video:** A viral video is a video that becomes popular through the process of Internet sharing, typically through video sharing websites, social media and email. Viral videos often contain humorous content. Once something has ‘gone viral’ it means it has been shared multiple times and may be hosted on numerous websites.

**WAP:** WAP stands for Wireless Application Protocol and is the technology used by most mobile phones to browse Internet sites that are written in a compatible format.

**Web:** The vast collection of websites that has been put into the Internet by companies, organisations and individuals. It is sometimes used to mean the Internet, but strictly speaking is only one area of it. Newsgroups, for instance, are Internet services, not web services. You and your children, however, can access both.

**Webcams:** This term is short for web cameras. They are special video cameras that can be linked to the Internet. Just like ordinary cameras, you point them at something, say a friend or a view of the beach, and the image appears, more or less straightaway on your computer screen. While they are a fantastic piece of technology, they could be used to send or receive unpleasant or illegal images.

**Whispering:** Whispering is a way of sending a private message to an individual in a chat room. This is like having a private conversation with a stranger. As in the real world, it is safer to stay in the public area of the chat room.

**Wi-Fi:** Wi-Fi is a way of getting broadband internet without wires. A device called a wireless transmitter receives information from the internet via a broadband connection.

The transmitter converts the information into a radio signal and sends it to wi-fi enabled devices.

**Whatsapp:** An app that uses the internet to allow the user to send texts, pictures and videos for free.

**Youth Produced Sexual Imagery – also known as Sexting:** Describes the use of technology to share personal sexual images or videos.

**YouTube:** A popular video hosting website where people can upload, watch, share, comment on and rate videos.

### Text Speak

Children and young people are known to use messaging codes for some phrases or expressions. These change and evolve over time. If you see something that you do not understand or worries you, talk to a trusted friend or call the Stop it Now! Helpline for advice on 0808 1000 900. Here are some examples:

ASL	= Age, sex, location
POS	= Parent over my shoulder
LOL	= Laugh out loud
PIR	= Parent in room
RUOK	= Are you okay?
LMAO	= Laugh my ass off
SPK	= Speak
ROFL	= Rolling on the floor laughing
EZ	= Easy
PMSL	= Pee myself laughing
WTF	= What the [flip]
TLTR	= Too long to read
PODH	= Pics or didn’t happen
FML	= [Flip] my life



# Creating a Family Safety Plan



For families where there have been worries about a young person's behaviour, it can be beneficial to create a family safety plan. This is something that can be done collaboratively, with all family members on board. It can be a really useful way of agreeing 'how can we make sure everyone is safe' and 'what can we do in case things go wrong'. This is as much about saying what we want young people (and in some cases parents, too) to do, as well as what we might want them not to do. Family safety plans can also help young people and their parents to work together on making joint decisions and on communication.

Where there have been concerns about a young person's behaviour online or with new technologies, there are a few key starting points for a family safety plan:

## • Talk about any warning signs.

Are there things that might tell you or the young person when things aren't quite right? Can you talk about what to do if you see any of these warning signs?

## • Opening the lines of communication.

Conversations between young people and their families should be an on-going process not just a one-time event after something concerning has happened. Let everyone in the family know it is OK to ask questions. It is important for adults to set the tone by talking about sex appropriately and for young people to know that they will not shock / embarrass their parents if they ask questions. Adults need to lead by example by opening up discussions about what is ok and what is not ok.

## • Set clear family boundaries.

Talk about and set clear family boundaries with family members around what has happened (e.g. around computer use). As the young person gets older, these will need to be adjusted.

## • Seek help and advice – you are not alone.

If any family member is worried about a concerning sexual behaviour, you can call the Stop it Now! Helpline (0808 1000 900) for confidential advice.

## • Make sure everyone knows that it's OK to talk with you about what may have already happened.

Let everyone involved ask questions, and provide opportunities for family members to talk in private if this is helpful.

## • Sometimes it can be useful to identify who everyone involved will talk to if there is a concern or worry.

This might be each other (e.g. Mum will talk to Harry if she thinks he is spending too much time online), or it might be a trusted family friend or relative who is aware about what's happened. It is important that whoever this is, it is someone who is responsible, honest and trustworthy.

## • See the following sheets for an example of what a family safety plan might look like.

This can be altered according to your family's needs and will probably need to be amended over time.



# Family Safety Plan

## Who is going to be involved in this plan?


## Who are we worried about?


What is it we are worried about happening? (What happened before?)

[illegible]



What will happen if things are going wrong for ..... again?

What signs might we see, how might they act, what do they say?

Parents:

How do they say they feel?

What do they do?

How do they act towards others?

What do they say?

Anything else that you might notice?

Young Person:

How do I feel?

How do I act?

How might I try and cover things up if  
thing are going wrong for me?

What am I thinking about?

Anything else I might notice?

What steps will we as a family take to ensure that everyone is safe?

Fill out the steps in the table below.

Step

e.g. Moving the computer to a public space

Who is responsible for this?

e.g. Dad will set up the computer in the kitchen

What can the family do to help to ensure that  
can meet his/her needs as a young person and live a happy life?

This list should look at goals and activities for the young person and the family to work towards.

### Goals

e.g. Spending more time with my friends offline  
doing things I enjoy.

### How are we going to get there?


e.g. Mum and Dad to help me to join the local  
football team.

What shall we do if someone isn't doing what we have agreed?

e.g. Speak to a professional?

How long shall we have this plan in place for?

How often shall we review this plan?



This guide has been brought to you by the child protection charity The Lucy Faithfull Foundation.  
For confidential advice and support, call the Stop it Now! Helpline 0808 1000 900.  
To obtain a hard copy of this guide contact:

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