PARENT FACTSHEET

Financially motivated sexual extortion (‘sextortion’)

What is ‘sextortion’?

Financially motivated sexual extortion (often referred to as ‘sextortion’) is a type of online blackmail. An adult (or group of adults) threatens to release nude or semi-nude images of a child unless they pay them money, or do something else to benefit them. It is a form of child sexual abuse.

Sextortion is often carried out by offenders in an organised crime group overseas, and is motivated by profit.

Sometimes adults pose as children, to make contact with them. They might:

- Groom or coerce the child into sending nudes or semi-nudes and financially blackmail them
- Use images that have been stolen from the child, taken through hacking their account
- Use digitally-manipulated images, including AI-generated images, of the child

Signs to look out for

If a child is a victim of sextortion, they might:

- Spend more time online, or more time offline – they might try to avoid mobile phones, laptops and tablets entirely, for example
- Complain of being tired because they were online all night, or have their phone going off a lot
- Have stronger emotional responses or outbursts to being online – they may get unusually angry, upset or distant after checking their phone or using their computer/tablet
- Be secretive about their use of the internet or a device – they may refuse to hand their phone in if they’re asked to do so by a teacher, or refuse to tell you what they get up to online
- Show signs of self-harm or suicidal thoughts. They might also show signs of hopelessness

How to protect yourself and your child from sextortion

- Encourage your child to be careful with the information they share online
- Review your child’s privacy settings on any accounts they use, so it’s harder for strangers to contact them
- Use strong passwords for each account you use online, so it’s harder for criminals to break in and get information about you

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What to do if you think your child is a victim

- Don't blame your child – criminals use sophisticated methods to trick young people
- Don't pay the person asking for money, and make sure your child stops engaging with them
- Don't delete any images, messages or videos, since they can be used by the police as evidence
- Do contact the police – you can make a report via the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) website (https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/)
- If your child agrees to it, speak to our school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL):
    - ALISON RICHARDSON & AMY MODEN

Sources

This factsheet was produced by The Key Safeguarding**: thekeysupport.com/safeguarding**

- With thanks to education expert Aaron King for his help with this content
- Internet Watch Foundation, Advice for parents or carers of children who are being sexually extorted or 'sextorted', *www.iwf.org.uk/resources/sextortion/parents-and-carers*

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