# ABINGDON FOUNDATION SAFEGUARDING BULLETIN LT24

Sextortion

In September 2023, the Internet Watch Foundation reported a 'shocking rise in the sextortion of boys', with a 257% rise in the number of cases reported in the first 6 months of 2023, compared with the whole of 2022. Reports to the IWF show that young people aged 14-17 are most at risk, with a rise in boys being targeted (this trend has also been reported in the United States and other countries). The emotional consequences can be devastating and many young people find it difficult to disclose to an adult out of fear of shame and judgement from their family and peers.
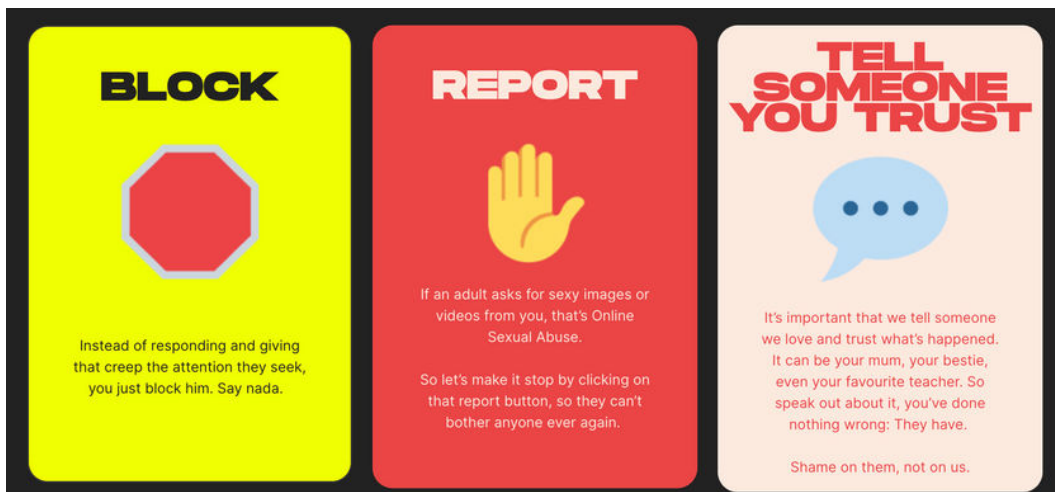
What is Sextortion?

'Sextortion' is a form of blackmail and involves threats to publish sexual information, photos or videos about someone. This may be to extort money or to force the victim to do something against their will. Photos or recordings are often made without the victim realising or consenting.

- Financial blackmail using sexual / indecent images that have been sent to somebody you've had contact with online.

- Financial blackmail using images that have been stolen from you, taken through hacking or have been faked using image altering technology.

- Blackmail using sexual/indecent images that have been sent to somebody, but with a demand for something other than money. This might be a demand for you to do something you don't want to, like give them use of your bank account.
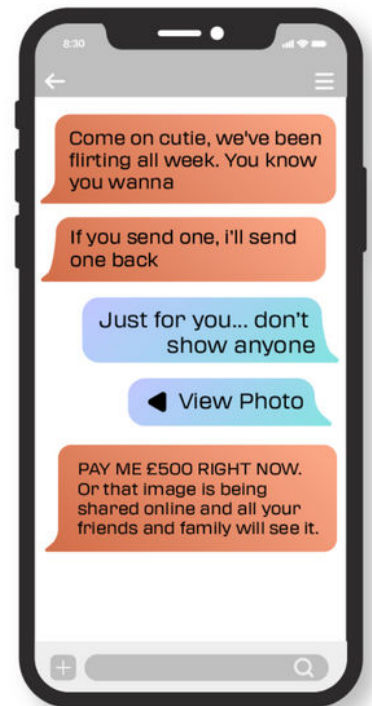
How does Sextortion happen?

Sextortion usually begins with innocent online interactions. Criminals often target people through dating apps, social media, webcams or pornography sites. As documented in the Nude Image Sharing bulletin, the development of online relationships and the sharing of intimate images has become increasingly normalised amongst young people, leaving many vulnerable to perpetrators posing as young people.

What to do if a young person has been a victim of Sextortion or online sexual abuse/harassment:

- **Do not** say or do anything to blame or shame any young people involved.
- Inform the **Designated Safeguarding Lead** of the young person's school.
- **Cease all communication** with the perpetrator - block them and change all passwords.
- **Never view, copy, print, share, store or save the imagery** yourself, or ask a child to share or download – this is illegal. If you have already viewed the imagery by accident (e.g. if a young person has showed it to you before you could ask them not to), report this to the DSL (or equivalent) and seek support.
- **Do not delete the imagery/videos** or ask the young person to delete it.
- **Contact the police** using an online report tool - see below.
- Use the **Report Remove** tool to help a young person have a shared image/video taken down.
- Consider further support for the **young person's wellbeing.**
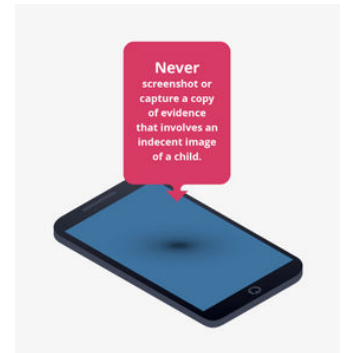
For further guidance on disclosures and reporting, see Sharing nudes and semi nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people

Reporting Tools

For under 18's:
Help for young people - Internet Watch Foundation

Childline

Report Remove tool

CEOP reporting

Gurls Out Loud (also for boys)

For over 18's:
StopNCII

Report Harmful Content

National Crime Agency

For more information:
Staff

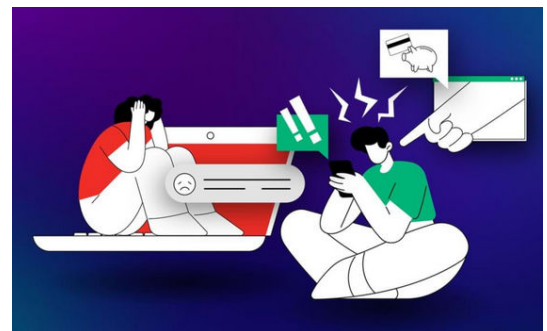Video on Sextortion awareness - Thorn
Poster on Sextortion - Our Safer Schools
Poster for over 18's - National Cyber Security Centre
Updated sexting guidance for schools - SWGfL
Resources for professionals - Project deShame
Guidance for professionals on the Report Remove tool - NSPCC
Help for teachers and professionals - Childnet

Parents

Advice for parents or carers of children who have been sextorted - Internet Watch Foundation
TALK checklist for parents and carers - Internet Watch Foundation
Advice for parents and carers - CEOP
Talking to your child about online sexual harassment - Children's Commissioner
A guide for parents on conversations about sextortion - The Conversation

by Natalie Hunt