



Dear Parents and Carers,

All schools in the UK have recently received information from the National Crime Agency, raising awareness of a recent rise in the reporting of financially-motivated sexual extortion. This is a type of online blackmail, often described in the media as 'sextortion'. This letter aims to help parents and carers to understand what sexual extortion is and what can be done to help protect and support children who may become victims of it.

What is Sexual Extortion?

This type of crime involves an adult offender, often pretending to be another child, threatening to release nude or semi-nude images and/or videos of a child or young person, unless they pay money, or meet another financial demand, such as purchasing a pre-paid gift card. These crimes are usually perpetrated by organised crime groups based overseas. They are motivated by making money quickly, rather than by sexual gratification and in some cases, have gone from initial contact to blackmailing their victim in under an hour.

Victims of any age and gender can be targets, however a large proportion of cases have involved male victims aged 14 - 18.

A child or young person is never to blame if they have been a victim. Offenders will have tricked, groomed and/or manipulated them into sharing an image. You can find out more about online blackmail on CEOP Education's Parent and Carers website:

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/online-blackmail/>.

Talking to children and young people about online risks

It's important to have frequent, age-appropriate, open and non-judgemental conversations with your child about relationships, sex and being online. This helps to build trust and supports them if something goes wrong. Financially motivated sexual extortion should be included in those conversations. Chat regularly with your child about their life online, have ongoing conversations with them about their life and time online. Continue to take an interest as they grow up, explore new apps and sites together and talk in a calm and balanced way, considering the benefits and the potential harms.

[Review privacy settings](#), talk to your child about the importance of using privacy settings on their accounts, to restrict who can contact them. Read CEOP Education's advice on how to talk your child about their privacy settings. Make sure they know where to go for support - let them know that they can come to you with any concerns and they won't be judged. It's also important to make them aware of any other trusted adults or sources of support they can go to, such as [Childline](#). If a child or

young person needs to report something that has happened to them online, then they can do this through [CEOP](#) or report it to the Police.

What can I do if this has happened to my child?

If your child tells you that someone is trying to trick, threaten or blackmail them online:

- Don't pay, do stop contact and block. You may be tempted to pay, but there is no guarantee that this will stop the threats. As the offender's motive is to get money, once you have shown you can pay, they will likely ask for more and blackmail may continue. If you have paid, don't panic but don't pay anything more. Help your child to stop all communication with the offender and block them on any accounts that they have been contacted on.
- Avoid deleting anything. Try not to delete anything that could be used as evidence, such as messages, images and bank account details.
- Report to the police or CEOP. Call 101 or 999, if there is an immediate risk of harm to your child. You can use the CEOP Safety Centre to report any online blackmail attempts.

Even if an image has been shared online, parents, carers and children should be reassured there are a number of steps which can be taken to get the image removed.

Adults can support young people in getting their images removed using Childline and the Internet Watch Foundation's [Report Remove](#) tool, the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children's [Take It Down](#) tool and reporting it to the platform or app it has been shared on, through the [Internet matters site](#).

If you need more information on sextortion and how to help protect and support children at risk of harm, please visit [Online blackmail \(thinkuknow.co.uk\)](#).

Further information and support is available through your school, and local help and advice numbers are available on the Child Protection Committee website [www.hcpc.scot](#).