

Sextortion guide and update for parents/guardians

Our officers are seeing a concerning trend of sextortion cases involving teenage victims. As a result we would ask parents to talk to children about their digital lives.

Sextortion happens when an individual makes contact via social media or a messaging platform and builds up a rapport with the victim.

With young people, the perpetrator often makes them believe they are of a similar age to them.

The conversation will then become sexualised and the perpetrator will request sexual images or videos.

They will then blackmail the victim by threatening to share the images or videos with family or friends, unless they do something in return, such as pay them.

They may also ask for further images rather than payment.

What should you do if you or your child has been the victim of sextortion?

- Report the matter to police as soon as possible.
- Don't pay any money or agree to other demands, such as providing further images.
- Keep all communications and record any evidence as soon as possible via screen capture.
- Do not communicate with the perpetrator any further.
- Report and log the issue with the relevant social media platform. Most firms have procedures to report abuse on their sites.

We would urge all parents to have regular open and honest discussions with their children about their digital lives.

These conversations should be as normalised as those about drugs and road safety.

Having an open channel of communication will enable young people to seek support and advice at an early stage if they find themselves in a difficult situation.

This can be especially relevant at this time of year, when some young people may be receiving new devices or digital devices for the first time. It can be a good opportunity for a discussion around boundaries and the risks out there.

If you wish to report to police, call 101. Dial 999 if it is an emergency or a crime is in progress.