

SEXTORTION

In simple terms, **sextortion** is when someone talks you into exposing yourself on web cam after which they extort you, i.e. pressurise or blackmail you to do things you don't want to, or to give them money.

Criminals operating abroad often commit these crimes. They think that distance and the anonymity the internet can provide will prevent their identification and capture – that is not true, in many cases they can be identified and stopped. The key is early reporting facilitating early intervention and support.

Whilst this crime is most often targeted at adults, children can and are caught up in the scam. When they are, it is crucial that they tell someone and are properly supported when they do so.



How does it happen?

If it looks too good to be true it usually is. Sextortion often begins with an approach from a very attractive female.

Then, once you have connected, they will flatter you and begin to engage in intimate chat and as the conversation moves to sex they will encourage you to 'engage in cyber sex with them'. They will often 'go first' exposing themselves to you as they commit a sexual act. This might make you feel more comfortable as you will be encouraged to think that since they have done it, it must be okay.

As soon as you have reciprocated by exposing yourself they will make demands such as asking you for money and then threaten to share the images on your Facebook and other social media accounts, if you don't comply.

If this happens to you; SEEK HELP straight away!

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

If a child tells you that they are a victim of sextortion, don't panic, overreact or get angry.

Stay calm - the child needs your support.

The feeling of embarrassment and shame can be overwhelming for a young person. A child centred sensitive approach is key in circumstances such as these.

The child needs to be reassured, and regardless of how robust they appear a multiagency suicide prevention plan should be developed.

Engage the police and multiagency support and make sure you check that a suicide prevention plan is in place.

AVOID MEANINGLESS RHETORIC

Telling children and young people "*what goes online stays online*", is not always accurate and can be damaging, as out of context it can remove hope.

RAISE AWARENESS but do it in a way that accepts people, especially young people at particular times in their lives make mistakes; we all did.

CASE STUDIES

Use cases already in the public arena to highlight how sextortion happens, how the approaches are made and the way they develop to blackmail and threats.

HELP - identify pathways to get help. Reinforce the fact that the sooner a victim tells someone the sooner they can be supported and the greater the chance of catching the criminals and stopping the crime.

PROVIDE PRACTICAL ADVICE

Talk about how to take screen shots of threatening/bullying messages.

TAKE A BREAK

Suggest not using social media for a period of time and even suspending a particular social media account.

SET GOOGLE ALERTS that inform you when your name or username is mentioned online. This will help you Monitor what is happening.