

The Wilnecote School Safeguarding Newsletter

We are excited to present our latest edition, continuing our commitment to keeping you informed and empowered in safeguarding your children. This newsletter will mainly focus on Sextortion.

The newsletter will also provide an update on Zero Tolerance and Cyber Security, also provide information about online safety and mental health support for students during May half-term.



What is Sextortion?

Sextortion is a type of blackmail in which an individual manipulates or threatens to distribute explicit or intimate material (such as explicit sexual images or videos) of the victim unless certain demands are met.

Criminals often target individuals through online platforms, social media, or dating apps. They may establish trust and rapport, leading victims to share intimate content willingly or unknowingly through video calls or private messages.

Sextortion can cause significant emotional distress, feelings of shame, fear, and anxiety. It's crucial to remember that victims are never at fault, and support is available to help cope with the aftermath. It's a criminal act and can have legal consequences for the perpetrator.

Teenagers in particular are at risk of sextortion, but what is the process the criminals might go through?

- 1) Connect with a teenager using one of the social media apps or games
- 2) Encourage them to move onto a platform with video, possibly encrypted
- 3) Start a conversation which quickly turns sexual
- 4) Encourage them to put on their video camera
- 5) The criminal usually posing as a teenage girl either makes excuses why their camera isn't working or possibly even uses a pre-recorded video
- 6) The teenager is encouraged to remove their clothing or to perform intimate activity
- 7) The criminal makes a recording made of the activity
- 8) Blackmail statement made

Recognise the Warning Signs

Be vigilant for potential red flags indicating sextortion attempts, such as receiving unsolicited explicit content, sudden or relentless requests for intimate images, or persistent demands for personal information.

Threatening language around the loss of viewers or followers on social media if demands are not met or images and videos are not sent.

PSHE Update:

The following topics have been covered this half-term during tutor time and KS4 PSHE lessons:

Year 7: Building Relationships

Year 8: Identity and Relationships

Year 9: Intimate Relationships

Year 10: Addressing extremism and radicalisation

Year 11: Families

*All students received an assembly from Miss Julius & Mr Simpson about Mental Health. The assembly talked about looking after yourself and others.

Safeguarding Weekly Updates:

Remember to check the safeguarding posters that get sent weekly. These now cover online safety, wellbeing & mental health.

This half-term we have covered:

- Township
- Shopping Apps
- OFCOM Media Report 2024
- Helldivers 2
- School Avoidance

School Safeguarding Team: Mr Simpson, Mr Foskett, Mrs Taylor, Mrs Ager, Mr Herbert, Miss Julius & Mr Croydon

Staffordshire Children Advice Support Service— 0800 111 8007

You can call Staffordshire Children Advice Support Service as parent/carer or as a member of the public. If you have any concerns about a child you can call this number for support if you feel a child is at serious risk or harm.

The Impact

It's important to note that every child may react differently when being sexually extorted, and the signs may vary depending on their personality, age, and other factors. However, here are some potential changes in behaviour that could indicate a child is being sexually extorted.

Emotional distress: The child may display signs of increased anxiety, fear, or mood swings. They may appear more withdrawn, depressed, or easily agitated.

Social withdrawal: The child might start avoiding social interactions or spending less time with friends and family. They may become isolated and reluctant to participate in activities they used to enjoy.

Change in online behaviour: If a child is being sexually extorted, they may exhibit specific alterations in their online activities, such as spending excessive amounts of time online, becoming secretive about their online interactions, or suddenly avoiding or deleting social media accounts.

Unusual behaviour with money, gift vouchers, online currencies etc.: The child is spending more money than usual or has less money than you would expect. They may steal money from their parents or other family members.

Unusual secrecy: The child may become unusually secretive about their personal life, activities, or online interactions. They might express reluctance or defensiveness when questioned about their online behaviour or communication.

Sudden drop in academic performance: Sextortion can have a significant impact on a child's emotional wellbeing, which may lead to a decline in their academic performance. They may struggle with concentration, lose interest in schoolwork, or show signs of distress during school hours.

Change in attitude to school: They may see school as their safe place and enjoy the break from devices if the perpetrator/extortionist is outside the school community.

Sleep disturbances: Sextortion can cause significant stress and anxiety, leading to changes in sleep patterns. The child may experience difficulties falling asleep, frequent nightmares, or increased night-time awakenings.

Avoidance of electronic devices: If a child is being sexually extorted, they might display an unusual aversion to using electronic devices or express discomfort when receiving messages or calls. They may try to limit their online presence or avoid using specific apps or platforms altogether.

Self-harm or suicidal ideation: The child might exhibit signs of self-harm, suicidal thoughts or express feelings of hopelessness. These signs should be taken extremely seriously, and immediate professional help should be sought (see Help and support below).

It's important to remember that these behavioural changes could indicate various issues, not just sextortion. If you notice any significant and persistent changes in a child's behaviour, it is crucial to approach the situation with sensitivity, open communication and seek professional help if necessary.



Useful Websites

Below are some websites that provide further support and guidance around sextortion aimed at both children and their parents:

- Talk (talk.iwf.org.uk)
- Gurls out Loud (gurloutloud.com)
- Stop Non-Consensual Intimate Image Abuse (stopncii.org)



Remember



Your child is the victim here. Remind them that they won't get in trouble, and others will neither judge nor blame them.

If they come to you for support emphasise that they have been really brave in coming forward.

And, reassure them that there are things they can do to take back control.

Questions to ask..

Talking about things before they become a problem is important. Conversations with our teens about sextortion will help them recognise the behaviour and know how to take action if someone approaches them online.

These questions can help start important conversations:

What sort of things would make you or your friends feel uncomfortable about online?

- Have you heard of sextortion? How can you protect yourself?
- What would you say to a friend who was being sextorted?
- What advice could you give and how could you help them?

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Zero Tolerance

In our Spring Term 1 Edition we shared information about our Zero Tolerance stance against discrimination. Students were asked to design a logo that would be used around school. Our Governors and SLT all voted for their favourite logo from a shortlist. We had over 200 entries and all logos submitted were fantastic and our students were very creative.

Congratulations to Sophie in 9RS who designed the winning logo. The logo is currently being digital created and will soon be displayed around school.



Cyber Security

Cybersecurity issues have become a major focus in safeguarding discussions in recent years. This shift is largely due to the significant move of social and family life into the digital realm. It is crucial to educate children and young people on the dos and don'ts of online safety to prevent them from learning hard lessons through experience. Parent Zone, an organization dedicated to the digital aspects of young people's lives, has developed resources tailored for children. To learn more about these resources, please follow the link below. The website provides some great advice to both parents and children. You also get the opportunity to take a personality quiz around cyber security to distinguish what matters most young people around cyber security.

<https://parentzone.org.uk/article/cyber-security>



The following pages of the newsletter are some useful posters on how you can support your child at home, sharing information about online content and inspiring children to build a better digital world. These both link to the content of this newsletter.

The final two posters provides information on local support during May half-term for students that may struggle with their mental health, this information has previously been shared via the new Wilnecote app. Please access this service if you have any concerns about your child. This was a very successful service during the Easter Break which some of our students and their families accessed.

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ONLINE CONTENT

10 tips to keep your children safe online

The internet has transformed the ability to access content. Many apps that children use are dependent on user-generated content which can encourage freedom of expression, imagination and creativity. However, due to the sheer volume uploaded every day, it can be difficult for platforms to regulate and moderate everything, which means that disturbing or distressing images, videos or audio clips can slip through the net. That's why we've created this guide to provide parents and carers with some useful tips on keeping children safe online.



1 MONITOR VIEWING HABITS

Whilst most apps have moderation tools, inappropriate content can still slip through the net.



2 CHECK ONLINE CONTENT

Understand what's being shared or what seems to be 'trending' at the moment.



3 CHECK AGE-RATINGS

Make sure they are old enough to use the app and meet the recommended age-limit.



4 CHANGE PRIVACY SETTINGS

Make accounts private and set content filters and parental controls where possible.



5 SPEND TIME ON THE APP

Get used to how apps work, what content is available and what your child likes to watch.



6 LET CHILDREN KNOW YOU'RE THERE

Ensure they know that there is support and advice available to them if they need it.



7 ENCOURAGE CRITICAL THINKING

Talk about what people might post online and why some posts could cause distress.



8 LEARN HOW TO REPORT & BLOCK

Always make sure that children know how to use the reporting tools on social media apps.



9 KEEP AN OPEN DIALOGUE

If a child sees distressing material online; listen to their concerns, empathise and offer reassurance.



10 SEEK FURTHER SUPPORT

If a child has been affected by something they've seen online, seek support from your school's safeguarding lead.

 **National Online Safety**
#WakeUpWednesday



10 Top Tips for Respect Online: INSPIRING CHILDREN TO BUILD A BETTER DIGITAL WORLD

Our ability to communicate with anyone in the world, at any time, via the internet has grown at breakneck speed. For teachers and parents, it can feel impossible to keep up. Worrying about our young people is understandable, and not unjustified: In 2020, for example, one in five 10- to 15-year-olds experienced bullying online. Our tips highlight ways that adults can support young people's positive online behaviours: by adopting and following 'netiquette', we can show them how to avoid getting into difficulty as they learn to negotiate the continually evolving digital landscape.

WHAT IS NETIQUETTE?

Just like etiquette is a set of rules which guides and governs our interactions with others in everyday life, netiquette – etiquette on the net – is the framework which helps inform how we communicate with people online. The rules of engagement often aren't the same as a face-to-face meeting, so it's important that we can accurately 'read' situations in the digital world and know how to act appropriately.

1 ACCEPT DIFFERENT RULES

A lot of our interaction with others is helped by non-verbal signals like body language and facial expressions. Online, of course, many of these clues are missing. Talk to your child about why this makes misunderstandings more likely to occur in the digital world and why keeping in mind that online communication is a very different process can help to prevent difficulties from arising.

2 PRESS 'PAUSE'

It's so easy to do things quickly online that most people (adults included) habitually send or respond to messages without considering the consequences. Pushing 'the pause button' buys a young person some time while they ponder the golden rule: "Would I still say this if the other person was right front of me?" You could practise this with your child on some made-up tricky situations.

3 THE INTERNET IS ADDICTIVE

Apps and sites use sophisticated algorithms and clever marketing to keep us engaged, while notifications on our devices are designed to draw us back in. It's no wonder that people continually return to the digital world, sometimes spending long periods of time there. You and your child could trial turning off notifications on certain apps and instead agree a time to check for updates manually.

4 BEWARE THE DARK SIDE

Getting a hurtful or unhelpful comment on social media or in a group chat can make the recipient feel publicly shamed. That's painful for anyone – but especially for a young person whose status in a group is integral to their sense of identity. Encourage your child to think about the best and safest way to send a message: for example, doing it as a private message rather than a public post.

5 HARMFUL INTERACTIONS

Unfortunately, it's very easy to send a hurtful message or to spread gossip and rumours online. We all know this happens regularly. Not having to deal with actually seeing the other person's distress usually doesn't help people to make a positive decision in the moment. It's important that trusted adults help children to visualise the potential consequences and have empathy for others.

6 APPRECIATE DIFFERENCES

We're all built differently; some people are simply more emotionally sensitive than others. Young people can be particularly affected by negative online communication, such as group shaming. Even a single message (which might seem trivial at face value) can cause deep anguish. Trusted adults should be prepared to be patient and listen to any difficulties their child might have had online.

7 ACCENTUATED ANXIETY

Young people's online lives create a lot of anxiety. Messages go into a 'black hole' until someone responds, there are more reasons to compare ourselves negatively, and social media can make us feel like we're missing out. Encourage activities such as sports and hobbies to balance this out, and remember that merely blocking out thoughts (by gaming, for instance) isn't the same as relaxation.

8 PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

A huge positive for the internet is how it helps people to feel connected and makes being kind and helpful easy to spread. When young people get involved in pro-social behaviours online, it creates a positive feedback loop which makes them feel good. Show your child examples of when you've done or said something positive online, and praise and encourage them when they do the same.

9 BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL

One of the best things we can do as trusted adults is to role model positive online behaviour. Just letting your child see that you know when it's time to put your phone away and do something more productive can set a strong example. Some families set aside particular times of the week (such as mealtimes or a family walk) where digital devices aren't allowed and conversation takes precedence.

10 SHOW COMPASSION

Mistakes can feel much bigger online, because they're so public. If a young person does or says something regrettable on the internet, it's important to support them to forgive themselves, learn any lessons and move forward positively. Even as adults, we can often stumble when learning how things work in the fast-moving digital world, so it's important to have compassion for ourselves, too.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Carole Francis-Smith is an experienced counselling psychologist who, through her research, specialises in promoting safe and ethical online communications. She consults with businesses and organisations to support positive and effective communication online, often by considering some of the more hidden aspects of the mediums.



Source: <https://www.nos.gov.uk/news/press-releases/online-safety-education-2020-02-22>
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THE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT TEAM IN SCHOOLS ARE **OPEN** OVER THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

Tuesday 28th May - Friday 31st May
(excluding weekends and bank holidays)

If your child is experiencing low level mental health difficulties, we may be able to help. Call us* between 9am - 5pm (Monday to Friday), leave your name and number and one of our practitioners will give you a call back to see what support we can offer.

We can help with:

- Low mood
- Anxiety
- Sleep difficulties
- Worry
- Panic

Burton and Uttoxeter
01283 504487

Cannock and Lichfield
01283 352113

Stafford
01283 352097

Jamworth
01785 301027



*Please note that these contact numbers are not to be used in an emergency.

TAMWORTH MHST

Schools we work with:

- Kettlebrook Short Stay
- Landau Forte Academy Qems
- Moorgate Primary Academy
- St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary
- Two Rivers High School
- Oakhill Primary School
- Glascote Academy P
- Lakeside CP School
- Amington Heath Primary
- Two Rivers School
- Ankermoor Primary Academy
- Landau Forte Amington
- Two Gates Primary
- Hanbury's Farm Primary
- Tamworth Enterprise College
- Landau Forte Academy 6th Form
- Ashcroft Infants School
- Florendine Primary School
- Dosthill Primary School
- Landau Forte Academy Greenacres
- Anker Valley Primary School
- The Woodlands Community Primary
- Birds Bush Primary
- Three Peaks Primary Academy
- Stoneydelph Primary
- Wilnecote High School
- Wilnecote Junior School

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