THE THINGS I WISH MY PARENTS HAD KNOWN

YOUNG PEOPLE'S ADVICE ON TALKING TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT ONLINE SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Children's COMMISSIONER

Introduction from the Children's Commissioner

Since March 2020, thousands of young women have been sharing their experiences of sexual harassment through the 'Everyone's Invited' project. This is an online platform where girls - who are still mostly in school – have described growing up in a world where harassment, including sexualised comments, slut-shaming and the sharing of nude pictures, is part of their everyday lives. This harmful behaviour happens online and offline. I've seen this first-hand during my time as a headteacher and I know how stressful and damaging it can be for children, especially girls.

Of course, boys can experience sexualised bullying too, and when they do it's often in the form of homophobic abuse, or through pressure to be more 'masculine'.

When I became Children's Commissioner for England I undertook the largest ever survey of children – The Big Ask – to understand children's lives. The findings of this survey gave me a lot of hope for this next generation, not least because of their incredible resilience. But children, especially girls, talked about their experiences of sexualised bullying and peer-on-peer abuse and were calling firmly for more support. Most kids want that support to come from their parents or carers.

Talking to our children about this issue can be hard. Parents tell me they sometimes feel uncomfortable, not just because of the sexualised nature of the topic, but also because their children know more about technology than they do. For mums, dads and carers who grew up without smart phones, this whole world can feel bewildering.

But children want to talk to their parents and carers about this. We know this because they've told us. And that's what is at the heart of this guidance.

We brought together a group of 16–21 year-olds and asked them to tell us what they think parents should know, and what they should say to their kids when talking about sexualised bullying and the pressures of growing up online. We asked them to think back to when they were a bit younger and tell us what their parents and carers did and said that was helpful...and what wasn't.

This guidance is based on the voices of young people giving adults their tips on how to tackle this subject.

I also convened a steering group of the leading organisations working in this area and listened to their expertise. We'll signpost to their excellent work for those who want more information, but this guide serves as a starter kit – an entry point for parents and carers who want to talk to their kids but need a bit of support to understand the issues and to start a conversation.

The overriding message you'll see from our focus group is **talk early, talk often**. You might be surprised how early our young people felt parents need to start the conversation. But kids want an age-appropriate conversation that evolves over time in line with their growing maturity.

My advice to parents and carers is to **create the culture before the crisis**. Children have told us they want their mums and dads to create a *safe, judgment-free space* for them to talk about these issues. It's better to do that before you hit a problem rather than trying to create that mood while you're dealing with one.

It takes a lot of bravery for a child to share their experiences of abuse or harassment. Parents and carers are telling me they want to match that bravery in getting to grips with these issues. Things that might feel uncomfortable to begin with, will feel less so over time. Parents and carers need to grasp the nettle as they support their kids navigating this complex part of growing up. Our kids have told us it's what they want. This guide will help you get there.

Dame Rachel de Souza DBE
Children's Commissioner for England

Background

What is peer-on-peer abuse and harmful sexual behaviour?

Peer-on-peer abuse is often sexualised in nature and occurs between children of roughly the same age. It can happen online and offline. It is driven by harmful attitudes about sex, relationships, and gender, often held by adults as well as children. All of us have a role to play in tackling this.

Peer-on-peer abuse online

This guide focuses on how sexual harassment and peer-on-peer abuse happens online – including on social media, messaging, gaming and dating platforms. It also explores how content which children are stumbling across and consuming online – including pornography – drives harmful attitudes and behaviours.

Some examples of how sexual harassment can happen online:

- **Pressuring someone to share nudes**
- **Leaking nudes**
- **Sending someone explicit content which they didn't ask for – including cyberflashing (unwanted pictures of genitalia)**
- **Bullying using sexualised language – including body-shaming and 'slut shaming'**
- **Outing someone's sexual history or orientation**
- **Sexualised threats**
- **Upskirting and posting this online**

These issues range from the problematic and harmful, through to illegal offences. It is important that parents feel comfortable in discussing the full spectrum of issues and how they may play out online.

Why is this a problem?

Some children have told us that peer-on-peer harassment is so common that they simply accept it as part and parcel of daily life. They say that too often, sexual harassment is not challenged or taken seriously by the adults in their lives.
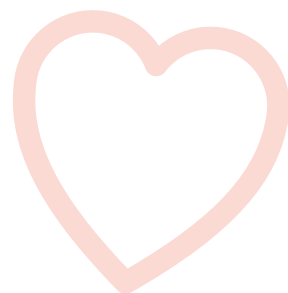
How to use this guide

Our guide starts by sharing how you can make these conversations easier.

We've broken down this guide into the subjects which children told us were important:

- Pornography
- Editing photos and body image
- Sharing nude images
- Peer pressure
- Sexualised bullying

Under each topic we give you a breakdown of what the issue is and how our 16–21-year-olds feel the problem affects children and young people. Then we present their tips on best ways for parents and carers to have this conversation with their children.

Following this we share how you can get the conversation started, notes young people wrote to their younger selves, resources and further information and signs to look out for and where you can get immediate help.

Acknowledging differences

The young people we spoke to came from a range of cultural backgrounds. Some said they had families who would talk openly about these issues, others told us that even though they would like their parents to talk to them, they thought they might not. Similarly, some of our 16–21 years-olds were LGBTQ+ and pointed out that whilst these issues would affect them just as much as any other young person, if they weren't able to be open with their family about their identity, it may act as a barrier for these conversations to take place.

How we spoke to young people

We began this guide by holding a series of focus groups with children and young people to understand the issues and challenges they face. Based on these findings, we designed a day of workshops with 16–21-year-olds to explore the issues in more detail – and how parents can help their child to navigate them.

We chose this age group as they're slightly older and able to reflect on their own experiences as a teenager growing up online. We asked them to think about the things they wished their parents had known about online peer-on-peer abuse, and for the advice they would give to a child on dealing with these issues.

We used what they told us as the basis for this guidance. We would like to thank them for their openness. We couldn't have made this guide without them.

What children find hard about having these conversations and how to make it easier

It's awkward / embarrassing

1 **Start conversations early**, before your child gets a phone or social media account. Keep the conversation going over time, adapting to your child. Don't let awkwardness or 'taboo' subjects build. The ThinkUKnow website has age-appropriate conversation-starters.

2 **Keep it casual**, find everyday opportunities to speak about relationships and the online world – like when you're walking or driving somewhere. Young people told us that they didn't want 'the big talk'!

3 **Use your own experiences**, be vulnerable. Share your own memories and experiences of being a child/teen. You could talk about something that happened when you were young, and how different it might have been if it had ended up online.

4 If you don't know how to start, try watching an #AsktheAwkward video together – use this to open up a conversation and ask them questions.

5 **It's okay to laugh!** Our young people told us that laughing with their parent can break tension and makes everyone feel more comfortable – they don't want you to be too serious or scary.

Parents don't know enough

1 Young people want their parents to **learn about new technology and trends**, including risky behaviours and dangerous spaces online. We share links to brilliant resources and expert organisations at the end of this guide.

2 If you're not sure, **ask your child**. *Allow them to be the expert*. Our young people told us this is a really simple way to build mutual trust.

3 If you're still not sure, **ask a teacher or trusted professional**. They will be able to point you in the right direction for extra advice and support.

4 **Be involved in your child's decision-making early on**. Young people told us that parents who took an active interest early on were far better equipped to step in when things went wrong.

Fear of consequences

1 **Create a safe and trusting home environment**. Young people told us the home environment is key, they want to share things with their parents but don't always feel able. Help your child to feel comfortable talking about apps they're on and what they're experiencing online.

2 Before punishing them and taking away their phone, try to be **non-judgmental and help them** out of bad situations. Young people want parents to know that if they think they will not be allowed to go online *they won't tell you what is happening*.

3 **Be ready to step in and help** if something goes wrong. This guide provides advice on these issues, so you can know where to go if a nude image of them is shared without consent, or if you find out they're being bullied, or sexually abused or groomed.

4 **Be honest and explain**. If you take their phone or limit social media access give reasons. It is understood that in some situations this is reasonable, but needs to be explained properly. If not, trust can be damaged and children might not open up a second time.

5 **Establish ground-rules** and agree these with your child. Be prepared for rules to change over time. Reassure your child that you trust them, especially as they get older.

Pornography

Porn is easily accessible online and children are seeing it earlier than their parents think. Children and young people sometimes access it out of curiosity, or sometimes their viewing is accidental and unwanted.

How, when and why children are viewing porn

- Over half of 11–13-year-olds have already seen pornography.[1]

- Many children view porn **unintentionally** for the first time – 62% of 11–13-year-olds say that their viewing of porn was mostly or more unintentional.[2]

- Parents' perceptions of how much porn their children are watching does not match the reality: only 25% of parents think that their child has seen porn – compared to 53% of children who have.[3]

Young people's view

Our group of young people felt porn doesn't show sex as it really is. Issues of concern include degradation and violence towards women, how consent is portrayed, and unattainable body standards.

They felt that watching porn, particularly at young ages, can affect real-life behaviours and attitudes around gender roles, sex and consent.

Girls talked about being sent porn by older boys at school. This can be scary and distressing and they would like to be able to talk to their parents about it. They also feel that parents of boys should be talking about why this kind of behaviour is not okay.

"I feel like the best time for parents to have a conversation about porn is a bit earlier for boys than girls. From my experience of male friends, they definitely see porn earlier than my female friends. I mean like early: year 4, year 5, year 6."

The legality of viewing porn

Under the current law, it is illegal for shops to sell under-18s physical copies of pornography (e.g. DVDs, videos, magazines). However there is currently a gap in the law around online pornography, which is freely available. The Children's Commissioner is working with the Government to close this loophole and bring pornography under the scope of the Online Safety Bill. In the meantime parents should be vigilant about the material their child has access to and apply parental controls where necessary.

Top tips from 16–21 year-olds

1 Apply adult content filters to your child and family devices. This is the best way to prevent them from stumbling across explicit content too young. More info on this can be found in the resources section.

2 Keep it casual. Find everyday opportunities to speak about porn in an age-appropriate way. Don't allow porn to become a 'taboo' subject.

"It shouldn't be a taboo. It should be something that parents talk about to their kids."

3 Be reassuring about the confusing emotions your child might feel after seeing explicit content.

4 Let them know it's okay to be curious and that this is a normal part of growing up. Create a judgement-free space to talk about it. Make sure to tell them that you won't overreact or be angry about anything they tell you.

"If [parents] say they're disappointed they're shaming the child for being curious about sex."

5 Telling your child off for watching porn and imposing sanctions is not always the best response. It will increase feelings of shame and make your child less likely to come to you for help/advice. Explain clearly and calmly why watching adult content too young can be harmful.

"Don't punish instead of having a proper good talk."

6 Be prepared to challenge views that may arise from watching adult content. Reinforce the message that sex and bodies, as depicted in a lot of porn, are not realistic. Explain that porn can make things like non-consensual sex appear 'normal' or 'okay' but it is not.

Click here to go to our resources page for more information

"At that young age you don't really know what's right and wrong and you just follow whatever you see on porn sites."

"Now porn has infiltrated mainstream media, you can literally find porn on Twitter."

All quotes from young people aged 16-21

📷 Sharing nude images

Young people share nudes (naked images/videos of themselves) for a variety of reasons. However, children might also be put under pressure to share pictures of themselves or to spread nudes sent to them by others. An Ofsted review into sexual harassment in schools found that girls can be contacted by up to **10 or 11 different boys a night**[4] asking for nude or semi-nude images.

Children are put at risk when nude images or videos of them are shared online – in Whatsapp groups, for example. This can happen without the young person's consent.

Our young peoples' view

The reasons why young people create and share nudes are varied and complex.

Some reasons given by our 16–21-year-olds as to why a child might create and share nudes include:

- Social pressure: belief that 'everyone else is doing it'

- Validation: to gain acceptance, feel empowered and confident (55% of young people who have shared a nude say it made them feel good about themselves).[5]

- Coercion, manipulation, harassment (60% of girls who have shared nudes felt pressured into doing so).[6]

- Flirting: to get someone's attention (particularly true for boys - 75% of boys who have shared a nude of themselves say they did so to 'turn someone on').[7]

- As part of a relationship milestone

Our young people say it is important that parents understand that the reasons for sharing nudes are complex. Their advice, if you find out your child has sent or received nudes, is to **not jump to conclusions**. Calmly ask your child open questions and try to understand the context in which the picture/video was taken and shared. This will help you to work out how to respond.

Cyberflashing

Cyberflashing is sending an unwanted nude image to someone else. It can leave victims feeling ashamed and violated, particularly if it is the first time they have seen a naked image. Cyberflashing disproportionately affects girls. One study found that **76% of girls aged 12–18 had been cyberflashed by a boy or man.**[8]

"They do it for validation – some people may have a lack of confidence or self-esteem issues and they're doing it because people say 'that's a good picture'."
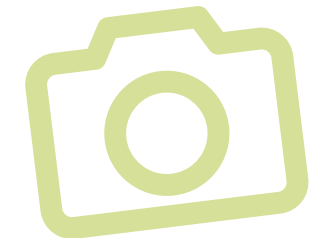
"It's just how society works – pressure applies more to girls than boys."

"Now, it's considered normal to send nudes if you have a relationship."

"Most young people seek validation from others... especially young girls seeking validation from boys cos they might not get it elsewhere."

*All quotes from young people aged 16-21*

Sharing nude images

The social consequences of sharing nudes

Girls face more consequences for sharing nudes than boys. Research shows that girls are looked down upon when a nude is leaked and it damages their reputation; but for boys, however unfairly, it seems the opposite is true – it can be a source of validation. A recent study found that **60% of young people think that a girl would lose social status** if a nude image of her was shared on Whatsapp, while **60% thought that a boy would gain social status** in the same situation.[9]

It is important to be aware of the fact that the social consequences for a male or a female child may be different, and to be sensitive to these. You can also use your proactive conversations with your child to challenge damaging and unfair gender stereotypes around sharing intimate images.

"A lot of parents might just blame the child instantly instead of trying to support them."
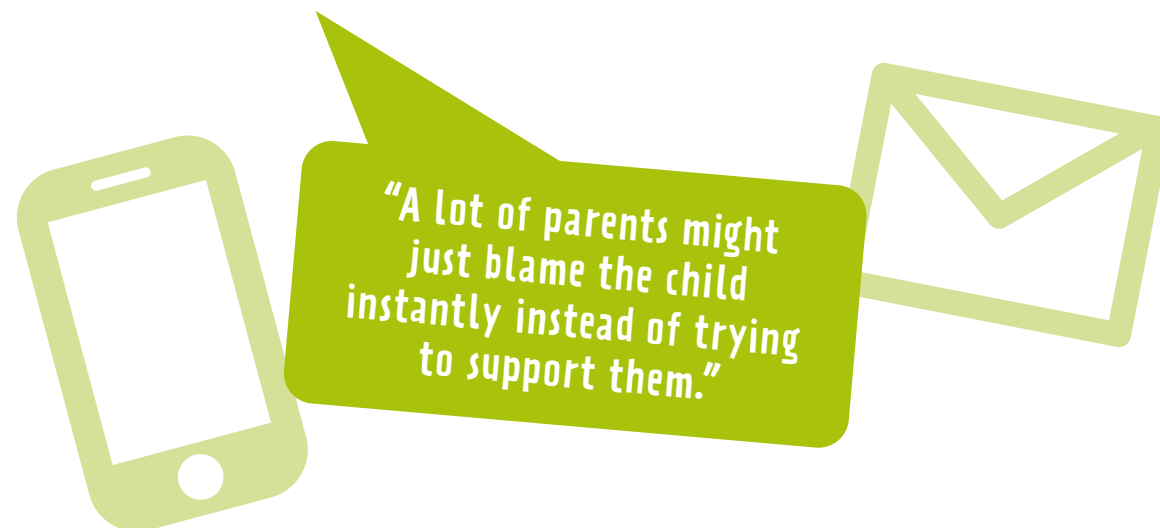
The legal consequences of sharing nudes

A nude image of an under-18 is classed as child abuse imagery. And while it is important that children sharing nudes are not criminalised, it needs to be addressed.

Where there is no evidence of exploitation or grooming it is unlikely that a child would be prosecuted for sharing a nude – particularly if it is a first offence. Police may investigate but can choose to record the incident in a way that does not have a negative impact on the children involved. More info can be found on Parents Protect.

Top tips from 16–21 year-olds

Be proactive

1 Start speaking to your child about the risks of sharing pictures when you first give them a phone. You can do this in an age-appropriate way using the ThinkUKnow videos.

2 Explain to your child early on that they may be sent naked pictures by someone else. The number one rule is that they don't send it on to anyone else. If it upsets them they should speak to you so you can help them to report it.

3 Don't assume your child is not involved. Sharing nudes is a very common part of growing up for some young people. Be prepared to support them if something goes wrong.

If your child tells you that they have shared someone else's nude:

1 Be very clear that pressuring someone for anything is wrong, especially something as personal as a naked picture. Have a conversation about how and why it happened.

2 Our young people think vulnerability is important in this situation. Remind your child we all make mistakes, and the important thing is to be honest and responsible after it has happened.

3 Seek advice from the safeguarding lead at your child's school. More information on how the school is likely to manage the situation can be found here.

If your child tells you that a nude image of them has been shared:

1 Teens want parents to offer practical advice (e.g. helping them contact tech platforms to stop images circulating.) Contact Childline/IWF Report Remove and make a report to NCA CEOP if you think the image has been shared with an adult. More advice on how to respond can be found on Internet Matters.

2 Seek advice from the safeguarding lead at your child's school. More information on how the school is likely to manage the situation can be found here.

3 Teens want parents to be emotionally supportive. The young person is in a vulnerable state, and they are likely to be feeling fear and embarrassment among other emotions. They need to hear that you love them and that you will work things out with them.

Click here to go to our resources page for more information

All quotes from young people aged 16-21

Sexualised bullying

Sexualised bullying can happen in 'public' online – in comments, tags and posts on social media for example, in videos and livestreams and on gaming platforms. It can also happen in 'private' online spaces like direct messages and group-chats.

Our young peoples' view

Our 16–21-years-olds talked about sexual comments and taunts and how these often included misogynistic language. They said that girls are more likely to be targeted with rude comments about their bodies and nasty gossip and rumours about their sexual activity. They also talked about physical forms of sexualised bullying, like 'upskirting', and how these violating images can be posted online.

Our group felt that sexualised bullying was more likely to happen to girls, but boys could be victims too. When boys were victims the bullying often had a homophobic element. Boys are also likely to find it harder to open up to friends and parents about their experience of sexualised bullying and this can make it harder to cope.

Of course, these forms of bullying (slut-shaming, body-shaming, gossiping etc.) happen offline too. However, it is much harder to escape when it is occurring online 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Introducing screen breaks can be helpful here.

> "Body shaming can happen to anybody. Imagine going on social media where hundreds of people can judge you, shame you and comment."

> "There are so many words used to describe girls in negative ways. And there are literally none for boys, I can't think of anything. Everyday I hear new words used to describe girls as objects or something like that basically."

Bait-out pages

Bait-out pages are online accounts – particularly on Instagram and Snapchat – which invite users to share nude images, videos or sexual gossip about others. Our young people told us that some pages are followed by thousands of other young people and allow gossip and nudes to spread rapidly.

> "You see it on Snap or Insta, bait out pages for different schools ... So you can't really escape it, it's everywhere. There are thousands of bait out pages on Insta or Snapchat of people doing things that are explicit and stuff like that."

Top tips from 16–21 year-olds

1 Young people emphasise how important it is for parents to build a trusting and open space where their children feel they are able to talk to them about forms of bullying including sexualised bullying and harassment.

> "Make them feel safe! Talk about sexual harassment before it even happens. From a young age, their child knows this is something they can come to their parents about."

2 Have regular check-ins and look out for signs that your child is being bullied.

> "Having that annoying mum saying 'how was your day' is really helpful."

3 Young people highlight the importance of parental vulnerability when talking and building relationship with their kids.

> "Parents should be just as open with their children as they want their children to be. It's more comfortable when you know your parent has been through something just the same."

4 Keep an eye on your child's social media account and make sure the account is private. Set boundaries on your involvement and agree these with your child.

> "We can have our boundaries ... setting these boundaries, I have mine and you have yours. Having that compromise."

5 Be aware that boys can be victim to sexualised bullying too and it may be harder for them to open up about it.

> "With girls it is easier for them to be a bit more vulnerable and upset and talk about it. I think that is why male suicide would increase because they wouldn't go to their parents, friends therapy or anything. They would keep all those problems and then just explode like that."

Click here to go to our resources page for more information
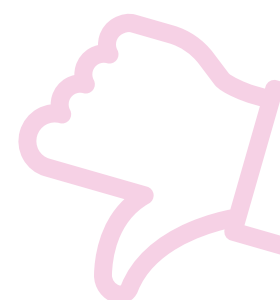
> "A lot of my male friends feel like they can't do certain things as they feel like they will get bullied, or even worse than bullied... they feel like they're in danger if they don't do a certain thing."

All quotes from young people aged 16-21

Editing photos and body image

Girls feel pressurised to achieve unrealistic beauty standards. They feel they "can't win" and beauty trends ask the impossible. They agree that edited images present an alternative reality which some people find it hard to distance themselves from. Even if they know an image is photoshopped, they still feel pressure.

Edited pictures can create a distorted perception of what the opposite sex looks like. This can pile pressure on young people to appear a certain way to appear 'attractive'.

"Boys want a natural face, but then when they see an actual natural face they put it down because that's not what they are seeing on social media."

Young people agree that boys are also under pressure to conform to a certain standard, such as being muscular.

"It is still as damaging … you know it's edited, you still wanna look that way. It is hard to get over the fact you don't look that way. It's hard to navigate through that."

Filters
Filters can be fun, funny and creative. However augmented reality is also used to 'perfect' or 'beautify' images: by smoothing skin, making cheekbones more prominent and reducing nose-size – for example – or by making a body appear thinner. This can have a negative impact on how children view 'real' unfiltered images of themselves and can lead to lower self-esteem.

Top tips from 16–21-year-olds:

1 Build confidence in your child and allow them to realise that they don't need to manipulate an image to feel good about themselves.

"Encourage your child to be who they are."

2 Start a conversation.

"Ask questions that allow expression of thoughts rather than yes/no answers. For example, 'What do you think/feel about this?... Would you ever edit your pictures?' "

3 Make your child aware that the pictures they see online are often manipulated. Explain that it can be fun and creative to use filters and edit pictures, but editing can also be used to mask insecurities. You can show them before and after pictures and talk about the change and effect of editing.

4 Social media can make it seem like there is one single standard for beauty. You should explain this isn't the case.

"Help to broaden your child's understanding of body image by looking at different cultures – a global outlook will show you there's not one set beauty standard."

"Boys expect every girl to look the same … hour glass figure… these unrealistic beauty standards. They're like 'I wanna big butt but you have to have a thigh gap'. Like that doesn't make sense."

"It comes to a point where people refuse to take a picture without a filter… they just can't look at their actual face."

All quotes from young people aged 16-21

Peer pressure

What are the issues?

Young people say social media can be a time sink and they wish they had spent more time doing things they enjoy more – like playing music, reading books and getting outside. They worry about the impact it will have on their attention span. They are also worried that there is pressure to get more likes and have more followers, and that can lead to them posting negative comments to get more attention, or to engaging in risky and harmful behaviour (including overly sexualised images and posts). However, they feel there's a shift towards people posting more honestly, discussing mental health and body issues, and feeling part of a positive community.

"You see people like those comments and get lots of likes. It makes you think to post more comments like that, you see people like them so you start posting more hateful comments."

Setting boundaries

Young people think that rules and boundaries should be set.

They also think that rules should be agreed in consultation with children. You can ask your child for their opinion and come to an agreement – e.g. what do you think is a reasonable time to be on your phone at night?

Some rules for parents/children which young people think are helpful:

- Parents should role model behaviour – by being confident in their own skin and not on phones all the time.

- Social media accounts should be private until 16/18.

- No social media accounts until 13.

- Time limits on use. Media timeouts – talk to kids to decide timings and keep having conversation at different ages.

Top tips from 16–21-year-olds:

1 Set boundaries and rules. Don't let social media become your child's only reality and influence everything they do. Set time limits and screen breaks.

2 Talk openly about peer pressure. You understand that your child might feel pressured into doing something, even if they know it is wrong and they don't want to do it. You might want to draw on your own personal experiences or use news stories as a starting point for the conversation.

3 Not everyone is doing it! Whatever the trend might be. Even though it might feel like everyone is participating, social media is designed to make people feel like they need to join in. It takes real strength of character to listen to yourself and to make your own decisions.

4 Find positive role models (of the same age or slightly older) for your child to follow and be influenced by. Young people say that there has been a positive movement towards discussing mental health, body and relationship issues – you can find and encourage your child to join these communities.

5 Social media/gaming/messaging/video platforms should be a fun extra to your child's interests rather than dominating their whole life. Talk about how your child can explore their hobbies and interests online (crafting, sports, music, dance...) and then apply new skills offline.

Click here to go to our resources page for more information

"Recently there's been a rise of people being vulnerable and showing their natural skin and it's really been helpful I feel like. Compared to five years ago everyone was like literally and metaphorically covering themselves up. People have learned that mental health is important and they want to share about it."

All quotes from young people aged 16-21

Summary of top tips

By reading this guide you have taken a big and important first step. This means it's likely that you're already doing a great job.

To make your child feel ever safer and more supported, here are the things that young people want you to do.

1 Do start speaking to your kids about these issues before you first give them a phone or set up a social media account. This might feel very early, but you can do it in an age-appropriate way. It is better to be proactive than reactive.

Don't wait for the crisis.

2 Do keep the conversation going. Adapt to your child's maturity levels.

Don't mention it once and think that's enough.

3 Do keep it casual, find everyday opportunities to speak about these issues – like when you're walking or driving somewhere.

Don't scare them with 'the big talk'.

4 Do focus on your child's emotions first. Your immediate instinct might be to punish them when something goes wrong, but your child needs you to listen and to be non-judgmental.

Don't punish them before listening and understanding.

5 Do keep curious about the technology your child is using and stay up to date with platforms, apps and trends.

Don't pretend these issues don't exist and that your child is not involved.

6 Do set boundaries. Use filtering tools to limit your child's exposure to harmful content. Decide on rules and boundaries with your child, allowing them to input. Explain which monitoring and filtering tools you are using, and why.

Don't leave your child unsupervised. You wouldn't leave them alone in the park or the street, apply the same level of protection online.

Conversation starters

Create the culture before the crisis

It's important to get into the habit of talking to your children about these topics because this is the reality of their everyday lives.

Create a culture of openness, curiosity and approachability and your child is likely to feel more comfortable coming to you if they have problems.

#AsktheAwkward is an online project aimed at helping parents start discussions about online relationships with their teens. Here are some suggested conversation starters:

What do you use apps/social media for most?

How do you stay safe online?

What's your favourite app at the moment? Show me…

What do you think might worry me about you being online? What might worry you about me being online?

Do you think a family agreement for online use is a good idea? How might this look for us?

How much do you think I should know about what you do online?

What are the warning signs that someone online is lying or isn't who they say they are?

What are the reasons why young people might share a nude?

Do people say things online they wouldn't say in person? Why?

A note to my younger self

We asked our young people to fill out a note to their younger selves. These are the thoughts and advice they had to offer.

You may want to try this exercise with your child and use it as a way to start a conversation.

It is okay not to look a specific way, don't feel pressure to do anything. You are perfect the way your are. People's opinions don't matter, just enjoy your childhood.

Don't worry about not being instantly in a relationship or experiencing school love. You're loved. You're wanted. You're perfectly normal. Let it come naturally. Don't let other people pressure you. You are your own person.

Trust your parents, even when you don't understand them. You don't get it now but one day you will.

Don't worry about getting social media and just carry on playing with your toy, reading and drawing because social media turns your brain to mush.

Don't let social media force you into viewing yourself in a negative way.

You didn't take social media seriously and knew about what was right and wrong. This led us to grow up without having to worry about things online and we are doing ok now.

Use social media responsibly and don't feel like you have to do certain things to seem more mature or older because you will grow up in your own time so no rush.

Try writing your own note here...

Dear me,

What to do if something goes wrong

Where to get help

If you are worried that your child has had an upsetting experience online, for example if a nude image has been shared without their consent, it is important that you know where to go for immediate support.

- Contact **Childline/IWF Report Remove** if an image/video of an under-18 has been shared without their consent.

- Make a report to **NCA CEOP** if you think the image/video has been shared with an adult.

- Contact the **NSPCC** sexual harassment helpline. Your child can also talk to **Childline**.

- Speak to your child's school. They should have a policy to deal with incidents of sexual harassment/abuse and can help you to support your child.

Signs to look out for

These are some of the signs of online sexual harassment that our young people said you should look out for:

- **refusing to go to school**
- **obsessively checking their phone**
- **distancing themselves, silence, anger, anxiety**
- **suddenly deleting/taking time off an app that they love**
- **skipping meals, saying they are 'not hungry'**
- **sudden awareness of their own body or sudden diets**

Resources and further information

Pornography

Internet Matters – Up-to-date information and advice on topics including internet porn:
https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/online-pornography/
ThinkUKnow – Age-appropriate activities to discuss issues including porn:
https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/Worried-about-your-child-and-online-porn/
Set Up Safe – Step-by-step guides on setting up parental controls on your child's device:
https://www.internetmatters.org/setupsafe/

Sharing nude images

Parents Protect – Practical advice, including a dedicated helpline 0808 1000 900:
https://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/
Childline – For any worries your child may have 0800 1111:
https://www.childline.org.uk/
Kooth – Qualified online counsellors for children:
https://www.kooth.com/
Childline and IWF Report Remove tool – If your child is worried that an image or video of themselves has been shared:
https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/remove-nude-image-shared-online/
NCA CEOP – To report concerns about online sexual abuse or grooming:
https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/
NSPCC helpline – To report experiences of sexual harassment and abuse in school call 0800 138 663:
https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/news/2021/april/sexual-abuse-in-education-helpline-launched

Sexualised bullying

Childnet – Resources on a range of topics including online sexual harassment:
https://www.childnet.com/our-projects/project-deshame/i-am-a-parent-or-carer
Family Lives – Support and advice for parents 0808 800 2222:
https://www.bullying.co.uk/cyberbullying/
Action for Children 1:1 – Free and confidential live-chat with a parenting coach:
https://parents.actionforchildren.org.uk/chat/?src=art_wide_widget
Report Harmful Content – Advice on reporting harmful and abusive content:
https://reportharmfulcontent.com/advice/
Childline – For children experiencing bullying or for any worries your child may have 0800 1111:
https://www.childline.org.uk/
The Mix – Advice and support for under-25s:
https://www.themix.org.uk/

Peer pressure

ParentZone – Advice and support for parenting in the digital world:
https://www.parents.parentzone.org.uk/
Childnet – Guide to setting up a family agreement:
https://www.childnet.com/resources/family-agreement
YoungMinds – Talk to an online counsellor:
https://www.youngminds.org.uk/young-person/

References

1   BBFC and Revealing Reality (2020) 'Young People, Pornography and Age-verification', accessed 14 December 2021

2   BBFC and Revealing Reality (2020) 'Young People, Pornography and Age-verification', accessed 14 December 2021

3   BBFC and Revealing Reality (2020) 'Young People, Pornography and Age-verification', accessed 14 December 2021

4   Ofsted (2021) 'Review of sexual abuse in schools and colleges', accessed 14 December 2021

5   Interim data from Revealing Reality: research into image sharing among young people in UK schools. Please note that figures are not final and may change, they are based on the responses from 4907 children who had completed the survey as of 23.11.21. Data is unweighted.

6   Interim data from Revealing Reality: research into image sharing among young people in UK schools. Please note that figures are not final and may change, they are based on the responses from 4907 children who had completed the survey as of 23.11.21. Data is unweighted.

7   Interim data from Revealing Reality: research into image sharing among young people in UK schools. Please note that figures are not final and may change, they are based on the responses from 4907 children who had completed the survey as of 23.11.21. Data is unweighted.

8   UCL IoE, SSE, University of Kent, ASCL (2021) 'Understanding and Combatting Youth Experiences of Image-Based Sexual Harassment and Abuse', accessed 14 December 2021

9   Interim data from Revealing Reality: research into image sharing among young people in UK schools. Please note that figures are not final and may change, they are based on the responses from 4907 children who had completed the survey as of 23.11.21. Data is unweighted.

Children's Commissioner