

What is sextortion?

Sexually coerced extortion or 'sextortion' is a type of blackmail where someone tries to use intimate, naked or sexual photos or videos of someone to make them do things they don't want to do. Sometimes, these photos or videos are taken without their knowledge, and the person blackmailing them uses them to force them into paying money or doing something against their will.

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 webcam sessions or private messages.

Recognising warning signs in children

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
- Social withdrawal
- Changes in online behaviour
- Unusual behaviour with money, gift vouchers etc
- Unusual secrecy
- Change in academic performance
- Change in attitude to school
- Sleep disturbances
- Avoidance of electronic devices
- Self-harm or suicidal ideation

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.



One Minute Guide

Sextortion

How to respond...

→ Avoid Blame

Always remember the child has done nothing wrong. Avoid victim blaming language and reassure them that you are there to support them.

→ Escalate

Remember that if sextortion has been disclosed it is a form of child sexual abuse and needs to be escalated towards your DSL who with then follow local pathways and procedures.

→ Work Together

Parents and carers will need to be informed about the situation, this can cause the child or young person to feel anxious. Discuss what approach they would prefer and reassure them that what you're doing is to support and protect them.

→ Take Action

If an incident has happened, you can direct towards online tools such as [Report Remove](#) or [Take it Down](#). Both services allow you to report the images and videos directly.

If a child is in immediate danger call 999

Key Contacts and Further Information

- [Coventry Safeguarding Children Partnership](#)
- [CSA Centre: Communicating with children](#)
- [UK Safer Internet Centre](#)
- [ChildLine & Sextortion](#)
- [Internet Watch Foundation](#)

Sign up to our e-newsletter [here!](#)

How does sextortion happen?

Sextortion incidents can happen through a variety of different ways which can often start by perpetrators making themselves as other children or by hacking accounts and pretending to be children known by the individual. It can often involve perpetrators:

- × Targeting young people through social online sites.
- × Moving conversations towards an end-to-end encrypted platform.
- × Starting sexual conversations or sharing an initial nude image.
- × Requesting and pressuring the child for images or videos.
- × Blackmailing them for money or further intimate content with the threat of sharing images with family members or friends.
- × Claiming they have hacked their accounts and have access to information, images and videos.

Professionals Online Safety Helpline

For supporting professionals working with children and young people, with any online safety issue they may be having

CALL: 0344 381 4772

EMAIL: helpline@saferinternet.org.uk

- In the first 6 months of 2023, the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) received more reports involving 'sextortion' than in the whole of 2022.
- Older teens (14-17) are reportedly most at risk, with boys apparently being targeted most often.
(IWF 2023)