# SYSTEMAGIC

# SEXTING

## ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CARERS




**Sexting is defined as the "exchange of sexual messages or images" and "creating, sharing and forwarding sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images" through mobile phones and the Internet.**

**Most sexting is a deliberate act, often where an individual will pose or act in a sexual manner and will make a direct effort to send it to the person they want to see it, usually a boyfriend or a girlfriend. Problems arise when these images are shared amongst peers or online. The distribution of images can be very distressing particularly by someone trusted. The effects of others seeing this content can lead to negative comments and bullying, and may result in a loss of confidence or self-esteem.**

### The Law

- **It is illegal to send an indecent image of themselves via text message or social media below the age of 18 is illegal. – It counts as an offence of distributing an indecent image of a child. Could lead to being on the sex offenders register**
- **It is illegal to make an indecent image of an under 18 even if this image is of their selves – this includes downloading or opening an image that has been sent to you**
- **Anyone that possesses or possesses with the intent of distributing indecent images of others under the age 18**
- **Anyone who distributes an indecent image of others under the age of 18**
- **Sending an indecent image of themselves to anyone whom is likely to be offended – this could be counted an**
- **offence under the Malicious Communications Act**
- **Redistribution of an image beyond the realms of that private communication is argued in court as a breach of the Privacy law**

**It is unlikely that young people engaging in sexting would face prosecution as first time offenders, but incidents are usually investigated to ensure that the young people involved are not at risk. Repeat offenders and more extreme cases are reviewed differently, still with a focus on avoiding prosecution unless absolutely necessary. Other than the legal implications sexting there also reputational and emotional consequences. As content can be so easily distributed on the internet and it is hard to control where there is a danger of a young person's reputation can be damaged, not just amongst** their peers but future employers, universities, colleges etc.

### What should you do as a parent or carer?

Sexting can, like most Internet safety issues, be avoided by talking about the consequences before an incident occurs. Reminding them that once an image is sent it can never be retrieved and how is easily it is distributed. Try to educate young people that they should delete images immediately and if they do send it on, they're distributing pornography - and that's against the law.

### If an incident occurs:

- Remain calm and assess the situation. Your first priority is to keep the young person safe. Reassure them that they've done the right thing by confiding in you, and you'll do what you can to help.
- Establish whom they shared the image with in the first place (or where they posted it). If you know the person with whom they shared the picture, it may be possible to contact them or their parents/carers immediately to get it deleted/taken down.
- If it's on a website or social network, try to get the provider to remove it by reporting it at once, using their report button
- If the photo is likely to be circulating at the child's school or college, inform them immediately. They have the power to respond to this. They will have to follow their child protection and safeguarding policies and will support you as things develop.
- Report the issue to the police if you think the child was coerced into making and sharing one or more images or the child's image is being exploited or there are threats, blackmail or extortion and if there is an adult involved

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