

Wolverhampton Police

Sexting

Sexting is the sending of sexually explicit messages and pictures via mobile phones. It is a growing trend amongst young people and is also often used by sexual predators when they are grooming child victims.

There is a growing trend among children and young people to take indecent photographs of themselves (and sometimes even of friends) to send on to each other or post in public places. This could be on the internet - for example on Facebook - or by sending the photos to each other on their mobile phones.

When people talk about sexting, they usually refer to sending and receiving:

- Naked pictures or 'nudes'
- 'Underwear shots'
- Sexual or 'dirty pics'
- Rude text messages or videos

They can be sent from a friend, boyfriend, girlfriend or someone you've met online. You might have also sent a sexual photo, video or text to someone else.

Many young people see it as harmless fun - often thinking it is a good way to show someone they like and trust them. Others may see it as a modern way to push boundaries and experiment with risk taking, particularly as they become more socially active and sexually aware.

What Are The Risks?

The images could get into the wrong hands in a number of ways. A simple example would be that a child or young person loses their mobile telephone (which contains images of them).

A further common example is where a young person sends a 'sext' message to their boyfriend or girlfriend. When the relationship ends and one of the partner decides to circulate for 'revenge' or 'a laugh'. This also puts that person who originally sent the images in a vulnerable position, and can often lead others to bully and harass them.



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Once an image is on the internet, it can be freely copied by anybody.

This could include people who have a sexual interest in children. Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) report that a number of 'self-taken' images are appearing on paedophile chat sites and forums.

Children and Young People may not realise that what they are doing is illegal or that it may be potentially harmful to them in the future.

The Law

Children who are 'sexting' may actually be committing criminal offences.

It is an offence to possess/send/make/take/distribute/show indecent photos of children (person under the age of 18). That means that the child who takes the photo commits an offence as does any person who it gets sent to. This is the case regardless of whether or not they forward it onto other people and also applies to anyone who simply shows it to other people.

If you are under the age of 18, the law sees you as a child.

Therefore, if you have any indecent images or videos of somebody who is under 18 you would technically be in possession of indecent images of children- even if you are the same age.

This is an offence under the Protection of Children Act 1978 and the Criminal Justice Act 1988.

If you are under 18 and you send, upload or forward indecent images or videos onto friends or boyfriends/girlfriends, this would also be breaking the law, even if they are photos of yourself ("selfies").



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Section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1978 creates various offences regarding the taking, making or distributing indecent photographs (or pseudo-photographs) of a child.

1(1) Subject to sections 1A and 1B, it is an offence for a person -

(a) to take, or permit to be taken, or to make, any indecent photograph or pseudo-photograph of a child; or

(b) to distribute or show such indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs; or

(c) to have in his possession such indecent photographs or pseudo-photographs, with a view to their being distributed or shown by himself or others.

is guilty of an offence

For which you can be arrested interviewed and imprisoned for up to 10 years there would also be a requirement to sign-on the sex offenders register, potentially for some considerable time

For further information and advice visit:-

Thinkuknow- CEOP's site with information on internet safety

or

www.nspcc.org.uk/sexting

