

Online Safety - Making the Right Choice

Children and young adults are over-sharing daily through direct messaging, picture messaging, social media, gaming and technology. Children and Young adults can become intentional victims of exploitation by behaving illegally or inappropriately, however with the evolution of technology and connectivity they can become unintentional victims through lack of awareness and education.

What child and young adults don't understand is that people besides their friends (i.e. Colleges, law enforcement, principals, parents, and potential employers) are looking in on these behaviours constantly. Parents also need to be aware of the possible consequences, and case examples are used to drive these points home. If children and young adults are old enough to be given or use an internet enable devices for social media or gaming, then they are old enough to be taught 'Making the Right Choice' can be crucial.

We All Use the Internet

But Children & Young Adults

Use it in a Completely Different Way





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EDUCARE (Creator of Online Child Safeguarding Training Course 2014-2018)

ERA (Academy of European Law), Trier, Germany.

BSME (British Schools in Middle East)

SANCTUARY (Training for Foster Carers & Social Services)

WT-ASSOCIATES (Child Safeguarding Consultancy)

FOBISIA (Federation of British International Schools in Asia)

CHRYSALIS FOSTER CARE (Training for Foster Carers & Social Services)

CAN Training (Training for Foster Carers & Social Services)

HEATHFARM FOSTERING (Training for Foster Carers & Social Services)



Sexting, Sexy Selfie or Inappropriate Self Generated Images

What Must be Understood to Prevent Criminalisation of Children & Young Adults

Sexting among teens is, unfortunately, common. Many parents are shocked to hear how casually teens discuss how prevalent it is. And, while experts differ on statistics, as long ago as 2009 a study confirmed 'sexting' is a teen reality that's here to stay, how right they were. Interestingly though research and 'experts' continue to supply statistical issues relating to the sending and receiving of sexy self generated images as if it has suddenly become an epidemic. Why do children or young adults take such images? To show off, to entice someone, to show interest in someone, or to prove commitment. Perhaps even as a joke. Teens' developing interest in sex, an impulse to experiment, and apps that make sexting easy -- and acceptable -- create an environment that some teens find irresistible.

Sending these pictures or messages is problematic enough, but the real challenge comes when this content is shared broadly. As far too many teens have found out, the recipient of these messages is in possession of a highly compromising image or message that can be easily posted on a social networking site or sent to others via direct messaging.

In a technological world where anything can be copied, sent, posted, and seen by huge audiences, there's no such thing as being able to control information. The intention doesn't matter -- even if a photo was taken and sent as a token of love, for example, the technology makes it possible for everyone to see your child's most intimate self. In the hands of teens, when revealing photos are made public, the 'sender' almost always ends up feeling humiliated. Furthermore, sending sexual images to minors is against the law, and some children have been prosecuted for the making and/or distribution of Indecent Images of Children. So, whilst the image may have been sent in complete innocence the child may find themselves charged or cautioned for a criminal offence. This charge or caution will result in a period spent on the Sex Offenders Register (SOR). The SOR is a register containing the details of individuals convicted, cautioned or released from prison for a sexual offence against children or adults since 1997, (and initially was believed to be for adults and was not created for registering children Under 18).



Let's Define 'Sexting' Correctly

In 2012, whilst speaking to students from years 9 & 10 at an all girls school, a student stated that she did not take part in 'sexting' but did receive and send 'Sexy Selfies'. Initially I felt this was an act of defiance, then I realised this exactly highlighted the issue. Most teens that do get involved in taking, sending and receiving sexy selfies do not see it as 'sexting'. If a parent or a teacher tries to speak to a teen about 'sexting' the initial

response will be '#awks' (awkward). However, whilst this synonymising is understandable and may legitimise the action to the teen involved in sexting, the issue becomes one of definition which highlights the legal dangers;

Sexting: *Sexting* is sending, receiving, or forwarding sexually explicit messages, photographs or images,

Indecent Image of a Child: *An Indecent Image of a Child* is not defined by law, the decision of whether an image is indecent is left to the police, CPS and the jury.

Whilst no legal definition exists for an Indecent Image of a Child, the image itself will have to be or contain elements of sexually explicit imagery (as with a Sext), so the correct synonymising with Sexy Selfie should or could be Indecent Image of a Child. Therefore Under 18's have been placed on the Sex Offenders Registered for a minimum of 1 year as a result of being charged or cautioned. The offence of making and distributing an indecent image of a child was generated prior to the current technological era (and before some were born). This offence was always intended for an adult who created and distributed images of a child, not for peer on peer images. Therefore, the line between whether a child is a victim, or an offender is a completely distorted one.

This is a real case of using a 'sledgehammer to crack open a nut', resulting in the complete unnecessary Criminalisation of a Child and destroying their reputation and preventing goals and plans for future education and employment.

Legal Issue - Criminalisation of Children

Certainly, with several Under 18-year-old teens being placed on the sex offender register as a result of being charged or cautioned for the making and/or distribution of Indecent Images of Children legislation has been created to attempt to prevent the Criminalisation of teenagers.

Current Legislation

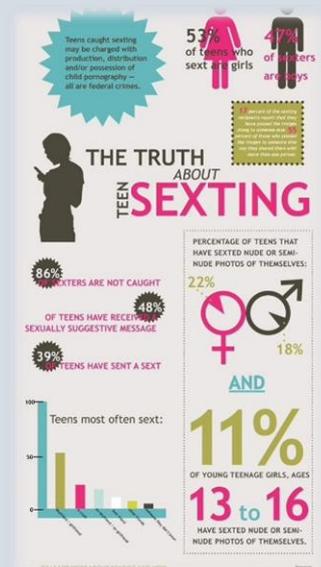
The Obscene Publications Act 1959, Section 8 & 9 sexual Offences Act 2003, Section 127 Communications Act 2003, all make it a criminal offence for anyone of any age to commit a relevant offence of creating/ sending sexual messaging including imagery. So new legislation has been created in the form of Section 67 Serious Crime Act 2015 which specifically states that the offence can only be committed by someone over 18. However closer examination proves this new legislation to be problematic.

Sexual communication with a child

"15A Sexual communication with a child

- (1) A person aged 18 or over (A) commits an offence if—
 - (a) for the purpose of obtaining sexual gratification, A intentionally communicates with another person (B),
 - (b) the communication is sexual or is intended to encourage B to make (whether to A or to another) a communication that is sexual, and
 - (c) B is under 16 and A does not reasonably believe that B is 16 or over.
- (2) For the purposes of this section, a communication is sexual if—
 - (a) any part of it relates to sexual activity, or
 - (b) a reasonable person would, in all the circumstances but regardless of any person's purpose, consider any part of the communication to be sexual;
 and in paragraph (a) "sexual activity" means an activity that a reasonable person would, in all the circumstances but regardless of any person's purpose, consider to be sexual.
- (3) A person guilty of an offence under this section is liable—
 - (a) on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 12 months or a fine or both;
 - (b) on conviction on indictment, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years."

On closer examination not only does an offender have to be over 18, but sexual intention must be proved (never easy). Furthermore, the victim must under 16, so this adds confusion as this means that 17-year olds can send to each other under this legislation but still commit offences under the older legislation! No power of arrest exists for this specific offence and the logistical & financial cost for investigating these offences (interviews, forensic



examinations of devices etc) suggests that this legislation will not ever be used. This new legislation is not straightforward, and I do not see it as preventing the criminalisation of children.

Outcome 21

The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), which is working in partnership with the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre and the UK Council for Child Internet Safety issued guidance in response to the increase in the number of sexting offences and concern among schools that children are not “over-criminalised”. Outcome 21 offers Guidance to police forces in England and Wales covering the basis for mounting an investigation into alleged sexting offences and allows discretion to take no further action in certain cases.

Every crime reported to the police must have an outcome code. The NPCC, Home Office and the DBS have agreed a new outcome code for youth-produced sexual imagery. *Outcome 21: This outcome code allows the police discretion not to take further action if it is not in the public interest, even though there is enough evidence to prosecute.*

Using this outcome code is likely to mean the offence would not appear on a future Enhanced DBS check, **although not impossible**, as that disclosure is a risk-based decision.

So, whilst Outcome 21 will hopefully mean 'no further action' no 'criminalisation' it can have an impact on the child's future, should they require a DBS Enhanced Disclosure for future gap year or full-time employment.

Conclusion

If a child or teenager gets involved in Sexting (which is highly likely), the response should always be guided by the 'principle of proportionality' this must include taking into consideration the number of images taken and sent. The primary concern always should be the welfare and protection of the young people involved. Therefore, I believe we should not be criminalising our young people and if Police consider no further action then at no stage should the report feature on any further DBS enhanced disclosure.

Whilst this action will prevent unnecessary Legal Consequences, it will not prevent 'Non legal psychological Consequences' which is why education and dialogue is the 'way forward'. The first part of stopping this epidemic of sexting is to know what the problem is, which is behaviour and understanding. Whilst there has been a call for compulsory sex and relationship education (SRE) for schools, there should also be compulsory Online Safety and Social media Workshops. These workshops must be carried out by experts who have dealt with victims, offenders, have worked with the law and continue to research online behaviour and its impact as a result of 'inappropriate behaviour'.

We will never police our way out of this problem, but we can inform, advice, and educate young people on the consequences of taking 'Sexy Selfies'.

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Online Safety & Social Media Issues

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The Online 'Challenges' That Seek Online Validation & Online Badge of Honour

Having worked extensively in UK Schools, International Schools in Europe, Middle East and Far East Asia and I have a deep knowledge of the technological context in which international schools work and therefore have a unique insight into international schools specific context and always tailor my approach accordingly (no other Online safety supplier provides such expertise in this bespoke setting). Being a qualified and experienced trainer, I always focus on the practical application of Online safety & Social Media Training that is up to date, current, relevant and specific. This allows for the exploration of the wide range of Online Behaviour and gives delegates the most current 'Online Safety message', not simply standard, ad-hoc 'E-Safety' Advise

Whilst I spend my time speaking to students, parents, teachers and child safeguarding professionals on Online Safety, specifically highlighting how children and young adults behave online, and how this can result in online exploitation, online Challenges and online validation is also an area to be aware of. Online validation invariably involves online broadcasting using social media eg You Tube, Instagram, Facebook, Periscope and Badoo (there are others). Therefore parents, carers, professionals and students should be informed in advance about the purpose and audience of any broadcast.

Challenges;

Warnings about Momo Challenge, Deleted, Tide Pod, Deodorant & Blue Whale Challenge have proved far more viral than the challenges themselves, anything that puts suggestions & images of self-harm & suicide in front of children who are already vulnerable to self-esteem and other psychological issues (including suicidal tendencies) can carry dangerous potential. One of my biggest concerns about rumours like Momo, Deleted and Blue Whale Challenge is the risk of suicide contagion, which could turn these challenges into reality for a small number of vulnerable youth. *"Suicide contagion is real, which is why I'm concerned about it,"* (M Gould). When Online Challenges become widely popular you cannot prevent the desire of some teenagers to exploit them to scare peers or younger kids. Whether we 'adults' like it or not Momo - Deleted - Blue Whale Challenge phenomena exist to prey on the minds of the vulnerable especially children with low self-esteem and/or other pre-existing psychological condition. So, to call them all 'Hoaxes' is very inaccurate and dangerous. If a child or young person is identified as having pre-existing psychological issues then the parents need to know about Online Challenges & the possible self-harm motivation, justification & validation they pose.

Online Challenges are not new, and more and more we see individuals creating online challenges, filming themselves completing them and then 'challenging' others (sometimes online contacts or friends). These challenges can be to pouring salt in their hands and hold ice until it burns, dousing themselves in rubbing alcohol and set themselves on fire or biting into colourful liquid laundry detergent packets. The fact that these completed challenges are filmed and posted adds to the fact that these challenges are designed to reinforce Online Validation, and perhaps would not be as possible if they were not filmed and posted.

Remember: All these Challenges are Filmed and uploaded / posted to social media on Mobile Phones, usually You Tube, Instagram, Snapchat or Facebook. As many videos exist, this can reinforce the validation for attempting and completing the challenge.

The Blue Whale Challenge is a social media challenge that encourages children, teenagers & other users to perform specific tasks, over the course of 50 days, that are assigned to them by an anonymous “group administrator.” Some people say that the Blue Whale Challenge might be an urban legend, but many parents and educators are concerned about this social media challenge that is gaining attention online. Many of the tasks include acts of self-harm, like urging players to cut themselves in the shape of a whale. Players join the Blue Whale Challenge by posting certain hashtags or joining specific groups on social media, in the hopes of getting selected by a “group administrator”. Targeted at 10-14-year olds, players are required to send photo evidence to their “group administrator” to prove that they have completed each specific task. The challenge is meant to harm students and slowly gets them to trust the game. The Blue Whale Challenge creates new opportunities for predators to target victims on social media. Players of the challenge can’t stop playing once they’ve started; they are blackmailed and cyber bullied into completing the “game”. “Group administrators” are typically adults and older teens.



The Momo Challenge is similar to the Blue Whale Challenge, the Momo Challenge is popular amongst teens and some young adults (10 – 16 year olds), however in many ways it is ‘age irrelevant’ as it preys on the vulnerable and those with ‘low’ self-esteem, hence the similarity to the Blue Whale Challenge. The challenge encourages students to contact an unknown person called ‘Momo’ via Whats App. Throughout the challenge, students are sent violent and graphic images and texts. If students want to stop the challenge “Momo” threatens to leak their personal information. Then, the stranger asks students to share photos and videos of themselves completing certain tasks. At first the tasks are small. For example: face a fear, wake up at weird hours throughout the night, then the tasks escalate until the final task which encourages students to kill themselves. Images associated with “Momo” are based off Japanese doll artists Linkfactory but the artists are in no way involved with the Momo challenge. WhatsApp, YouTube, and Facebook are the primary networks for the challenge.



The Condom Snorting Challenge is not unlike other dangerous dares that have swept social media, teenagers have been doing it - for years now. The challenge involves uncoiling a condom and stuffing it up one side of your nose, then plugging the other nostril and inhaling until the long piece of latex slides into your throat. Then what? You reach back and pull it from your mouth. The condom could easily get stuck in your nose or your throat, blocking your breathing or causing you to choke. The challenge is not only to do this once, but how many times can one individual complete this task, and now many in a minute, different challenges different dangers.



Tide Pod Challenge soon became real after circulating on social media - with multiple videos uploaded to YouTube of people participating in the challenge. The uploaded videos instantly get many views and soon became viral. Most videos open by discussing the challenge, stating, “I didn’t think you could eat them, but look so tasty,” before popping the detergent pod into the individuals mouth. Biting down, the pod oozes detergent, and the ‘YouTuber’ will immediately attempt to spit it out. These videos, ‘many hundreds’, are both foolish and disgusting - in addition to dangerous - and doctors are urging people to refrain from attempting the challenge.



The Deodorant Challenge is the latest to worry parents, as kids who take part are seriously injuring themselves. The challenge is a test of endurance and involves spraying deodorant from an aerosol can directly onto a person's bare skin. The aim is to see who can hold it there the longest. This is a very scary trend, because basically these children are committing chemical burns. Apparently one dermatologist expert announced that the force of the aerosol itself and the temperature change on the skin can potentially cause second- and third-degree burns.



Cyber Banging is the creation of videos on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter by rival gang members, using it to endorse 'gangs' and where they come from and to threaten each other. The practice is called "cyber banging," and it's often led to fights and even death. Media and social media outlets nationally and internationally have reported this new phenomenon of gang affiliates using social media sites such as Facebook and YouTube to trade insults or make violence threats that lead to violence, victimisation, physical assaults, challenges and even murder. Many of the videos are filmed by gang members who have infiltrated a rival's 'territory' recorded themselves challenging and disrespecting the local gang, resulting in physical violence.



Whilst all these challenges are physical not technological, without the use of technology (mobile phones / tablets etc), the message could not be spread, therefore the online validation sought, the online badge of honour received, and the online motivation and justification for behaving this way would not be warranted or 'go viral'.

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INTERNET SAFETY



Monitor them. Educate them. Keep them safe.



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