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Date

Dear Parents & Guardians

During this challenging period when our children are at home with very limited time outside the house. It is understandable that they will be socialising more online & generally spending more time on the internet.

As a police officer who often visits schools, one of the most frequently requested talks I deliver to secondary school pupils is on the topic of 'Sexting'. Sexting involves a person sending a sexualised text, indecent image or video of themselves to another person via a mobile phone or similar.

Once such content has been sent to others, control of it is lost & it can end up anywhere in the world. This could result the images being seen by a very wide circle of people including their family & friends. It could be posted on social media or even reach the hands of criminals. It could be used by a known or unknown person to bully, harass, embarrass or even threaten the victim, or be circulated among unknown people forever.

This situation can be almost impossible to fully track & ensure content is deleted. There is no guarantee that an image or video won't re-appear at some point in the future, perhaps years later. This can have a massive impact on their mental wellbeing, their relationships & social circle? As well as the huge distress & anxiety it can cause parents to feel. It could even impact on their future job prospects.

I'm sure young people don't always understand the possible consequences of their actions & the distress, embarrassment & upset they could endure through a lack of internet safety awareness. Please take time to discuss this with them.

One very important point to add, as well as all the risks, sexting is illegal if it involves an indecent image of a person under 18 years of age. It is illegal to incite a person under the age of 18 to take an indecent image of themselves. It is illegal to take an indecent image of a person under the age of 18 and it is illegal to possess, show or distribute an indecent image of a person under the age of 18.

**Possess an indecent image of a Child, contrary to Section 160(1), 2(A) & (3) of the Criminal Justice Act 1988.** Which carries a maximum custodial prison sentence of **5 years**.

**To show an indecent image of a child, contrary to Section 1 (1) (b) and 6 of the Protection of Children Act 1978**, carries a maximum custodial prison sentence of **10 years**. Which is the same for distribution (sending).

Please discuss this with your child to make them aware of the consequences & explain that as soon as a message, image or video is sent via this type of technology, the sender has lost control as to how it may be further used.

To give further support, CEOP (Child Exploitation & Online Protection Service) [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk) have produced some short films on what to do if your child has shared a nude selfie.

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/Nude-selfies-a-parents-guide/>

As well as information on receiving unwanted/requested nude pictures which can be found on the following link [new article for teens](#)

CEOP is a Police Service, their website is well worth visiting and one that you could also make your children aware of. There are some excellent short films & resources on a variety of youth related internet issues & risks. The site is aimed at children of all ages, parents, carers & professionals.

CEOP have also created a new section to their site to support parents during COVID-19 and the closure of schools. Each fortnight, they will be releasing new home activity packs with simple 15 minute activities you can do with your child to support their online safety at a time when they will be spending more time online at home. See the following link;

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/Support-tools/home-activity-worksheets/>

Thames Valley Police also released a short film as part of our #ProtectYourWorld campaign. The link to the short film 'Amy's Story' is [youtu.be/GQDBX1nZ2U8](https://youtu.be/GQDBX1nZ2U8)

Thank you for taking the time to read this document, I hope you find it practical and a useful reference to help reduce the risk of a negative internet related experience.

Please also visit the Thames Valley Police Website [www.thamesvalley.police.uk](http://www.thamesvalley.police.uk) for lots more Police related information.

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Yours sincerely,  
Mike