

Children and young people online

A guide for parents of children and young people who have got into trouble online



This document was written by **Stop it Now!**. It is an easy read version of 'What's the problem? A guide for parents of children and young people who have got into trouble online'.

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Ariennir gan
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Stop It Now!

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Helping prevent
child sexual abuse

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Helping prevent
child sexual abuse

**THE
LUCY FAITHFULL
FOUNDATION**

Working to protect children

How to use this document



This is an easy read document. But you may still need support to read it. Ask someone you know to help you.



Words in **bold blue writing** may be hard to understand. You can check what the words in blue mean on **page 38**.



Where the document says **we**, this means **Stop It Now!** For more information contact:

Website: stopitnow.org.uk/helpline

Phone: 0808 1000 900



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Who are we



Stop it Now! are the only UK child protection charity that works just to prevent **child sexual abuse**.



Child sexual abuse is when a child has been involved in sexual activities. Whether they are aware of it or not.



We support parents and families.



We speak to thousands of people every year and help them take action to protect children and young people from **sexual abuse**.

Children and young people online. What is the problem?



Using the internet and technology is important for children and young people.



However, there can also be risks for them.



This guide will help parents understand the risks. And show them what to do.



It will also help them know what to do if their child gets into trouble online.

This guide will look at 4 main areas:



1. My child has watched **pornography** online.

Pornography is images and videos about sex.



2. My child has sent or received nude pictures or videos.



3. My child is in trouble for viewing illegal sexual pictures or videos.



4. My child has been **groomed** online.

Groomed means someone has tried to build up trust with a child so they can take advantage of them.

And we will help you with things like:

- What to do if the police are involved with your child.
- Talking to your children about concerning online sexual behaviour.
- Developing a digital safety plan. This means how to use the internet safely.
- Other resources and support.



What to do when you are worried about your child's behaviour online



It can be hard if you find out that your child has done something online that is harmful to them. Or if they have done something illegal or worrying.



Take time to talk to them calmly about what has happened. And what you will do to help keep them safe.



Make sure they know you love them. And that you are there to support them.



Try and find out as much as you can. For example, if anyone else they know is involved.



Think about anyone else you might need to speak to about this. For example, if it happened when someone else was looking after your child.



Be open and honest with your child about needing to talk to a professional.

My child watched pornography online



Around 6 in every 10 children, under the age of 18, have seen **pornography**.



They watch it for lots of different reasons. For example, because their friends are. Or to learn about sex.



Some young people think watching **pornography** is a normal part of growing up.



But they need to know that it often does not show normal sex. Or normal bodies.



It can make young people feel confused about what their body should look like.



It can give children a false sense of what real sex is like.



It can also fail to show the importance of respect and **consent**.



Consent means we agree to do something that we want to do without feeling forced or threatened.



It is important to explain these things to children. And to help them know what makes a sexual relationship positive and safe.



Watching **pornography** can be harmful to children in many ways.



It can be confusing and stressful to watch during their development.



It can also cause them to get used to images that are aggressive or rude.

What to do if you think your child is watching pornography



It is important to talk openly to your children if you think they have watched **pornography**.



They need to know about your concerns, the risks and breaking the law.



Ask them to think about why they are looking at it. And to talk about any worries they have.

Some tips to help start the conversation:



- Find a time and place to chat privately.



- Talk through what has happened and why. Talk through other ways to help them and support available.



- Some young people look at **pornography** to learn about sex. Give them other ideas to learn. For example, the website [Brook](#).



- If they keep looking at **pornography**, talk to them about the sites they are looking at. Help them think about using the least harmful sites. And using them less.



- You don't need to do everything yourself. Think about other adults your child may trust to talk to. For example a teacher.

About the law



Children and young people need to be taught what is legal and not legal about **pornography**.



They also need to know what to do if they see something that worries them.





Here are some of the laws around **pornography**:

- It is illegal to have, create or share sexual images or videos of anyone under the age of 18.
- This includes cartoons and drawings.
- It also includes images and videos taken by the person themselves.
- It is illegal to have, share or create any images or videos of extreme violence or rape.
- It is illegal to have, share or create any image or video involving sex with an animal or with a dead body.
- It is illegal for an adult to show anyone under the age of 16 an image or video for their own sexual enjoyment.
- It is illegal to take sexual or personal images or videos of someone without their **consent**.
- It is illegal to share sexual images or videos of someone without their **consent**. This is also called **revenge porn**.



If a child sees something illegal online you could help them to report it.



For example, to **Crimestoppers**. Or the **Internet Watch Foundation**. They do not have to give their name.



Please see the **Resources section** on **page 36** for details.

When pornography affects a child's life



Sometimes children and young people can have problems when they watch **pornography**.



This is because they are developing into a young adult and experiencing a lot of changes to their bodies.



Sometimes young people find it difficult to stop watching it. Even when they want to.



For example, maybe they are choosing to watch **pornography** over doing other things.



Or maybe they are viewing more and more extreme types of **pornography**.



If this happens, it is helpful to come up with a plan together.



You could ask them things like:

- What worries you about the things you are looking at online?
- What would help you stop or watch less?
- What could I do to help?



There is more information here: www.parentsprotect.co.uk/pornography.htm



We have a helpline to get advice and support.
Please call: 0808 1000 900

My child has sent or received nude images or videos



This is sometimes called 'sexual selfies' or 'pics'.



Children and young people send these sexual selfies for all sorts of reasons.



For example, because they feel under pressure. Or maybe they are in a relationship and feel that it would prove their feelings to the other person.



But sometimes there can be risks involved. For example, maybe someone threatens to share a nude photograph of the child with someone else.



If you find out your child has sent a nude picture of themselves or of somebody else, it is important to talk to them. And listen to them. And to make sure they feel supported.



Please call our helpline for further advice and support.



You can also report concerns about an image being mis-used to the **Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command** at: www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting

Childline and the **Internet Watch Foundation** can also help get images taken down that are online:



www.childline.org.uk/remove



www.iwf.org.uk/our-technology/report-remove

How to talk to your child about sexual selfies



Let your child know they can talk to you and that you won't be angry. Always listen to them and support them.



If you are unsure about what to say, tell them you will have a think about what they've said first.



If you need help or advice call the **Stop in Now! Helpline** on 0808 1000 900.



It could be a chance to talk to them about relationships and **consent**. And about making good choices.



It can be difficult for children and young people to talk about these things. Punishing them and stopping them going online can make things worse.



There are lots of videos here that can help you talk to children about these issues:

www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/nude-selfies-a-parents-guide



Remind your child about the law.



Also remind them that once an image is shared it is difficult to get it back.



Support them to find ways to say 'no' to being asked to share images.



Remind them to talk to a trusted adult if they receive any images. And not to share them with anyone else.

My child is in trouble for viewing illegal sexual images or videos



Sadly, there are millions of sexual images of children on the internet.



The Police and Internet Watch Foundation try and take these down. But there are so many, it is difficult to do so.



To report illegal images go to:
<https://report.iwf.org.uk/en>

What to do next



If your child was arrested for viewing these images, it can be a very stressful time for both of you.



Remember they are still a child. And they are the same child.



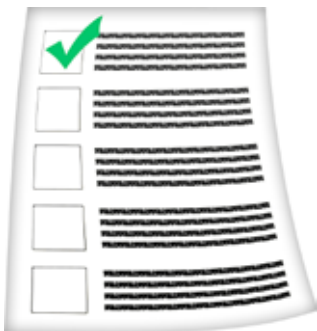
They need your help to get them back on the right path.



It is also important to have gentle conversations with your child about their behaviour.



It is useful to talk to them about how to help them stay safe.



You could put a plan together about staying safe online. See **page 34** for creating a plan.

Telling others



If a child is arrested for viewing indecent images of children it can be very stressful for the child and their parents.



This is because there is a fear that the child will be called a 'sex offender'.



It is important to think about who needs to know and why.



For example, other adults who take care of your child may need to know. For example, the child's school.



If you decide to share this information with others you need to think carefully about what you will say.



Tell your child to avoid telling anyone else themselves. If they need to talk to a friend they should think very carefully about the risks of doing so.



You may also need to talk to someone like a professional who supports you. To help you deal with the feelings you are having.



Please read **page 36** for more information on where to get help.

My child has been groomed online



Grooming can happen in all sorts of places.



For example, in the child's home, a club, church or school.



It can also happen online by someone who pretends to be the child's friend.



For example, if they think the child is lonely they might try and make them feel special.



They often pretend to be younger. Or pretend to be the opposite sex.

Keeping your children safe online



Help your child stay safe by teaching them the word **SMART**. This stands for these things:

S – Safe. Don't give out personal information.

M – Meeting. Don't meet up with someone you have met online unless a parent or carer is there.

A – Accepting. Do not accept emails or files online from someone you do not know. They could contain harmful messages or images.

R – Reliable. People online may not be who they say they are. They are not reliable.

T – Tell. Talk to a parent, carer or trusted adult about anything that has happened online or is bothering you.



If you think your child has been **groomed** you should report it to the police.



Don't blame the child, they are a victim and need your support. Contact our helpline for more support.
www.stopitnow.org.uk/helpline

What happens if the police investigate my child



If police or children services get involved it can be stressful for everyone.



It is really important to support your child and help them feel safe.



Keep an eye on them to see how they are coping.



If your child has been involved in any illegal activities they will need to be investigated.



The police will need to think about whether any other children are at risk.



This can be difficult and stressful for families.



If you are unsure about what is happening, make sure you ask questions.

What happens during a police investigation?



The police will need to carry out an investigation if they think a crime has been committed.



They need to look at whether any children are at risk.



What they do will depend on the situation.



If your child is being investigated you will need to get a solicitor to represent them.



You can find solicitors at:

- [The Law Society](#)
- [Just for Kids Law](#)
- [Citizens Advice Bureau](#)



If you live in Scotland you can contact: [The Scottish Child Law Centre](#)

Or in Northern Ireland you can contact: [The Children's Law Centre](#)



Please contact our helpline for more information about what can happen during an investigation.

Phone: 0808 1000 900

Website:

<https://www.stopitnow.org.uk/stop-it-now-wales/resources/>

Talking to your children



It can be difficult to talk to your children about online sexual behaviour. But here are some tips:

- Make sure everyone knows it is OK to talk about what happened.
- Give everyone the chance to ask questions
- Be honest
- Tell your child it is OK to be open and ask questions.
- Talk about your concerns.
- Make it clear about keeping information private. And who they can share with.
- Only agree to sharing information with people you trust.
- Think about making a digital safety plan. There is more information below.
- Get support from us by contacting our helpline. Or through our website chat service. Or email. See our **Resources** section on **page 36** for details.

Making a Digital Safety Plan



A Digital Safety Plan is a plan you make with your child to help keep them safe when they go online.

You could do things like:



- Make sure the settings on social media accounts are as private as possible.



- Talk about being safe online by thinking about who they talk to and the info they share.



- Think about apps and websites that are not safe and talk about deleting or blocking them.



- Talk about only using the internet when there is another adult in the room.



- Talk about when your child might be more likely to do something risky online. Talk about what they could do instead.



- Help them write a list of reasons they want to stop online behaviours.



- Put the list somewhere they can see it.



Click for our example of a [Digital Safety Plan](#).

Resources and other organisations

Stop It Now!

UK and Ireland Helpline: 0808 1000 900 live

Chat and website: www.stopitnow.org.uk

You can call us for any advice or support you need about the issues in the booklet.

Crimestoppers

Website: www.crimestoppers-uk.org

Phone: 0800 555 111

A charity where you can report a crime without saying who you are.

Internet Watch Foundation

Website: www.iwf.org.uk/our-technology/report-remove

A charity that removes sexual images of children from the internet.

Childline

Website: www.childline.org.uk/remove

www.childline.org.uk/get-support/

Phone: 0800 1111

Childline supports children under the age of 19 with any issues.

Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP)

Website: www.thinkuknow.co.uk

This site gives advice to children, young people and their families about issues to do with child sexual abuse.

Childnet

Website: www.childnet.com

This website gives advice and information to children, young people and their parents and carers.

Other useful numbers and links:

Samaritans

Chat: 116 123

Website: www.samaritans.org

Citizens Advice

Phone: 0800 223 1133

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Citizens Advice Scotland

Phone: 0800 028 1456

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland

Citizens Advice Wales

Phone: 0800 702 2020

Website: www.cacv.org.uk

Hard words

Child sexual abuse

This is when a child has been involved in sexual activities. Whether they are aware of it or not.

Consent

Consent means we agree to do something that we want to do without feeling forced or threatened.

Groomed

This means someone has tried to build up trust with a child so they can take advantage of them.

Pornography

This is images and videos about sex.