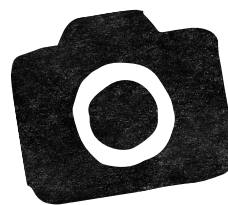
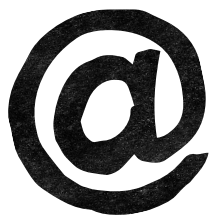
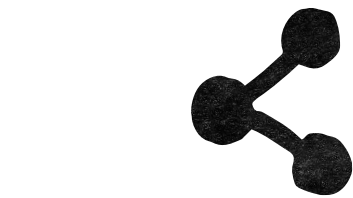




Online Sexual Harassment

Advice for Parents and Carers of 13-17 year olds



The thing that is happening online but nobody talks about

Childnet has produced this guidance to help parents and carers and their teenage children talk about the important issue of **online sexual harassment** – specifically when this is happening between children of **around the same age**.



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What is online sexual harassment?

At its simplest, it is any unwanted sexual comments or actions that occur online. This is something that young people are likely to be seeing and impacted by even if they are not directly involved.

Here are some examples:

- Sharing sexual gossip or rumours online
- Editing photos to make them sexual
- Offensive sexual language and name-calling online
- Sharing someone else's sexual images online or threatening to do so
- Receiving unwanted sexual requests, comments and images

It is hard for young people to know what to do

When it is other young people doing or saying these things it can be very hard for a young person to know what to do or how to challenge it. They may not even realise that what they

are experiencing is not ok until it has been occurring for a while or until it happens to them or someone they know.

What did our research tell us?

It is hard for young people to talk about this

We found that one of the biggest concerns for parents and carers is their child keeping something worrying that happens to them online to themselves. Here are some of the reasons young people may be reluctant to talk to their parents or carers about these issues:

- Too embarrassed
- Worried about what would happen next
- Worried about being targeted by those involved
- Worried about getting in trouble
- Don't see it as something serious

How do young people want you to help?

Discussing topics like this can be difficult for you and them. The nature of your situation could present an added challenge too, as the relationship with your child may just be developing. Young people have told us, however, that they do want to talk about this and how they would like their carers to support them:

Be

- Available to talk to, even if it seems like we may not need you
- Reassuring and understanding
- Patient
- Open and honest
- Willing to take us seriously, and admit if you don't know something
- Willing to ask us how we want to be helped

Avoid

- Overreacting and getting angry
- Judging or blaming us
- Assuming you know how we feel
- Threatening to or taking away access to the internet
- Overriding or belittling our emotions
- Taking it as a criticism of your parenting
- Shaming us for our friends or relationships

Start a conversation

It is important to talk to young people about their lives online. Here are some ways that you can create a safe environment for those conversations:

- Regularly make time to listen and be available for a chat; just the two of you, with no agenda and no distractions.
- Ask open questions about your child's friends and the time they spend online. Include the online world in the conversations you have about relationships and growing up.
- Let your child know that they can come to you with any problem they have, and you will be there for them. They may need regular reassurance.
- Use a distancing technique – ask about what other young people at school are going through or dealing with online, so they don't have to talk about first-hand experience.

Further information...

For more information about how you can help to support your child with the issue of online sexual bullying and harassment:

childnet.com/OSHParents

For general advice around online safety and how to talk about it with young people:

childnet.com/resources/lets-talk-about-life-online

PROJECT

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