

Financially motivated sexual extortion: guidance for further education professionals

Globally, there has been an increase in reports of children and young people being forced into paying money or meeting another financial demand (such as paying for a gift card) after an offender has threatened to release nudes or semi-nudes of them. This is financially motivated sexual extortion, a type of online blackmail often referred to in the media as 'sextortion'.^[1] Where victims are under the age of 18, it is a form of child sexual abuse.

Financially motivated sexual extortion is usually carried out by individuals who are typically motivated by money and based overseas. While these individuals target all ages and genders, a large proportion of cases have involved male victims aged 14-18.

Here is what you need to know as education professionals to recognise the signs of this form of abuse, understand how to respond, and increase awareness and help seeking behaviours amongst students.

¹ Financially motivated sexual extortion is also referred to as sexually coerced extortion

What we would like you to do

- Develop your understanding of financially motivated sexual extortion using this guidance and read the '[Sharing nudes and semi-nudes](#)' guidance published by the UK Council for Internet Safety
- Encourage and empower young people, if targeted, to block and report the accounts used by offenders to the platform, and report to police
- Refer concerns, if disclosed or discovered, to police and follow your safeguarding procedures
- Avoid using [victim-blaming language](#) and support young people in getting their images removed
- Use the template letter attached to this alert to support parents and carers to talk to their child about financially motivated sexual extortion and understand how they can help them if they become a victim
- Display the poster attached in prominent areas across your setting, helping students know how to respond and report financially motivated sexual extortion.

What it looks like

Victims may report being:

- contacted by an online account that they do not know but appears to be another young person. They may also be contacted by a hacked account of a young person they do know, and the communication feels unfamiliar
- quickly engaged in sexually explicit communications, which may include the offender sharing an indecent image first
- moved from a chat on social media, an online platform or game to a private messaging app that is an [end-to-end encrypted chat platform](#)
- manipulated or pressured into taking and sending nude or semi-nude photos or videos
- told they have been hacked and the offender has access to their images, personal information and contacts (whether this is true or not)
- blackmailed into sending money or meeting another financial demand (such as paying for a gift card) after sharing an image or video, or the offender sharing hacked or digitally manipulated/[AI-generated images](#) of the young person and making the threat of sharing them wider.

Be aware that offenders may target multiple young people within an education or wider social setting, as it is more likely that a young person will accept a friend request or communicate with someone they don't know if they believe they are a 'mutual friend'.

If a young person has disclosed an incident like this, your designated safeguarding person should immediately refer it to police and/or local authority children's services through your safeguarding procedures.

Supporting victim survivors

A young person who is a victim should be supported in the same way as with any other type of child sexual abuse. **You should:**

- reassure them that they are not alone or at fault and that the adults around them will do all they can to help and support them
- remain solutions-focused and avoid victim-blaming language. Where a young person has shared an image, remember that they have been groomed and manipulated into doing so, and they are never responsible for their abuse
- work with the young person to determine their preferred approach for you or another appropriate professional to inform parents and carers
- support parents and carers to find further support for them and their child – a letter for parents and carers has been provided with this guidance to support you with this
- help the young person to remove or prevent images being shared online by following these three steps:

1. Use [Report Remove](#), the Internet Watch Foundation and Childline's tool, to report images that have been shared or might be shared online.
2. Use [Take It Down](#), a tool provided by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, to help them remove or stop the online sharing of images across participating online platforms.
3. **Report directly to the platform or app that the incident has occurred on.** See Internet Matters for advice on [where to report online issues on major social media platforms](#).

In rare cases, financially motivated sexual extortion has been linked to self-harm and suicide. Be aware of changes in behaviour that may suggest a young person is at risk of developing or experiencing poor mental health.

If you have a mental health concern about a young person that is also a safeguarding concern, follow your setting's child protection policy and speak to your designated safeguarding person. Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem.^[2]

Make sure that young people are aware of what local and national mental health support services are available to them. Support services like [Childline](#) can act as a gateway to wider support.

2] Further information can be found the Department for Education's statutory safeguarding guidance '[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)'.



Financially motivated sexual extortion: letter for parents and carers

Dear parent/guardian,

Last year the National Crime Agency issued an alert, raising awareness of the rise in reporting of financially motivated sexual extortion (a type of online blackmail often known in the media as 'sextortion'). Children and young people worldwide are being targeted.

This type of crime involves an adult offender (often from an organised crime group based overseas) threatening to release nude or semi-nude images and/or videos of a child or young person, unless they pay money, or meet another financial demand, such as paying for a gift card.

Victims of any age and gender can be targets, however a large proportion of cases have involved male victims aged 14-18.

A child or young person is never to blame if they have been a victim. Offenders will have tricked, groomed and/or manipulated them into sharing an image.

Find out more about online blackmail on [CEOP Education's parents and carers website](#).

Talking to your child

It's important to have frequent, open and non-judgmental conversations with your child about relationships, sex and being online to build trust and support them if something goes wrong. Financially motivated sexual extortion should be included in those conversations.

Here are some tips about how to approach this:

- **chat regularly about their life online:** have ongoing conversations with them about their life and time online. Continue to take an interest as they grow, explore new apps and sites together and talk in a balanced way, considering the benefits and the potential harms.

- **talk about where to find information about relationships and sex:** organisations like [CEOP Education](#), [Childline](#) and [Brook](#) have age-appropriate advice topics such as sexual communication and image sharing. This will help your child to understand what unhealthy relationships look like, such as applying pressure and blackmail; and give them trusted sources of information to explore these topics.
- **review privacy settings:** talk to your child about the importance of using privacy settings on their accounts to restrict who can contact them. Read CEOP Education's advice on [how to talk your child about their privacy settings](#).
- **make sure they know where to go for support:** let them know that they can come to you with any concerns and won't be judged. It's also important to make them aware of other trusted adults or sources of support, if they feel they can't talk to you, such as Childline.
- **make sure they know where to report:** remind your child that you can help them to report an incident to the police or they can report to the [CEOP Safety Centre](#). Let them know that if a nude or semi-nude of them has been shared without their consent, they can take these 3 steps to try and get them removed:
 1. Use [Report Remove](#), a tool from Childline and the Internet Watch Foundation. Your child can use this to remove images that have been shared or might be shared.
 2. Use [Take It Down](#), a tool from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Your child can use this to remove or stop the online sharing of images or videos.
 3. **Block and report the accounts used by the offender directly to the platform or app.** For advice on how to report to major social media platforms, visit [Internet Matters](#).

To learn more about what resources are available to help you support your child, visit the [UK Safer Internet Centre](#).

What can I do if this has happened to my child?

Reassure them that they've done the right thing by telling you: make sure they know they are not to blame for what has happened and they have done the right thing to ask for your help.

children and young people's mental health may be negatively impacted by experiences of exploitation; you can [find advice on looking after your child's mental health from the NHS](#).

Don't pay, do stop contact and block: you may be tempted to pay, but there is no guarantee that this will stop the threats. As the offender's motive is to get money, once you have shown you can pay, they will likely ask for more and the blackmail may continue.

If you have paid, don't panic but don't pay anything more. Help your child to stop all communication with the offender and block them on any accounts that they have been contacted on.

Avoid deleting anything: try not to delete anything that could be used as evidence such as messages, images, voucher codes and bank account details.

Report to the police: Call 101 or 999 if there is an immediate risk of harm to your child.

Report any images or videos that have been shared: help your child to remove images that are online or prevent images being shared online by following these three steps:

1. Use [Report Remove](#), a tool from Childline and the Internet Watch Foundation. Your child can use this to remove images that have been shared or might be shared.
2. Use [Take It Down](#), a tool from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Your child can use this to remove or stop the online sharing of images or videos.
3. **Block and report the accounts used by the offender directly to the platform or app.** For advice on how to report to major social media platforms, visit [Internet Matters](#).



Is someone trying to pressure, threaten or blackmail you online?

This could be financially motivated sexual extortion, or 'sextortion'.
It's not your fault and there is help and support available.



What to do

Don't pay, stop contact and block. Sending the offender money does not guarantee that they will stop their threats. It could lead to them asking for more money and the blackmail continuing.

If you have sent them money already, stay calm but don't pay anything more.

Stop all communication with the offender and block them on any accounts they have used to contact you.

Avoid deleting anything that could be used as evidence such as messages, images, offender profile details, voucher codes and bank account details.



Report it to police by phoning 101 or calling 999 if you or anyone else is in immediate risk of harm. Under 18 year olds can also report to the CEOP Safety Centre.

Scan to visit **CEOP Safety Centre** or go to www.ceop.police.uk

If your image has been shared

Report any images or videos that have been shared. If your image or video has been shared without your consent and you are under 18, help get them removed by taking these 3 steps:



1. Use Report Remove, a tool from Childline and the Internet Watch Foundation. You can use this to remove images of you that have been shared or might be shared online.

Scan to visit Report Remove or go to www.childline.org.uk/remove



2. Use Take It Down, a tool from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. You can use this to remove or stop the online sharing of images or videos.

Scan to visit Take It Down or go to takeitdown.ncmec.org

3. Block and report the accounts used by the offender directly to the platform or app.

For advice on how to report to major social media platforms, visit www.internetmatters.org.uk

Need to talk?

You can talk to Childline about anything. Online, on the phone, any time.
Phone 0800 1111 or visit www.childline.org.uk