

To Secondary Parents/Carers

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**EDUCATION SERVICE  
DIRECTORATE**

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Dear Parent/Carer

### **Supporting Your Teen Online - A summer message for Parents and Carers**

As we head into the summer holidays, many young people will be spending more time online connecting with friends, sharing photos, and exploring their independence. While this can be a positive and creative space, it also brings challenges, particularly around the sending and sharing of images. This letter is intended to support you as a parent or carer in having open, informed conversations with your child(ren) about staying safe online.

Being a teenager today means navigating a world full of curiosity, new experiences, and increasing pressure - from friends, relationships, and in particular what they see online. One area that's especially important for parents/carers to be aware of is the sharing of personal or intimate images.

Young people may feel encouraged to share intimate images, often without fully understanding the long-term consequences. Once an image is shared, control over it is lost. It can be copied, forwarded, or even used to shame, manipulate, or harm. This becomes even more serious when it involves **sexortion**.

Sexortion is a form of online abuse where someone threatens to share sexual images (which may originally be AI generated) with friends and family of a young person unless they meet certain demands such as sending more images or money. It can be frightening and confusing for young people, and it's vital they know they can talk to someone if something doesn't feel right.

We understand that conversations like this can be difficult. When having open and honest conversations with your child(ren), these key points may help you:

**Talk about consent and respect:** Make sure your child knows that no one should ever pressure them to send images - and that they should never ask others to do so.

**Discuss the risks:** Once an image is shared, it can be copied, saved, or spread without their control - even on apps that claim to be private or temporary.

**Stay calm and supportive:** If your child comes to you with a concern, listen without judgement. Reassure them that they won't be in trouble and that you're there to help. You can find helpful advice and conversation starters at [thechat.scot](https://thechat.scot).

Before you answer any questions, it is okay to feel surprised, shocked or worried by a question. If this is the case, give yourself time, for example: *"Thank you for asking me, just let me think about that"*. Take some time to think through the answer you want to give and consider the kind of chat you might want to have to understand more about why your child

is asking. You could start with:

- *“Let’s talk about that for a minute…”*
- *“Can you tell me what you know about that already?”*
- *“Okay, could you tell me where you heard that?”*

These conversations don’t need to be perfect - they just need to be open, calm, and supportive. Your child(ren) will benefit from knowing they can come to you without fear or shame.

### **Need someone to talk to?**

Sometimes it helps to speak with someone who can support you in your parenting journey. These services are here to help:

[Children 1st ParentLine](#) - Free, confidential support for all parents and carers.

Call 08000 28 22 23 | Webchat also available

[Childline](#) - A confidential service for children and young people up to age 18.

Call 0800 1111 | [1-2-1 messaging chat also available](#)

[respectme](#) - Scotland’s national anti-bullying service.

[Parents and carers | CEOP Education](#) - Advice and reporting tools for concerns about online abuse or exploitation.

[Keeping children safe online | Barnardo's](#) - Support and guides for parents and carers.

Please have a good summer break.

Warm regards



Maria Lloyd  
Head of Service, Education