

Childline Reach

BEHIND THE SCREEN

Together, we can raise awareness of Sexually Coerced Extortion and the impact it's having on boys and young males.

childline
A life-changing **NSPCC** service

WHAT'S INCLUDED IN THIS PACK

IN THIS PACK YOU WILL FIND:

Information on Sexually Coerced Extortion

How it can happen, the signs to look out for, and how to support a young person if they are experiencing this abuse.

Information about Childline

Understanding our unique confidentiality policy, how we work, and how you signpost young people to us.

Information about Report Remove

You'll find information on our Report Remove tool that can help young people get images/videos taken down online.

Resources

We've included signposting to useful resources for further information on **Sexually Coerced Extortion and online safety** for both professionals and young people.

Campaign resources

You'll find information on our **Behind The Screen** campaign, its website and what you can share online to help raise awareness.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can help by downloading the resources in this pack and following the steps below

1

Share our poster and leaflet online or in-person.



2

Use our social media assets to share our campaign's messages.



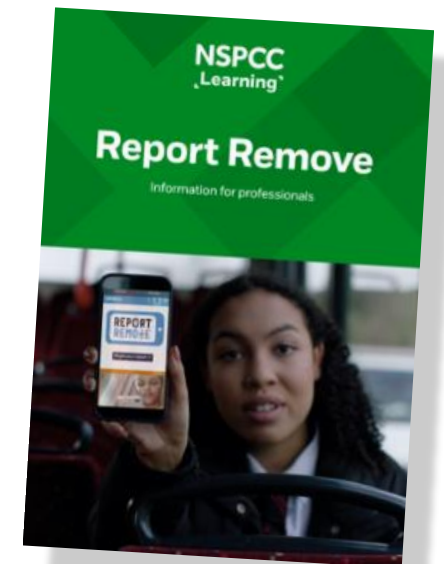
3

Access our free materials and share these with your colleagues.



4

Visit our campaign's webpage.



WHO ARE WE?

Childline Reach is a Programme of work which focuses on reaching as many young people as possible, especially those who may not currently know about Childline or feel like it's a place for them.

We run campaign activities to raise awareness of different issues, showing young people how we can support them.



Our previous work includes:

- **'We all feel it'** which reaches out to boys and young men.
- **'The Full Story'** which raises awareness around Child Sexual Exploitation.
- **'Team Talk'** which reaches out to young people from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

WHY SEXUALLY COERCED EXTORTION?

With our next area of work, we want to engage boys and young males again. This is because we know we deliver significantly fewer counselling sessions to boys in comparison to girls.

When looking at issues that boys and young males are facing currently, Sexually Coerced Extortion is an issue reflected both within our Childline data and externally as an issue which poses a threat to boys and young males physical and emotional wellbeing.

Last year, **68%** of Childline counselling sessions about blackmail/threats to share sexual images (where gender was known) were with boys, compared to **31% for girls**. And data from Report Remove (our tool to help young people get nude images removed from the internet) showed that it was also used significantly more by boys than girls.

Through our new campaign, we want to raise awareness of this form of exploitation. **We also want to reinforce that it's OK for boys and young men to seek support** for whatever they are going through – and that Childline is a place for them.

OUR OBJECTIVES

- To increase awareness of the signs and indicators of Sexually Coerced Extortion.
- To increase confidence in how to support boys and young males who are experiencing or have experienced this type of abuse.
- To highlight that online exploitation is not young peoples' fault.
- To raise awareness of Childline, Report Remove, and how our services support young people.

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ONLINE, ON THE PHONE, ANYTIME

Call 0800 1111

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Toolbox

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You are here / Home / Info and advice / Bullying, abuse, safety and the law / Abuse and safety / **The Full Story**

Search Childline

THE FULL STORY

Sometimes, they say they love you. Other times, they pressure, force or threaten you into doing things. No matter the situation, Childline is here to listen.

On this page

How Childline can help
Is Childline confidential?
What is sexual exploitation?
What if I've shared nudes?



WHAT IS SEXUALLY COERCED EXTORTION?

LANGUAGE

Sexually Coerced Extortion is a form of online blackmail that involves the threat of sharing intimate or explicit images or videos to extort money or force someone to do something against their will (Internet Watch Foundation, 2024).

Sexually Coerced Extortion is sometimes called '**Sextortion**', however this term fails to emphasise the coercion involved in this form of exploitation. It's also important to acknowledge the different types of exploitation within Sexually Coerced Extortion and the overlaps with other forms of abuse and exploitation such as **Child Sexual Exploitation** and **Child Criminal Exploitation**.

Sexually Coerced Financial Extortion relates to the **financially motivated** abuse that we are seeing largely impacting on boys, whereas girls typically speak to Childline about being pressured to send more nude or semi-nude images rather than money.

Language is important and the way that we describe things and speak to young people needs to be relatable and relevant. We know young people do not always recognise the term '**Sextortion**' or '**Sexually Coerced Extortion**' and we have found that language such as '**online blackmail**', '**manipulation**', '**grooming**', '**(peer) pressure**', '**threats to share nudes**' and '**taking advantage of someone**' are the main terms young people use to describe this abuse.

During 2023/24, **Childline** provided over **900 counselling sessions** to young people relating to blackmail or threats to share sexual images online. The **NSPCC Helpline** handled over **150 contacts** from adults wanting advice around reporting incidents, easing impact and talking to children about this issue.

Some young people were being extorted for money after someone they'd met online threatened to release sexual images or videos of them, including '**fake nudes**' created by the offenders.

While external research has cited organised cybercrime groups based overseas as a key source of Sexually Coerced Extortion scams (National Crime Agency, 2024), the data from our helplines is limited when it comes to identifying the people responsible.



Some children affected by Sexually Coerced Extortion told Childline they were being extorted by someone known to them in person, such as someone they described as an ex-partner. Other children spoke about being targeted by someone they didn't know on social media and other online platforms - someone who, at first, appeared to be another child or young person.

IMPACTS OF SEXUALLY COERCED EXTORTION?

Perpetrators may not carry out their threats, but we know from the children and adults contacting our helplines that threats like this can be hugely distressing for the young people involved.

Self-blame

Some of the young people who contacted Childline told us they felt **guilty and ashamed**, believing that they were somehow responsible for what had happened to them. Descriptions of **low self-esteem** were also apparent amongst this group of children and young people.

Social isolation and trust issues

For some, this experience had **impacted their social lives**. Some told us they **felt lonely**, as they were **too ashamed or embarrassed to tell anyone else**. Some were being **bullied** after their nudes had been shared on social media, while some questioned whether they'd be able to trust other people in their lives again.

Mental health issues

The persistent threat of exposure had left some young people **struggling with mental health issues**, including **anxiety, stress, difficulty sleeping and even thoughts of self-harm and suicide**.

Fear of punishment

Another key fear for this group of young people – and another **barrier** for them seeking help – was that their **phones or devices would be taken away from them as punishment**.

Fear of repercussions

Many of the stories that young people shared made it clear they were **scared**. Some young people told us they couldn't tell others what had happened to them as they were **afraid of what might happen**. Some were afraid of **disappointing or upsetting loved ones and being judged**, and some **were afraid of bringing shame to the family name or community**. Some were also afraid of getting **into trouble with the police** and getting a criminal record, while some feared this could **harm their education or future career**.



HOW DOES IT HAPPEN?

These quotes* from boys and young males who've contacted us show how Sexually Coerced Extortion can happen.

* Quotes are created from real Childline counselling sessions but are not necessarily direct quotes from the young people.

"Their profile pic was just some **random girl** smiling, nothing sexual. There were loads of other pics and videos on their feed too, and it was clear it was the same person. **It never occurred to me at the time that the pics might belong to someone else.** It was only once things turned flirty and they **convinced me to send nudes** that I realised they were a **fake**. They messaged to say they'd been **playing me and that I had to pay them**, otherwise they would release my nudes and my reputation would be destroyed!"

Boy, aged 16, Childline

"I received a message on **Wizz** which is an app for teens to make new friends. It was from a girl, and she came across as nice and friendly, so I carried on chatting to her. After an hour or so, **she asked for my number** so we could chat over text - so I sent it to her. That's when **things started to change**, and her messages suddenly became flirty. **She sent photos of herself semi-nude**, and then said it was 'my turn' to return the favour. Due to how she came across earlier, **I went and trusted her**. I only sent 2 nudes but that was enough for her. She said she was going to post these nudes **to all my followers unless I paid her £100.**"

Boy, aged 16, Childline

"This 'girl' messaged me on **Discord** asking me all these questions about what games I liked, and she seemed to be into the same stuff as me. I was a bit sceptical that she'd just **contacted me out of the blue** like that but, I can't lie, **it felt nice having things in common.** I should have known it was too good to be true. Eventually, I got a call from a number I thought belonged to the girl but **instead it was a man with a foreign accent!** By that point it was too late - they already had my nudes!"

Boy, aged 18, Childline

How TO SPOT IT

Signs a child may be experiencing Sexually Coerced Extortion

Remember that with some Sexually Coerced Extortion scams, young people may believe that the perpetrator is someone their age. The perpetrator might trick the young person into believing that they are someone with a genuine interest in them. Young people may struggle to tell anyone if they have been targeted or are experiencing Sexually Coerced Extortion so it is important to look out for the signs that it might be happening.

These signs could include but are not limited to:

- **There may be a change in behaviour,- they might appear withdrawn, worried, display signs of stress and fear, or be generally unhappy compared to their normal self.**
- **They might become secretive or guarded about their device(s). They might stop using their devices or become worried when messages appear.**
- **They might talk about a new online friendship, and it might sound like a connection that has formed very quickly.**
- **They might spend increasing amounts of time online**
- **Apps or platforms that they used to like might become a source of anxiety.**
- **They might ask for money with little or no explanation about what they need it for. Or they may try and obtain funds without asking for permission such as using a parent or carers card details or selling high value items. They might be using funds to pay perpetrators in the form of gift cards.**

It's important to recognise that the signs of Sexually Coerced Extortion can often resemble those of other types of abuse or general issues young people might face. By staying curious and supportive, you can help the young person feel more comfortable opening up about their experiences, whether they are related to sexually coerced extortion or other challenges they might be facing

The National Crime Agency (NCA) says young people might report:

- Being contacted by an online account that they do not know but appears to be another child or young person. They may also be contacted by a hacked account of a child or young person they do know, but the communication feels unfamiliar.
- Being quickly engaged in sexually explicit communications, which may include the offender sharing an indecent image first.
- Moving 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.
- Being manipulated or pressured into taking nude or semi-nude photos or videos.
- Being told they have been hacked and the offender has access to their images, personal information and contacts (whether this is true or not) or the offender sharing hacked or digitally manipulated/AI-generated images of the child or young person and making the threat of sharing them wider.
- Being extorted into sending money after sharing an image or video.

"My son didn't come forward straight away, but I could tell something wasn't right, like he'd been spending more time in his room, and asking to borrow money from me and his mum, for no apparent reason. It was only when we challenged him on this that he broke down and showed us all the messages on his phone." **Parent/Carer, NSPCC Helpline**

HOW CAN YOU BE SUPPORTIVE

You must follow your organisation's child protection procedures.

If you're talking to a young person who has been affected by Sexually Coerced Extortion, it's important to **remain calm, reassuring and non-judgmental**. Give them your full attention and **keep your body language open and encouraging**.

Let them **go at their pace**, without interrupting them. And remember that it may take several conversations for them to share what's happened to them.

Make sure they know they are **not to blame** for what has happened. And reassure them that any information they do share with you – or with other trusted adults – **will be treated seriously**.

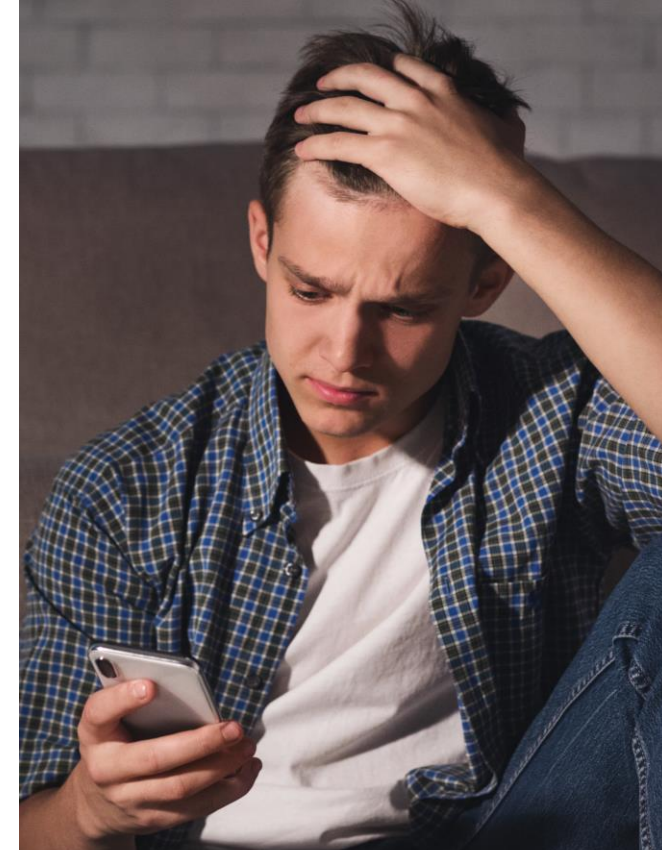
Ask them what they want to happen next. Make sure they have as much control as possible over what happens next, but don't promise anything that is outside your control. Take time to explain what you understand will happen next, and **make sure they're kept fully informed of any actions you take**.

You can also talk to them about **practical steps** to get images/videos removed from the internet through our **Report Remove tool** and **remind them they can also contact Childline**.

Further support

Some of the signs of Sexually Coerced Extortion may only be seen by parents and carers so it is important to share information within this pack with parents and carers in young people lives.

You can find **further guidance on what on steps to take** to when supporting a young person experiencing this type of abuse on the [Financially motivated sexual extortion: NCA alert](#) for **education and parents**.



Remember:

Where a child or 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. Ensure they receive a compassionate, trauma-informed response, emphasising that it is not their fault and acknowledging the manipulation they have experienced.

Report Remove

Report Remove is an award-winning tool, provided by Childline and the [Internet Watch Foundation](#) (IWF), that allows young people to report an image or video shared online, to see if it's possible to get it taken down.

When a young person loses control of a nude image of themselves, it can be very distressing. It's important that young people don't feel judged when this happens, and you should reassure them that **they're not to blame**.

You can help a young person **aged under 18** to use the **Report Remove tool** to see if the image or video can be taken down, and Childline can provide further support.

Please watch the 'Supporting Young People to use Report Remove: Guidance for professionals' video below -



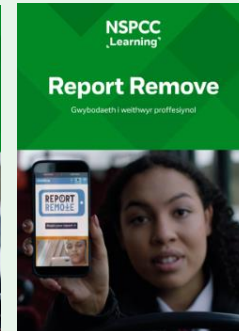
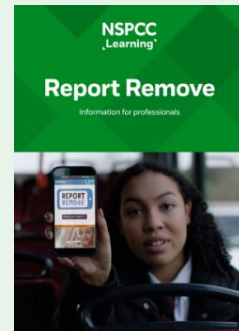
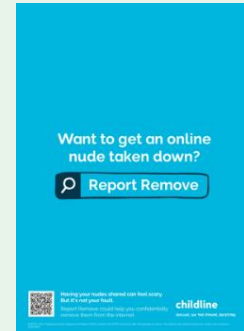
Thank you for sharing Report Remove with me. I've been so stressed about all this; I haven't been able to sleep at night. I don't even know if my nudes have been posted or not, but just knowing that something can be done about it is a massive relief. Thanks again for being so helpful and understanding.

Boy, 17, Childline

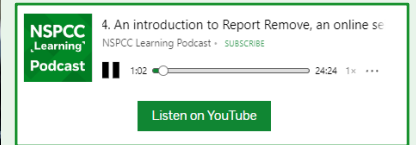


Report Remove resources

Below you can find our resources for understanding and raising awareness of Report Remove, including our **information pack**, **posters and podcast**. You can find out more on our [NSPCC Learning page](#). Click the image links below



Download our [information pack](#), listen to our [NSPCC podcast](#) about Report Remove.



Information about report remove for young people

You can let young people know about the [Childline website Report Remove page](#) where they can find out more about Report Remove, FAQs and videos.



About Childline

Childline is here 24 hours a day, 365 days a year

Young people can contact Childline about **anything**. They can speak or write about anything in their lives from homework to puberty to family relationships, from feeling happy to feeling suicidal with everything in between.

Young people can contact us online through **1-2-1 chat** or **email** and **call us for free on 0800 1111** (they do not need to have phone credit, and the number does not show on phone bills, though it does need to be deleted from call history).

The main Childline site, www.childline.org.uk, contains different sections from **information and advice** on a wide range of issues affecting young people, the people they live with and know; **peer support**; **self-help** and **creative outlets** to access to the Childline counsellors online. This is available **24/7** and is about offering young people **easily accessible resources** at any time.

[Childline for under 12s](#) | [Childline](#) explains our age-appropriate content for under 12s.



Resources

- The [message boards](#) are a public forum in which young people support each other with anything in their lives – from complex mental health issues to sharing their favourite recipes.
- [Ask Sam](#) is what may have traditionally been referred to as a problem page. Young people can submit a letter to “Sam” about anything at all.
- The [Calm Zone](#) has breathing exercises, activities, videos and games to help with stress.
- The [Coping Kit](#) allows young people to try different, easily accessible things to help cope.
- The [Mental Health First Aid Kit](#) includes ways a young person can distract themselves, how to relax and how to identify those who can support them.
- [Childline Games](#) can be used for coping purposes, to express feelings, to refocus or to just have some fun.

Accessibility

- [Our Deaf Zone](#) offers advice and support in English and BSL and a young person can also contact a Childline counsellor via SignVideo, through a BSL interpreter.
- It is possible to arrange a time to speak with a Welsh-speaking counsellor and the site also has [Advice in Welsh](#).
- We use **Recite Me**, an accessibility toolbar, to allow young people to change font size, colour and style, including a dyslexia friendly font; to translate the site into over 100 languages; to read sections of text aloud; to download audio files; to magnify or to use a reading ruler and to adjust the colour contrast.

Childline's Confidentiality Policy

At Childline, our confidentiality policy is what makes us unique

At Childline our **confidentiality policy is what makes us unique and is different** to other organisations. In many instances we do not need to pass on information that young people tell us unless it meets our confidentiality policy threshold.

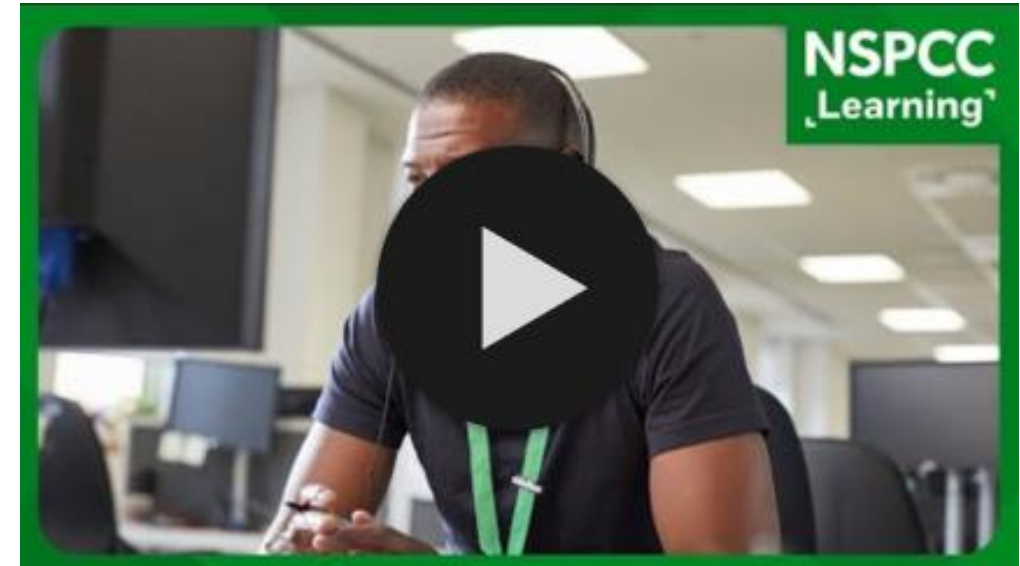
Having a **higher level of confidentiality** allows a **safe space** for young people to come to about things they may not feel able to talk to other professionals about, due to fear of what they say being passed on.

Our confidentiality policy allows for young people to have **more control** in what is shared and what happens in their lives. We work with young people to **empower them**, to **help them understand their choices**, and **advocate on their behalf** if they want or need us.

You can find out more about Childline on our [NSPCC Learning page](#) and the video link explains how we work in more detail.

“The confidentiality promise made me less anxious to tell you about the issues at home, I feel so much better for sharing what’s going on and how I’m feeling”

Girl, 14



CONFIDENTIALITY AT CHILDLINE

Childline is a safe place to talk. Whenever you speak to us it's confidential and we won't tell other people what you've said. We only might need to say or do something if:

- you ask us to
- we believe your life or someone else's life is in danger
- you're being hurt by someone in a position of trust who is able to hurt other children like a teacher, religious leader, sports coach, police officer or doctor
- you tell us that you're seriously hurting another person
- you tell us about another child who's being hurt and is not able to tell someone or understand what is happening to them
- we're told we have to by law, for example for a court case.

Behind The Screen

As part of the campaign, we have filmed an entertaining and informative film **“Leng Or Liar?”** in collaboration with social media stars WhyDee and Kay The Jeweller from The Charvas (The Charvas are teenage content creators and musicians), who have been tasked to engage in an online conversation with three different people, but one of which is fake. Can they correctly identify the fake person, or will the team behind the scenes manage to trick them?

During the challenge, WhyDee and Kay The Jeweller experience first-hand some of the complex ways scammers attempt to deceive young people. In the shocking conclusion, they learn a valuable lesson to share with young people: not everyone you meet online is who they say they are.

How can you support?

Share our posters
and leaflets

[Childline posters](#)
[| NSPCC Learning](#)

Follow us on
social media and
share the
campaign video

Share this pack
with colleagues
and other
professionals to
continue to raise
awareness

Visit the Childline
Campaign page
and share with
young people

[Trusting others
online | Childline](#)

[Watch the full video here](#)



Resources and further support



Find out more information about Financially Motivated Coerced Extortion, delivering preventative education and how to support victims in NCA's alert [Financially motivated sexual extortion: NCA alert](#)



UK Safer Internet Centre has several [key resources for financially motivated sexual extortion](#) which includes a range of resources for professionals, parents and young people.



Sexting: sharing nudes and semi-nudes
Advice for schools and organisations working with children and young people
[Sexting: sharing nudes and semi-nudes | NSPCC Learning](#)



When you're not sure

The NSPCC Helpline can help when you're not sure if a situation needs a safeguarding response. Our child protection specialists are here to support you whether you're seeking advice, sharing concerns about a child, or looking for reassurance.

Our child protection specialists at NSPCC Helpline can help when you're not sure if a situation needs a safeguarding response.

Contact [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) or email help@nspcc.org.uk

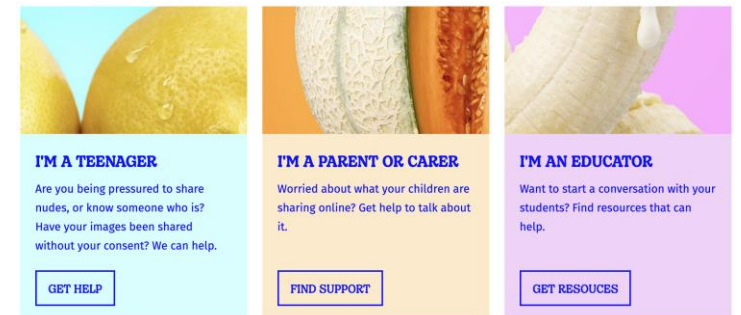
[Find out more about how the NSPCC Helpline can support you](#)



Guidance: Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people (updated March 2024) [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)



IWF 'Think before you share' website provides support and advice for young people, parents and professionals on the topic of sharing nudes.



Further reading



This guidance aims to help professionals better understand, recognise and respond to victim blaming language and behaviour when discussing or responding to the online experiences of children and young people.



This briefing looks at the available data and statistics about online abuse and harm to help professionals, and the organisations they work for, make evidence-based decisions.



This briefing shares children and young people's experiences. Drawing from contacts to Childline and the NSPCC Helpline in 2023/24,

Exploitation can happen anywhere

**Don't wait.
Report it.**

The Children's Society

The Children's Society's #LookCloser campaign has several downloadable [resources](#) on exploitation for those working with young people including Online Sexually Coerced Extortion.

childline

A life-changing **NSPCC** *service*

Follow Childline on social media:

Instagram: [@childline_official](#)

Facebook: [@Childline](#)

TikTok: [@Childline](#)