Research Highlights for
Children’s Online Safety #96

Sexting and Young People: The Parent’s View

Aims

The NSPCC and ChildLine hear frequently from children about sexting, with many young people telling us they feel too ashamed to speak to their parents and are left with no one to turn to. In 2015/2016 there were 1292 contacts to ChildLine about sexting, whilst the Sexting advice page received over 18,000 page views, making it the most visited Explore page on the site.

Following an increase in the number of counselling sessions performed by ChildLine, the NSPCC worked with FACTs International to explore how parents can be better-supported to help their children around this issue. The research explores parent’s knowledge and perceptions of sexting, as well as the types of resources and support that they would like to receive. It will be of benefit to those working with parents, particularly schools and the police, and can be used to inform the materials and services that are provided to parents going forward.

Key Findings

- 73% of parents believe that sexting is always harmful and 37% are concerned that their child may become involved in sexting in the future.
- There is a lack of clarity regarding the law around sexting: half of parents are unaware that it is illegal for a child to take a naked or sexual image of themselves, and 28% do not know that it is illegal for a child to send a naked or sexual image to a peer.
- 86% of parents would seek help if they found out that their child had sent a sexual image to another young person and it had been shared on the internet. However, only 50% of parents are confident that they would be able to access the right support in this situation.
- Parents would be most likely to turn to the police, their child’s school, or the Centre for Exploitation and Online Protection if their child was involved in a sexting incident.
- 42% of parents have spoken to their child about sexting at least once but 19% do not intend to ever have a conversation.
- When talking about sexting, parents are least comfortable having conversations about the law around sexting and what could be done if an image of their child was shared. This is because they lack knowledge on these issues.
- 83% of parents have never received information about sexting and 84% of parents have never looked for it. Despite this, 50% want to learn more about sexting and the most popular ways to do so are through their children’s school and online resources.

http://www.saferinternet.org.uk/research
In particular, parents would most like to receive information about healthy relationships and the pressures that young people may face; what young people think about sexting; and tips on how to start conversations about sexting.

Methodology

FACTs International, on behalf of the NSPCC, performed research with parents between February and April 2016. The research was composed of initial qualitative interviews with 32 parents and carers in order to inform the survey questions. This was followed by an online survey with 1000 parents and carers from across the UK, which was available online between the 4th April and the 19th April. In order to be eligible to take part in either element parents had to:

- Be over the age of 18
- Live in the UK
- Have a child/children in their care aged 11 to 17 who had access to a smart phone, tablet, or computer.

For the purpose of the research, participants were asked to focus on the production and transmission of sexual videos and images, rather than sexual messages.

Source Sexting and Young People: The Parent’s View:
https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/2016/sexting-young-people-parents

Research Team FACTs International

Contact information Charlotte.lynch@nspcc.org.uk

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