

Cotham School

Online Safety Newsletter

Academic Year:
2025/2026

Term: 1
Date: 29/09/2025



Newsletter Topic:

1. What is: Sextortion
2. Social Media Focus: WhatsApp - Chat Locks

What is Sextortion?

- A 'cyber-enabled crime' where victims are lured into sharing intimate photos/videos or behaving sexually on camera.
- Criminals record or save these actions and blackmail victims by threatening to release the material.

Statistics

In early 2024, The IWF reported child sexual abuse linked to sextortion rose by 19%, with victims as young as 11. Childline held over 900 sessions on sextortion in 2023/24 - 68% involved boys. Yet police report 80% of grooming victims are girls, often pressured to share more images.

How to Help Your Child Stay Safe Online!

🚫 Help Them Avoid Risky Behaviours:

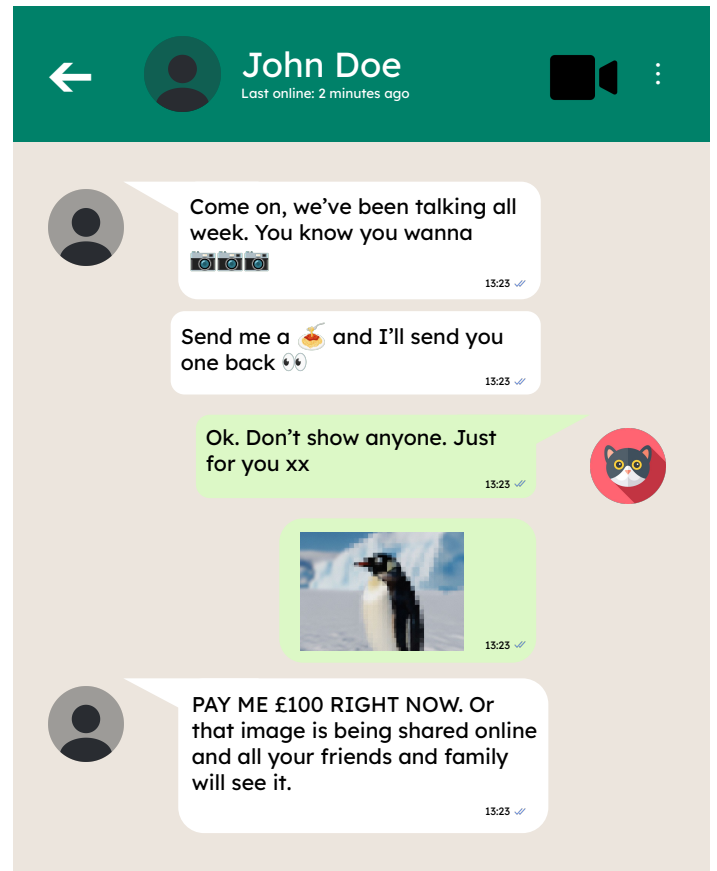
- Talk about why posting private or intimate content can be unsafe.
- Teach them to say no to any requests for sexual photos or video activity.
- Encourage them not to accept friend requests from strangers.
- Help them understand why sharing personal info like address, phone number, or school can be dangerous.

✅ Encourage Positive Online Habits:

- Explain that real friends won't pressure or scare them into doing things.
- Check in together on who they're connected with - do regular "friend list clean-ups".
- Review privacy settings as a team to make sure everything is locked down.
- Remind them to pause and think: "Do I really know this person?" before chatting or sharing.

How It Happens:

Victims are often approached on social media or dating apps by offenders using fake profiles. After building trust and steering the conversation toward sexual topics, offenders obtain compromising material and then blackmail the victim for money or more images. Victims may feel violated, afraid, ashamed, or suicidal.



What To Do If You're Targeted by Sextortion:

- 🚫 Don't reply or send money.
- ✗ End all contact immediately.
- 📸 Save evidence - messages, screenshots, etc.
- 🗣️ Talk to someone you trust.
- 🚓 Contact the police right away.
- 🔒 Block the offender and change passwords.
- 📞 Report them to the website or app.
- ❤️ Get mental health support if you feel unsafe.

Important Reminders:

- Sexual images of minors are illegal to create or share.
- Sextortion is a serious crime - report it immediately.
- Victims are not to blame.
- Never save or share harmful images of children.

Support Resources:

[IWF \(Internet Watch Foundation\)](#)
[NCA](#)
[Police.uk](#)
[UK Safer Internet Centre](#)
[CEOP](#)

 **NCA**
National Crime Agency

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Social Media: WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a popular messaging application used worldwide. It enables users to send text messages, make voice and video calls, share multimedia content such as photos and videos, and use group chat features, all through an internet connection

 Meta



Age Requirements:

13+ (reduced from 16+ in April 2024)

Key Features:

- Messaging and Group Chats
- Voice and Video Calls
- Media Sharing
- End-to-End Encryption

Safety and Privacy Features:

- Last Seen and Online Status
- Profile Photo and Info
- Block Unknown Calls
- Block/Report Contacts
- Group Invites
- Two-Step Verification
- Read Receipts

How to: [Turn WhatsApp Chat Locks on or off.](#)

You can lock chats to add an extra layer of privacy to your chats.

Locked chats will be hidden from your chats list in the Locked Chats folder.

To read messages in a locked chat, you must unlock your chats using device authentication, such as your phone passcode, Face ID, fingerprint, or with a secret code of your choice. When chats are locked, notification content and contact information are hidden. Notifications show as “WhatsApp: 1 new message.”

Turn chat lock on or off

You can turn chat lock on or off for any chat, including group chats and muted chats. If you don't have device authentication turned on, you'll be prompted to turn it on before locking a chat.

- Right click the chat.
- Click Lock Chat or Unlock Chat.

When you turn on chat lock, the other people in the chat are not notified.

To open locked chats on web, you must create a secret code on your primary phone.

Note:

You can't save media from locked chats. To save media, you must turn chat lock off. Calls from contacts in locked chats won't be blocked. If you backup and restore WhatsApp on a new phone, your locked chats will still be locked. To access your locked chats you must have device authentication set up.

Create a secret code

You can lock your chats with a secret code, separate from your phone passcode. However, you must create your secret code on your Android or iPhone. To view chats locked by secret code:

- Click Locked chats.
- Enter your secret code.
- Click Continue.

View and hide locked chats

To view your locked chats, click chat lock unlocked. Alternatively, you can hide the locked chats folder so it only appears when you enter your secret code. Learn how to hide your locked chats folder on Android and iPhone. To view hidden locked chats:

- Click Search.
- Type your secret code.
- Click Locked chats.

Unlock and clear locked chats

You can unlock and clear all your locked chats at once. When you unlock and clear locked chats, they are wiped clear and returned to your chat list. This process deletes all messages and media in those chats. If you have a secret code, it will also be deleted. To unlock and clear locked chats:

- Click settings > Privacy.
- Click Chat lock > Unlock and clear locked chats.

