

How can I respond if my child experiences digital sexual violence

What do we mean by 'digital sexual violence'?

We classify digital sexual violence into three categories of harmful behaviours:

1. Unsolicited Sexual Images: Any sexual content shared online not wanted by the recipient. This can include: unsolicited dick pics, 'cyberflashing', pornographic images from bots, unwanted nude images/videos.

2. Digital Sexual Pressure & Coercion: Being pressured or forced to engage in sexual activity on or offline via digital technologies. This can include: pressurising, blackmailing or bribing someone to send nudes.

3. Non-consensual Taking or Sharing of Nudes: creating, sharing or threatening to share someone's nudes without their consent. This is also called image-based sexual abuse (sometimes called 'revenge porn'). It can include: forwarding a nude in a group chat, showing a nude of someone else on a phone or upskirting.

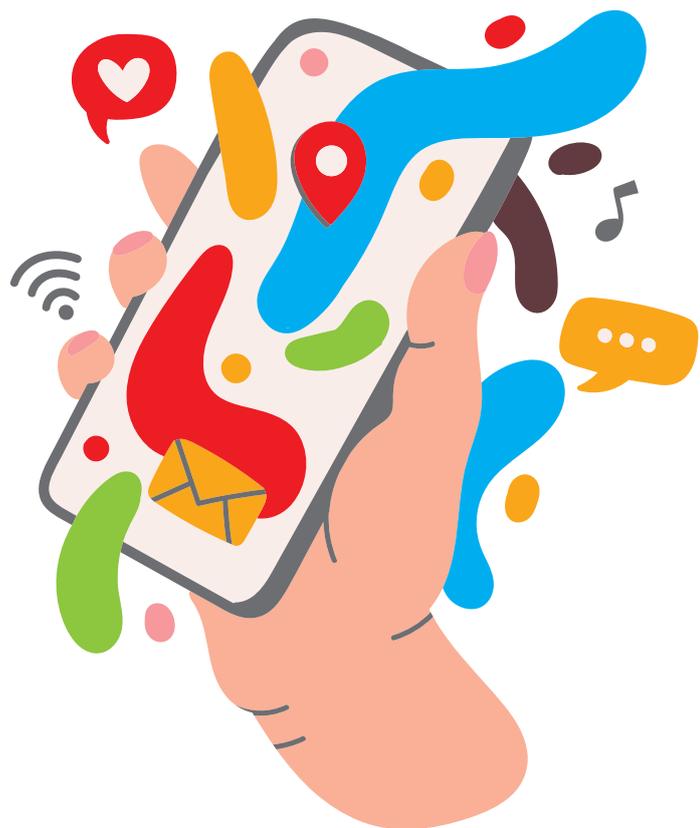
Further information around the prevalence of these issues can be found [here](#).

How can I respond as a parent or carer if my child tells me they've experienced one of these forms of online harms?

Listen calmly and don't blame

If your child tells you that they've experienced online harm, it may have taken a lot of courage to do so. Give them space to talk while you listen. Even if you feel upset or shocked, try to respond calmly, thank them for telling you, and reassure them that they've done the right thing.

Try to avoid any responses that might make your child feel like what's happened is their fault, for example through questions like "did you check whether you knew them before you accepted their friend request?" or "were you going out with them at the time?" Remember that regardless of the choices your child made, the perpetrator chose to do harm - remind them that what happened was not their fault.



Ask them what they need

Digital sexual violence can take many forms, and as with all forms of sexual violence the impact is specific to the survivor. In some situations a child may just want to tell a trusted individual about what's happened. In others, they might have already taken action - for instance they might have already blocked and reported an account. Ask them what they need from you.

You could give a few ideas about what you could do next, so that they can consider the steps that feel right for them. This could include contacting a support service, talking to a teacher in school, or reporting an account or user.

If you strongly feel like a particular action is necessary - for example, to contact your child's school - explain to your child why you feel that next step is necessary, ask them how they feel about it, and listen to their response. Support your child to feel as empowered in their choices as possible - for instance if you feel it's necessary to speak to their teacher, ask whether they would like to be present during the conversation.

Help your child access support if they want it

There are a number of different support services for those who have experienced digital sexual violence. If or when your child feels it would be useful, you could look at some different options together. Our guide [to support services](#) explains how these work, and this leaflet for young people provides a summary of links and ideas.

Ensure you have the support you need

It can be very difficult and upsetting to know that someone you care about has experienced online harm. Ensure that you have a safe space to talk about how the situation has made you feel. Many support services can be contacted by someone who is supporting a victim/survivor of sexual violence, including digital sexual violence, as well as the individual themselves. Check out our [sexual violence support services explained document](#) and [support for parents and carers document](#) for more.