

Sextortion is sexual extortion where the victim is exploited through threat of the exposure of intimate images and is usually for financial gain or as a means of controlling behaviour. It is a growing threat and comes in many forms including phishing emails, non-consensual intimate image abuse (also referred to as revenge porn), online child sexual abuse and exploitation (grooming).

The most prolific form of Sextortion is social media enabled sextortion also referred to as catfishing. These sextortions start with seemingly harmless flirting on social media or dating sites. Criminals are experts at creating fake profiles that appear genuine. Flirtatious conversations quickly turn sexual and the victim is actively encouraged to remove clothing, perform a sexual act on camera or share explicit images. These images and videos are often recorded without the victim’s knowledge and then can be held to ransom. Criminals rely on open social media profiles where contacts and personal information can be seen and copied and threaten to share the intimate images with them unless their demands are complied with.



Sextortion often goes unreported due to feelings of immense shame and embarrassment by the victim coupled with a fear of exposure leveraged by the perpetrators. These criminals do not differentiate between adults and children and do not care about the impact this crime has on the victim. Sextortion is affecting children in Scotland and it is important for parents and teachers to have conversations with their young people about the risks and how to keep themselves safe online.

If you or someone you know has become a victim of sextortion:

**Do not panic.**

* Report the matter to the police on 101. The police will take the case seriously. We will deal with it in confidence. You will not be judged.

**Do not pay.**

* Some victims who have paid hear no more about it, others pay and are pressured for more money. In some cases, even when money is paid the criminals share the videos or images anyway.

**Do not talk any further to the criminals**

* Take screen shots of any communication. Keep it as evidence.
* Make a note of all details provided by the criminals. For example; the profile name, the URL, details of any method of payment and account/ transfer/ cryptocurrency details.
* Deactivate the social media account but do not delete it. Report the matter to the platform to have any video blocked. Deactivating the account rather than shutting it down will mean data is kept and you can reactivate it at a later date. This helps the police to gather evidence and means your online memories are not lost forever.

Safeguarding victims is of paramount importance due to the emotional trauma experienced by victims. Support can be found at:

* [Report Remove](https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/report-remove/)- helps young people under 18 in the UK to confidentially report sexual images and videos of themselves and remove them from the internet
* [CEOP](https://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre/Should-I-make-a-report-to-CEOP-YP/Should-I-make-a-report-to-CEOP-concerned-adult/) works to keep children safe from sexual abuse and grooming online
* [PAPYRUS](https://www.papyrus-uk.org/) gives confidential advice and support. They work to stop young suicide in the UK
* Contact a [SAMARITAN](https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/) if you need someone to talk to, we listen. We won't judge or tell you what to do
* [GET SAFE ONLINE](https://www.getsafeonline.org/) is the UK’s leading source of unbiased, factual and easy-to-understand information on online safety
* [REVENGE PORN HELPLINE](https://revengepornhelpline.org.uk/) is a UK service supporting adults (aged 18+) who are experiencing intimate image abuse
* [THINK YOU KNOW](https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/) provides support for young people, teenagers, parents & carers
* [NCSC’s](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/sextortion-scams-how-to-protect-yourself) advice on how to protect yourself from sextortion emails
* [Sextortion Self Help Guide](https://www.scotland.police.uk/spa-media/0bdpujih/sextortion-self-help-guide.pdf)

For further information and advice about sextortion visit [Sextortion - Police Scotland](https://www.scotland.police.uk/advice-and-information/internet-safety/sextortion/)