Services For Education

SAFEGUARDING SUBSCRIPTION RESOURCES

CYBERFLASHING

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Cyberflashing – What do we need to know and do?

What is Cyberflashing?

Cyberflashing is sending a nude picture online to someone who did not consent to it. It is an online version of "indecent exposure". Often the image is sent using an app or more frequently via Bluetooth, AirDrop (on Apple devices) or wifi.

The victim will not know they have been targeted until they have opened the notification or app. It often happens on public transport, or other busy public spaces, and frequently it is happening between complete strangers.

What is the Law around it?

Whilst "sexting" between two consenting adults isn't a crime, this issue is done without consent. It has been illegal in England since March 2022 with a sentence of up to two years in prison. If a child (under 18) is involved as a victim, it is also child abuse.

How common is it?

Research by the dating app Bumble stated 48% of women aged 18-24 had been victim to this. Other research says 26% of men of the same age group have also been cyberflashed.

We don't have such extensive research specifically on this for under 18s as data is categorized as child sexual abuse if it is reported. We do know it is common.

Why do people do this?

It can be to embarrass the victim in public – the person sending the image can see the reaction. The perpetrator may get an adrenaline rush in controlling what the victim sees on their phone.

For example with Apple AirDrop anyone else with an Apple Device can send a message to the victim and the victim will not know what the message contains in advance to avoid seeing the unwanted image.

Some people who have sent these images report that they thought it was fun and/or sexy and didn't recognise how the victim felt intimated and threatened.

How can we empower and support young people?

1. Talk about how to control what images are sent to them – for example with Apple AirDrop you can change privacy settings. The default setting is that everyone can send photos, but you can change it to "contacts only" or even "receiving off" (settings > general > airdrop).

2. Talk about healthy relationships and having boundaries of what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour – this can be subjective, so we need to consider the opinion and feelings of the person receiving the image at all times. Your RSHE curriculum is crucial here. Remind children of who trusted adults are and how to report potential safeguarding issues in your setting.

3. If an image has been received, encourage the child to block the sender and report to the app or platform used.

4. Use your safeguarding referral procedures as appropriate.

If you need extra support on this topic, please contact us at safeguarding@servicesforeducation.co.uk

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