



UK CHILDREN ASKED TO THINK BEFORE THEY SEND

UK NATIONAL CENTRE FOR CHILD PROTECTION WARNS ABOUT THE RISKS OF “SEXTING”

“Think before you send” is the message from the Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre - the UK’s national centre for protecting children – as it marks EU Safer Internet Day 2011 to talk about the dangers young people face when sending indecent images of themselves to each other, often called ‘sexting’.

This is in response to increasing evidence that such images are being shared with wider groups of friends. Research from Beatbullying highlighted that 38% of 11-17 year olds have received a sexually explicit or distressing text or email, with 70% admitting they knew the sender. Young people often do not realise that by digitally sharing such images, they may lose control and may never really know where it ends up. In some extreme cases, CEOP has found these in the collection of child sex offenders and their networks.

To support this message and Safer Internet Day, which falls on Tuesday 8 February, CEOP has launched a brand new resource called “Exposed”; a ten minute film aimed at 11-16 year olds, encouraging them to think about their actions and how these may affect others and their lives in future. Together with lessons plans and accompanying activities, the film has been produced in consultation with leading charities and education practitioners and is available free of charge at www.thinkuknow.co.uk/teachers.

Peter Davies, Chief Executive of the CEOP Centre says:

“We know that young people are increasingly using technology not only to stay in touch, but to explore their sexuality and to push the boundaries in what they send and to whom they send it. It is now so easy to send pictures instantly via emails and texts that we are seeing instances of boys or girls sending sexual images of themselves to others without considering the consequences. They often find out later that the image has been passed on to many others and as a result they can be the victims of bullying or harassment.

“In some rare instances we have seen these images end up in the collections of offenders. It is important that we look to raise awareness of this risk by launching new resources into our established education programme Thinkuknow so that young people can make the right choices”.



Minister for Crime Prevention James Brokenshire said:

“Child protection will always be an absolute priority for Government and CEOP continues to play a crucial role in ensuring children are safeguarded.

“This is a worrying trend. We should encourage young people to use technology but it’s really important that they are made aware of the dangers involved too.

“I welcome this new campaign which will help to raise awareness of the risks and educate young people about staying safe online.”

Charlotte Aynsley, Beatbullying Director of Practice continues: “Beatbullying is extremely proud of our long standing partnership with CEOP. It is vital we are able to work together in such a capacity and continue to produce useful tools to help highlight child safety online.”

“Early intervention needs to be part of the solution if we are to educate our young people, teachers and families about the consequences of their actions and how to keep our children and young people safe online as well as offline.”

CEOP are also council members of the government’s UK Council For Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) and will be supporting the launch of new good practice guidance for moderation, social networking, search, chat and instant messaging services - available at www.education.gov.uk/ukccis - and will continue to endorse the work of the UK Safer Internet Centre which is formed of Childnet, the South West Grid for Learning, and the IWF. Visit www.saferinternet.org.uk for more information.

CEOP will also be announcing the winner of this year’s ‘My Life Online’ competition, which has been running on its Thinkuknow website since December 2010.

On the work of UKCCIS and wider collaboration, Peter Davies emphasised the need for partnership:

“The real value of UKCCIS from our point of view is providing that mechanism and forum for ensuring collaboration from all interested sectors. This is fundamental to making children safe today. No matter what sector or position we represent, I truly believe that only by working together can we collectively make a real difference in making the internet safer today and into the future. That is why we as always remain fully committed to the principles of this vital Council”.