

Tackling the online sharing of child abuse imagery by children

What's happening?

So far this year, in the Northumbria Police area, one third of offenders who share the worst kind of child abuse imagery online are under the age of 18; this equates to approximately 66 children. This is the number who have been caught sharing material on digital platforms and is the tip of the iceberg for young people viewing this type of material. There will be many more cases of children who are exposed to this material whether by choice or by accident. The sharing of this content also brings children into contact with paedophiles on digital forums. These offenders are typically, but not exclusively, teenaged males who display neurodivergent traits and who spend a great deal of time online. This type of offending is being seen by police forces nationally.

Offenders who have shared child abuse imagery often say that they were exposed to age-inappropriate content – both sexual and violent – at a young age, and that subsequent desensitisation led them to seek content of a more extreme nature.

What can we do to address it?

Parents and carers play a vital role in helping to protect children from exposure to age-inappropriate content online.

We have put together an e-leaflet for parents and carers:

“Keeping children safe online – Reducing their exposure to violent and pornographic content”
which we would like you to consider sharing within your school community.
Please find it attached alongside this bulletin.

We hope that the following weblinks will be of support to you within school:

All ages:

The NSPCC offers free [online safety workshops for parents and carers](#) that are hosted by your school but facilitated by trainers from the NSPCC. The core content comes with the option to add on topics such as online porn.

[NSPCC - Promoting healthy relationships in schools](#) – resources split by age group

[CEOP Education](#) – various resources split by age group

Primary:

[NSPCC Speak Out Stay Safe](#) – a programme of resources encouraging 5-11 year olds to speak out if they experience any kind of abuse.

Secondary:

[Let's Talk about Porn lesson \(Y9+\)](#) – looking at the history of porn, breaking down myths, and getting students to think about what they are watching online.

[CEOP Respecting me, you, us](#) – lesson plans for discussing healthy relationships with 12-14 year olds