Rape Crisis Scotland

Keeping safe from sexual violence online: information for young people

Sexual violence and the online connection

Any form of sexual contact which you do not agree to is sexual violence. Anyone who does not respect your privacy, who will not leave you alone, who posts embarrassing or threatening statements about you, or 'shares' photos of you without your permission is being abusive.

The internet makes it very easy for people to quickly connect with others and find out and send very personal information. But it also allows people to hide who they really are and what they are doing. Some people use the internet to harm others.

Some examples are:

» Using social networking to stalk, bully and harass others

» Distributing images of victims of sexual crimes by phone

» 'Befriending' young people and others for sex through chat rooms and instant messaging

» Grooming young people and others for sex

The person who commits any kind of sexual violence and abuse is always responsible for it. They choose to do these things. Even if you know that you have taken risks or done something that made you vulnerable, this does not mean that you caused or invited the abuse.

This leaflet gives ideas about how to keep yourself as safe as you can. It also gives information about where you can get help if something goes wrong.

There is more information on our website at **www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk**

Remember that you cannot control what happens to information or images which you give or which are taken from/of you

People, particularly girls, may feel pressured (by boys/men or peer culture) or want to send explicit photos of themselves (or texts). This could be to a boy/girlfriend. Some people call this 'sexting' or taking 'selfies' and it is very common – many celebrities circulate such photos of themselves.

The problem is that, even if you trust your friends, there is no guarantee what will happen to a photo once it leaves your phone. Once it starts to circulate, you lose control over who has the image.

So, it may be best to decide that you will not send any photos of yourself. And that if someone else sends you such photos, that you will delete them immediately. Sending them may be illegal, depending on your age. If you receive them you could report it to the police.

Some safety tips are:

» Never share private or identifying information when using social networks

» Check your privacy settings to make sure you are not sharing more information than you intend. Review and reset them regularly

» Use 'strong' passwords and change them regularly; don't use the same password for different websites

» Pick a user name which does not include any personal information or place names such as where you live or hang out

» Keep your profile 'closed' and only allow your friends to view your profile

» Be wary about who you invite or accept invitations from

» Make sure that any 'friends' you make online are real ones and not just 'friends of friends'. Because someone is on the 'friends' list of a friend you know well and trust, does not mean that it is safe to trust them. If you have not met them in person, they are not likely to be real friends. They are simply people you chat to online. People often collect 'friends' because it's seen as a status symbol or a bit of a competition. This makes it easier for the wrong person to get involved

» If you meet someone in person who you have only had online contact with, there are risks. This is because you cannot guarantee anything about them or what they intend. Being aware of the risks is the first step in keeping yourself safe

» Be careful about the information you give out about yourself in a chat room. Everyone else in the chat room can see what you write. So don't give your name, age, address, or any personal information you would not tell to a stranger

» Do not send or post photographs online that you would not want anyone else to see. This includes any photographs that someone sends to you

» Do not do anything in front of a webcam that you would not want the world to see. People may manipulate you into doing this. Have a look at the clips here: www.youtube.com/user/ceop

» Some people may try to get you to do things you don't want to, such as sending them an explicit photograph of yourself. They may use this to 'blackmail' you into doing something else with the threat that if you don't, they will send the photograph to other people

» Here is one example of what can go wrong and how to deal with it: http://youtu.be/hK5OeGeudBM

Remember that the people you meet online may not be who you think they are

» They may not be who they appear to be; or the age they say they are; or look the same as their photographs; in fact everything they tell you may be untrue. See: http://youtu.be/pIkQvpXnQsM

» Abusers often get to know and 'make friends' with young people online through instant messaging, chat rooms or online gaming. They do this to 'groom' them for sex either in person or online

» Do not meet someone in person who you have only had online contact with. They may be pretending to be someone else to get you to trust them
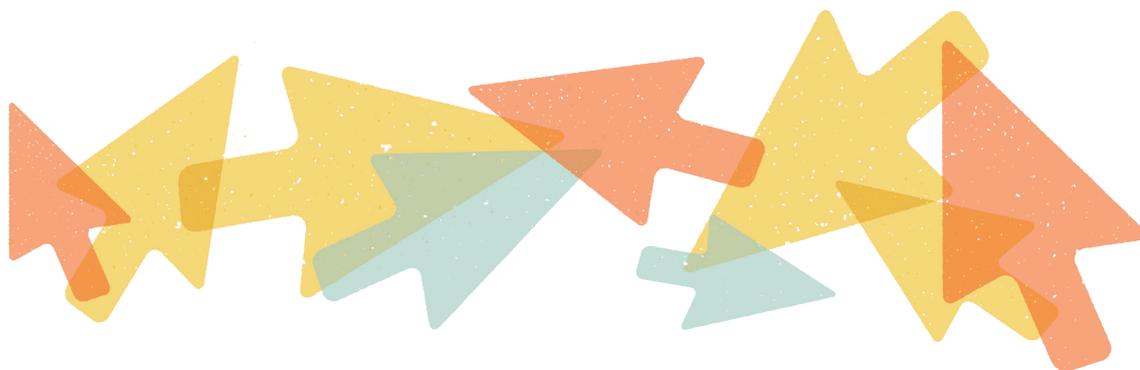
Help from the law

See **www.rapecrisisscotland.org.uk** for information about how the law can help. You can also phone or email the RCS helpline (see below) and we can tell you more.

Reporting abuse

» If you are worried about something which is happening to you or someone you know, contact the police by phoning **101**. If it is an emergency, dial **999**

» If you are reporting to the police or others, it is good to keep evidence, for example of offensive text messages, photos, comments, chat room commentary and so on

» To take a snapshot or copy of anything on the screen, including chat or online conversations hold down the 'ALT' key and press 'Prt Sc – SysRq' or 'Print Screen'. Open up a new text or paint document and paste the image into it. Note the time and date of the conversation. (If using an apple computer press 'Cmd + Shift + 3'. This will take a snapshot of your screen and save it as an image to your desktop)

» Take pictures to record any evidence and note, date, time and place

Help and information

Rape Crisis Scotland Helpline

08088 01 03 02 (6pm-12 midnight daily)
Email: **support@rapecrisisscotland.org.uk**

Free confidential support and information for women and men, aged 13+, affected by sexual violence at any time in their lives; also support for friends, family and professionals.

Child Exploitation and
Online Protection Centre (CEOP)

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Site with advice for children, young people, parents, teachers and others. You can 'report abuse' and someone will get in touch with you to help.

Knowthenet

www.knowthenet.org.uk
Advice and tips on staying safe.

Childline

www.childline.org.uk/talk
Call: **0800 1111**
Bullying line: **0800 44 1111**

For children or young people who want to talk to someone in confidence.

Chatdanger

www.chatdanger.com
How to keep safe while chatting online.

Get Safe Online

www.getsafeonline.org

Practical advice on how to protect yourself, your computers and mobile devices against problems online. Useful info on cyber stalking, safe online dating and safeguarding children.