



PRESS RELEASE

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Sexting and Safeguarding

The Royal Gibraltar Police, in partnership with the Department of Education and the Care Agency, launched the DON'T CLICK.....THINK last year on the 6 June 2017. Since then, the three organisations have been working diligently to highlight the issues and dangers of sharing explicit images online or via text messages, (known as 'sexting'). The aim of the awareness campaign is to engage young people to think about risks and what they can do to stay safe online.

The campaign was commissioned by the Gibraltar Child Protection Committee. There has been a team working on this safeguarding concern and, as such, presentations were prepared and have been delivered both to parents and children. The presentations have highlighted issues surrounding sexting and encouraged young people to think about their actions. Schools have participated in these sessions throughout the last 12 months, and by the 21 June 2018, all middle and secondary schools will have engaged in this very significant initiative.

In addition to this, the Child Protection Committee commissioned training in April 2018 on the dangers of child sexual exploitation (CSE) where the dangers of sexting were also highlighted. One of the points raised during this training was that in these type of incidents the victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appeared consensual, and what made this of concern was that it did not always involve physical contact. CSE could occur through the use of technology and the internet without the child's immediate recognition; for instance, being persuaded to post sexual images on the internet or their mobile phones without any immediate payment or gain. The Child Protection Committee and Designate Safeguarding Officers from different Government Departments took part in this training. The main aim of this course was to enable the Committee to continue to develop its safeguarding strategies, and provide practitioners with the tools to assess, identify and support those at risk.

Natalie Tavares, Chair of the Child Protection Committee, explained that "one of the main aims of the Child Protection Committee is to identify trends and patterns affecting safeguarding of children in Gibraltar, and online safety is one of the areas of work that will continue on the Committee's agenda. We will keep what is already in place under review, and develop this so as to meet the needs of the community".

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Minister of Health, Care and Justice, the Hon Neil F Costa MP, said: “As we near the end of this important awareness campaign, it is essential that young people know how they can protect themselves online. It is just as imperative that parents, carers, teachers, and other practitioners, know and understand the dangers to which children and young people can be exposed. All of us have a duty to safeguard the wellbeing of children and young people, both online and offline. The work undertaken to date to implement the appropriate procedures and policies has been crucial to enable young people to come forward and report anything that makes them feel uncomfortable. For me, and the Child Protection Committee, it is equally essential that the professionals working with children and young people are being equipped with the knowledge, skills and tools to identify any areas of concern and work together to continue making children and young people in Gibraltar safe and free from harm”.

Teenager? Take a look at this advice about sexting

- Remember even if you think you are having a private conversation; once you have hit send, where those words or images end up will be out of your hands.
- Nudes, sexts, fanpics, whatever you call them, sending private pictures of yourself to someone else is never a good idea. Whether it's to your boyfriend or girlfriend or someone you've met online, a quick snap can have long-term consequences.
- If you have sent pictures and regret it, remember it is never too late to get help – The ThinkuKnow & The Parent Zone websites host excellent information on staying safe online.
- Children who are 'sexting' may actually be committing criminal offences. If a teenager were to have in their possession an indecent image of another minor (aged under 16), they would technically be in possession of an indecent image of a child, which is an offence under the Crime Act. If someone is prosecuted for these offences, they may be placed on the sex offenders register, potentially for some considerable time.
- Tell your parent, carer, teacher or an adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried, or if you or someone you know is being bullied online.

You can also seek advice from:

- RGP specialist officers at safeguarding@royalgib.police.gi
- The Care Agency at Referral.concernsforachild@careagency.gov.gi
- ChildLine on the 8008 helpline

Here are some tips when using social media

- Pause before you post. What you write could come back to haunt you.
- How you behave online can affect your future. Think about your job prospects. Do you really want future potential employers to see what you are about to post or send someone?
- Make sure you check your privacy settings on social media. Do you really want the whole world to see what you are saying or the pictures you are posting?
- Think about how much information you put online. Could it be used to steal your identity, or are you telling the world information that could be used against you by criminals – have you told potential burglars that your house is empty while you all go on holiday for two weeks, for example.



- Stay safe by being careful not to give out personal information to people you are chatting with online.
- Remember that information you find on the internet may not be true, or someone online may be lying about who they are.
- Meeting someone who you have only been in touch with online can be dangerous. Only do so with your parents' permission and only when they can accompany you.
- Tell your parent, carer or an adult if someone or something makes you feel uncomfortable or worried, or if you or someone you know is being bullied online.
- Visit the ThinkuKnow – an excellent online resource with information on internet safety

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Information and advice for parent and carers

- There is a growing trend among children and young people to take indecent photographs of themselves, and sometimes even of friends, to send on to each other or post in public places. This could be on the internet - for example on social media sites - or by sending the photos to each other on their mobile phones.
- Many young people see it as 'harmless fun' - often thinking it is a good way to show someone they like and trust them. Others may see it as a modern way to push boundaries and experiment with risk taking.
- Organisations such as the Police, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre or the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), receive reports of harassment after private photos have been circulated. This risk comes when children and young people lose control over where the images are circulated. Once an image is on the internet, it can be freely copied by anybody.
- Children who are 'sexting' may actually be committing criminal offences. If a teenager were to have in their possession an indecent image of another minor (aged under 16), they would technically be in possession of an indecent image of a child, which is an offence under the Gibraltar Crimes Act 2011. If someone is prosecuted for these offences, they may be placed on the sex offenders register, potentially for some considerable time.
- Children and young people may not realise that what they are doing is illegal or that it may be potentially harmful to them in the future.
- What you can do as parents/carers is educate your children to these dangers. Tell them that this behaviour could come back to haunt them in later life and that once an image is on the internet - you can never get it back.
- Make sure they stay safe by being careful not to give out personal information to people they are chatting with online.
- Make sure they check their privacy settings on social media. Ask them; do they really want the whole world to see what they are posting?
- Educate them around the risks of sharing personal information.
- Visit the ThinkuKnow website, an excellent resource on internet safety.

To make a report as someone aged 18yrs and younger, a parent/guardian or as a professional working with children or young people, contact one of the RGP's specialist officers at safeguarding@royalgib.police.gi or the Care Agency at Referral.concernsforachild@careagency.gov.gi