

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

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Launch of 'Sexting' campaign: "DON'T CLICK.....THINK"

The Royal Gibraltar Police, in partnership with the Department of Education and the Care Agency, are today launching a new campaign highlighting the issues and dangers of sharing explicit images online or via text messages (known as 'sexting'), with the aim of engaging young people to encourage them to think about risks and what they can do to stay safe online.

The campaign was commissioned by the Gibraltar Child Protection Committee on advice given to them by the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) Coordinator, after MAPPA representatives attended the UK National Conference for the National Organisation for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (NOTA). At the conference it was highlighted that young persons - as young as the age of 9 - were engaging in **"Sexting"**, a trend which had also begun to gain momentum locally.

RGP School Liaison Officers, as part of ongoing work with schools and other organisations, will be highlighting issues surrounding sexting and encouraging young people to think about their actions through the use of messages on posters, audio visual presentations and social media.

The campaign features advice for victims and messages that warn those who request 'sexual images' that they are potentially committing criminal offences.

Detective Inspector Enriles from the RGP Public Protection Unit, said:

"Any image of yourself that you send, can and might be shared by the person you sent it to, or even be used for blackmail. Remember, once you press send, you can't undo and can't go back."

*He added: **"Sexting"** is an activity we have become increasingly aware of amongst young people and many may not realise that what they are doing is illegal or that it may be potentially harmful to them in the future. We have already seen a very real impact on local victims. Although our reported numbers are not as high as in other jurisdictions we do believe that this is currently underreported and we wish to raise awareness in order to prevent our children from falling foul to **"Sexting"**. Children are growing up in an*



age of ever-changing technology and are learning their social norms through technology and social media. It falls upon us as adults to educate them and support them through the safe use of these technologies”.

“Specialist investigators trained in Safeguarding and Child Protection are able to deal with reports of this nature on a case by case basis. Based on vulnerability and risk, taking into account any age difference, repeat offending and repeat victims, a decision can then be made on an appropriate course of action.”

Minister of Justice, the Hon Neil F Costa said: “This campaign sends an important message to young people about how they can protect themselves online, but also as to the importance of reporting requests for sexual images and incidences of ‘sexting’ to the police, or to their teachers, parents and carers. All of us have a duty to safeguard the wellbeing of children and young people, both online and offline. It is vital that the appropriate structures and policies are in place to ensure that young people feel safe and confident enough to come forward and report anything that makes them feel uncomfortable. Simultaneously, the campaign sends a serious message that requesting sexual images from children is a criminal offence which may result in a criminal prosecution.”

Minister for Education, the Hon John Cortes, said: “While mobile technology has brought great benefits, it also brings serious dangers. This campaign highlights some of these and aims at helping to make a difference.”

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
- 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

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 a 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