

Selfies: five conversation starters

Start with the facts

Explain that, if a young person has an indecent image of another minor, they are committing an offence. The police service are clear that they don't want to criminalise a young person for a mistake, but it is important that your child knows the law.

Help them consider the consequences

What parents and children worry about is vastly different. Young people worry more about their friendships today than any future implications such as job opportunities.

Focus on issues rather than technologies

It's important to understand the link between off and online vulnerability. Cyberbullying, for example, is often a continuation of bullying in the classroom, so making a bullied child close their social network accounts is unlikely to resolve the problem.

Make it relevant

Instead of thinking about certain content is inappropriate, try and think about what is 'stage appropriate' for your child. You'll be well placed to think about their maturity and understanding of complicated issues. Be realistic and avoid shame or being dismissive of any sexual content outright. For example, saying "porn isn't real sex, it's just fantasy" can be misleading and confusing for a young person as online porn is real and sex can involve fantasy.

Think about your 'worst case scenario' plan

If the worst does happen, it's important to know what to do and who to turn to for support. There are a number of charities and government organisations to help parents and young people who have fallen victim to abuse or exploitation online or through mobile devices. More information and support including the reporting of sexual abuse imagery online can be found on the IWF website: iwf.org.uk.