

Financially Motivated Sexual Extortion (FMSE): advice for parents and carers

**How to talk to your child and
access support if they need help**

What is Financially Motivated Sexual Extortion?

You may have recently heard of Financially Motivated Sexual Extortion (FMSE), sometimes referred to as 'sextortion'. This is when an offender threatens to release nude or semi-nude images and/or videos of a victim, unless they pay money or meet another financial demand, such as buying a pre-paid gift card.

Victims of any age and gender can be targets. However a large proportion of cases involve male victims aged 14-17.

It's important to remember that **a child or young person is never to blame if they have been blackmailed online**. Offenders will have tricked, groomed and/or manipulated them into sharing an image, or created digitally manipulated images of them. The reality is that it could happen to anyone.

What we would like you to do



Learn about FMSE



Talk with your child about FMSE



Know how to support your child and where to report if they become a victim of FMSE

What does FMSE look like?

If your child has been approached by an offender, they may tell you that they have been:

- contacted by an online account they do not know but appears to be another child or young person
- quickly engaged in a sexually explicit conversation. This may include the offender sharing indecent content first
- pressured into taking nude or semi-nude photos or videos. Or, they may have been blackmailed with images that have been digitally manipulated or AI-generated
- blackmailed into sending money or meeting another financial demand, such as buying a pre-paid gift card

Talking to your child

It's important to have frequent, open and non-judgemental conversations with your child about being online to build trust and support them if something goes wrong. FMSE should be included in those conversations.

Some young people have little understanding of what FMSE is and do not see themselves at risk. Very few are able to spot the warning signs or know where to report it to.

Here are four tips on how to talk to them:

- **Chat regularly about their life online.** Have ongoing conversations with them about their time online and continue to take an interest as they grow.

Use our [#AskTheAwkward](#) resource for conversation starters on how to speak to your child about meeting and talking to new people online, considering the benefits and potential harms.

Ask your child if they have seen our FMSE campaign on Snapchat, Instagram or Reddit. Use the campaign to discuss the signs of an FMSE attempt and where to report.

Let your child know about our [Online Blackmail](#) article (for 11-18s), which looks at what online blackmail is, spotting the warning signs and where to get help. Visit the Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) Online Safety Hub for more advice for [adults](#), and [13-18 year olds](#).

- **Talk about where to find information about relationships and sex.** The [SBNI Online Safety Hub](#) and organisations like [CEOP Education](#), [Childline](#) and [Brook](#) have age-appropriate advice on topics such as sexual communications and image sharing.
- **Review privacy settings.** Discuss the importance of using privacy settings on their accounts to restrict who can contact them. Read our parent and carers advice on [how to talk to your child about their privacy settings](#). [Internet Matters](#) have created a step by step parental controls guides to help you manage children's devices, apps and platforms.
- **Make sure they know where to go for support:** let them know that they can always come to you with any concerns and won't be judged. Make them aware of other trusted adults or sources of support, if they feel they can't talk to you, such as [Childline](#). The Online Safety Hub [reporting pathways tool](#) signposts to agencies who can help.

FMSE can have an impact on a victim's mental health. Talk to your child about the local and national mental health support services available to them, such as [YoungMinds](#).

What can I do if this has happened to my child?

If your child has told you that someone is trying to trick, threaten and/or blackmail them online:

- **Don't pay, do stop contact and block.** There is no guarantee that paying or meeting the offender's demands will stop the threats. As their motive is for financial gain, they will likely ask for more money and the blackmail may continue.

If you have paid, stay calm but don't pay anything more. Help your child to stop all communication with the offender and block them on any accounts that they have been contacted on.

- **Avoid deleting anything** that could be used as evidence such as messages, images, offender profile details and bank account details.
- **Report to the police.** Call 101 or 999 if there is an immediate risk of harm to your child. You or your child can also contact the [CEOP Safety Centre](#) to report online blackmail and access support in relation to this.

If your child has already shared an image to someone trying to exploit them:

- **Reassure them that they've done the right thing by telling you.** Make sure they know they are not to blame for what has happened and they have done the right thing to ask for your help.

Children and young people's mental health may be negatively impacted by experiences of exploitation. Be mindful of signs of distress such as withdrawal, changes in mood or trouble sleeping. Let them know you are there to support them emotionally as well as practically and seek professional help if needed.

You can find advice on [looking after your child's mental health](#) from the NHS or the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP) [Youth Wellness Web](#).

- **Report any images or videos that have been shared.** If your child's image or video has been shared without their consent and they are under 18, help them to get them removed by taking these 3 steps:
 - Use [Report Remove](#), a tool from Childline and the Internet Watch Foundation. Your child can use this to remove images that have been shared or might be shared.
 - Use [Take It Down](#), a tool from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Your child can use this to remove or stop the online sharing of images or videos.
 - Report it to the platform or app that the incident has occurred on. For advice on how to report to major social media platforms, visit [Internet Matters](#).

Adult victims

Adults that have experienced FMSE can find information on reporting routes and support services by visiting [the National Crime Agency's FMSE page](#).

Adult victims can use the [Stop Non-Consensual Intimate Image Abuse](#) tool to immediately prevent their content from being shared across [StopNCII.org's Industry Partners](#).

Feedback

Scan to share your feedback on this guidance.

