

Sextortion Awareness & Online Safety

What Is Sextortion?

Sextortion is a form of online blackmail. It happens when a person is tricked, pressured, or coerced into sharing intimate images, videos, or personal information and then threatened with exposure unless they pay money or comply with further demands. Sextortion is a crime. Offenders may be individuals or organised criminal groups, and victims can be anyone, regardless of age, gender, background, or digital experience.

How Sextortion Typically Happens

Offenders often use:

- Fake social media profiles
- Bots or scripted messages on platforms
- Hacked accounts
- Dating apps, gaming platforms, or messaging sites

Common tactics include:

- Flattering or flirtatious messages to build trust quickly
- Moving the conversation to a “private” chat
- Asking for images or initiating a video call
- Recording content without permission
- Demanding money, additional images, or access to contacts

Key Warning Signs

Look out for:

- Profiles that seem too perfect, overly interested, or very fast-moving
- Requests to move to another platform (Snapchat, WhatsApp, Instagram)
- Pressure to share personal content
- Someone refusing to reveal their real identity
- Threats after sending content, or sudden financial demands



If It Happens to You or Someone You Know

1. Do NOT engage further
Stop all communication immediately. Do not pay any money this rarely stops the threats.
2. Save the evidence
Take screenshots or note usernames, messages, and links.
3. Report the account
To the platform (Instagram, TikTok, Snapchat, Facebook, etc.).
4. Make a formal report

You can report sextortion to:

- UK Police (999/101 or online reporting) Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) CEOP (Child Exploitation & Online Protection)

Where to Get Help

- QA safeguarding team – safeguarding@qa.com
- Police: 999 (immediate risk) / 101 (non-emergency)
- CEOP Safety Centre: <https://www.ceop.police.uk>
- Internet Watch Foundation (IWF):
<https://www.iwf.org.uk>
- Victim Support: <https://www.victimsupport.org.uk>

How to Protect Yourself Online

✓ Strengthen privacy settings

Limit who can see your photos, lists, and contact information.

✓ Avoid sharing personal details quickly

Be cautious about meeting new people online.

✓ Verify identities

A video call (with the person visible) before sharing anything personal can deter scammers but only if you feel safe to do so.

✓ Be careful on video calls

Scammers can record without your knowledge.

✓ Keep devices secure

Use strong passwords, 2-factor authentication, and updated antivirus protection.

✓ Trust your instincts

If something feels off, pause and check.

Supporting Someone Who Has Experienced Sextortion

- Stay calm and non-judgemental
- Thank them for telling you

Reassure them:

- It is not their fault
- Encourage reporting to safeguarding or authorities
- Help them protect their accounts
- Avoid telling them to “just delete it” evidence helps investigations