

New research lifts the lid on 'sexting' attitudes and practices amongst teenagers

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A new study conducted by Plymouth University and UK Safer Internet Centre supported by the NSPCC, reveals new concerns and trends in 'sexting' amongst teenagers.

The qualitative study engaged with 120 13-14 year olds and 30 10-11 year olds and concluded that:

- [Sexting](#) is considered almost routine for many 13-14 year olds.
- [Young people](#) are unwilling to turn to [adults](#) for help due to fear of being judged.
- Young people think that issues around sexualised online content (both pornography and self-generated content) should be discussed in school.
- Younger children (10-11 years olds) are still largely safe from exposure to sexualised content.

The author of the study, Plymouth University Business School's Professor of [Social Responsibility](#) in IT, Andy Phippen, said: "We have worked with eight schools across the South West to better understand the issues and influences around sexting and have spoken to 150 young people in detail. What is clear from this work is the sexting is almost routine in the lives of many 14 year olds and it is something they address with their friends. They are highly unlikely to turn to an adult for fear of being judged. However, what is also clear is that they are willing to talk about these issues if done in a supportive and sensitive manner and it is

something all the young people we spoke to felt should be addressed in school."

David Wright, Director of UK Safer Internet Centre (SWGfL), said: "Technology and the internet offer amazing opportunities but in some aspects have contrasting issues and threats; issues that can have devastating [consequences](#), especially for our children and young people.

"Whilst illustrating the latest [attitudes](#) amongst children, the study also has some clear messages for schools; that children want the opportunity to discuss these subjects but at the same time wouldn't report an issue to their teacher. Clearly there is much work to do, although the UK Safer Internet Centres new sexting resources (October 2012) for schools and children can help inform and support in such situations."

Jon Brown, sexual abuse lead at the NSPCC, said: "We are starting to see the regular and normalised consumption of hardcore [pornography](#) among young people and this has led to the sharing of explicit self-generated sexual imagery.

"Good quality sex education is absolutely critical. It needs to be age-appropriate, but if we are to be able to help young people navigate their way through these pressures, it also needs to start in primary school. We need to teach young people about respecting themselves and respecting each other.

"Parents should not be afraid of talking to young people about this issue. And young people who feel they can't approach a trusted adult can call ChildLine for advice and support."

Provided by University of Plymouth

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