

# ONLINE BLACKMAIL.



A one-hour learning session helping 15-18 year olds identify risk and get support when they need it.

**Resource pack**



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## **What is Thinkuknow?**

Thinkuknow ([thinkuknow.co.uk](http://thinkuknow.co.uk)) is the national online safety education programme from the NCA-CEOP Education Team, which forms one strand of the NCA's work to safeguard children and young people from sexual abuse and exploitation.

Thinkuknow offers learning resources, advice and support for children and young people aged 4-18 years old and their families, and best practice guidance and professional development for the children's workforce.

Thinkuknow learning resources include activities based on games, animations, films, web content and more. Each resource is accompanied by best practice guidance on safeguarding children, and how to deliver safe and effective online safety education.

Each of our age-appropriate learning resources are developed in response to:

- NCA (National Crime Agency) intelligence and expertise
- The latest research evidence
- Engagement with children and young people, their parents and carers and professionals
- Consultation with expert partners

### **Find out more about Thinkuknow**

Anyone working with children and young people can gain access to all of our resources and monthly update emails by signing up for a Thinkuknow account at: [www.thinkuknow.co.uk/account/register](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/account/register).

To learn more about online sexual abuse and exploitation and strategies for protecting children, sign up for one of our one-day CEOP Ambassador courses at: [www.thinkuknow.co.uk/training/ceop-ambassador-course](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/training/ceop-ambassador-course).

The CEOP Ambassador course provides an in-depth look at:

- Introduction to CEOP and reporting
- How children and young people use the internet, social media and online technologies
- The nature of online sexual offending against children and young people
- Dealing with incidents of youth produced sexual imagery
- How to deliver strong preventative education on online sexual abuse and exploitation across age groups

On completion of the course, delegates become CEOP Ambassadors and gain access to the Thinkuknow Introduction Course – a modular course for Ambassadors to deliver to other professionals.

## **1. Introduction**

The pack includes:

- Guidance on delivering the session safely and effectively
- A 1 hour session plan
- Two fictitious news articles
- A PowerPoint presentation

### **Session aim and objectives**

The objective of the session is to help young people identify key features of blackmail online, understand the impact it can have, and learn how young people can access help if they are ever concerned about something that has happened online.

By the end of the session, learners will be able to:

- Explain what online blackmail is
- Describe the impact blackmail may have
- Identify some controlling and manipulative behaviours online
- Explain how to get help, and the different people and organisations who can provide support with problems young people face online.

Online blackmail, like all forms of online child sexual abuse, can manifest in different ways. As such, this session helps learners recognise the early signs of manipulative, pressurising and threatening behaviour, and identify different people and organisations that can provide help if they need it.

It is crucial that young people are never held responsible for their own safeguarding online.

## 2. Background: online blackmail

### What is online blackmail?

This resource aims to help protect young people from harm through online blackmail.

Throughout the resource, the term 'online blackmail' is used to refer to the act of threatening to share information about an individual (including images or video) to the public, their friends or family online, unless a demand is met.

Online blackmail can take place in any online service, website or app. Perpetrators may be more likely to make threats on private messaging services which facilitate image and video sharing, and to threaten to share information or images in more public social media services. Both perpetrators and victims of online blackmail can be adults or young people.

In many cases of online blackmail against young people, offenders start by manipulating, tricking or coercing them into sharing indecent images of themselves. Once obtained, the offender threatens to share content publically unless demands for money or further images are met. Young people often comply with the demands as they are afraid of the consequences of the threat being carried out. Note that in some cases where a young person refuses to comply, the offender has carried out their threats; in other cases, they have not.

The session in this pack is based on two fictional news articles about online blackmail, both based on real cases. We strongly recommend that you read both articles before delivering the session to young people.

Further advice and guidance around online blackmail is available on our Thinkuknow websites:

- Article for professionals – [www.thinkuknow.co.uk/professionals/our-views/online-blackmail-resource](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/professionals/our-views/online-blackmail-resource).
- Article for young people aged 14+ - [www.thinkuknow.co.uk/14\\_plus/need-advice/online-blackmail](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/14_plus/need-advice/online-blackmail).
- Article for parents and carers - [www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/online-blackmail](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/articles/online-blackmail).

## **Online blackmail and the law**

Perpetrators of online blackmail involving indecent images are breaking a number of laws. The specifics of a particular case will determine which laws it is prosecuted against. The following are likely to be relevant:

**Blackmail:** using menace to make demands (for example, money, property, indecent images or some advantage from another person) is a criminal offence, even if the threat is not followed through.

### Legislation

- England and Wales: Theft Act 1968
- England and Wales: Communications Act 2003
- Northern Ireland: Theft Act 1969
- Scotland: Common law

**Indecent images of children:** it is a criminal offence to possess distribute, publish and make indecent images of an under 18 year old.

### **Points to note:**

- **Indecent** is not defined in legislation. Whether an image is indecent is decided on a case by case basis by law enforcement officers and the courts. However in most cases, an indecent image of a child takes the form of a nude or semi-nude image or video.
- Police forces operate under clear guidance from the National Police Chiefs Council that children should not be criminalised for creating or sending indecent images of themselves, except in cases where there are clear indications of manipulative or abusive intent.

### Legislation

- England and Wales: Protection of Children Act 1978
- England and Wales: Sexual Offences Act 2003
- Northern Ireland: Protection of Children Order 1978
- Northern Ireland: Sexual Offences Order 2008
- Scotland: Civic Government Act 1982

**Indecent images of over 18 year olds:** it is a criminal offence to distribute private and personal explicit images of an individual without their consent.

### Legislation:

- England and Wales: Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015
- Northern Ireland: Justice Act 2016
- Scotland: Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm Act 2017

### 3. Thinkuknow values

The Thinkuknow programme is founded on five values to ensure safe, effective and child-centered delivery of online safety education.

Professionals using Thinkuknow resources are expected to commit to the Thinkuknow values, and ensure that each value is reflected in their own practice.

- **Safeguarding first** – The safety and wellbeing of each child always comes first. [Page 13](#) of this resource pack provides detailed guidance on safeguarding children whilst delivering online safety education.
- **Approach from the perspective of the child** – Let children start the conversation. Understand what the online world means to them and explore the positive opportunities it presents, as well as the risks.
- **Promote dialogue and understanding** – Young people are safest when they feel listened to and understood, and know that they can ask trusted adults for help when they need it.
- **Empower and enable children** – Children have the right to be protected from harm, and to be supported to build knowledge, skills and confidence which will help them identify risk and access support when they need it.
- **Never frighten or scare-monger** - Alarmist education can be risky and ineffective. Avoid shocking or scaring young people, their families or other professionals.
- **Challenge victim-blaming attitudes** – We all have a responsibility to challenge victim-blaming whenever it arises. Thinkuknow helps young people understand that abuse is never the fault of those who have been harmed, and builds their confidence to ask a trusted adult for help when they need it.

## 4. Delivering activities safely and effectively

### Creating a positive learning environment

The online blackmail session tackles a range of sensitive issues. It is crucial that you approach delivery on the assumption that some young people will have had experiences related to online blackmail or nude image sharing. You may not already be aware of this for many reasons, and people who have experienced abuse find disclosure extremely difficult. For example, a young person who has shared self-produced nude images may blame themselves for anything that happens to them as a result, even if they were pressured or tricked into sending them. It's important that the language used in the delivery of the session does not encourage feelings of guilt or blame.

Before using this resource, it is your responsibility to ensure that:

- You have read and considered the all of the advice in this section on delivering the online blackmail session safely and effectively.
- You are familiar with the legal and background information detailed on [page 5 and 6](#) of this guidance.
- You are following your organisation's policies and procedures for safeguarding and delivering Relationships and Sex Education
- The designated person responsible for safeguarding in your setting is aware that you are delivering this resource.

Further questions that you should consider include:

- To your knowledge, does the content relate in any way to specific incidents involving young people, your organisation, community or stories currently in the public eye of which young people may be aware?
- How will you take account of this – and of the likelihood that young people have had experiences related to the topic of this resource of which you are not aware - in the delivery of the resource?

## **Ground rules**

Many groups of young people are not used to discussing the topics tackled in this session. A strong set of shared ground rules sets expectations, establishes boundaries and pre-empts any potential anxieties about the topic area and their involvement in the session.

The most effective ground rules are informed by young people themselves. You can do this, for example, by asking them to fill in the blanks in the following question:

*"If I wanted to share my ideas it would help if the group would...and it would help if the group would not..."*

To save time, you might decide to present them with a pre-prepared set of expectations. Some groups will already have a standard set of ground rules which you can remind them of at the start of the session.

If you decide to create them, we would recommend including the following as a minimum:

- *I will not share any of today's discussions outside this session.*
- *I will recognise that individuals presented in today's resources are not to blame and will not be critical or judgemental of their actions.*
- *Myself or others may need to use some words that are normally embarrassing – I understand this and feel safe to use these words in today's session.*
- *When I give an opinion, I will do so sensitively and try to explain my reasons.*
- *I will listen to the views of others, and show respect.*
- *If I am worried about something that has happened to myself or a friend, I will not share this with the whole group. If comfortable, I will talk to (session leader) at the end of the session.*
- *If I feel upset or anxious at any point, I will ask for 'time out'.*

## **Managing inappropriate language**

Most young people are unused to discussing the topics addressed in this session in a school or youth work setting. They may find it difficult to access appropriate vocabulary.

This session provides an excellent opportunity both to help young people develop appropriate vocabulary around vulnerability, risk and criminal activity online, and to address, explore and challenge the prevalence of victim blaming in society as a whole.

Prepare sessions with the following strategies in mind:

- Ensure that your ground rules include a commitment to choosing language carefully to avoid offence
- Throughout the session, encourage young people to express their thoughts openly
- Encourage learners to challenge each other's opinions respectfully and constructively, and model this yourself
- Challenge victim-blaming comments, such as criticism of a young person who may have encountered risk online. (See [page 11](#) below for further guidance)

If you judge that a young person is being intentionally and persistently disruptive, and if it is impacting on the learning of others, address this as a behaviour management issue according to normal procedure in your setting

If a young person uses inappropriate language, address this directly.

- Ask them to elaborate on what they mean, and help them to do so by introducing and explaining new vocabulary
- Encourage them, and other young people, to suggest more appropriate language
- Explain why the language they used originally is inappropriate
- Positively affirm their learning and the new choices they have made

## **Challenging victim-blaming attitudes**

Both learners and the adults who work with them may express victim-blaming attitudes, such as being critical of a young person who may have been subjected to online blackmail.

Victim-blaming can be direct and explicit, or can manifest in more subtle uses of language – for example, questioning what a victim could have done differently, or how they may have reacted differently in the victim's shoes.

Victim-blaming can have a devastating impact, not only on young people who have already experienced harm and trauma (whether they have disclosed this or not) but also by making it far less likely that young people will have the confidence to seek help if they are need it.

Victim-blaming attitudes should be challenged in a constructive and supportive way that encourages young people to think critically about the language they use and the impacts this has, both in the moment and more widely by reinforcing harmful social narratives.

You could challenge victim-blaming attitudes by using one or more of the following strategies:

### **1. Focus on the criminal behaviour of the offender**

When discussing situations where young people are being blackmailed after sending nude images, focus on the criminal behaviour of the offender who is threatening to share the images. Ask young people to consider who is doing something wrong in this situation.

### **2. Take a children's rights-based approach**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out rights to which all children are entitled. Like all children and young people, someone who has shared a nude image of themselves has the right to privacy, and the right to protection from abuse. An offender blackmailing a young person is a violation of these rights.

### **3. Explore impact on individuals**

Ask the group to consider the impact that online blackmail can have on a young person. Help young people to recognise that it can cause serious long-term harm to confidence, self-esteem, friendships and relationships.

### **4. Unpack victim-blaming language and offer alternatives**

If victim-blaming terms such as "stupid" are used to describe the characters, ask young people to think about the connotations of the

language they've chosen. Explain that using this language wrongfully places blame on the person experiencing abuse, rather than the person who is perpetrating it. Together, seek alternative words without victim-blaming connotations.

**5. Increase empathy by considering circumstance and motivation**

When discussing scenarios where a young person has shared a nude image, increase empathy by discussing the circumstances and reasons why the young person might have shared this.

## 5. Safeguarding

Before delivering this session, it is your responsibility to:

- Make the designated person responsible for safeguarding in your setting aware that you are delivering this activity, and ensure that they are available to offer appropriate support to you and learners.
- Familiarise yourself with your setting's Safeguarding Policy, and ensure you know how to respond in case of a disclosure.
- Ensure that where relevant, colleagues are aware that you are delivering the activity and are confident with your organisation's safeguarding procedure. A young person who has suffered abuse or other harm may be more likely to disclose it following this session, and staff across your organisation must be prepared to respond appropriately, as at all times.
- When planning, you should also consider the following:
  - To your knowledge, does the content of an activity relate to any specific incident involving your learners, organisation or community, or stories currently in the public eye? What impact could this have on how young people respond to and participate in the activity, and how will you manage this to ensure positive learning outcomes in a safe environment?
  - Are you aware of any event or incident which may make this resource unsuitable for delivery in a group setting with your learners? If so, how else could you support them in this area?
  - Does your setting require you to notify parents and carers before delivery of an activity? Would it enhance learning outcomes from your session if parents received a letter or factsheet before or after the session?
- For a wide range of articles, advice, and other resources for parents and carers see [www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents) or the 'Resources' page at [www.thinkuknow.co.uk/professionals](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/professionals).

## **In the event of a disclosure**

- If a young person discloses a concern about any safeguarding matter, support them by following your setting's safeguarding policy and procedures. At a minimum, these should direct you to:
- Guide the individual to a private space.
- Share with them limits of confidentiality. Explain that if there is a risk to a young person's safety, or disclosure of a criminal act, you will need to report this further.
- Listen to the young person and allow them to describe their concerns. Do not ask probing question or make judgements on what they are telling you. Instead, remain calm and avoid expressing emotions such as shock or disbelief.
- Reassure the young person that they have done the right thing by telling someone.
- If applicable, explain that you need to tell the appropriate authority so that they can help. Explain that they will still have privacy and that only people who need to know will be informed.
- Inform the person responsible for safeguarding in your organisation.
- In some instances, it may be necessary to make a report to the police and/or children's services. This should be taken forward by the person responsible for safeguarding.

## **Seeking support and reporting incidents**

Empowering young people with knowledge of how to access further support and report abuse is a key learning outcome for this session.

The session includes an activity which encourages young people to identify trusted people in their lives who would be able to support them if they were worried about something which had happened online.

It also identifies a number of national services which can support young people with such concerns. Reinforce this by taking a whole-organisation approach to signposting young people to key support services:

- **CEOP:** Under 18 year olds with a concern about any form of sexual abuse, including online blackmail, can report this to CEOP at [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk).
- **Childline:** Childline offers free, confidential services where under 19 year olds can talk with trained counsellors via telephone, email, or online 1-2-1 chat. Visit [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) or call **0800 1111**.
- **Samaritans:** If a young person wants someone to talk to about any concern or worry, they can call a Samaritan volunteer for free on **116 123**. They can also email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org). For advice or specialist support, the Samaritan volunteer will direct the young person to Childline or the police.
- **The Mix:** The Mix offer support on a range of issues young people face, through: group chats, discussion boards, free helpline (08088084994) open from 4pm-11pm every day, 1-2-1 chat, and a crisis messenger. You can find out more by visiting: <https://www.themix.org.uk/get-support>.
- **Meic** is a confidential, anonymous, and free bilingual helpline service for children and young people up to the age of 25 in Wales. From finding out what's going on in their local area to help dealing with a difficult situation, Meic will listen and will help by giving young people information, useful advice and the support they need. Young people can contact them in Welsh or English. Meic is open 8am to midnight, 7 days a week. Call for free on 0808 80 23456 or text 84001. IM/Online chat: [www.meic.cymru](http://www.meic.cymru)

If a young person is in immediate danger this should always be reported to the police.

## 6. Session plan

**Target audience:** 15-18 year olds

**Session duration:** 1 hour

**Resources:**

- Worksheet 1 - Knowledge map ([page 26](#))
- Article 1 - 'Hundreds' of UK nationals blackmailed with sexual images ([page 27](#))
- Article 2 - Fake 'sugar daddy' jailed after blackmailing teenager ([page 29](#))
- Worksheet 2 – Sources of support ([page 31](#))
- Flyer - Online Blackmail - Who can help? ([page 32](#))

To help young people identify key features of blackmail online, understand the impact it can have, and learn how young people can access support about anything that happens online.

**Learning outcomes:**

By the end of the session, young people will be able to say:

- I can explain what online blackmail is
- I can describe the impact this may have
- I can identify some controlling and manipulative behaviours online
- I can explain how to get help, and different people and organisations who can provide support with problems young people face online.

**Safeguarding reminder:**

*This session contains sensitive material which may relate directly to experiences of the young people you are working with, whether or not they have disclosed this.*

*Before delivering this session, you should read the session guidance ([page 13](#) of this pack) in full, make a professional judgement about the suitability of this content for the group or individual you are working with and make any appropriate safeguarding arrangements as necessary.*

## 1. Ground rules & starter (5 mins)

*To create a climate of trust for safe and effective learning, begin the session by establishing/sharing ground rules.*

*Use the starter to set the tone, and to help young people contextualise what they will learn about risk within a positive framework which identifies opportunities.*

### Slide 3

- Share a set of ground rules with young people, and put these on display during the session e.g. either on the board, a wall, or on young people's desks, so that you can revisit them if required.
- See slide 3 and [page 9](#) of the session guidance for recommended ground rules.

### Slide 4

- Show slide showing Nik's phone (17 year old in the early 2000s with pre-internet mobile phone) and AI's phone (contemporary 17 year old).
- Ask young people to call out answers to the following: **What opportunities does AI have that Nik doesn't? What challenges does he face?**
- Encourage broad thinking. Elicit as much positive discussion of online opportunity as possible .

*For example, AI can access job opportunities online; can use the internet as a way of learning and finding information; to develop and maintain relationships with others; opportunities for creativity; access to online support.*

- Write up a few key points which emerge from the conversation. Point out that while online life presents numerous opportunities, there are some risks, and it is important to help young people understand and identify these and know how to get help if they ever need it.

## 2. Baseline activity (10 mins)

*Use this activity to gauge existing understanding, challenge misconceptions, and start a discussion about the topic of online blackmail.*

### Slide 5

- Introduce the session objectives to young people.

- Share [Worksheet 1 - Knowledge map](#) with young people.
- Ask young people to consider (1) what they might already know about online blackmail, if anything; and (2) questions they have about this topic.
- Ask them to work independently to write as many notes as possible to complete both sections (1) and (2).
- Take brief feedback from section (1). Build a picture of the young people's collective understanding.
- Where you encounter misconceptions or challenging perspectives, use strategies including the following to reframe these as questions for section (2):
  - **Query factualism:** Is that something you *know* or *believe*?  
(**Factualism** – emphasis on, or reliance upon fact.)
  - **Ask them to consider alternative perspectives:** OK, so you have said x. Some people might say y. What do you think? Shall we reframe this as a question?
- Take feedback from section (2). Ask young people to share their questions and write all of these up on a whiteboard or flipchart, grouping them as appropriate. Make it clear that all questions are valid.
- Do not seek to answer or debate the questions yet – make it clear that you will seek to answer them together as the session goes on.

### 3. What is online blackmail? - Article 1 (10 mins)

*This activity provides information around different ways blackmail can occur online, challenges young people to question preconceptions, and enables them to identify tactics used by offenders to target people online.*

#### Slide 6

- Hand out copies of [Article 1 - 'Hundreds' of UK nationals blackmailed with sexual images.](#)
- Explain that both articles are fictional, but based on real cases.
- Allocate time for young people to read the article independently.
- In pairs, ask young people to consider and discuss the following questions:

- Did you learn anything that you didn't already know?
- Did this article answer any of our questions?
- Does it raise any further questions for you?
- Ask volunteers to feedback to the rest of the group and use this as the basis for wider discussion.

**Note:** At this point some young people might make victim-blaming comments in response to the article. Be prepared for this, see [page 11](#) for positive strategies for managing such conversation and challenging such comments in a positive way.

### Prompt questions

For young people who may require additional support, you can provide prompt questions to check and support comprehension as follows:

- **Why do you think the student accepted the friend request from 'Lotta'?**

*'Lotta' had added a few students from the same school, which may have made her seem more trustworthy. He may have found her profile picture attractive.*

- **What steps did 'Lotta' take to blackmail the student?**

*'Lotta' sent flirtatious messages and sexual images to trick the student into sending one back. Once the student shared a sexual video, 'Lotta' threatened to share it with other people in order to demand money.*

- **How did the student feel when 'Lotta' started to blackmail him?**

*The student was scared that friends/family/others would see the video.*

- **How did the student stop 'Lotta' from blackmailing him?**

*The student confided in a friend for support and advice and then reported the blackmail to the police.*

### Challenge questions

You might consider introducing the following questions, if they do not arise naturally:

- **Have you come across the term ‘catfishing’ before? What does it mean?**

*Taking on a false identity online, in order to trick another person.*

- **‘Victims may number as many as 150’ – why do you think the offender/s blackmailed so many victims?**

*In this case, the blackmailer’s motive is financial: the more victims, the more likely they are to make money.*

- **In a situation like this, why might the person who has been blackmailed sometimes be reluctant to tell anyone what has happened?**

*Blackmailers often deliberately make their target feel that they have done something wrong, even though they are the victims of a crime.*

## 4. Extending understanding, exploring impact – Article 2 (10 mins)

### Slide 7

- Hand out copies of [Article 2 - Fake ‘sugar daddy’ jailed after blackmailing teenager.](#)
- Allocate time for young people to read the article independently.
- Ask them to consider how the article changes or builds on their view or understanding of online blackmail.
- In pairs, ask young people to consider and discuss the following questions:

- **What similarities are presented in both articles?**

*Both ‘Lotta’ and Michaels pretended to be someone else online; they targeted lots of people; they threatened to share intimate images with friends and family; the police are involved in both cases; and the offenders escalated their threats when their demands weren’t met.*

- **Are there similarities in the way that the young people being blackmailed felt or responded in the different cases?**

*The young people who were blackmailed in both incidents: experienced fear/panic; felt embarrassed for being tricked and manipulated; told someone about what was happening to them for advice and support; and made a report to CEOP or the police.*

### **Prompt questions**

For young people that may require additional support, you can provide prompt questions to elicit discussions around:

- **What barriers were there when considering whether to report the blackmail to the police?**

*She was frightened about what could happen if he shared the images and videos she had sent with other people. She may have been made to feel that she was at fault, even though in reality it was not.*

### **Challenge questions**

For young people that may require additional challenge or extension, you may provide questions such as the following:

- **Do you think the blackmailers would have stopped if the young people didn't respond to their demands?**

*Some offenders will not carry out with their threats if they receive no response. Others still will.*

- **Do you think the blackmailers would have stopped if the young people paid straight away?**

*Many offenders continue to blackmail even when their demand is met, as they are looking for more chances to get what they want.*

- **Were the motivations for blackmail the same in each case?**

*It is difficult to make clear judgements on motivations behind crimes. 'Lotta' appears to be financially motivated, whereas Michaels appeared to be more sexually motivated.*

## 5. Help and support (15 mins)

*This activity enables young people to gain an understanding of and reflect on different sources of support – both people around them and specialist organisations.*

### Slide 8

- Hand out [Worksheet 2 – Sources of support](#) and [Flyer - Online Blackmail - Who can help?](#)
- Explain that Character X has asked Character Y for advice on who to turn to for support. Character Y will need to consider what each source of support might have to offer, before they offer advice to their friend.
- Give young people 10 minutes to read the flyer and then complete the worksheet, explaining what advice Character Y could give to Character X. This can be done individually or in pairs.
- Ask volunteers to feedback to the rest of the group.

**Note:** Young people are likely to outline barriers/disadvantages of approaching each source of support, raising issues related to trust, fear or social/cultural barriers.

Listen and express understanding. If appropriate, seek volunteers to provide counter-arguments, or propose these yourself. Alternatively, use this as an opportunity to signpost to a source of support which young people feel more confident about approaching.

- Follow up this discussion by highlighting that blackmail is often underreported because people may be scared or embarrassed by what the blackmailer has put them through. Reiterate that blackmail is crime and people who have been blackmailed are never to blame.

Possible responses from young people to barriers and/or misconceptions:

- **Friend.**  
**A friend could tell more people. If people find out they could be judgemental.**

*It is natural to seek support and confide in a trusted friend. Highlight that friends can provide emotional support. However, there are*

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*possible side-effects - such as a friend breaking trust and telling other friends.*

- **Parent, carer, or family member/trusted adult.**  
**It would be too embarrassing or scary. Parents would be angry and wouldn't understand. Fear of getting into trouble. A teacher/trusted adult would tell parent/carer - they wouldn't keep it confidential.**

*If a young person is really afraid of telling their parents/carer, they could consider telling a trusted adult (teacher, social worker, youth worker), who have been trained in how to deal with problems and will have policies and systems in place to support and safeguard young people.*

- **Helpline.**  
**It would be embarrassing. They would call the police. There would be a record of it on a phone bill.**

*Childline is a confidential 24hr helpline (phone or online) that provides support and advice to children and young people. A call to Childline does not show on a phone bill.*

*The Mix is another organisation that provides support for young people under 25. The Mix offer support on a range of issues young people face, through: group chats, discussion boards, free helpline (08088084994) open from 4pm-11pm every day, 1-2-1 chat, and a crisis messenger. You can find out more by visiting: <https://www.themix.org.uk/get-support>.*

- **CEOP.**  
**Reporting to CEOP could result in my parents finding out, or having to give evidence in court**

*An under 18 year old who reports to CEOP will get support from a specialist child protection advisor/ They will work with the young person to agree a plan – depending on the case, this may or may not include helping the young person think about talking to a parent, carer or another trusted adult to get more support. A young person's choice whether or not to participate in criminal proceedings against an offender will be respected. All decisions by CEOP Child Protection Advisors are always made in the best*

*interests of the young person. Note that a young person aged 18 or over should be advised to report to the police.*

o **Police.**

**If a young person reports to the police they could get a criminal record for sharing an indecent image in the first place.**

*All police forces act according to guidance which states that young people who have shared nude or nearly nude images of themselves should never be criminalised. In cases of blackmail the police will always consider the offender to be responsible for the crime, and will support the young person who has been targeted.*

- Ask young people to take a few minutes of independent reflection to think of who they would ask for help if they had a problem online, and how they would approach them.
- Remind young people that they can always approach you to ask for help and support too.
- Follow up this discussion by reinforcing the positives of a young person finding the courage to speak to someone about what is happening to them. Reiterate that blackmail is crime and those who have experienced blackmail are never to blame.

## **6. Plenary (5 mins)**

*Use the plenary to consolidate learning and understanding of the session.*

### **Slide 9**

- Revisit the questions you collected at the start of the session, and tick off any more which have been answered. Where there are outstanding questions, either give brief answers yourself, or take them away and bring the answers to a future learning session.
- Ask young people to revisit **Worksheet 1 - Knowledge map** from the start of the session, and to complete the 'I now understand' section. To clearly show progression, this could be completed in a different coloured pen or pencil.
- Allocate enough time for young people to finish.

- Once young people have finished, collect in the **Knowledge maps** and review them.
- Any specific misconceptions or cause for concern should be addressed directly with the young person in the week or two following the session.

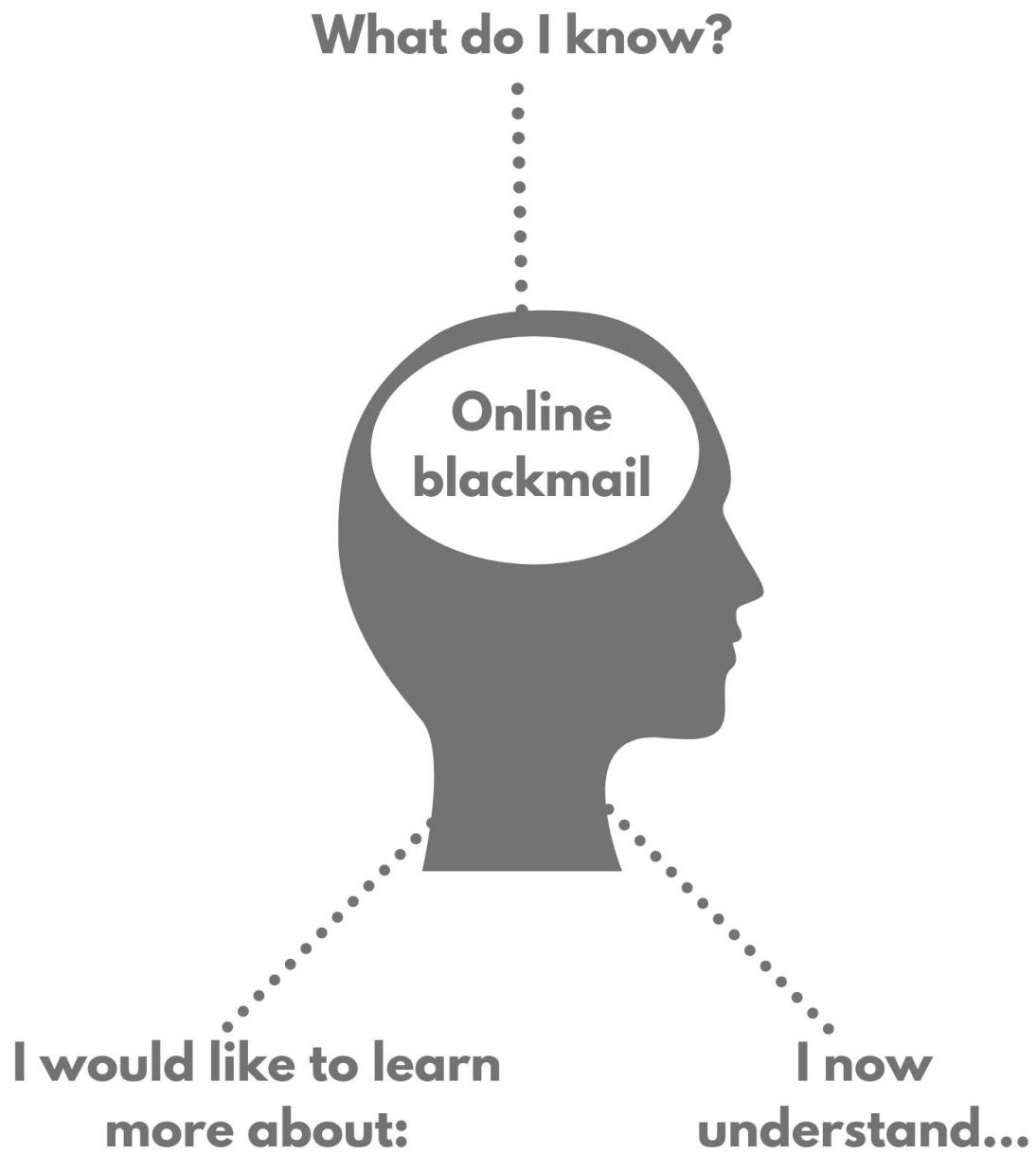
## **7. Distancing activity to finish (5 mins)**

*A distancing activity at the end of session will help young people emotionally adjust, giving them the chance to consciously step back, debrief and be prepared for their next activity/lesson.*

- Set aside time at the end of the session for a distancing activity to help young people to consciously take a step back from the learning and discussions.
- Below you will find three suggested distancing activities – however, do feel free to use your own activity not suggested below as informed by the needs and interests of the young people you're working with.
- **Distancing activity 1.** Give each young person a plain sheet of paper. Ask them to write the letters A-Z vertically down the side of the page. Either in pairs or independently, ask young people to think of a word associated with a topic of your choosing (i.e. sports, names of different fruit etc.) for each corresponding letter of the alphabet.
- **Distancing activity 2.** Ask young people to stand in a circle. Throw a ball to different young people in the circle. When a young person catches the ball, ask them to share with the group one of their key take-aways from the session. Explain that if a young person wishes not to participate and share, they can throw the ball on to somebody else in the circle.
- **Distancing activity 3.** Prompt a discussion with young people about a current or local news topic which may be of interest. This could include a shared reading activity of a relevant article online – or the sharing of a relevant news bulletin or video clip.

Worksheet 1 – Knowledge map

**KNOWLEDGE MAP**



## Article 1

# ‘Hundreds’ of UK nationals blackmailed with sexual images

**WRITTEN BY ROSHNI BURMAN**

**PUBLISHED:** 3 hours ago



SHARE



8.4K people  
are talking  
about this



Police are investigating reports that hundreds of UK nationals may have fallen prey to online criminals using fake accounts to blackmail them into paying out large sums of cash.

The practice, known as ‘catfishing’, involves setting up fake profiles on social media and dating sites and tricking innocent users into believing they are chatting to a real person. As the chat gets more personal, the blackmailer persuades the victim to share ‘sexy’ images - then threatens to reveal them if demands for cash are not met. Early indications are that victims of this individual, or criminal group, may number as many as 150 - it is possible that many more people affected have not yet come forward.

We spoke to one victim, aged 18, who asked not to be named. A talented musician currently studying for his A-levels, he was visibly shaken as he told his story. “It started with a friend request,” he told us. “Her name was Lotta. I didn’t think much of it. We had mutual friends from sixth form, so I just assumed I knew her and accepted. Then she started messaging me. She was really fit, and seemed funny and nice...so I messaged back.”

From this point, 'Lotta' moved quickly. "She sent a load of photos and videos that kept getting more revealing. I felt like I wanted to send pictures back." After 'Lotta' sent a video of herself undressing, he reciprocated. "I couldn't believe my luck to start with...I definitely thought it was just a bit of fun. It never occurred to me the girl in the pictures and videos may not have been her."

Within minutes, his world had turned upside down. "She sent me a message demanding money and threatened to post the video online if I didn't pay up. Things really escalated from there. I came really close to paying, just to make it go away."

He took the step of telling a friend what was happening. With support from his friend, he blocked 'Lotta' and reported what had happened to police. "I was lucky," he said. "The video was never shared with my friends and family. The police told me that's not always the case. Now I want other people to hear what happened to me." he said. "I feel like if it happened to me, it could happen to anybody."

Chief Inspector Sarah Hall, lead investigating officer at the National Crime Agency, said: "This young man, and many others, have shown immense bravery in reporting to police. We urge anyone in a similar situation, or who may have information to share, to contact the police as soon as possible."

If you have been affected by this story, click [here](#) for organisations which can help you.

## Article 2

# Fake 'sugar daddy' jailed after blackmailing teen

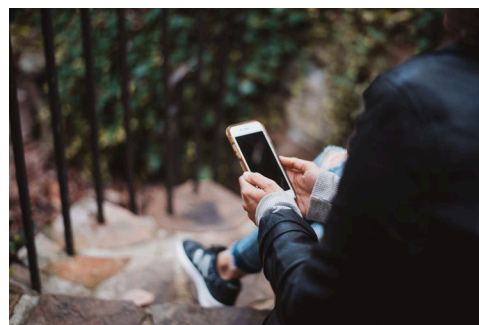
**WRITTEN BY YOGAN PATEL**

**PUBLISHED:** 2 days ago



3.4K people  
are talking  
about this

Over a two year period, 22-year-old Aaron Michaels posed online as a wealthy older man and persuaded dozens of women and girls - some as young as 15 - to send him intimate photographs and videos in exchange for money. He would then use the images to blackmail his victims, threatening to post the images online if his demands were not met.



This afternoon Michaels was sentenced at Sheffield Crown Court to 12 years in prison after being found guilty of 19 offences including blackmail, voyeurism, and possessing indecent images of children. In her sentencing remarks Mrs Justice Nicholson described him as a, "...sadistic and cruel individual whose despicable crimes have caused deep and lasting distress."

Michaels sought out his victims on different websites and platforms. After making an initial connection, he took time to build their trust and persuade them of his legitimacy. One 18 year old victim explained, "I didn't believe that he was rich at first. When I challenged him, he sent me proof which seemed to confirm that he did actually have the

cash. It didn't look fake, so I believed he was telling the truth."

Giving evidence last month, one 17 year old victim told the court how Michaels had made contact with her online. "He offered me money to send a picture of myself. It seemed a bit weird but he convinced me it was harmless – an easy way to make money." When she agreed Michaels then offered her more cash for more revealing images. After obtaining these images, he threatened to share the photo online unless she gave in to his demands.

After several weeks of continued threats, she took the decision to get help by reporting what was happening to CEOP. An investigation found that Michaels had blackmailed over 26 women into sharing sexual material online. Arresting officers found over 10,000 indecent images on his seized devices.

Investigating officer Benjamin Spencer said, "We commend the courage of each and every witness in this case. If you have been blackmailed online, it's not your fault and you're not to blame. There is help available."

Anyone aged under 18 can report a concern about sexual abuse online to CEOP at [www.ceop.police.uk](http://www.ceop.police.uk) and will receive help from child protection specialists. Anyone aged over 18 years old can get support by making a report to the police.

## Worksheet 2 – Sources of support

# SOURCES OF SUPPORT



## Flyer

### Online Blackmail – Who can help?

No one should be made to feel uncomfortable or threatened online. There is lots of help out there. Here are some people who can offer support:

1. **Trusted friends:** Sharing concerns with friends can make you feel better and less alone. If a friend tells you about a problem they are having online, encourage them to speak to an adult, or report it to CEOP or the police.
2. **Trusted adults:** Telling a trusted adult is a good step to getting the help and support you need. You may feel scared or not know how to tell your parents or family. Seeking advice from a teacher or youth worker may help you decide how to start this conversation with a parent/carer and what steps to take next.
3. **Helplines:** You may want to seek advice or tell an adult that is trained to help you, but that you do not know personally. There are organisations you can go to for help, including:
  - **Childline:** Childline offers free, confidential services where young people under 19 can talk with trained counsellors via telephone, email, or online 1-2-1 chat. If you're under 18 and a nude image of yourself has been shared online, Childline have a 'Report Remove' service which can help you get it removed from the internet.
    - **Website** – [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
    - Telephone number - 0800 1111
  - **The Mix:** The Mix offers under 25s support on a range of issues young people face, through: group chats,

discussion boards, a free telephone helpline, 1-2-1 chat, and a crisis messenger.

- **Website** – [www.themix.org.uk/get-support](http://www.themix.org.uk/get-support)
- Telephone number – 0808 808 4994
  
- **Meic:** Meic is a confidential, anonymous, and free bilingual helpline service for children and young people up to the age of 25 in Wales. From finding out what's going on in their local area to help dealing with a difficult situation, Meic will listen and will help by giving young people information, useful advice and the support they need. Young people can contact them in Welsh or English. Meic is open 8am to midnight, 7 days a week.
  - **Rhif ffon** - 0808 80 23456 neu anfon neges destun at 84001.
  - **Negeseua gwib/Sgwrs ar-lein:** [www.meic.cymru](http://www.meic.cymru)

**4. CEOP:** If you are under 18, you can report directly to CEOP and speak to one of CEOP's Child Protection Advisors. Their role is to protect young people from online sexual abuse, and will work together with other professionals and police to keep young people safe and identify the person responsible. Visit [www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre](http://www.ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre) for further information.

**5. The police:** If you are in immediate danger and are being threatened or blackmailed online, you can report to the police on 999. In less urgent cases, you can call 101 for advice. Speaking to the police may feel like a scary option, but the police are there to protect you and bring criminals to justice. Remember, those experiencing online abuse are never to blame.

