**Project Phoenix Week of Action: 21 to 27September 2015**

Next week Project Phoenix will be holding a week of action, marking a year since the start of the “It’s Not Okay” campaign. Phoenix brings together Local Safeguarding Boards across Greater Manchester, Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner, Greater Manchester Police, health, education and social care professionals to tackle the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation - CSE. More information about Project Phoenix and who we are: <http://www.itsnotokay.co.uk/who-we-are/> .

Under the banner ‘[Know who your friends are](http://www.itsnotokay.co.uk/know-who-your-friends-are)’, the focus of the campaign during this year’s week of action is online safety, sexting, and ‘[peer on peer](http://www.paceuk.info/the-problem/grooming-models/)’ exploitation.

Young people sometimes share indecent images of themselves online – commonly known as “sexting”, “cybersex” or “sending a nudie”. They may have been coerced or tempted into sending naked pictures or videos, perhaps to a friend’s mobile, on a web cam, or on social media. These images are often sent onto others and end up being used to blackmail or bully the young person and force them into carrying out other sexual acts or producing more sexual images of themselves.

Sexting can feel exciting, grown-up and fun. It can feel really private too. But sexting is never private. Any images can be saved or ‘screen grabbed’ by the person receiving it – even if young people are using a private network or a temporary message app like Snapchat.

Once a photo is shared online, all control of it is lost and it will be virtually impossible for it to be deleted or recalled. Even if attempts are made to delete the photo, other people may have already shared or copied the image.

## Key Messages to Children and Young People

* Sending videos or pictures of yourself to people you don’t know is dangerous - any communication with people you don’t know is dangerous
* Sometimes abusers will pretend to be your age. You may think you are sexting with people you think are your friends and people you can trust. The truth is, anyone you send a photo to can take advantage of you for doing it – even so-called ‘friends’ in your year group
* Those wanting to take advantage of you will flirt with you; flatter you; make you feel really special – all in an effort to earn your trust and make you think they are your friend. They will start conversations with you about sex and convince you it’s good to talk to them about it too. If you’re feeling down or unloved, they will boost your self-esteem and try to earn your trust
* It can happen to you - there were more than 1,200 ChildLine counseling sessions that mentioned ‘sexting’ last year
* Although it may be very common, sexting can be illegal - if you are under 18 and you take part in sexting by creating an explicit photo of yourself, you have potentially ‘created’ an indecent image of a child. If you send the image to someone else, you have then ‘distributed’ an indecent image of a child. If you are the one receiving the image, you are then in \*possession\* of an indecent image of a child. **This is all against the law**
* Sending or sharing indecent images of anyone who is under 19 – or keeping an image someone sends you – is a serious crime. You risk being arrested and going to court. This is the case even if the person sharing the image with you is happy to do so or you are happy to send nude selfies to someone else
* Getting a criminal record can really badly affect your life and is not something anyone should feel proud of.

## Help is available!

When things go wrong online, many young people are afraid, embarrassed or ashamed to tell someone in case they have their phones taken off them or they are wrongly judged. This only allows the abuse to continue.

But the good news is that help is available. If something does go wrong online young people can:-

* [Talk local specialist CSE team](http://www.itsnotokay.co.uk/get-help/)
* [Contact ChildLine online or on 0800 1111](https://www.childline.org.uk/Pages/Home.aspx)

## Preventing online abuse

There are some really useful links below which can give you further advice and help about this issue:-.

* [ThinkUKnow – sex, relationships and the internet. Three things that get a little bit complicated.](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/14_plus/)
* [ChildLine – online and mobile safety advice](http://www.childline.org.uk/Explore/OnlineSafety/Pages/OnlineSafety.aspx)
* [Report it to CEOP – has someone made you feel weird or uncomfortable online? Report it!](https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/11-16/)
* [ChildLine – online grooming](https://www.childline.org.uk/explore/onlinesafety/pages/online-grooming.aspx)
* [Stay safe onscreen – how to use webcams safely](https://www.ceop.police.uk/Documents/Webcam%20fact%20sheet%202.pdf)
* [What is sexting? (ChildLine)](https://www.childline.org.uk/explore/onlinesafety/Pages/Sexting.aspx)
* [What is sexting? (Childnet)](http://www.childnet.com/young-people/secondary/hot-topics/sexting)

**The week of action – How you Can Help**

Much of our campaign work involves promoting our social media accounts to young people. This will help us get important messaging out to a wider audience throughout the entire year.

Please share content from the ‘It’s not okay’ social media accounts to help drive followers and likes. This will help us get important messaging out to a wider audience throughout the entire year.

* Facebook: [www.facebook.com/notokayGM](http://www.facebook.com/notokayGM)
* Twitter: [www.twitter.com/notokayGM](http://www.twitter.com/notokayGM)
* #itsnotokay

@boltoncouncil will be also be tweeting and [www.facebook.com/boltoncouncil.com](http://www.facebook.com/boltoncouncil.com) will be posting information too.

NB. The accounts **do not** have ‘it’s’ in them.

**Other activity**

The social media campaign will be supported by other activity throughout the week to promote awareness including:-

* Awareness raising about sexting – youth centre session
* Street surgeries to raise awareness with young people
* Awareness raising with schools
* Awareness raising with hotels
* Multi-agency compliance visits to takeaways and newsagents
* Disruption patrols
* Outdoor advertising campaign
* Press release

Bolton Safeguarding Children Board have merchandise branded with the ‘It’s not Okay’ campaign including posters, leaflets, pens, wristbands, USB sticks, lip balms and mobile phone chargers. If you work in a service with young people and you can promote awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation, and in particular the dangers of sexting, please contact the Phoenix Exit team on 337195 to access these resources.

GMP also plans to launch a new web application during the week that aims to show the public the decisions police officers face when investigating the complex cases around missing young people and CSE. The online scenario will allow users to step into the shoes of a police officer, and make a series of decisions that can directly affect the outcome for the victim and the offender.