



E-Safety News

Parents 'may be prosecuted for their children's sexting'

Parents could be prosecuted if their children engage in sending indecent images over mobile phones, a police force has said.

Kent Police says it is a crime for a child to take or share an explicit image or video of themselves or anyone else under 18 - a practice known as sexting if it is done on a mobile phone.

The force says parents could be liable if their name is on the contract for the phone.

Detective Superintendent Susie Harper said: "If a child's mobile phone contract is in his or her parent's name, then the parent can be liable for what the phone is used for, and any indecent material that is saved or sent from it.

"That could mean police turning up at the family home with a search warrant, property being seized, potential arrests and innocent people being suspected of serious offences."

The warning was issued as part of a more specific alert about the dangers of "bait out" pages on social media.

The force says there is a growing trend for youngsters to be encouraged to share sexual images before being shamed and bullied.

A Kent Police spokesman said more than 40 children in Thanet alone had fallen victim to such a group on Snapchat since the start of January.

But a charity has hit out against the police's stance, saying children should be supported and not criminalised.

An NSPCC spokeswoman said: "Children who share a naked image of themselves should be taught why it's a bad idea, supported and safeguarded - certainly not branded criminals.

"We don't want to see the unnecessary criminalising of children, or parents whose son or daughter has been sexting.

"Once a child sends a picture of themselves they have no control over where it is shared or who sees it. That can leave a child feeling humiliated and even lead to them being bullied or blackmailed."

Kent Police said in a statement: said: "Whilst the police do not wish to unnecessarily criminalise young people, this could potentially affect a child's reputation, education and future employment prospects; for example, if they are named on a crime report or receive a caution or other criminal sanction."

Det Supt Harper added: "I'm not raising awareness to scaremonger, and our first priority is to safeguard young people and protect them from harm, and there are many places we can signpost (them to go) for independent help and advice.

"I also think it's important for parents to be aware about the ways their children might be vulnerable to these things and what they can do about it.

- Sky News 31 January 2018