EAST SUSSEX
Local Safeguarding Children Board

Boarding the e-safety train

Young People's sexual behaviours online.

Although the title of this one is scary – perhaps even unpalatable – it is useful to think back to when we were at school ourselves. It used to be common that people would look up rude words in dictionaries, or giggle quietly when a "rude word" was encountered in a play or poem. Well, now young people have Google, and far more rude words than we ever had, plus, thanks to the internet, videos to go with them. It is a sad fact that you will never be able to protect your youngsters from sexual imagery online, and the more you try to do so, the more they look for it elsewhere. This is about facing up to the reality, and steering our young people through that most turbulent part of their lives.

LOOK	There are signs that indicate that all may not be well. Sadly, there are no definitive signs. You are the best person to know what is usual or unusual in your young people. ➢ Overt sexual behaviour. ➢ Covert sexual behaviour. ➢ Taking photographs of themselves in sexual or sexualised poses. ➢ Posting images online that, while in themselves may not be sexual, shows them in a sexualised way. ➢ Spending a lot of time on explicit websites. (Check the internet historyfolder) ➢ A sudden change of wardrobe.
listen	Similarly, their language may change. ➢ Sexual or sexualised words or terms creeping in more often. ➢ Casual comments of a sexual nature to films, tv programmes etc. ➢ Explicit phone calls/texts with boyfriend/girlfriend. ➢ Listen to how they talk about their friends online activities and images. ➢ Do a picture search from time to time. (See Boarding the e-safety train, Computers)
talk	Easy to say, hard to do – especially as your youngster develops into a young man or young woman. Then again, no-one said parenting was easy! There are many opportunities to have "the talk", but sometimes it needs to be revisited in the light of the online world. Things have changed, and some youngsters today cling on to myths or wishful thinking. Here are a few – All of them have been said by young people in the last year – all of them are **incorrect.** ➢ It doesn't matter if I post an image of myself online – if I delete it, any copies

	disappear.
	➤ Getting sexy with someone on a webcam is safe – you can't record webcam pictures.
	➤ Its not illegal to have pictures of my 15 year old girlfriend on my phone – she agreed. (She can't agree – she is underage and the images may well constitute a criminal offence.)
	➤ Everyone does it and there's nothing anyone can do about it. (So wrong, I don't know where to start!)
	➤ It's safe, "playing around" online, than doing it in the real world.
BUSINESS-PLAN	If you find that your youngster has sent unwise images of themselves, it is vital that you react in a calm and collected way. If you don't they will probably never share anything with you again. Whatever you do here, you should think about taking advice first. There are places you can go. www.childnet.org http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk www.kidscape.org.uk
SUCCESS	Prevention, in this particular aspect of e-safety is far better than any cure. You need to have the "online" talk at the same time you have the "growing up" talk. Avoid, at all costs, over-reaction. However, the Police are there if you need them, and they take all aspects of child sexual exploitation extremely seriously. Once you make a complaint, it will be followed up. Sometimes, youngsters really do not understand the impact of their actions. (To a young person, telling them that the picture they posted will be online forever means very little. Telling them that it might be discovered by someone they care about has more impact.) The reality is that once something is posted online, you lose control of it – forever. They need to be taught to treat the "enter" key carefully.

Without doubt, this is one of the most sensitive, delicate, yet widespread areas of e-safety. It is unique to each individual, although there are some common threads.

➤ Sexting, (having an intimate conversation with a boyfriend/girlfriend is common.
➤ Seeking, looking at an engaging with sexual images online is common.
➤ Sexual predators look for youngsters with sexual or sexualised images and language on their social networking sites.
➤ Grooming can be done in a minute, or take months to accomplish. At each step, the youngster feels they are in control.

This area is so intense that discussing it with an e-safety training consultant is the best way to explore it safely. (Don't worry – no images are used.) Your school or college can arrange this for you.

Together, we can make E-Sussex, E-Safe