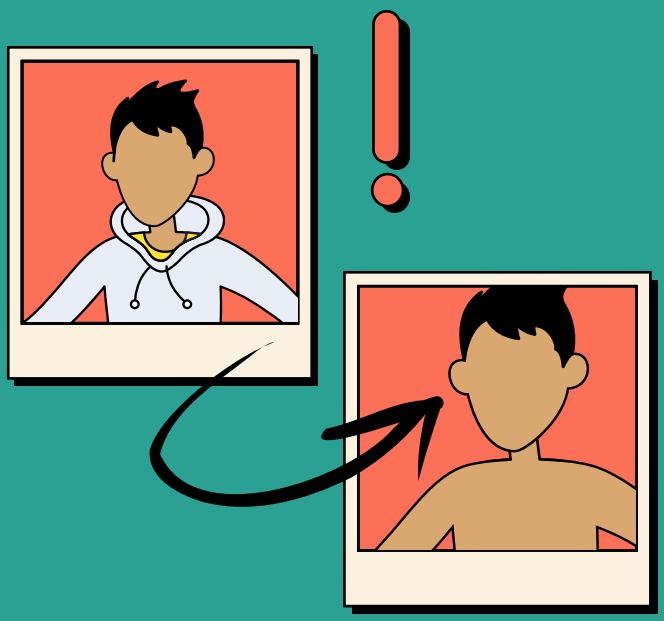
JUNE 2026

Child sexual abuse material generated by artificial intelligence



An essential guide for parents & carers

NCA National Crime Agency

CEOP Education from the National Crime Agency

IWF Internet Watch Foundation

Working together to stop child sexual abuse online

Why this guide matters

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is becoming a part of everyday life. Whilst it has many benefits, it can also be misused - including by those who use it to make, manipulate and share nude, semi-nude or sexual images and videos of children. This is child sexual abuse material and, under UK law, is illegal.

Hearing about this as a parent or carer can feel alarming, but you are not alone. It's important to know that there are steps you can take, many of which you may already be doing, to help better protect your child.

This guide from the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) and the National Crime Agency (NCA) is here to support you. It will help you to understand more about how AI can be misused, why it matters and what steps you can take to feel confident and help keep your child safer online.

One of the most important protective factors in a child's life is an informed parent, carer or trusted adult who knows how to respond calmly, appropriately and confidently when something goes wrong.

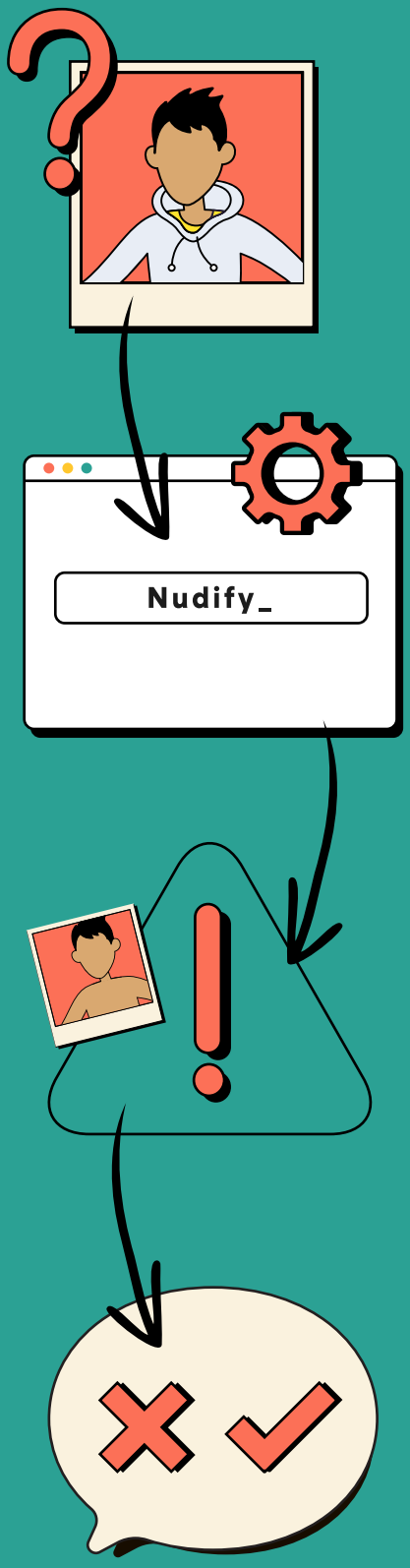
Keywords

Artificial Intelligence: Computer systems that can mimic human intelligence to solve problems, hold conversations and create realistic images and videos.

Deepfake: An image, video or audio recording that has been generated or altered using AI, making someone appear to say or do things they never actually said or did.

Nudify: The process of digitally removing clothing from images or videos of a person to make them appear nude or semi-nude.

What you can do



Learn about child sexual abuse imagery generated using AI.

Take practical steps and **talk with your child** about AI, including how it can be misused to create sexual abuse imagery.

Know how to **support your child** and **where to report** if they become a victim.

Start the conversation with other parents and carers about image consent.

What is Artificial Intelligence (AI)?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) describes technology that can act in ways that would normally need human thinking or creativity. AI technology can hold conversations, answer questions and even create realistic images and videos.

AI is already embedded in many tools and services we use daily such as film streaming platforms, social media and navigation apps.

What are child sexual abuse images or videos generated using AI?

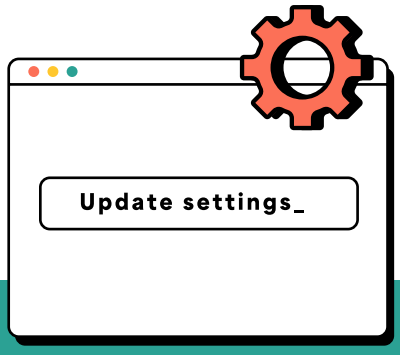
Images or videos don't need to show sexual acts to be considered child sexual abuse material. This can also include nude or semi-nude images of someone under 18 years old.

Child sexual abuse images or videos created or altered using AI may include:

- Everyday images of a child or young person that are manipulated into child sexual abuse imagery, including images taken from social media, websites or messaging apps. These are sometimes known as 'deepfakes'
- Images or videos that look like a real child but are completely artificial
- AI technology that digitally removes clothing from existing images to create nude or semi-nude images, sometimes known as 'nudifying'

Even when a child sexual abuse image has been created or altered using AI, including images that do not look realistic such as cartoons or animations, they are **illegal** and can cause harm.

Practical steps



1 Review privacy settings

Understanding privacy online can feel overwhelming but there are easy steps you can take to make online activity and your children's photos safer.

Most social media apps clearly label privacy controls under **Settings**. You can look for sections called **Privacy, Safety or Account,** where you can make profiles private and limit who can see posts.

If you'd like to share photos of your child online, we suggest creating a 'close friends' group or limiting visibility so only selected people can see them. Visit **Internet Matters** for app and platform specific guidance.

2 Check your social media accounts

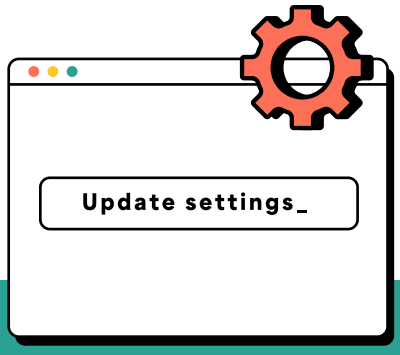
Taking a moment to review what's already online can help you to feel more in control. Start by looking through your own social media accounts. Check the images and videos you have shared and ask yourself:

- *Can my child's face, body or school uniform be seen?*
- *Am I still comfortable with this post being online?*
- *Can it be deleted or made private?*

Check to see if your friends or family have uploaded images of your child, including older posts too. This may be something you weren't aware of, after events like birthdays, school activities or family gatherings. If you find something you're not comfortable with, speak to them clearly and calmly. You can set clear boundaries using our **practical conversation starters**, helping to protect your child and make expectations clear for everyone.

It's ok to ask people not to post photos or videos of your child online.

Practical steps *(continued)*



3 Revisit image consent

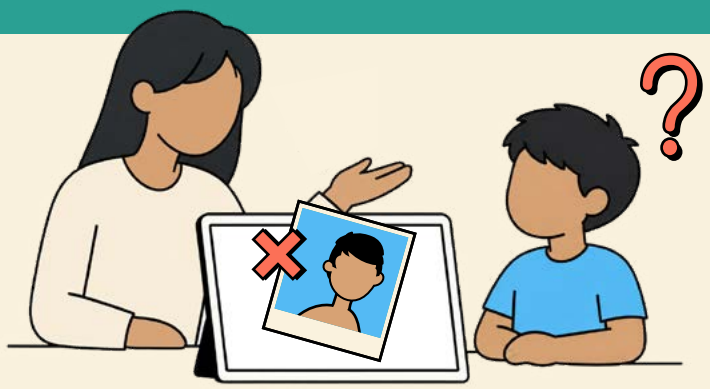
You may have already discussed image consent with friends, family and even within the places your child attends like schools and clubs. It can be helpful to revisit these conversations and involve your child, especially as they get older and start exploring new spaces online. Talk about how they feel about their photos being taken or shared, and help them to understand it's ok to say no.

You can also review the consent forms you've signed at places your child attends, such as school or clubs. Ask yourself:

- *Am I still comfortable with how my child's images might be used?*
- *Have my preferences changed?*
- *Do I want to limit or withdraw consent?*

It's ok if you and your child choose to withdraw image consent altogether and these steps don't need to all be taken at once. **Making small, practical changes that can be revisited over time can help you and your child feel more confident and in control over time.**

Exploring AI and image consent with your child

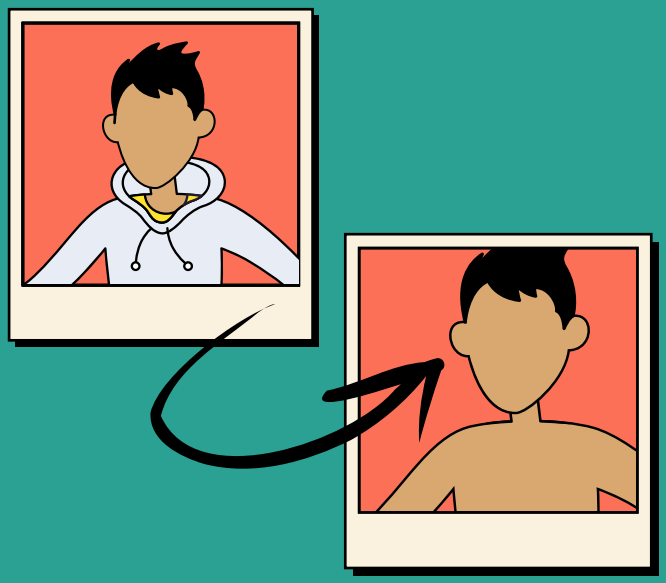


You don't have to know everything about AI to talk to your child about it. What matters most is including it in the regular, open conversations you're already having and letting them know that they can come to you if something online worries them.

Being curious, listening to them and learning together can help to build trust and will let your child know that you'll support and not judge them if they come to you for help.

The questions and talk prompts on the next page will help you to talk about AI misuse and image consent without sounding too scary or serious.

Talking to your child about...



AI, nudes and deepfakes

"Have you used AI at school or at home? What did you use it for? Did you find it helpful?"

Start the discussion and find out what they already know about AI.

"Some AI apps can make or edit images or videos. Sometimes people do this to make fake or inappropriate content. What would you do if something online didn't feel right?"

Open the door to the misuses of AI and keep the focus on their safety.

"Have you heard of 'deepfakes'?"

Remind them that just because something looks real online, it doesn't mean it is.

"Images or videos made or changed using AI can be harmful or even illegal. Why do you think this might be?"

Help them to consider the impact and potential consequences of misusing AI.

"If this were to happen to you or someone you know, you can..."

Reassure them that they can speak to you if they are worried. Talk through **the steps** they can take if someone has created AI imagery of them.

Talking to your child about...*(continued)*

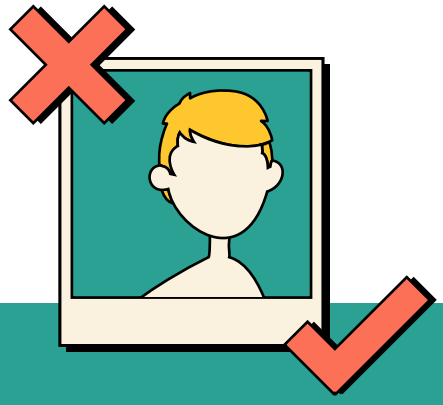


Image consent

"How do you decide when a picture is ok to share?"

Discuss privacy boundaries - for themselves and others.

"If someone took a picture of you and shared it without asking for permission, how would you feel?"

Build on their understanding of consent, explaining that it is ok to say no to pictures being posted or asking for them to be taken down.

"What advice would you give to a friend who had an image shared of them without their consent?"

Focusing the question on someone else might make it easier for your child to explore feelings and responsibility without pressure.

"If someone asked you to send or post a picture that you didn't feel comfortable with, what could you say?"

Talk through strategies for withdrawing from online conversations that make them feel uncomfortable, including:

- Explaining how they feel
- Changing the topic
- Using humour to deflect
- Stepping away from their device for a moment

"Someone might say that sharing altered pictures of others is 'just a joke' or 'banter'. What do you think about that?"

Help your child to think about whether intent matters and recognise the difference between humour and harm. You could even ask them what advice they would give a friend who had these views, allowing them to think about consent without relating it to themselves.

"Did you know that nude or semi-nude images of under 18s can be reported and removed online, including those created or altered using AI?"

Let them know that services including **Report Remove** can help to remove nude or semi-nude images of under 18s that have been shared, or might be shared online.

Reporting

If you're worried that your child...

- has seen something harmful, including AI generated sexual abuse imagery
- has had sexual abuse imagery created or manipulated of them
- is being blackmailed or threatened with sexual abuse imagery of themselves

What to do next

1. **Reassure them that they have done the right thing** by telling you what has happened, you will help them and they are not to blame.
2. **If your child is being blackmailed or threatened** with sexual abuse imagery of themselves, they should stop contact and block the account. If blackmail is for a financial demand (such as transferring money or purchasing gift cards) do not pay. If they have paid, stay calm but don't pay anything more.
3. **Don't ask them to show you the image.**
4. **Avoid deleting anything** that could be used as evidence, such as messages, images, videos or profile details.
5. **Report it to the police.** Call 101, or 999 if there is an immediate risk of harm to your child. Under 18s can also report online sexual abuse or exploitation directly to the NCA's CEOP Safety Centre.
6. **Report it to the platform, website or app** that the incident has occurred on. For advice on how to report to major social media platform, visit Internet Matters.
7. **Report the image to** Report Remove, a service run by the NSPCC's Childline and IWF. They can seek the removal of nude images and videos that may appear online and offer mental health support for young people.
8. **Access emotional and wellbeing support for you and your child.** Experiences involving sexual images, including those generated using AI, can be stressful and cause worry, shame or even fear. You can find advice on looking after your child's mental health from the NHS or contact Childline. The Marie Collins Foundation also supports victims and survivors of technology-assisted child sexual abuse.

Adult victims

The Revenge Porn Helpline can support all adults in the UK who have had intimate images shared online without consent and can help report intimate images for removal.

StopNCII.org, a global tool from SWGfL, can protect the intimate images from being shared on participating platforms.

If you're worried your child has created or shared an image or video of someone, visit the Stop It Now helpline.

Setting boundaries with friends and family

Sharing images and consent

Speaking to other adults about image consent, including friends and family, can feel awkward. However, most people are happy to respect your wishes once they understand them.

You can start these conversations in whatever way feels easiest for you - face to face, by text or even in a group chat.

Here are some quick and simple ways to start the discussion and set clear boundaries whilst being respectful.

Open the conversation gently and ask questions

> *We're being more careful with what goes online about the children. Would you mind asking us before sharing anything?*

> *I'm trying to teach the kids about image consent - can you check-in with us before posting anything online?*

> *I like to check-in with other parents about sharing photos of their kids. Do you have any preferences? We like to keep ours offline.*

Set clear but respectful boundaries

> *We're keeping their photos private for now. Could we keep photos in the group chat instead of posting them on social media?*

> *I'm starting to have conversations with them about digital footprints. If you ever want to post something with them in, can you check in with me first?*

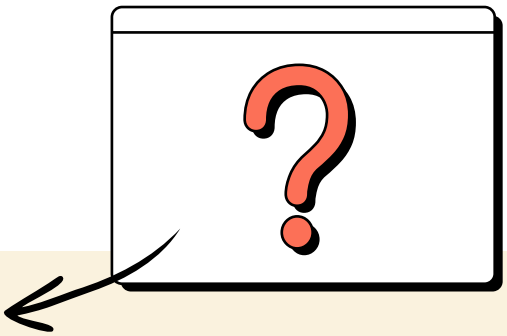
> *If you get any good pictures, we'd love to see them but we don't want them shared online - so that everyone feels comfortable. Thank you for helping us stick to this!*

If someone has already shared a photo

> *Thanks for sharing that moment but we're keeping the children offline. Could you take it down? We really appreciate it.*

> *It's such a lovely photo, but would you mind taking it down? I'm keeping their photos private at the moment. Thanks for understanding.*

FAQs



Are child sexual abuse images created or altered using AI illegal in the UK?

Yes. Under UK law it is illegal to create, share or possess an indecent image of anyone under the age of 18 - including AI-generated images. This also includes images that do not look realistic, such as cartoons or animations.

Are child sexual abuse images created or altered using AI harmful?

All child sexual abuse imagery is harmful, including when created using AI. This also includes images that look unrealistic, such as cartoons or animations.

All child sexual abuse imagery, including AI generated content, fuels the demand for child sexual abuse online and normalises the sexual abuse of children - even when the material is fully synthetic. AI imagery can also be created using images of real children and victims to train AI tools, meaning those children can be harmed again each time the images or videos are viewed or shared.

For children and young people, knowing an image of them exists can be upsetting and frightening. The thought that an image may be shared online can also cause feelings of shame or loss of control.

It is important to remember that support is available. Images can be reported and often removed. As a parent or carer, you play a key role by listening, reassuring, responding calmly and knowing where to get help if this happens.

For many children and young people, trusted adults can make an enormous difference in whether they feel believed, supported and safe enough to ask for help.

Why would someone create AI-CSAM?

Some offenders may believe that AI makes their behaviour less harmful, or reduces their chances of being caught. This is not true - AI generated child sexual abuse images can cause real harm and are illegal under UK law. Some young people may misuse AI as a "joke" or out of curiosity without understanding the legal consequences or emotional impact.

What is a 'deepfake'?

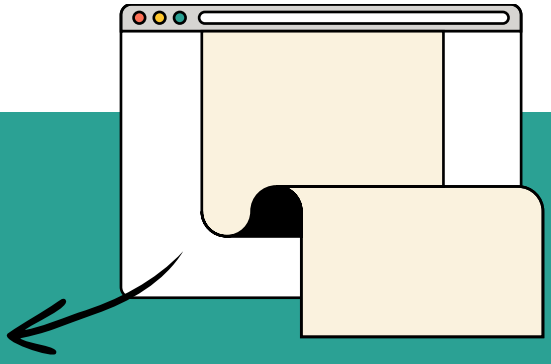
A deepfake is an image, video or even audio recording that has been generated or altered using AI, making someone appear to say or do things they never actually said or did.

Deepfakes can look extremely convincing and may be used in ways to confuse, mislead or harm those who view them.

How can I tell if an image is AI-generated?

You do not need to work out whether an image has been created using AI or not. If you discover or your child discloses that an indecent image or video of them exists, follow **these steps** for what to do next.

Other helpful organisations & resources



- **Marie Collins Foundation** - Supports children, young people and families affected by technology-assisted child sexual abuse and provides advice, guidance and recovery support.
- **TALK** - A practical guide from the Internet Watch Foundation to help parents and carers understand online sexual abuse risks and support children to stay safe online.
- **YoungMinds** - Mental health advice and emotional support resources for young people and parents.
- **Parent Zone** - Support and information to help parents navigate children's digital lives and emerging technologies with specific guidance on AI.
- **NSPCC** - Practical advice for parents and carers on keeping children safe online, talking about difficult topics, and getting support.

CEOP Education from the National Crime Agency

The CEOP Education programme offers a range of free resources for professionals, parents/carers and under 18-year-olds on the threat of online child sexual abuse, visit ceopeducation.co.uk to find out more.

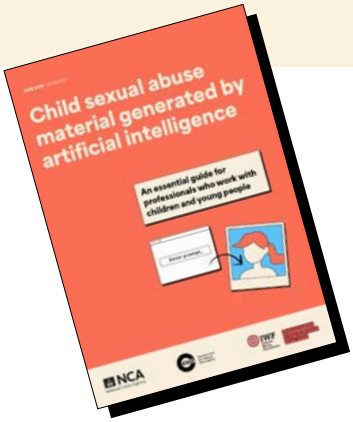
This guide is supported by:

Cefnogir gan Lywodraeth Cymru
Supported by Welsh Government

Police Service of Northern Ireland

SBNI Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland

Education Scotland Foghlam Alba



Are you a teacher or do you work in a professional setting with children or young people?

Take a look at our professionals' guide.