



Childline app helps teenagers say ‘no’ to sexting

An anti-sexting app from Childline is using humour to help teenagers deal with unwanted requests for sexual images of themselves.

The Zipit app has been updated as new figures from Childline reveal the NSPCC service held 2,634 counselling sessions about sexting and self-generated explicit images in 2016/17. Sexting was also the most viewed topic on the Childline website last year with 221,840 page views.

The free app offers young people a gallery of images and animations called GIFs they can send in response to requests for sexual pictures and to deal with difficult sexting situations.

NSPCC is also looking to educate adults about sexting after a survey by the charity showed that almost half of parents in Scotland are unaware that it’s illegal for a child to take nude selfies.

The 2016 survey also confirmed that while over a third of parents fear their children will be involved in sexting - only 33 per cent spoke to them about the risks.

Counsellors heard how some teenagers felt pressured by peers into sending nude selfies. Some young people were worried that images they had sent would be shared with others or uploaded on to the internet.

One 14-year-old girl told us: “I sent some naked pictures of myself to a boy that I was talking to online. I really regret it now because he took screenshots and says that he’ll show them to all my friends. I don’t know how to report him, I really don’t want my family to find out.”

Head of NSPCC Scotland Matt Forde said: “Many young people tell Childline that they feel pressured into sending sexual images of themselves and don’t always have the confidence to say no.

“Once a teenager sends an image of themselves they have no control over where it is shared or who sees it, and sometimes images can end up online.

“This can leave a child feeling humiliated and even lead to them being bullied or blackmailed. By using humour Zipit helps young people take control of online

chatting that becomes awkward or pressurised and support them if something goes wrong.”

Childline founder and President Dame Esther Rantzen said: “The online world is full of opportunities for young people but also presents dangers like sexting which they need help to withstand. Senior police tell me that sexting has become normalised for far too many young people, so many teenagers feel pressurised into sending explicit pictures of themselves.

“There is a real danger that they feel desperately humiliated, and it can sometimes result in them being abused or bullied into handing over money to prevent these images being shown to school friends or family members.

“Zipit gives them the weapon of humour so that they can resist this pressure in a way that feels appropriate and cool. Many parents have told me they feel helpless when they try to protect their children against these dangerous pressures, so I’d encourage families and professionals to take a look at Zipit and share it with the teenagers they know.”

Zipit, originally launched in 2013 in partnership with creative network Livity, has now adapted to technology popular with teenagers and introduced GIFs co-created with 11-17-year-olds to help empower young people to defuse difficult and potentially damaging conversations.

The app also includes advice on safe online chatting and what young people should do if they feel threatened or if an image becomes public. If a young person is worried about an image they have shared, they can visit [MailScanner has detected a possible fraud attempt from "contentreporting.childline.org.uk" claiming to be childline.org.uk/remove](https://www.childline.org.uk/remove) and follow the steps to have the image taken down from the internet.

Zipit launches today with a Facebook Live event called ‘GIF Me A Response’, featuring a live GIF studio presented by Julie Adenuga with You Tubers Phil Green and Niki n Sammy creating real time responses to the audience’s unwanted sexting situations.

Zipit is free and available to download for Android and Apple smartphones.

Childline is available 24/7 on Freephone 0800 1111 or at www.childline.org.uk for counselling chat, emails or message boards.

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