Non-Consensual Filming – Staying Safe

We are increasingly seeing videos shared online that appear to target people simply because they are perceived as different or vulnerable. Some content creators deliberately film members of the public to mock, harass or humiliate them for online views and engagement. In some cases, the videos may also reveal personal information or encourage others to target the individual.

This guidance explains practical steps you can take to protect yourself, safeguard your personal information and know what to do if you believe you have been deliberately targeted.

What should I do if someone approaches me and I think they may be filming me?

If something doesn't feel right, trust your instincts.

You do not have to stop, answer questions or continue a conversation with someone you do not know. You can simply say, "No thank you," or walk away.

If you feel uncomfortable or intimidated, leave the area if it is safe to do so. Go to a busy place, enter a nearby shop or other public building, or ask someone for help. If you believe you are in immediate danger, call 999.

How will I know if someone is filming me?

It is not always obvious when someone is recording.

Some people film openly using a mobile phone, while others may use body-worn cameras, smart glasses or other devices that make recording less noticeable.

Be cautious if someone:

- seems unusually keen to get you to engage with them;
- asks personal or intrusive questions;
- appears to be pointing a phone or camera towards you;
- is accompanied by someone who appears to be filming.

These signs do not necessarily mean you are being recorded. However, if something feels unusual or makes you uncomfortable, you are entitled to end the interaction.

Do I have to answer their questions?

No.

You are never under any obligation to speak to a stranger or provide personal information.

You can simply say:

- "No thank you."
- "I'm not interested."
- "I'd rather not."

You can also walk away without saying anything at all.

Sometimes it can be hard to know exactly what to say, particularly if the person has approached you unexpectedly. Here are some sentences you can keep in mind which make it clear that you don't want to engage with the conversation with them.

- "I want you to stop talking to me"
- "Stop filming me"
- "Leave me alone please"

You can even add

- "You are making me feel in imitated and harassed"

This might feel a bit strange, but it makes it very clear that you don't want to talk to the person and have asked them to stop speaking to you.

How can I protect myself?

Avoid sharing personal information with someone you have just met.

This includes your:

- phone number;
- full name;
- home address;
- place of work or study;
- daily routine; and
- social media accounts.

If someone asks for your phone number and you genuinely wish to stay in touch, consider asking for theirs instead. This allows you to decide later whether you want to make contact.

Can I ask someone to stop filming me?

Yes.

You can ask whether they are recording you and tell them clearly that you do not consent to being filmed or having your image shared online.

Although someone may not always be legally required to stop filming in a public place, making your wishes clear may discourage further recording. It may also be relevant if the behaviour later forms part of a pattern of harassment.

Should I try to stop them filming?

If you do not want to be filmed, tell the person clearly and then leave if it is safe to do so.

Avoid trying to take someone's phone or camera, or physically blocking them, as this could escalate the situation or put you at risk. Your safety is always more important than stopping the recording.

Is it legal for someone to film me in a public place?

Filming in a public place is not, by itself, usually against the law in the UK.

However, this does not give someone the right to target, intimidate or repeatedly harass another person for online content.

Depending on the circumstances, repeatedly following someone, making unwanted contact, causing alarm or distress, or publishing material as part of a pattern of harassment may amount to a criminal offence or give rise to other legal remedies.

Whether an offence has been committed will always depend on the individual circumstances. A wider pattern of behaviour is often just as important as the filming itself. For example, if a content creator repeatedly targets people with particular characteristics or vulnerabilities, reporting each incident can help the police build a clearer picture of what is happening.

What if they are following me or won't leave me alone?

Repeatedly approaching, following or targeting someone can be much more serious than simply filming.

If someone continues to follow you, repeatedly tries to engage you after you have made it clear you are not interested, or behaves in a way that causes you alarm or distress:

- move to a place where other people are present;

- ask staff in a nearby shop, café or public building for help;
- if you are at a railway station or using public transport, speak to a member of staff or use a passenger help point where available. For non-emergencies, you can text the British Transport Police on **61016**;
- call someone you trust; or
- if you believe you are in immediate danger, call **999**.

The video has been posted online. What should I do?

If you discover a video of yourself online:

- save screenshots of the video, comments and username before reporting it;
- copy or save the web address (URL);
- report the content using the platform's reporting process; and
- avoid commenting on or sharing the video further.

Videos like this can attract abusive or hateful comments. Although it is understandable to feel angry or upset, responding to comments often draws more attention to the video and may increase its visibility.

If the video reveals personal information, encourages others to target you, or forms part of ongoing harassment, report this to the police and keep copies of any evidence.

Can I ask a social media platform to remove a video of me?

Yes.

Most major social media platforms allow users to report content that they believe is abusive, harassing or breaches the platform's community standards.

Before reporting the content, save screenshots and the web address, as the post may later be removed.

Even if the platform decides not to remove the video, you should still report any behaviour that forms part of harassment or makes you fear for your safety.

Should I report it to the police?

If you believe you have been deliberately targeted, harassed or repeatedly filmed for online content, you should consider reporting it to the police.

A single incident may not amount to a criminal offence. However, repeated reports can help the police identify patterns of behaviour, repeat offenders and locations where vulnerable people are being targeted.

If you have evidence such as screenshots, videos, links to online posts or witness details, keep these safe and provide them when making your report.

Remember

Nobody should be deliberately targeted or ridiculed for online entertainment.

You have the right to:

- walk away;
- end a conversation;
- refuse to answer personal questions;
- protect your personal information;
- ask whether someone is recording you; and
- report behaviour that makes you feel intimidated, alarmed or distressed.

This guidance provides practical information and is not a substitute for legal advice. Whether an offence has been committed will always depend on the individual circumstances.

What if I see someone else being targeted?

Some online content creators deliberately target people they believe are less likely to challenge them. This may include people experiencing mental ill health, learning disabilities, dementia, homelessness, addiction or other circumstances that make them more vulnerable to exploitation.

If you think someone is being targeted, your priority should always be the safety and wellbeing of the person involved and yourself.

Check on the person

If it is safe to do so, approach the person being targeted rather than the person filming.

A simple question such as:

- "Are you alright?"
- "Do you need any help?"
- "Would you like to come over here?"

may interrupt the situation without creating further confrontation.

Avoid confrontation

Try not to argue with the person filming if doing so is likely to escalate the situation or put anyone at risk.

Remember that some content creators are looking for confrontation because it attracts more views and engagement online. Staying calm and focusing on the person being targeted is often the most effective response.

Offer practical support

If the person appears distressed or confused, you could:

- stay with them for a short time if they would like you to;
- help them move somewhere quieter or safer;
- encourage them to contact a friend, family member or someone they trust; or
- help them report the incident if they wish to do so.

If the person is in immediate danger

If someone is being threatened, intimidated, prevented from leaving, or you believe they are at immediate risk of harm, call **999**.

If you witnessed the incident

If the person decides to report what happened, your account as an independent witness could be valuable.

If possible, make a note of:

- the date and time;
- the location;
- descriptions of the people involved;
- any usernames or social media accounts you noticed; and
- whether anyone else witnessed the incident.

This information may help if the incident is later reported to the police.

Why your support matters

Many people are targeted because someone believes they are unlikely to complain or may struggle to understand what is happening.

A small act of kindness, reassurance or practical support from a bystander can make a significant difference.

What if the person being filmed is under 18?

Children and young people may require additional safeguarding.

In the UK, there is no general law that makes it illegal to film someone under the age of 18 in a public place simply because they are a child. However, filming or sharing images of children can raise safeguarding, privacy or harassment concerns, depending on the circumstances.

If a child or young person is being deliberately targeted, repeatedly filmed, or recorded in a way that is intimidating, humiliating or exploitative, a parent, carer or the young person themselves should, if it is safe to do so, make it clear that they do not consent to the filming and ask the person recording to stop.

If the filming appears suspicious, is sexual in nature, or causes you to have concerns about a child's safety or welfare, contact the police immediately. If a child is in immediate danger, call **999**.

If a video of a child has been posted online to mock, bully or exploit them:

- save screenshots and the web address before reporting the content;
- report the video using the platform's reporting process;
- keep copies of any evidence;
- consider reporting the matter to the police if the child has been deliberately targeted or the behaviour forms part of a wider pattern of harassment.

If the child attends a school, college or youth organisation, consider informing them as they may be able to provide support, monitor any ongoing concerns and take appropriate safeguarding action.

Remember

Children and young people should not be deliberately targeted or exploited for online content.

Where there are concerns about a child's safety or welfare, safeguarding should always take priority. Even where filming in a public place may not, by itself, be unlawful, the circumstances surrounding the filming and the way the footage is used may give rise to safeguarding concerns or criminal offences.

This guidance provides practical information and is not a substitute for legal advice. Whether an offence has been committed will always depend on the individual circumstances.

Need Help?

If you are in immediate danger or believe someone else is at immediate risk, call **999**.

If the situation is not an emergency but you believe you have been deliberately targeted, harassed or repeatedly filmed, report it to your local police force. If the incident took place on the railway or public transport, you can contact **British Transport Police** by texting **61016**.

Being filmed, ridiculed or targeted online can have a significant emotional impact. If you are feeling overwhelmed, anxious or distressed, consider talking to someone you trust or contacting a support organisation such as the **Samaritans**. If you are struggling with your mental health, you can also seek advice and support from your GP or local mental health services.

Remember - you do not have to deal with this alone. Support is available.