CYBER-CRIME

Our article here last month specifically covered scams - phone calls e-mails and texts all being attempts to obtain peoples' details to defraud them.

We make no apology for continuing in a similar vein. Cyber-crime is described as "criminal activities carried out by means of computers or the Internet" and is by far the fastest growing area of concern for the Police.

There is less chance of being caught as a cyber-criminal than a real life one. The public and Police are not as clever as the cyber criminals, so prevention is the best defence we have.

80% of cyber-crime is preventable. To do this we have to be simple, i.e. avoid techno babble, which only confuses people.

Hampshire Police are currently campaigning to raise awareness of sextortion, which is a form of cyber-crime, during which victims are lured into sharing intimate images in a front of webcam, or a camera on a smartphone.

The victims are unaware their actions are being recorded by criminals who then use the video footage to blackmail individuals, threatening to upload video recordings to the internet, sending the footage to a victim's family and friends.

A typical initial demand is £2K. The age range of victims involved is 17-24, but data from 50 of Britain's biggest secondary schools showed that more than a third of sexting cases involved children aged 12 and 13.

The NSPCC has reported a 15 per cent rise in ChildLine counselling for sexting in a year. The consequences can be as severe as suicide and self-harm and have a major impact on mental health.

The victims are mainly aged between 17 and 24, targeted by offenders, claiming to be women asking to be friends on social media.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology exists to allow social media platforms to block explicit images from young users automatically, following a request from their parents.

"Social media giants should block children from sharing explicit images to help to curb Britain's "sexting" crisis", the health secretary has said, this being the latest demand from a senior government figure for social media companies to take a greater role in confronting issues such as online porn, cyberbullying and extremism.

REPORTING

Research suggests that, due to embarrassment, sextortion is under-reported as a crime. More than 100 offences of this nature were recorded by Hampshire Constabulary during 2015. The general advice is, don't pay and keep all evidence. Police can have some influence in getting images removed.

If you have been affected, contact Hampshire Constabulary by phoning 101, where call takers are now trained to deal with this type of call.

However, it is also possible to report anonymously via Crimestoppers - 0800 555 111. They cannot ask for callers' details. It is totally independent of the Police, but all calls are analysed and redirected to the appropriate Police force.

There is a PDF containing advice that Hampshire Constabulary gives to victims and members of the public about preventing sextortion and protecting people from its potential consequences - **Hampshire Constabulary guide to help victims of sextortion**

On the general topic of online safety there is a first class website, that is sponsored by a very wide spread of big organisations. It carries a huge amount of valuable data -**www.getsafeonline.org.uk**

Alresford and District Neighbourhood Watch Association website-
www.neighbourhood.watch.alresford.org
e-mail – contact.adnwa@gmail.com

CRIME IN PROGRESS — 999
NON URGENT – 101
CRIMESTOPPERS – 0800 555 111