

Safeguarding Team

No. 5 Sharing nudes and semi nudes

What is sexting?

'Youth produced sexual imagery' best describes the practice because:

- 'Youth produced' includes young people sharing images that they, or another young person, have created of themselves.
- 'Sexual' is clearer than 'indecent.' A judgement of whether something is 'decent' is both a value judgement and dependent on context.
- 'Imagery' covers both still photos and moving videos (and this is what is meant by reference to imagery throughout the document).

Who does it affect?

In 2024 37% of reports involved girls and 79% involved boys. For the first time 5 children aged 11-13 reported sexually coerced extortion. The IWF has produced a resource for young people;
<https://www.iwf.org.uk/resources/sextortion/>

Boys were more likely to feel like it was an expected part of being in a relationship (35%) while girls said they wanted to because they were in a relationship (41%).

For those young people who have sexted, 78% said they hadn't faced any consequences, leading them to disbelieve traditional online safety advice.

Sexting can be seen by young people as 'banter' and an easy way for them to express their feelings for others. But with sharing of images and videos there could be consequences such as embarrassment, humiliation and emotional hurt. An immediate referral to police and children's social care should be considered where there is evidence of online sexual extortion (sextortion), blackmail, threats, coercion, or demands for money following the sharing of images.

Many children will wish they had not sent images, after pressing 'send' feeling ashamed, worried and anxious. They have no way of knowing how many people have viewed, tagged, liked the image, where it has gone or how it may be used in the future.

What should school staff do?

- If a device is involved - confiscate it and set it to flight mode or, if not possible, switch it off.
- The DSL should hold an initial review meeting with appropriate school staff.
- There should be subsequent interviews with the young people involved (if appropriate).
- Parents should be informed at an early stage and involved in the process unless there is good reason to believe that involving parents would put the young person at risk of harm.
- At any point in the process if there is a concern a young person has been harmed, or is at risk of harm, a referral should be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately.
- Do explain to the young person/s that you need to report the incident
- Reassure the young person/s that they will receive support and help from the DSL and trusted members of staff.

What not to do?

- Do not view or seek to view the image unless agreed with the Head/Principal and the reasons are carefully considered and recorded in writing.
- Do not delete the imagery or ask the young person to delete it (until further advice has been sought).
- Do not say or do anything to blame or shame any young people involved.

The DSL should consider...

An immediate referral to police and/or children's social care should be made if at this initial stage if:

- The incident involves an adult
- There is reason to believe that a young person has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed, or if there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example, owing to special educational needs)
- What you know about the imagery suggests the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's developmental stage, or are violent
- The imagery involves sexual acts and any child/pupil in the imagery is under 13 years old

- You have reason to believe a young person is at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of the imagery, for example, the young person is presenting as suicidal or self-harming

If none of the listed circumstances are present the setting will be able to manage the situation. The DSL can refer to the guidance set out in the UKCIS document 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes' (see link below). If unsure of the actions give your LA safeguarding hub a consultation call and/or refer to the NPCC document 'When to Call the Police'

Regardless of actions the DSL should ensure that details of the incident, actions, resolution, and external agencies involved etc. are recorded. It is also important to ensure that both the victim and perpetrators have the appropriate support and safety plans in place in your setting.

Staff should be aware that incidents may involve AI-generated or digitally manipulated sexual images. These should be managed in line with safeguarding procedures and the UKCIS "Sharing nudes and semi-nudes" guidance, with consideration given to the wellbeing of all children involved.

How might school support/teach students about the dangers of this?

- What it is and what isn't it
- How it is most likely to be encountered
- The consequences of requesting, forwarding or providing such images, including when it is and is not abusive
- Issues of legality
- The risk of damage to peoples' feelings and reputation
- Specific requests or pressure to provide (or forward) such images
- What to do should a child or young person receive such images
- Talk about consent
- Use language young people understand and ensure that it isn't victim-blaming or dismissive
- Discuss sexting in the wider context of other issues such as relationships, body image, bullying and wellbeing

Settings may also wish to add links to websites that can provide further information and support to both

pupils and parents such as ThinkUKnow, Vodaphone, Common Sense Media, SWGfL etc.in their newsletters.

How do the police view this?

The national and local police view is that the law is there to protect young people from harm and from being exploited, and it's not designed to punish them for making genuine mistakes. That said, every case is different and is always dealt with based on the circumstances and facts involved. If, as a result of a police investigation, it is decided that no further action should be taken, this will be recorded on the police computer system, but it will not show in a future DBS. Words of advice may be given to the young person.

Further information

UKCIS - [Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people](#)

DFE -

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/searching-screening-and-confiscation>

NSPCC -

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/search/?query=sexting>

CEOP Think You Know -

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

Internet Watch Foundation - IWF:

<https://www.iwf.org.uk/report/> (helps children and young people to report an image shared online, to see if it is possible to get the image removed)

Guide for parents -

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/advice-and-info/sexting-keep-child-safe.pdf>

SWGfL Guide for young people -

<https://swgfl.org.uk/resources/so-you-got-naked-online/>

Devon Front Door - 0345 155 1071

Devon Front Door Consultation line - 01392 388428

Police - in an emergency always dial 999