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Sexting in School Guidance Policy

This guidance is for designated safeguarding leads, Headteachers and senior leadership teams within the group.

This policy covers:

- Responding to disclosures.
- Handling devices and imagery.
- Risk assessing situations.
- Involving other agencies, including escalation to the police.
- Recording incidents.
- Involving parents.
- Preventative education.

This guidance has been produced by the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (*UKCCIS*) Education Group in parallel with guidance for policing from the National Police Chiefs Council (*NPCC*).

The UKCCIS Education Group is chaired by CEOP, with representatives from the Department for Education, the NSPCC, Barnardo's, the UK Safer Internet Centre, Childnet, the PSHE Association, Parent Zone, Kent County Council and the National Education Network.

A wide range of other schools, local authorities, police forces and organisations have also been consulted including Ofsted, the Disclosure and Barring Service, the Home Office and the Internet Watch Foundation.

This guidance is non-statutory and is supplementary to the Keeping Children Safe in Education statutory guidance and complements the Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance at school.

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Whilst professionals refer to the issue of 'sexting' there is no clear definition of 'sexting'. Many professionals consider sexting to be *'sending or posting sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via mobiles or over the Internet.'*(1). Yet when children and young people are asked 'What does sexting mean to you?' they are more likely to interpret sexting as *'writing and sharing explicit messages with people they know'*(2). Similarly, the majority of parents think of sexting as flirty or sexual text messages rather than images(3).

Regardless of what you call this practice, the greatest risks tend to arise when young people share sexual photos or videos. Sharing sexual photos and videos of under 18s is also illegal and therefore causes the greatest complexity for schools and other agencies when responding.

This guidance has been produced to help schools respond to 'youth-produced sexual imagery.' This best describes the practice because:

- *'Youth produced'* includes young people sharing images that they or another youth has 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.

The types of incidents which this guidance covers are:

- A person under the age of 18 creates and shares a sexual photo or video of themselves and shares it with a peer under the age of 18.
- A person under the age of 18 shares a sexual photo or video created by another person under the age of 18.
- A person under the age of 18 is in possession of a sexual photo or video created by another person under the age of 18.
- A person under the age of 18 creates and shares a sexual photo of themselves and shares it with someone over the age of 18.

This guidance does not cover the sharing of sexual photos of people under 18 by adults as this constitutes child sexual abuse.

(1) *Adolescents and self-taken sexual images - Cooper, Quayle, Jonsson, Svedin, 2014*

(2) *I wasn't sure it was normal to watch it. NSPCC, Middlesex University, Office of the Children's Commissioner 2016*

(3) *Childline Sexting Survey 2016*



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Why have we produced this guidance?

Sharing photos and videos online is part of daily life for many people, enabling them to share their experiences, connect with friends and record their lives.

Photos and videos can be shared as text messages, email, posted on social media or increasingly via mobile messaging apps, such as SnapChat, Whatsapp or Facebook Messenger.

90% of 16-24 year olds and 69% of 12-15 year olds own a smartphone⁴, giving them the ability to quickly and easily create and share photos and videos.

This increase in the speed and ease of sharing imagery has brought concerns about young people producing sexual photos and videos of themselves and sharing them. This can expose them to risks, particularly if the imagery is shared further, including embarrassment, bullying and increased vulnerability to sexual exploitation. Producing and sharing sexual images of under 18s is also illegal.

Although the taking of such imagery will likely take place outside of school, these issues will often manifest in schools and organisations working with children and young people. Schools and other organisations need to be able to respond swiftly and confidently to ensure that children are safeguarded, supported and educated.

This guidance aims to support schools in developing procedures to respond to incidents involving 'youth produced sexual imagery.' It also signposts sources of resources and support.

These procedures should be part of a school's safeguarding arrangements and all incidents of youth produced sexual imagery should be dealt with as safeguarding concerns.

The response to these incidents should be guided by the principle of proportionality. The primary concern should be the welfare and protection of the young people involved.

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/cmr/cmr16/icmr16/icmr-ful.pdf?v=321559>

<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/siteassets/resources/documents/research-and-data/cmr/cmr17/uk/cmr-2017-uk.pdf?v=321493>

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How is this really happening?

'Parents expect you to be involved in sexting even when you are not.' Simone, 14

Most young people aren't sharing sexual imagery of themselves (5).

A 2016 NSPCC / Children's Commissioner study found that one in ten boys and girls had taken topless pictures of themselves and 3% had taken fully naked pictures. Of those who had taken sexual images, 55% had shared them with others. A simple extrapolation of these figures against current population estimates would suggest that around 110,000 children aged 13-17 have taken fully naked pictures of themselves and around 61,000 shared them.

Although most young people aren't sharing this type of imagery, the potential risks are significant. As a result concerns about this issue in schools remain high. Research conducted by 'the key' discovered that 61% of its secondary school head teacher members reported 'sexting' as a concern (1). This placed it higher than drugs, obesity and offline bullying in terms of frequency of reporting as a concern.

(5) *I wasn't sure it was normal to watch it. NSPCC, Middlesex University, Office of the Children's Commissioner 2016*

The Law

Much of the complexity of responding to youth produced sexual imagery is due to its legal status. Making, possessing and distributing any imagery of someone under 18 which is 'indecent' is illegal. This includes images of yourself if you are under 18.

The relevant legislation is contained in the Protection of Children Act 1978 (*England and Wales*) as amended in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (*England and Wales*).

Specifically:

- It is an offence to possess, distribute, show and make indecent images of children.
- The Sexual Offences Act 2003 (*England and Wales*) defines a child, for the purposes of indecent images, as anyone under the age of 18.

'Indecent' is not defined in legislation. When cases are prosecuted, whether any photograph of a child is indecent is for a jury, magistrate or District Judge to decide based on what is the recognised standard of propriety. (6) For most purposes, if imagery contains a naked young person, a topless



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girl, displays genitals or sex acts, including masturbation, then it will be indecent. Indecent images may also include overtly sexual images of young people in their underwear.

(6) <https://www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/indecent-and-prohibited-images-children>

Criminalisation of children

The law criminalising indecent images of children was created long before mass adoption of the internet, mobiles and digital photography. It was also created to protect children and young people from adults looking to sexually abuse them or gain pleasure from their sexual abuse. It was not intended to criminalise children.

Despite this, young people who share sexual imagery of themselves, or peers, are breaking the law.

We should not, however, unnecessarily criminalise children and young people. Children with a criminal record face stigma and discrimination in accessing education, training, employment, travel and housing and these obstacles can follow a child into adulthood (8).

Whilst young people creating and sharing sexual imagery can be very risky, it is often the result of young people's natural curiosity about sex and their exploration of relationships. Often, young people need education, support or safeguarding, not criminalisation.

(8) *Growing Up, Moving On – The International Treatment of Childhood Criminal records, Standing Committee on Youth Justice, 2016*

The Police Response

Schools need to feel confident that they can seek advice and involvement of the police and that young people will not be criminalised as a result.

The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) in the UK is clear that incidents involving youth produced sexual imagery should primarily be treated as safeguarding issues.

The police may need to be involved in cases to ensure thorough investigation and there are incidents, highlighted in this guidance, which should always be referred to the police. However, it would only be in cases where evidence is uncovered that a young person is knowingly engaging in coercive, threatening or exploitative behaviour, that a criminal justice response and formal sanction against a young person would be considered proportionate and applied. In the absence



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of evidence of this, cases should not result in any form of criminal justice sanction (*i.e. the young person being charged or given a youth caution*).

The new NPCC guidance, produced in parallel to this guidance, outlines what a proportionate response to youth produced sexual imagery looks like and should ensure that there is greater consistency across each police service in England and Wales.

<https://www.npcc.police.uk/SysSiteAssets/media/downloads/publications/publications-log/criminal-justice/2023/npcc-outcome-22-guidance-2022.pdf>

Crime Recording

Where the police are involved in incidents of youth produced sexual imagery they are obliged, under the Home Office Counting rules and National Crime Recording Standards, to record the incident on their crime systems. The incident will be listed as a 'crime' and the young person involved will be listed as a 'suspect.'

This is not the same as having a criminal record.

However, there have been concerns that young people could be negatively affected should that crime be disclosed, for example, on an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

To mitigate this risk, the NPCC have worked with the Home Office and the Disclosure and Barring Service and provided policing with a new way of recording the outcome of an investigation into youth produced sexual imagery. This is called Outcome 21.

Outcome 21

Every 'crime' recorded on police systems has to be assigned an outcome from a predefined list of outcome codes. As of January 2016 the Home Office launched a new outcome code (outcome 21) to help formalise the discretion available to the police when handling crimes such as youth produced sexualised imagery.

Outcome 21 states:

"Further investigation, resulting from the crime report, which could provide evidence sufficient to support formal action being taken against the suspect is not in the public interest. This is a police decision."

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This means that even though a young person has broken the law and the police could provide evidence that they have done so, the police can record that they chose not to take further action as it was not in the public interest. The new NPCC guidance outlines how outcome 21 should be applied in cases of youth produced sexual imagery, ensuring that safeguarding is the primary consideration and avoiding the unnecessary criminalisation of children accordingly.

DBS Certificates

A decision to disclose information on a DBS certificate is made on the basis of whether that information is relevant to the risk an individual might pose to children, young people or vulnerable adults.

The Home Office, NPCC Lead for Disclosure and the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) have made amendments to guidance to ensure that officers making disclosure decisions are aware of outcome 21 and its application in incidents of youth produced sexual imagery. Officers will be aware that if police have applied outcome 21 then this will have been on the grounds that it was not proportionate to pursue a criminal justice outcome or formal sanction in this case.

Disclosure of an incident of youth produced sexual imagery with outcome 21 on a DBS certificate would therefore be unlikely.

An incident would only be disclosed if other information indicated that the individual posed a risk, for example, they had committed other relevant offences or the youth produced sexual imagery appeared to form part of a pattern of offending.

Consequently, schools can be confident that the police have discretion to respond appropriately in cases of youth produced sexual imagery and to record incidents in a way which will not have a long term negative impact on young people.

Initial Response

All incidents involving youth produced sexual imagery should be responded to in line with the school's safeguarding and child protection policy.

Keeping children safe in education statutory guidance sets out that all schools should have an effective child protection policy. Youth produced sexual imagery and your school's approach to is reflected in our policy.

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When an incident involving youth produced sexual imagery comes to a school's attention:

- The incident should be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead as soon as possible.
- There should be an initial review meeting with the safeguarding team and a subsequent interview with the children involved. At that meeting there needs to be a clear record taken of the incident with dates, timings and names in accordance with safeguarding protocols.
- 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 child at risk of harm.

Disclosure by pupils

Disclosures about youth produced sexual imagery can happen in a variety of ways. The pupil affected may inform a class teacher, the safeguarding lead in school, or any member of the school staff. They may report through an existing reporting structure, or a friend or parent may inform someone in school or the police directly.

All members of staff must be made aware of how to recognise and refer any disclosures of incidents involving youth produced sexual imagery. This should be covered within staff training and within your school safeguarding policies and procedures.

Any direct disclosure by a young person should be taken very seriously. A young person who discloses they are the subject of sexual imagery is likely to be embarrassed and worried about the consequences. It is likely that disclosure in school was a last resort and they may have already tried to resolve the issue themselves.

Initial review meeting

The initial review meeting with the safeguarding team should aim to establish:

- Whether there is an immediate risk to a pupil or pupils.
- If a referral should be made to the police or social care.
- If you need to view the imagery in order to safeguard the child, – in most cases, you should not view imagery.
- What further information is required to decide on the best response.
- Whether the imagery has been shared widely and on what platforms.
- If there is a need to contact another school, setting or individual.
- Whether to contact parents or carers of the pupils involved - in most cases, yes.

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An immediate referral to police or social care should be made if at this initial stage:

1. The incident involves an adult.
2. There is reason to believe that a child has been coerced or blackmailed.
3. What you know about the imagery suggests the content is extreme or violent.
4. A pupil involved has been identified as vulnerable, previously been abused, or is currently involved with social care.
5. The imagery involves sexual acts and any pupil in the imagery is under 13.
6. You have reason to believe a pupil or pupil is at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of the imagery.

If none of the above apply you may decide to respond to the incident as a school without involving other agencies.

The decision to respond to the incident without involving other agencies would be made in cases when a Designated Safeguarding Lead is confident that they have enough information to assess the risks to pupils involved and the risks can be managed within the school's pastoral support and disciplinary framework.

The decision should be made by the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, Headteacher and with additional input from other members of staff if appropriate.

The decision should be in line with the group's child protection procedures and should be based on consideration of the best interests of the pupils involved. This should take into account proportionality as well as the welfare and protection of the young people.

Most incidents that are dealt with by the school directly would be those where a young person has shared imagery consensually in a romantic relationship or as a joke and where there is no intended malice. In contrast any incidents with aggravating factors, for example, a young person sharing someone else's imagery without consent and with malicious intent, should be referred to police and/or social care.

Assesing the risks

The circumstances of incidents can vary widely. If at the initial stage you have decided not to refer to police and or social care the Designated Safeguarding Lead should conduct a further review to establish the facts so you can assess the risks and effectively manage the incident.

When assessing the risks the following themes should be considered:

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- How the image was generated?
- Why it was generated?
- Was the child coerced or put under pressure to produce the imagery?
- Who has shared the imagery?
- Where has the imagery been shared?
- Was it shared and received with the knowledge of the pupil in the imagery?
- What is the impact on the pupils involved?
- Do the pupils involved have additional vulnerabilities?

Designated safeguarding leads should always use their professional judgement in conjunction with their colleagues to assess the incidents. To complement and support your professional judgment you will find a list of questions which you should consider at Annex A

Informing parents

Parents should be informed and involved in the process at an early stage unless through your risk assessment you have determined that the child might be put at further risk from a parent or carer. In the initial investigation phase you will want to inform parents and invite them to come into school to discuss the incident.

You will also need to notify parents if you are informing the police or removing a device from a child and the reason for doing so.

Annex B contains further advice and information about involving parents and carers.

Involving other agencies

Following the risk assessment you may need to involve other agencies in the handling of the incident. Other agencies can be involved in different ways.

The police may need to be involved if the incident is of a serious nature, you may need additional support or need to make a referral to social care or your local Multi Agency Hub (*MASH*) or you may need support for a young person from organisations like the NSPCC (*Childline*), Brook, Barnardos or CAMHS. Decisions on whether to involve other agencies should always involve the designated safeguarding lead.



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Reporting incidents to the police

If it is necessary to refer to the police, contact should be made through your existing arrangements. This may be through your safer schools officer, a PCSO, your local neighbourhood police or by dialling 101.

Once a report is made to the police, the report has to be recorded and the police will conduct an investigation. This may include seizure of devices and interviews with the children involved. The police guidance that has been developed in parallel with this guidance gives further detail on what will happen once an incident is referred onto the police.

Things to be aware of when making reports to the police:

- Be aware that the police are not able to offer general advice on incidents. If you name the children involved / specifics they are duty bound to record and investigate all criminal activity reported.
- If you are making a report through the 101 service, be aware that the person answering the call is a call handler and deals with a wide variety of crimes.
- If you have Safer Schools Officers in your area they will be able to offer direct support to schools on prevention and management of incidents

Securing and handing over devices to the police

If a device needs to be seized and passed onto the police then the device(s) should be confiscated from a student and the police should be called. The phone should be turned off and placed under lock and key until the police are able to come and retrieve it.

If seizure is required and a child refuses to hand over their device, the parents should be informed and police potentially contacted.



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Social care contact and referrals

If the Designated Safeguarding Lead is aware that children's social care are currently involved with a pupil involved in an incident of youth produced sexual imagery then they must contact Children's Social Care to inform them of the incident. You should also contact Children's Social Care if you believe they may be involved, or have been involved with a child in the past.

If as a result of your investigation you believe there are wider issues which meet the threshold for social care involvement then you should make a referral in line with your child protection procedures.

All schools should have an initial point of contact with their local authority which can help you make effective decisions about the handling of incidents and the best referral pathways for children.

Many Local Safeguarding Children Boards (*LSCBs*) will have published procedures to enable professionals to respond to a range of safeguarding concerns which may relate to youth produced sexual imagery, including (but not limited to) harmful behaviours and underage sexual activity. Most LSCB's have thresholds which they publish in their areas. Designated safeguarding leads should ensure that they are familiar with any relevant documents and guidance.

Searching devices, viewing and deleting imagery

Should you view the image or video?

You should **not** view youth produced sexual images or videos unless there is good reason to do so. Wherever possible you should make decisions based on what you have been told about the content of the imagery.

The decision to view imagery would be based on your professional judgement as Designated Safeguarding Lead and you should **ALWAYS** comply with your safeguarding and child protection policy and procedures. You should never view imagery if the act of viewing it will cause significant distress or harm to the pupil.

If you decide to view the imagery you would need to be satisfied that viewing:

- is the only way to make a decision about whether to involve other agencies (ie you are not able to establish the facts from the pupil(s) involved)

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- is necessary to report the image to a website, app or suitable reporting agency to have it taken down, or to support the child or parent in making a report
- is unavoidable because a pupil has presented an image directly to a staff member or the imagery has been found on a school device or network

If it is necessary to view the image(s) then you must:

- Never copy, print or share the imagery. This is illegal.
- Inform the headteacher of your decision to view the imagery and the reasons why.
- Ensure viewing is only undertaken by one member of staff. This should be the designated safeguarding lead or another member of the safeguarding team with delegated authority from the headteacher.
- Ensure images are viewed by a staff member of the same sex as the pupil in the imagery.
- Record the fact that you viewed the imagery in your safeguarding records including who was present, why the image was viewed and any subsequent actions.
- Ensure this is signed and dated and meets the wider standards set out by Ofsted for recording safeguarding incidents.

Further details on searching, deleting and confiscating devices can be found on the DfE web site in the Searching, Screening and Confiscation advice.

Deletion of images

If you have decided that police do not need to be involved, then you will need to manage the deletion and removal of imagery from devices, online storage and social media sites.

The Searching, Screening and Confiscation advice highlights that schools have the power to search pupils for devices, search data on devices and delete youth produced sexual imagery this is not the case in Spain where teachers are not able to search or view the imagery on the phone. In this case the parents must be called and informed.

However, just as in most circumstances it is not recommended that teachers view imagery, you should also not search through devices and delete imagery unless there is good reason to do so.

It is recommended that pupils are asked to delete imagery and to confirm that they have deleted the imagery. Pupils should be given a deadline for deletion across all devices, online storage or social media sites.

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Pupils should be informed that if they refuse or it is later discovered they did not delete the image they are committing a criminal offence and the police may become involved. All of these decisions need to be recorded, including times, dates and reasons for decisions made and logged in the safeguarding records. Parents and carers should also be informed unless this presents a further risk to the child.

At this point schools may want to invoke their own disciplinary measures to discourage students from sharing, generating or receiving images but this is at the discretion of the school and should be in line with its own behaviour policies.

You should note that if your school does intend to use the power to search for devices then your mobile phone policy needs to clearly articulate that devices can be searched, confiscated and imagery deleted if they contain youth produced sexual imagery unless this breaks the law of the country. You should highlight why this is important, the conditions in which you will view images and the sanctions that are likely to be imposed if imagery of this nature is found

Interviewing and talking to the child/children involved

Once you have assessed that the child or young person is not at immediate risk, it may be necessary to have a conversation with the student and decide the best course of action. If possible, the Designated Safeguarding Lead should carry out this conversation. However, if the child feels more comfortable talking to a different teacher, this should be facilitated where possible. If the child prefers, this initial conversation may be carried out without their parents present, if the school's policies allow this. However if after the initial conversation it transpires that there are safeguarding or welfare concerns then the parents should be informed, unless informing them will place the child at further risk. Within the meeting there needs to be a clear record taken of the incident with dates, timings and names in accordance with safeguarding protocols, and the child needs to be made aware that this will happen.

When discussing the sharing of youth-produced sexual imagery, it is important that the Designated Safeguarding Lead: Recognises the pressures that young people are under to take part in sexting and, if relevant, supports the student's parents to understand the wider issues and motivations around sexting.

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- Remains solution focused and avoids questions such as 'why have you done this?' which may prevent the young person from talking about what has happened.
- Reassures the young person that they are not alone and will do everything that they can to help and support them.
- Helps the young person to understand what has happened by discussing the wider pressures that they may face and the motivations of the person that sent on the photo.
- Discusses issues of consent and trust within healthy relationships. Explain that it is not ok for someone to make them feel uncomfortable, to pressure them into doing things that they don't want to do, or to show them things that they are unhappy about. Let them know that they can speak to you if this ever happens.

The purpose of the conversation is to:

- Identify, without looking, what the image contains and whether anyone else has been involved.
- Find out who has seen or shared the image and how further distribution can be prevented.

Recording incidents

All incidents relating to youth produced sexual imagery need to be recorded in school. This includes incidents that have been referred to external agencies and those that have not.

Ofsted highlight that when inspecting schools in relation to safeguarding they will be looking for the following:

- Are records up to date and complete?
- Do records demonstrate both effective identification and management of the risk of harm?
- Do records demonstrate sound decision-making, appropriate responses to concerns and evidence of relevant referrals made in a timely manner?
- Do they indicate that appropriate action is taken in response to concerns and allegations in a timely manner?
- Do they show evidence of tenacity in following up concerns with relevant agencies?
- Do they provide evidence of effective partnership working and sharing of information?
- Is there evidence of attendance at or contribution to inter-agency meetings and conferences?
- Is there clarity about the school's policy relating to the sharing of information internally, safe keeping of records, and transfer when a pupil leaves the school?

In cases that relate to youth produced sexual imagery it is important that schools reflect all of the areas above when they are recording incidents.

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In addition, where schools do not refer incidents out to police or social care they should record their reason for doing so and ensure that this is appropriately signed off by the headteacher in school.

Reporting youth produced sexual imagery online

Children and young people may need help and support in the removal of content (*imagery and videos*) from devices and social media, especially if they are distressed. Most providers offer a reporting function for account holders and some offer a public reporting function to enable a third party to make a report on behalf of the child.

- The quickest way to get content removed from the internet is for the person who posted it to take it down. If the child posted the content themselves using their account, ask them to log in and delete it.
- If someone else posted the image or re-posted it, ask them to log in and delete it from any sites they've shared it on.
- If you don't know who has posted it, or the poster refuses to take it down, you can still report the content and if it breaches a site's Terms of Service then it will be removed.

You should act especially quickly to remove content containing the following:

- Nudity or suggestive poses.
- Details which might identify a child – for example a school uniform.
- Details which might identify or embarrass other children.

Each provider will have a different approach to dealing with requests for the removal of content and the speed of response. You can find out more by visiting the individual provider's site where they should make public their Terms of Service and process for reporting. Nudity and sexual content is not allowed by the majority of the main providers'. Where this is the case, it should not be difficult to report this content for removal.

The NSPCC's website provides an overview of the main providers and links to their reporting functions <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

Annex C outlines how to report to some of the major providers and what to do when a site does not have a reporting function.



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Annex A

When deciding whether to involve other agencies, consideration should be given to the following questions. Answering these questions will help the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the safeguarding team decide whether additional information or support is needed from other agencies or if the school can manage the risk of harm and support the pupils itself.

Why was the imagery shared? Was it consensual or was the pupil put under pressure or coerced?

<p>Why this question?</p>	<p>Young people's motivations for sharing sexual imagery include flirting, developing trust in a romantic relationship, seeking attention or as a joke.</p> <p>Though there are clearly risks when young people share imagery consensually, young people who have been pressured to share imagery are more likely to report negative consequences.</p> <p>A referral should be made to the police if a child has been pressured or coerced into sharing an image, or imagery is being shared without consent and with malicious intent.</p> <p>You should take disciplinary action against pupils who pressure or coerce others into sharing sexual imagery</p>
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Has the imagery been shared beyond its intended recipient? Was it shared without the consent of pupil who produced the imagery?

<p>Why this question?</p>	<p>The imagery may have been shared initially with consent but then passed on to others. A pupil may have shared the image further with malicious intent, or they may not have had a full understanding of the potential consequences.</p> <p>The police should be informed if there was a deliberate intent to cause harm by sharing the imagery or if the imagery has been used to bully or blackmail a pupil.</p>
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Has the imagery been shared on social media or anywhere else online? If so, what steps have been taken to contain the spread of the imagery?

<p>Why this question?</p>	<p>If the image has been shared widely on social media, this could cause significant embarrassment for the pupil and have a long term impact on their online reputation. It could also increase the risk of them being bullied or contacted by strangers online.</p> <p>You should support a young person to report the imagery to any sites it is hosted on. You can find information on reporting in Annex B.</p> <p>If the child has tried to report the imagery and it has not been removed you should contact ChildLine or the Professionals Online Safety Helpline.</p> <p>If the child is being contacted by people they don't know who have viewed the image then you should report to CEOP.</p>
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How old is the pupil or pupils involved?

<p>Why this question?</p>	<p>Children under the age of 13 are unable to consent to sexual activity. Any imagery containing sexual activity by under 13s should be referred to the police.</p> <p>Being older can give someone power in a relationship so if there is a significant age difference it may indicate the young person felt under pressure to share.</p> <p>If you believe the imagery contains acts which you would not expect a child of that age to engage in then you should refer to the police.</p> <p>The Brook Traffic Light tool provides guidance on harmful sexual behaviour at different ages.</p>
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Did the child send the image to more than one person?

Why this question?	<p>If a pupil is sharing sexual imagery with multiple people this may indicate that there are other issues which they need support with. Consideration should be given to their motivations for sharing.</p> <p>If you believe there are wider safeguarding concerns then you should make a referral to social care.</p>
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Does the pupil understand the possible implications of sharing the image?

Why this question?	<p>Children may produce or share imagery without fully understanding the consequences of what they are doing. They may not, for example, understand how it may put them at risk or cause harm to another pupil.</p> <p>Exploring their understanding may help you plan an appropriate response helping you assess, for example, whether they passed on an image with deliberate intent to harm.</p>
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Do you have any concerns about the pupil's vulnerability?

Why this question?	<p>Consideration should be given to whether a pupil's circumstances or background makes them additionally vulnerable. This could include being in care, having special educational needs or disability or having been a victim of abuse.</p> <p>Where there are wider concerns about the care and welfare of a pupil then consideration should be given to referring to children's social care.</p>
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Are there additional concerns if the parents or carers are informed?

<p>Why this question?</p>	<p>Parents should be informed of incidents of this nature unless there is good reason to believe that informing them will put the child at risk. This may be due to concerns about parental abuse or cultural or religious factors which would affect how they or their community would respond.</p> <p>If a pupil highlights concerns about involvement of their parents then the Designated Safeguarding Lead should use their professional judgment about whether it is appropriate to involve them and at what stage. If a school chooses not to involve a parent they must clearly record the reasons for not doing so.</p>
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Annex A

Educating parents about sexting

Parents have a key role to play in helping to inform children about sexting and supporting them to make positive decisions. NSPCC research found that 50% of parents said they would like to receive more information about sexting to support them in talking to their children and understanding healthy relationships. They would prefer to receive this through leaflets, booklets, and newsletters from their child's school or police and through online forums or resources. Information needs to be accessible and easy to read. Resources for parents should include:

- An overview of what sexting is, highlighting in particular that it includes the sending of images and videos
- The pressures, motivations and expectations faced by young people to behave sexually
- Information about consent and trust within healthy relationships.
- The prevalence of sexting – showing that numbers are low but highlighting the vulnerabilities of those who share, particularly to those unknown to them
- Explanation of what the risks associated with sexting are, especially recognising young people's fears/concerns
- Legalities of sexting and naked pictures or videos
- Tips on how parents can support their children if their image has been publicly shared – signposting to relevant agencies and information/resources
- What parents can do to help remove images/empower young people – signposting Childline's partnership with the IWF
- Role of police and schools in incidents – signposting to named roles in each organisation to empower parents to know they are asking the 'right' person

Helping parents when their child has been involved in sexting:

Young people can be involved in sexting in several different ways: they may lose control of their own image; receive an image of someone else; or share an image of another person. It can be difficult for parents whose children have experienced any of these situations to know how to deal with the knowledge that their child has been involved in sexualised activity. Parents may feel shocked, upset, angry, confused, or disappointed.

Whatever their feelings, it is important that professionals listen to their concerns and take them seriously. It can also be helpful for teachers and the police to reassure parents by explaining that it is normal for children to be curious about sex. Below are examples of the advice that police and schools should offer to parents in a range of scenarios.



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Parents whose child has lost control of a sexual image should be:

- Advised on the law around sexting, with regards to saving, sharing, or looking at naked or sexual images of children.
- Directed to encourage the young person to delete images from social media accounts, if they have uploaded them themselves.
- Directed to ChildLine's partnership with the Internet Watch Foundation to see if it is possible to get the image removed if it has been shared more widely. This must be done as soon as possible in order to minimise the number of people that have seen the picture. Parents should also be informed about how to report sexual images on individual sites to get them taken down. Or if the image has been shared via a mobile, they should be informed that they can contact the provider in order to get their child's mobile number changed.
- Helped to have conversations with their child in an approachable and supportive way. Parents should be advised to:
 - Reassure the young person that they are not alone and refrain from getting angry. Let them know that you will do everything you can to help.
 - Listen and offer support, rather than criticism
 - Avoid questions, such as 'why have you done this?' which may stop the young person from opening up. Instead stay focused on finding a solution, by asking who the image has been sent to and shared with and agreeing next steps.
 - Help the young person to understand what has happened by discussing the wider pressures that they may face and the motivations of the person that sent on the photo.
 - Discuss issues of consent and trust within healthy relationships. Explain that it is not ok for someone to make them feel uncomfortable, to pressure them into doing things that they don't want to do, or to show them things that they are unhappy about. Let them know that they can speak to you if this ever happens.
- Directed to the child's school if they are concerned that their child is being bullied.
- Directed to services for Harmful Sexual Behaviour, such as the National Clinical Assessment and Treatment Service, if this incident, or similar incidents, have previously occurred.

Parents whose child has been sent a sexual image should be:

- Advised on the law around sexting, with regards to saving, sharing, or looking at naked or sexual images of children.
- Supported to have conversations with their child and advised to:
 - Reassure the young person that they have done the right thing by speaking out and that you are there to help.
 - Explain to the young person the importance of not sharing the image further.
 - Listen to the young person's concerns, without criticising their decisions.

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- Ask whether they requested the photo or if it was unsolicited. Confirm whether it has been sent by an adult or a child.
- Discuss issues of consent and trust within healthy relationships. Explain that it is not ok for someone to make them feel uncomfortable, to pressure them into doing things that they don't want to do, or to show them things that they are unhappy about. Let them know that they can speak to you if this ever happens .
- If they asked to receive the photos, explain that they should also not put pressure onto others to do things that they are uncomfortable with.
- Provided with suggested ways that the young person could speak to the sender in order to stop future correspondences. Alternatively, if the young person prefers, informed about how to block the sender.
- Directed to CEOP if the images were shared by an adult or if they are concerned about child exploitation or grooming.

Parents whose child has shared another child's image should be:

- Advised on the law around sexting, with regards to saving, sharing, or looking at naked or sexual images of children.
- Supported to have conversations with their child and advised to:
 - Stay calm and refrain from getting angry at the young person.
 - Ask who the image has been sent to and where it has been shared. Agree next steps for taking the image down, including deleting the image from their phone or any social media accounts and reporting it to service providers.
 - Identify whether they asked for the photo or were initially sent it without requesting.
 - Discuss issues of consent and trust in healthy relationships or friendships. Talk about the types of things which are and aren't ok to share and how they would feel if someone shared a personal photo of them. If they have asked for the image, explain the importance of not pressuring others into activities that they may not want to take part in.
 - Ask about their motivations for sharing the photo and discuss what they could have done differently. If they have reacted to an upsetting incident, such as the break-up of a relationship, by sending the photo onwards, talk about how they could have managed their feelings in a healthier and more positive way.
- Advised to contact their child's school if they are concerned that their child is behaving in a sexually inappropriate way. They should also be directed to services for Harmful Sexual Behaviour, such as the National Clinical Assessment and Treatment Service, if this incident, or similar incidents, have previously occurred.



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All parents whose child has been involved in any of the above should be:

- Advised to contact their child's school, if they have received their child's consent, so that teachers are able to offer support to any student that is affected and ensure that the image is not circulated further.
- Informed about sources of support for their child, in case they are feeling anxious or depressed about what has happened. This can include speaking to a ChildLine counsellor or a GP. If they are concerned that their child is suicidal they should contact 999.
- Provided with information on where they are able to access support themselves if they are concerned or distressed, such as through the NSPCC Helpline.
- Directed to CEOP if they are concerned about child sexual exploitation or grooming.

The following resources can be used to support parents and children with sexting. They should be included on school and police websites:

- Children can talk to a ChildLine counsellor 24 hours a day about anything that is worrying them by ringing 0800 11 11 or in an online chat
 - ◆ <http://www.childline.org.uk/Talk/Chat/Pages/OnlineChat.aspx>
- ChildLine have created Zip-It, which is an app that provides witty comebacks in order to help children say no to requests for naked images
 - ◆ <https://www.childline.org.uk/Play/GetInvolved/Pages/sexting-zipit-app.aspx>
- ChildLine and the Internet Watch Foundation have partnered to help children get sexual or naked images removed from the internet. Children can get their photo removed by talking to a ChildLine counsellor. More information is available here-
 - ◆ <http://www.childline.org.uk/explore/onlinesafety/pages/sexting.aspx>
- The NSPCC has information and advice about sexting available on its website
 - ◆ <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/sexting/1>
- If parents are concerned about their child, they can contact the NSPCC Helpline by ringing 0808 800 5000, by emailing help@nspcc.org.uk, or by texting 88858. They can also ring the Online Safety Helpline by ringing 0808 800 5002.
- CEOP have produced a film resources for parents to help them keep children safe from the risks of sexting. They can be seen here:
 - ◆ <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/Teachers/Nude-Selfies/>
- The Safer Internet Centre has produced resources called 'So You Got Naked Online' which help young people to handle incidents of sexting
 - ◆ <http://childnetsic.s3.amazonaws.com/ufiles/Files%202015/SYGNO%20Booklet%20%20v%20%20May%202015.pdf>

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Annex C

The following provides an overview of the reporting functions provided by the main service providers:

Snapchat

Snapchat offers users the ability to share stories and images/videos. The picture or the 'snap' is shared and then disappears after a few seconds. Snapchat also allows users to share Snapchat Stories these are snaps that are shared in a sequence across a 24 hour period.

Snapchat provides a reporting function here <https://support.snapchat.com/en-US/ca/abuse>

Users are able to block other users.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a messaging service where users can share pictures, texts or videos. These can be shared with one person or multiple users.

WhatsApp provides a reporting function here https://faq.whatsapp.com/1142481766359885?helpref=search&cms_platform=web

Users are able to block other users.

Instagram

Instagram is a picture and video sharing app which allows users to share images, make comments and post messages.

Instagram provides a reporting function here <https://help.instagram.com/443165679053819/>

Users are able to block other users.

Facebook

Facebook is a social network which allows users to create a profile, share images, videos and messages.

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Facebook provides a reporting function here:

Social reporting: <https://www.facebook.com/help/128548343894719>

This offers users the ability to contact other users directly to ask them to take something down that does not necessarily breach Facebook's terms of service. In some cases the child/young person may not feel comfortable in contacting the person directly so they can use the report flow to use another trusted person to help them – a teacher, friend, parent.

Public reporting: <https://www.facebook.com/help/263149623790594/>

Users who do not have a Facebook account are able to report directly to Facebook using the link above and completing the form.

Users are able to block other users.

YouTube

YouTube allows users to watch, create and share videos. Users can create their own YouTube account, make a music playlist and create their own channel. Users are also able to comment on other users channels.

YouTube provides a reporting function here <https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/2802027>

Users can report an individual video, a channel or a comment on a video Please note you need to have an account to be able to report on YouTube.

Google

The “right to be forgotten” ruling allows the public to request the removal of search results that they feel link to outdated or irrelevant information about themselves on a country-by-country basis. Users are able to complete a form to highlight what content they wish to be removed. Users have to specify why the content applies to them and why it is unlawful so the exact URL's relating to the search results need to be referenced.

https://support.google.com/legal/contact/lr_eudpa?product=websearch

A list of many other providers and links to their reporting functions can be found at the NSPCC's NetAware website <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

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In the event that a site has no reporting function and if the content is a sexual image you can report it to the Internet Watch Foundation (*IWF*). Sexual images of anyone under 18 are illegal and the IWF can work to get them removed from sites which do not have reporting procedures. You can report directly to the IWF here <https://www.iwf.org.uk/>

Support Services

If you need additional advice or support in contacting providers, the following organisations may be able to assist:

CEOP – If you are concerned that a child is being sexually abused, exploited or groomed online you should report to CEOP <https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre>

The NSPCC adults helpline – 0808 800 5002

The NSPCC have partnered with O2 to offer direct support to parents and other adults on issues relating to online safety.

Childline <https://www.childline.org.uk/>

Childline offers direct support to children and young people including issues relating to the sharing of sexual imagery.

The Professionals Online Safety helpline (POSH)

<https://saferinternet.org.uk/professionals-online-safety-helpline>

Tel: 0844 381 4772

The POSH helpline has been set up to support professionals with an online safety concern or an online safety concern for children in their care. Professionals are able to contact the helpline to resolve issues.

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