

Responding to Sexting

In light of comments in September 2015 from the National Police Chief Council's lead on children and young people who said, "if a school chose to take an incident to the police, then officers must record the crime", we have updated our advice on how schools should manage incidents of sexting.

For Staff

If you have a report of (or you suspect) a sexting incident

Remember: intimate sexting images are typically considered to be illegal images which is why incidents need very careful management for all those involved.



If a device is involved – secure the device and switch it off

Seek advice - report to your designated safeguarding lead officer via your normal safeguarding procedures

“Sexting doesn't just occur within, but also now happens prior to, a relationship
Prof A Phippen (2012)”

“16% of teenagers don't think naked images are inappropriate
SWGfL (2009)”

“Teenagers typically consider sexting to be 'mundane' and widely known about”

“Celebrity, media representations of body image and pornography all play a role in sexting”



¹Phippen, A. (2012) Sexting: An Exploration of Practices, Attitudes and Influences. (<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/globalassets/documents/research-reports/sexting-exploration-practices-attitudes-influences-report-2012.pdf>)

²http://ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/externaldocs/ACPO_Lead_position_on_Self_Take_n_Images.pdf



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Managing Sexting Incidents

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Designated Safeguarding Lead Officer

Sexting among children and young people can be a common occurrence; where they often describe these incidents as 'mundane'. Children, involved in sexting incidents, will be dealt with (by the police) as victims as opposed to perpetrators (unless there are mitigating circumstances).

Record all incidents of sexting. This includes both the actions you did take together with the actions that you didn't take, together with justifications.

In applying judgement to each sexting incident consider the following:

- ✓ Significant age difference between the sender/receiver involved.
- ✓ If there is any external coercion involved or encouragement beyond the sender/receiver.
- ✓ If you recognise the child as more vulnerable than is usual (ie at risk).
- ✓ If the image is of a severe or extreme nature.
- ✓ If the situation is not isolated and the image has been more widely distributed.
- ✓ If this is not the first time children have been involved in a sexting act.
- ✓ If other knowledge of either the sender/recipient may add cause for concern (ie difficult home circumstances).

If you have a report of (or you suspect) a sexting incident



If these characteristics present cause for concern, then escalate or refer the incident using your normal safeguarding procedures.

If these characteristics do not present cause for concern, then manage the situation accordingly, recording details of the incident, action and resolution.

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