‘Sexting’ in schools: advice and support around self-generated images

What to do and how to handle it

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We have made every effort to take into account relevant laws and best practice in the preparation of this document. However, sexting issues have the potential to be complex and multi-faceted. As case law in this area is still relatively underdeveloped, nothing in this document should be deemed to constitute legal advice.

If you have a specific query relating to sexting in your school or organisation you should seek help from an appropriate adviser, which may include your Local Authority, Children’s Services, the Department for Education (DfE), your Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB), the police, the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP), other child protection experts, the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF), counsellors and legal advisers.

The authors and other contributors of this document can therefore accept no liability for any damage or loss suffered or incurred whether directly, consequentially, indirectly or otherwise by anyone relying on the information in this publication or any other information referred to in it.

URLs and references given in this document were correct at the time of publication but may be subject to change over time.

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Introduction

This advice is in three sections:

★ Part 1

Offers practical advice about what to do if sexting happens in your school, highlights the steps that you need to take and offers examples of best practice through case studies.

★ Part 2

Gives an overview of the problem and offers an insight into the research and categorisation of sexting incidents. It highlights some activities that schools can do to highlight the issues and develop a 'whole school' approach.

Ideally this advice should be read together but it has been designed and developed to enable schools to act swiftly in the case of an incident *(Part 1)* and to be able to access background information and support *(Part 2)*.

This advice supports all schools regardless of their status (Free school, Academy, Independent or Maintained school) in developing their approach to handling and preventing incidents of sexting. It should help you to develop preventative approaches and offers advice about handling incidents when they arise. It has been written in conjunction with schools, local authorities, teacher unions, the police and child protection charities. The advice is grounded in practice and offers pragmatic support and advice in a form that schools can apply to their own context.

★ Exercise Sheet, Resource Sheets and Annexes

A range of supporting materials to be used as a 'toolkit' for individual or group training in the *Understanding the Nature of Sexting* exercise outlined in Part 2. This material may be duplicated for multiple use.

★ Part 1

Definition of 'sexting'

There are a number of definitions of sexting but for the purposes of this advice sexting is simply defined as:

Images or videos generated

- **by children under the age of 18, or**
- **of children under the age of 18 that are of a sexual nature or are indecent.**

These images are shared between young people and/or adults via a mobile phone, handheld device or website with people they may not even know.

There are many different types of sexting *(please see Part 2 for definitions)* and it is likely that no two cases will be the same. It is necessary to carefully consider each case on its own merit. *Annexes 1 and 2* will help you to make decisions appropriate to your context. However, it is important to apply a consistent approach when dealing with an incident to help protect yourself, the school and the student. The range of contributory factors in each case also needs to be considered in order to determine an appropriate and proportionate response. **It is therefore suggested that each school has a clear policy detailing the action to be taken. All staff should be familiar with this police and parents and pupils should be made aware of it.**

The flowchart in *Annex 1* (adapted from *'Medway Local Authority Response Process for Professionals'*) will help you to make a decision about the actions you need to take.

★ Steps to take in the case of an incident

Step 1 Disclosure by a student

Your school policies should outline the protocols relating to any form of disclosure from a student. Sexting disclosures should follow the normal safeguarding practices and protocols. A student is likely to be very distressed especially if the image has been circulated widely and if they don't know who has shared it, seen it or where it has ended up. They will need pastoral support during the disclosure and after the event. They may even need immediate protection or a referral to social services.

The following questions will help decide upon the best course of action:

- **Is the student disclosing about themselves receiving an image, sending an image or sharing an image?**
- **What sort of image is it? Is it potentially illegal or is it inappropriate?**
- **Are the school child protection and safeguarding policies and practices being followed?** For example, is a member of the child protection team on hand and is their advice and support available?
- **How widely has the image been shared and is the device in their possession?**
- **Is it a school device or a personal device?**
- **Does the student need immediate support and or protection?**
- **Are there other students and or young people involved?**
- **Do they know where the image has ended up?**

This situation will need to be handled very sensitively. Whatever the nature of the incident, ensure school safeguarding and child protection policies and practices are adhered to.

Step 2 Searching a device – what are the rules?

In a school-based context, it is highly likely that the image will have been created and potentially shared through mobile devices. It may be that the image is not on one single device: it may be on a website or on a multitude of devices; it may be on either a school-owned or personal device. It is important to establish the location of the image but be aware that this may be distressing for the young person involved, so be conscious of the support they may need.

The revised Education Act 2011 brought to bear significant new powers and freedoms for teachers and schools. Essentially, the Act gives schools and/or teachers the power to seize and search an electronic device if they think there is good reason for doing so. The interpretation of this Act has not yet been tested and many schools ban personal devices in schools. For more information about the Act go to:

www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/21/section/2/enacted

www.education.gov.uk/aboutdfe/advice/f0076897/screening,-searching-and-confiscation/screening-searching-and-confiscation

A device can be examined, confiscated and securely stored if there is reason to believe it contains indecent images or extreme pornography. When searching a mobile device the following conditions should apply:

- **The action is in accordance with the school's child protection and safeguarding policies**
- **The search is conducted by the head teacher or a person authorised by them**
- **A member of the safeguarding team is present**
- **The search is conducted by a member of the same sex**

If any illegal images of a child are found you should consider whether to inform the police.

Taking into account the ACPO position [see Part 2 – 2 of this advice], as a general rule it will almost always be proportionate to refer any incident involving "aggravated" sharing of images to the police [see Part 2 – 6 of this advice], whereas purely "experimental" conduct may proportionately be dealt with without such referral, most particularly if it involves the child sharing images of themselves.

Any conduct involving, or possibly involving, the knowledge or participation of adults should always be referred to the police.

If an "experimental" incident is not referred to the police the reasons for this should be recorded in writing.

Always put the child first. Do not search the device if this will cause additional stress to the student/person whose image has been distributed.

✗ Never

- **Search a mobile device even in response to an allegation or disclosure if this is likely to cause additional stress to the student/young person UNLESS there is clear evidence to suggest that there is an immediate problem**
- **Print out any material for evidence**
- **Move any material from one storage device to another**

✓ Always

- **Inform the school child protection officer (CPO)**
- **Record the incident**
- **Act in accordance with school safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures**
- **Inform relevant colleagues/senior management team about the alleged incident before searching a device**

If there is an indecent image of a child on a website or a social networking site then you should report the image to the site hosting it. Under normal circumstances you would follow the reporting procedures on the respective website; however, in the case of a sexting incident involving a child or young person where you feel that they may be at risk of abuse then you should report the incident directly to CEOP **www.ceop.police.uk**/ceop-report, so that law enforcement can make an assessment, expedite the case with the relevant provider and ensure that appropriate action is taken to safeguard the child.

Step 3 What to do and not do with the image

If the image has been shared across a personal mobile device:

✓ Always

- **Confiscate and secure the device(s)**

✗ Never

- **View the image unless there is a clear reason to do so *(see bullet 2 above)***
- **Send, share or save the image anywhere**
- **Allow students to do any of the above**

If the image has been shared across a school network, a website or a social network:

✓ Always

- **Block the network to all users and isolate the image**

✗ Never

- **Send or print the image**
- **Move the material from one place to another**
- **View the image outside of the protocols in your safeguarding and child protection policies and procedures.**

Step 4 Who should deal with the incident

Often, the first port of call for a student is a class teacher. Whomever the initial disclosure is made to must act in accordance with the school safeguarding and/or child protection policy, ensuring that a member of the child protection team and a senior member of staff are involved in dealing with the incident.

The child protection officer should **always** record the incident. Senior management should also always be informed. There may be instances where the image needs to be viewed and this should be done in accordance with protocols. The best interests of the child should always come first; if viewing the image is likely to cause additional stress, professionals should make a judgement about whether or not it is appropriate to do so.

Step 5 Deciding on a response

There may be a multitude of reasons why a student has engaged in sexting – it may be a romantic/sexual exploration scenario or it may be due to coercion.

It is important to remember that it won't always be appropriate to inform the police; this will depend on the nature of the incident (see *Part 2* for definitions). However, as a school it is important that incidents are consistently recorded. It may also be necessary to assist the young person in removing the image from a website or elsewhere.

The flowcharts in *Annexes 1 and 2* will help you to decide on your response.

If indecent images of a child are found:

- Act in accordance with your child protection and safeguarding policy, e.g. notify SMT/pastoral team
- Store the device securely
- Carry out a risk assessment in relation to the young person *(Use Annex 1 and 2 for support)*
- Make a referral if needed
- Contact the police (if appropriate)
- Put the necessary safeguards in place for the student, e.g. they may need counselling support, immediate protection and parents must also be informed.
- Inform parents and/or carers about the incident and how it is being managed.

(Depending on the nature of the image and the family circumstances of the young person, communication with parents will need to be carefully handled. The definitions presented in Part 2 by Finkelhor and Annexes 1 and 2 will help identify how to handle communication with parents. In addition, in Part 2, there is a useful exercise in developing approaches to managing incidents of sexting.)

Step 6 Contacting other agencies (making a referral)

If the nature of the incident is high-risk, consider contacting your local children's social care team. (*Annex 1: 'Sexting: Response Process for Professionals'* and the *'Risk Assessment Tool for Young People'* in *Annex 2* will help you to decide.) Depending on the nature of the incident and the response you may also consider contacting your local police or referring the incident to CEOP.

Understanding the nature of the incident will help to determine the appropriate course of action. The following case studies exemplify the varying nature of sexting incidents and appropriate levels of response.

★ Case study 1

A group of year 6 pupils aged between 10 and 11 were speaking to each other on instant messenger and using webcams. One girl (with mild learning difficulties) was speaking on her laptop, which was upstairs in her bedroom. She was getting ready for bed and accidentally 'flashed' on webcam. Another pupil (girl aged 10) from the group told the class teacher what had happened the next day at school, who then reported the concern to the head teacher.

Action

The school's Designated Child Protection Coordinator (DCPC) discussed the concern with both the children and parents of the other children involved. It was discussed with a local police officer and agreed that police action was not necessary but that they would support the school in speaking to the girl's parents.

The girl's parents had not considered the impact and possible risk of locating the laptop and its webcam in her bedroom. They agreed to take the laptop to a family area and only allow webcam use when supervised. The school consulted with social services but no action was taken.

The school revisited the subject of e-safety with all pupils in school (appropriate to age and ability) and wrote a letter to all parents directing them to advice and guidance about online safety at home. Specific advice was given to key stage two pupils about the safe use of webcams and sending images. Specific advice was given to the child concerned with support from the school's Special Educational Needs officer (SENCO).

★ Case study 2

A 13 year-old girl was chatting to a boy she met online. He told her that he was 16 and new to the area and that he was using social networking sites to make new friends. They spoke online for a few weeks and she told her friends that she was in a relationship. She also told them that they had been speaking on the phone and she had sent him some naked photos of herself via her mobile phone. The boy then said that he wanted them to meet up in real life at his house to take the relationship further, but that she must keep him a secret. Her friends were worried and spoke to a teacher at school.

Action

The teacher raised the concern with the school DCPC. A consultation took place with social services and the police were spoken to regarding any possible criminal implications. The police advised that they would investigate the incident and found that the 16 year-old boy was actually a 28 year-old man who had been speaking to several young girls and requesting indecent images. He has since been arrested.

The school spoke to the girl and her parents and gave them specific advice about online safety and safe behaviours. The girl was also given targeted support via the school counsellor.

Again, the school revisited e-safety for all pupils using CEOP's *ThinkUKnow* materials and explained how they could report any concerns, e.g. to the school, to Childline or to CEOP. All parents were sent information about the importance of online safety at home.

Courtesy of Kent County Council

Step 7 Containing the incident and managing student reaction

Sadly, there are cases in which victims of sexting have had to leave or change schools because of the impact the incident has had on them. The student will be anxious about who has seen the image and where it has ended up. They will seek reassurance regarding its removal from the platform on which it was shared. They are likely to need support from the school, their parents and their friends. Education programmes can reinforce to all students the impact and severe consequences that this behaviour can have. Consider engaging with your local police and asking them to talk to the students.

Other staff may need to be informed of incidents and should be prepared to act if the issue is continued or referred to by other students. The school, its students and parents should be on high alert, challenging behaviour and ensuring that the victim is well cared for and protected. The students' parents should usually be told what has happened so that they can keep a watchful eye over their child, especially when they are online at home.

Creating a supportive environment for students in relation to the incident is very important.

Preventative educational programmes on sexting can be found on CEOP's advice-giving website **www.thinkuknow.co.uk** and the South West Grid for learning have developed advice for young people at **www.swgfl.org.uk/sextinghelp**

Step 8 Reviewing outcomes and procedures to prevent further incidents

As with all incidents, a review process ensures that the matter has been managed effectively and that the school has the capacity to learn and improve its handling procedures. Incidents of sexting can be daunting for a school to manage, especially if the image has been widely shared between pupils in school.

An established approach to schools managing and preventing incidents of e-safety relies on them developing effective **Policies and Practices**, a secure **Infrastructure**, robust **Education** for teachers, parents and pupils all underpinned by high quality **Standards**. This model is known as PIES.

Using PIES (see below), a preventative approach to sexting and other incidents of e-safety can help to prevent further incidents.

Policies and procedure

The issue of sexting should be referenced within all relevant school policies. For example:

- 'Acceptable Use' policies;
- Behaviour policies;
- Child protection and safeguarding policies;
- Anti-bullying policies; and
- Home-school agreements

Be clear that incidents of sexting will not be tolerated and that sanctions will be enforced if any member of the school community breaches any of the policies. Explain that sanctions may include involving the police if images are considered illegal and that sanctions will be enforced regardless of the use of school equipment or personal equipment, both on and off the school premises. Ensure that parents understand the legal and other consequences of sexting and the way in which the incident will be dealt with.

Sexting incidents should follow child protection procedures. Consider a proportionate level of response to each incident, taking care not to further traumatise the victim by imposing unwarranted sanctions upon them. *Annexes 1* and *2* offer guidance on appropriate courses of action and considerations when handling an incident.

In developing your policy use the exercise in *Part 2: 'Understanding the Nature of Sexting'* to raise awareness of the issues with staff.

Infrastructure and technology

Many schools employ a variety of technical solutions to help to protect students and staff – firewalls, filtering, monitoring and so on. Most sexting incidents relate to self-generated images on personally owned devices and can generally occur outside of school. However there have been numerous occasions in which images have been shared within schools and have been uploaded onto the school network. Be aware of how you monitor the network:

- Who has access to the image?
- Where it is stored on the network?
- How it would get removed from the network?

- What other ways could a sexting incident be identified and by whom?
- How would the incident be escalated to the correct person?

- Is your school system reactive or preventative, *i.e. does the school have a network monitoring solution or are you relying on students and staff to report any issues? If you rely on incidents being reported, to whom are they reported and what are the escalation procedures?*

Education and training

As mentioned above, most sexting incidents relate to self-generated images on personally-owned devices, generally outside of school. Schools need to consider preventative education strategies for their pupils and appropriate staff training to identify and manage incidents. Consider tackling sexting issues within the curriculum using existing educational resources:

- Check the CEOP resources at **www thinkuknow.co.uk** There is a film called *Exposed* and accompanying lesson plans for 11-16 year olds
- The children's charity Childnet **www.childnet-int.org** have developed a drama for secondary school-aged children on the issue of sexting
- Teachtoday is a source of advice for teachers on a variety of topics and does include information on the issue of sexting www.teachtoday.eu
- The Southwest Grid for Learning have developed a resource for young people: *'So you got naked online'* **www.swgfl.org.uk/sextinghelp** which supports them in knowing what to do if things have gone wrong online

Staff may also need support in developing their understanding of incidents of sexting.

- CEOP conduct training for professionals in the form of an ambassador course **www.thinkuknow.co.uk/trainers**
- Schools can undertake the 360 degree safe self-evaluation online tool **www.swgfl.org.uk** to highlight the areas they need to develop in relation to the PIES model

Use the exercise *'Understanding Incidents of Sexting'* in *Part 2* to develop awareness with staff and reflect this in your policies.

Provide support to parents in understanding the issues:

- The Vodafone digital parenting magazine is an excellent resource for parents on all aspects of e-safety View it online or order it here: **www.vodafone.com/parents**
- Talk Talk have also developed the HomeSafe challenge which again, targets all aspects of e-safety including sexting: homesafechallenge.co.uk [link no longer valid]

Standards and inspection

Whilst Ofsted will be interested in the management of sexting incidents, you will also wish to ensure that your procedures are fit for purpose and to track levels of incidents. You will have your own way of reviewing and monitoring progress, ensuring that you maintain certain standards in relation to school policies, current practices, maintenance of the school infrastructure and educational opportunities. After an incident has been dealt with it is important to review the handling of the incident to ensure best practice and to update management procedures where necessary.

★ Part 2

Categorisation, the legal context and the Ofsted framework

1 Definition of 'sexting'

There are a number of definitions of sexting but for the purposes of this advice sexting is simply defined as:

Images or videos generated

- **by children under the age of 18, or**
- **of children under the age of 18 that are of a sexual nature or are indecent.**

These images are shared between young people and/or adults via a mobile phone, handheld device or website with people they may not even know.

Often, incidents of sexting are not clear-cut or isolated; schools may encounter a variety of scenarios.

Today's young people document their lives online. Culturally, there is a seamless connection between the online and offline worlds. However, young people often do not anticipate the implications and consequences of sharing things online as they would offline - there is a disconnect between the two. Research by the Pew centre in America in 2010 states that 'sexting is a teen reality that's here to stay.[1] 'Kids 'sext' to show off, to entice someone, to show interest in someone, or to prove commitment'.

This may be true but the consequences of sexting can be devastating for young people. In extreme cases it can result in suicide or a criminal record, isolation and vulnerability. Young people can end up being criminalised for sharing an apparently innocently image which may have, in fact, been created for exploitative reasons.

The social and psychological effects on young people can be significant and it is not uncommon for the victim to be expelled, move school or to suffer paranoia and become very isolated. It is essential that schools handle these incidents as carefully as possible and offer support to all parties involved whilst abiding by the law. Schools will also want to take as many preventative measures as they can to educate young people about the risks and to support them in maintaining a healthy digital footprint.

Because of the prevalence of sexting (see below) young people are not always aware that their actions are illegal. In fact, sexting as a term is not something that is recognised by young people and the 'cultural norms' for adults can be somewhat different. Some celebrities have made comments which appear to endorse sexting – 'it's okay, as long as you hide your face' - giving the impression that sexting is normal and acceptable. However, in the context of the law it is an illegal activity and young people must be made aware of this.

1 America Pew Centre- www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2009/Teens-and-Sexting.aspx

2 What the law says

It is important to be aware that young people involved in sharing sexual videos and pictures may be committing a criminal offence. Specifically, crimes involving indecent photographs (including pseudo images) of a person under 18 years of age fall under Section 1 of the Protection of Children Act 1978 and Section 160 Criminal Justice Act 1988. Under this legislation it is a crime to:

- **take an indecent photograph or allow an indecent photograph to be taken;**
- **make an indecent photograph (this includes downloading or opening an image that has been sent via email);**
- **distribute or show such an image;**
- **possess with the intention of distributing images;**
- **advertise; and**
- **possess such images.**

While any decision to charge individuals for such offences is a matter for the Crown Prosecution Service, it is unlikely to be considered in the public interest to prosecute children. However, children need to be aware that they may be breaking the law. Although unlikely to be prosecuted, children and young people who send or possess images may be visited by police and on some occasions media equipment could be removed. This is more likely if they have distributed images.

The decision to criminalise children and young people for sending these kinds of images is a little unclear and it is worth discussing the issues with your local police force. However, the current Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) position is that:

> **'ACPO does not support the prosecution or criminalisation of children for taking indecent images of themselves and sharing them. Being prosecuted through the criminal justice system is likely to be upsetting and distressing for children especially if they are convicted and punished. The label of sex offender that would be applied to a child or young person convicted of such offences is regrettable, unjust and clearly detrimental to their future health and wellbeing.'**

www.ceop.police.uk/Documents/ceopdocs/externaldocs/ACPO_Lead_position_on_Self_Taken_Images.pdf

However, there are cases in which children and young people have been convicted and sent to prison. The important thing to remember is that whilst, as a school, you will want to consider the implications of passing an incident over to the police, it is not the responsibility of a school to make decisions about the seriousness of the matter. Clearly, if it is a case that involves an adult, the process and potential outcome will be very different. What you will need to consider is how to manage the outcome and process: there may well be safeguarding procedures that your school needs to follow and issues to manage in terms of staff, pupils and the wider school community.

Essentially, though, sexting is classed as illegal as it constitutes sharing and/or possessing an indecent image of a child.

3 Extent of sexting

Sexting is a relatively recent phenomenon; however, with the growth of mobile phone ownership among young people (41% of 12-15 year olds have a smartphone[2]) there has been an increase in the number of young people sharing and receiving images.

Statistics from the children's charity Beatbullying[3] suggest the following:

- **Over one third (38%) had received a sexually explicit text or email – 36% of males and 39% of females**
- **Over a quarter (25%) had received an offensive sexual image**
- **85% knew the identity of the aggressor**
- **The majority were peers and only 2% indicated that it was an adult**
- **Just under a third (29%) have been chatting online when someone started to talk to them about sexual things**
- **6% had received a message or image on the subject of sex which subsequently made them feel uncomfortable or upset**
- **Over half of teachers (54%) were aware of pupils creating and sharing sexually explicit messages and images via the internet or mobile**

More recent qualitative research from the NSPCC[4] suggests that sexting reinforces some of the negative social stereotypes about the relationships between boys and girls. Boys gain kudos from having sexually provocative images of girls on their phones whereas the same is not true for girls:

> **'We found considerable evidence of an age old double standard, where sexually active boys are admired and rated, while sexually active girls are denigrated, shamed and described as sluts'**

A recent report by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP): *'Threat Assessment of Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse – June 2012'* highlights the increase in 'user generated indecent imagery'. They identify that they have seen a marked increase in the number of reports where young teenagers appear to have taken still or video indecent imagery of themselves and then shared this online.

They highlight the following platforms as a place where young people are likely to share these images:

- **Live one-to-one video chat on web sites**
- **Video chat via instant messaging applications**
- **Files sent by email to another person**
- **Files uploaded to public video hosting web sites**
- **Files being sent as attachments during online chat sessions**
- **Files used as profile images or posted on social networking sites**

2 Ofcom 2011

3 Beatbullying, Virtual Violence – Protecting young people from Cyberbullying, 2009; Beatbullying,Virtual Violence II – January 2012

4 Authors: Jessica Ringrose (Institute of Education, London), Rosalind Gill (King's College, London), Sonia Livingstone (London School of Economics), Laura Harvey (Open University)
www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/resourcesforprofessionals/sexualabuse/sexting-research-report_wdf89269.pdf

The list on page 17 relates to order of prevalence of reporting and CEOP contrast this to their previous report - most of these images are being shared by children **'without external influence, coercion or threats from adults or others'.**

The research highlights that sexting is something that young people engage in regardless of the adults that surround them. There is a need for schools to develop a strong educational programme that supports prevention but we cannot ignore some of the 'cultural norms' that are developing around this kind of behaviour. As with all aspects of children's safety, there is no single solution.

Though most incidents of sexting take place outside of the school on personal devices, the consequences and behaviours 'migrate' back into school. Beatbullying's research in both 2009 and 2012 highlighted that most online bullying took place between young people who knew one another in the offline world - the two are transient places for social interaction, consequently the actions of young people are brought to bear in all of their environments.

★ Case study 3

A group of girls were teasing a 14 year-old boy in their class about his sexuality. They started to send him nasty text messages calling him names. He replied by sending a naked photo of himself to one of them (a 14 year-old girl). The girl then forwarded the text on to her friends and joked to the boy about posting it online for others to see. He reported his concerns about the image going onto a social networking site to a pastoral manager.

Action

The pastoral manager discussed the concern with the school DCPC. A consultation was made with social services and the police were spoken to regarding any possible criminal implications. The police advised the school that they felt that criminal action was unlikely to be helpful but they would investigate the incident and support the school in speaking to all the children involved, as well as their parents, about the possible consequences of their behaviour (both legal and emotional).

It was found that the girl had not posted the image online and the image had not been shared beyond the group of girls. The children were given a warning regarding their behaviour. The boy was offered access to additional support regarding the incident as well as the bullying.

The school revisited e-safety for pupils specifically around the sending of pictures via phones. All parents were given information about the importance of online safety, specifically the use of mobile phones for sending photos and messages. The school also updated their anti-bullying policy to include homophobic bullying and cyberbullying.

4 The risks to young people

Sexting is a behaviour that young people often engage in without understanding the full consequences. It is essential, therefore, that they understand the legal implications and the impact on others.

The initial risk posed by sexting primarily comes from peers, friends and others in their social network rather than from strangers or adults. Once images are in the public domain, young people may then be subjected to additional risks.

It is also important to recognise that sexting does not refer to one single activity: it can have multiple facets and activities, be connected to sexual pleasure and be linked to a 'normal' part of sexual development; however, something that transpires online can quickly spiral out of control as it becomes freely available in the public domain. It can then be transferred, forwarded, downloaded, uploaded and shared.

> **'Recent evidence suggests that girls are more adversely affected by the risks than boys – it is not a gender neutral practice, it's something that is shaped by pre-existing gender dynamics and reinforced through the use of the technology.'**
>
> *NSPCC – Children, Young People and Sexting May 2012*

Young people are also essentially taking risks with their futures. Increasingly employers, universities and colleges are doing 'digital digging' – they are looking at profiles, searching for names and asking questions about the online profile of potential recruits.

Children can also be criminalised for incidents of sexting (see *What the Law Says*). Though unusual, there is a risk that sharing, possession and uploading of an indecent image can result in a young person being prosecuted under the Sexual offences Act (2003) and the Protection of Children Act (1978).

It can also significantly affect the mental health and social interactions of young people. Once the image is in the public domain, it is difficult for to control, to know who has seen it and what they have done with it. This can lead to feelings of paranoia and isolation at a time when teenagers need to build up their self-esteem during a crucial stage of their development.

The risks to victims, bystanders and perpetrators are different but all three contain a degree of risk that can leave a young person in a vulnerable state and can significantly affect their future.

5 Sexting and the Ofsted inspection framework

The revised inspection arrangements for schools give an increased emphasis on behaviour and safety and the engagement of students and parents.[5]

Inspectors are required to report on the quality of education provided in the school and must, in particular, cover:

- The achievement of pupils at the school
- The quality of teaching in the school
- The quality of leadership in and management of the school
- **The behaviour and safety of pupils at the school**

Schools are expected to focus on the needs of students and parents by *'minimising the risk to children, young people and adults by evaluating the effectiveness of schools procedures for safeguarding'.* They will be asked specific questions by the inspectorate. They will also be asked to **inform their decisions by students and parents who have significant interest in the school.**

5 Ofsted January 2012

Behaviour and safety of pupils at the school

When evaluating the behaviour and safety of pupils at the school, inspectors consider:

- Pupils' attitudes to learning and conduct in lessons and around the school
- Pupils' behaviour towards, and respect for, other young people and adults, including freedom from bullying and harassment that may include cyber-bullying and prejudice-based bullying related to special educational need, sexual orientation, sex, race, religion and belief, gender reassignment or disability
- How well teachers manage the behaviour and expectations of pupils to ensure that all pupils have an equal and fair chance to thrive and learn in an atmosphere of respect and dignity
- Pupils' ability to assess and manage risk appropriately and to keep themselves safe
- Pupils' attendance and punctuality at school and in lessons
- How well the school ensures the systematic and consistent management of behaviour.

Quality of leadership in and management of the school

When evaluating the quality of leadership and management at all levels, including, where relevant, governors, inspectors consider whether they:

- Demonstrate an ambitious vision for the school and high expectations for what every pupil and teacher can achieve, and set high standards for quality and performance
- Improve teaching and learning, including the management of pupils' behaviour
- Provide a broad and balanced curriculum that: meets the needs of all pupils; enables all pupils to achieve their full educational potential and make progress in their learning; and promotes their good behaviour and safety and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Evaluate the school's strengths and weaknesses and use their findings to promote improvement
- Improve the school and develop its capacity for sustaining improvement by developing leadership capacity and high professional standards among all staff
- Engage with parents and carers in supporting pupils' achievement, behaviour and safety and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
- Ensure that all pupils are safe.

(Ofsted 2012)

Successful handling of sexting incidents present an opportunity for schools to demonstrate quality leadership and management of their pupils' behaviour and safety.

Schools have a duty of care towards their pupils and an obligation to support them in being safe in the online world as well as the physical world. Whilst Ofsted makes no specific reference to incidents of 'sexting', it will have an effect on how safe young people feel and the consequent negative effect on their behaviour in school.

6 Should all incidents of sexting be treated in the same way?

One of the challenges for schools is dealing appropriately with sexting scenarios. Recent research by the NSPCC identifies that sexting does not refer to any one particular activity; rather, it can be a variety of different activities motivated by a variety of different situations.

David Finkelhor, the American sociologist, and Janis Wolak conducted a review of over 550 sexting cases in the US from a national survey of law enforcement agencies. All of the cases which involved youth produced sexual images. These were defined in American law as *'images of minors created by minors that could qualify as child pornography under applicable criminal statutes'*.

Broadly, Finkelhor defined them into two categories: Aggravated and Experimental

Aggravated incidents of sexting involved criminal or abusive elements beyond the creation of an image. These included further elements, adult involvement or criminal or abusive behaviour by minors such as sexual abuse, extortion, threats, malicious conduct arising from personal conflicts, or creation or sending or showing of images without the knowledge or against the will of a minor who was pictured.

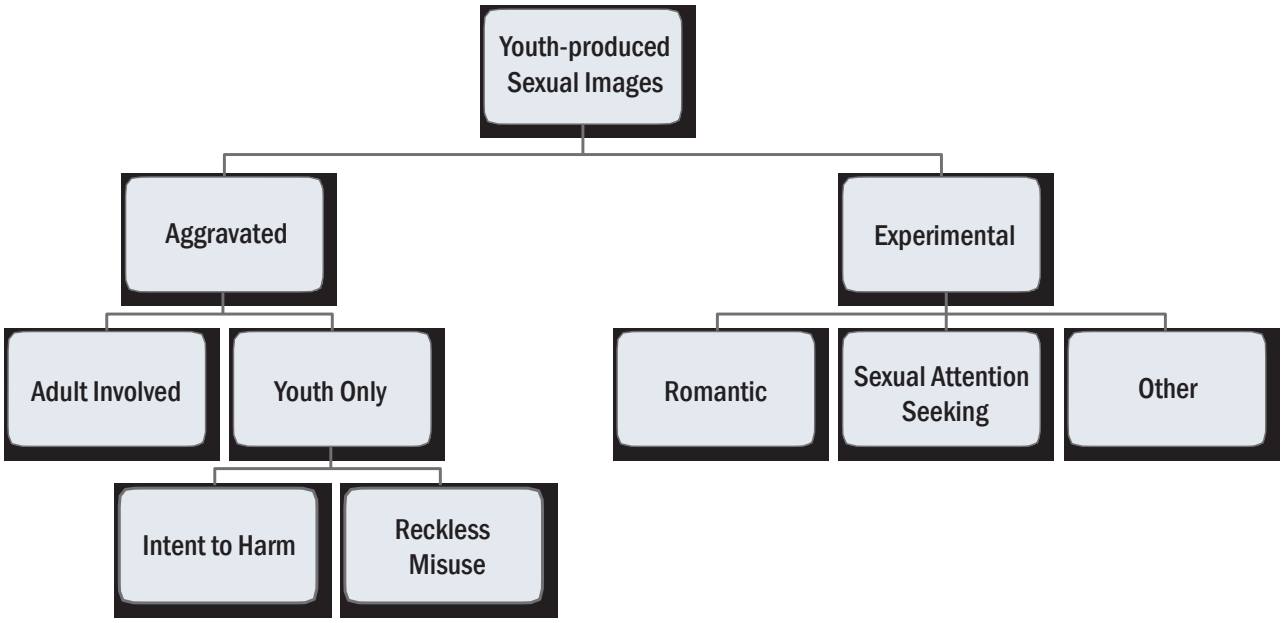
Experimental incidents of sexting involved youths taking pictures of themselves to share with established boy or girlfriends, to create romantic interest in other youth, or for reasons such as attention seeking. There was no criminal element (and certainly no criminal intent) beyond the creation and sending of the images and no apparent malice or lack of willing participation.

Reprinted from Wolak and Finkelhor 'Sexting: a Typology' March 2011

The intention of the typology is to help 'codify' some of the diversity and explain the aims and motivations behind some of the behaviours. There is recognition in Finkelhor and Womak's work in the diversity of the situations and even within the typologies. Anyone dealing with incidents of sexting, therefore, needs to understand the circumstances as this may well influence how the issue is dealt with in the context of the school, the individual and the police.

The exercise below is based on Finkelhor's typology and will help schools to identify what sort of incidents have taken place and to develop awareness amongst staff. Consult the attached instructions sheet for information about how to carry out the activity.

Figure 1: ***Typology of youth-produced image cases known to law enforcement***



Exercise: understanding the nature of sexting

Refer to the Exercise Instruction Sheet which will help you in your preparation.

Having considered a range of cases you may find that your reaction to incidents of 'sexting' is being challenged by the contributory factors that surround each case and that a 'one size fits all approach' may not work. For example, consider:

- **the age and the developmental appropriateness of their actions:** is the activity appropriate for their age group or is it extreme behaviour? Teenagers will experiment – but what about a younger child? Are you concerned that the behaviour is outside the norms?
- **their background or context:** have they suffered abuse? Are they a looked after child or a vulnerable child? Have they been involved in the criminal justice system? Could their actions have been influenced by the behaviour of influential adults?
- **whether the child was willing or coerced:** were they subjected to sexual coercion or bullying, or was the incident willingly entered into? Were adults involved?
- **the nature of image that was shared:** how provocative or explicit was it? Does it break the law, i.e. is it a child sex abuse image?
- **the level of dissemination:** how widely was the image shared and with whom? How was it passed around?
- **participant intent/motive:** was it simply a 'romantic' gesture? Or was there intent to harm another? What other motive might there be? Was there sexual attention seeking?
- **the wellbeing of those involved:** depending on the answers to some of the questions above, you should risk-assess the situation in order to work out whether you need to escalate the issue to protect those involved.
- **whether protection, education or counselling is required** related to the level of risk. Does what may be a silly juvenile incident warrant a criminal record?
- **urgency and timing:** again relevant to the level of risk - for example, an incident taking place last thing on a Friday may escalate over the weekend
- **involvement of other schools:** do you need to contact the senior management team at another school if the sexting involves, or has disseminated to, pupils there?

The purpose of these additional considerations is to identify the kind of support that may be required, such as:

- whether the young person needs protecting and if so, in what way;
- whether they, their parents and/or other children in school need educating about the risks and issues;
- whether the young person needs counselling support services or child protection input

Essentially, every incident is unique and you will want to consider each one in context.

At this point you might try the exercise at *Annex 2: 'Assessing incidents of sexting and considering an appropriate and proportionate response'*.

There are certain steps that you should always take in order to ensure that you are abiding by the law. *Annex 1* explores some of the issues you will need to consider and the section below (*Dealing with an incident*) outlines the process you will want to take.

Conclusion

Sexting is a complicated and sensitive issue for all schools– there is no single solution and the consequences for young people, their families and schools can be devastating.

How a school handles these incidents presents specific challenges. New technologies offer great learning opportunities but the ease with which children and young people can share and upload images allow little time for consideration of the consequences of actions which may go hand in hand with adolescent development. There are preventative and reactive actions that can be taken by schools to support young people growing up in the digital world. We hope that this advice helps you to make effective decisions about the responses and actions you take in your school.

Remember

Always operate within the context of your own child protection and safeguarding procedure

Always put the welfare of the young person first

Raise awareness of the issue of sexting across the school

Make sure that your policies, practices and procedures have been updated to reflect how you will handle and prevent incidents

Ensure that you create an environment in school that is supportive for young people if an incident occurs so they know where to go

Annex 1 – Sexting: a response for professionals

Annex 2 – Risk assessment tool for young people engaged in potentially harmful sexting

Resource Sheet and Exercise Instruction Sheet: Understanding the nature of sexting, for the 'sexting' exercise.

Understanding the nature of sexting

This exercise is designed to illustrate that the nature of sexting incidents is variable and that an appropriate and proportionate response needs to be considered for each incident.

Instructions to trainer

Resources required:

- Resource Sheet 1 – typology definitions (1 per delegate)
- Resource Sheet 2 – case studies (1 per group)
- Resource Sheet 3 – response (1 per delegate)
- Resource Sheet 4 - Finkelhors typology (1 per delegate)
- Coloured Card – 6 colours
- Blu-tack

Preparation:

A Prepare a set of case study cards per group
This takes a little time but the cards can be re-used again and again

The 15 case studies (*Resource Sheet 2*) match Finkelhor's 6 categories as follows -

- Aggravated Adult (*case studies 4 & 7*)
- Aggravated Youth: Intent to Harm (*case studies 5, 6, 3 & 8*)
- Aggravated Youth: Reckless Misuse (*case studies 9 & 10*)
- Experimental Romantic (*case studies 11,12 & 2*)
- Experimental Attention Seeking (*case studies 13, 14, & 1*)
- Experimental Other (*case study 15*)

Assign a distinctive coloured card to each of the six categories above, then cut and mount each of the 15 case studies accordingly.

B Prepare 6 white 'header' cards for wall mounting
Each card should display the title of one of the typologies

Activity:

1. Divide delegates into small groups of 3-4. Where appropriate mix delegates to include a wide range of experience/job role etc.

2. Give each group a set of case study cards (all 15 if time permits, if not then ensure that they have at least one of each colour)

3. Instruct delegates to read each study and consider as a group the following questions:
   - What level of risk do they think is attached to each case – green/red/amber
   - What should the action of the school be?

At this stage a simple outline/plan of action – no more than 3 mins per case.

4. Give each group member a copy of Resource Sheets 1 & 4 and discuss with them Finkelhor's typology.

5. Give each delegate a copy of Resource Sheet 3 and ask them as a group to decide for each case study, which typology they would assign to it. Record any comments on their sheets.

6. Whilst delegates are working, blu-tack the 6 'header' cards around the room.

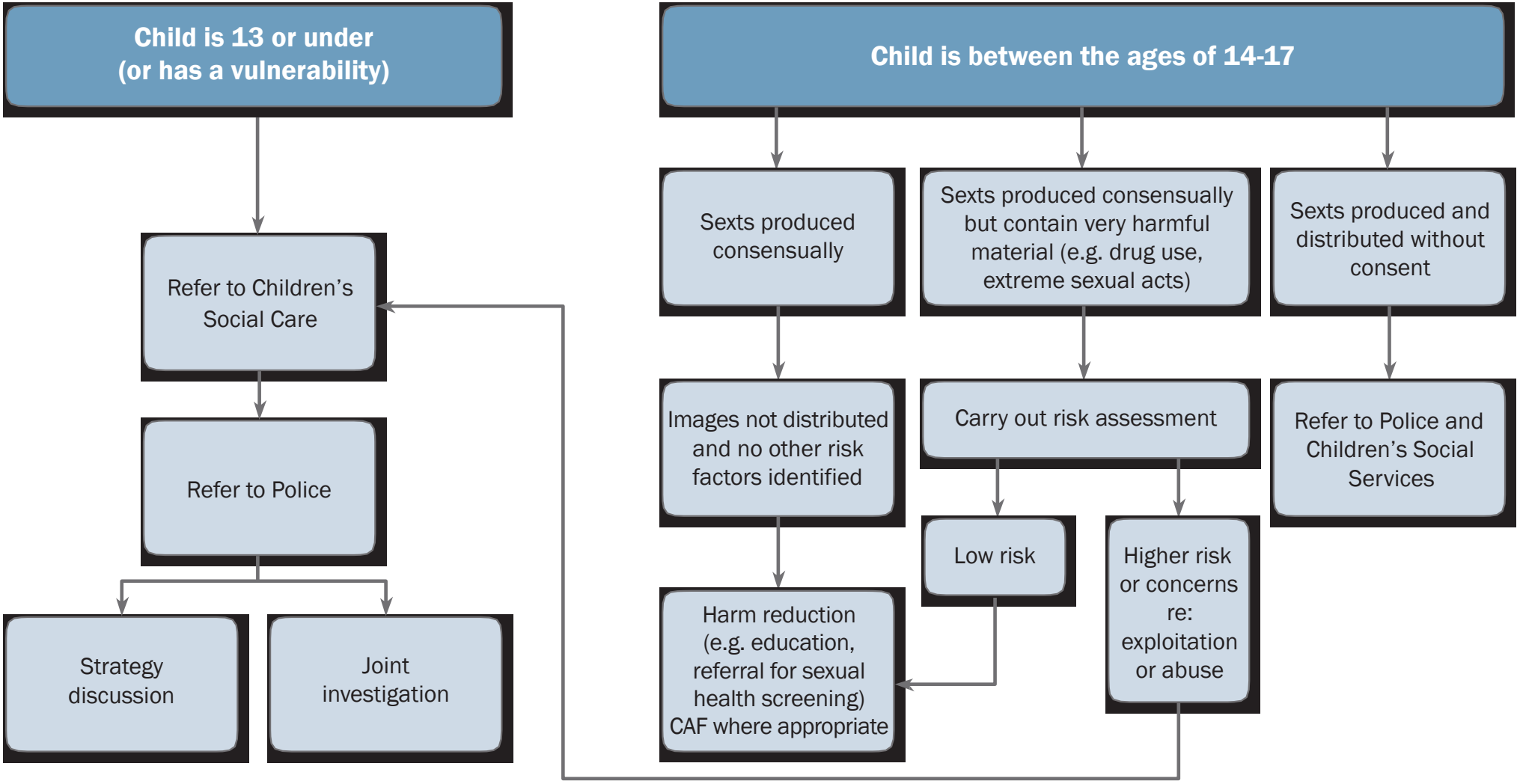
7. When delegates have categorised each of their case studies, ask them to post the cards on the wall under the appropriate 'header' card around the room. (It becomes apparent quite quickly that the colours match up in groups and show where groups agree/disagree on categorisation)

8. Comment on where there has been agreement/disagreement to pull out variation in group thinking – how well have they agreed with Finkelhor?

9. Ask delegates to now consider in view of what they have learned
   - Would they now react differently as a school?
   - Would all cases be treated in the same way?
   - What are the key factors in deciding what course of action should be taken?
   - What important lessons have they learned?

Sexting – Response process for professionals

This flowchart (adapted from *'Medway Local Authority Response Process for Professionals'*) will help you to make a decision about the actions you need to take.



Risk assessment tool for young people engaged in potentially harmful sexting

Indicator of risk or harm	Factors to be considered	Concern Yes/No	Comments
The age of the child	Sexual activity at a young age is a very strong indicator that there are risks to the welfare of children, whether boy or girl, and possibly others. This is particularly relevant if one of the parties is pre-pubertal. Children under 13 cannot lawfully give consent to sexual activity and there is a presumption that they will be referred to children's social services.		
The level of maturity and understanding of the child	Is the child/young person competent to consent to the sexual activity? Is there a relationship of trust? A legal definition is provided at s27 Sexual Offences Act 2003.		
The child's living circumstances or background	Has a child in need [s17] or referral of child protection concern [s47] ever been made on any party? Do cultural or religious beliefs have an impact on their circumstances and/or sharing information?		
Coercion or bribery	Has the child been encouraged to exchange sex for favours or other inducements such as supply of alcohol or substances? Is there evidence of persuasion, emotional blackmail, threats or use of pornography?		
Familial Child Sex Offences	At this stage of the assessment is any family member considered to be "a risk to children" or have convictions for sexual offences? Does the sexual partner fall within any of the following categories beyond the normal family relationships? Step-parent, foster parent, step sibling who live in the same household or have been regularly involved in caring for the child; or care workers such as nannies or au pairs if they live with or regularly care for the child.		

Indicator of risk or harm	Factors to be considered	Concern Yes/No	Comments
Behaviour of the child	Is the child withdrawn or anxious? Is there a pattern of 'casual' sexual relationships with different partners? Are there more than two other persons involved in the sexual activity?		
The misuse of substances or alcohol as a disinhibitor	The child or young person may be unaware or reluctant to acknowledge that alcohol or substances may be offered to facilitate sexual activity with them. The young person's own behaviour in misusing substances or alcohol may place the young person at increased risk of harm, as they may be unable to give informed consent.		
Secrecy	Has the sexual partner attempted to secure secrecy beyond what might be considered usual in a normal teenage relationship? Advice may need to be sought from a sexual health expert.		
Power imbalance	Is the relationship reasonably equal and consensual? Power imbalances can occur in many different forms including threats and aggression. Is there an age differential greater than 3 years?		
Disability impeding choice	Disabled children and young people are more likely to be abused than non-disabled children. However, disabled children and young people have a right to a private life, which should be respected. The Sexual Offences Act provides an offence of sexual activity against persons with a mental disorder impending choice. See Home Office/Mencap guidance.		

Adapted from Wolak and Finkelhor *'Sexting: a Typology'* March 2011

Aggravated incidents involve criminal or abusive elements beyond the creation, sending or possession of youth-produced sexual images	**Adult offenders** develop relationships with and seduce underage teenagers, in criminal sex offenses even without the added element of youth-produced images. Victims may be family friends, relatives, community members or contacted via the Internet. The youth produced sexual images generally, but not always, are solicited by the adult offenders. **Youth Only: Intent to Harm** cases that: • arise from interpersonal conflict such as break-ups and fights among friends • involve criminal or abusive conduct such as blackmail, threats or deception • involve criminal sexual abuse or exploitation by juvenile offenders. **Youth Only: Reckless Misuse** no intent to harm but images are taken or sent without the knowing or willing participation of the young person who is pictured. In these cases, pictures are taken or sent thoughtlessly or recklessly and a victim may have been harmed as a result, but the culpability appears somewhat less than in the malicious episodes.
Experimental incidents involve the creation and sending of youth-produced sexual images, with no adult involvement, no apparent intent to harm or reckless misuse.	**Romantic** episodes in which young people in ongoing relationships make images for themselves or each other, and images were not intended to be distributed beyond the pair. **Sexual Attention Seeking** in which images are made and sent between or among young people who were not known to be romantic partners, or where one youngster takes pictures and sends them to many others or posts them online, presumably to draw sexual attention. **Other:** cases that do not appear to have aggravating elements, like adult involvement, malicious motives or reckless misuse, but also do not fit into the Romantic or Attention Seeking sub-types. These involve either young people who take pictures of themselves for themselves (no evidence of any sending or sharing or intent to do so) or pre-adolescent children (age 9 or younger) who did not appear to have sexual motives.

Case Studies (adapted from Wolak and Finkelhor)

Case Study 1

Involved a group of pupils aged between 9 and 10. One girl (aged 9 with mild learning difficulties) was speaking to a group of friends from school via MSN using her webcam. Her laptop was upstairs in her bedroom. She was getting ready for bed and was sat in a towel and "flashed" on webcam. Another pupil (girl aged 10) from the group told the class teacher what had happened the next day at school, who then reported the concern to the head teacher.

Case Study 2

A Year 6 girl (aged 11) texted a photo of herself, topless but covered, to her 12 year old boyfriend (an ex pupil). No physical sexual activity took place between them prior to this event on or offline. The image was discovered on the boy's mobile phone by his mother who deleted the image and then contacted the girl's parents. The girls' parents approached the school for advice.

Case Study 3

A girl, 13, sent a topless photo of herself to her boyfriend, who was 14. When they broke up, the boy sent the photo to numerous friends via his mobile phone and many recipients forwarded the image to others. The school found out when one recipient told a parent. By then over 200 students had received the picture.

Case Study 4

The parents of a 14-year-old girl found nude pictures of her on her computer and approached her school for advice. She admitted sending the pictures to a 37-year-old man she met online. The girl was in love with the offender, who lived in another part of the country. The victim never met him face-to-face.

Case Study 5

Two Year 9 girls (A & B) got mad at each other. They had been friends and had access to nude photos of each other. Girl A showed a nude photo of Girl B to another girl. Girl B thought the photo had been shown to many people. To get even, she sent a picture of Girl A's breasts to several boys. Several days later, both girls went to the headteacher's office, crying and upset. They felt bad about what they had done.

Case Study 6

The parents of a 16-year-old contacted the school because a boy was blackmailing their daughter. The victim said she had accidentally uploaded a nude picture of herself to a social networking site. When she realised this, she deleted the image, but a boy from another school had already downloaded it. He threatened to distribute it if she did not send him more nude pictures. When the girl refused, the boy sent the picture to about 100 people.

Case Study 7

A 16-year-old girl used the Internet to send sexually explicit photos of herself to numerous men and solicit them for sex. She was using a stolen computer because her parents had taken her computer away from her. The parents discovered the online conversations and approached her school for advice.

Case Study 8

A13-year-old girl took sexual pictures of her three younger sisters (ages 5, 6 & 8) and touched them sexually. A classmate disclosed this information to their class teacher. A child protection agency had been involved with the family for some time.

Case Study 9

At a party where there was heavy drinking, three boys in the shallow end of a pool pulled down their swim trunks and had a "swordfight". A girl, 17, filmed this and sent the video via her mobile to six other people. The three boys did not know she had taken the video or sent it. The video became a hot topic within the school and came to the attention of the teaching staff.

Case Study 10

A boy, 16, who had been bullied in school and teased about his "male anatomy" took a picture of his penis and sent it a female classmate. The classmate, in turn, but without permission, sent it to four other girls. The incident was disclosed when a teacher confiscated the boy's mobile phone and found he was using the picture as a screensaver on his phone.

Case Study 11

A 14-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl who were boyfriend/girlfriend for a couple of weeks sent sexual pictures and videos to one another, including pictures showing masturbation. The girl's mother found the pictures of the boy on her daughter's mobile phone and told their Headteacher that she wanted the boy prosecuted to the full extent of the law. When she found out that her daughter had sent images too, she wanted the girl prosecuted as well.

Case Study 12

Parents approached the school when they discovered their son, 16, had received a video of a 17-year-old boy masturbating. Their son was gay and in a relationship with the other boy. His parents were upset about his sexual orientation.

Case Study 13

A girl, 15, sent unsolicited naked pictures of herself to three different boys in her school using her mobile phone, including to one boy who was 18. Then she and a friend went to their class teacher because they were concerned the images would be sent around the school.

Case Study 14

A girl, 17, posted nude pictures of herself on a social networking site. The website identified the images as possible child pornography, removed them and reported the incident to CEOP, which forwarded the report to the local police force. The police approached the school and talked with the girl, but she was not charged.

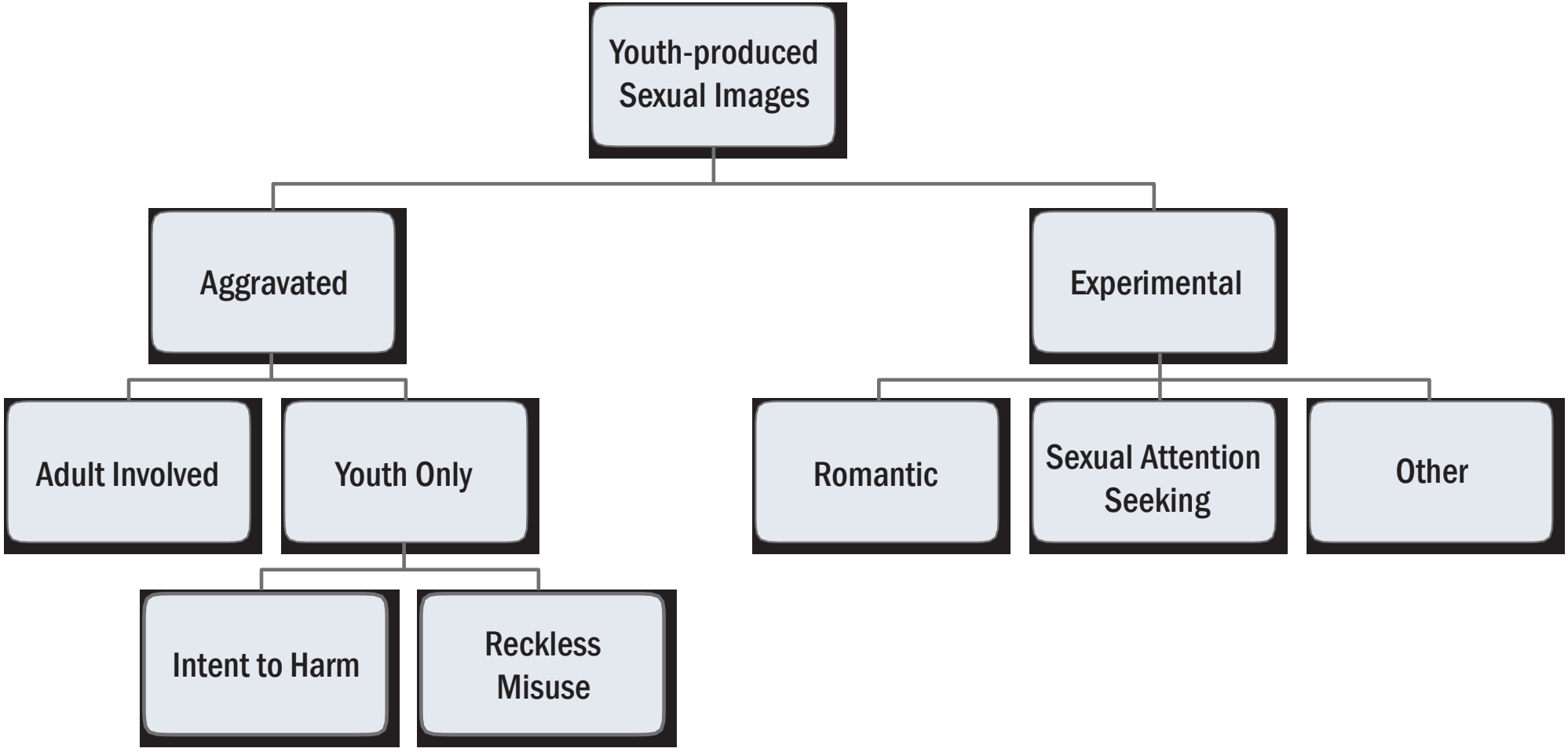
Case Study 15

An 11-year-old girl took naked pictures of her breasts with her mobile phone. Her grandparents discovered the images, did not realise they were of the girl and brought the phone to school. The girl, when interviewed, admitted she took the pictures of herself but said she had not sent them to anyone.

Response

Case Study - Typology	Comments	Response
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		

Typology of youth-produced image cases known to law enforcement



Case Studies (adapted from Wolak and Finkelhor)

1 **Aggravated Adult** (4 & 7)

2 **Aggravated Youth: Intent to Harm** (5, 6, 3 & 8)

3 **Aggravated Youth: Reckless Misuse** (9 & 10)

4 **Experimental Romantic** (11,12 & 2)

5 **Experimental Attention Seeking** (13, 14, & 1)

6 **Experimental Other** (15)

1 Aggravated Adult

In most of the Adult Involved cases, adult offenders developed relationships with and seduced underage teenagers, in what were clearly criminal sex offenses even without the added element of youth-produced images. Some of these adult offenders had face-to-face relationships with victims as family friends, relatives, community members. In other cases, offenders used the Internet to meet victims. The youth-produced sexual images were generally, but not always, solicited by the adult offenders.

Case Study 4 (Adult aggravated)

The parents of a 14 year old girl found nude pictures of her on her computer and approached her school for advice. She admitted sending the pictures to a 37 year old man she met online. The girl was in love with the offender, who lived in another part of the country. The victim never met him face-to-face. Police found he was communicating with numerous adolescent girls. They were able to identify 8 or 9 victims aged 12 to 16 that had sent him sexual images. He seemed to target victims who struggled with their self image; many were over-weight and had skin problems. According to the police, two of the victims said “he made them feel good.” The offender also had hundreds of photographs and videos featuring child pornography on his computer. He was charged and sentenced to 10 years in prison .

Case Study 7 (Adult involved)

A 16-year-old girl used the Internet to send sexually explicit photos of herself to numerous men and solicit them for sex. She was using a stolen computer because her parents had taken her computer away from her. The parents discovered the online conversations and approached her school for advice. Police talked to two of the men involved but did not charge them because the girl had portrayed herself as 18 and was physically very mature. The girl’s father had asked for help in controlling her behaviour with men on several occasions. Her case was handled in court and she was provided with mental health counselling.

2 Aggravated Youth: Intent to Harm

These cases were diverse and fell into three sub-types;

1) cases that arose from interpersonal conflict such as break-ups and fights among friends,

2) cases that involved criminal or abusive conduct such as blackmail, threats or deception and

3) criminal sexual abuse or exploitation by juvenile offenders.

Case Study 5 Youth: intent to harm; interpersonal conflict

Two Year 9 girls (A & B) got mad at each other. They had been friends and had access to nude photos of each other. Girl A showed a nude photo of Girl B to another girl. Girl B thought the photo had been shown to many people. To get even, she sent a picture of Girl A's breasts to several boys. Several days later, both girls went to the headteacher's office, crying and upset. They felt bad about what they had done.

Case Study 6 Youth: intent to harm; blackmail, threats and deception

The parents of a 16-year-old contacted the school because a boy was blackmailing their daughter. The victim said she had accidentally uploaded a nude picture of herself to a social networking site. When she realised this, she deleted the image, but a boy from another school had already downloaded it. He threatened to distribute it if she did not send him more nude pictures. When the girl refused, the boy sent the picture to about 100 people. The boy, who was a top set student, was charged with a criminal offence. He pleaded guilty and was put on probation.

Case Study 3 Youth only: intent to harm; interpersonal conflict

A girl, 13, sent a topless photo of herself to her boyfriend, who was 14. When they broke up, the boy sent the photo to numerous friends via his mobile phone and many recipients forwarded the image to others. The school found out when one recipient told a parent. By then over 200 students had received the picture. The police seized over 150 mobiles from students. The police did not charge any of the parties to the incident because so many young people were involved and police did not want to "mark kids for life".

Case study 8 Youth: intent to harm; criminal sexual abuse or exploitation by juvenile offenders

A 13-year-old girl took sexual pictures of her three younger sisters (ages 5, 6 & 8) and touched them sexually. A classmate disclosed this information to their class teacher. Subsequently, the police determined that she herself had been molested by her stepfather. A child protection agency had been involved with the family for some time. The girl was removed from the home; the agency was taking steps to remove her younger sisters also.

3 Aggravated Youth: Reckless Misuse

These cases did not appear to involve any intent to harm but images were taken or sent without the knowing or willing participation of the young person who was pictured. In these cases, pictures were taken or sent thoughtlessly or recklessly and a victim may have been harmed as a result, but the culpability appears somewhat less than in the malicious episodes.

Case Study 9 Youth only: reckless misuse

At a party where there was heavy drinking, three boys in the shallow end of a pool pulled down their swim trunks and had a "swordfight". A girl, 17, filmed this and sent the video via her mobile to six other people. The three boys did not know she had taken the video or sent it. The video became a hot topic within the school and came to the attention of the teaching staff. The girl was charged in court.

Case Study 10 Youth only: reckless misuse

A boy, 16, who had been bullied in school and teased about his "male anatomy" took a picture of his penis and sent it a female classmate. The classmate, in turn, but without permission, sent it to four other girls. The incident was disclosed when a teacher confiscated the boy's mobile phone and found he was using the picture as a screensaver on his phone. Police investigated and deleted the images. No one was charged.

Experimental

This means they involved the creation and sending of youth-produced sexual images, with no adult involvement, no apparent intent to harm or reckless misuse. It subdivides into three further subcategories:

4 Experimental Romantic

Episodes in which young people in ongoing relationships made images for themselves or each other, and images were not intended to be distributed beyond the pair.

Case Study 11 Experimental Romantic

A 14-year-old boy and a 12-year-old girl who were boyfriend/girlfriend for a couple of weeks sent sexual pictures and videos to one another, including pictures showing masturbation. The girl's mother found the pictures of the boy on her daughter's mobile phone and told their Headteacher that she wanted the boy prosecuted to the full extent of the law. When she found out that her daughter had sent images too, she wanted the girl prosecuted as well. Both went to court and were assigned 20 hours of community service.

Case Study 12 Experimental Romantic

Parents approached the school when they discovered their son, 16, had received a video of a 17-year-old boy masturbating. Their son was gay and in a relationship with the other boy. His parents were upset about his sexual orientation. The 17-year-old was put on police probation and required to write an essay about what he had done.

Case Study 2 Experimental Romantic

A Year 6 girl (aged 11) texted a photo of herself, topless but covered, to her 12-year-old boyfriend (an ex-pupil). No physical sexual activity took place between them prior to this event on or offline. The image was discovered on the boy's mobile phone by his mother who deleted the image and then contacted the girl's parents. The girl's parents approached the school for advice.

5 Experimental Sexual Attention Seeking

Cases in which images were made and sent between or among young people who were not known to be romantic partners, or one youngster took pictures and sent them to many others or posted them online, presumably to draw sexual attention.

Case Study 13 Experimental Sexual Attention Seeking

A girl, 15, sent unsolicited naked pictures of herself to three different boys in her school using her mobile phone, including to one boy who was 18. Then she and a friend went to their class teacher because they were concerned the images would be sent around the school. However, none of the pictures were ever found and the case was dropped.

Case Study 14 Experimental Sexual Attention Seeking

A girl, 17, posted nude pictures of herself on a social networking site. The website identified the images as possible child pornography, removed them and reported the incident to CEOP, which forwarded the report to the local police force. The police approached the school and talked with the girl, but she was not charged.

Case Study 1 [Primary/Primary] Experimental Attention Seeking

Involved a group of pupils aged between 9 and 10. One girl (aged 9 with mild learning difficulties) was speaking to a group of friends from school via MSN using her webcam. Her laptop was upstairs in her bedroom. She was getting ready for bed and was sat in a towel and "flashed" on webcam. Another pupil (girl aged 10) from the group told the class teacher what had happened the next day at school, who then reported the concern to the head teacher.

6 Experimental Other

There were a small number of cases that did not appear to have aggravating elements, like adult involvement, malicious motives or reckless misuse, but also did not fit into the Romantic or Attention Seeking sub-types. These tended to involve either young people who took pictures of themselves for themselves (no evidence of any sending or sharing or intent to do so) or pre-adolescent children (age 9 or younger) who did not appear to have sexual motives.

Case Study 15 Experimental incident: Other

An 11 year old girl took naked pictures of her breasts with her mobile phone. Her grandparents discovered the images, did not realise they were of the girl and brought the phone to school. The girl, when interviewed, admitted she took the pictures of herself but said she had not sent them to anyone, and there was no evidence otherwise

Acknowledgements and Sponsors

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Compass Community is one of the UK's leading fostering organisations providing high quality foster care for children and young people.

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Over 3,000 schools are now using Securus, which flags up potential child protection issues taking place on a network. Unlike filtering and blocking, Securus provides evidence of worrying or problematic behaviour by children or staff using its network. Securus helps schools to meet Ofsted recommendations by facilitating lasting improvements in pupil behaviour and safety, helping them to recognise unsafe situations and encouraging them to use new technologies responsibly.

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation www.lucyfaithfull.org.uk

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation is the only UK-wide child protection charity dedicated solely to reducing the risk of children being sexually abused. It works with entire families that have been affected by abuse including: adult male and female sexual abusers; young people with inappropriate sexual behaviours; victims of abuse and other family members.

Drawing on expert knowledge about child sexual abuse the Foundation offers a broad range of services for professionals and members of the public. These include: assessments, intervention and treatment of known offenders, case specific advice and support, training and development courses and workshops, educational programmes for internet offenders and their families, circles of support and accountability and internet safety seminars for schools (teachers, parents and children).

A Gentle Touch

A Gentle Touch

A Gentle Touch, formed by Sharon Girling OBE, works in the area of child protection, safeguarding and e-safety and consults for numerous law enforcement agencies globally.

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