

Sexting

(Youth Produced Sexual Imagery)



Northamptonshire
Safeguarding Children Board



TEA-BREAK GUIDE



What is Sexting / Youth Produced Sexual Imagery?

As a professional's sexting is the term you will commonly come across and is what young people will know the practice as but youth produced sexual imagery best describes this practice for the following reasons:

- Youth produced includes young people sharing images that they, or another young person have created themselves.
- The term sexual is clearer than indecent as whether something is indecent is a value judgement and dependent on context.
- Imagery covers both still photos and moving videos which should be considered when reading this document.

Who does it affect?

A 2016 NSPCC / Office of the Children's Commissioner for England study found that 13% of boys and girls had taken a topless photo of themselves with one in four of those being girls and 3% had taken a fully naked picture.

Of those who had taken sexual images, 55% had shared them with others and 31% of this group had also shared the image with someone they did not know.

What does the law say?

Young people often see it as harmless but creating or sharing explicit images of a child is illegal, even if the person doing it is a child. A young person is breaking the law if they:

- Take an explicit photo or video of themselves or a friend
- Share an explicit image or video of a child, even if it's shared between children of the same age.
- Possess, download or store an explicit image or video of a child, even if the child gave permission for it to be created.

As of January 2016, if a young person is found creating or sharing images, the police can choose to record that a crime has been committed but that taking formal action isn't in the public interest.

What should Professionals do?

- If a device is involved it should be confiscated, you should even try to set the phone to flight mode, lock it or if that is not possible, switch it off.
- Report the incident to the senior safeguarding lead in your organisation and hold a meeting to agree your next steps.
- You should agree with the safeguarding lead if you are going to question and record any conversations you have with any young people involved.
- Parents should be informed at an early stage and involved in the process unless there is a good reason to believe that involving parents would put the young person at risk of harm.
- Do not view or seek to view the image unless agreed with the safeguarding lead for your organisation and the reasons are carefully considered and recorded.

Safeguarding leads within organisations should consider an immediate referral to police and/or children's social care if:

- The incident involves an adult
- There is reason to believe that a young person has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed or if there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example, owing to special educational needs)
- What you know about the imagery suggests the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's development, or are violent
- The images involve sexual acts and any pupil in the imagery is under 13
- You have reason to believe a young person is at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of imagery, for example the young person is presenting as suicidal or self-harming.

[Further Guidance for Parents and Carers](#)

[Further Guidance for Schools and College Staff](#)