



Sharing nudes and semi-nudes

Responding to incidents and safeguarding children and young people

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Guidance

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Sharing nudes and semi-nudes

Audience

This document has been produced by Welsh Government as part of the UK Council for Internet Safety's (UKCIS) Education Working Group in consultation with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC), All Wales School Liaison Core Programme (AWSLCP), police forces, the national Safeguarding in Education Group (SEG), regional consortia, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and other key stakeholders.

This advice is for the designated safeguarding person (DSP), headteachers and senior leadership teams in schools, colleges and other education settings in Wales. Other members of staff should see the summary on how to manage incidents, which is available alongside this guidance on Hwb.

It will also be of interest to local authorities, diocesan authorities, Governors Wales, and staff within organisations that have a lead responsibility for safeguarding children and young people.

Overview

This advice outlines how to respond to an incident of sharing nudes or semi-nudes. Although creating and sharing nudes or semi-nudes will likely take place outside school or college, these issues often manifest in schools, colleges and education settings. Schools, colleges and other education settings need to be able to respond swiftly and confidently to ensure that children and young people are safeguarded, supported and educated.

This advice aims to support schools, colleges and other education settings in developing procedures to respond to incidents involving sharing nudes or semi-nudes. It also signposts to resources and sources of support.

Action required

Procedures developed to respond to incidents of sharing nudes or semi-nudes should be part of a school's safeguarding arrangements and dealt with as a safeguarding matter. This advice is non-statutory and should be read alongside the Welsh Government's statutory guidance *Keeping learners safe* (2020). The advice replaces *Sexting: Responding to incidents and safeguarding learners* published in 2017.

Further information

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The image on the cover is taken from the film *Think life not likes*, produced by pupils from Ysgol Nantgwyn, which explores the impact of sharing images online and was awarded first prize in the Welsh Government's 2020 Safer Internet Day film competition. It can be viewed on the 'Keeping safe online' area of Hwb at [hwb.gov.wales/search?query=nantgwyn&strict=true&popupUri=%2FResource%2F1da3fd06-a5ff-488a-b792-d9b3aab02a63](https://www.hwb.gov.wales/search?query=nantgwyn&strict=true&popupUri=%2FResource%2F1da3fd06-a5ff-488a-b792-d9b3aab02a63).

Contents

1. Background and the law	3
What does this advice cover?	3
Defining 'sharing nudes and semi-nudes'	3
Alternative definitions	4
The law	5
Non-consensual image sharing	6
Sharing images – a form of control	6
Avoiding unnecessary criminalisation of children and young people	7
The police response	8
Crime recording	8
Police decision	8
Criminal records check	9
Multi-agency working	10
2. Context	11
Why is this issue important to settings working with children and young people?	11
Understanding motivations and behaviours	12
Defining an incident	13
Assessing behaviour	14
Age considerations	14
Distinguishing between normal and abnormal sexual behaviour	14
3. Handling incidents	17
Initial response	17
Disclosure	17
Initial review meeting	18
How to report online content to the police	19
Assessing the risks	20
Case study A: Children and young people aged 13–18	21
Case study B: Children aged under 13	22
Supporting the child(ren) or young person/people involved	22
Informing parents/carers	24
Social services contact and referrals	25
Viewing and deleting nudes and semi-nudes	25
Recording incidents	26
Reporting nudes and semi-nudes online	26
Supporting parents/carers	28
Resources and support	29
Helplines and reporting	30
4. Educating children and young people	31
Why educate learners about the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes?	31
How should we teach learners about sharing nudes and semi-nudes?	31

When to teach learners about these issues?	33
How can we deliver education safely?	34
What resources are available?	35
Annex A: Questions to support assessment	36
Annex B: Staff training activity	40
Annex C: NSPCC cases studies	49
Annex D: Flowchart for responding to incidents	52

1. Background and the law

What does this advice cover?

This advice outlines how to respond to an incident of nudes and semi-nudes being shared, including risk-assessing situations, handling devices and images, recording incidents, including the role of other agencies, and informing parents/carers.

The types of incidents that this advice covers are:

- a person under the age of 18 creating and sharing nude and semi-nudes of themselves with a peer under the age of 18
- a person under the age of 18 sharing nudes and semi-nudes created by another person under the age of 18 with a peer under the age of 18
- a person under the age of 18 being in possession of nudes and semi-nudes created by another person under the age of 18.

This advice does not cover:

- the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes of people under 18 with or by adults as this constitutes child sexual abuse and schools should always inform the police as a matter of urgency¹
- young people under the age of 18 sharing adult pornography or exchanging sexual texts that do not contain images.

Defining ‘sharing nudes and semi-nudes’

This advice uses the term ‘sharing nudes and semi-nudes’ to mean the creating and/or sharing of nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams by young people under the age of 18. This could be via social media, gaming platforms, chat apps or forums. It could also involve sharing between devices via services like Apple’s AirDrop, which works offline.

This term has been changed from sexting to ensure greater clarity for professionals, parents/carers and children and young people. The term more appropriately encompasses all types of image sharing incidents.

The motivations for taking and sharing nude and semi-nude images are not always sexually or criminally motivated. Children and young people can be groomed or coerced into sending nude and semi-nude images; however, nude and semi-nude images may be created and shared within consensual relationships or may be received unsolicited.

¹ This also includes instances where a person under the age of 18 shares nudes or semi-nudes created by a peer under the age of 18 with an adult.

It is also possible for a young person in a consensual relationship to be coerced into sharing an image with their partner. Incidents may also occur where:

- children and young people find nudes and semi-nudes online and share them claiming to be from a peer
- children and young people digitally merge an image of a young person with an existing nude online
- images created or shared are used to abuse peers, e.g. by selling images online or obtaining images to share more widely (without consent) to publicly shame, sometimes in reaction to a relationship ending.

The sharing of nudes and semi-nudes can happen publicly online, in one-to-one messaging or via group chats and closed social media accounts.

The nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams may include more than one child or young person.

Further guidance on the motivations for taking and sharing nude images can be found on page 14.

Creating and sharing nudes or semi-nudes of under-18s is illegal which makes responding to incidents involving children and young people complex. There is also a range of risks that need careful management from those working in education settings.

Alternative definitions

The legal term used to define nude or semi-nude images of children and young people under the age of 18 is 'indecent images of children'.

'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes' may also be referred to as:

- youth-produced sexual imagery or 'youth-involved' or 'self-generated' sexual imagery
- indecent imagery. This is the legal term used to define nude or semi-nude images and videos of children and young people under the age of 18. Further guidance on the law can be found in the section that follows
- sexting. Many professionals may use this term; however, some people interpret sexting as 'writing and sharing sexually explicit messages with people they know'² rather than sharing images
- child sexual abuse material. This term may be used when referring to the non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes³.

² "...I wasn't sure it was normal to watch it..." (NSPCC, Middlesex University, Office of the Children's Commissioner England, 2017)

³ *Online Sexual Harassment: Comprehensive Guidance for Education settings* (Sexplain et al, 2020)
Available at: <https://sexplain.org.uk/guidance-for-schools>

For children and young people, terms commonly used include ‘nudes’ or ‘dick pics’⁴.

The law

Responding to sharing nudes and semi-nudes is complex due to its legal status. Making, possessing or distributing any imagery of someone under 18 that is ‘indecent’ is illegal. This includes imagery of themselves that children and young people have created and shared (if under 18).

The relevant legislation is contained in the Protection of Children Act 1978 (England and Wales) (see www.iwf.org.uk/what-we-do/how-we-assess-and-remove-content/laws-and-assessment-levels/laws-for-child-sexual-1) as amended in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (England and Wales) (see www.iwf.org.uk/what-we-do/how-we-assess-and-remove-content/laws-and-assessment-levels/laws-for-child-sexual-0).

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, the question of whether any photograph of a child is indecent is for a jury, magistrate or district judge to decide based on the recognised standard of propriety⁵.

Indecent imagery does not always mean nudity; however, images are likely to be defined as such if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- nude or semi-nude sexual posing, e.g. displaying genitals and/or breasts or overtly sexual images of young people in their underwear
- someone nude or semi-nude touching themselves in a sexual way
- any sexual activity involving a child
- someone hurting someone else sexually
- sexual activity that includes animals.

⁴ *Young people and sexting – attitudes and behaviours* (Safer Internet Centre, University of Plymouth, Netsafe New Zealand, Office of the Esafety Commissioner Australia, 2017)

⁵ www.cps.gov.uk/legal-guidance/indecent-and-prohibited-images-children

Non-consensual image sharing

The non-consensual sharing of private sexual images or videos with the intent to cause distress is also illegal. The relevant legislation is contained in section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015⁶.

Sharing images – a form of control

In some circumstances, nudes or semi-nudes may be used as a means of coercive control within relationships or manipulation after separation. In Wales, the provisions of the Violence against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 are intended to ensure a focus across the public sector on the prevention of these issues, the protection of victims and the support for those affected by such issues. The Welsh Government definition of domestic violence and abuse is: 'Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality'.

There are many different forms of domestic abuse. These include but are not limited to:

- coercively controlling behaviour
- emotional/psychological abuse
- physical abuse
- sexual abuse
- financial abuse
- harassment and stalking.

The Act seeks to bring about an improved public sector response to violence against women, domestic abuse and sexual violence. The main aims of the Act are to improve arrangements to:

- promote awareness, and to prevent, protect and support victims
- strengthen the strategic leadership and accountability in the public sector
- improve the consistency, quality and join-up of service provision in Wales.

It should be noted that any child or young person under 18 can be coerced or blackmailed into sending nudes or semi-nudes. The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and related statutory guidance sets that practitioners working across agencies have a responsibility to safeguard children and to report concerns that a child is at risk. These responsibilities are further explained in the Wales Safeguarding Procedures⁷.

⁶ This generally relates to adult-to-adult non-consensual image sharing offences; however, there have been cases where young people have been prosecuted under section 33 in the youth courts.

⁷ www.safeguarding.wales/index.html

Online abuse is any type of abuse that is facilitated through technology like computers, tablets, mobile phones, consoles and other electronic devices. It is important to be aware that online contact related to abusive behaviours can cause considerable trauma to children and young people even where the contact/content might be considered as lower level in terms of harm. Children who engage in peer abuse, such as harmful sexual behaviour and other forms of abusive behaviour online, should be considered as children first and should be provided with appropriate support. There should be a proportionate response to the behaviour, and consideration should be given to whether they have any care and support needs. More information is available in the 'All Wales Practice Guide: Safeguarding children from online abuse'⁸.

Avoiding unnecessary criminalisation of children and young people

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

Despite this, children and young people who take, possess or share nudes or semi-nudes of themselves, or peers, are breaking the law.

We should not, however, unnecessarily criminalise children. 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 adulthood⁹.

While children and young people creating and sharing nudes and semi-nudes may be putting themselves and others at risk, it is often the result of a child or young person's natural curiosity about sex and their exploration of relationships. As a consequence, engaging in the taking or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes may not always be 'harmful' to all children and young people. Situations should be considered on a case-by-case context, considering what is known about the children or young people involved and whether there is an immediate risk of harm. Often, children and young people need education and support, e.g. on identifying healthy and unhealthy behaviours within relationships and understanding consent and how to give it. Safeguarding action will also be required in cases where there is risk of harm.

Investigation by police of an incident of sharing nudes and semi-nudes does not automatically mean that the child/young person involved will have a criminal record, as explained in the next section.

⁸ See www.safeguarding.wales/chi/index.c6.html

⁹ *Growing up, Moving on: The International Treatment of Childhood Criminal Records* (Standing Committee for Youth Justice, 2016)

The police response

The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) has made clear that incidents involving sharing nudes and semi-nudes should be treated primarily as a safeguarding issue.

Education settings may respond to incidents without involving the police. Advice on the circumstances in which this would be appropriate can be found in section 2.

The police may, however, need to be involved in cases to ensure thorough investigation, including collection of all evidence (e.g. through multi-agency checks). **Where there are abusive and/or aggravating factors, incidents should always be referred to the police through the local multi-agency safeguarding hub (MASH) or equivalent (see section 2).**

When the police are involved, a criminal justice response and formal sanction against a young person would only be considered proportionate in exceptional circumstances.

To help local police services develop a coordinated, effective and proportionate response in this area, the NPCC and College of Policing have produced operational advice for law enforcement relating to the investigation of nude and semi-nude sharing offences.¹⁰

Crime recording

When an incident of sharing nudes and semi-nudes is reported to the police 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.

Police decision

Once an incident is reported to the police, they will investigate and decide on an appropriate outcome.

If an incident is found to have abusive and/or aggravating factors, the child or young person may receive a caution or conviction.

To mitigate the risk of children and young people being negatively impacted, the police are able to record the outcome of an investigation using an outcome 21 code should an incident be found to be non-abusive and have no evidence of any of the following:

¹⁰ *Briefing note: Police action in response to youth produced sexual imagery ('Sexting')*, (College of Policing, 2016). See www.college.police.uk/News/College-news/

- exploitation
- grooming
- a profit motive
- malicious intent (e.g. extensive or inappropriate sharing such as uploading onto a pornographic website)
- persistent behaviour.

The outcome 21 code, launched in 2016, helps to formalise the discretion available to the police when handling crimes such as the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes.

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.

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 decision to use outcome 21 in these circumstances is likely to be reviewed by a suitably senior and/or experienced officer.

Once an appropriate outcome has been decided, it should be communicated by police to the child or young person affected, their parents/carers and, where appropriate, the setting. This should also explain the immediate and longer-term implications.

Criminal records check

A decision to disclose information as a part of any criminal record check (a Disclosure and Barring Service (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.

It is possible for an incident of sharing nudes or semi-nudes recorded on police systems with outcome 21 to be disclosed on a DBS certificate.

However, information falling short of conviction or caution can only be included on a DBS certificate when an individual has applied for an enhanced DBS check. In such cases it would be for a chief officer to consider what information (in addition to convictions and cautions held on the Police National Computer) should be provided for inclusion. That decision must be made on the basis that the chief officer reasonably believes the information to be relevant to the purpose of the disclosure (e.g. where someone is taking up a position working with children) and considers that it ought to be included.

Multi-agency working

Should police inform a setting of an incident previously unknown to the setting, the designated safeguarding person (DSP) should follow statutory guidance set out in *Keeping learners safe* (2020), which includes liaising with relevant multi-agency partners.

2. Context

Why is this issue important to settings working with children and young people?

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

In the UK, 83 per cent of 12 to 15-year-olds own a smartphone¹¹, giving them the ability to quickly and easily create and share photos and videos. Photos and videos can be shared as text (MMS) messages, email, posted on social media or via mobile messaging apps. Popular platforms include Snapchat, Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp.

In 2019/20 Childline delivered 693 counselling sessions where sharing nudes and semi-nudes was recorded as a sub-concern; in the previous year (2018/19) there were 647.

Research has found (Brook and NCA-CEOP, 2017):

- 26 per cent of children and young people had sent a nude or semi-nude image to someone they were interested in
- 48 per cent of children and young people had received one of someone else, sent by that same person.

Although most children and young people are not creating or sharing these types of images and videos, the potential risks are significant. If the imagery is shared further, it may lead to embarrassment, bullying and increased vulnerability to blackmail and exploitation.

Creating and sharing nudes and semi-nudes of under-18s is also illegal, which causes considerable concern in settings working with children and young people, and among parents/carers.

As outlined in the overview, this advice aims to support settings in developing procedures to respond to incidents involving sharing nudes and semi-nudes as part of their safeguarding arrangements.

The response to these incidents should be guided by the principle of proportionality and the primary concern at all times should be protecting and safeguarding the welfare of the children and young people involved.

¹¹ *Children and parents: Media use and attitudes report 2019* (Ofcom, 2019) www.ofcom.org.uk/research-and-data/media-literacy-research/childrens/children-and-parents-media-use-and-attitudes-report-2019

Individual incidents of peer abuse and sexual behaviour (the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes can fall under this category) can lead to unhealthy or damaging cultures within the setting's community. How these incidents – including incidents of 'low-level' harmful sexual behaviour – are responded to directly affects the culture of the setting. If handled poorly, an unsafe and unhealthy set of norms can be created that enable peer-on-peer abuse; this can also prevent other children and young people from disclosing.

Guidance for education settings on peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour has been developed for the Welsh Government by the NSPCC and Barnado's. There is also further information in the All Wales Practice Guide 'Safeguarding children where there are concerns about harmful sexual behaviour' and the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

It must be recognised that the individual case management can affect setting-wide culture, peer response and all children and young people's ability to speak out.

Annex D is a high-level flowchart for responding to incidents. However, in order to ensure an appropriate and proportionate response, education settings can use the recommended supporting tools to help with assessing an incident. This is covered under 'Defining an incident' (page 13) and 'Assessing behaviours' (page 14).

Understanding motivations and behaviours

Understanding contemporary culture and societal influences on children and young people is important when considering the social practice of sharing nudes and semi-nudes and in assessing incidents. Exchanging nudes and semi-nudes can be a form of relationship or popularity currency and 'the primary technology-related threat is not the 'stranger danger' hyped by the mass media but technology-mediated sexual pressure from their peers'¹². There can be 'blurred lines of consent ... such as receiving a compliment or feeling connected to the recipient but not the other aspects, such as the worry about unauthorised distribution'¹³.

Victim blaming remains a prevalent issue around the self-generation of nudes and semi-nudes; it follows 'a typical pattern of someone sending an image to one person, then the recipient shares that image, and the victim then receives abuse from the wider community because they are a 'slut' or a 'slag' (or 'dumb' or 'stupid') for sending the image to this one trusted individual'¹⁴. Harmful and abusive forms of image-sharing are uncommon, but there can be malicious intent in some cases, e.g. '5 per cent of young people report having a sexual image shared following a relationship break-up'¹⁵.

¹² 'A qualitative study of children, young people and 'sexting': a report prepared for the NSPCC' (London School of Economics and Political Science, 2012)

¹³ *How safe are our children? 2020: An overview of data on abuse of adolescents* (NSPCC, 2020)

¹⁴ *Young people and sexting – attitudes and behaviours* (Safer Internet Centre, University of Plymouth, Netsafe New Zealand, Office of the Esafety Commissioner Australia, 2017)

¹⁵ *How safe are our children? 2020: An overview of data on abuse of adolescents* (NSPCC, 2020)

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes is not always sexually or criminally motivated. However, 'an image shared consensually and non-sexually could be used and interpreted differently by someone else, making the task of defining harm and safety ... even harder'¹⁶. An education setting's response to an incident will differ depending on the motivations behind the incident and the appropriateness of the child or young person's/people's behaviour.

In order to ensure an appropriate and proportionate response to an incident of sharing nudes and semi-nudes, education settings can use the tools set out in the table under 'Defining an incident'.

Defining an incident

Finkelhor and Wolak's typology of youth-produced imagery cases can be used to define and assess incidents of sharing nudes and semi-nudes according to motivations¹⁷.

Incidents can broadly be divided into two categories, as detailed in the table below.

<p>Aggravated incidents involve criminal or abusive elements beyond the creation, sending or possession of nudes and semi-nudes</p>	<p>Adult offenders attempt to develop relationships by grooming teenagers into 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 may be solicited by adult offenders.</p>
	<p>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, or involve sexual abuse or exploitation by young people.</p>
	<p>Youth only: reckless misuse involve 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.</p>
<p>Experimental incidents involve the creation and sending of nudes or semi-</p>	<p>Romantic episodes involve young people in ongoing relationships making images for themselves or each other – such images were not intended to be distributed beyond the pair.</p>

¹⁶ *How safe are our children? 2020: An overview of data on abuse of adolescents* (NSPCC, 2020)

¹⁷ <https://scholars.unh.edu/ccrc/48>

nudes, with no adult involvement, no apparent intent to harm or reckless misuse.	Sexual attention seeking: the phrase 'sexual attention seeking' is taken directly from the typology; however, it is important to note that incidents within this category can be a part of normal childhood. A child or young person should not be blamed for taking and sharing their image.
	Other: these are 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 nine or younger) who did not appear to have sexual motives.

Assessing behaviour

When considering appropriate action regarding sharing nudes and semi-nudes, the DSP will need to take into account both the age of the children and young people involved and the context.

Age considerations

Children under 13 are given extra protection from sexual abuse under the Sexual Offences Act 2003. Any situations involving children under 13 and sharing nudes and semi-nudes must be taken seriously as potentially being indicative of a wider safeguarding or child protection concern or as being problematic sexual behaviour.

The understanding of children and young people around the potential implications of taking and/or sharing nudes and semi-nudes is likely to be influenced by the age and ability of the children involved. In some cases children under 13 (and indeed older) may create nudes and semi-nudes as a result of age-appropriate curiosity or risk-taking behaviour or simply due to naivety rather than any sexual intent. This is likely to be the behaviour more commonly identified within primary schools. Some common examples could include sending pictures of their genitals to their friends as a dare or taking a photo of another child while getting changed for PE. Within this context it is unlikely that police or social services involvement is required or proportionate but DSPs will need to use their professional judgement to consider the specific context and the children involved.

Distinguishing between normal and abnormal sexual behaviour

DSPs will need to be mindful that behaviour that may not initially appear to be sexually motivated may have occurred as a result of risky or harmful behaviour or indeed sexual abuse being 'normalised' for children.

Hackett's 'Continuum of children and young people's sexual behaviours' model can also help practitioners to understand that children and young people's sexual behaviours exist on a wide continuum from normal to abusive and violent behaviours; they may move fluidly between each category. This is also used as a model in the *Guidance for education settings on peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour* (see gov.wales/peer-sexual-abuse-exploitation-and-harmful-sexual-behaviour).

It is important to note that an isolated incident that demonstrates problematic or abusive behaviour may not necessarily be indicative of the child or young person's overall sexual behaviour¹⁸. The incident should be dealt with proportionally to the behaviour being displayed.

Normal	Inappropriate	Problematic	Abusive	Violent
Developmentally expected	Single instances of inappropriate sexual behaviour	Problematic and concerning behaviours	Victimising intent or outcome	Physically violent sexual abuse
Socially acceptable		Developmentally unusual and socially unexpected	Includes misuse of power	Highly intrusive
Consensual, mutual, reciprocal	Behaviour accepted by peers within peer group context	No overt elements of victimisation	Coercion and force to ensure victim compliance	Instrumental violence which is physiologically and/or sexually arousing to the perpetrator
Shared decision-making	Context for behaviour may be inappropriate	Consent issues may be unclear	Intrusive	Sadism
	Generally consensual and reciprocal	May lack reciprocity or equal power	Informed consent lacking or not able to be freely given by victim	
		May include levels of compulsivity	May include elements of expressive violence	

¹⁸ See *Harmful sexual behaviour framework* (NSPCC, 2019) <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2019/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework>

Adapted from 'A continuum of children and young people's sexual behaviours' by Simon Hackett (2010)¹⁹

Any situations involving children under 13 and the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes must be taken seriously as potentially being indicative of a wider safeguarding or child protection concern, or as being problematic sexual behaviour. This is essential to ensure that children involved or identified are safeguarded and are not unnecessarily criminalised or labelled. More information on this is included in the All Wales Practice Guides 'Safeguarding children from online abuse' and 'Safeguarding children where there are concerns about harmful sexual behaviour'. These are based on Hackett's continuum of children and young people's sexual behaviours. The guides also include links to practice tools.

Frameworks such as Brook's Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool can also be used to identify when a child or young person's sexual behaviour is a cause for concern in relation to their development. Where a child or young person displays appropriate sexual behaviour within the context of their age or development, consideration should still be given as to whether the taking or sharing of the nude or semi-nude raises any additional concerns.

In summary, tools available to support DSPs include:

- All Wales Practice Guide 'Safeguarding children from online abuse' www.safeguarding.wales/chi/index.c6.html
- All Wales Practice Guide 'Safeguarding children where there are concerns about harmful sexual behaviour' www.safeguarding.wales/chi/index.c6.html
- Brook's Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool www.brook.org.uk/training/wider-professional-training/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool/
- Lucy Faithfull Foundation Stop it Now! resources www.stopitnow.org.uk/resources/
- *Guidance for education settings on peer sexual abuse, exploitation and harmful sexual behaviour* (see gov.wales/peer-sexual-abuse-exploitation-and-harmful-sexual-behaviour).

¹⁹ Taken from *Harmful sexual behaviour framework* (NSPCC, 2019) <https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/research-resources/2019/harmful-sexual-behaviour-framework>

3. Handling incidents

Initial response

Keeping learners safe statutory guidance sets out that everyone in education settings should create and maintain a safe learning environment and identify where there are child welfare concerns and take action to address them, where appropriate, in partnership with other agencies. All settings with statutory responsibilities must have a child protection policy, and might wish to consider how they reflect their approach to sharing nudes and semi-nudes in that policy.

All incidents involving sharing nudes and semi-nudes should be responded to in line with the setting's safeguarding and child protection policy and the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

When an incident involving sharing nudes or semi-nudes comes to a setting's attention:

- the incident should be referred to the DSP as soon as possible
- the DSP should hold an initial review meeting with appropriate staff. The DSP may wish to seek general advice from their School Community Police Officer (SCPO)
- there should be subsequent interviews with the children or young people involved (if appropriate)
- parents/carers should be informed at an early stage and involved in the process unless there is good reason to believe that involving parents/carers would put the child or young person at risk of harm
- at any point in the process if there is a concern a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm a referral should be made to social services and/or the police immediately in line with the setting's usual arrangement
- if the child has a social worker, you should inform social services about the incident.

Annex D is a flowchart that summarises the approach education settings should take when responding to sharing nudes and semi-nudes incidents.

Disclosure

Disclosures about sharing nudes and semi-nudes can happen in a variety of ways. The child or young person affected may inform a teacher, the DSP or any member of the setting. They may report through an existing reporting structure, or a friend or parent/carer may inform someone in the setting, or inform the police directly.

All members of staff (including non-teaching staff) should be made aware of how to recognise and refer any disclosures of incidents involving all child protection matters, including sharing nudes and semi-nudes. This should be covered within staff training, which should also include strategies for raising awareness on the processes among children and young people in the setting. Annex B contains a training exercise that may be used to highlight the issues for staff.

Any disclosure by a child or young person should be taken very seriously. It is likely that they will be embarrassed and worried about the consequences, and disclosure in the setting may be a last resort after trying to resolve the issue themselves.

Initial review meeting

The initial review meeting should consider the initial evidence and aim to establish:

- whether there is an immediate risk to a child or young person
- if a referral should be made to the police and/or social services
- what further information is required to decide on the best response
- whether the image(s) has/have been shared widely and via what services and/or platforms. This may be unknown
- any relevant facts about the children or young people involved that would influence risk assessment
- if there is a need to contact another setting or individual
- whether to contact parents/carers of the children or young people involved – in most cases they should be involved.

As part of this initial review, please refer to 'Viewing and deleting nudes and semi-nudes' on page 25.

DSPs can use Finkelhor and Wolak's typology and Brook's Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool (outlined in section 1) to help categorise the incident and assess the behaviours of any child or young person involved to identify any immediate risks.

An **immediate** referral to police and/or social services²⁰ should be made if at this initial stage:

- the incident involves an adult
- there is reason to believe that a child or young person has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed, or if there are concerns about their capacity to consent (e.g. owing to additional learning needs)
- what you know about the imagery suggests the content depicts sexual acts that are unusual for the young person's developmental stage, or are violent (see page 13 for guidance on assessing behaviour)
- the imagery involves sexual acts and any child in the image is under 13²¹
- you have reason to believe a child or young person is at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of the imagery, e.g. the child or young person is presenting as suicidal or self-harming.

²⁰ If the setting's local area has a MASH then this may be the most appropriate first point of contact.

²¹ See Annex A for more information about age considerations.

If none of the above apply, then a setting may decide to respond to the incident without involving the police or social services (a setting can choose to escalate the incident at any time if further information/concerns come to light). Within school settings, the SCPO is always available to provide further general advice if required at any stage.

The decision to respond to the incident without involving the police or social services would be made in cases where the DSP is confident that they have enough information to assess the risks to the children and young people involved and that the risks can be managed within the setting's pastoral support and disciplinary framework, as well as (if appropriate) their local network of support.

The decision should be made by the DSP in consultation with the headteacher or manager and leadership team, with input from other members of staff if appropriate. The decision should be recorded in line with the setting's policy.

The decision should both be in line with the setting's child protection policy and procedures and be based on the consideration of the best interests of the child or young person involved. This should take into account proportionality as well as the welfare and protection of the child or young person. The decision should be reviewed throughout the process of responding to the incident and take into account the views of those involved and the parents/carers. Every decision should be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account consideration issues such as whether there was mutual consent to share an image(s) and with reference to Hackett's continuum. If in doubt, you should contact children's social services for advice.

If you have any doubts about whether to involve other agencies, you should make a report to the police.

How to report online content to the police

If it is necessary for a report to be made to the police, contact should be made through existing arrangements. This may be through the SCPO, through the MASH or equivalent, or by dialling 101 or 999 (where there is a threat to life).

It is important that you do not ask anyone to forward any images or videos to you and that you do not forward any images or videos via technology yourself – even to the police.

If you suspect that there might be images/chat logs/website history on any device belonging to the child then **do not** delete anything on the device. The device needs to be seized and retained in the state that it is found. Establish any PIN/device access details where possible so the device can be examined by the police in any investigation.

What to be aware of when making reports to the police

The police are not able to offer general advice on incidents. If the child or children involved are named or specifics are provided they are duty-bound to record and investigate all criminal activity reported.

When making a report through the 101 service, be aware that the person answering the call is a call handler who deals with a wide variety of crimes and may not have specialist knowledge in this area. Ensure any crime reference numbers provided are recorded.

SCPOs are able to offer direct support to schools on prevention and advice on management of incidents.

Assessing the risks

The circumstances of incidents can vary widely. If at the initial review stage a decision has been made not to refer to police and/or social services, the DSP should conduct a further review (including an interview with the children or young people involved) to establish the facts and assess the risks.

When assessing the risks the following should be considered.

- Why was the nude or semi-nude shared? Was the child or young person coerced or put under pressure?
- Has the nude or semi-nude been shared beyond its intended recipient? Was it shared without the consent of the child or young person who produced the nude or semi-nude?
- Has the nude or semi-nude been shared on social media or anywhere else online? If so, what steps have been taken to contain the spread?
- How old are any of the children or young people involved?
- Did the child or young person send the image to more than one person?
- Do you have any concerns about the child or young person's vulnerability?
- Are there additional concerns that relate to informing the parents/carers?

DSPs should always use their professional judgement in conjunction with that of their colleagues to assess incidents.

Annex A provides a list of questions to complement and support DSPs' professional judgement.

Case study A: Children and young people aged 13–18

Concern

- A boy and a girl, both aged 16, were in a relationship for the past month and both consented to recording themselves engaging in sexual activity. The boy has since shown the video to other learners. The girl's friends discovered this then told their form teacher who spoke with the setting's DSP.

Setting response

- The DSP spoke with the girl and then the boy. There were no wider safeguarding concerns about either learner. There was no evidence that the video had been shared by the boy and he offered to delete it from his device.
- Although not shared online, the boy admitted showing the video to some friends without his girlfriend's consent, which caused her embarrassment.
- The DSP provided the girl with information on support services available and advised both young people on the potential impact of taking and sharing sexual images/videos both criminally and emotionally.
- As it was not consensual for all young people involved, including those who were shown the video, disciplinary action was taken against the boy. It was considered appropriate to deal with this 'in house' as it was judged that there was no deliberate intent to cause harm and that educating those involved on consent and healthy relationships would be a more effective way of handling the incident.
- The DSP worked with both learners to help them come up with an agreed plan to inform the learners' parents. The DSP recorded the incident, as well as the actions taken, in their safeguarding records.

Case study B: Children aged under 13

Concern

- A learner with slight learning difficulties (girl, aged 12) told her teacher that she had sent a photo of herself in her underwear to a fellow learner (boy, aged 12) months previously, but was now being blackmailed by an unknown Snapchat user to send a naked photo of herself to them or they would release the first picture online and send it to her family.

School response

- The school had no other safeguarding concerns about the children or their families. The teacher referred the incident to the school DSP who spoke with the learners involved and their parents and advised them on the situation and possible consequences, including police and social services' involvement.
- It was confirmed during the DSP's interviews that the image was unsolicited and the girl was not pressured or coerced into sending it. The boy who received the original image denied sharing it more widely or any knowledge of the Snapchat user.
- The DSP sought advice from SCPO and the local authority education safeguarding team. Due to the girl's vulnerability a referral to social services was made as, although there might not have been a cause for concern, it was deemed important to explore why she was behaving in this way.
- The SCPO conducted an investigation, which involved contacting Snapchat. The company sent an encrypted disc containing the messages sent by the suspect. The disc contained nude images of children and the underwear photo sent by the girl.
- After investigation the IP address revealed the suspect lived in south west England and the case was handed over to the Paedophile Online Investigation Team in the area. A subsequent arrest was made, although it is unknown how the image got in their hands.
- During this time the SCPO stayed in touch with the girl and her parents to provide information, reassurance and support.
- The school documented the incident and the actions taken in the children's safeguarding records.

Supporting the child(ren) or young person/people involved

Once an assessment has concluded that a child or young person is not at immediate risk, it may be necessary to have a conversation with them and decide the best course of action. If possible, the DSP should have this conversation. However, if the child or young person feels more comfortable talking to another member of staff, this should be facilitated where possible. It is important that the child or young person be given a sense of control over the reporting process.

The purpose of the conversation is to:

- identify, **without looking**, what the nude or semi-nude contains and whether anyone else has been involved

- find out whether the nude or semi-nude has been shared between two people or shared further. This may be speculative information as imagery may have been shared more widely than the child or young person is aware of
- discuss what actions and support might be needed, including preventing further distribution. This discussion should both take into account the views of the child or young person and balance what are considered to be appropriate actions for responding to the incident.

When discussing the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, it is important that the DSP (or equivalent) considers the child or young person's perspective (see Annex C). While this will vary from case to case, it is important to be mindful that the process of being involved in any investigation or discussion of an incident will be worrying for a child or young person. In order to help alleviate and manage the anxiety experienced by the child or young person, it is important that the DSP (or equivalent):

- reassures the child or young person that they are not alone and the education setting will do everything that they can to help and support them. They should also be reassured that they will be kept informed throughout the process
- recognises the pressures that children and young people can be under to take part in sharing an image and, if relevant, supports their parents/carers to understand the wider issues and motivations around this
- remains solution-focused and avoids any victim-blaming questions such as 'why have you done this?' as this may prevent the child or young person from talking about what has happened. For example, use questions such as 'describe what happened' or 'explain to me who was involved'
- helps the child or 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 image(s)
- discusses issues of consent and trust within healthy relationships. Explain that it is not okay for someone to make them feel uncomfortable, to pressure them into doing things that they do not want to do, or to show them things that they are unhappy about. Let them know that they can speak to the DSP if this ever happens
- explains the law on the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes. It is important to highlight that the law is in place to protect children and young people rather than criminalise them; it should be explained in such a way that avoids alarming or distressing them
- signposts (if necessary) to support services available, e.g. if they want to talk to a professional anonymously.

For children and young people who have had their nudes or semi-nudes shared publicly it is important that the DSP (or equivalent):

- reassures them that they have done the right thing by speaking to an adult and that the education setting and other adults are there to help
- advises them:
 - to delete images from social media accounts (including from cloud photo backups) if they have uploaded them themselves

- to use the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) and Childline’s Report Remove tool at www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/sexting/report-nude-image-online/. This must be done as soon as possible in order to minimise the number of people who see the image
- on how to report nudes or semi-nudes on individual sites to get them taken down. If the image has been shared via a mobile, they should be informed that they can contact the mobile phone operator to have a mobile number changed as this may stop others from contacting them
- to speak to the setting if they are concerned about any bullying behaviour.

For children and young people who have been sent nudes and semi-nudes it is important that the DSP:

- reassures them that they have done the right thing by speaking out and that the education setting and other adults are there to help
- asks whether it was sent by an adult or another child or young person and if they requested the photo or if it was sent unsolicited
- advises:
 - on the importance of reporting it online if it has been shared
 - that they delete it from their devices and accounts
 - on the importance of not sharing the image further
 - (if they asked to receive the image) that they should not put pressure on to others to do things that they are uncomfortable with.

For children and young people who have shared another child’s or young person’s nudes or semi-nudes it is important that the DSP:

- asks whether they asked for the image or were initially sent it without requesting it
- asks 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 the child or young person’s phone or any social media accounts and reporting it to service providers
- asks about their motivations for sharing the photo and discusses 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. Emphasise that whatever the reason, it is always wrong to share nudes and semi-nudes of another child or young person. This can be used as an opportunity to discuss the importance of consent and not putting pressure on others to take or share nudes and semi-nudes
- advises on the laws concerning the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes.

Informing parents/carers

Parents/carers should be informed and involved in the process at an early stage, unless informing them will put the young person at risk of harm. If there is any reason to believe that informing a parent/carer might cause distress or harm to the child the matter should be referred to social services for consideration.

DSPs may work with the young people involved to decide on the best approach for informing parents/carers. In some cases, DSPs may work to support the child or young person to inform their parents/carers themselves.

Further advice and information about involving parents/carers can be found under 'Supporting parents/carers' on page 28.

Social services contact and referrals

If the DSP is aware that social services are currently involved with a young person implicated in an incident of sharing nudes and semi-nudes they should contact the duty officer in social services. They should also contact children's social services if they believe they may be involved, or have been involved, with a young person in the past.

If as a result of the investigation the DSP believes there are wider issues that meet the threshold for social services' involvement then they should make a referral in line with their child protection procedures.

DSPs should ensure that they are aware of, and familiar with, any relevant local policies, procedures and contact points/names that are available to support settings in responding to sharing nudes or semi-nudes.

If a local area has a MASH then this may be the most appropriate place for settings to make a referral initially.

Viewing and deleting nudes and semi-nudes

Adults should **not** view nudes or semi-nudes. Wherever possible responses to incidents should be based on what DSPs have been told about the content of the image.

If nudes and semi-nudes have been unavoidably viewed by a member of staff either following a disclosure from a young person or as a result of a member of staff undertaking their daily role (such as IT staff monitoring systems) then DSPs should ensure that the staff member is provided with appropriate support. Viewing such images can be distressing for children, young people and adults and appropriate emotional support may be required.

If the setting has decided that other agencies do not need to be involved and that this is reasonable, then consideration should be given to deleting the image(s) from devices and online services as well as any image(s) being stored on cloud storage services, in line with the setting's behavioural policy, to limit any further sharing of the image(s).

It is recommended that in most cases children and young people are asked to delete image(s) and to confirm that they have deleted the image(s). Children and young people

should be given a deadline for deletion across all devices, online storage or social media sites²².

Children and young people should be reminded that possession of nudes and semi-nudes of under 18s is illegal. They 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. Any statements from the child or young person should be recorded **in their own words**. Parents/carers should also be informed unless this presents a further risk to the child or young person.

At this point settings should invoke their own measures to educate children and young people on the issues surrounding the sharing, creating or receiving images but this is at the discretion of the setting and should be in line with its own behaviour policies.

Settings should act in accordance with their policy on confiscation of learners' items, including digital devices, as set out in their behavioural policy.

Recording incidents

All incidents relating to nudes and semi-nudes being shared need to be recorded by the DSP and kept separate from other records for the children and young people in the setting. This includes incidents that have been referred to external agencies and those that have not. For incidents that have not been reported to police or social services, education settings should record their reason for doing so and ensure it is signed off by the headteacher or setting's manager/leadership team.

Reporting nudes and semi-nudes online

Children and young people may need help and support with the removal of nudes and semi-nudes from devices and social media, especially if they are distressed. Most online service 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 a child or young person.

The quickest way to get content removed from the internet is for the person who posted it to take it down. If the child or young person posted the content themselves using their account they should be asked to log in and delete it. If someone else posted the image

²² Young people may need support to report images. For advice and information on reporting images online see 'Reporting nude and semi-nudes online'.

or reposted it, they should be asked to log in and delete it from any sites they've shared it on.

If the setting knows where the content is hosted but doesn't know who posted it, or the poster refuses to take it down, the content can still be reported to an online service. If it breaches a site's terms of service then it will be removed. Each provider will have a different approach to dealing with requests for the removal of content and the speed of response. More information can be found on individual providers' websites 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. Sexual images of children and young people are illegal and should not be hosted by any providers.

NSPCC's Net Aware guides, which include information on reporting functions for some of the most popular apps used by children and young people, can be found on the 'Keeping safe online' area of Hwb at hwb.gov.wales/zones/keeping-safe-online/news/articles/ceddbf9e-758c-487a-b514-d5dafbc00e3a.

In the event that a site has no reporting function and if the content is a sexual image of someone under 18 you can report it to the IWF. Anyone can report directly to the IWF at www.iwf.org.uk.

Children and young people can use IWF and Childline's Report Remove tool (see www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/sexting/report-nude-image-online/) to confidentially report nude and semi-nude images and videos they are worried have been, or might be, shared publicly.

Images will be removed if they meet the legal threshold for removal. At the very least, the image or video must show a person under the age of 18 nude or partially nude. Each report is manually assessed by highly trained IWF analysts. Their assessments are accurate and trusted by the police and internet industry across the globe.

IWF's analysts use hashing technology to produce a digital fingerprint of the image and trace it to other locations on the internet. The image can be located and removed even if it has been cropped or slightly edited. This technology can also prevent the image from appearing in search results or being uploaded to the internet in the future.

To make a report a child or young person needs:

- a Childline account
- photographic ID (if they're 12 to 17-years-old) to prove their age via the Yoti app
- a copy of the photo or video, or a link where it has been posted online.

They can start a report at www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/sexting/report-nude-image-online/.

Safeguarding support and feedback about each report is provided via the Childline account.

If you are concerned that a child or young person is being sexually abused, exploited or groomed online you should report your concern to National Crime Agency Child Exploitation and Online Protection (NCA-CEOP) command (see www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre).

Supporting parents/carers

Children and young people can be involved in sharing nudes and semi-nudes 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. In any of these situations, parents/carers may find it difficult to know how to deal with the knowledge that their child has been involved in an incident and may display differing emotions.

Whatever their feelings, it is important that professionals listen to their concerns and take them seriously. It can also be helpful for staff members and the police or social care to reassure parents/carers by explaining that it is normal for young people to be curious about sex.

In all situations, parents/carers should be:

- given support to deal with their own feelings of upset and concern, including signposting to further resources that can help them to understand the sharing of nude and semi-nude incidents or support services they can contact, where appropriate
- given support on how to speak to their child about the incident
- advised on the law around sharing nudes and semi-nudes
- kept updated about any actions that have been taken or any support that their child is accessing unless the child involved has specifically asked for this not to happen and is judged to be old enough to make that informed decision
- informed about sources of support for their child, in case they are feeling anxious or depressed about what has happened. This could include speaking to a Childline counsellor at www.childline.org.uk or on 0800 11 11, in-house counselling services where available, or a GP. If they are concerned that their child is suicidal they should contact 999
- advised to talk to the setting about any incidents of bullying linked to the situation in line with the anti-bullying policy
- directed to NCA-CEOP at www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre if the child or young person discloses any further details to them that may suggest they are being groomed or sexually exploited.

In addition to the advice above, parents/carers should be given the following advice and guidance for specific scenarios.

Parents/carers whose child has lost control of nudes and semi-nudes should be:

- directed to encourage the child or young person to delete images from social media accounts if they have uploaded the images themselves
- directed to IWF and Childline's Report Remove tool at www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/sexting/report-nude-image-online/. This must be done as soon as possible to minimise the number of people that see the image.

Parents/carers whose child has been sent nudes and semi-nudes should be advised to:

- listen to their child's concerns without criticising their decisions
- consider ways that their child could speak to the sender to stop future correspondences. Alternatively, if the child or young person prefers, informed about how to block the sender
- discuss issues of consent and trust within healthy relationships. Explain that it is not okay for someone to make them feel uncomfortable, to pressure them into doing things that they do not want to do, or to show them things that they are unhappy about. Explain that they can speak out if this ever happens.

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

- supported to have conversations with their child and advised to:
 - stay calm and refrain from getting angry with their child
 - 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 image or were initially sent it without requesting it
 - discuss issues of consent and trust in healthy relationships or friendships. Talk about the types of things that are and are not okay 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 inform the setting if they are concerned that their child is behaving in a sexually inappropriate way, and directed to contact their GP and/or social services for advice about getting early help and support for the child from appropriate services.

Resources and support

It is likely that information for parents/carers about the sharing of nudes and

semi-nudes will sit within the setting's wider parental engagement strategy on online safety. The 'Keeping safe online' area of Hwb contains information on a broad range of online safety considerations for children and young people, as well as providing information, guidance and advice tailored for parents/carers.

There are specific sharing nudes and semi-nudes resources available to support parents/carers, providing information on the risks and consequences, as well as practical advice on how they can support their child (see hwb.gov.wales/zones/keeping-safe-online/parents-and-carers/guidance-parents-and-carers/#sharing-images).

Parent Info (www.parentinfo.org) provides information and advice to parents/carers from expert organisations on topics ranging from sex and relationships and mental health to online safety; this includes content on sharing nudes and semi-nudes. The content of Parent Info can be hosted for free on a setting's website via a newsfeed service.

Helplines and reporting

- 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 at www.childline.org.uk/Talk/Chat/Pages/OnlineChat.aspx.
- If parents/carers are concerned that their child is being contacted by adults as a result of having shared sexual imagery they should report to NCA-CEOP at www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre.
- If parents/carers are concerned about their child, they can contact the NSPCC Cymru Helpline by ringing 0808 800 5000 or emailing help@nspcc.org.uk.
- Meic (see www.meiccymru.org) is the national advocacy, information and advice helpline for children and young people in Wales aged 0 to 25. Young people can access the free and confidential service by phone (080880 23456), text (84001), or online chat (www.meiccymru.org).
- Llinell Gymorth Byw Heb Ofn/Live Fear Free Helpline 0808 8010 800 – a 24-hour helpline for people who have experienced or are experiencing domestic abuse or sexual violence, or who are worried about a friend or relative.
- Live Fear Free website offers advice on domestic abuse, sexual violence and violence against women at <http://livefearfree.gov.wales/?lang=en>.
- Stop it Now! UK and Ireland Helpline (0808 1000 900) for advice on protecting a child or if you are concerned about their sexual behaviour. For more information or to send an anonymous online message visit the website at www.stopitnow.org.uk/concerned-about-a-child-or-young-persons-sexual-behaviour/.

4. Educating children and young people

Why educate learners about the sharing of nudes and semi-nudes?

Teaching about safeguarding issues in the classroom can prevent harm by providing children and young people with skills, attributes and knowledge to help them navigate risks. Addressing sensitive issues promotes a whole-setting approach to safeguarding, giving children and young people the space to explore key issues and the confidence to seek the support of adults should they encounter problems.

Keeping learners safe states that everyone working in education ‘has a responsibility to develop children’s understanding, awareness and resilience [of safeguarding] through the curriculum’. In line with this, schools should provide young people with opportunities to learn about the issue of sharing nudes and semi-nudes.

How should we teach learners about sharing nudes and semi-nudes?

Learning about sharing nudes and semi-nudes cannot be done in isolation. Given the potential sensitivity of these lessons, it is essential that this issue is taught within an emotionally safe classroom climate where clear ground rules have been negotiated and established, and where boundaries around teacher confidentiality have been clarified. If teachers suspect any child or young person is vulnerable or at risk, the setting's safeguarding protocols should always be followed.

Settings should consider:

- what specific learning resources are available to support teaching on the subject of sharing nudes and semi-nudes? This might include factual information, such as:
 - what it is
 - how it is most likely to be encountered
 - the consequences of requesting, forwarding or providing such images, including when it is and is not abusive
 - issues of legality
 - the risk of damage to people’s feelings and reputation
- what specific learning should take place to ensure children and young people have the strategies and skills required to **manage**:
 - specific requests or pressure to provide (or forward) such images
 - the receipt of such images.

This will include who to tell; what to say; what to do; what not to do and where to get support from within and outside of the setting.

It is important to recognise how difficult it may be for children and young people to challenge or deny their peers’ requests for images, especially those to whom they are

attracted or whose approval they seek. It may also be extremely difficult for them to ask adults for help. Children and young people may have made a decision they now regret and may find it difficult or embarrassing to ask for help. It is essential that lessons help children and young people develop the confidence they may need to put their skills and strategies into action.

It is therefore important that children and young people understand their setting's policy towards sharing nudes and semi-nudes. The content of this policy and the protocols the setting will follow in the event of an incident can be explored as part of this learning. This reinforces the inappropriate nature of abusive behaviours and can reassure children and young people that their setting will support them if they experience difficulties or have concerns.

- what **underpinning protective learning** is being provided by the personal and social education (PSE) programme and wider curriculum? This will include work on:
 - communication
 - understanding healthy relationships, including trust
 - understanding and respecting the concept of consent
 - understanding our rights (especially our collective right to **be** safe and to **feel** safe)
 - recognising abusive and coercive language and behaviours
 - recognising and challenging victim-blaming and harmful societal norms such as 'slut-shaming'
 - accepting our responsibilities (especially our responsibility to respect others' trust and protect their right to be physically, emotionally and reputationally safe).

The *Personal and social education framework for 7 to 19-year olds in Wales* (2008) provides guidance to settings on how to plan and deliver a broad and balanced programme of PSE to meet the specific needs of the learners.

Curriculum for Wales – Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience

The Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience (Area) provides a holistic structure for understanding health and well-being. It is concerned with developing the capacity of learners to navigate life's opportunities and challenges. The fundamental components of this Area are physical health and development, mental health, and emotional and social well-being. It will support learners to understand and appreciate how the different components of health and well-being are interconnected, and it recognises that good health and well-being are important to enable successful learning. Guidance to help schools and settings develop the Health and Well-being Area of Learning and Experience of their own curriculum can be found at hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/health-and-well-being.

Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE)

Relationships and sexuality education (RSE) plays a vital role in enhancing learners' well-being and safety and will be mandatory when the new curriculum is in place in 2022.

Settings have an important role in prevention and protection, responding to and discussing learners' questions and needs. They have the potential to create safe and empowering environments that build upon learners' own formal and informal learning and experiences, offline and online. Enhancing learner voice and agency is a key principle for embedding RSE within the curriculum and learners should be invited to take part in discussions that advance social justice for gender, sexual and relationship equity and well-being, as well as supported to express their views and feelings on a range of RSE issues, including sharing nudes and semi-nudes.

It is proposed that schools will have a duty to provide RSE. Further guidance will be published before 2022 to support this, including guidance on the topics and learning that support RSE and how each Area can contribute to these (see hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/designing-your-curriculum/cross-cutting-themes-for-designing-your-curriculum).

When to teach learners about these issues?

It is essential that learning is both age and readiness appropriate and is seen by children and young people as balanced and relevant to their real life experience. Working with children and young people in the planning of these lessons can help ensure that lessons are both appropriate and relevant.

Consider how this learning can be supported by the delivery of the Digital Competence Framework (DCF), specifically, in the Citizenship strand. The DCF was made available in September 2016 and has recently been refreshed to support Curriculum for Wales (see hwb.gov.wales/curriculum-for-wales/cross-curricular-skills-frameworks).

Citizenship forms one of four strands within the DCF, which is broken down into four elements. Through these elements learners will engage with what it means to be a conscientious digital citizen who contributes positively to the digital world around them and who critically evaluates their place within this digital world. Learners will be prepared for and ready to encounter the positive and negative aspects of being a digital citizen, and will develop strategies and tools to aid them as they become independent consumers and producers.

The four separate elements are:

- Identity, image and reputation
- Health and well-being
- Digital rights licensing and ownership
- Online behaviour and online bullying.

How can we deliver education safely?

Teaching should reflect best practice in delivering safe and effective education, including the following²³.

- **Safeguarding first** – Make sure that the safety and well-being of each child comes first by establishing an emotionally safe learning environment and following the education setting’s safeguarding or child protection policies and procedures in the event of a disclosure.
- **Approach from the perspective of the child** – Before any new teaching, it is important to understand what being online means to children and young people and their relationships and explore the positive opportunities it presents, as well as the risks.
- **Promote dialogue and understanding** – Children and young people feel safest when they are listened to and understood, and know that they can ask trusted adults for help when they need it.
- **Empower and enable children and young people** – Children and young people have the right to be protected from harm, and to be supported to build knowledge, skills and confidence that will help them identify risk and access support when they need it.
- **Never frighten or scaremonger** – Alarmist education can be risky or worse, counterproductive. Avoid shocking or scaring children and young people, their families or other professionals.
- **Challenge victim-blaming attitudes** – Some children, young people and adults may express victim-blaming attitudes around sharing nudes and semi-nudes. These should be challenged in a constructive and supportive way that encourages them to think critically about the language they use.

Using external practitioners

The use of practitioners from other organisations to support education around sharing nudes and semi-nudes can provide significant benefits, but their use should be carefully considered to ensure they are effective. External practitioners should be used to enhance a setting’s offer rather to deliver education in isolation.

It is important to consider:

- how the external visitor will be used to meet your aims and objectives
- whether you are selecting the right external visitor – do they have the required skills and knowledge? Are their resources appropriate? Does their key message reflect your safeguarding ethos/approach?
- how you will safeguard your setting’s community

²³ Values taken from NCA-CEOP’s Thinkuknow education programme. Available at: (see www.thinkuknow.co.uk/professionals).

- how you will evaluate their input and assess their impact.

What resources are available?

The 'Keeping safe online' area on Hwb (see hwb.gov.wales/zones/keeping-safe-online/) provides bilingual resources on a wide range of online safety issues for different audiences, including children and young people, practitioners, parents/carers and governors. There are a number of resources that relate specifically to sharing nudes and semi-nudes (sometimes referred to in the resources as sexting).

An overview of the bilingual resources that relate to sharing images and can be used to support lessons can be found at hwb.gov.wales/zones/keeping-safe-online/practitioners-and-professionals/guidance-education-practitioners/#sharing-images.

It is recommended that you visit the trusted partners and organisations page if you require further guidance, resources and/or specialist support (see hwb.gov.wales/zones/online-safety/trusted-partners-and-organisations/).

This page includes signposting information for organisations including Barnardo's, Childline, NSPCC, SchoolBeat Cymru, the NCA-CEOP (see specifically the Thinkuknow education programme), Stop it Now! Wales, and others who have expertise in this area.

Annex A: Questions to support assessment

When deciding whether to involve the police and/or children's social services, consideration should be given to the following questions. Answering these questions will support the DSP in considering whether a child or young person is at risk of harm, in which case a report will be appropriate, whether additional information or support is needed from other agencies or whether the setting can manage the incident and support the young people directly.

Do you have any concerns about the child or young person's vulnerability?	
Why this question?	<p>Consideration should be given to whether a child or young person's circumstances, sexuality or background makes them additionally vulnerable. This could include being in care, having additional learning needs or disability, being a young carer, or having been a victim of abuse. This is not an exhaustive list and each case should be considered on a case-by-case basis. If the child or young person has a social worker you should inform social services about the incident.</p> <p>Where there are wider concerns about the care and welfare of a young person then consideration should be given to referring to children's social services.</p>

Why was the nude or semi-nude shared? Was it consensual or was the child or young person put under pressure or coerced?	
Why this question?	<p>Children and young people's motivations for sharing nudes and semi-nudes include flirting, developing trust in a romantic relationship, seeking attention, or because they thought it would be a funny thing to do and did not think of the consequences.</p> <p>Though there are clearly risks when images are shared consensually, children and young people who have been pressured to share nudes and semi-nudes are more likely to report negative consequences.</p> <p>A report should be made to the police if a child or young person has been pressured or coerced into sharing nudes and semi-nudes, or if an image is being shared without consent and with malicious intent.</p> <p>Consideration should also be given to a child or young person's level of maturity and the impact of any additional learning need on their understanding of the situation.</p>

	<p>Action should be taken, in accordance with the setting's behavior policy, with any child or young person who has pressured or coerced others into sharing nudes and semi-nudes. If this is part of a pattern of behaviour then you should consider making a referral to a harmful sexual behaviour service (via social services), such as the Barnardo's Taith Service. NSPCC also has a service – Protect and Respect – for children and young people aged 11 to 19 who either need support to learn about healthy relationships or who may be experiencing child sexual exploitation.</p>
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<p>Has the nude or semi-nude been shared beyond its intended recipient? Was it shared without the consent of the child or young person who produced the image(s)?</p>	
<p>Why this question?</p>	<p>The image may have been shared initially with consent but then passed on to others. A child or young person may have shared the image further with malicious intent, or they may not have had a full understanding of the potential consequences.</p> <p>Consideration should also be given to a child or young person's level of maturity and the impact of any additional learning needs on their understanding of the situation.</p> <p>The police should be informed through the MASH or equivalent if there was a deliberate intent to cause harm by sharing the image or if the image has been used to bully or blackmail a child or young person.</p>

<p>Has the nude or semi-nude been shared on social media or anywhere else online? If so, what steps have been taken to contain the spread of the imagery?</p>	
<p>Why this question?</p>	<p>If the image has been shared widely on social media, this could cause significant embarrassment for the child or young person and have a long-term impact on their reputation. It could also increase the risk of them being bullied or contacted by strangers online.</p> <p>The child or young person should be supported to report the image to any sites it is hosted on. You can find information on reporting in section 3.</p> <p>If the child or young person has tried to report the image, and it has not been removed, the young person should use IWF and Childline's Report Remove tool at</p>

	<p>www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/online-mobile-safety/sexting/report-nude-image-online/.</p> <p>If they need to talk to someone anonymously then Childline or Meic can offer emotional support.</p> <p>The Professionals Online Safety Helpline (POSH) can be contacted for further advice and support.</p> <p>If the young person is being contacted by people they don't know who have viewed the imagery then you should report to NCA-CEOP.</p>
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How old is/are the child(ren) or young person/people involved?	
<p>Why this question?</p>	<p>Children under the age of 13 are unable to consent to sexual activity. While the age of consent to any form of sexual activity is 16, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 provides extra protection from sexual abuse to children under the age of 13 as they cannot legally give their consent to any form of sexual activity. Any image 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 child or young person felt under pressure to take the image/video or share it.</p> <p>Consideration should also be given to a child or young person's level of maturity and the impact of any special educational needs on their understanding of the situation.</p> <p>If you believe the image contains acts that you would not expect a child or young person of that age to engage in then you should report to the police, through the MASH or equivalent. Brook's Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool (see www.brook.org.uk/training/wider-professional-training/sexual-behaviours-traffic-light-tool/) can be used to support you with this assessment.</p>

Did the child or young person send nudes and semi-nudes to more than one person?	
<p>Why this question?</p>	<p>If a child or young person is sharing nudes and semi-nudes with multiple people, this may indicate that there are other issues that they need support with. Consideration should be given to their motivations for sharing.</p>

	If you believe there are wider safeguarding concerns then you should make a referral to children’s social services or the police, through the MASH or equivalent.
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Does the child or young person understand the possible implications of sharing the nudes or semi-nudes?	
Why this question?	<p>Children and young people may produce or share images 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 young person. They may also not understand consent.</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>

Are there additional concerns if the parents/carers are informed?	
Why this question?	<p>Parents/carers should be informed of incidents of this nature unless there is good reason to believe that informing them will put the child or young person at risk. This may be due to concerns about parental abuse or cultural or religious factors that would affect how they or their community would respond.</p> <p>If a child or young person highlights concerns about involvement of their parents/carers then the DSP should use their professional judgement to decide whether it is appropriate to involve the parents/carers and at what stage. If a setting chooses not to involve a parent/carer they must clearly record the reasons for not doing so.</p> <p>Where possible children and young people should be supported to speak with their parents/carers themselves about the concerns.</p>

Annex B: Staff training activity

Activity instruction sheet

This activity may be used by a DSP to explore the issues of nudes and semi-nudes with staff. It is designed to illustrate a range of scenarios and highlight that an appropriate and proportionate response needs to be considered for each incident.

Instructions to trainer

Resources required

- Resource sheet 1 – typology definitions (one per delegate)
- Resource sheet 2 – case studies (one per group)
- Resource sheet 3 – response (one per delegate)
- Coloured card – six colours
- Adhesive putty

Preparation

A – Prepare a set of case study cards per group (this takes a little time, but the cards can be reused). If you prefer, you can use anonymised case studies that you are aware of.

The 15 case studies (Resource sheet 2) match the six typology categories as follows:

- aggravated adult (case studies 4 & 7)
- aggravated youth intent to harm (case studies 3, 5, 6, 8 and 12)
- aggravated youth reckless misuse (case studies 9 and 10)
- experimental romantic (case studies 2, 11 and 12)
- experimental attention seeking (case studies 1, 13, 14)
- 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 six white ‘header’ cards for wall mounting – each card should display the title of one of the typologies.

Activity

1. Divide delegates into groups of 3–4. Where appropriate mix delegates to include a wide range of experience/job roles, 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 setting be?
 - At this stage, which of the case studies would they refer out to police and or social services?

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

4. Give each group member a copy of Resource sheet 1 and discuss with them Finkelhor and Wolak's typology. Finkelhor and Wolak's typology will help them to define the kind of incident and will also help them to decide on the appropriate and proportionate response.
5. Give each delegate a copy of Resource sheet 3 and ask them as a group to decide for each case study which typology category they would assign to it. Ask them to record any comments on their sheets.
6. While delegates are working, use adhesive putty to stick the six '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 will become 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.
9. Pull out a variety of incidents that reflect the different typologies, e.g. romantic, attention seeking, aggravated adult, etc., and ask delegates to consider the following questions.

- Do any of the case studies reflect any of the five points for immediate referral to other agencies?
- If they do, which external agency should they be referred to and why?
- If they don't need to be referred to an external agency, why not?

10. Where there are case studies that don't hit the referral threshold ask the groups to consider their response. This should take into account how they would respond as a setting. They should consider the following:

- How would the child be supported?
- How would parents/carers be informed?
- How would the deletion and removal of the images be handled?
- How would the incident be recorded?
- Who would take the lead in managing the incident?
- What would follow the management of the incident?

11. Allow for discussion in small groups on these topics and where possible get them to refer to the main body of the advice. Draw out any key elements for discussion and take the opportunity to remind staff of any relevant policies and procedures in managing incidents of youth-produced sexual imagery.

Resource Sheet 1 (Adapted from Wolak and Finkelhor ‘Sexting: a Typology’ March 2011)

<p>Aggravated incidents involve criminal or abusive elements beyond the creation, sending or possession of nudes or semi-nudes.</p>	<p>Adult offenders attempt to develop relationships by grooming teenagers into 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 may be solicited by adult offenders.</p>
	<p>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, or involve sexual abuse or exploitation by young people.</p>
	<p>Youth only: reckless misuse involves 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.</p>
<p>Experimental incidents involve the creation and sending of nudes or semi-nudes, with no adult involvement, no apparent intent to harm or reckless misuse.</p>	<p>Romantic episodes involve young people in ongoing relationships make images for themselves or each other – such images were not intended to be distributed beyond the pair.</p>
	<p>Sexual attention seeking: the phrase ‘sexual attention seeking’ is taken directly from the typology; however, it is important to note that incidents within this category can be a part of normal childhood. A child or young person should not be blamed for taking and sharing their image.</p>
	<p>Other: there are 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 nine or younger) who did not appear to have sexual motives.</p>

Resource sheet 2: Case studies

Case studies adapted from *Sexting: A typology* by J Wolak and D Finkelhor (University of New Hampshire – Crimes against Children Research Center, 2011).

Case study 1

A girl (aged nine with mild learning difficulties) was speaking to a group of friends from school via a popular messaging app. Her mobile, which had a camera, was upstairs in her room. She was getting ready for bed and was sat in a towel and 'flashed' on webcam. Another learner (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 headteacher.

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, 15, sent a topless photo of herself to her girlfriend, who was also 15. When they broke up, the girlfriend sent the photo to numerous friends and many recipients forwarded the image to others. The school found out when one recipient told a parent. By then more than 200 pupils had received the picture.

Case study 4

The parents of a 14-year-old girl found nude pictures of her on her mobile device and approached her school for advice. She admitted sending the pictures to a 37-year-old man she met online. The girl stated she 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

A 14-year-old girl reported to the DSP she had been forwarded a naked photo of one of her friends, 13. Her friend had initially sent the photo to a boy, 15, she liked who attended a nearby school.

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. 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

A 13-year-old girl took sexual pictures of her three younger sisters (ages five, six and eight) and touched them sexually. A classmate disclosed this information to their class teacher. Children's social services had been involved with the family for some time.

Case study 9

A 14-year-old girl from the school posted content of herself in her underwear simulating oral sex; the school's DSP had not seen any of this content but had been told about it by pupils. (The DSP at another neighbouring school had called to raise awareness of a local 'competition' between children to see what the riskiest videos they could upload to social media sites were without the videos being reported and removed.) When spoken to the pupil insisted this was not true and that she was fully clothed in any content.

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 to 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 13-year-old boy sent one picture of himself masturbating to another pupil in his class. The pupil was shocked and shared the image with two others asking for their advice about what to do. One of the pupils showed the image to their parents who emailed it to the form tutor at the school demanding that something be done.

Case study 12

Two 16-year-old males in a relationship had faced some homophobic abuse online that culminated in their heads being photoshopped onto pornographic images which were shared. One of the boys confided in a member of staff about what had happened and explained that they had exchanged nude images with each other. Another young person claimed to have a copy of the image (although there was no proof of this) and had threatened to share it. One of the two boys was worried that if his family found out about his relationship there could be 'serious consequences for us both'.

Case study 13

A boy, 15, sent unsolicited naked pictures of himself to three different girls in his school. One of the girls reported it to their class teacher.

Case study 14

A girl, 17, posted nude pictures of herself on a social networking site. The website identified the images as possible child abuse images, removed them and reported the incident to NCA-CEOP, which referred 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.

Resource Sheet 3 – Response

Case study – typology	Comments	Response
1 –		
2 –		
3 –		
4 –		
5 –		
6 –		
7 –		
8 –		
9 –		
10 –		
11 –		
12 –		
13 –		
14 –		

15 -		
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Annex C: NSPCC cases studies

Case study 1: Megan's story

Summary

Cyberbullying and physical bullying at the hands of her peers led to Megan self-harming, suffering from anxiety and not eating properly.

So when she moved secondary schools at the end of Year 9, aged 13, she thought it was a chance to start over again.

She quickly made friends and was added to people's social media accounts.

But her whole world was turned upside down after a boy she had been messaging asked her to send a naked image of herself.

Within 24 hours of sending the photo on Snapchat most of the school had seen it and she was being bullied as a result.

She credits Childline with saving her life on several occasions.

Full case study

I had a very happy childhood but when I went to secondary school things went downhill.

A group of about five girls I was friends with in Year 8 when I was 12 years old, literally turned on me overnight. They sent horrible text messages then it escalated to online bullying via apps as such as Facebook. The whole school year seemed to get involved and then a boy started physically bullying me.

My sister and my mum knew about the bullying and that I was suffering from anxiety and not eating properly as a result. What they didn't know was that I was self-harming. To help me cope I often visited the Childline website and chatted to online counsellors.

After about a year of bullying my parents eventually found out about me self-harming and got me help.

It was while I was seeing a child psychiatrist and undergoing cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) that I told them I couldn't deal with the bullying anymore. So at the end of Year 9, aged 13, I moved schools.

My first day was nerve-racking but everyone was really nice and there was a frenzy of people adding me on social media so we could keep in contact over the summer.

I ended up adding a boy who was a year above me to my social media accounts. I had never spoken to him but we would smile at each other in the corridors. After the summer break, he started texting me and messaging me on Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. He was the first boy who had shown any interest in me before and I was flattered.

We were messaging constantly for about two weeks. Then one night he asked me if I would send him a picture of myself naked. I said no.

For four days it was just constant pressure. He said he was going to tell everybody I was frigid if I didn't do it.

I had only been at the school four weeks and I was desperate to be liked and to fit in so in the end I sent him a full image of me naked via Snapchat.

I could see he had opened it and there was no sign to say a screenshot had been taken of it, which was a relief. About an hour later a message appeared. When I opened it it was a photo of a girl in my year group with the words 'Haha I've got you'.

She kept calling me but I didn't answer. Then she messaged me saying if I didn't answer my phone she was going to show it to everyone. It turned out that she had taken a photo of the image I had sent on her phone and had been using the boy's mobile phone and social media accounts to communicate with me. I panicked and turned my phone off thinking it would go away.

The next morning I had loads of text messages. I ignored them and went to school but as soon as I arrived people started crowding round me holding up their phones with the photo of me on the screen and print-outs of it.

During lessons I had stuff thrown at my head with the words 'slut', 'whore', 'slag', 'prostitute', and 'stripper' written on them.

It was my best friend who convinced me to tell my tutor what had happened. Unfortunately I was made to feel that I was the one in the wrong because I had sent the image.

Mental health-wise I was back to square one – I started self-harming again, not eating properly and isolating myself.

Once again I turned to Childline to help me cope with my emotions. I truly believe if it wasn't for Childline I wouldn't be here today because there were a couple of times when I felt I was on the verge of taking my own life.

Life is good now. I got good GCSE and A level grades and I'm now at university studying for a degree in journalism.

Despite reporting the photo to Snapchat and the police it was never retrieved and I still worry it could resurface later.

To help raise awareness of sexting – sharing sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos with others – I give talks about my ordeal at schools, charity and government events and police training sessions to help them understand how best to handle cases similar to mine.

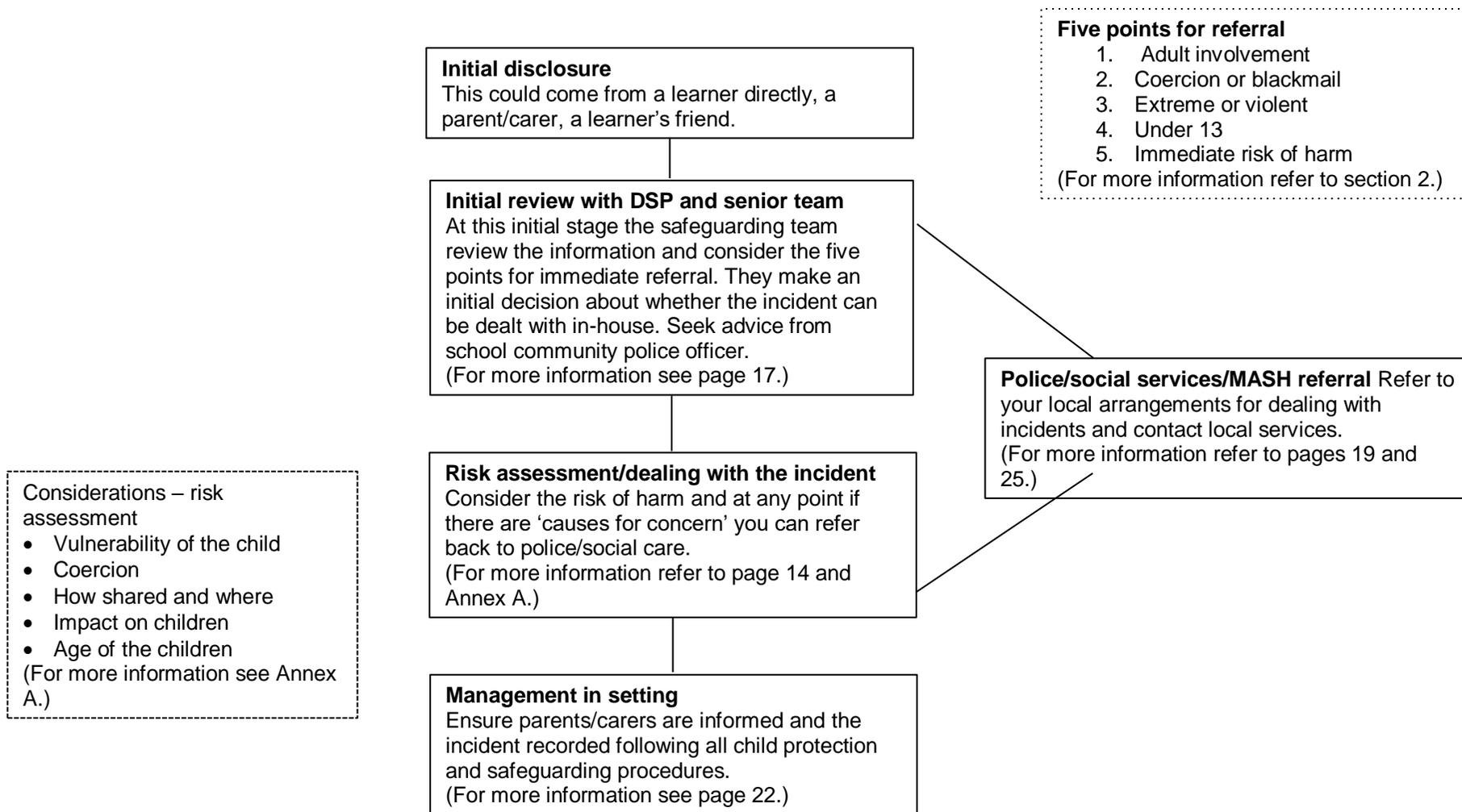
Even if I can help just one person through everything that I do then it's worth it.

Case study 2: Eleanor's story

Summary

Eleanor was 14 when her boyfriend asked her to send explicit photographs. She agreed to send him three nude pictures, having been lured into a false sense of security by Snapchat's disappearing photos function. After the relationship ended he turned everyone against her; Eleanor was ostracised at school and her mental health deteriorated. Her hair started falling out and she was diagnosed with stress, anxiety and school-phobia. The bullying was so bad her parents moved her to a private school and things turned around, until her ex-boyfriend shared the explicit photographs online. Eleanor spent two months desperately trying to ignore the problem and hoping it would go away while the photos were in full circulation. She eventually reported it to NCA-CEOP who contacted her school, who in turn contacted her parents and advised them to call the police. They reported it to the police, and arrests were made but no charges were brought. Eleanor has had a lot of counselling and is rebuilding her life.

Annex D: Flowchart for responding to incidents



Disclaimer

Relevant laws and best practice have been taken into account in the development of this document. However, these 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 taken as legal advice.

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The UKCIS Education Working Group is comprised of the following organisations.

