

01 Background



'Sexting' means sending sexually explicit messages and/or suggestive images or videos. 'Sexts' can be sent via any messaging service (often Social Media apps). Sexting can also be called 'trading nudes', 'dirties', 'nude selfies' or 'pic-for-pic'. Studies suggest up to a third of 15 year olds have shared a nude or semi-nude image of themselves. Particularly concerning is that young people often perceive Sexting as a 'mundane' activity or 'no big deal'. Sexting is increasingly occurring as a 'pre-relationship' activity.

When images are shared online, control is lost. Some apps offer time-limited viewing then 'deleting' images which engenders a false sense of security. Studies have shown that 90% of those who have received a 'sext', subsequently shared it with others.

Why it matters 02



1. It places children and young people at additional risk of exploitation.
2. It is against the law. Creating or sharing explicit images of a child is illegal, even if the person doing it is a child themselves. A child is breaking the law if they: take, share, possess, download or store an explicit image or video of a child (even if the child gave their 'permission' for it to be created).
3. It can have longer-term consequences

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Questions

- Do you routinely ask about Social Media use when assessing a child/family?
- Do you talk to children about Sexting and their broader online behaviour?
- Do you know organisation's policies and procedures for managing Sexting incidents?

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Information

There are many reasons why a young person may share a sexual image or video of themselves including: 'everyone is doing it', 'it's just banter'; 'I am proud of my body'; it's a boost to their self-esteem, it may be part of flirting, they

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What to do

1. Remain calm, be understanding and follow your organisation's Safeguarding policies and procedures.
2. Ensure your focus remains child-centric and do not be distracted by the technology (Sexting fundamentally remains a Safeguarding issue).
3. Contact the Police and Children's Social Care if: there is Adult Involvement; there is Coercion or Blackmail; the images/video are Extreme or show Violence; the child is under the age of 13; there is immediate risk of harm (UKCCIS Guidance).



can be a blackmail technique used by criminals.

Every organisation working with children and young people should have policies and procedures within the safeguarding policy that include reference to Sexting. Policies should include information on what Sexting is, why children do it, what the law says, what steps your organisation will take to protect children from the risks.

may feel under pressure, harassed or blackmailed to share, they may feel it's easier to give in and send an image, they may be in love and trust the person they are sending it to or they may be seeking approval. It may be viewed as an extension of other adolescent 'risk-taking' behaviour.

It can have longer-term consequences as the shared images can potentially return in their later life as adults. In cases of 'Sextortion', the threat of sharing the images with their family, own children, friends or work colleagues



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