

Supporting young people with harmful sexual behaviour online

A guide for educators to employ a contextual and multi-agency approach

A Campaign
Toolkit from

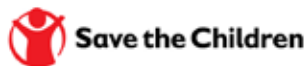
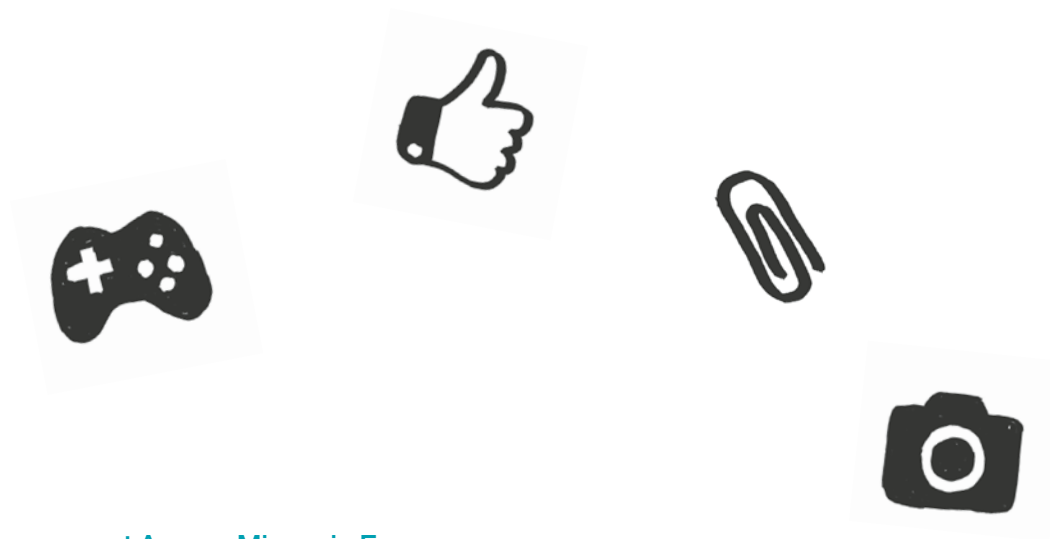


Step Up,

Speak Up!

PROJECT deSHAME

Digital Exploitation and Sexual Harassment Among Minors in Europe
Understanding, Preventing, Responding



Co-financed by
the European Union

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How is this guide going to help you, as an educator working with young people?

This guidance is written to answer some of the questions you may have after learning a young person you work with has displayed harmful sexual behaviour towards their peers online.

This could be creating fake online personas to share sexual gossip about their classmates. It could be sending pornography to their peers, knowing it will make them uncomfortable or upset. It could be that a young person has taken an intrusive sexual photo of a classmate without their knowledge and shared it with their peer group.

What does this guidance do?

This guidance focuses on addressing and changing the behaviour of those young people who have carried out harmful sexual behaviour online. If you would like advice on preventing and responding to online sexual harassment, particularly in terms of victim support please refer to the 'Step Up Speak Up!' [Guidance for Schools](#) document.

How can technology pose a challenge to young people's sexual behaviour and attitudes?

The internet can play a powerful role in young people's lives, both positively and negatively. Under the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), the UK has committed to providing every child with the right to freedom of expression, freedom of thought, and access to the media, as well as several other rights focussed on children. The internet plays a huge part in allowing children these rights.

The internet can be especially positive when:

- It allows children space and agency to talk about problems that they might be too embarrassed to talk about with others face to face.
- It allows children to seek good advice or information that helps them work towards a solution and make them aware that they are not the only ones with a particular problem.
- It allows a direct connection to their friendship groups and support network.
- It empowers them to be global citizens and engage with the world around them.

Unfortunately, the internet can also offer opportunities to embarrass, hurt, and harass others in ways that can be just as invasive and impactful, or even more so, than if carried out face to face. As young people begin to explore their sexual identity, the internet is a place where they may take risks, before becoming fully aware of the consequences.

The internet can amplify hurtful behaviour due to:

- The ability to share hurtful or harmful content quickly, without someone's knowledge, with lots of other people.
- The use of screenshots and copies to keep hurtful content in circulation online, and the risk of it resurfacing after the incident has passed.
- Online abuse not always being immediately or physically obvious, unlike other forms of sexual abuse such as physical violence or exploitation.

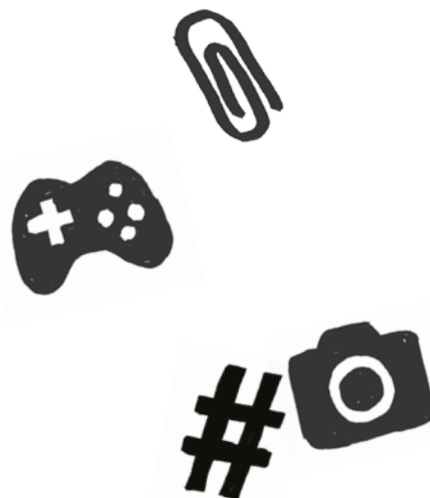
How will this advice help?

Young people who display such behaviour may have several different motivating factors, or unmet needs that are perhaps not apparent at first. As an educator, you know your students best. This document is intended to deliver advice on understanding why some young people carry out this form of abuse and to support your school or setting's existing policies on addressing this form of behaviour.

Is there someone I can talk to for advice?

As a member of the children's workforce, you can also contact the [Professionals Online Safety Helpline](#) (POSH) on 0344 381 4772 or via helpline@saferrinternet.org.uk Monday – Friday 10am – 4pm. The team can help with a wide range of online safety issues, and have direct channels to many social media companies and other online services.

In some local areas, advice might also be available via your local authority.



About this guidance

This guide will look at 4 areas of harmful sexual behaviour online:

- Non-consensual sharing of intimate images and videos.
- Exploitation, coercion and threats.
- Sexualised bullying.
- Unwanted sexualisation.

This guidance focuses on supporting young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour online in a peer-to-peer context. It aims to reduce further escalation of abusive online behaviour and support professionals in addressing the needs of a young person displaying such behaviour, and the underlying causes.

'Young people' refers to adolescents aged 13-17 years old. Although this guidance is aimed at supporting young people in this age bracket, some elements could be applied if working with younger age groups.

Who is it for?

- Safeguarding, pastoral, well-being and senior leadership teams within schools.
- Youth services, such as social workers.
- Police and youth offending teams.
- All members of the children's workforce.

There are also 4 areas of further information on:

- Supportive discussion.
- Involving parents and carers.
- Creating a moving forward plan.
- Signposting to help for children who display harmful sexual behaviour online.

Your responsibilities

The recommendations in this guidance are the views of the deSHAME project partners; Childnet (UK), Kek Vonal (Hungary) and Save the Children (Denmark). The recommendations have been arrived at after careful consideration of the available evidence, research and evaluation of the extensive youth perspective we gathered. While designed to be a helpful tool, it is not designed as a replacement for robust safeguarding policies or risk assessments or the judgement and expertise of professionals. It is also not able to take into account the individual needs and unique context of the young people undergoing support.

All members of the children's workforce must follow statutory guidance to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children under their care, for example, [Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018](#).

Key documents

Below is a list of documents that can offer further advice and guidance in supporting young people who display harmful sexual behaviour online, both statutory and recommended.

The best examples of this supportive practice in action will be a contextual and case-by-case approach. They will combine and adapt the advice and approaches that are the best fit for the individual young person and their unique situation, whilst still adhering to government statutory guidance.

Statutory guidance

The following documents are statutory and the most recent versions at time of writing.

[Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018](#)

[Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018](#)

Recommended advice

[Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges 2018](#)

[Sexting in schools and colleges: Responding to incidents and safeguarding young people 2017](#)

Further advice and resources

[Childnet – Cyberbullying: Understand, Prevent and Respond Guidance for Schools](#)

[Farrer & Co - Peer-on-peer abuse toolkit](#)

[Centre of expertise on child sexual abuse - Key messages from research on children and young people who display harmful sexual behaviour July 2018](#)

[Brook - Sexual Behaviours Traffic Light Tool](#)

[NSPCC - Harmful sexual behaviour framework](#)

[University of Bedfordshire – Contextual Safeguarding Network](#)

Understanding harmful sexual behaviour online

I'm handling a disclosure. Is it online harmful sexual behaviour?

Defining the issues

Sexual development: As young people grow, they move through a range of common and healthy behaviours at different stages of their development. The sexual behaviour of young people can be seen on a continuum from mutually agreed experimentation to behaviour classed as criminal. This continuum extends to their online behaviour as well. Much of this behaviour is voluntary, mutual and a necessary part of the learning process as they continue to grow and develop. Other types of behaviour may be inappropriate and harmful to themselves or others. What is healthy for one child

may be different for another, depending on the unique circumstances of the individual child.

Harmful sexual behaviours: Sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards themselves or others and/ or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult. (Hackett, Holmes & Branigan, 2016)³

Any behaviour that falls outside of the 'healthy' or 'expected' range, can be classed as harmful. It is important to note that this term encompasses a range of behaviours that may or may not be abusive.

The table below produced by Hackett, Holmes & Branigan (2016) shows the sexual behaviour in young people on a continuum:⁴

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

3 NSPCC Harmful Sexual Behaviour Framework

4 Hackett, S. (2010) Young children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours. In Barter, C. and Berridge, D. (eds.) Children Behaving Badly? Peer Violence between Children and Young People. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell

Contextual factors

In the previous table, inappropriate, problematic, abusive and violent sexual behaviours may all be considered under the umbrella term of 'harmful sexual behaviour.' This guidance aims to give advice to support young people displaying any severity of harmful sexual behaviour online. Be aware that each case of harmful sexual behaviour will be unique. Harmful sexual behaviours may not necessarily be linear, and can transition across different levels, dependent on many contextual factors for the young person in question.

For more information on the continuum of behaviours, Brook provide a free, easy to use [Traffic Light Tool](#) to help the children's workforce identify what is healthy, potentially unhealthy and unhealthy sexual behaviour at each developmental stage.

For more information on the definition of harmful sexual behaviour, see further reading at [NSPCC: Harmful sexual behaviour](#).



Providing some context

When talking about online sexual harassment, we typically think of the offender as an adult. But that is by no means always the case. Both with respect to physical and so-called 'digital' offences, young people are often harassed by other young people.

According to one study, over a third (37%) of female students and 6% of male students at mixed-sex schools have personally experienced some form of sexual harassment at school from people their own age.³

We know that young people also violate one another online. The Project deSHAME study of online sexual harassment among 13-17 year olds shows that:

1 in 10 (10%) of survey respondents aged 13-17 reported being sent sexual threats online (e.g. rape threats) in the last year.

Almost 1 in 4 (23%) of survey respondents aged 13-17 witnessed young people secretly taking sexual images of someone and sharing them online ('creep shots') in the last year.

1 in 12 survey respondents (8%) aged 13-17 years reported that they have shared a nude or nearly nude image of someone else **without their permission** in the last year.

Almost half (47%) of survey respondents aged 13-17 witnessed people their age editing photos of their peers to make them sexual (e.g putting their face on a pornographic image or adding sexual emojis).

Over a third (33%) of survey respondents aged 13-17 witnessed young people sharing images or videos of someone they know doing sexual acts in the last year.

Why do young people display harmful sexual behaviour online?

Wider social context

To understand young people's experiences of online sexual harassment it is important to consider this within the wider social context of sexualised media culture and debates around gender. We can see these issues reflected in the culture and dynamic of young people's peer groups and intimate relationships. Teenage sexual development and the central role that digital technology plays in young people's lives also shapes this experience.

Through Project deSHAME research, five key intersecting factors emerged as central to occurrences of peer-based online sexual harassment – societal, peer group, relationship, developmental and digital. To address online sexual harassment it is essential to understand how these factors influence and aggravate one another. This means looking beyond students' home lives and taking into account every aspect of their life. The deSHAME research report examines these contextual factors in more detail in [Chapter 5](#).

Teenage development

As part of their development, teenagers experience unique psychological dynamics. They develop an increasing desire for autonomy, and may find regulating their emotions difficult. They are also increasingly motivated by 'risk,' 'thrills' and short term gains. Testing the boundaries and working through these changes are a natural part of growing up and developing a sexual identity. However, there can be occasions when the particular risks or vulnerabilities surrounding a young person can cause them to display behaviour that moves past healthy sexual development into sexually abusive behaviour.

Research suggests that the conditions experienced when growing up and the personality of an individual young person can impact on the development of sexually abusive behaviour³. Young people who have been exposed to neglect, violence or sexual abuse are more likely to develop antisocial behaviour, which can also be expressed in sexual interactions, particularly when entering puberty. However, this does not mean that young people who come from more stable backgrounds

are not capable of displaying harmful sexual behaviour online, but it may mean that they are less likely to come to the attention of professionals. As a result, their harmful sexual behaviour may go undetected for longer.

Online environment

The particular conditions of online sexual harassment – anonymity, an absence of physical cues and disassociation – can reduce the barriers that otherwise moderate young people's behaviour. It can be difficult to determine whether the harmful sexual behaviour of a young person is a 'one-off mistake' or indicative of more profound harmful behaviour. It is important to understand that any harmful sexual behaviour that young people display towards their peers happens in the context of their own knowledge and experience of sexual relationships. They may have 'heard' that their friends are engaging in certain sexual behaviours, but in reality that is not often the case. Some of the harmful sexual behaviour young people display could be classified as 'unintentional'. With the help of open discussion and information, the young person can be made aware that their behaviour has been offensive and it's reasonable to expect that they will be capable of changing it.

Understanding boundaries

During Project deSHAME, young people communicated difficulties in always being able to recognise when behaviour was 'unwanted'. Understanding and communicating consent and respect in an online world presents new challenges for teens and adults alike. How to develop positive social norms and etiquettes online that enable trust, respect and consensual online relationships to thrive is a challenge that many young people are currently navigating, often without the support of adults. Many young people were also uncertain about whether their own behaviours potentially breached consent.

“You can mock your friends, you can say stuff to just tease them but you can get too far very easily, there's a fine line and you've got to be careful of over stepping that”

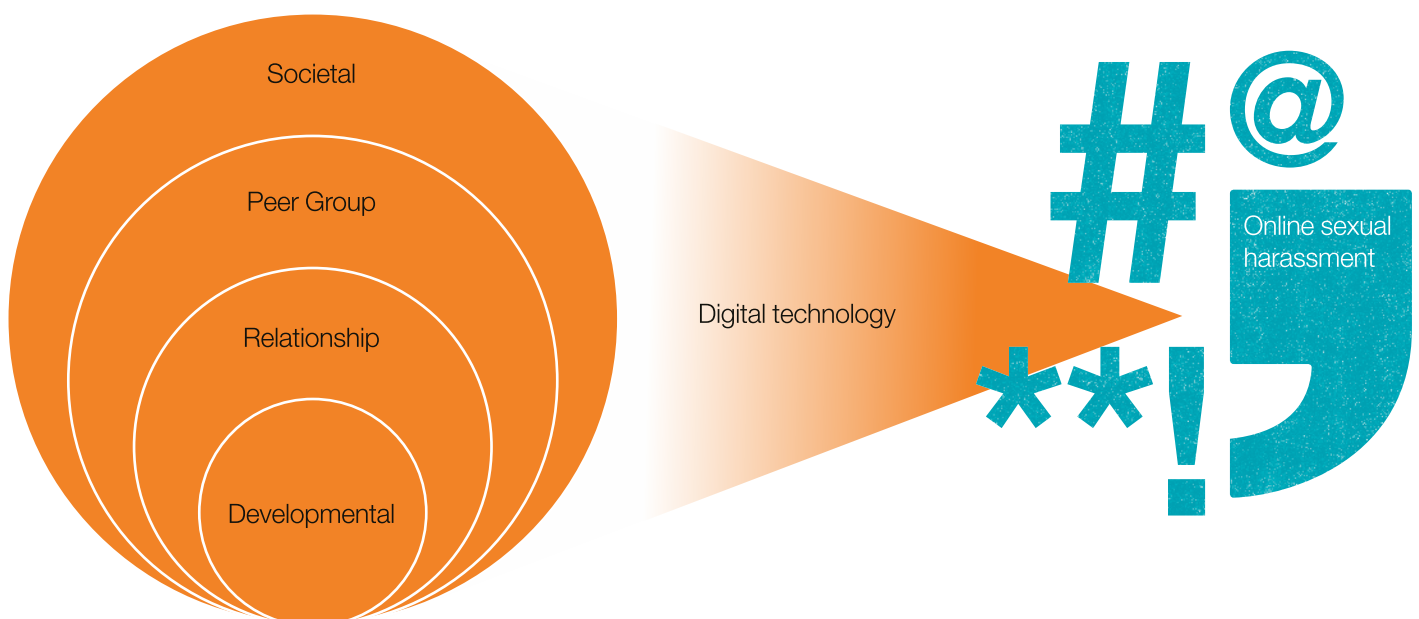
Girl, 14-16 years, UK

Vulnerabilities

Young people with special educational needs may be at particular risk of unintentional or impulsive harmful sexual behaviour online. The particular nature of their individual needs may mean they have less awareness of acceptable social behaviour, or that their knowledge of consent and healthy relationships is not at the same developmental stage as their peers. This may also make them vulnerable to coercion by their peers, and the risk of being persuaded to engage in harmful sexual behaviour online may be higher⁴. They may also lack the communication skills needed to verbalise their boundaries or to understand the boundaries of others. This could also limit them from seeking support.

It is always important to keep in mind the possibility that any young person who displays harmful sexual behaviour may themselves have been either a victim or a witness and need further support. For example, young people who are being groomed, sexually exploited or exploited as part of gang involvement may be seen to display harmful sexual behaviour because of the manipulation they are under from external influences.

For further information on the reasons young people may display online sexual harassment towards their peers, see Chapter Five of the [Project deSHAME research report](#).



4 <https://www.csacentre.org.uk/research-publications/key-messages/harmful-sexual-behaviour/#children-and-young-people-with-learning-disabilities>

Why is it important to recognise when a young person displays harmful sexual behaviour online?

Impact on victims

When harmful sexual behaviour is displayed online that affects another person, it will likely have a deep and lasting impact on the victim/s involved. It is crucial the young person who has displayed the harmful sexual behaviour is supported in changing their behaviour. This support is not just to reduce the risk of another young person being harmed but also to protect the young person in question from continuing to act in a way that could lead to reputational damage, social stigma and possible illegal behaviour.

School/community culture

When a situation of harmful sexual behaviour plays out online, there is a risk it can be dismissed as ‘teenagers being teenagers’, grouped under the wider umbrella of ‘cyberbullying’ or the harm is dismissed because it ‘only happened online.’ It is important that this behaviour is challenged and that all of those involved are supported.

Young people are learning what is acceptable as they grow up, testing boundaries in the process. This means that they are not always aware that what they do or see around them is classed as ‘harmful.’ Indeed, there are behaviours that we know are problematic, such as using misogynistic or homophobic language online, that can be seen as ‘normal’ and ‘part of growing up’ by some young people. Even within close peer groups these ‘norms’ can change quickly.

Acts of harmful sexual behaviour online may be indicative of a wider picture of offline peer to peer abuse or an indicator that a young person displaying harmful sexual behaviour online has been or is being sexually abused themselves. It may also be a symptom of an unhealthy culture within the young person’s local communities – whether at school or other settings.

Establishing the context around the behaviour allows for a more robust risk assessment of the young person in question. Working to identify the reasons behind the behaviour can give a clearer idea of what that young person needs next to protect the safety of others and of themselves.

Reduce further abuse

It is important to identify the causes of the harmful behaviour in question. For example, did it stem from a misunderstanding about consent? Did it arise because the young person has been searching out answers about sex from pornography rather than trusted sources? Is the young person being pressured into these acts by an adult? Once harmful sexual behaviour online has been recognised, a targeted and bespoke approach can be taken to address it. Further harm or vulnerability to future offending may be reduced.

It is also important to ensure that the young person displaying these behaviours understands there are consequences from those actions.

History of abuse

If a referral is needed to external agencies, e.g. the police, knowing the context behind the behaviour may be helpful in the rehabilitation process. For example, if a young person has been involved in a sexual assault offence in the past and has recently displayed harmful sexual behaviour online it is important that these incidences are considered in relation to each other.



I'm supporting a young person who has displayed harmful sexual behaviour towards their peer/s online. What do I do next?

Considerations

Any online sexual behaviour considered to be outside of the range of healthy behaviours for the young person's age and developmental stage should be considered in the context of child protection. Remember the online nature of the incident – it may be reflective of offline behaviours that are sexually harmful, and there may be more than one victim and/or perpetrator, including many more bystanders that have witnessed the incident and been affected by it.

As with any child protection concern, the best interests of the young people involved should be made paramount.

Who to talk to

Any member of staff who is concerned a young person under the age of 18 has displayed harmful sexual behaviour online should seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) within their school/setting who can advise on the initial response. This will likely involve a consultation with a local safeguarding partner (e.g local safeguarding children's board or Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub, MASH) or equivalent.

Further help and advice

See the [Guidance for Schools](#) document for more information on the first response to handling a disclosure of this nature.

The Department for Education's guidance [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges \(2018\)](#) has further advice on the considerations a DSL will need to make a risk assessment before making a response. In terms of the perpetrator, these include:

- Whether harmful sexual behaviour has been displayed
- Whether a crime has been committed (see relevant legislation on p.12 of the Guidance for Schools document)
- The ages of those involved
- The developmental stages of those involved
- Any power imbalance between the young people
- If the incident is a singular event or a pattern of behaviour
- If there are ongoing risks to the alleged perpetrator, other young people or staff
- The wider context

When making a decision, advice should be taken from the local children's safeguarding board, children's social services or the police as appropriate.

Possible responses

1. Managing internally: If the DSL makes an informed decision not to seek a consultation with the local safeguarding body - for example, if it was a one-off, less severe incident and the context indicated no further risk, the next step would be to manage the incident internally.

The [Professional Online Safety Helpline](#) can offer free and independent advice to any member of the children's workforce for a number of online safety queries (0344 381 4772, helpline@saferinternet.org.uk)

2. Early help: On occasions where it has been decided that statutory intervention from children's social services is not necessary, but further specialist help is required, either the DSL or local safeguarding body may decide that the next logical step is to employ early intervention from local organisations and agencies.

3. Referral to children's social services: If a child has been harmed or is at risk of harm, for example, if the behaviour displayed has moved from 'problematic' into the 'abusive' or 'violent' category a referral to children's social services should be made.

4. Reporting to the police: Where a report of criminal activity is made the police should be notified as a starting point. Any report to the police will generally be in parallel with a referral to children's social services. Schools and colleges must be aware of their local processes for referring the police and follow them accordingly. See the Legal Appendix for further information on the law.



What types of behaviour may be considered part of harmful sexual behaviour online?

Project deSHAME has categorised online sexual harassment into four main types. These different behaviours can be experienced simultaneously and can overlap with offline experiences of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, bullying, relationship abuse and stalking.

Non-consensual sharing of intimate images and videos A person's sexual images and videos being shared without their consent or taken without their consent	Exploitation, coercion and threats A person receiving sexual threats, being coerced to participate in sexual behaviour online, or blackmailed with sexual content	Sexualised bullying A person being targeted by, and systematically excluded from, a group or community with the use of sexual content that humiliates, upsets or discriminates against them	Unwanted sexualisation A person receiving unwelcome sexual requests, comments and content
Sexual images/videos taken without consent ('creep shots' / 'upskirting') Sexual images/videos taken consensually but shared without consent ('revenge porn') Non-consensual sexual acts (e.g., rape) recorded digitally (and potentially shared)	Harassing or pressuring someone online to share sexual images of themselves or engage in sexual behaviour online (or offline) Using the threat of publishing sexual content (images, videos, rumours) to threaten, coerce or blackmail someone ('sextortion') Online threats of a sexual nature (e.g., rape threats) Inciting others online to commit sexual violence Inciting someone to participate in sexual behaviour and then sharing evidence of it	Gossip, rumours or lies about sexual behaviour posted online either naming someone directly or indirectly alluding to someone Offensive or discriminatory sexual language and name-calling online Impersonating someone and damaging their reputation by sharing sexual content or sexually harassing others Personal information shared non-consensually online to encourage sexual harassment ('doxing') Being bullied because of actual or perceived gender and/or sexual orientation Body shaming Sexualised body shaming 'Outing' someone where the individual's sexuality or gender identity is publicly announced online without their consent	Sexualised comments (e.g. on photos) Sexualised viral campaigns that pressurise people to participate Sending someone sexual content (images, emojis, messages) without them consenting Unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favours 'Jokes' of a sexual nature Rating peers on attractiveness/sexual activity Altering images of a person to make them sexual

Relationship abuse: Abuse in a relationship can take many forms and affect people of any age, any gender and any background. Sometimes abuse can be invisible to people outside a relationship, but that doesn't mean it's not happening. Abuse is always wrong, and never the fault of the person who is being abused. Relationship abuse can include physical violence, coercion or control over a partner's behaviour, forcing a partner to isolate themselves from their support network or give up things they enjoy doing, making a partner feel bad about themselves or threaten to hurt them, physically or sexually. Technology and the internet can provide a further platform for abusive partners to exert harm on others, and can be particularly invisible to those outside of the relationship due to the use of private or closed platforms. Online and offline relationship abuse can also overlap. For example, a person may use digital platforms to 'cyberstalk' or exert coercive control over a partner by demanding access to their passwords and devices so they can perform actions such as checking their messages or following their location via GPS.

Non-consensual sharing of intimate images and videos

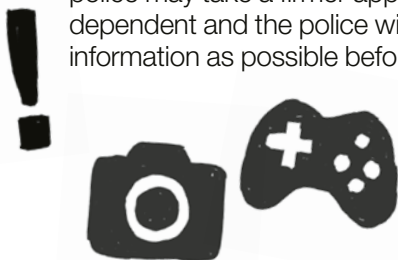
“A young person has behaved inappropriately by sharing a peer’s sexual image online with friends and peers without consent”

What’s the issue?

‘Sexting’ is a term that has come to be used to describe any instance of youth produced sexual imagery, that may be shared amongst peers. However, this term is not used by young people, and does not distinguish between the many different versions of this type of behaviour. Young people may instead refer to this behaviour as ‘sending nudes’ or ‘nudes getting leaked.’

A more accurate definition of this particular type of problematic behaviour might be ‘non-consensual sharing of intimate images’ to highlight the specific behaviour of a person sharing on someone else’s image without their consent. This can be the action of the young person who first received the photo, but can also be carried out at a later stage and on a larger scale if multiple young people receive and share on the photo from others, resulting in the image becoming widespread. However, even if the image is shared with a very small group of people, it’s important to remember that this can still cause harm.

The [Protection of Children Act 1978](#) states that for any person to take, share or possess a nude or sexually explicit image of a child under 18 is illegal. This law extends to young people who take and share these types of images of themselves i.e. ‘selfie’ style and those who forward other people’s images on to others. Should they be notified of an incident, police have a duty of care to investigate and establish the safety of the young people involved, and to offer guidance and support. For the person who took an image of themselves, the police take a common sense approach, and do not seek to criminalise young people unnecessarily for this type of behaviour. For those who share on the nude or explicit images of their peers with intent to cause distress, the police may take a firmer approach. It is very much context dependent and the police will want to gather as much information as possible before making a decision.



Outcome 21 Guidance

As of January 2016 the Home Office launched a new outcome code (Outcome 21) to help formalise the discretion available to the police when handling crimes such as youth produced sexual imagery (sexting). The College of Policing has produced guidance to advise forces on how to respond to and record cases of sexting between those aged under 18. If the making and sharing of images is considered non-abusive and there is no evidence of further criminal activity (e.g. exploitation, grooming) or evidence of it being persistent behaviour, Outcome 21 can be applied. The child’s involvement would be recorded on police systems, but as it has been decided that further investigation in order to pursue further formal action is not in the public interest, no further police action would be taken. In the event of a future ‘Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service’ (DBS) check, it would be unlikely that this record would be disclosed. See the [College of Policing’s Briefing Note](#) for more information.

For further information on the law around sexually explicit images of children under 18 see the [Guidance for Schools](#) document p.12.

Understanding what has happened

A young person might display this behaviour for a number of reasons – to gain peer approval, to embarrass or shame the person in the image, pressure to ‘prove’ they had it or pressure from an adult in an exploitative relationship. There are many contextual factors to consider when dealing with an incident such as this, for example, the age and vulnerability of the young person and whether they themselves have been a victim of this behaviour in the past. Consider wider environmental factors such as their peer groups both in and out of school, and other places they interact with others such as online games or forums. It may be helpful to consider the nature of other sexual material they may have been exposed to, such as pornography, and whether this has played a part in their attitudes towards sex and consent. Do keep in mind that it is unlikely a young person will have displayed this behaviour ‘for a joke’ - there is usually always a reason that can be addressed.

Safeguarding the young person

Before addressing the young person's behaviour, it is important to rule out any further risks they may be exposed to, for example, if the behaviour was carried out with adult coercion, or if they are in possession of other similar imagery.

The young person may be reluctant to talk about their behaviour. If this is the case you will need to reassure them that your job is to protect all young people in your care, including them. Explain how they may have done something unacceptable, but this is their chance to start making amends for their actions by sharing the details of what happened.

If an adult has been involved in the creation, distribution or possession of any indecent image of a young person under 18, report this immediately to [CEOP, who are part of the National Crime Agency](#), or the police.



Exploitation, coercion and threats

“A young person is harassing someone to share sexual images of themselves or peers using coercion or threats”

“A young person is using the threat of sharing sexual images or gossip about a peer to control or coerce them”

“A young person is threatening to ‘out’ another peer online”

What’s the issue?

The Project deSHAME survey found that almost 1 in 10 young people have received sexual threats online from someone their age. 1 in 10 young people had also been pressured by a boyfriend or girlfriend to share nude or nearly nude images of themselves, with girls being particularly likely to experience this. Whilst sharing details about their life seems to come naturally to many young people, the threat of having personal, romantic or sexual details online can seem particularly overwhelming due to the fact it can be made very public, very quickly. These behaviours rely on the privacy the online world can offer in order to communicate the threats without being detected, but often rely on the public space and ease of communication offered by the online world to make the threat plausible.

Understanding what has happened

A young person might display threatening, coercive or exploitative behaviour due to a number of reasons. If this behaviour is seen as commonplace within their peer group, they may not recognise that it is unacceptable. They may be lacking key understanding about healthy relationships and boundaries – they might perceive it as a ‘right’ to obtain and view sexual images of their partner. They may be feeling pressure from peers to engage in this behaviour and thus behave in this way to become accepted or maintain their social status. There is also a risk this peer-to-peer exploitation is part of a wider context of relationship abuse, stalking, gang involvement and other exploitative relationships.

Safeguarding the young person

What is the nature of the threat? Are they exerting that power as a pre-emptive measure because they are worried about their own images or personal matters being shared? If so, they need further support in order to manage that situation. For example, they may be questioning their own sexuality, and threatening to ‘out’ a peer online is a way to feel in control of their own feelings.

A contextual approach can be useful to determine what other influences the young person is exposed to. For example, consider:

- Aside from home and school, do they interact with anyone in any other situations? e.g a youth club, others in their neighbourhood, sports teams.
- Ask about their online life. Do they communicate with other people who may exert an influence on them?
- Have these people played a part in their behaviour?

There is a risk that behind a young person’s exploitative behaviour is an adult, grooming or pressuring them to obtain images or information from their peers. Alternatively, they may be part of an online peer group that encourages and celebrates unhealthy and problematic behaviours in return for peer approval. Online peer approval can be a powerful motivator, due to the high numbers of ‘friends’ and ‘followers’ a young person may have.

It is important to explore the young person’s reasons for their behaviour as it may reveal them to be at risk of harm themselves. For example, if their behaviour is linked to gang involvement (e.g. exchange for status or protection) or pressure from an adult (e.g. to ‘collect’ images of peers) this would require further steps to protect the young person.



Sexualised bullying

“A young person has used sexual content to upset, humiliate or harass a peer online.”

What’s the issue?

This is a behaviour that can take many different forms. They typically revolve around discriminating against someone because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or physical appearance, or around their actual or perceived sexual activity e.g. ‘slut-shaming.’ Peer group dynamics often play a central role, with friendship ‘drama’, break-ups and ‘banter’ being key issues.

- Some behaviours can take place without the knowledge of the victim in private digital spaces (such as closed ‘group chats’) and can be intentionally hidden from the victim.
- Some behaviours can take place in public digital spaces (such as social media profiles or video platforms). At first the victim may or may not be aware they are being targeted, but the public nature of the behaviour means it is easy for peers to witness the harassment and share it on, even with the victim themselves.
- The content being shared can either ‘name and shame’ a person, or be an ‘indirect’ comment that may indicate who the person targeted is without naming them directly.
- In some instances young people may not know who the perpetrators are, particularly when fake or anonymous profiles have been created.

Understanding what has happened

In focus groups, many young people expressed how the line between ‘banter’ and ‘bullying’ can vary between different people, different friendships and relationships. It can even differ from day to day based on how someone might be feeling at that time. One explanation for the behaviour may be that the young person has misjudged a situation. Be alert to the possibility a young person may use the excuse of the behaviour being meant as a joke to cover up their intention to hurt someone. This online behaviour may indicate that further sexualised bullying is happening offline too. It’s important to establish whether the behaviour was a one-off mistake or whether the young person is contributing to a systemic targeting of a particular young person, and why. For example, if the bullying is of a homophobic nature, does the young person engaging in it have questions about their own sexuality? Is it a method to deflect any attention away from themselves? Also bear in mind young people are exposed to the same

cultural attitudes as adults are – the wider social context of sexualised media may have an impact on the way young people’s peer dynamics play out.

Safeguarding the young person

If the behaviour has a particular homophobic, biphobic, transphobic or misogynistic tone, consider where the young person has learned this behaviour. For example:

- Do they understand the meaning of the language or behaviour they are displaying, or repeating it with little or no comprehension of its abusive nature?
- Are they hearing these views at home, through their family or guardians, or through their peer group?
- Have they been exposed to online content that encourages these views?

Pinpointing where the young person has learned any derogatory language or behaviour may indicate a need for further action to safeguard them. The answers to this type of contextual questioning will allow you to adapt your response to meet the unique needs of the young person.

Explicitly sexual language or references is also something to take into account. Young people will often test the boundaries of what is seen to be funny, risqué or rude. In most instances this is a natural part of development. However, if their behaviour displays unexpected knowledge of sexual content, is outside of their developmental stage or is particularly violent or graphic, it is important to determine how the young person has learned this behaviour. Are they exposed to these ideas by people at home, at school or online? Online pornography can be one place that young people learn about sex and sexual behaviour. Viewing online pornography can lead to young people being exposed to unhealthy, violent or extreme portrayals of sex, and distorted or desensitised attitudes towards sex and relationships. In a 2016 survey, the NSPCC found 48% of 11-16 year olds surveyed had seen pornography online³. This may be an opportunity to have a supportive, non-judgmental conversation with the young person about questions or worries they have about content they may have come across or been exposed to online. Assess their experience in terms of child protection – how and why did they access it? If another person showed it to them, who was it and why?

Be aware that the young person may not feel comfortable having this discussion. In which case, help them to seek support from an adult they do feel comfortable with, or other places to access help such as counsellors or helplines e.g Childline, or The Mix.



Unwanted sexualisation

“A young person has harassed their peer/s online by sending unwelcome sexual requests, comments or content.”

What’s the issue?

It is sometimes difficult for young people to identify the boundaries between ‘unwanted’ sexual behaviour online, compared to ‘wanted’ and consensual sexual interaction online. While sometimes the intention of this behaviour may be to compliment someone, when it is misplaced and unwanted, it can contribute to the wider experience of harassment and objectification that young people may face online.

This behaviour can take many different forms. For example:

- A young person asking for a sexual image of someone they believe they’ve been flirting with online.
- A young person sending a sexually explicit image of themselves in the hope for one in return.
- A young person sharing or sending pornography, whether to cause offence intentionally, or accidentally.
- Editing photos to give a sexual meaning to them, such as adding emojis that suggest sexual activity.
- Sharing of pornography publicly, for example, using features such as ‘Airdrop’ to share content with other people in the vicinity, often without their consent.
- Unwanted sexual comments, typically on photos, can be a public or private form of unwanted sexualisation that objectify the person in the image. This may involve someone posting a comment or emoji about how attractive someone looks or what sexual acts they want to do with that person.

Over half of Project deSHAME survey respondents (53%) have witnessed other young people posting sexual comments on an image of someone they know in the last year. The survey revealed that many young people hold attitudes that normalise the expectation of this form of interaction. Over 1 in 5 respondents (22%) said that they felt that getting sexual comments is just part of being online.

Understanding what has happened

Experimentation, flirting and testing the boundaries of relationships are all part of growing up. It is important to recognise that young people may want to receive compliments on their images and this can be done in a respectful way. However, between one comment and the next, what might have been meant as flirting could change into unwanted sexualisation that is upsetting and humiliating. The line between mutually consensual flirting

and harassment can become blurred due to a number of factors, such as the relationship between those involved, the nature of the comment or content, and the regularity and intensity of these online encounters. They may also be very closely tied with offline behaviours and relationships.

Wider societal expectation on gender roles can have a part to play too – stereotypes around relationships, such as boys being the ‘chasers’ and girls deflecting their romantic advances are returned to again and again throughout different media, portraying an idea that boys must have unbounded sexual desire and girls are not allowed to have any. Young people are faced with numerous contradictory models of what a so-called ‘normal’ relationship looks like. It is not surprising they encounter difficulties in navigating their own.

Safeguarding the young person

Consider what may have happened in the lead up to the young person displaying this particular form of harmful sexual behaviour. Were they encouraged or pressured by anyone else? Were they exposed to or provided with the content they used by someone else? For example, was it the pressure from an older peer or sibling that led them to their actions?

Consider the nature of other relationships the young person may have experienced or may be involved with at present. Have they been treated in an abusive way by another partner, leading to a distorted attitude towards relationships and consent? Unhealthy cultures in peer groups, both online and offline can sometimes normalise behaviour that is otherwise unacceptable. Is the young person part of a peer group that encourages or celebrates this form of behaviour?



Supportive discussion

Open and honest discussion is one of the most powerful tools you have to support young people in your care.

The way you approach these topics will most likely differ with different young people, depending on their age, developmental stage and individual personalities. The behaviour and choices young people make online can stay with them for the rest of their lives. The earlier and more rapidly these behaviours are addressed, the better the chance of changing their behaviour and avoiding the risk of re-offending.

The reporting process

Explain the next steps in the reporting process to the young person. Many young people voice that they are put off from talking to teachers and professionals because they are worried about who else will find out and what happens next. Be as clear as possible. Whilst you cannot promise confidentiality, you can list who else you will need to talk to and offer the young person the opportunity to be with you when you have those conversations.

Non-judgemental approach

Adults often find incidents of harmful sexual behaviour online to be shocking. It can be difficult to understand why a young person would harm another in this way. However, it's important to put these personal feelings aside and concentrate on supporting the young person to recognise the consequences of their actions and to change their behaviour. Be mindful of using terms such as 'perpetrator' or 'blame' when discussing the young person and their actions as this can carry very negative connotations. It may signal to the young person that they are 'guilty' or that it has already been decided they can't be helped, which is not the case. Perhaps an alternative would be to describe the 'perpetrator' as 'the person being 'supported' or 'changing their behaviour' as a way to encourage a positive change in attitude. Listen to the young person, and refer to the terminology they use themselves to help them see you are trying to understand the situation.

Acknowledgement of feelings

Acknowledge how the young person is feeling. They may be feeling a range of strong emotions, and may have difficulty controlling them or expressing them. Give them time to process their actions and their emotions. They may find it easier to write them down. Explain that whilst their behaviour is unacceptable, your job is to support them in finding a way to make it right and understand how to make positive choices online from now on.

Making assumptions

Just as adults do, young people have their own private lives and it's important not to make assumptions about their sexual preference or personal experiences. What a young person does or says online may have many deeper meanings to it than first presented, as young people often see the online world as an outlet for things they feel they can't express offline. When making statements or clarifying a situation, ask "have I got that right?" and give the young person the opportunity to explain their side of the events. Similarly, do not assume the young person is able to provide unbiased information on the events - use their version to piece together with other information you may have from others involved.

Wider picture of abuse

There is always a possibility this behaviour is part of a wider picture of exploitation or abuse, which the young person either cannot recognise, or is too scared to speak about. If there is doubt as to the safety of the young person due to further exploitation or abuse, contact the police. If they are already recognised as being vulnerable or at risk, contact their existing support network e.g social worker or case worker.

Your own knowledge of the online world

Young people often see themselves as the experts when it comes to their online lives. You can use the young person's natural interest in being online as a lever to open up communication with them. Let them explain to you how things work and the nuances of being online that at first may not be apparent to you. Rather than expressing how little you might feel you know about the online world, instead show a willingness to listen and learn. Technology plays a part in incidents of online sexual harassment, but other issues such as friendships, relationships, peer group dynamics and teenage experimentation all play a part too, and this is where your experience and expertise can help.

Healthy relationships and consent

Understanding and communicating consent and respect in an online world presents new challenges for teens and adults alike. How to develop positive social norms and etiquettes online that enable trust, respect and consensual online relationships to thrive is a challenge that many young people are currently navigating, often without the support of adults. During focus groups, many young people expressed uncertainty about whether their behaviours potentially breached consent. Open up discussion about how healthy relationships should make

us feel – happy, safe and good about ourselves. Making online choices that don't meet these requirements can hurt people's feelings and damage relationships. Reassure the young person that it's okay not to understand or feel confused, the important thing to do is ask questions and seek help.

Pornography

The ways young people learn about sex, consent and gender are increasingly influenced by what they see and interact with online. It is important to realise many young people will access adult pornography at some point, whether intentionally, unintentionally or from others. For most it is unlikely to have an adverse effect on their long term development. However, with online pornography becoming increasingly mainstream and accessible, young people - or their peers and partners - are becoming more and more exposed to it, and at a younger age. This consumption of pornography can have implications for their capacity to negotiate free and full consent, for mutual respect, expectations from partners and understanding of gender equality.

You may feel that the nature of the incident carries some connection to exposure to online pornography, for example, using particularly misogynistic and offensive language. Using a supportive and non-judgmental approach, have initial conversations about the extent to which the young person has accessed online pornography and whether or not they have been coerced into viewing this type of material by others. This can help you assess the extent to which it may have led to additional risk-taking or harmful online behaviours, and whether further support is needed.

Pornography and the law: Pornographic magazines and videos can be legally bought by those aged over 18. To sell pornographic imagery to those under 18 is illegal - the person or company would break the law, not the child who received it. A new 'age verification' law is coming into force that will mean online porn can also only be accessed by adults, by requiring all porn sites to have age verifications checks in place. It won't completely stop children from seeing online porn as the law does not include social media sites and some young people may find a way around the checks.

Some types of porn are always illegal – even for an adult to possess. These are called “extreme pornographic images” and include acts that threaten a person's life, acts which are likely to, or do, result in serious injury, degrading porn, violent porn (which includes rape and abuse), or anything involving those under the age of 18.

Sex education and sexual development

Explain to the young person that as a teenager, it is natural to begin exploring their sexuality, and you recognise that they can do this both offline and online.

This should not be at the expense of other people's feelings however. Don't feel pressured to brief the young person on all aspects of sex education. Try to gain an assessment of how much knowledge they do have or if they have incorrect information. This could be something to pass on to parents/carers or work with your school/ setting's PSHE co-ordinator to ensure appropriate lessons or external speakers can be planned to meet the gaps in their knowledge. If they have misunderstandings, it may represent a common theme across their class or year group.

Long term consequences

The behaviour and choices young people make online can follow them for the rest of their lives. Online incidents can spread very far, very quickly. It is increasingly common practice to search people's name online in the course of applications and job interviews. The young person you are speaking to may feel this isn't of consequence – they might say they have a common name which generates lots of results or that their accounts are private so no-one can see their content. It is important they realise these are not fail-safe protections. Content can easily be shared and hosted online, perhaps without the knowledge of those who it belongs too.

This moment of reflection can be the chance to change their behaviour before it impacts their life in further negative ways. There are laws that apply to online behaviour and there is a risk that if their behaviour continues and escalates, they may obtain a criminal record or risk being sentenced with a prosecution. Certain careers, such as teaching, medicine, and caring will run a check on applicants' criminal records. It may cost them a job offer if it returns a result.



Involving parents and carers

When a young person has displayed harmful sexual behaviour online, the next logical step is to inform their parents or carers, unless there is a concern that doing so would place the young person at further risk of harm. Any decision not to inform parents or carers would generally be made in conjunction with other agencies, such as children's social services and/or the police.

Getting the support of the young person's parents and carers can be essential in ensuring a joined-up approach to help them change their behaviour. Parents and carers can help reinforce the messages being delivered in school and can monitor the young person's attitudes, behaviour and internet use when at home.

Before meeting with parents or carers, consider any family or cultural factors that may contribute to the young person's harmful sexual behaviour online, particularly if there is knowledge of abuse within the family, or a difficult home life. Discuss the upcoming meeting with the young person and work together to decide on the best approach for informing parents or carers. In some cases, adults may work to support the young person to inform their parents themselves. The young person may feel more confident telling another close adult such as an auntie, uncle or grandparent, and use them as a link to informing their parents or carers together.

Outline to parents/carers the nature of the online behaviour that their child displayed. Use professional judgement to decide how much detail to give. Be aware that giving details of the incident is likely to provoke an emotional response from the parents/carers, and the young person may lose any trust in the intervention process if they feel they have not been included in this decision.

If the incident involved the taking, sharing or possession of indecent images of under 18 year olds, **do not** share or save a copy of these to show to parents or carers. This would be illegal under the Protection of Children Act 1978. The UKCCIS guide [Sexting in Schools and Colleges](#) has further information on how to handle youth produced sexual imagery.

Consider how the young person's parents or carers and other family members may receive the information you are about to give them. They may be totally unaware of the actions of their child, and may be shocked to discover details of their behaviour. Approach this cautiously, giving factual details and timescales, avoiding personal judgement. Some parents or carers may not feel online behaviour 'counts' and are therefore in denial of their child's actions. Explain the consequences for all those involved – for their child, the victim and any bystanders. The emotional and reputational distress caused by online actions have real consequences in the offline world.

Discuss with the parents or carers the context of their child's behaviour, alongside the young person if they wish. Pass on the results of any discussion had with the young person that highlights a gap in their knowledge, for example, understanding of consent, or healthy expectations of relationships. Schools can address such issues of personal, social and relationship education in lessons, but parents and carers also play a vital part in this process through discussions at home.

Whilst some parents or carers may want to discipline their child for their behaviour, it is important to encourage their relationship with their child still to be caring and supportive. Help parents and carers to understand that whilst the young person may have acted in an unacceptable way, the best way to support them in changing their behaviour is to make them feel safe and valued. In this way, if anything happens in the future or the young person is feeling confused or worried about something happening online, they are more likely to seek help, knowing they will be listened to.

Understand that parents and carers may struggle to accept a report that their child has displayed harmful sexual behaviour online against their peers and that these conversations may be difficult. Having clear behaviour and child protection policies, with robust and clear guidelines around response procedures can be helpful to refer back to, and to manage these situations. See the Guidance for Schools document for more information on effective policy and practice concerning online sexual harassment.



FAQs

Should the young person who has displayed harmful sexual behaviour online have their devices confiscated?

Staff should always follow their school policies and procedures in regards to seizing and searching devices. Senior Leadership and/or Designated Safeguarding Leads should ensure all staff know of these policies and how to apply them. According to the Department for Education's [Searching, screening and confiscation guidance](#), staff members can confiscate, retain or dispose of a student's property as a disciplinary penalty, where this is reasonable. This can include mobile phones when they are being used to cause a disturbance in class or otherwise contravene the school behaviour / anti-bullying policy. The law protects members of staff from liability in any proceedings brought against them for any loss of, or damage to, any item they have confiscated, provided they acted lawfully. (See p.25 of the 'Step up Speak Up!' [Guidance for Schools](#) for more information.)

Staff members carrying out a search can seize anything they have reasonable grounds to suspect is a prohibited item or is evidence in relation to a criminal offence. Where a device contains material that needs to be passed to the police, school staff can confiscate and secure the device, for example, by placing it in a locked draw.

Where a member of staff finds content on a device which is banned under the school rules, i.e. evidence which relates to harmful sexual behaviour but is not illegal– they should take into account all relevant circumstances and use their professional judgement to decide whether to delete the content, return the device to its owner, or retain it. Such content can be deleted, but staff should be aware of how to capture and retain evidence of abusive incidents and an awareness of when this would be useful. Remember that even if content is deleted from a device, there is a chance it will still exist online, whether through 'cloud-based' online storage services or within social media profiles. Talk to the young person about where else the content is hosted and work together to delete.

If parents/carers are involved in a young person's disciplinary action, they may wish to extend the limit on using technology to the young person's home life too. Consider that a full ban on all technology can be unrealistic – researching for school work, remaining in contact with parents/carers and using functional apps such as maps, banking, travel planners and even the alarm function on a young person's phone may make

this difficult to maintain. A compromise may be more achievable, for example, setting time limits, requesting regular check-ins to the young person's devices or only using devices in family spaces (i.e. the kitchen). Confiscating or limiting use of technology should be approached as a 'reset button' – a chance to work together with the young person and their family to rethink the way the young person uses technology, and the beginning of their journey to using it safely and responsibly when not under disciplinary measures.

The incident involves a group of young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour online

As mentioned earlier, harmful sexual behaviour online can become encouraged and acceptable within peer groups if left unchallenged by external influences. The connected nature of the online world means behaviour can quickly be seen, shared, commented on and copied in a short space of time. Sometimes online sexual harassment can be amplified by the number of people joining in with it. If a group of young people have displayed unacceptable online behaviour, work with them individually, but also as a group to distinguish how they have developed this unacceptable attitude. Work to challenge and change their behaviour as a group, so that it is a shared agreement.

Assess whether the peer group involves any young people in other local, or further afield schools or colleges. To make the behaviour intervention as thorough and effective as possible, it is helpful to contact their Senior Leadership Team and inform them of any incidents if possible. They may be currently unaware, or may have further information about the incident that could be useful in supporting the school's own students.

Assess whether the peer group involves other young people or adults not at the school/setting. If this is the case, other agencies such as social services or the police may be required to reach members of the group outside of your care.



The young person in need of support to change their behaviour is not interested or open to help

During focus groups, young people spoke often about how they felt adults don't understand their online lives and the nuances of online sexual harassment. It may be that young people who display harmful sexual behaviour online don't feel there is any 'point' to working with adults as they will not understand their situation. Rather than expressing how much you feel you don't know about their online life, talk to them about areas that you do have experience in – pastoral support, sex and relationship education, healthy behaviour etc. Be curious about the young person's online life, ask them questions and give them an opportunity to explain in their own words. Remember that young people will engage with technology differently but we need to support them in doing this in a healthy way.

Be alert to the fact the young person may be scared to engage, for fear of negative repercussions from their peers, or from an exploitative relationship with an adult. Supportive intervention is crucial. If a young person has been groomed or coerced into engaging in harmful sexual behaviour online, part of that process may have been to distance them from their support network and plant distrust of other adults who will be able to help them. It is up to the adult to find a way to engage them. It may not happen immediately, but perseverance is key, to show the young person that support is there for them, and the trustworthy adults in their life are not giving up on them.

A young person who previously displayed harmful sexual behaviour online has repeated their actions

Consider this fact when conducting a risk assessment for the repeat incident. It will be important when deciding on the response. Try to identify why the young person has repeated their actions. What has happened in the young person's life since the previous incident? Have they received the support they needed in that time? Did the support recently stop? Has this behaviour coincided with renewed access to their online accounts or devices, if they were previously denied as a consequence of the original incident? What has actually changed for the young person since the last incident – were the contextual factors that look beyond school and parents/carers addressed?

If the incidents involve the non-consensual sharing of youth produced sexual imagery, it is important to make the young person aware that the police may treat a repeat occurrence differently than if it was a first-time offence and choose to take a more serious course of action.

A young person has displayed harmful sexual behaviour online outside of school/setting hours

In the Department for Education's [Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence' Advice \(2018\)](#), it is stated that "Schools and colleges have a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children at their school/college."

In the Department for Education's [Keeping Children Safe in Education \(2018\)](#), it is stated that "Everyone who comes into contact with children and their families and carers has a role to play in safeguarding children."

The [Education and Inspections Act \(2006\)](#) (England and Wales) states that Head Teachers have a specific statutory power to discipline students for poor behaviour outside of the school premises.

Be aware that as a member of the children's workforce, you may be the only adult in a young person's life who can and will intervene in issues of child protection and that your support is vital in safeguarding not only this young person but anyone else who may have been or could be targeted by their behaviour. The young person's behaviour may be a result of problems they are facing in their home or personal lives, or that their parents or carers are not able to provide the support they require. Your intervention may be the first opportunity the young person or their family have to access further support.

A young person who has displayed harmful sexual behaviour online has now become the victim of online harassment

After displaying harmful online sexual behaviour, there is a risk that a young person's peers may target them with harassment or abuse, as perceived 'revenge' for their behaviour. This could happen either online, offline, or a combination of both. Any incident of bullying or

harassment should be handled according to school/setting procedure. It is important to condone all forms of bullying, regardless of the previous incident, to make it clear to young people that this type of behaviour is never justified or acceptable. Make sure the young person at the centre of the incident is supported, and that all members of the school/setting community are aware of the behaviour expectations and the consequences of breaking the behaviour policy, including online. Further guidance on setting up effective policies and practices can be found in the [Guidance for Schools](#) document.



Moving forward plan

For young people who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour online, and are being supported by their school/setting to change their behaviour, it can be beneficial to work together to create a 'moving forward' plan. This can be done in collaboration with the young person and their parents or carers. It can be a way of agreeing on boundaries and expectations, and giving the young person a clear strategy to use if they have questions, or they are feeling confused or worried. Rather than a series of 'dos' and 'don'ts,' the plan is there to help everyone make joint decisions on how the young person can use the internet safely, responsibly and respectfully.

Starting points:

Involve everyone: Encourage everyone to commit to the plan - it is not just for the young person involved, but requires their support network to follow the plan too.

Be honest: Let everyone involved know this is an opportunity for a new start and the best way to make this plan work is if everyone is open and honest about what they want it to achieve. Make sure everyone involved knows it is okay to talk about what might have happened in the past and to ask questions if anything is unclear.

Be clear: When setting up boundaries and expectations around internet use, be as precise as possible. For example, when talking about 'going online' what does that include? Apps, websites, games, TV-on-demand?

Signalling for help: Young people sometimes find it hard to ask for help or know when they need to ask for it. Talk about the signs that might show the young person is in need of extra support, and plan for ways the young person can signal that they need to talk. It might be a word, a phrase or a particular time and place help will be available.

Be flexible: Make sure everyone knows this is a working document and that it can be reviewed and changed over time, according to the needs of the young person as they continue moving forward.



Starting questions



Date: _____

Who is involved in this moving forward plan?

What do you use the internet for? (Favourite apps, games, websites)

Why are we creating this moving forward plan?
(e.g what happened before that we are worried about?)

What steps will we take to help you use the internet in a safe and respectful way?

e.g (name) will speak to (parent/carer/teacher) if they feel angry or worried

Who is responsible for this?

E.g We will all make sure to have regular catch-ups to discuss how you are feeling

How long will this plan last for? (E.g 1-2 months)

How often will we review our plan? (E.g. every week)

Young person

I will know if I'm about to repeat my behaviour if I...

To help me manage it, I will...

.....

.....

.....

Other people will know if I'm having difficulty to manage my online behaviour if I ...



To help me, I would like (name) to (action)

Are there any other ways you would like to be helped? (e.g given the numbers of helplines, asking a friend to help you)



Staff member



I will know if (young person name) is about to repeat their behaviour if ...

Four horizontal lines for writing.

To help them manage it, I will...

Three checkboxes, each followed by a dotted line for notes.

I might also speak to (parents/carers/other staff member) if I feel that it would be helpful.

Five horizontal lines for writing.

NOTES



Eight horizontal lines for notes.

Parents or carers

I will know if (young person name) is about to repeat their behaviour if ...

To help them manage it, I will

I might also speak to the following people (e.g names of staff members) if I feel like that would be helpful...

What happens if someone doesn't follow the plans we agreed on?



What is the date of our next review of this plan? _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Having difficulty making positive choices online?

Where to go for help...

By speaking to an adult about what's happened, you've made the first step in deciding to make positive choices online. You don't have to deal with this alone, and there are lots of people who can help you.

It might take more than one conversation to get the help you need. Remember you can always talk to more than one person if you need to, and have as many conversations as you need with them.

Who can I talk to if I need more support?

If you are worried or upset because of anything you've discussed in this meeting, or if you are having problems making positive choices online, you should speak to a friend, teacher, parent, carer, or someone else you trust about it.

If you are worried or upset or wish to talk about anything you discussed already, you can speak to:

They'll be free on this day at this time:

You'll find them in their office / this room:

...and support

Find out more about staying safe online at:

Childnet International: www.childnet.com
UK Safer Internet Centre: www.saferinternet.org.uk
Thinkuknow: www.thinkuknow.co.uk

Other places where you can get FREE help and advice:



You can get confidential help and advice about any problem that you may have. You can chat online at www.childline.org.uk or call for free on 0800 1111.



Free confidential support for young people under 25 that will help you explore any issue that is worrying you and find organisations that can help you further. You can chat online at www.themix.org.uk or call for free on 0808 808 4994.



An organisation for all young lesbian, gay, bi and trans people – as well as those who are questioning. There's helpful advice on their website and you can also find out about other local services in your area. www.youngstonewall.org.uk



An organisation that provides free and confidential sexual health and well-being advice for young people under 25. You can find out more information using their 'Ask Brook' feature and find out more about services in your area www.brook.org.uk



If you've experienced rape, abuse or any other kind of sexual violence or harassment you can find out more about how you can get support at Rape Crisis. The website can give you information about what other local services are in your area. www.rapecrisis.org.uk

Places where you can report problems:

Inappropriate contact from adults:
www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-report
Report to social media or other online services:
www.childnet.com/resources/how-to-make-a-report

Glossary

AirDrop: A feature of Apple products (e.g. iPad, iPhone) that lets users share files wirelessly. Although the user needs to click 'accept' to receive files, a preview of the file will appear on the device of the person receiving it. AirDrop can be used between any Apple device in range that has Bluetooth turned on.

Bait-out page: A website or social media profile dedicated to sharing gossip or images of individuals within a local community, e.g. a particular school in order to shame them, or 'bait them out.' The gossip and images are sometimes of a sexual nature. Sometimes access to these websites or profiles is denied unless a user offers a piece of gossip or an image in exchange for access.

Bluetooth: Short-range wireless technology that can connect mobile phones, laptops, tablets etc.

Bystander: A young person who witnesses any online sexual harassment or online bullying.

Consent: An agreement made by someone with the freedom and ability to decide something.

dm: Direct message. A private message sent via social media platforms or games.

Group chat: A messaging group consisting of 3 or more people. These can be people who already know each other or include people who don't know each other but who have been added by a contact they already know. In situations such as this, members' phone numbers and profile pictures can often be visible to the whole group, including anyone they do not know.

Harmful sexual behaviour: Sexual behaviours expressed by children and young people under the age of 18 years old that are developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards themselves or others, or be abusive towards another child, young person or adult (NSPCC, 2016).

Indirect: A form of bullying whereby someone posts an indirect comment about someone but doesn't name them. Although this comment could be intended for anyone, those who understand the context behind it know who it is written about, but it is difficult to prove. Examples could be "I hate people who complain if they post a nude and don't expect to get hassle for it."

LGBT+: Refers to people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender/Transsexual plus. The "plus" is inclusive of other groups, such as asexual, intersex, queer, questioning, etc.

Online: Any website, app or digital platform including social media platforms, gaming, direct messaging services (for example, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Xbox LIVE). Whilst some professionals may prefer to use the term 'digital,' young people are more familiar with the term 'online.'

Online sexual harassment: Unwanted sexual behaviour on any digital platform. See p.3 for more details.

Perpetrator: A young person who has carried out online sexual harassment. However, young people would not necessarily refer to themselves or their peers as perpetrators, or even recognise harmful sexual behaviour. They are more likely to identify others by their specific individual actions or repeated behaviours. Moreover, particularly in a peer context, it is important to recognise there are complex vulnerabilities that surround any young person or group of young people who may display such behaviour.

Post: Used in the context of publishing a public image, comment or link on social media.

Revenge porn: Used to describe nude images that have been shared without consent by partners or ex-partners in order to exact 'revenge' on the other party. This behaviour is illegal in the UK (see p.14)

'Send nudes': A term used by young people to request or pressure others for nude images. More widely used by young people than 'sexting.'

Sexual: Any conduct that concerns a person's sexual activity, body parts or sexual orientation.

Sexual violence: Unwanted sexual behaviour that abuses, coerces, threatens, exploits or harasses.

Share: Depending on the context, this can be publishing an image, comment or link, publicly, on social media, or forwarding on an image, comment or link to others via a message.

Slut-shaming: The act of stigmatising a woman or girl for engaging in behaviour judged to be promiscuous or sexually provocative.

Story: A function on social media apps such as Instagram and Snapchat. A story allows users to share photos and videos in slideshow format. Separate from users' profiles that often include carefully selected and edited images, stories are used for real-time sharing. They are usually only available to view for a limited time e.g. 24 hours.

Take a screenshot/screengrab: To take a picture of what the image on a device is showing at that time. A screenshot is usually taken by pressing a combination of the home and power buttons, and the image will be saved to the device's photo gallery.

The Cloud: Shorthand for 'cloud computing.' It enables users to access the storage on remote computers (usually owned by a business) via the internet using their own device. When files are stored in the Cloud, downloading to another device is simple. Some platforms allow a certain group of users to all access the same files e.g. Dropbox or Google Drive.

Victim: A young person who experiences online sexual harassment. Throughout this toolkit young people who experience such behaviours are referred to as 'victims' for clarity. Be aware that not all young people will identify themselves as victims, or want to be called or seen as a victim.

Victim-blaming: The act of blaming the victim for the harm that has affected them.

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