Abuse through sexual image sharing in schools: Response and responsibility

# Details

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* Internet usage, practices and engagement
* Risks and harms
* Content-related issues

## Sample

59 young people aged 13-21; 58 school staff; 25 multi-agency practitioners

## Implications For Educators About

Digital citizenship

# Abstract

The question of how to tackle abuse through adolescent sexual
image sharing is an increasing concern for schools, yet little is
known about how they should respond. In this article, I review
school responses to this phenomenon. The findings presented are
taken from a mixed-methods study into harmful sexual behaviour
carried out in seven educational settings across four local
authorities in England. Using data from focus groups,
observations, case reviews and reviews of policies and procedures
I present findings on abuse through image sharing including
suggestions for safer school environments. I argue that responses
to adolescent sexting must move beyond risk aversion and
challenge the very socio-cultural systems that enable abuse
through sexual image sharing. Achieving this requires responses
that recognise developing adolescent sexuality within a digital
age and understanding what works in practice for schools and
young people. Concurrently, schools have responsibility to
challenge socio-cultural norms underlying harmful sexual practices
between young people.

# Outcome

"While students could articulate the significance and implications of abuse through image
sharing, school responses appeared aimed at targeting all forms of image sharing. Furthermore, schools felt unsure of how to manage incidents directly and what approaches work." (Lloyd, 2018: 799). "sexting itself is not the
problem but the fear, or experience of, having the image shared beyond the perceived
receiver. This distinction is important when we consider abuse through image sharing
and how schools can respond.
Abuse through image sharing happened in all schools we visited as evidenced in focus
groups and case reviews. Typically, this involved a girl’s image being shared on social
media without her consent. This could be through someone directly sharing the image
with their friends, social media ‘followers’ or anonymously. Social media platforms used
varied between incidents but the intent of sharing was similar across incidents – for
people to see." (Lloyd, 2018: 791).