

Sexting in schools

Annex 2

Risk assessment tool for young people engaged in potentially harmful sexting

Indicator of risk or harm	Factors to be considered	Concern Yes/No	Comments
The age of the child	Sexual activity at a young age is a very strong indicator that there are risks to the welfare of children, whether boy or girl, and possibly others. This is particularly relevant if one of the parties is pre-pubertal. Children under 13 cannot lawfully give consent to sexual activity and there is a presumption that they will be referred to children's social services.		
The level of maturity and understanding of the child	Is the child/young person competent to consent to the sexual activity? Is there a relationship of trust? A legal definition is provided at s27 Sexual Offences Act 2003.		
The child's living circumstances or background	Has a child in need [s17] or referral of child protection concern [s47] ever been made on any party? Do cultural or religious beliefs have an impact on their circumstances and/or sharing information?		
Coercion or bribery	Has the child been encouraged to exchange sex for favours or other inducements such as supply of alcohol or substances? Is there evidence of persuasion, emotional blackmail, threats or use of pornography?		
Familial Child Sex Offences	At this stage of the assessment is any family member considered to be "a risk to children" or have convictions for sexual offences? Does the sexual partner fall within any of the following categories beyond the normal family relationships? Step-parent, foster parent, step sibling who live in the same household or have been regularly involved in caring for the child; or care workers such as nannies or au pairs if they live with or regularly care for the child.		

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Indicator of risk or harm	Factors to be considered	Concern Yes/No	Comments
Behaviour of the child	<p>Is the child withdrawn or anxious?</p> <p>Is there a pattern of 'casual' sexual relationships with different partners?</p> <p>Are there more than two other persons involved in the sexual activity?</p>		
The misuse of substances or alcohol as a disinhibitor	<p>The child or young person may be unaware or reluctant to acknowledge that alcohol or substances may be offered to facilitate sexual activity with them.</p> <p>The young person's own behaviour in misusing substances or alcohol may place the young person at increased risk of harm, as they may be unable to give informed consent.</p>		
Secrecy	<p>Has the sexual partner attempted to secure secrecy beyond what might be considered usual in a normal teenage relationship? Advice may need to be sought from a sexual health expert.</p>		
Power imbalance	<p>Is the relationship reasonably equal and consensual? Power imbalances can occur in many different forms including threats and aggression.</p> <p>Is there an age differential greater than 3 years?</p>		
Disability impeding choice	<p>Disabled children and young people are more likely to be abused than non-disabled children. However, disabled children and young people have a right to a private life, which should be respected. The Sexual Offences Act provides an offence of sexual activity against persons with a mental disorder impeding choice. See Home Office/Mencap guidance.</p>		