

RESPONDING TO INDECENT IMAGES BEING SHARED

Checklist

A quick reference tool for staff working with children and young people.

The purpose of this checklist:

Responding to incidents involving the sharing of indecent images (nude or semi-nude) requires calm, consistent, and legally compliant action from all professionals. This checklist details the key steps outlined in the UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes guidance, ensuring staff understand what to do - and what not to do - when such an incident comes to light. Its purpose is to help professionals safeguard children effectively, avoid unintentionally committing offences, and ensure decisions are made by the appropriate safeguarding lead, always in line with statutory expectations and local child protection procedures.

Sharing nudes and semi-nudes': definition

This advice uses the term 'sharing nudes and semi-nudes' to mean the sending or posting of nude or semi-nude images, videos, or live streams by young people under the age of 18 online. 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. The sharing of nudes and semi-nudes can happen publicly online, in 1:1 messaging or via group chats and closed social media accounts.

Nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams may include more than one child or young person. The term 'nudes' is used as it is most commonly recognised by young people and more appropriately covers all types of image sharing incidents. Alternative terms used by children and young people may include 'dick pics' or 'pics'.

Immediate actions when an Incident comes to your attention

Report the incident to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or equivalent immediately.
Follow your organisation's child protection policy and local safeguarding procedures.

Critical "Do Nots" for all Staff

Do NOT view, copy, print, share, store, or save the imagery under any circumstances. It is illegal.
Do NOT ask the child or young person to share, resend, or download the imagery.
Do NOT delete the image or instruct the young person to delete it.
Do NOT question the child for details about the imagery - this is the DSL's role.
Do NOT share information about the incident with peers, other staff, or parents unless directed by the DSL.
Do NOT blame or shame the young people involved.

If the image has already been seen accidentally

Immediately inform the DSL that accidental viewing occurred.
Record the circumstances of accidental viewing as per safeguarding policy.

Handling devices

Do NOT search a device unless authorised by DSL and following guidance.

If a device may contain imagery, confiscate it only if this aligns with policy and pass immediately to the DSL. Professionals should never transfer or inspect data on a young person's device.

Communication and information sharing

Inform parents/carers only when appropriate, following DSL decision and safeguarding procedures. Ensure clear, factual, non-judgmental records of incident details, people informed, and steps taken.

Follow-up and support

Provide or arrange ongoing emotional and safeguarding support for any young person affected.

Address online safety education and preventative input, individually or in groups, as needed.

Review internal policies if the incident highlights gaps in training or procedure.

When Police involvement is mandatory

Always contact police immediately if:

- An adult is involved in sharing images of a child
- There are sexual exploitation concerns
- There is evidence of coercion, threats or blackmail
- Distribution is widespread or malicious

DSL (or equivalent) responsibilities

In most cases, images or videos should not be viewed (see [section 2.10](#) of the guidance for DSL's below) for further guidance on when an image may need to be viewed.

Conduct a risk assessment using guidance factors: (motivation, coercion, age difference, power imbalance, distress) - use [Annex B](#) of the nude and semi-nude guidance as a toolkit.

Decide whether police, social care, or other agencies need to be involved, particularly if:

- Adults are involved
- Coercion, threats, blackmail, or exploitation is suspected
- There are aggravated factors or repeated sharing.

Safeguarding and support the child of young person, ensuring they know they are not in trouble and will be helped.

Securely store written records, including decisions and rationales (without storing imagery).

Key message:

Safeguarding always comes first. When a young person has shared or been exposed to indecent images, your role is not to investigate but to protect. Follow procedures, avoid engaging with the imagery, and pass responsibility promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. By responding calmly, lawfully, and compassionately, professionals help prevent further harm and ensure that children receive the support they need.

Resources

[Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: how to respond to an incident](#) (overview) (updated March 2024) – For frontline staff

[Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people ...](#) – For DSL's

[Professionals guidance to AI generated child sexual abuse material](#) – Internet Watch Foundation

[Searching, Screening & Confiscation in schools](#) – Guidance to be read alongside the above

[Report Remove tool](#) – Childline / IWF

