

# Police Action in response to youth produced sexual imagery (sexting)



Out of the **70%** of teen girls who have sexted – **61%** said they did so because they were pressured.

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## What is sexting?

Children (under 18 years old) possessing, sharing or generating indecent imagery of themselves or other children

## Is it a crime?

Youth produced sexual imagery can range from consensual sharing to exploitation.

All reported offences of youth produced sexual imagery must be recorded as a crime.

In most cases it should be primarily treated as a safeguarding issue but it may constitute an indecent image offence and be illegal under the Protection of Children Act 1978 and Criminal Justice Act 1998.

## Outcome 21

The recently introduced 'outcome 21' enables forces to resolve crimes in a proportionate and effective way.

The new outcome code for youth produced sexual imagery was agreed by the NPCC, Home Office and DBS in order to increase the focus on educating, supporting and safeguarding children rather than criminalising.

Outcome 21 states:

'Further investigation, resulting from the crime report, which could provide evidence sufficient to support formal action being taken against the suspect is not in the public interest. This is a police decision.'

This means a crime can be recorded as having happened but no formal criminal justice action will be taken as it is not in the public interest to do so.

About **15%** of teens who have sexted nude/semi-nude photos of themselves, send them to people they have never met.

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# Police Action in response to youth produced sexual imagery (sexting)



Around **1** in **7** young people have taken a semi-naked/naked picture of themselves.

NSPCC.com

## Initial police action for an outcome 21

- All reported offences of youth produced sexual imagery must be recorded as a crime in line with Home Office Counting Rules (HOCR).
- At the point of report it is vital to ascertain whether any aggravating features (e.g. adult involved, presence of violence) and/or known vulnerabilities are present and to check the welfare of relevant parties.
- Background checks should be run regarding the victim(s), perpetrator(s) and location(s). This should include all police systems (including national (PNC/PND) and where possible those belonging to partners (e.g. via a Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub(MASH) or equivalent).
- Where significant risks are identified or any of the involved children are found to be subject to ongoing child protection activity (e.g. in care or on a child protection plan) there is likely to be a requirement for a child protection referral and/ or a strategy meeting. This should help develop measures to effectively safeguard the child and ensure relevant duties of care are followed.

## Do you know?

While this guide uses the terms 'youth produced sexual imagery' and 'sexting' it is important to note that many children use their own terms such as 'sending nudes' and many of them believe 'sexting' to mean the sending of flirty or sexual explicit written texts.