

Sexting: consulting young people to inform practice

A project by Oxfordshire County Council and Thames Valley Police

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Executive Summary

This report is based on findings from 10 single sex focus groups with 99 Year 9 students in 4 schools across Oxfordshire. The project was undertaken as a response to evidence from Thames Valley Police, Oxfordshire schools and other partner agencies indicating that the current approach to 'sexting' is not having an impact on changing young people's behaviour or empowering them to keep safe. Consulting and involving young people was therefore agreed to be a crucial step towards achieving a change in young people's behaviour.

The focus groups identified a variety of terms used by young people to refer to the sending of explicit images, with 'nudes' being the most commonly used. Although young people understood the term 'sexting' used by adults, they did not tend to use it themselves, and some young people described it as being 'too formal'.

It was evident that images are most commonly shared via 'Snapchat' – an Application (App) that can be used to share images for very short periods of time. When asked whether they knew about software that can be used to hide the fact that a screen-shot has been taken, a small number of young people did have knowledge of it. When provided with this information however, young people did not seem to think that this knowledge would have an influence on behaviour.

When asked to describe incidents of sexting in schools it was evident that the topic was commonly associated with rumour and gossip and there was a lack of clarity about the actual extent to which it happens. Groups varied in terms of their views about the frequency of incidents in schools; some said this was 'every few weeks' and others felt it was far less frequent. As this became apparent, the consultation was modified to ask participants confidentially about whether they had actually seen an explicit image, and 61% of those asked said they had seen an image. For many young people, sexting appears to be normalised and isn't viewed as a 'big deal'.

It appeared that in the majority of cases, sexting occurred between young people who know each other, although for some this wasn't close peer group members. Incidents of sexting between strangers were mentioned less often and young people appeared to have a good awareness of internet safety in relation to dangers from unknown adults.

Young people agreed that sexting is most likely to begin towards the end of Year 7 or beginning of Year 8 when young people are established in their peer groups, following transition to secondary school. Engaging in sexting was viewed as being part of beginning to form relationships and wanting to be seen as being 'grown up'.

Young people identified gender as having a significant impact on behaviour and perception in relation to sexting. Most young people felt that boys are more likely to ask for images first, and girls are more likely to send them. It was also perceived to be more likely that boys would share images with their peer group. This was explained by the young people as being a result of boys being more immature, wanting to 'show off' and gain approval from other boys. Girls commented that girls' behaviour was likely to be judged more harshly, particularly by other girls. A quote that sums up commonly expressed opinions of both girls and boys was: "If a boy sends one, or gets sent one, then he's a lad but if a girl sends one, she's a 'slut'".

Peer pressure, wanting to impress current or potential partners and a desire to be seen as mature were the most common reasons given by young people for being involved in sexting. These factors were deemed significant enough to outweigh the associated risks. Refusing to send an image was seen to lead to the break-up of relationships, bullying and even blackmail. Participating in sexting was also linked to similar negative outcomes with girls in particular identifying that they were in a 'no win' situation. Furthermore, celebrity influence was cited as something that might encourage young people to send images.

Young people demonstrated some awareness of the law in relation to sexting, with 87% in agreement that sexting breaks the law. However, it was apparent there was a lack of knowledge regarding the age at which sexting is illegal. 37% thought that it was illegal for those under 16, 34% for those under 18 and 28% said that they were not sure, or did not give an answer. A number of young people referred to the age of sexual consent being 16 and thought that this would also apply to sexting. In addition, whilst many thought that it was illegal to share and distribute images of others, very few were aware that taking an indecent image (even if of themselves) is against the law if it is of someone under 18.

Overall, young people had a good level of awareness of the risks associated with sexting, including risks to their future social status, education and employment, as well as to their emotional well-being and happiness, making reference to self-harm, suicide and bullying. Despite a good understanding of risk however, there was also recognition that being aware would not necessarily change behaviour, as peer pressure and expectations from others had more impact on behaviour. This highlights the challenges faced in order to promote change.

In terms of current education on sexting, there were a variety of different experiences. All schools are providing education on internet safety and young people gave various examples of what they had learnt on this topic, for example watching the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) videos in assemblies. However, young people did not view the current approach, particularly the prevalence of assemblies and whole class sessions on internet safety, as the best way to learn about the risks associated with sexting. Confidential, single sex, small group discussion led by someone who is not a member of school staff was felt to be the ideal. Other factors identified as important included feeling safe, being able to learn from others in the peer group and having the chance to ask questions. The use of engaging approaches such as drama and video were also highlighted as favourable.

When asked what messages they would give other young people, they said they wanted others to realise that sexting is not worth the risk and that it can have a serious negative impact on your life.

The focus groups therefore helped to identify a number of recommendations:

1. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and Thames Valley Police (TVP) should produce a sexting resource pack including session plans for delivery of education and links to appropriate guidance and resources, based on the findings of this study.
2. Schools should review the content and delivery of their Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) to include sexting as part of education on respectful relationships. Delivery of SRE should include single sex, confidential sessions run by those other than school staff, with some sessions being targeted at vulnerable groups.

3. OCC and TVP should develop a survey to investigate the current experience and prevalence of sexting in a wider sample of teenagers, which can also capture emerging trends and changes in behaviour, in order to inform policy and practice.
4. OCC and TVP should investigate commissioning the creation of a video resource relevant to local experiences that would address the issues raised by this study and enhance the education of young people.
5. Senior management within OCC and TVP should be made aware of the results of this study in order to inform policy and practice.

Whilst the focus groups were designed to be a consultation exercise, it was evident that the young people who took part valued the session, including the chance to ask questions and the opportunity to give their opinions on the topic. Essentially, the focus groups were perceived by the young people as an awareness raising tool in themselves.

It is hoped that the recommendations outlined in this report and the associated resources developed will help to address issues of sexting in Oxfordshire and the wider Thames Valley and empower young people to make informed and safe decisions.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank all the young people who took part in the focus groups and all four schools who supported with running the consultation including The Warriner School, The Cooper School and Wheatley Park School.

Introduction

Please note: This report includes direct quotes from young people some of which are sexually explicit.

'Sexting' has been conventionally defined as the *'exchange of sexual messages or images'* (Livingstone et al., 2011) and *'the creating, sharing and forwarding of sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images through mobile phones and/or the internet'* (Lenhart, 2009). Qualitative research carried out for the NSPCC in 2012 indicated that sexting is causing problems for young people and concluded that more resources and support are vital. Sexting is often coercive and reflects the wider sexual pressures on young people, and this must be taken into account if sexting is to be effectively addressed.

Evidence from Thames Valley Police, Oxfordshire schools and other partner agencies indicates that sexting is a widespread issue affecting a large number of young people.

As a result, Thames Valley Police and Oxfordshire County Council worked together with support from Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board (OSCB) to establish a project to engage with young people and find out about their views and experiences. The clear indication is that there is a need to talk to, and involve, young people in order to be effective in addressing this issue and identifying ways forward.

Project aims

- To investigate the current prevalence, experience and impact of sexting through consultation with young people.
- To engage with young people in identifying the best ways to raise awareness and reduce the incidence and impact of sexting amongst their peers.
- To develop a resource pack including guidance, session plans and links to appropriate resources to support adults in helping to empower young people to deal with this issue and keep them safe.

Methodology

10 single-sex focus groups were held with Year 9 students (aged 13 and 14) in 4 different Oxfordshire secondary schools, from across the county. Year 9 was selected as the most appropriate age group, with students perceived to be mature enough to have a sensible discussion about this sensitive issue. 54% of the young people were aged 13, and 46% were aged 14.

Table 1 below gives a breakdown of the number of young people consulted within each school, and in total 99 students were involved. There was an even balance of girls and boys overall; of those taking part, 51 were boys (52% of total) and 48 were girls (48% of total), from 5 different boys' groups and 5 different girls' groups.

Group No.:	Date:	Gender:	No. of young people at start:	Total No. of young people at school:
1	08/12/15	Boys	12	24
2	08/12/15	Girls	12	
3	20/01/16	Boys	6	11
4	20/01/16	Girls	5	
5	27/01/16	Girls	11	34
6	27/01/16	Boys	11	
7	27/01/16	Boys	12	
8	28/01/16	Girls	10	30
9	28/01/16	Boys	10 (2 left early, so missed some of session)	
10	28/01/16	Girls	10	

Table 1: Table to show the number of young people consulted within Oxfordshire

(See Appendices A and B for more detailed information, including: dates of sessions, how many schools took part, the areas of Oxfordshire schools are located in, facilitator names, group sizes, gender and ages of the young people who participated in all sexting focus groups, as well as data and percentages showing the responses given to specific questions.)

Contact with each school and the arrangement of sessions was carried out by Oxfordshire County Council's Anti-Bullying Co-ordinator (Jo Brown). Some schools allocated their students for the focus groups randomly, whilst others selected specific students to take part. Focus groups were split according to gender, in order to improve participation and confidence, and to enable young people to speak freely in front of the rest of the group. A session plan was produced in advance and used to guide the session (see Appendix E) and everything the young people said during the session was typed on the spot. All sessions were also recorded on a Dictaphone to improve the accuracy of records of the session.

At the start of the session, all young people were asked to refer to the overall experiences of their age group and peer group, as opposed to individual and personal experiences. They were told however, that if they had any concerns as a result of the content discussed in the session, they could speak to the session leads at the end or another trusted adult in order to get further support.

Young people were assured that whilst they could speak confidentially, anything discussed that was a potential safeguarding concern would have to be reported.

During the sessions, as well as talking to the whole group, young people were given opportunities to respond privately using Post-it notes. The three-part evaluation at the end was anonymous. Young people were invited to write down privately on Post-it notes: something about the session they felt worked well, something that could be improved, and if they had anything else that they wanted to comment on, which also gave young people the opportunity to write down anything they may not have been confident saying in front of the whole group during the session. (See Appendix D, which shows all recorded evaluation comments.)

Key Findings

Sexting includes both pictures and texts

The sessions started by asking the young people what they thought sexting was. Young people were also asked to record anonymously on a Post-it an example of sexting that they or other young people their age had experienced. (See Appendix C, which shows all recorded comments.) All understood what was meant by the term and the majority agreed that sexting involves sending images, however there was some discussion over what kind of images these could be.

Sending photos of someone who's naked.

It's basically sending pictures and being really dirty.

Sexting images were described by the young people as being those that were 'inappropriate', 'sexual' and 'indecent', yet it was clear that some young people were not entirely sure about what could be defined as 'indecent', therefore this prompted some further discussion within the groups.

What counts as an indecent image?

Would wearing a bikini be classed as indecent?

A number of young people felt that sexting was not just limited to sending images, but also included text messages.

Isn't it like having sex, but in a text? You can talk about having sex.

It could be naughty texts.

One group of young people also made reference to the use of 'emojis' that can also be used in sexting situations.

***Innuendos
using emojis...
There are loads!***

***Or send a picture of an
eggplant or the pointing
finger and ok sign.***

Use of the term 'sexting'

It became apparent that whilst all young people understood what was meant by the term sexting, very few would actually use this term. Young people referred to sexting as a term used by adults, which was seen as very formal.

***No-one would ever say
sexting, only teachers.
It's too formal.***

This made clear the value of engaging with young people to find out about their experiences, which can be applied to how we educate young people about the issue.

There were a number of alternative terms used by young people, with different terms being favoured by each individual school. 'Nudes' however seemed to be the most commonly used term across all schools.

The quotes below indicate the variety of words used by young people to refer to sexting:

- 'Nudes'
- 'Hotpic'
- 'Pictures'
- 'Dick pic'
- 'Tit pic'
- 'Booty pic'
- 'Pussy pic'
- 'Nip slip'
- 'Cheeky pic'
- 'Fanny pics'
- 'Clit pics'

Some groups of young people also made reference to the terms used to describe the exchange of images, such as 'N4N' or 'Nude 4 Nude'.

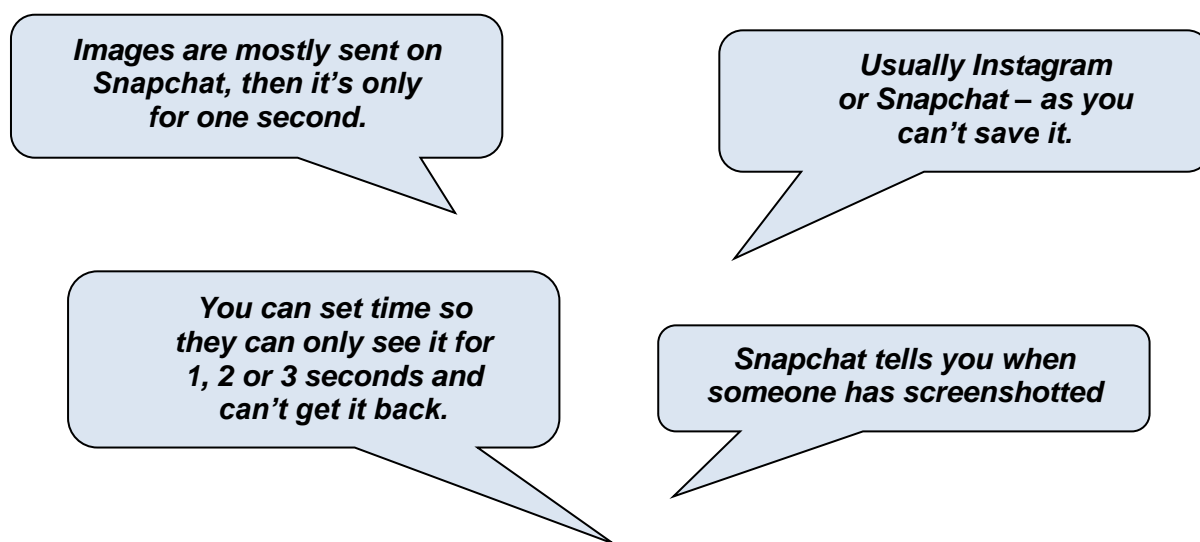
One group, also used the term ‘spamming’ to describe the process of sending sexting images one after the other, so boys could ‘wank over them’. Interestingly however, ‘spamming’ was also used by a different group of young people in the same school to refer to the process of ‘liking’ multiple images on social media, indicating the huge variety of language used by young people in relation to sexting.

Snapchat and sexting

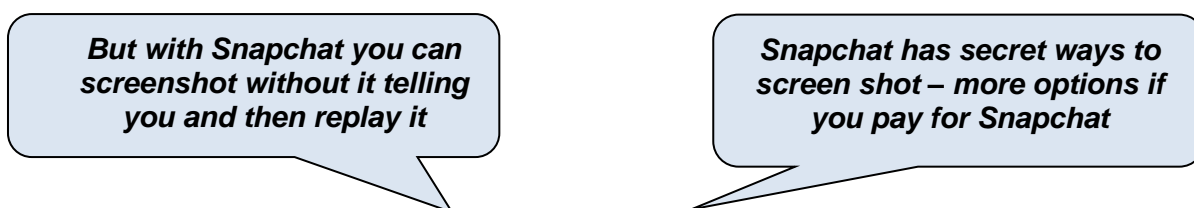
Snapchat was described as the most common App to be used for sexting.

Snapchat can be used to send photos and videos that can only be viewed for a specified period of time (1 to 10 seconds) before they disappear and become inaccessible.

Young people commented that it is ‘less risky’ than other forms of social media, as images can only be shared for a matter of seconds before they disappear and that the sender is made aware if a ‘screen-shot’ has been taken by the other person.



There was some awareness about software that can be used to hide the fact that a screen-shot has been taken.



When provided with this information however, young people did not seem to think this knowledge would have an influence on behaviour.

The reality of sexting

When young people were asked to describe the prevalence and kinds of sexting experienced in schools, responses between schools varied.

A key aspect of these discussions was the considerable amount of rumour that surrounds sexting which results in young people themselves being unsure of what and how much is actually going on. Young people explained that generally, incidents of sexting only become known about when images are shared in the peer group and are widely talked about. This usually occurs following an argument or the breakdown of a relationship, but some young people also made reference to situations associated with 'attention seeking', where people wanted to be talked about and therefore sent images. They seemed aware that some groups of young people are more vulnerable to being involved in sexting.

Some young people said that sexting 'incidents' with images spread around school would happen every few weeks whereas for others, it was every few months.

It's very common – you hear rumours – lots of talking about it... "Bet I can get a nude off her!"

A nude was sent around school – everyone knew and person got bullied, but was over really quickly.

There was a guy who was going out with this girl and they were going out. He was on Facetime and she took a screenshot, sent it to someone else – to a lad - who then put it on his Instagram. Then they broke up as he had cheated on her.

To help us get a clearer picture of the reality of sexting in schools, we modified the consultation and decided to ask young people in the last six groups to write privately on a Post-it note whether or not they had ever seen a sexting image. This revealed that of those young people asked (62 young people), 61% had seen a sexting image, and 39% had not. (See Appendix B.)

Young people also mentioned how images could be shared with the group more than once.

Pictures keep going round again – people will say they don't have it, but then the same picture gets brought out again and are sent around again, and everyone is reminded of it.

Despite sexting being a common source of rumour and speculation, it was also clear that sexting in schools has become normalised and isn't something that's seen as a 'big deal'.

Ten years ago that would have been like “OMG OMG!” but now it’s just normal because it happens so much, and you just get on with it.

Young people also seemed to think that even if images did get spread around school, the incidents would mostly be forgotten in a relatively short amount of time. This again shows how sexting has become a normal part of school life.

When it happens everyone is talking about it but then in a few weeks other stuff happens.

Everyone gets really rowdy but then the next day it is forgotten.

It was evident that most young people believed that incidences of sexting occur between people who know each other, even if not very well. Cases of sexting between young people in school and a stranger online were mentioned less often and young people seemed to be aware of the risks associated with this.

It’s mostly people you know (rather than strangers on internet etc) as you think you can trust them. Kids are aware of 'peados' – for example, someone says it’s a 20 year old boy, but actually a 40 year old man.

Some young people however did reference the use of sites such as Omegle (the free online chat site that lets users use a webcam to interact with strangers online across the world), and how there may be circumstances where indecent images are shared.

Can be just people who add you on Snapchat.

Girls and some boys but mostly girls - going on Omegle.

Age range

The age range for sexting was a topic that prompted extensive discussion. Most young people tended to agree that sexting begins in secondary school and is linked to wanting to impress others and feel more mature during their transition to a new school. They did not feel that it was something that they would be thinking about at primary school but some believed that sexting would start straight away at the beginning of Year 7.

At 7 years old I wouldn't be taking pictures of my testicles I would be running around eating Cheerios. I wouldn't care about that stuff.

Usually starts in secondary school – around Year 7.

It's all that change between primary and secondary school when you want to prove yourself, make yourself known – when you move up from primary school, when people don't know who they are.

When you're in Year 7 you want to feel older than you are and grow up more, so thinking is – "maybe if I send nudes I'll feel more like an adult".

Most, however felt that sexting was more likely to occur towards the end of Year 7 and into Year 8 as this is when young people have formed their friendship groups and are starting to have relationships.

In Year 8 you know each other quite well and start developing, there is more to do and you start seeing boys.

They also seemed to agree that sexting incidents reduce as you move up the school as people either mature and realise how risky it is, or any images that are taken are kept within relationships and not shared around school.

In Year 7 – not many sexual experiences in your life, but as you get older you get closer to girls, and can do anything, so there's genuinely no point.

It gets less common in Year 9 – all these stories of screenshots being sent around, so people get more cautious.

Half way through Year 10 you get more mature and realise how dangerous sending inappropriate pictures is - unless you want to be a porn star or something!

Some young people commented that people are starting to mature earlier and using technology/social media at a younger age which may therefore influence the age at which young people are involved in sexting.

I think now the generation has changed - it's a bigger problem now - starting younger.

All social media and phones... those who are using are getting younger - getting Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, younger.

Gender differences

Something that was evident throughout all groups of young people was the gender differences in relation to sexting. The general view seemed to be that typically, boys tended to ask for images to be sent whilst girls are more likely to send images than boys.

Girls send photos the most, and boys ask more.

Girls [send more]. Generally girls give into peer pressure more easily.

Boys think there nothing wrong with it, girls think it's bad.

They go N4N, then "you first", then sometimes they don't send one back.

Boys do it more – they often start it. It depends but they might send a pic of themselves topless – for example with a six pack.

Differing levels of maturity for boys and girls was brought up by a number of groups as the reason why boys might ask for images more than girls.

***Girls don't really say:
"can I see your dick?"***

Girls are more mature as they don't mess around in lessons when boys all do - apart from a few.

"Boys are just boys"- they don't want to grow up yet.

Most young people also agreed that it was more common for boys to 'screen shot' images than girls.

Girls don't really screenshot like boys.

Girls talk about it a lot and in more depth - "Ooh he's got a big/little willy" - rather than screenshotting it, whereas boys think it's more of a joke/laugh.

It was evident from the comments that both girls and boys felt girls would judge other girls more than boys judge each other.

Girls will get called 'slut' but boys don't get judged.

If a girl does it, it's a massive thing, whereas if a boy does it, it's seen as cool.

Girls are meanest.

Girls just get less respect when they do it - they get called names and stuff and are looked at in a different way.

This study did not have the opportunity to identify the incidence or experience of young people with gender identities other than male or female. It is also unlikely that young people would have felt safe enough to disclose if they were lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) in the group discussions. This remains an area to investigate further as evidence suggests that young people who identify as LGBT, or are questioning their sexual identity, are more likely to be at risk online. Our observations and conclusions are therefore limited to heterosexual relationships.

Reasons for sexting

Peer pressure and wanting to impress current or potential boyfriends/girlfriends appeared to be the most common reason for young people to be involved in sexting, and they felt these pressures had more impact on their behaviour than awareness of potential risk. Many young people spoke about situations where refusing to send a naked image could result in the break-up of a relationship and it was apparent that girls were under the most pressure in relation to this.

They feel pressurised – if you don't do it. People would be like "you're frigid".

If a girl is talking to a boy, if she doesn't want to send a picture she'll worry they won't talk to her again – feels like you have to.

For boys however, the pressure appeared to come from other boys in their peer group and having to be seen as 'one of the lads'. Some groups also spoke about boys sending images to each other to 'show off'.

For boys it's about proving themselves, making them more cool they have to show off and be the same as their friends.

Boys send dick pics around to each other. They all think we care. "Yeah - I've got a 6 incher... I've got a 12 inch snake!"

Young people also cited wanted to be 'grown up', and to be seen to take their relationship to the next level as a reason for being involved in sexting.

You might send them to get closer to the person.

They might want to get sexually active – get hard over a girl.

If a girl likes a boy she's trying to prove herself or impress them – to show that she is grown up enough.

In addition, young people made reference to use of 'blackmail' if sexting images were not sent, in that the other person would either end the relationship or spread rumours about them. This again reinforces the idea of peer pressure and coercion being a key influence on behaviour.

If a boy sends it and a girl says no to a booty, they will dump them or make up rumours.

They might hold it against you and say that if you don't send it they will tell everyone things you've told them.

Celebrity influence was also mentioned by a number of young people as a reason why people might start sending photos in an attempt to be like the celebrities that they look up to. Some groups also made reference to young people wanting to be more like the 'popular' people in school and copying their behaviour.

Influence from celebrities who've done similar things has an impact, as if things are posted on social media everyone thinks – "Wow that's cool - I should do that". Like Miley Cyrus, Kim Kardashian.

Some girls do it because they'll see more popular girls doing it, so then they'll try and be like them.

Some groups also made reference to the fact that those with low self-esteem and confidence issues might be more likely to be involved in sexting to get the attention of others and feel more important.

Some people do it because they've been talking to a boy – and he's been calling them beautiful – and it's highly manipulating the girl, as she's like "Oh I actually mean something to someone – someone's calling me beautiful".

Sometimes a boy ignores you, then girls send them out of the blue for attention.

Sexting and the law

When asked about sexting and the law, a large majority (87%) agreed with the statement that 'sexting breaks the law'. Just 9% of young people disagreed with the statement and 2% were unsure. Answers for the remaining 2% were unknown. (See Appendix B.)

There was however a lack of understanding about the age at which sexting is illegal, with a number of young people thinking that sexting is illegal for those under 16 (37% of young people). 34% of young people thought it was illegal for those under 18, and a significant number said that they were not sure - 28% of responses included those who were not sure, and those whose answers were unknown. (See Appendix B.)

A number of people referred to the legal age of consent being 16, and therefore thought this would also apply to sexting.

Isn't it when you're 16 you can be in an intimate relationship – so it's ok?

You can have sex at 16, so if you're sexting at 16 it's ok.

Is it all to do with the age between the two people – for example a 13 year old girl and 30 year old man?

A discussion around whether it was against the law to be involved in all aspects of sexting (i.e. taking, sending, possessing and sharing images) was introduced by the facilitators. Most young people were not aware that taking a photograph of themselves is against the law and mostly attributed the 'illegal' part of sexting to be sharing the image with others without consent.

Spreading would be worse.

Sending it to one person isn't illegal, but spreading it to other people is.

Some young people felt that the term 'illegal' had been over-used in schools to the extent that it had lost its meaning. As will be discussed later in this report, young people felt they would rather be made aware of the real risks associated with sexting, instead of just being told it is 'illegal' and that they therefore should not be doing it.

The term illegal has become such a broad term now – it's illegal to watch movies online. I used to think if I do something illegal "Oh I'll go to jail", but now it's thrown around everywhere in school by teachers.

At primary school, a teacher who was really into Health and Safety said it was illegal to bring a rugby ball into school. Since this wasn't something that would really harm anyone, from then on just thought the term illegal means something that's just frowned upon.

Is sexting risky?

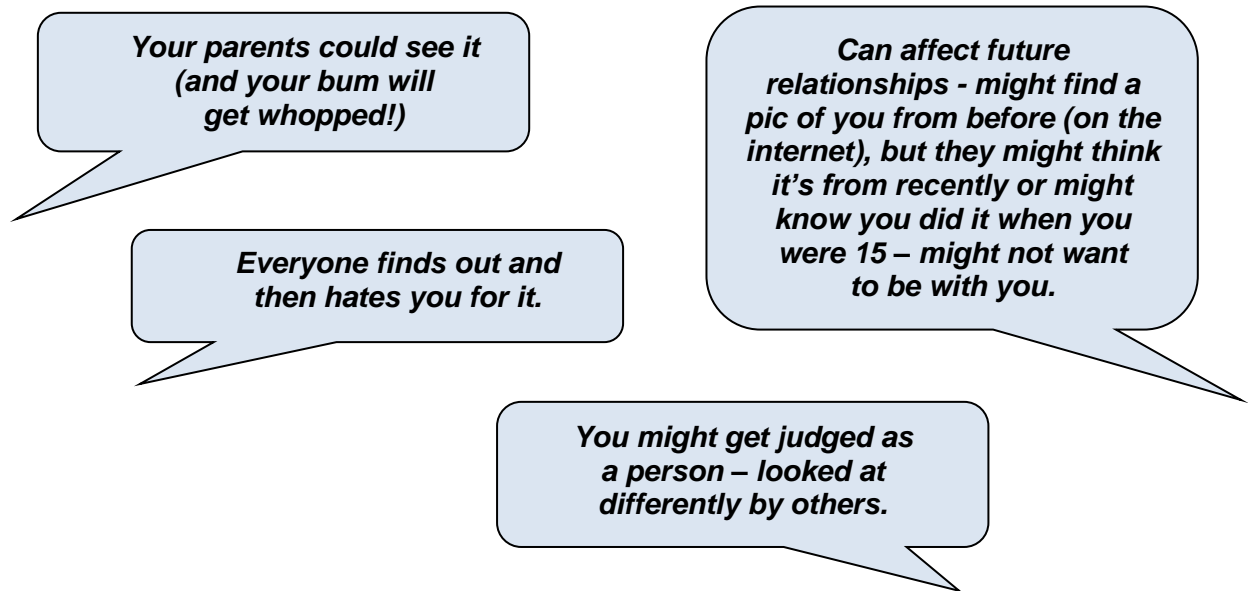
Overall, young people had a good understanding of the reputational risks associated with sexting. The quotes below give an overview of the key themes discussed including future employment prospects, further education and foreign travel.

Could affect your choices on jobs – you couldn't work in a nursery or be a teacher because they wouldn't be able to trust you around children.

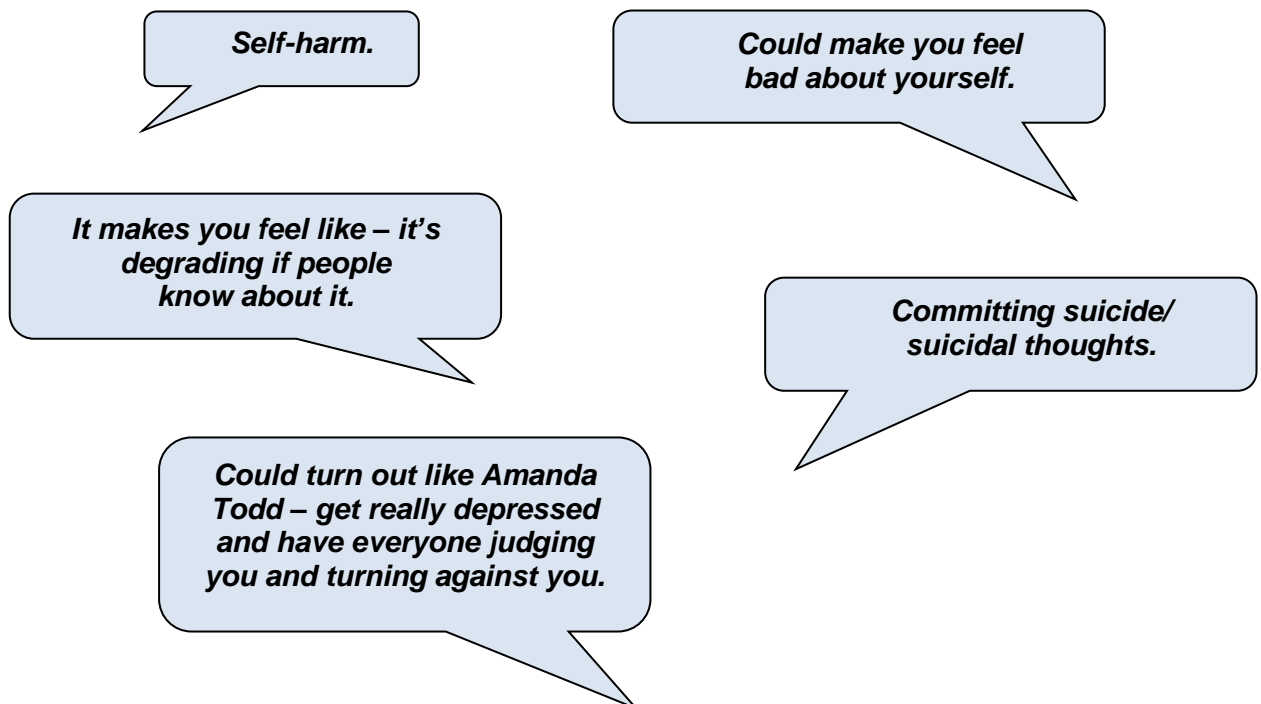
Can affect your Uni, sixth form application, your job. If they find out – think you're not worthy.

If you're on the Sex Offenders List doesn't that mean you have a criminal record – so you can't go to America and other countries?

Young people also highlighted the impact it might have on how others would view them including friends, family, teachers and current or future relationships.



They frequently stated the impact that sexting can have on emotional well-being and happiness.



The first group mentioned Amanda Todd and expressed the view that awareness of her experience and viewing the video she made could have an impact on young people. When asking some of the other groups if they had seen the video, 44% of all those asked (48 young people from five of the groups) said they had. The remaining 56% of those asked had either not seen the video but had heard of it, or had not heard of Amanda Todd at all. (See Appendix B.) Those who had seen the video felt that it was highly emotive and was something that they could relate to as it showed the 'real' impact of sexting rather than just being told what 'could happen'. This is something that the majority of young people agreed with. They wanted to be made more aware of the 'real' risks of sexting and what has actually happened to other people their age.

The impact of drama was highlighted by some young people, with a number mentioning 'Chelsea's Choice', which they had seen at school. Of those asked, 49% had seen it (see Appendix B) and their comments showed what they had remembered and learnt.

We all walked out quiet and no one said anything because we were all shocked, as Chelsea was quite close to our age.

If you hear a story, you just forget about it but if you see something that's actually happened, then it hits you.

Young people also mentioned that rumours about sexting, which they were aware may not even be true, could have an impact on reputation, and potentially lead to bullying.

Sometimes it's made up though – people say people have sent pictures when they haven't. If people think someone is that kind of person – they think they probably would have sent them.

People assume you've done it and accuse you even if you tell them you haven't.

Young people also demonstrated an awareness of risk associated with the lack of control over images once they have been shared. Many identified the risk of images potentially being shared with 'paedophiles' and unknown adults.

Paedophiles seeing the pics.

Unknown adults seeing a pic – some people pretend they are younger than they are.

However, despite having a very thorough understanding of the risks associated, there was also recognition that being aware of risks would not necessarily stop young people engaging in the activity as reflected in the comments below.

People will still do it.

But some don't care – "it won't happen to me", but then it will.

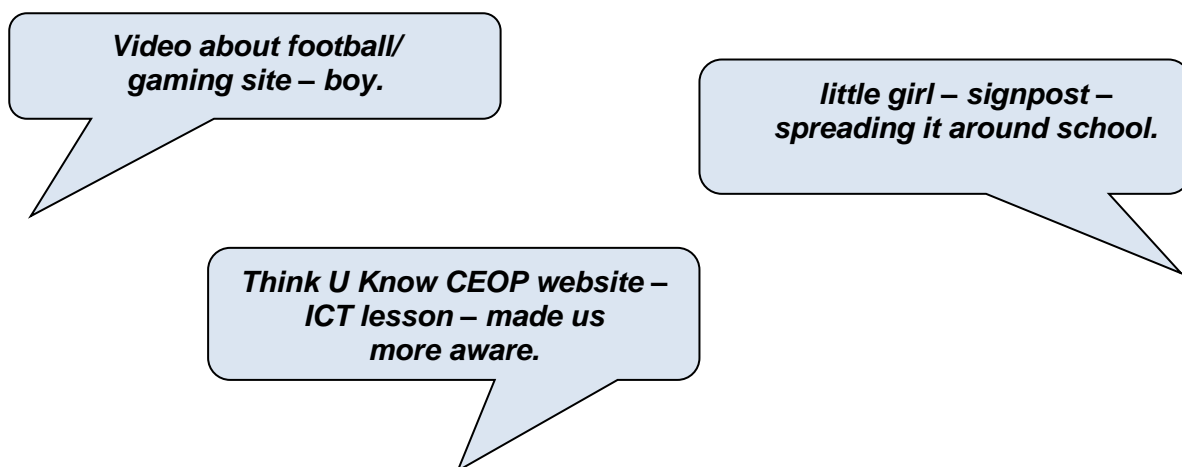
People will only learn if it happens to them or someone close to them.

This highlights the challenges faced in finding ways to effectively empower young people to keep themselves safe.

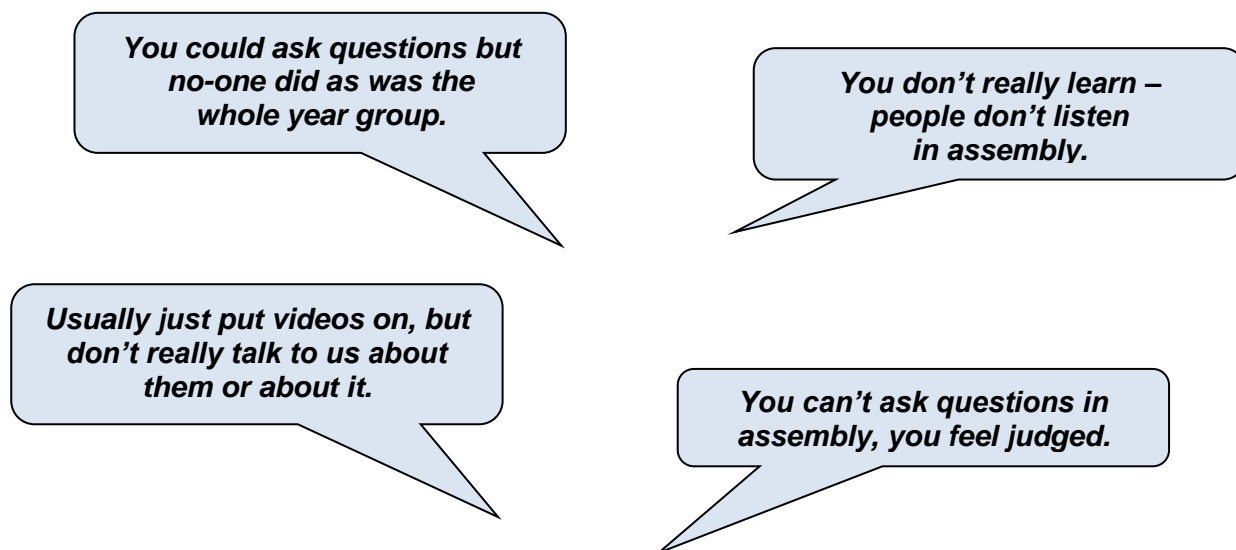
Education about sexting

The rest of the session focussed on consulting young people about the education they had already received on sexting, how effective this was and whether it changed their behaviour. The facilitators then asked them what approaches would be effective to help young people understand the risks and keep themselves safe.

In terms of the education that they were currently receiving in school, there seemed to be a variety of different experiences. All schools were providing education on internet safety and young people gave various examples of what they had learnt, and the resources that were commonly used. This seemed to mainly relate to use of the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) Think U Know education resources.



Many of the young people mentioned watching videos in assembly but they also felt that assemblies were not the most effective way of educating them, particularly highlighting there were no opportunities for questions or follow up.



Most young people did not have a very positive view of the education about sexting they were currently receiving.

I think it's not really effective at all.

It's not good because they tell us things over and over again which is boring and people lose interest.

A smaller number of young people did feel that education about sexting had been effective.

Makes you think about it.

Makes you afraid to do it.

CEOP 'report abuse' button and SWGfL resources

During the focus group sessions, young people were also asked whether they knew about the CEOP 'report abuse' button. Although the majority (62% of young people) said they knew about the button, knowledge varied between schools. When asked for more detail some were unclear what it was for or were uncertain about the benefits of using it. (See Appendix B.)

Bullying?

That button – not many people are going to click it, as they'd think "what can they actually do?" We need to get taught what happens and how they can help us.

Only 1% had seen the South West Grid for Learning (SWGfL) leaflet 'So You Got Naked Online' (see Appendix B) which is a sexting resource specifically aimed at young people who have already posted a picture. Once we had shown them the leaflet and provided the young people with SWGfL's checklists for Snap Chat, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, some felt these were useful whereas others felt that leaflets were of limited value. (See Appendix F for more information about these resources.)

Might be good as some people might get in a panic and reading this will help them take control.

You'd take it, but then throw it away when you got home.

What would be effective?

Many young people felt that videos and particularly drama could be an effective way of delivering education on sexting, but the context and follow up were considered to be particularly important. It was also apparent, from evaluation responses of the sexting consultation sessions, that many elements of the way these sessions had been delivered were seen by the young people as the best way to support and empower them to keep themselves safe.

It's been effective like this – in a small group which is more personal.

Better divided – girls separate to boys.

Not to judge us.

Better without teachers – they might go and tell other teachers what we've been saying.

Prefer it to be confidential so we can speak freely.

The person responsible for leading the session was also considered by the young people to be important.

A teacher might change their opinion of you and you won't want to look them in the eye afterwards.

Maybe a school nurse or counsellor as you don't see them every day.

Easier as we've never met you.

Whereas if it's a policeman it's more intimidating – they know what they're talking about.

Young people's recommendations for the context of delivering sessions on sexting can be summarised as follows:

- Single sex groups allowing freedom of discussion and reducing the embarrassment factor.
- Smaller group size allowing everyone to feel comfortable and to be able to participate.
- To take care about who's in the group, to allow them to learn from each other in a safe setting.
- People leading the group not being members of school staff. The young people commented that it was easier to talk to, and ask questions from, people they did not know in a 'confidential' setting. The young people also valued a non-judgemental approach.

Something that was also evident was that young people used the consultation sessions to ask wider questions about sex and relationships, indicating that they valued this opportunity. Young people also wanted accurate information about the law in relation to sexting.

Content of sexting education

Young people also had views about the content of what was delivered to them in relation to sexting.

Need to be told the possible outcomes – good and bad – not just “This person sent a nude and then killed themselves”.

Instead of telling them “Don’t do it!” make them understand or they’ll just rebel.

Make sure you mention the risks.

Need to know about the bullying that leads on from sexting.

Several young people mentioned the NSPCC Share Aware advert and expressed the opinion that, although this was aimed at younger children and people might find it funny, the content could have an impact.

NSPCC advert about John and his friend – it was very useful as I’m not going to share my willy after that!

When should education on sexting start?

We asked young people whether education on sexting should start in primary school. Some felt that this would be beneficial, however others had concerns about the timing. Some said they were not sure this was something their parents would approve of or said they would be too young to handle it.

When I was in primary school we had the sex talk – I wasn't allowed in as my Mum thought it was too young – I agree – we shouldn't learn about that stuff too early.

If they changed the curriculum to this topic in Year 5 or 6, people would think about it earlier and when they got to secondary school might think "I don't think I should do this".

Because they teach about it in Year 5 or 6, you might later think "We already know about that – don't need to listen", so better to leave it until later.

Adults don't understand how early we know about stuff and how early stuff happens.

Many young people felt that the key time to deliver education on sexting is in Year 7 or Year 8 as beyond this age it may be too late as they are more likely to have already been involved in sexting.

I think it should be done in Year 7, as when you're in primary school you don't know what a Nude is – only when you're in secondary school when you hear about it in the playground, you do.

Peer education

When we asked young people what they felt about education from their peers rather than from adults, some felt this could be effective although not many suggested this unprompted.

Ask someone who was involved and get them to tell their story.

It's always the teacher stood there saying "Don't do it – or this will happen". I think you need someone speaking who's more from our age or experience.

An older student – for example a sixth former.

Talking to parents/carers

As well as finding it hard to talk about the topic with teachers, many young people also found this a difficult topic to discuss with parents and carers making it hard to go to them for advice.

It's really weird because you don't normally talk to your parents about this.

Oh no – I can't speak to her about it!

It's embarrassing!

Messages to other young people

Towards the end of the session we asked young people what their key messages to other young people would be about sexting. The comments made showed that young people were aware that engaging in sexting was unlikely to be a positive experience. Sexting may be a normal part of current teenage behaviour, but young people wanted others to realise it is not worth the risk and can have a serious negative impact on your life.

It ruins your life because it gets spread around, you get bullied and can't get jobs or go places.

My most important message would be to keep your personal details safe.

Taking pictures – don't do or send because it might get shared around when you don't want it to and because it can mess up your life.

It can come back around – if you take when you're younger then can come back when you're older.

Don't take pictures!

It's more dangerous than you think.

Don't send it – defriend it!

You don't have control of it at all!

You don't know where it can be sent next.

Think before you press send – because it can affect your future.

Be smart – Bill doesn't send nudes. Be like Bill!

If you want to see someone's private parts, do it in person!

Conclusion

From our consultation with young people, sexting appears to have become a 'normal' or commonly experienced part of growing up and exploring/developing relationships during adolescence. Behaviour of celebrities and the prevalence of information in the media was one of the factors contributing to this normalisation and it also seems that being accepted by the peer group and conforming to current peer norms and expectations are major motivators. This can include coercion within relationships between young people and young women particularly expressed that these expectations are a 'no win' for them as either sending, or not sending, a 'nude' could be judged negatively. Some groups of young people also seem more likely to be involved in sexting and more likely to be impacted by it.

It would appear that current education on sexting mainly focuses on the risks of posting information online and the access to this information by strangers. Also how this can lead

to possible exploitation and impact on personal reputation etc., with this tending to be delivered within an 'internet safety' context. This approach to education was not viewed by young people as being effective and they felt it had a limited impact on their behaviour. The desire to conform and be accepted by their peer group was more likely to influence their behaviour than knowledge of potential risks. Although young people have a good understanding of the potential risks of sexting, their knowledge of the law was limited and often inaccurate. They had a wider understanding of risk in terms of personal reputation and potential impact on their mental health, well-being and self-esteem.

These sessions, designed to consult students (including the content of information that was delivered), proved to be seen by young people as an effective way of helping them to understand the risks and consequences of sexting. Therefore, work needs to be done to look at how elements of this approach can be realistically applied within the school context, bearing in mind limited resources and staff time available to schools. Young people's views and experiences are also invaluable to inform policy and practice in relation to sexting, across agencies.

Recommendations

- 1. Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and Thames Valley Police (TVP) should produce a sexting resource pack including session plans for delivery of education and links to appropriate guidance and resources, based on the finding of this study.** This resource pack should be made available to schools, youth settings, school health nurses and the police, and should include:
 - Guidance on how the sessions should be delivered and who is the most appropriate person to deliver them.
 - Age appropriate resources both for late primary school and secondary school.
 - Links to agreed guidance for schools about how to deal with incidents of sexting in order to promote a consistent approach across the Thames Valley.
 - An evaluation process to ensure that those delivering the pack and the young people receiving it can continue to be consulted in order to further develop and improve the resources.
 - Information and links to good resources for parents/carers to help them support their children.
 - A 'train the trainer' resource to provide a reference point for consistent delivery of education by OCC and TVP.
- 2. Schools should review the content and delivery of their Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) to include sexting as part of education on respectful relationships. Delivery of SRE should include single sex, confidential sessions run by those other than school staff with some sessions being targeted at vulnerable groups.** This study made it clear that sexting is currently common amongst teenagers and needs to be learnt about in the context of healthy/unhealthy relationships, peer pressure and potential coercion and exploitation. Some young people are likely to be more vulnerable to being involved in sexting and would benefit from targeted support. A strong message from young people was that they valued education from independent, confidential sources indicating a potential role for school health nurses as they already have a role in the delivery of Sex and Relationships Education (SRE) in schools. There is a clear need for development of good resources to support what schools currently deliver in Personal, Health and Social Education

(PHSE) and tutor time. There is also a role for delivery of sessions by TVP, particularly with reference to potential legal consequences for young people. The resource pack could include this material for TVP colleagues in order to promote a consistent message.

3. OCC and TVP should develop a survey to investigate the current experience and prevalence of sexting in a wider sample of teenagers, which can also capture emerging trends and changes in behaviour in order to inform policy and practice.

This should be made available to schools and settings with the facility for them to have individual results for their establishment so that they can find out what the issues are in relation to sexting within their setting, in order to address the problem more effectively. The results of this survey should be pooled to give County/Thames Valley-wide results which would then allow the impact of any work undertaken (for example delivery of education) to be measured and improved. Facilities already exist for this to be taken forward within Oxfordshire.

4. OCC and TVP should investigate commissioning the creation of a video resource relevant to local experiences that would address the issues raised by this study and enhance the education of young people.

5. Senior management within OCC and TVP should be made aware of the results of this study in order to inform policy and practice.

List of Appendices:

▪ **Appendix A:**

Information table showing dates of sessions, which schools took part, location of school in Oxfordshire, facilitator names, group sizes and gender of the young people (YP) who participated in all sexting focus groups

▪ **Appendix B:**

Detailed table showing information about the young people (YP) who participated and the responses they gave to specific questions:

- How many YP took part?
- Ages of YP taking part?
- Gender of YP taking part?
- Have you seen or not seen an image?
- Sexting breaks the law - True or False?
- Do you think Sexting is illegal if you're under 16, or under 18?
- Have you seen the play 'Chelsea's Choice'?
- Have you seen the 'So You Got Naked Online' booklet?
- Do you know about the CEOP 'Report Abuse' button?
- Have you seen and/or heard about the Amanda Todd video?

▪ **Appendix C:**

Examples of sexting experienced by young people (written anonymously and put in ballot box)

▪ **Appendix D:**

Three-part evaluation of session (written anonymously and put in ballot box):

- One thing that worked well?
- How could we improve the session?
- Anything else you want to say?

▪ **Appendix E:**

Example session plan for sexting focus groups

▪ **Appendix F:**

SWGfL online safety resources, including the 'So You Got Naked Online' sexting guidance leaflet

Appendix A: Information table showing dates of sessions, which schools took part, location of school in Oxfordshire, facilitator names, group sizes and gender of the young people (YP) who participated in all sexting focus groups

Group No.:	Date:	School:	Area of Oxfordshire:	Leads:	Gender:	No. of young people at start:	Total No. of young people at school:
1	08/12/15	School 1	North	Jo, Rosie, April	Boys	12	24
2	08/12/15	School 1	North	Jo, Rosie, April	Girls	12	
3	20/01/16	School 2	South	Jo, Rosie, Anne, Laura	Boys	6	11
4	20/01/16	School 2	South	Jo, Rosie, Anne, Laura	Girls	5	
5	27/01/16	School 3	West	Jo, Rosie, April	Girls	11	34
6	27/01/16	School 3	West	Jo, Rosie, April	Boys (1 st)	11	
7	27/01/16	School 3	West	Jo, Rosie, April	Boys (2 nd)	12	
8	28/01/16	School 4	North	Jo, Rosie, April	Girls (1 st)	10	30
9	28/01/16	School 4	North	Jo, Rosie, April	Boys	10 (2 left early, so missed some of session)	
10	28/01/16	School 4	North	Jo, Rosie, April	Girls (2 nd)	10	
						Total:	99

Appendix B: Table showing information about the young people (YP) who participated and the responses they gave to specific questions

Question:	Responses:	Group 1:	Group 2:	Group 3:	Group 4:	Group 5:	Group 6:	Group 7:	Group 8:	Group 9:	Group 10:	Total Nos. of YP (out of 99) & % of total:
How many YP took part?		12	12	6	5	11	11	12	10	10 (2 left early)	10	99 (100%)

Ages of YP taking part?	Age 13:	7	6	4	4	5	7	4	4	6	6	53 (54%)
	Age 14:	5	6	2	1	6	4	8	6	4	4	46 (46%)

Gender of YP taking part?	Boys:	12	0	6	0	0	11	12	0	10	0	51 (52%)
	Girls:	0	12	0	5	11	0	0	10	0	10	48 (48%)
	Other:	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0 (0%)

Have you seen or not seen an image? (See comment below in red)	Seen:	0	0	0	0	8	3	5	9	7	6	38 (38%)*
	Not Seen:	0	0	0	0	3	8	7	1	1	4	24 (24%)*
	Unknown: (Didn't ask question)	12	12	6	5	0	0	0	0	2	0	37 (37%)*

The percentages referred to in the report are in relation to those YP asked if they had seen an image. Of the overall total of 99 YP, only 62 were asked, and the remaining 37 were not (including 2 YP who left Group 9 early). Therefore of those YP asked, 61% had seen an image, and 39% had not seen an image.

Sexing breaks the law - True or False?	True:	12	10	3	5	9	11	12	10	4	10	86 (87%)
	False:	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	9 (9%)

	Unknown: (Didn't ask question or YP not sure)	0	0	0	0	2 (said 'don't know')	0	0	0	2 (not known as left early)	0	4 (4%)
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Do you think Sexting is illegal if you're under 16, or under 18?	Illegal if under 16:	6	10	0	1	3	0	9	5	3	0	37 (37%)*
	Illegal if under 18:	5	2	0	1	8	0	2	5	1	10	34 (34%)*
	Unknown: (Didn't ask question or YP not sure)	1 (said 'not sure')	0	6 (didn't ask)	3 (said 'not sure')	0	11 (all said 'don't know', but later all thought it would be under 18 as it is not as bad if you are sending it to an older person)	1 (thought under 17)	0	6 (4 said 'not sure' & 2 not asked as left early)	0	28 (28%)*

Have you seen the play 'Chelsea's Choice'?	Yes:	12 (didn't ask the question, but all students seemed to have seen Chelsea's Choice)	0	5	5	0	0	0	9	8	10	49 (49%)*
	No:	0	0	0	0	11	11	12	1 (as was away)	0	0	35 (35%)*
	Unknown: (Didn't ask question or YP not sure)	0	12 (didn't ask)	1 (said 'not sure')	0	0	0	0	0	2 (not asked as left early)	0	15 (15%)*

Have you seen the 'So You Got Naked Online' booklet?	Yes:	1 (‘kind of heard about it online’)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1 (1%)
	No:	11	0	6	5	11	11	12	10	8	10	84 (85%)
	Unknown: (Didn't ask question)	0	12	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (not asked as left early)	0	14 (14%)

Do you know about the CEOP 'Report Abuse' button?	Yes:	9	0	1	1 (‘knew, but hadn't actually seen it’)	11	8	12	6	4	9	61 (62%)
	No:	3	12	5	4 (although others knew there are ways to report abuse)	0	3 (1 hadn't seen it but had seen similar icons)	0	4	4	1	36 (36%)
	Unknown: (Didn't ask question)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2 (not asked as left early)	0	2 (2%)

Have you seen and/or heard about the Amanda Todd video? (See comment below in red)	Yes:	3 (3 had seen it)	0	0	4 (4 had seen it)	6 (6 had seen it)	0	0	8 (3 had seen it)	0	5 (5 had seen it)	26 (26%)
	No:	0	0	0	0	5	0	0	2	0	5	12 (12%)
	Unknown: (Didn't ask question or not known)	9 (hadn't seen, but didn't ask if they'd heard of it)	12 (didn't ask)	6 (didn't ask)	1 (hadn't seen, but didn't ask if they had heard of it?)	0	11 (didn't ask)	12 (didn't ask)	0	10 (didn't ask)	0	61 (62%)

The percentages referred to in the report are in relation to those YP asked if they had seen the Amanda Todd video. Of the overall total of 99 YP, only 48 were asked, and the remaining 51 were not. Therefore of those YP asked, 44% had seen the video, and 56% had not seen it.

***N.B.: Percentages shown above have been calculated by rounding up or down to the nearest whole number. This is why percentages marked with an asterisk (each relating to one of 3 of the questions) only add up to 99% in total.**

Appendix C: Examples of sexting experienced by young people (written anonymously and put in ballot box)

(All comments made by young people are recorded below verbatim)

- Sent naked photos.
- When someone sends a picture of themselves naked and sends it to someone and they send it back.
- People send them and then screenshot them. It doesn't happen too often.
- A naked photo sent to mate.
- Sending photos of private parts of your body.
- I have heard that people send photos to strangers to get followers or likes.
- Sent Nudes – my mate and his girlfriend.
- People taking photos of themselves.
- When you make someone send naked photos of yourself.
- I have heard of people sending Nudes – indecent pictures of body parts.
- No experience.
- By snapchat – usually they are in a relationship.
- Someone sends a pic and they send to their friends or viral.
- A boy asked a girl for Nudes and he saved the photos and posted them on group chat to show all his friends.
- Someone kept asking someone for a Nude, they sent it and then the person screen shot and sent to all his mates.
- Someone has asked for a Nude and the other has sent it they have screen shot it and sent it to all their friends.
- Someone sent a Nude picture to someone and it spread around (everyone knew about it).
- Two people sending Nude and getting it sent around the school.
- Someone sends a Nude and someone screenshots it and shows other people.
- Someone sent a photo to another person and it spread around school.
- Someone sent a Nude to someone and the person who received it put it on social media and on a group chat.
- Someone sent a picture then people spoke behind their backs.
- Celeb Nudes leaking.
- Pictures on insta of a girl who sent one and then got put on insta
- Never been sent one. Pics on insta
- Never been sent on
- Someone sent 1 to someone and they screenshotted it and it went all over instagram
- I've never sent one and I've never been sent on but I've heard about people sending them
- Never been sent one
- Someone sending a picture and it getting shared on instagram and people talking about it
- My friend skyped an older man and she didn't know him
- Pictures being screen shotted and put on instagram then everyone from other schools talking about it
- I got some pictures from people, I don't even know why. My friend recently got a pic from someone in our school
- I don't know
- I heard that one of my friends have send nudes to a boy and her mother found out but I'm not sure whether it is true
- I have heard someone sent someone else a nude without them asking for it
- I don't know

- Not me – my friend met a guy from America. She sent a pic of her chest when he asked and he sent a pic of his penis
- I don't know
- My mate got sent a dick pic from her boyfriend. I haven't been asked nor sent one
- I've heard people in my year saying that they have been asked to send nudes and some said they did and some said they didn't
- I heard a boy asked his girlfriend for nudes and they broke up when she said no
- Nudes – sexual messages – someone has sent a nude and the other person has shared it
- Someone sent my friend pics and they didn't even expect it
- I know some people send each other picture of their vaginas or penis pics
- I've seen accounts called nudes for nudes and people saying nudes for nudes
- Sending nude pictures
- Someone gets asked to send a picture to the other
- People on games ask for peoples Kik, phone number or snapchat to send each other stuff
- Rude pictures n4n
- Never really hear about it
- I have heard of sexting as people sending nudes or inappropriate messages to each other
- I've heard of someone sending a picture of their body parts to people
- I've heard of nude pictures
- Never heard about anything or experienced it
- I heard that someone sent an inappropriate picture to their boyfriend
- None
- I have heard about a girl who put their vagina on their snapchat
- I do not really know about sexting. I call it nudes. There has been one case in our year I believe.
- I have heard about nothing
- Some people do
- I have heard someone was sent a picture
- Some people in our year had some
- I have heard about someone I don't know sent pics
- Seen tit pics, picture from stranger, SedgyFergo, girl in our year took a picture of her bum and sent it
- Nudes (anonymous) Emojis text
- I don't know – somebody in our year sent one
- I have heard of someone sending images to a person
- I know people who have send nudes such as: booty pics, dick pics
- I know people who have sent nudes
- I know that some girls in my school have sent nudes but also boys have sent dick picks also people who have sent videos
- I know people who have sent nudes "booty pics" "dick pics". I also know people who have sent videos
- I have heard of sexting but have never experienced it
- I know that people send nudes
- I know girls who have sent booty pics to boys
- I know a girls who got a dick pic but the boy wanted her to send nudes to him for money
- I know a lot of people who have sent them
- People gossip but never heard a big story

- Mobile shagging
- Dick Pic
- Sending a booty pic
- Tit pics
- Dick pic
- Mobile shagging
- Tit pic
- Booty Pic, Bum picture – picture of an image that was a bum
- F pic friend
- Pussy Pics – seen it
- A friend of mine received nudes from a boy in Year 10 and my other friend received the same picture from the same boy in Year 10
- I don't know
- I don't know
- I heard about a girl who sent rude pictures and or video to a guy friend of mine
- My friend was sent a nude from a boy she doesn't know. Someone I know sent a booty pick to a Year 11 she hardly knew
- I haven't heard anything that I can recall
- A girl in my year sent an inappropriate video to someone
- X
- A friend of mine sent one to a boy I know
- I have heard a boy sent a pick to a girl. Furthermore some girl from Year 9 sent a pick. I heard this from someone

Appendix D: Three-part evaluation of session (written anonymously and put in ballot box):

- **One thing that worked well?**
- **How could we improve the session?**
- **Anything else you want to say?**

(All comments made by young people are recorded below verbatim)

One thing that worked well?

- I think it was good as we were able to voice exactly what we thought.
- Good thing about this lesson is that we all know more about sexting and we know the real meaning of illegal.
- The council and the police listened to our views.
- Good to talk to mates and teachers.
- I know we'll help a lot of people.
- Everyone listened.
- Interesting topic for research.
- I enjoyed the lesson and it helped me to realise how bad it is.
- I think it was good because we learnt different opinions from each other and views on risks.
- The way that we can discuss with people that we usually wouldn't.
- Very good to get my opinion out.
- Getting everyone else's opinion on it.
- We could talk to adults about things.
- Everyone contributed.
- We have discussed topics that are not usually addressed.
- Being able to speak openly and be honest.
- We could be open and speak our minds.
- We all talked really well and understood each other in the group.
- Everyone contributed and said their opinion. We learnt lots.
- I found out the consequences and causes.
- Free talking.
- We could share our opinions and established a lot.
- I liked how you could say anything confidently.
- We have felt like we were able to open up and tell our opinions and stories.
- All of it
- The amount of people in this session made it easier to speak in confidence
- Everyone said what they wanted and shared their experience
- I enjoyed the fact that it was with people I am comfortable with
- I learnt something about sexting
- Felt like I could be really honest
- The teacher wasn't here so we could speak freely
- That the teachers listened to us
- Small groups so we are confident to say what we think

- We were all able to be open to each other
- I know that it's confidential
- It's really helping me to understand more about what is going on in the internet. Also talking with a small group of girls, not with boys
- I like that it was confidential and we had people who take it seriously
- I like knowing all about truth
- I thought it was very helpful and they covered everything and gave us every chance to talk about what we know. The leaflets are very useful
- I think that now we have spoke about this people will think more about this
- We talked as a group. Very comfortable within group.
- I liked opening up about it and speaking to someone that takes it seriously
- I liked this session because it has given me more information.
- Learnt more about it and more comfortable talking about it
- It gave everyone a chance to share opinions openly with no judgement
- Felt comfortable talking to you about this type of thing
- More private compared to assemblies
- Easy to talk/size of group
- Playing the game at the start of the session
- Gets you to understand more about sexting
- I liked that it was in a small group and was private
- The leaflets, making a phone case, making a survey, listened good
- It was quite open once we played the game
- Activities, easy to understand, talking about the law in sexting
- Size of the group
- You have taught me on the laws of sexting
- Easy to talk to
- It was very interactive and funny
- Face to face
- Covered most things let us ask questions
- Face to face. People talking about what they actually know. Not made up
- With friends
- Everything
- Was face to face, interactive
- I think it helped my understanding
- It was fun but informative
- It explained everything well and made everyone get their say
- I think that it has helped
- I like the way you are able to freely talk about more awkward things
- Make clear the dangers of sexting
- It was small and direct. It made sure people listened
- That it was a small group and everyone could have a say
- Making sure everyone is comfortable to speak in front of each other (confidential)
- Goes into detail about sexting and helps about the awareness of it

- You could ask questions in a small group and they would be answered
- Everyone says their opinion and shares their experiences and we got told the risks and consequences in a mature way which will impact us more in smaller groups
- You didn't force people to talk and you made sure everyone was comfortable. It's confidential
- That it was well explained with the consequences and the impact it can have on your life, while trying to get jobs etc.
- Everybody giving their opinions and everything is confidential
- It teaches us all of the problem of sexting and what can happen to you
- I learnt not to sexting before we would know that consequences before and after the event – Don't do it!
- Safety
- I learnt that sexting is bad
- I learned more about the legal ages of sexting and just more information
- I got to ask lots of questions about things I didn't know and understand
- I got taught that sexting is bad
- The thing that was useful was learning ideas and the laws about the rules and also have a laugh
- Talking
- Enjoyed: Got to learn more about sexting. Sharing ideas.
- Got to learn more about how to be safe on line
- Talking about different things
- Everyone was very open with each other as it was a small group
- Sharing experiences and getting to know the girls better
- Good: Learnt that everyone is thinking the same thing
- Talking and learning a lot!
- Nothing
- We were able to discuss many things that some people may be unsure of and may want to know more information or are intrigued about

How could we improve the session?

- Longer session so we can talk more.
- Nothing.
- It was good but make it longer.
- Do a film in assembly to show us the real impact not just stories. We could sign a form to make us able to watch this.
- More time.
- Not much to improve but maybe watch a video.
- Watch a video – to see important videos about the impact of sexting.
- Nothing really.
- Longer sessions.
- More time.
- More time to talk about it.
- More time.
- Have longer to talk. 😊

- Talk about subjects like these in lessons.
- More activity less sitting.
- Longer session.
- Make it longer or be with boys.
- More time because I still had things to say.
- Maybe you could make a survey for focus groups to fill in.
- May be with boys (same number of people) so we know what boys felt about it.
- Longer.
- Make it longer so we can do all the questions.
- Maybe more time to share opinions.
- Have longer.
- Room less cold
- Nothing to improve
- Nothing it was good
- Not sure
- Heat
- Heat
- Not sure
- Nothing to improve
- Nothing
- Nothing to improve
- Can't think of anything
- Trying to get us to loosen up more at the start
- I can't think about anything that could change
- I think you could talk more about social media
- Talk more about how teachers are talking about it
- Talk about what we can do for ourselves and others if it happens to us
- More time, deeper explanations
- Can't think of anything
- Can't think of anything to improve
- Not record us speaking
- I think there should be more information on how to react to sexting
- Have more information on how to protect yourself from nudes
- Say more statistics about sexting
- It last a bit longer
- Do more activities
- Break half way through
- More hands on activities
- Maybe a small serious talk
- The questions read louder
- More/less structured

- Speak to people who have past experience
- X
- Nothing
- Don't know
- ?
- Nothing
- Make sure everyone gets a chance to say their opinion
- Ask more relatable questions
- Make sure it is late year 7 because right now it's too late it just makes us scared
- Maybe show a video or tell some stories so people think it is more real
- Add more media to keep the attention and use the resources
- Do more activities
- Make the group late Year 7, Early Year 8 and just tell them the risks and consequences
- Tell different stories that happened to people
- Do more activities?
- Demonstrations
- Perfect
- Someone's personal experiences
- It's perfect
- Be clearer
- Nothing!
- More active. Not just sat down
- Less awkward
- Do it for a little more time
- Try and get people who are willing to
- Maybe use younger adults. More comfortable.
- I don't know.

Anything else you want to say?

- I feel as if I've wasted hours in classes being told the risk of sexting that I already know.
- Sexting ruins lives due to them not coping mentally and not able to concentrate at school.
- How do the police get involved and how do they solve it?
- People don't realise the actual outcome of sexting.
- People spread rumours of things that aren't true for attention.
- If a person got sent a Nude they're told to talk to someone but the person would feel that if they told someone they would get into trouble.
- It can be hard to talk to anyone about what has happened to you.
- Feels like some teachers don't care
- 1x not sure
- 3x nothing

- Either: nothing or don't know
- I enjoyed speaking and getting involved
- Nothing
- Videos
- Make sure everyone is friends so they feel they can share
- Make sure no-one is embarrassed
- Include stories about it and people it has happened to and how it affected/helped them
- Thank you for today. Is there any illegal sexual moves when you are over 18?
- What's the most you can do with a girl at 14 years of age?
- Is it classed as raped if the girl asked for sex? (further discussion – can a boy be raped by a girl?)
- Nope
- I don't know

Appendix E: Example session plan for sexting focus groups

Example Session Plan for Sexting Focus Groups (75 minutes)						
	Purpose:	Activity:	R'sources:	Time: Start at:	Mins:	Who:
0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrival • Setting up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrive and set up room • Get all sheets, flipcharts, pens, paper and dictaphone ready (to run throughout the session if YP are happy with this.) • Set up chairs in circle, and tables as needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dictaphone • Fl'chart + pens • Pens + paper • Colouring pens • Post-its 	8.25am	10m (Not part of 75m)	RB & JB & AM
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YP arrive • Explain Project • Group 'Rules' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YP arrive. • Facilitators introduce themselves. • Explain project and inform young people we are recording session on Dictaphone so we capture everything said. In final report, no one will be identified individually or even by school – e.g. will just be '14 year old female', although quotes will be used. Info will be kept confidential unless something is said that may affect anyone's safety. We are interested in possible follow-up work if anyone is interested... • Elicit 'working together' group rules (respect/listening/confidentiality/respecting privacy etc). Explain re confidentiality exceptions in relation to safety/criminal offences – don't need to know about your personal behaviour (see NB below). • NB: We don't want to hear about what you are personally doing around this topic, we are interested in young people generally, and what's going on in your peer group. If you feel you need any further advice or support, or are worried about anything, you can see us at the end, or make sure you talk to an adult you trust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fl'chart and pens 	8.35am	5m	JB (RB to type responses in template)
2	• En'giser	<p>Energizer: 'Cornflakes': Get all YP to sit in a circle with one less chair than there is people...extra person is in the middle. They make a statement, and everyone who agrees with the statement stands up, swaps chairs and sits down somewhere else (can't be chair next to you). Game continues until facilitator ends it. If you get stuck, or if no one agrees with what you have suggested, then you say 'Cornflakes' and everyone has to get up and swap around. Statements can be about anything – e.g. 'I have been to France', 'I am wearing trousers'.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairs in circle with 1 removed 	8.40am	5m	RB
	• Name Intro's	<p>Introductions: Ask YP to say their name, age and something they enjoy doing on the internet. (Write down info to help interaction using names in session.)</p>		8.45am	2m	RB
3	Q.1	<p>1. What do you think sexting is?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you say it just includes images or also texts etc? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fl'chart and pens 	8.47am	4m	JB (RB to type responses in template)

4	Q.2	<p>2. What do young people call it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adults define it as sexting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fl'chart and pens 	8.51am	2m	JB (RB to type responses in template)
5	Q.3	<p>3. What kinds of sexting have you or young people your age experienced?</p> <p><i>First ask each YP to write down one example of any sexting they have heard about or experienced on a post it note, and post in ballot box. Then discuss further (young people can share what they've written down if they want to, but they don't have to.)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you know anyone who has been involved in sexting? How were they involved? i.e. uploading their own image; sending on an image sent by someone else; how else were they involved? (What kind of things are young people doing?) How common is "sexting"? Are lots of young people involved? Is it usually between people who know each other or those that people meet online? Do you find that it usually happens to people outside of school, or do people continue asking for images/talking about images etc during school. How are these images sent, are they on Apps such as WhatsApp or social media such as Twitter, Facebook etc? Has there ever been a situation at school where images were sent around to lots of people, other than the person that the image was originally sent to? What happened? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fl'chart and pens Post-its + pens Ballot Box 	8.53am	9m	JB (RB to type responses in template)
6	Q.4	<p>4. Is there an age range for sexting? (Do you think there's an age when young people start or stop?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How young are people getting involved? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fl'chart and pens 	9.02am	2m	JB (RB to type responses in template)
7	Q.5	<p>5. Who is doing sexting most – girls/boys/other genders or equal amounts?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it more common amongst girls than boys? Who is sending images? Who is passing on images? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fl'chart and pens 	9.04am	4m	JB (RB to type responses in template)
8	Q.6	<p>6. Why do young people do it?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the reasons for young people getting involved? Do young people feel pressurised to send images? Are there different reasons for girls and boys? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fl'chart and pens 	9.08am	8m	JB (RB to type responses in template)
9	• True or False?	<p>True or false? "Sexting breaks the law?"</p> <p><i>Ask for a show of hands for each and note on paper how many YP said True/False.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fl'chart and pens Post-its + pens 	9.16am	2m	AM (RB to type responses in template)
	Q.7	<p>7. How is sexting risky?</p> <p>What do you know about the law relating to sexting? Then explain the law as outlined below.</p> <p>Explain: It's TRUE! If you take or send an indecent image of someone who is under 18 years old, you are committing a criminal offence. The police on your side – they are trying to protect you. It's illegal to</p>		9.18am	5m	

		<p>hold on to an image, so if one is sent to you, always delete and never spread it – as this make you a distributor of a pornographic image (indecent image of someone under 18)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are young people aware of other risks? What do you think these risks might be? 				
10	Q.8	<p>8. How does sexting affect young people?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it causing distress to young people? How? What kind of things worry young people? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fl'chart and pens 	9.23am	5m	JB (RB to type responses in template)
11	Q.9	<p>9. What have you learnt at school about sexting?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have you learnt anything at school about sexting? Did it change your behaviour? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fl'chart and pens 	9.28am	4m	JB (RB to type responses in template)
		<p>Did you Know:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are lots of resources and toolkits to help young people, parents and teachers learn about sexting. This booklet 'so you got naked online' produced by Southwest grid for learning / safer internet centre has lots of info. Ask how many have seen it? Also tell them about CEOP 'report abuse' button. How many have seen it? Anyone used it? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resource packs to show and/or give out 	9.32am	2m	
12	Q.10	<p>10. How effective is the information you've learnt at school in keeping young people safe?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fl'chart and pens 	9.34am	4m	JB (RB to type responses in template) AM
		<p>What do you think? How long do you think YP aged between 16 – 24 spend online each week (approx.)? Is it: 13 or 22 or 28 or 35?</p> <p>Explain: Answer is 28. The Ofcom Media Use and Attitudes report 2015 say young people aged 16 – 24 spend 27 hours and 36 mins online each week. This has nearly has tripled since 2005, when it was 10 hours and 24 mins.</p>		9.38am	2m	
13	Q.11	<p>11. What would be most effective in helping young people understand the risks of sexting to keep themselves safe</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What information, education, messages etc. would affect young people's behaviour in relation to sexting? Would anything make it less likely for young people to be involved? What would your message be to other young people about sexting? What would you advise adults to do to support young people with sexting? What things are actually going to change young people's behaviour? If we run a competition to raise awareness about sexting what's most likely to make young people want to listen, get involved? If we were going to run a survey to ask young people about sexting what are the questions we should be asking? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fl'chart and pens 	9.40am	5m	JB (RB to type responses in template)

14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anything else? Next steps 	<p>Anything else? Ask young people if there's anything else they want to say or tell us about sexting? They can also write down anonymously about sexting or anything we've discussed, and post in ballot box</p> <p>Thank YP for taking part</p> <p>Next steps: Please write down your name on this piece of paper if you might be interested in getting involved in developing resources and/or designing a session for young people to deliver about Sexting. We're not sure how or when this might happen, so just an initial show of interest – thank you!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-its Ballot box? 	9.45am	2m	JB (RB to type responses in template)
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation 	<p>Evaluation: Give YP Evaluation Post-its. Explain: as we will be running more of these sessions in future, please tell us the following 3 things:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> One thing that worked well about this session A suggestion of something we could improve the session Anything else you want to say? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post-its Ballot box? Free stuff to give out? 	9.47am	3m	RB
Session Ends:				09.50am		

Need to bring on day:

- Cardboard flip charts, pens
- Pens and plain paper
- Post-it notes
- 2x clipboards and notepads
- E-safety leaflets for students/copy of “So you Got Naked Online”
- Dictaphone
- 3x Session Plans and Risk Assessment

Background:

- Sexting has been conventionally defined as ‘exchange of sexual messages or images’ (Livingstone et al., 2011) and ‘the creating, sharing and forwarding of sexually suggestive nude or nearly nude images through mobile phones and/or the internet’ (Lenhart, 2009).
- Qualitative research carried out for the NSPCC in 2012 indicated that “sexting” is causing problems for young people and concluded that more resources and support are vital. Sexting is often coercive and reflects the wider sexual pressures on young people, which must be taken into account if sexting is to be effectively addressed.
- Further information and key messages from the research and references for definitions can be found here: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/services-and-resources/research-and-resources/pre-2013/qualitative-study-sexting>
- The clear indication is that we need to talk to and involve young people if we are to be effective in addressing this issue.
- Thames Valley Police, Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board are working together to explore innovative approaches and solutions to the growing involvement of children and young people in sexting locally.

Aims:

- To investigate the current prevalence, experience and impact of sexting through consultation and a survey of young people.
- To engage with young people in identifying the best ways to raise awareness and reduce the incidence and impact of sexting amongst their peers.
- To develop a resource pack including guidance, session plans and links to appropriate resources to support adults in helping to empower young people to deal with this issue. The resource pack would also include peer-led education ideas to be delivered by young people and guidance for adults to promote consistent delivery across schools and settings.
- To engage with young people in developing promotional and educational material to address sexting through an Oxfordshire wide competition.

Appendix F: SWGfL online safety resources, including the 'So You Got Naked Online' sexting guidance leaflet

The South West Grid for Learning (SWGfL) Trust's website provides a number of free resources for teachers, educators, and schools to access and download. These include the 'So You Got Naked Online' sexting guidance leaflets, and checklists for Snap Chat, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter, which were given to young people during focus groups. These resources can be downloaded from here: <http://swgfl.org.uk/products-services/esafety/resources>

The following information about the 'So You Got Naked Online' resource is taken from this section of the SWGfL website: <http://swgfl.org.uk/products-services/esafety/resources/So-You-Got-Naked-Online>

“So You Got Naked Online [is] a resource that offers children, young people and parent's advice and strategies to support the issues resulting from sexting incidents.

With help and advice for young people who may find themselves in a situation where they or a friend have put a sexting image or video online and have lost control over who it's being shared with.

We often get asked for advice that young people, parents or teachers can refer to in these cases, and whilst there is a lot of advice around preventing this situation in the first place, we felt that it is very important to recognise that this does happen and those affected really need support and guidance.

So You Got Naked Online is a resource that aims to do just that - it offers children, young people and parents' advice and provides strategies to support the issues resulting from sexting incidents.”