



RLSS UK
Safeguarding

RLSS UK Youth Image Policy

Author: Lee Heard and Richard Flavell supported by Safe LTD

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Control Sheet

Document Review

Name	Title
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Document Approval

Name	Title	Department	Signature	Date
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Associated Documents

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RLSS UK Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedures	V1.0

Review dates

This document should be reviewed in line with the details in section 8 and updated to reflect relevant changes.



Contents

1.0 Policy statement	4
2.0 Definitions	4
3.0 Why does this matter to settings working with children?	5
4.0 The Law	6
5.0 Making an assessment of an incident.....	6
6.0 Avoiding unnecessary criminalisation of children	7
7.0 Initial response.....	8
8.0 Searching devices, viewing and deleting nudes and semi-nudes.....	9
9.0 Deletion of imagery	10
10.0 Recording incidents.....	10
11.0 Reporting nudes and semi-nudes online	11
12.0 Procedural implementation and review:.....	11



1.0 Policy statement

- 1.1 RLSS UK is committed to ensuring that children and adults at risk who participate in its activities including lifesaving, lifeguarding, community awards, education, sports, competitions and any other events have a safe, positive and enjoyable experience. All groups of people whatever their age, gender, language, disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, socio-economic status and culture have the right to protection from abuse and to be treated fairly. Everyone involved with an adult who may be at risk is uniquely placed to recognise and respond to abuse and poor practice across RLSS UK.
- 1.2 This policy clearly sets out the RLSS UK stance in relation to sharing nude and semi-nude images. The policy details how we will tackle such behaviour and how we will support children, young people and adults at risk who may become involved in or affected by such behavior. This policy sits alongside the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and all others developed by RLSS UK.
- 1.3 This policy applies to **all** of those who occupy positions of responsibility, who work, volunteer or come into contact with adults as part of their role within the RLSS UK.
- 1.4 RLSS UK will consider any request for this policy to be made available in an alternative format or language. Please contact the RLSS UK HQ DSL for further information. This policy is also available on the RLSS UK website.

2.0 Definitions

- 2.1 This policy 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.
- 2.2 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 may be used by children and young people.
- 2.3 The motivations for taking and sharing nude and semi-nude images, videos and live streams are not always sexually or criminally motivated. Such images may be created and shared consensually by young people who are in relationships, as well as between those who are not in a relationship. It is also possible for a young person in a consensual relationship to be coerced into sharing an image with their partner. Incidents may also occur where:
 - Children and young people find nudes and semi-nudes online and share them claiming to be from a peer.
 - Children and young people digitally manipulate an image of a young person into an existing nude online.
 - Images created or shared are used to abuse peers e.g. by selling images online or obtaining images to share more widely without consent to publicly shame.



- 2.4 The sharing of nudes and semi-nudes can happen publicly online, in 1:1 messaging or via group chats and closed social media accounts.
- 2.5 Nude or semi-nude images, videos or live streams may include more than one child or young person.
- 2.6 Creating and sharing nudes and semi-nudes of under-18s (including those created and shared with consent) is illegal which makes responding to incidents involving children and young people complex. There are also a range of risks which need careful management from those working in clubs.
- 2.7 Alternative definitions

Many professionals may refer to 'nudes and semi-nudes' as:

- Youth-produced sexual imagery or 'youth involved' sexual imagery.
 - Indecent imagery. This is the legal term used to define nude or semi-nude images and videos of children and young people under the age of 18. Further guidance on the law can be found in section 1.7.
 - 'Sexting'. Many adults may use this term, however some young people interpret sexting as 'writing and sharing explicit messages with people they know' rather than sharing images.
 - Image-based sexual abuse. This term may be used when referring to the non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes.
- 2.8 Terms such as 'revenge porn' and 'upskirting' are also used to refer to specific incidents of nudes and semi-nudes being shared. However, these terms are more often used in the context of adult-to-adult, non-consensual image-sharing offences outlined in s.33-35 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015, Voyeurism (Offences) Act 2019 and s.67A of the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

3.0 Why does this matter to settings working with children?

- 3.1 Sharing photos, videos and live streams online is part of daily life for many people, enabling them to share their experiences, connect with friends and record their lives. Photos and videos can be shared via messaging apps or posted on social media and image sharing platforms. It is important to note that children and young people send a variety of images and videos, some of which are not nude, semi-nude and/or exploitative or intended to be so. However, the focus of this guidance is on the sending of nudes and semi-nudes.
- 3.2 Although most children and young people aren't creating or sharing these types of images and videos, the potential risks are significant. If the imagery is shared further, it may lead to embarrassment, bullying and increased vulnerability to blackmail and exploitation.



- 3.3 Producing and sharing nudes and semi-nudes of under 18s is also illegal, which causes considerable concern in many settings working with children and young people, and amongst parents and carers.
- 3.4 Although the production of such images will not likely take place within RLSS UK settings, sharing can take place and issues are often identified or reported in many locations. RLSS UK staff and volunteers need to be able to respond swiftly and confidently to make sure children and young people are safeguarded, supported and educated.

4.0 The Law

- 4.1 Sexting can be seen as harmless but **creating or sharing explicit images of a child is illegal**, even if the person doing it, is a child.
- 4.2 A young person is breaking the law if they:
- Take an explicit photo or video of themselves or a friend.
 - Share an explicit image or video of a child, even if it's shared between children of the same age.
 - Possess, download or store an explicit image or video of a child, even if the child gave their permission for it to be created.

However, as of January 2016 in England and Wales, if a young person is found creating or sharing images, the police can choose to record that a crime has been committed but in the public interest, decide not to take formal action.

5.0 Making an assessment of an incident

- 5.1 All concerns or incidents about nude or semi-nude images will need to be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs) in line with the current safeguarding policy.
- 5.2 The DSLs will need to be mindful that behaviour, which may not initially appear to be sexually motivated, may have occurred as a result of risky or harmful behaviour or sexual abuse being 'normalised' for children and young people. It is important for professionals to place a child's sexual behaviour within the context of their age and development.
- 5.3 Any child or young person displaying harmful sexual behaviour should be safeguarded and supported in moving forward from the incident and adopting positive behaviour patterns.
- 5.4 Where a child or young person displays appropriate sexual behaviour within the context of their age or development, consideration should still be given as to whether the taking or sharing of the nude or semi-nude image/s raises any additional concerns.



5.5 DSLs will need to have due regard to the law;

Indecent images of children

Responding to incidents of sharing nudes and semi-nudes is complex because of its legal status. Making, possessing and distributing any imagery of someone under 18 which is 'indecent', is illegal. This includes imagery of yourself if you are under 18.

The relevant legislation is contained in the Protection of Children Act 1978 (England and Wales) as amended in the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (England and Wales).

Specifically:

- It is an offence to possess, distribute, show and make indecent images of children.
- The Sexual Offences Act 2003 (England and Wales) defines a child, for the purposes of indecent images, as anyone under the age of 18.

'Indecent' is not defined in legislation. Indecent imagery does not always mean nudity; however, images are likely to be defined as such if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Nude or semi-nude sexual posing (e.g. displaying genitals and/or breasts or overtly sexual images of young people in their underwear).
- Someone nude or semi-nude touching themselves in a sexual way.
- Any sexual activity involving a child.
- Someone hurting someone else sexually.
- Sexual activity that includes animals.
- Non-consensual image sharing - The non-consensual sharing of private sexual images or videos with the intent to cause distress is also illegal. The relevant legislation is contained in section 33 of the Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015.
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6.0 Avoiding unnecessary criminalisation of children

6.1 The law criminalising indecent images of children was created to protect children and young people from adults seeking to sexually abuse them or gain pleasure from their sexual abuse. It was not intended to criminalise children and young people. The law was also developed long before mass adoption of the internet, mobiles and digital photography. Despite this, children and young people who share nudes and semi-nudes of themselves, or peers, are breaking the law.

6.2 However, children and young people should not be unnecessarily criminalised. Children and young people with a criminal record face stigma and discrimination in accessing education, training, employment, travel and housing and these obstacles can follow them into adulthood.



- 6.3 Whilst children and young people creating and sharing images can be risky, it is often the result of their natural curiosity about sex and their exploration of relationships. Therefore, engaging in the taking or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes may not always be 'harmful' to all children and young people. Situations should be considered on a case-by-case context, considering what is known about the children and young people involved and if there is an immediate risk of harm. Often, children and young people need education and support for example, on identifying healthy and unhealthy behaviours within relationships and understanding consent and how to give it. Safeguarding action will also be required in cases where there is risk of harm.
- 6.4 The NSPCC has made it clear that incidents involving sharing nudes and semi-nudes should have an immediate focus on safeguarding children.
- 6.5 In many cases, DSLs may respond to incidents without involving the police, for example where an incident can be defined as 'experimental' and there is no evidence abusive or aggravating elements.
- 6.6 The police may, however, need to be involved in some cases to ensure thorough investigation, including the collection of all evidence (for example, through multi-agency checks). Where there are abusive and/or aggravating factors, incidents should always be referred to the police through the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) or equivalent (see [section 2](#) for further guidance).

7.0 Initial response

- 7.1 When an incident involving nudes and semi-nudes comes to the attention of any volunteer, member of staff or member:
- The incident should be referred to the DSL (or Deputy) as soon as possible.
 - The DSL (or equivalent) should hold an initial review meeting with appropriate personnel. This may include the individual(s) who heard the disclosure. Further advice and guidance can be obtained by contacting the RLSS UK HQ safeguarding team.
 - There should be subsequent interviews with the children or young people involved (if appropriate).
 - Parents and carers should be informed at an early stage and involved in the process in order to best support the child or young person unless there is good reason to believe that involving them would put the child or young person at risk of harm.
 - A referral should be made to children's social care and/or the police immediately if there is a concern that a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of immediate harm at any point in the process.



8.0 Searching devices, viewing and deleting nudes and semi-nudes

8.1 Viewing the imagery

8.1.1 Staff and parents or carers must not intentionally view any nudes and semi-nudes unless there is good and clear reason to do so as outlined below. Wherever possible, responses to incidents should be based on what DSLs (or equivalents) have been told about the content of the imagery.

8.1.2 It is important that all personnel are clear on what they can and can't do in relation to viewing nudes and semi-nudes and that this is communicated to any child, young person or parent and carer requesting that imagery be viewed.

8.1.3 The decision to view any imagery should be based on the professional judgement of the DSL (or Deputy) and should always comply with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures of RLSS UK. Imagery should never be viewed if the act of viewing will cause significant distress or harm to any child or young person involved.

8.1.4 If a decision is made to view imagery, the DSL (or Deputy) would need to be satisfied that viewing (this should only be undertaken as a last resort):

- Is the only way to make a decision about whether to involve other agencies because it is not possible to establish the facts from any child or young person involved.
- Is necessary to report it to a website, app or suitable reporting agency (such as the Internet Watch Foundation - IWF) to have it taken down, or to support the child or young person or parent or carer in making a report.
- Is unavoidable because a child or young person has presented it directly to a staff member.

8.1.5 If it is necessary to view the imagery, then the DSL (or Deputy) should:

- Never copy, print, share, store or save them; this is illegal. If this has already happened, please contact your local police for advice and to explain the circumstances.
- Make sure viewing is only undertaken by the DSL (or Deputy) and following sanction from the RLSS UK HQ safeguarding team.
- Make sure viewing takes place with another member of staff present in the room, ideally another DSL. This staff member does not need to view the images.
- Wherever possible, make sure viewing takes place on the premises of the RLSS UK setting.
- Make sure wherever possible that they are viewed by a staff member of the same sex as the child or young person in the images.
- Record how and why the decision was made to view the imagery in the safeguarding records, including who was present, why the nudes or semi-nudes were viewed and any subsequent actions. Ensure this is signed and dated and meets any appropriate wider standards e.g. such as those set out in statutory safeguarding guidance and local authority policies and procedures.



- If any devices need to be taken and passed onto the police, the device(s) should be confiscated and the police should be called. The device should be disconnected from Wi-Fi and data, and turned off immediately to avoid imagery being removed from the device remotely through a cloud storage service. The device should be placed in a secure place, for example in a locked cupboard or safe until the police are able to come and collect it.

8.1.5 If nudes or semi-nudes have been viewed by personnel, following a disclosure from a child or young person, DSLs should make sure that the individual is provided with appropriate support. Viewing nudes and semi-nudes can be distressing for children, young people and adults and appropriate emotional support may be required.

9.0 Deletion of imagery

9.1 If the DSL has decided that other agencies do not need to be involved, then consideration should be given to deleting nudes and semi-nudes from devices and online services to limit any further sharing.

9.2 In most cases, children and young people should be asked to delete the imagery and to confirm that they have deleted them. They should be given a deadline for deletion across all devices, online storage or social media sites. They should be reminded that possession of nudes and semi-nudes is illegal. They should be informed that if they refuse or it is later discovered they did not delete the imagery, they are continuing to commit a criminal offence and the police may become involved.

9.3 Any decision to search a child or young person's device and delete imagery should be based on the professional judgement of the DSL and should always comply with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures of the RLSS UK. All of these decisions need to be recorded, including times, dates and reasons for decisions made and logged in the safeguarding records. Parents and carers should also be informed unless this presents a further risk to any child or the young person.

10.0 Recording incidents

10.1 All incidents relating to nudes and semi-nudes being shared need to be recorded. This includes incidents that have been referred to external agencies and those that have not. For incidents that have not been reported to police or children's social care, clubs should record their reason for doing so and ensure it is signed off by the HQ RLSS UK safeguarding team. Please note copies of imagery should not be taken.



11.0 Reporting nudes and semi-nudes online

- 11.1 Children and young people may need help and support with the removal of nudes and semi-nudes from devices and social media, especially if they are distressed. Most online service providers offer a reporting function for account holders, and some offer a public reporting function to enable a third party to make a report on behalf of the child or young person. More information can be found on individual providers' websites where they should make public their Terms of Service and process for reporting.
- 11.2 In the event that a site has no reporting function and if the content is a sexual image of someone under 18, you can report it to the IWF. You can report direct.
- 11.3 Children and young people can use the IWF and [Childline's Report Remove](#) tool to report images and videos they are worried have been, or might be, shared publicly. The tool helps children and young people to report an image shared online, to see if it is possible to get the image removed. This must be done as soon as possible in order to minimise the number of people that have seen the picture. If you are concerned that a child or young person is being sexually abused, exploited or groomed online you should report this to: [report to NCA-CEOP](#).

12.0 Procedural implementation and review:

- 12.1 These procedures were implemented on 1st May 2023 and will be reviewed on an annual basis or in response to changes in safeguarding legislation and/or best practice.