MIDDLESBROUGH COUNCIL

FINAL REPORT OF THE COMMUNITY SAFETY & LEISURE SCRUTINY PANEL

DIGITAL SAFEGUARDING SEXTING AND YOUTH PRODUCED SEXUAL IMAGERY

AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION

1. The aims of the investigation were:

- To examine what work is taking place in primary schools, secondary schools and colleges to protect young people from new risk taking behaviours.
- To ensure all agencies are being proactive in protecting young people's digital footprint, even if not legally obliged to do so.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

2. The terms of reference for the scrutiny panel's investigation were as follows:

a) To investigate the prevalence of "youth produced sexual imagery" in Middlesbrough.
b) To examine what methods or tools are currently used within the school environment to prevent or deter young people from becoming victims of youth produced sexual imagery.
c) To give consideration to what role does, and should the local authority and schools play in educating parents and the wider community to prevent young people engaging in new risk taking behaviours.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Sexting and youth produced sexual imagery

3. Is this an issue of concern for the Local Authority and young people in Middlesbrough? This question has been posed to the panel on a number of occasions and despite sensationalist coverage of the topic in the media the panel is firmly of the view that the sharing of 'indecent' images of young people is very much an issue of concern. Research shows that sexting and youth produced sexual imagery is of most concern to young people in their early teens. However, as younger children become much more proficient in their use of and exposure to the digital world the need to address privacy and boundaries from a very early age becomes ever more important. The use of 'digital

safeguarding' or 'digital resilience' is perhaps a more accurate description of the panel's focus in undertaking this review.

4. Children and young people in Middlesbrough represent the future of our town and it is important we protect them from dangers introduced by the use of technology including: sexting, online grooming, radicalisation, and cyber bullying. These issues are taking place in towns and cities across the UK and are often linked. Evidence given to the Women and Equalities Committee Inquiry into sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools (2016) made it clear that schools were letting children down by not giving them the tools to cope with a modern, digital world

5. In August 2016 the UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) issued a non-statutory guidance document for schools entitled, *"Sexting in schools and colleges: responding to incidents and safeguarding young people (August 2016)".* Although this guidance is non-statutory, the need for a policy in relation to sexting in schools is specifically mentioned in the statutory guidance 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (Sept 2016).

6. Whilst professionals refer to the issue as 'sexting' there is no clear definition. Many professionals consider sexting to be 'sending or posting sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via mobiles or over the Internet.' Yet when young people are asked 'What does sexting mean to you?' they are more likely to interpret sexting as 'writing and sharing explicit messages with people they know'. Similarly, many parents think of sexting as flirty or sexual text messages rather than images.

How much is this really happening

7. It is evident that the majority of young people are not creating or sharing this type of imagery. However, the potential risks for those that do are significant and there's considerable concern about the issue in schools and amongst parents.

Research conducted by 'The Key' in 2016 found that 61% of its secondary school head teacher members reported 'sexting' as a concern. This placed it higher than drugs, obesity and offline bullying in terms of frequency of reporting as a concern.[1]

Research from the PHSE Association similarly found that 78% of parents were either fairly or very concerned about youth produced sexual imagery, compared to 69% who were concerned about alcohol misuse and 67% who were concerned about smoking.[2]

8. In 2016 a NSPCC/Office of the Children's Commissioner England study found that just over one in ten boys and girls (13%) had taken topless pictures of themselves (around

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[1] https://www.thekeysupport.com/media/filer_public/08/32/0832cb2c-85c1-4ed4-891d-4a106d3c72b1/summer_report_2015_school_leaders_concerns_about_pupil_wellbeing.pdf

[2] https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/news/parents-call-education-address-sexting-children

one in four of those were girls) and 3% had taken fully naked pictures.[3] Of those who had taken sexual images, 55% had shared them with others. 31% of this group had also shared the image with someone that they did not know.[4] In 2013 and 2014, schools in Middlesbrough were experiencing a significant rise in incidents of sexting, at a time when there was no guidance. In a sample of over 600 year 9 pupils (13/14), in Secondary Schools and Academies, 22 per cent of girls and 14.4 per cent of boys had reported that they had previously sent a 'rude' image of themselves, via technology. It is believed this proportion will be higher in older age groups.

Relationship and Sex Education

9.   The future of Sex and Relationship Education has been a topic of keen parliamentary interest and wider debate in recent years, and has been the subject of numerous parliamentary debates, legislative proposals and outside campaigns.

- In May 2013, Ofsted published a report on PSHE in primary and secondary schools in England, entitled 'Not yet good enough.'

- In February 2015, the Education Committee published a report, Life lessons: PSHE and SRE in schools.

- In January 2016, a letter from four select committee Chairs advised "it is clear to the four of us that there is a need to work towards PSHE and SRE becoming statutory in all schools."

- In November 2016, the Women and Equalities Committee Inquiry into sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools (2016) called for a commitment to statutory SRE. In particular, the Government needs to prioritise action to ensure Sex and Relationship education reflects the realities of the 21st century rather than the pre-smartphone age when guidance was last updated.

March 2017 announcement: statutory RSE

10.   On 1 March 2017, the Education Secretary announced her intention to put 'Relationships and Sex Education' – rather than SRE – on a statutory footing and to create a power to make personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) statutory in future.[5]

11.   The Education Secretary stated that "*the statutory guidance for Sex and Relationship Education was introduced in 2000 and is becoming increasingly outdated. It fails to address risks to children that have grown in prevalence over the last 17 years, including cyber bullying, 'sexting' and staying safe online.*"

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[3] Sexting in schools and colleges: responding to incidents and safeguarding young people (August 2016) non-statutory guidance – UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS)

[4] Sex and Relationships Education in Schools (England): House of Commons Library – Briefing Paper, 2 March 2017

12.   Following consultation, the RSE proposals are to be in place for teaching to commence in September 2019.

The proposals involve:-

- All primary schools in England teaching 'Relationships Education
- All secondary schools teaching 'Relationships and Sex Education'
- Reformed statutory guidance, following consultation
- Retaining the parental right of withdrawal from sex education
- Flexibility for schools in their approach, including for faith schools to teach within the tenets of their faith earlier reviews and proposals for change

13.   The panel is very supportive of the introduction of Relationship and Sex Education in 2019 but notes that currently there is still no requirement for faith schools or academies to provide Relationship and Sex Education. The Director of Education has advised that many schools in Middlesbrough do a very good job with educating around SRE. The Lucinda and Godfrey programme is used in primary schools across the town and Catholic Schools have their own programme of study, which is very reassuring for the panel. However, the panel is still keen to see the work undertaken as part of this review used by all schools in Middlesbrough in readiness for the implementation of RSE nationally.

Preventing young people from becoming victims

14. The NSPCC and Childline hear frequently from children about sexting, with many young people reporting that they feel too ashamed to speak to their parents and are left with no one to turn to.

In 2015/16 there were 1292 contacts to Childline about sexting, whilst the sexting advice page received over 18,000 page views, making it the most visited Explore page on the site.

15. South Tees Youth Offending Service advised that from their involvement with young people it is clear they lack an understanding of the risks they take when sending images / sexting in their correspondence with others. Young people are rarely aware they are breaking the law and could be subject to criminal conviction which could impact on their future life chances. There is clearly a challenge to schools and colleges to address this issue and include education on this topic in PHSE.

16. Since April 2015 South Tees Youth Offending Service has received 13 notifications from the Police relating to young people possessing sexual imagery. This includes 9 from Middlesbrough and 4 from Redcar and Cleveland. All but 1 of the young people received some form of Out of Court Dispersals, this young person received a Conditional Discharge as he was already known to the YOS for further offending. The youngest person was 12 years of age and the oldest were 17, with 10 of the young people of school age, only 2 were girls. None of the young people have been re-referred to the YOS for further offending of a similar nature

Criminalisation of children

17. The law criminalising indecent images of children was created long before mass adoption of the internet, mobiles and digital photography. It 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. Despite this, young people who share sexual imagery of themselves, or peers, are breaking the law. Whilst young people creating and sharing sexual imagery can be very risky, it is often the result of young people's natural curiosity about sex and their exploration of relationships. Often, young people need education, support or safeguarding, not criminalisation.

The Law

18. Much of the complexity in responding to youth produced sexual imagery is due to 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. .

19. The issue of 'sexting' and 'youth produced sexual imagery' presents a challenge for Police and the Youth Offending Service (YOS) in relation to how to respond to reports of young people engaging in this behaviour. With the growth of social media the sharing of images and loading of images into websites such as Facebook, You Tube, Snapchat and Instagram are part of their daily life and would usually be viewed as harmless. However by engaging in this behaviour young people can also create risks to themselves such as:

    - Cyberbullying
    - Revenge Porn
    - Sharing of images with others outside of the initial correspondence
    - Grooming or exploitation by adults or other young people

20. This can lead to additional concerns for the young person involved impacting on physical and emotional wellbeing, self-harm, social interaction, attendance at school and potentially becoming involved in criminal behaviour particularly in the case of revenge porn. In many cases this introduces a balancing act as to when to prosecute (criminalise) young people aged under 18 years, and when not to prosecute. The non-statutory guidance document provides advice on categorising youth produced imagery and differentiates between experimental and aggravated cases.

Cleveland Police

21. Cleveland Police's Economic, Cyber Crime and Paedophile Online Investigation Team (POLIT) Detective Inspector attended a meeting of the panel on this topic. The

Detective Inspector advised that Cleveland Police has a specialist team to tackle online indecent images and the team includes 12 Detectives and 2 Sergeants. The work of the team is predominately focused on tackling Child Sexual Exploitation and targeting online perpetrators. The team has over 150 investigations open at present against people who have downloaded indecent images of children or groomed a child on line.

22. The Detective Inspector advised that a lot of children are unaware of the risks they are taking in sharing indecent images of themselves. The Police have seen a significant increase in the number of 'selfie' or self-generated images of children stored on computers by perpetrators. Images from snapchat and other similar applications are the most common. The Detective Inspector acknowledged that today's children live in a digital world and their concept of being 'friends' online is entirely different to being friends in real life. The Local Children's Safeguarding Board (LCSB) regularly discus this issue at length and there is a need for a common approach to the education of all children on this matter.

23. The Detective Inspector expressed the view that regular sessions delivered by CEOP Ambassador trained staff to young people on the dangers of these risk taking behaviours would make a real difference. PCSO's are currently receiving CEOP Ambassador training and it is envisaged that each school will be allocated a PCSO. Reference was made to the approach taken by various schools in respect of this issue and it was advised that some are very proactive. Regular newsletters are sent out and current trends highlighted. It was confirmed that if an investigation is conducted, which involves an adult possessing or making indecent images of a child there would be a prosecution. Cleveland Police has prosecuted 90 people in the last 12 months for possessing indecent images of children and another 85 are on bail awaiting prosecution. The sharing of indecent images of children online is a huge industry.

24. In terms of highlighting these dangers to parents it was suggested that the Police and Council in partnership with schools could collectively run a publicity campaign on this issue. The benefit of using social media to proactively push the message out to a specific target audience was also discussed, as well as the potential for highlighting this issue via Cleveland Connects and the Love Middlesbrough magazine. The Detective Inspector expressed the view that further consideration should be given to undertaking such a campaign. The point was made that parents often hold the view that this wouldn't happen to us, this wouldn't happen to my child but unfortunately the reality is different. Parents have the same responsibility to look after their child in the digital world as they do in the real world. Members expressed the view that there should be more national media campaigns on the importance of protecting children online. A regional campaign would also be beneficial.

25. Reference was made to the facility to track your child's location, as well as filtering the picture messages they can send and receive via their mobile phone. The Detective Inspector confirmed that there are hundreds of secretive applications for parents to use and these are very much a tool in the box. Many children are highly knowledgeable with regard to mobile technology but awareness amongst parents could be improved. Another method for protecting children involves signing a contract with the child to work out the rules on how the device is to be used and what can / cannot be accessed when they receive it.

26. In terms of feedback from the interviews with schools reference was made to

information provided by Middlesbrough College on the very few incidents it had recorded. The Detective Inspector advised that for young people aged 16-18 in a lot of cases unless it poses a major problem the issue is very much hidden. The point was also made that the only people who report this issue are parents upon finding the evidence on their child's phone. It is never self-reported by a child, as understandably children are reluctant to admit they have shared an indecent picture online or have been talking to a man in his 20s/30s. The view was expressed that general awareness raising of these issues should be undertaken by Cleveland Police with the aim of reaching out to parents and adopting a preventative approach.

Outcome 21

27. Since January 2016 the Police have been able to reduce the criminalisation of young people by dealing with the offences surrounding self-generated imagery under 'Outcome 21'. The introduction of this measure means that even though a young person has broken the law and the Police can provide evidence that they have done so, the Police can record that they chose not to take further action as it was not in the public interest.

28. In response to the use of Outcome 21 the Detective Inspector advised that it has been used 6 times by Cleveland Police in 2016/2017. If an incident image is reported it has to be recorded and outcome 21 is used in cases where indecent images have been produced and shared by children. Members expressed the view that it would be useful to have the Detective Inspector attend Community Council meetings to provide advice on this subject. The Detective Inspector advised that he had a hard hitting presentation on indecent images and what effects it had on children. The presentation has been given to approximately 7/8 schools in Middlesbrough, as well as Social Workers and Doctors.

Kayleigh's Love Story – Leicestershire Police / Who are you really talking to – West Yorkshire Police

29. Keighley's Love Story Film was produced by Leicestershire Police in 2016 to act as a warning to young people, both girls and boys, about the dangers of speaking to people they don't know online. The film highlights just how quick and easy it can be for children to be groomed online without them or those around them knowing it is happening. Its purpose is to protect children now and in the future and to stop another family losing a child in this way. The film has been shown to thousands of schoolchildren across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland by a team of specially trained Police Community Support Officers. This rollout has continued throughout 2017.

30. West Yorkshire Police have also undertaken a publicity campaign entitled who are you really talking too? The campaign features a poster of a young person alongside a changing image of an online 'friend' warning that people are not always who they say they are. Text messages inviting the young person to meet up are featured alongside the changing image. The poster campaign has been designed to warn young people that some people use social media to make contact with children and young people with the intention of "grooming" them. The poster advises anyone young people with concerns about who they are talking to online to please call the Police on the non-emergency number 101. The poster provides a clear message for young people and parents about the action they need to take if they have any concerns.

31. Another suggestion put forward by the panel related to the inclusion of an article produced by Cleveland Police in the Love Middlesbrough magazine on this topic. The Detective Inspector advised that he was pleased this issue was subject to scrutiny, as it is a target area for policing locally.

Middlesbrough Council Questionnaire

32. In an effort to develop an understanding of work undertaken in schools in respect of educating young people on 'sexting and youth produced sexual imagery' it was agreed that a questionnaire be sent to all schools on this topic The aim of the questionnaire was to gain an understanding of the awareness amongst young people about the risks involved, examine how the issue is being addressed, whether schools have developed any best practice and how young people, parents and teachers can be supported.

33. The questionnaire compiled in partnership with the Assistant Director of Safeguarding & Children's Care, the Assistant Director of Education & Skills, the Risk and Reduction Manager and Chair of the Local Children's Safeguarding Board covers the following areas - awareness and training, prevention, identification / monitoring systems and good practice. The panel decided to complete face-to-face interviews with a number of schools, including primary schools, secondary schools and Middlesbrough College. Following the interviews a copy of the questionnaire, as detailed below, was sent to all schools in Middlesbrough.

34. The questionnaire was devised as follows:-

Under its legal duty to safeguard all children and young people in Middlesbrough, and following high profile cases of Child Sexual Exploitation in other parts of the UK, Middlesbrough Council commissioned work in 2014 through the Community Safety and Leisure Scrutiny Panel. This work was designed to assure elected members that awareness, training, and operational practice in this area was as good and as effective as it could possibly be. The current work of the scrutiny panel focuses specifically on 'sexting and youth produced sexual imagery' and the following questions are designed to help inform elected members to understand how children are safeguarded from the harms caused by such activity.

Awareness and Training

1. How does the school keep abreast of new and emerging technology and its impact in this area? e.g. one person or a specialist teacher is responsible for environmental scanning and training staff, input from external organisations, trainers (LA or other), collaboration across schools, other method (please describe in as much detail as you can)?

2. What training is provided to Governors and Staff members?

3. What work is being done with parents and carers to inform and raise awareness?

Prevention

4. The DFE document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' emphasises the promotion of safeguarding and highlights the need for staff to be able to deal

with specific types of issues, including **'peer on peer'** abuse and '**sexting.'** What is being done to help prevent these two specific areas of abuse?

5. In August 2016 UKCCIS published an advisory document entitled 'Sexting in Schools and Colleges'. What is the school doing in response to the recommendations made?

Identification, monitoring systems

6. What systems does the school have in place for children and or staff to report concerns e.g. Toot Toot?

7. How, as a school would you respond to an incident or disclosure made by a child or YP a schools perspective?

8. Does school Use C-POMS? If not Why not? If yes, To what extent?

Good Practice

9. Can the school give an example(s) of good practice that it has deployed in either of the following areas?

- Preventative

- Dealing with incident

10. Is there is any further support that schools would like for which the Council may be able to help facilitate/coordinate good practice?

35. In advance of the visits the Members involved researched the schools' website to find out what policies / procedures were in place. Training was provided on the risks associated with using information technology in the 21st century, as well as information on the latest apps. A total of 12 schools in Middlesbrough were visited by Members of the panel during January and February 2017 including the following:-

- Acklam Grange School
- Macmillan Academy
- Outwood Academy Acklam
- Trinity Catholic College
- Unity City Academy
- Middlesbrough College
- Abingdon Primary School
- Beech Grove Primary School
- Newport Primary School
- North Ormesby Primary Academy
- Park End Primary School
- St Augustine's Primary School

36. In addition written responses to the questionnaire were received from a further 7 schools as follows:-

- Hemlington Hall Academy
- Priory Woods School and Art College

- North Ormesby Academy
- Kings Academy
- Berwick Hill Primary School
- Breckon Hill Primary School
- St Gerard's Primary School

37. Full endorsement of the panel's work was given by Middlesbrough Children's Safeguarding Board (MCSB) and the report will be shared with the Board once finalised.

Educating parents and the wider community

38. Following an increase in the number of counselling sessions performed by Childline in 2015/16, the NSPCC worked with FACTS International to explore how parents can be better supported to help their children around this issue. The research explores parent's knowledge and perceptions of sexting, as well as the types of resources and support that they would like to receive. The key findings of this work highlighted that:

- 73% of parents believe that sexting is always harmful and 37% are concerned that their child may become involved in sexting in the future.

- There is a lack of clarity regarding the law around sexting:

  Half of parents are unaware that it is illegal for a child to take a naked or sexual image of themselves, and 28% do not know that it is illegal for a child to send a naked or sexual image to a peer.

- 42% of parents have spoken to their child about sexting at least once but 19% do not intend to ever have a conversation.

- 86% of parents would seek help if they found out that their child had sent a sexual image to another young person and it had been shared on the internet. However, only 50% of parents are confident that they would be able to access the right support in this situation.

- 83% of parents have never received information about sexting and 84% of parents have never looked for it. Despite this, 50% want to learn more about sexting and the most popular way to do so are their children's school and online resources.

- Parents would most like to receive information about healthy relationships and the pressures that young people may face; what young people think about sexting; and tips on how to start conversations about sexting.

39. Middlesbrough Safeguarding Children's Board (MSCB) has recently undertaken a piece of work on esafety and the Teeswide Esafety Strategy is available online. One of the big challenges facing MSCB is reaching out to parents and although the Chelsea's

Choice programme[6] has successfully engaged young people in Middlesbrough it has not reached their parents. In other areas of the UK parents have been involved in the programme and more work is needed on this issue.

Key Findings

40. Detailed below are some of the responses received from schools across Middlesbrough to the panel's questionnaire:-

Awareness and Training

- The Head Teacher has undertaken the Think You Know (TUK) training and the school website has a link to TUK and CEOP.

- The Head is the e-safety lead and believes that training is crucial 'the earlier the better' for all concerned within the school. CEOP training is delivered to staff and they all receive regularly updates. There has also been a series of workshops for children in Y6.

- The NSPCC has come in to talk on the area with the Families and Schools Together group (FAST). However, the school is not sure if parents use this information. There is material on our website such as that provided by CEOP, including the PANTS campaign. Other work with parents is carried out by the Parents Information Group.

- A session was held with parents in November 2016 which was attended by 30 parents (for 210 children in the school). In addition a session has been run for parents by Barnados in the past and regular updates on safeguarding issue are sent out to parents to their phone if they are signed up to the Parent Mail app.

- There is a specific session for parents on e-safety which is often poorly attended. Out of 1500 students including the 6th Form only around 30 parents attend. That being said, parents are keen and happy to talk to teachers and staff about issues when necessary.

- BT offered training to school staff entitled "Rights Respecting" and governors were included in the invitation to the training.

- The school is keen to sign up for the Vodaphone campaign 'Digital Parenting'.

Prevention

- The school is building up 'digital resilience' in its students. It tries to get students to see that they are 'worthwhile' so that they are less susceptible to pressure. There appears to be more people speaking about this issue in school now. In years 7 & 8 students are very keen to 'collect' friends on Facebook and are more

susceptible to cyber bullying, however by years 10 & 11 they have usually develop permanent relationships and are less vulnerable.

- The school has made an effort to make children aware of how to stay safe online. E.g. a recent poster competition for pupils to design a poster for use in the school about online safety.

- The school encourages the build-up of trust in children to enable them to talk to others and to adults through methodologies such as 'Circle Time' and nurture areas. It is expected that children come to adults to talk about issues and then staff would follow procedures as outlined in the document (bespoken for their school based on the above document.

Identification, monitoring systems

- All photos and 'naughty' messages are treated as safeguarding issues but unless particularly serious they are not considered a police matter. Any issues of any kind are always relayed to the parents of the student(s) concerned. The Pastoral Team in the school have a clear process to deal with issues in-house. School staff act as mediators in terms of any issues and the pastoral (i.e. non-teaching staff) are seen by the students as much more open and easier to talk to than teaching staff. This makes for a more open environment in terms of reporting issues to staff.

- There is a concern that many people who are involved in issues online are repeat offenders and they take up a lot of staff time. It might be the case that there are issues involving quieter, students that go 'under the radar'. Good to check on pupils feelings regularly.

- One young pupil filmed himself with his shirt off and uploaded the video to Youtube. He was asking for 'likes' and talking in an American accent. The video was brought to the school's attention and the video was taken down.

- All incidents are recorded via CPOMS. Used very regularly. Staff document incidents in writing and then upload to CPO MS. PSAs, Safeguarding Leads and the Headteachers can access and update CPOMS but all staff can access and view it too.

- When an incident occurs it is first recorded on C-POMS and this is monitored by the Safeguarding Lead. The Safeguarding Lead then speaks to the student and follows the protocol laid down in the guidance. If they feel that there is an element of exploitation they will contact the parents, the police and refer to the Social Care Department at the Council. If it is non exploitative, then they will bring in the parents and student support.

- Toot Toot is used in school for reporting incidents. Any concerns are sent to the Leadership Team to be dealt with. Firstly through the (non-teaching) Tutor or Year Manager. Then escalated where required to the Leadership Team. Students often visit the Health and Well-being office in an informal setting before talking to their Tutor/Year Manager.

- Specific training for staff about the latest 'apps' and online programmes that children may be using would be helpful? Some staff use social media in a limited

way and could use as much up to date information about the most commonly used and popular 'apps' and programmes.

Good Practice

- One primary school in Middlesbrough had produced its own bespoke document in response to the national guidance - sexting in schools and colleges: responding to incidents and safeguarding young people (August 2016)." The bespoke document clearly details six steps to take in response to an incident.

    - Step 1 – Disclosure by a child

    - Step 2 – Searching a device – what are the rules?

    - Step 3 – What to do and not do with the image?

    - Step 4 – Who should deal with the incident?

    - Step 5 – Deciding on a response

    - Step 6 – Contacting other agencies – making a referral

- All staff get a "Bubble" card which they carry on their lanyards reminding them of how to handle an incident or a child reporting an incident. BUBBLE is an acrostic and each line gives the teacher a reminder of how to deal with a child reporting an incident. Main points of which are don't ask leading questions, let the conversation be as open as possible and let the child talk them through any details of any incident. The schools PSA's have proved very successful in terms of being a point of contact for parents. Some parents are wary of teachers and find the PSA's a more trusted route to report any issues.

- During a visit to one school Members met with two young Year 6 pupils who answered questions posed by the Head and by Members. Their answers were outstanding and clearly demonstrated their excellent levels of awareness and ability to describe the issues of 'digital footprint' etc. They knew exactly what to do in the event of someone sending an inappropriate image and were clearly confident about how to deal with such an event. They knew who to talk to in school and how to protect themselves from the potential dangers of sexting and other internet abuse such as bullying.

- Theatre groups would be a good way of raising awareness with students.

- It would be good to share good practice with staff responsible for safeguarding from other schools. Regular update meetings would be very useful.

- A forum could be initiated to consider how to pass on important e-safety information for students.

- The BT Training document given to parents is a very useful and practical document which explains to parents how to use parental controls on a number of different apps.

- In Telford and Wrekin a group of children in year 4-6 created a Children's Safeguarding Board called Team Safeguarding Voice (TSV) and they produced

a leaflet for other children on the topic sexting. This was an initiative from their LCSE (see Appendix 2).

41. Over the course of the review many of the schools arranged for young people to speak directly to Members on the issue. Efforts have been made to capture the voice of young people below:-

"Only very overprotective parents ask to look at their children's phone."

"It is illegal. I learnt that in sex education."

"About 40% or 50% of young people in this school are sexting. A lot of it goes on but there's not a lot of talk about it. It is more Year 9 onwards."

"Boys can be scared to go and see someone if they need help." Boy, Year 8.

"Your digital footprint has a lasting effect on you." Girl, Year 6

"People add you on snapchat who you don't know and ask you questions." Boy, Year 9

"Boys are more willing to send pictures - the girls are more reluctant." Boy, Year 9

"In a relationship it shows you're not frigid but you're cool, there is pressure to send pictures." Girl, Year 8

"Children are ten miles ahead of their parents and learning all the time" Safeguarding Lead.

"For people from other cultures it is not socially acceptable…it is about respect." Boy Year 8

"There is a concern that many people who are involved in issues online are repeat offenders and they take up a lot of staff time. It might be the case that there are issues involving quieter students that go 'under the radar'. Good to check on pupils feelings regularly." School Council

"It is alright as long as there is only a year or two between you." Boy, Year 9

Recommended resources for schools

42. During the review the following free resources and guidance for schools were highlighted as the most pertinent:-

- A practical PSHE Toolkit for educators containing films, lesson plans and activities. The film about 'sexting' and peer pressure, 'Just send it', is rated 12 by the BBFC - Ages 11-24 some activities for KS2 - www.childnet.com/ pshetoolkit

- Thinkuknow Toolkit – A set of 15 lesson plans including an activity exploring the influence of the media in 'sexting' - www.thinkuknow.co.uk/teachers

- The ChildLine website has useful information about 'sexting', which can be used as part of lessons.

- Zipit provides young people with witty comebacks which they can use to help diffuse situations where they are asked to send sexual pictures. https://childline. org.uk/info-advice/ bullying-abusesafety/onlinemobile-safety/ sexting/

- The Dangers of Sexting leaflet produced by the children's Telford and Wrekin Children's Local Safeguarding Board – Team Safeguarding Voice

- A book entitled "Sex, Likes and Social Media – Talking to our teens in the digital age" by Allison Havey and Deana Puccio was also highly recommended by a secondary school in Middlesbrough as a good source of advice for parents.

- Kayleigh's Love Story Film – Leicestershire Police / Who are you really talking to? West Yorkshire Police. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WsbYHI-rZOE

CONCLUSIONS

43. Based on the evidence, given throughout the investigation, the scrutiny panel concluded that:

The prevalence of youth produced sexual imagery

a) Children and young people are growing up in a culture where technology and social media are important and have created more opportunity for sharing personal information. 'Sexting' and other self-made images and messages of a sexual nature raise particular issues of safety, privacy, peer influence and personal responsibility. Over the course of the review the panel has had the opportunity to speak to Head Teachers, Safeguarding Leads and young people from across the town. The panel has been impressed by the work undertaken in schools and the knowledge and insight shown by young people. It is evident that in many schools this issue is seen as a priority and given the strategic high profile it deserves. Child protection policies are required to cover a school's approach to sexting and it should be specifically mentioned in safeguarding documents. The panel is keen ensure that all schools in Middlesbrough have a policy on sexting.

b) Listening to children and the voice of young people has been an important part of this review. When speaking to young people it is evident that sexting takes place regularly and is part and parcel of school life for secondary school age children. Talking about the issue in an open, non-judgemental setting provides an opportunity for young people to discuss any concerns and promotes an atmosphere of trust. In the secondary schools where groups of young people have been asked for their views it is clear that a whole school approach is the most effective way to prevent incidents occurring and provide support to any young people affected.

c) It is clear that young people in Middlesbrough are digital and technology savvy - children in one primary school talked about the importance of their digital footprints having a lasting

effect on them. Nevertheless, it is also apparent that sexting is an issue that is under reported by young people. It would therefore seem that if young people encounter any difficulties they sort it out themselves or ignore it. It was felt that one of the reasons many young people deal with these issues themselves is due to the fact that Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram have effectively become background noise for young people. It is part of their everyday life. However, in the same way staff need a 'policy' document the panel is of the view that young people would clearly benefit from a 3 point plan of 'what to do if this happens to me'. Effectively dealing with this type of issue is equivalent to 21st century first aid. Children no longer only fall in the playground - building digital resilience in young people is of the utmost importance.

The methods and tools used in schools

d) Another factor that is apparent is the importance attached to this issue by senior management in the school. In cases where the Head Teacher, Deputy Head Teacher has taken ownership it is evident that staff are trained, regular updates are provided and children are clear about what to do if they receive an "indecent image" and where to go to for support if someone asks for or shares an indecent image of them. It is also clear that many of the schools visited as part of the review are adhering to the advice contained in the latest guidance document for schools: *"Sexting in schools and colleges: responding to incidents and safeguarding young people (August 2016)"* Many schools have, however, acknowledged that they would benefit from more training on the latest apps.

e) In order to teach children about how to protect themselves whilst using technology, it is essential that all young people receive both good quality, age appropriate 'Relationship and Sex Education (SRE)' and good quality, up to date internet safety advice. Age appropriate education should take place across years 1 to 13 and ideally would be part of a co-ordinated approach across all schools in Middlesbrough under one umbrella name (e.g. for statutory school age: 'Respect Yourself' or for older young people: 'Why Risk It'?) The 'Respect Yourself' programme is in the process of being developed and the Why Risk It? campaign had been designed specifically with Middlesbrough College in mind. The Why Risk It? programme is mandatory for all students attending the college and the panel is keen for this to be the case at all sixth forms in the town.

f) Another avenue through which support to schools can be provided is through the phone network providers. Vodafone's Digital Parenting magazine, which is free to all schools on a quarterly basis and BT's training document for parents are both highlighted in the review as best practice documents. Both publications aim to provide parents with a better understanding of the digital world in which their children are growing up. The panel is keen to see digital parenting publications made available to parents across Middlesbrough. One of the other ways in which the panel is keen to promote the findings of this review is to explore the possibility of the Council linking up with Vodaphone, O2 or BT to undertake a specific project, which involves all schools in Middlesbrough and delivers a clear and consistent message across the town to young people about sexting.

Educating parents and the wider community

g) Young people can access social media through a wide range of forms including mobile phones, games consoles and televisions and often do this away from the watchful eyes of their parents. It is likely that many parents are not aware of the nature and content of their child's correspondence through social media and place significant trust in their child to use this freedom responsibly. Many parents are completely unaware that sexting is quite

common behaviour amongst young people.

h) The need to increase parental awareness around 'sexting' and 'peer on peer' abuse is apparent. Despite holding esafety presentations for parents these are often poorly attended and few schools expressed the view that they have successfully engaged with parents other than when incidents occur and parents are called into school to discuss a specific issue. The panel is of the view that the way in which information on this issue is conveyed needs to be improved. Rather than holding an e-safety presentation these events could be marketed differently i.e. Does your child have a smartphone? Do you know what apps are trending at the moment? Do you know who your child is your child talking too / messaging online? Do you want to find out more? The panel is of the view that getting parents on board is one of the most important factors in preventing further issues arising.

i) The panel is of the view that the Council is in a strong position to promote "digital safeguarding and digital resilience" across the town. Many staff employed by the Council have children and grandchildren aged between 4 – 18 years old and getting the message out to staff around protecting their child's digital footprint, understanding the latest apps, learning how to use parental controls is as important as teaching young people about the dangers involved in new risk taking behaviours.

j) The view was expressed that often parents 'did not have a clue' about what their children were accessing via social media and nor were they interested. The view expressed by one young person was that "only very overprotective parents" would ask to look at their child's phone. Reference was made by Members to the public safety campaigns used in the past, for example 'do you know where your lads are tonight?' This campaign sought to ensure parents took responsibility for the whereabouts of their lads and their behaviour. *It was advised that a recent public safety campaign by West Yorkshire Police entitled 'Who are you really talking too?'* was developed in response to an online grooming case, which could be rolled out locally.

Examples of Good Practice

k) It was evident during the review that a number of schools have developed best practice, which the panel is keen to see replicated. Abingdon Primary School has produced a bespoke version of the 'sexting in schools' document, which is fully endorsed by the Council. Abingdon Primary School has confirmed that it is happy for other schools in Middlesbrough to use / amend this document to meet their own needs. Equally, the Bubble card lanyard introduced by Beech Grove Primary School offers a go to aid for teachers dealing with any issues. Collaboration across schools is an element of which the panel is keen to promote and in discussions with schools it is evident that many would find it beneficial to have, for example, a bi-annual event on Digital Safeguarding / Digital Resilience.

l) The Digital Leaders Program was referenced by one school as a means to engage children and parents and the panel is keen to see more young people in Middlesbrough becoming part of the 'smart crew'. Encouraging the children to write and put on a production for parents is another way to creatively engage parents in discussing this issue with their children. The final message that came across in respect of methods and tools used in schools related to the promotion of "safer internet week". Although the panel is fully supportive of this campaign, the message that needs to be delivered in schools is that every week is safer internet week.

RECOMMENDATIONS

44. The Community Safety & Leisure Scrutiny Panel recommends to the Executive:

a) That the support of the Regional Ofsted Leads for Safeguarding and Education are enlisted to ensure that the best practice findings outlined in the report are taken on board and promoted amongst all schools in Middlesbrough as follows:-

- That all schools in Middlesbrough employ CEOP ambassador trained staff to routinely deliver digital safeguarding presentations to children.

- That schools produce a bespoke version of the *Sexting in schools and colleges: responding to incidents and safeguarding young people (August 2016) document* based on the best practice example provided by a Middlesbrough Primary School.

- That children and young people be provided with a 3 point plan of 'what to do if this happens to me'.

- That teachers, parents, carers and professionals working with children and young people are provided with a quick and easy reference method on how to respond to any incidents.

- That due attention is given to the Local Children's Safeguarding Board's quarterly newsletter.

- That schools listen to children and young people regularly to ensure they are aware of the most up to date information in respect of sexting taking place in the school / wider community.

- That the 'Digital Leaders' Program is promoted in all schools across the town.

- That the use of drama be used (as with Chelsea's Choice) to deliver information to parents directly by children and young people in Middlesbrough.

b) That in readiness for the introduction of new statutory "Relationship and Sex Education" in September 2019 schools, sixth forms and colleges are proactively encouraged to take advantage of the resources available and sign up to the Council's "Respect Yourself" and "Why Risk it Programme".

c) That all schools in Middlesbrough be actively encouraged to sign up to receive a regular digital parenting magazine and attend the Safeguarding Network Forum.

d) That an alert system be set up to immediately inform safeguarding staff of trends / apps / online crazes that could pose a danger to young people, which staff should be made aware of (similar to the way in which alerts are sent out to professionals who work in drug and alcohol services to alert them of specific dangers).

e) That a publicity campaign to raise awareness for parents, carers, teachers and other professionals working with young people on how to set safety and privacy controls on the most popular social network sites, apps and live streaming services be undertaken to further protect children and young people in Middlesbrough.

I.   Many staff employed by the Council have children and grandchildren aged between 4 – 18 years old and getting the message out to staff around protecting their child's digital footprint, understanding the latest apps, learning how to use parental controls is as important as teaching young people about the dangers involved in new risk taking behaviours.

II.   That the CEOP and the thinkyouknow website be regularly promoted via the Love Middlesbrough magazine and the Council's digital media platforms.

f)   That a bi-annual event be hosted on 'Digital Safeguarding/Digital Resilience' in an effort to increase awareness, share best practice and provide an opportunity for statutory agencies in Middlesbrough to share knowledge and experience in addressing these challenges.

g)   That training on 'Digital Safeguarding' be included in the Local Children's Safeguarding Board's (LCSB) and School Governors annual training programme in an effort to further strengthen knowledge and awareness.

h)   That all schools in Middlesbrough are fully supported to ensure that they have links from their main school websites to CEOP, the NSPCC and a digital parenting magazine to enable parents to access trusted advice directly from their child's school website.

i)   That a public safety campaign by Middlesbrough Council and Cleveland Police similar to that used by Leicestershire / West Yorkshire Police to warn young people, both girls and boys, about the dangers of speaking to people they don't know online be developed and rolled out. The possibility of undertaking this work in partnership with the NSPCC, O2, Vodafone or BT could be explored particularly in respect of working with parents to help them understand and protect their children from online abuse.

a.   That innovative ways in which to reach parents through the public safety campaign as a targeted demographic be explored - including the use of social media and the purchasing of reach on Facebook.

b.   That the idea of children signing a contract with their parents / carers when receiving / upgrading their mobile phone to work out the rules on how the device is to be used and what can / cannot be accessed be promoted.

j)   That Cleveland Police's Economic and Cyber Crime unit's presentation on indecent imagery and the impact it has on children be provided to all elected Members.

k)   That the panel receive an update on 'Digital Safeguarding – Sexting' in 6 months' time.

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Karen Edmundson, Designated Safeguarding Lead, Hemlington Hall Academy
Janis Wood, Head Teacher, Priory Woods School and Art College
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A.Cooper - Abingdon Primary School
J Sutton – Headteacher, T.McGill, Parent Governor - Newport Primary School
G Cairns – Unity City Academy
Acklam Grange School
North Ormesby Academy
Macmillan Academy

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following sources were consulted or referred to in preparing this report:

- Reports to, and minutes of, the Community Safety & Leisure Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 7 November 2016, 19 December 2016, 9 January, 6 March and 3 April 2017.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education – Statutory Guidance for Schools and Colleges – Department for Education, September 2016.
- Sexting in schools and colleges: responding to incidents and safeguarding young people (August 2016) non-statutory guidance - UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS)
- Sexting and Young People: The Parent's View – NSPCC / FACTS International
- Growing up Digital – A Report of the Growing Up Digital Taskforce, Children's Commissioner for England, January 2017.
- Sex and Relationship Education (SRE) for the 21st Century – Supplementary Guidance DfEE (0116/2000)

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