Academic Guardians UK

Youth Produced Sexual Imagery Policy

This policy outlines the Academic Guardians UK (AGUK) approach to reports of sexting disclosures, handling devices and imagery, risk assessing situations, partnership working, recording incidents and involving parents and schools where appropriate.

This policy will be applicable for disclosures and incidents which happen to an AGUK student when they are not at school (as the school policy will be implemented when in school), and under the care of AGUK - for example while with a host family, during an event or during a transfer. This guidance is based on the report 'Sexting in Schools and Colleges – responding to incidents and safeguarding young people' (UK Council for Child Internet Safety), and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2018

London Registered Office
Kemp House, 152-160 City Road, London, EC1V 2NX

Telephone
+44 (0) 203 515 8880
+44 (0) 203 815 7943

Mobile
+44 (0) 7931 954 106
+44 (0) 7823 321 993

Email
info@academic-guardians.co.uk

Online
www.academic-guardians.co.uk

Policy owner	Updated	Review date
Andrew Kettle	August 2024	August 2025

Academic Guardians UK Ltd – Youth Produced Sexual Imagery Policy and Procedure

Policy:	Youth Produced Sexual Imagery (Sexting) Policy and Procedure
Summary:	This policy outlines the Academic Guardians UK (AGUK) approach to reports of sexting disclosures, handling devices and imagery, risk assessing situations, partnership working, recording incidents and involving parents and schools where appropriate. This policy will be applicable for disclosures and incidents which happen to an AGUK student when they are not at school (as the school policy will be implemented when in school), and under the care of AGUK - for example while with a host family, during an event or during a transfer. This guidance is based on the report 'Sexting in Schools and Colleges – responding to incidents and safeguarding young people' (UK Council for Child Internet Safety), and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2019
Policy Owner:	Andrew Kettle (Designated Safeguarding & Prevent Lead) Update: August 2024
Next Review Date:	August 2025

Academic Guardians UK Ltd – Youth Produced Sexual Imagery Policy and Procedure

1. Policy Introduction

1.1 Access to improved speed and methods of sharing photographs and videos have brought concerns about young people producing and sharing sexual imagery of themselves. This can expose them to risks, particularly if the imagery is shared further beyond their control, including embarrassment, bullying and increased vulnerability to sexual exploitation. Making, possessing and sharing sexual images of under 18s is illegal (including images of yourself if you are under 18). The production of such imagery will usually take place outside of school, though issues often manifest in schools and we understand the need to respond swiftly and confidently to ensure that all students are safeguarded, educated and supported. This policy provides a guide for staff, students, parents, homestay host families and drivers as to how Academic Guardians UK will proceed and what steps will be taken should an incident of sexting be reported or suspected. Our response to these incidents will be the least intrusive response appropriate to the risk, maintaining the primary concern being the welfare and protection of the young people involved.

1.2 This policy forms part of the Academic Guardians UK safeguarding arrangements and all incidents of sexting will be dealt with as safeguarding concerns. The policy is formed and based on the UK Council for Child Internet Safety guidance 'Sexting in Schools and Colleges: Responding to Incidents and Safeguarding Young People' (the 'UKCCIS Guidance') and should be read in conjunction with the following AGUK policies: Safeguarding and Child Protection and E-safety.

1.3 Contacts

Designated Safeguarding & Prevent Lead – Director Andrew Kettle who can be contacted on:

+44(0) 203 515 8880 + 44 (0) 7823 321 993 andrew@academic-guardians.co.uk

Deputy Safeguarding Lead – Director Dawn Kettle who can be contacted on:

+44(0) 203 515 8880 + 44 (0) 7931 954 106 dawn@academic-guardians.co.uk

Concerns in relation to the Managing Directors should be addressed to the Director of Safeguarding, Andrew Kettle, Concerns in relation to the Designated Safeguarding Lead should be addressed to Dawn Kettle. Concerns about all Directors should be directed to Crimestoppers, which will remain confidential.

Safeguarding Partners - Academic Guardians UK registered office is within the borough of Islington whose current safeguarding contact details are as follows:

Website: http://www.islingtonscb.org.uk/Pages/Key-contacts-in-Islington.aspx

Children's Services Contact Team - +44 20 7527 7400

Tim Djavit - Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) - +44 20 7527 8102

Information about services for children can be found on the Islington Family Directory www.islington.gov.uk/familydirectory

Police Referrals - Child Abuse Investigation Team (CAIT) +44 20 8733 6495 or +44 20 8733 6500

For Emergencies - 999

All local Safeguarding Partners & MASH (Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub) contact details are provided to Homestay Host families, attached to the student profile on confirmation of booking.

2. Definition of 'sexting'

While there is no clear definition of sexting with professionals considering sexting to be 'sending or posting sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via mobiles or over the Internet', and young people interpreting sexting to be 'writing and sharing explicit messages with people they know'. Many parents think of sexting as flirty or sexual text messages rather than images. For this policy document 'sexting' is seen as the sharing of sexual imagery by young people.

Creating and sharing sexual photos and videos of under-18s is illegal and therefore causes the greatest complexity for schools and other agencies when responding. It also presents a range of risks which need careful management. On this basis this advice introduces the phrase 'youth produced sexual imagery' and uses this instead of 'sexting'.

'Youth produced sexual imagery' best describes the practice because:
'Youth produced' includes young people sharing images that they, or another young person, have created of themselves.
'Sexual' is clearer than 'indecent.' A judgement of whether something is 'decent' is both a value judgement and dependent on context.
'Imagery' covers both still photos and moving videos (and this is what is meant by reference to imagery throughout the document).

The types of incidents which this advice covers are:
A person under the age of 18 creates and shares sexual imagery of themselves with a peer under the age of 18; A person under the age of 18 shares sexual imagery created by another person under the age of 18 with a peer under the age of 18 or an adult; A person under the age of 18 is in possession of sexual imagery created by another person under the age of 18

This advice does not cover:
The sharing of sexual imagery of people under 18 by adults as this constitutes child sexual abuse and schools should always inform the police; Young people under the age of 18 sharing adult pornography or exchanging sexual texts which don't contain imagery.

Academic Guardians UK policy is to take any direct disclosure by a young person very seriously and to deal with all incidents of youth produced sexual imagery as safeguarding concerns. This applies to young people

who are suspected to have shared images and to students who have had their images shared. Images can either be shared consensually (for example when in a romantic relationship, or as a joke and there is no intended malice), or with aggravating factors for example sharing images without consent and with malicious intent.

The response to consensual and non-consensual sharing of images will be proportionate to the nature and extent of the incident, with the primary concern being the welfare and protection of the young people involved. Incidents with aggravating factors should be referred to Children's Services and/or police.

3. The Law

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.

'Indecent' is not defined in legislation. When cases are prosecuted, the question of whether any photograph of a child is indecent is for a jury, magistrate or District Judge to decide based on what is the recognised standard of propriety. For most purposes, if imagery contains a naked young person, a topless girl, and/ or displays genitals or sex acts, including masturbation, then it will be considered indecent. Indecent images may also include overtly sexual images of young people in their underwear.
Criminalisation of children
The law criminalising indecent images of children was created long before mass adoption of the internet, mobiles and digital photography. It was also 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.

We should not, however, unnecessarily criminalise children. Children with a criminal record face stigma and discrimination in accessing education, training, employment, travel and housing and these obstacles can follow a child into adulthood. 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.

4. Academic Guardians UK procedures for dealing with reports of youth produced imagery

4.1 An AGUK staff member, including host families and drivers receive a report of suspected youth produced imagery from a student, parent or other source by face to face disclosure, email or telephone call.

4.2 The AGUK Staff member refers to and adheres to the Child Protection Policy, including recording the disclosure in the most appropriate format as soon as possible to provide a chronological and accurate record (using the Tell, Explain, Describe model if the information is being given by a student).

4.3 The record taken of the disclosure is reported verbally, as soon as practicable, to the Designated Safeguarding & Prevent Lead (DSL) Andrew Kettle on 0203 515 8880 or 07823 321 993.

4.4 The staff member must then submit a written record of the disclosure on a Student Incident Form to Head Office staff or an email to Andrew Kettle andrew@academic-guardians.co.uk

4.5 The DSL will hold an emergency meeting to discuss the incident, assess the alleged threat and risk to the child (including any relevant facts about the child which may affect their vulnerability including age and ability), implement an action plan and continue to review the situation until a resolution has been achieved. This meeting should aim to establish whether the imagery should be viewed (in most cases imagery should not be viewed); and whether the imagery has been shared widely, via what services/platforms (which may be unknown), whether immediate action should be taken to delete or remove images from devices and or online platforms.

4.6 The meeting will be recorded, with times and dated entries within a Student Record (Incident Record) to record all actions and updates.

4.7 The DSL will arrange for the young person to be offered and given support, in recognition of the pressures they may have been under to share imagery; helping them to understand the wider issues and motivations and making available information and material on the issues of consent, trust within healthy relationships and recognising abusive and coercive language and behaviors. This help and support could be provided from accredited organisations such as the school, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), ChildLine and National Crime Agency (NCA) – Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) websites and helplines.

4.8 The DSL will consider the need to ask for the student to produce the device as evidence. The viewing of any images or seizing of any devices will be recorded including those present, date and time to meet Academic Guardians UK standards set out for recording incidents.

4.9 The DSL will ensure that viewing of the images is only made where there are good and clear reasons to do so (unless unavoidable because the student has willingly shown a member of staff), basing incident decisions on what the DSL has been told about the content of the imagery. The DSL will ensure that staff members do not search through devices and delete imagery unless there is a good and clear reason to do so.

4.10 The DSL will consider the need to contact the school, college, setting or individual and whether to contact the parents or carers of the children involved. In most cases parents should be involved unless there is good reason to believe that involving these parties would put the young person at risk of harm.

4.11 The incident will be referred to a statutory agency (Children's Services on the Local Authority telephone number or the police by dialing 101) immediately if there is a concern a young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm. This would include information coming to light at the initial stage where:

- The incident involves an adult

- There is reason to believe that a young person has been coerced, blackmailed or groomed, or if there are concerns about their capacity to consent (for example owing to special educational needs)
- What you know about the imagery suggests the content depicts sexual acts which are unusual for the young person's developmental stage, or are violent
- The imagery involves sexual acts and any pupil in the imagery is under 13
- You have reason to believe a pupil or pupil is at immediate risk of harm owing to the sharing of the imagery, for example, the young person is presenting as suicidal or self-harming

If none of the above apply, the DSL may decide to respond to the incident without involving the police or children's social care (the DSL can choose to escalate the incident at any time if further information and or concerns come to light). The decision should be recorded in line with the Safeguarding Policy and Child Protection Policy and regularly reviewed throughout the process of responding to the incident.

The decision to respond to the incident without involving the police or children's social care would be made in cases when the DSL is confident that they have enough information to assess the risks to pupils involved, and the risks can be managed within Academic Guardians UK support framework and network for the child. In such circumstances the procedures continue and -

4.12 The DSL will advise to the young person to delete imagery and to confirm they have deleted the imagery. Young people should be given a deadline for deletion across all devices, online storage or social media sites on the basis that possession of youth produced sexual imagery is illegal. Where a young person refuses or is later discovered to have not deleted the images, they are committing a criminal offence and the police may become involved. A record will be made of these decisions as per the Safeguarding Policy including decisions, times, dates and reasons. Academic Guardians UK may wish to invoke their own measures to discourage young people sharing, creating or receiving images in line with behavior policies.

4.13 Where the DSL is aware that youth produced sexual imagery has been unavoidably viewed by a member of staff, the DSL should ensure that the staff member has appropriate support. Viewing youth produced sexual imagery can be distressing for both young people and adults and appropriate emotional support may be required.

5. Training & Support

5.1 AGUK will support staff to receive training on receiving reports of sexual abuse. This training will be made available via online learning resources.

5.2 Staff, homestay host families, local coordinators & drivers should follow the usual reporting procedures as for any other safeguarding concern as laid out in Academic Guardians UK Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy. Copies of the reporting forms are available on all the AGUK portals and as appendix documents in the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy which is also available in the portals and online. In addition, copies may be requested from the office team by emailing office@academic-guardians.co.uk.

5.3 A copy of this policy along with the all the AGUK polices are made available to the homestay hosts, local coordinators, drivers, students and parents in the AGUK SharePoint sites and portals. Reference to these policies are also made within the School, Student, Parent and Homestay host handbooks. All stakeholders are expected to familiarise themselves with the policy and understand their role in supporting AGUK.

6. Further Supporting Resources

Academic Guardians UK are aware of many resources being made available to provide additional advice or support including the following organisations:

Internet Watch Foundation
If a site has no reporting function and if the content is a sexual image of someone under 18 you can report it to the Internet Watch Foundation (IWF). Sexual images of anyone under 18 are illegal and the IWF can work to get them removed from sites which do not have reporting procedures. Adults can report directly to the IWF here: www.iwf.org.uk. Young people can contact ChildLine who work in partnership with the IWF and will support young people through the process.

The NSPCC adult's helpline
0808 800 5002 The NSPCC has partnered with O2 to offer direct support to parents and other adults on issues relating to online safety.
ChildLine - www.childline.org.uk
ChildLine offers direct support to children and young people including issues relating to the sharing of sexual imagery.

NCA-CEOP
Parent Info from CEOP and Parent Zone - https://educateagainsthate.com/resources/parent-zone-guides/ - Parent Zone works globally to help families to navigate the internet safely and confidently. It includes a set of parent guides covering a wide range of online and digital services setting out clearly what parents need to know about each.

www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre If you are concerned that a child is being sexually abused, exploited or groomed online you should report to NCA-CEOP

Other Relevant Legislation, Guidance and Codes of Practice
UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS) (UKCIS, 2020) https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-council-for-internet-safety