

QUICK REFERENCE LEARNING POINTS FROM HARROW SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP'S CASE REVIEW

RESPONDING TO INDECENT IMAGES OF CHILDREN

Background

The Safeguarding Partnership's Case Review Group carried out a review into a case where the multi-agency response to a child's disclosure of sexual exploitation fell short of agreed procedures and expected standards of practice.

The case involved a child's disclosing a sexual assault which had been recorded and was being circulated to peers. The review examined why the practitioners dealing with the incident had not understood the law regarding the downloading of such images – placing themselves at risk of a criminal conviction, as well as potentially undermining any evidence for protecting the child.

In addition, it was found that some of the language used in agency records implied that the child had consented to the exploitation.



Learning – Responding to Indecent Images of Children

All staff must understand the law in relation to responding to indecent images of children and that viewing or downloading these images is a criminal offence – even if your intentions are well-meaning.

One page guidance sheets on the 'do's and don'ts' have been produced to help you:

- Version for Schools and College staff – with acknowledgements to Harrow High School: [Ctrl + Click Here](#)
- All other staff/agencies and voluntary sector: [Ctrl + Click Here](#)

Learning – Familiarise yourself with your Organisation's Procedures for Managing Allegations Against Staff

- Any information that suggests a person working in the children's workforce has downloaded or viewed criminal/indecent images of a child must be referred to the police and the LADO without delay (MASH ; Golden number 0208 901 2690, out of hours, 0208 424 0999, duty.assess@harrow.gov.uk If the person works with vulnerable adults, then this must be referred to the police and Adult Safeguarding (0208 420 9453, safeguardingadults@harrow.gov.uk).
- Someone's motives, no matter how well intentioned, should not be used as an excuse for deviating from procedures in these circumstances. Mitigating factors will always be taken into account by investigating authorities, but the facts of the matter should not be distorted in the records kept by the organisations involved.

Learning – Using Appropriate Language

Staff must be mindful of using the correct language/terminology when referring to children/young people who are exploited i.e. avoid language that implies they are consenting. Inappropriate language can contribute to unconscious bias in assessments and decision-making. For further guidance see: NSPCC and Children's Society's Appropriate Language Toolkit:

<https://www.csepoliceandprevention.org.uk/sites/default/files/Guidance%20App%20Language%20Toolkit.pdf>