Sexting behaviour: prevalence and attitudes among S1 and S3 pupils in a sample of Fife secondary schools

Vivienne Sutherland
Chris Hamilton
Fife Council Educational Psychology Service
What we will cover…

- What’s this got to do with educational psychology?
- What’s the link to local and national priorities?
- What is the research for?
- How was it done?
- What are the key findings?
- So what?
- Recommendations – in terms of this research and in terms of the role of educational psychology services
What’s this got to do with educational psychology…or, rationale for research

• Casework – increased demand for support to school staff and also young people involved as ‘victims’ and ‘perpetrators’
• School development – supporting schools to deal with an increasing number of incidents systematically
• Significant impact on young people’s emotional wellbeing and mental health
• Significant impact on young people’s school experience, and therefore potential attainment and achievement
• Potential for young people to be criminalised
• Articulating the risk - raising the profile and closing the gap
Why educational psychology services are well placed to tackle this issue

• Good understanding of what is needed to assess and intervene effectively and positively with young people’s wellbeing
• Skilled in identifying casework issues, which if tackled at a systemic level, can have a much wider impact
• Skilled at supporting school staff and parents through training and other development opportunities
• Skilled in research methods and translating action research into effective practice
• Unique role within local authorities of working as front line support, undertaking local research and also in developing strategy and policy
What’s the link to local and national priorities?

• Fife Council Educational Psychology Service SIP 2014-17 priority – Social Media – links to...
• Education and Children’s Services Directorate Plan priority – Improve Equality and Equity
• GIRFEC – supporting young people’s wellbeing
• Education Scotland – Scanning and Scoping document
• National Improvement Drivers –
  – School leadership
  – Teacher professionalism
  – Parental engagement
  – Assessment of children’s progress
  – School improvement
  – Performance information
Our pathways to future success

**Leadership**
- to achieve better ways of working
  - More highly skilled leadership
  - Increasingly complex organisations

**Professional Learning**
- to increase the impact of our partnership working
  - Improving evidence-based practice
  - Relentless focus on outcomes
  - Reducing focus on inputs

**Customer Focus**
- to improve our customers’ experience
  - More joined-up delivery
  - Better access to services
  - Fewer physical assets

**Community Empowerment**
- to develop the resilience of our local communities
  - Greater focus on empowering communities
  - Less focus on responding to individuals

**Early Intervention**
- to support better attachment
  - Greater emphasis on early & proportionate intervention
  - Less reliance on responding to demand

**Enterprise**
- to deliver income generation
  - Increasing focus on our unique selling points
  - Reducing focus on universal service delivery

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**Improve Employability Skills**
- Preparing children and young people for learning, life and work
- Improving overall qualifications of young people
- Supporting young people into positive and sustained destinations

**Enhance opportunities for the vulnerable**
- Improving life outcomes for the most vulnerable individuals and groups
- Improving the quality and effectiveness of care
- Protecting vulnerable individuals and local communities

**Improve Educational Outcomes**
- Improving learning, teaching, curriculum and assessment
- Improving the literacy, numeracy and attainment of children and young people
- Improving professional learning and the quality of professional practice

**Improve Early Years and Health & Wellbeing**
- Giving every child the best start in life
- Improving the health and wellbeing of children and young people
- Encouraging positive attitudes and life choices

**Improve Equality and Equity**
- Breaking the cycle of disadvantage
- Engaging the disadvantaged in better life choices
- Improving the systems of support for our children and young people

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What is the research for…or, what’s the point?

The key aims of the research were to:

- illuminate the issues for young people in our local communities, around the sending and receiving of inappropriate images
- with the results, reflect with partners on how best to move the emphasis towards support, education and intervention, including:
  - informing specific training for young people, to reduce their risks and maximise their wellbeing
  - identifying links to Curriculum for Excellence
  - exploring how pupil and parent awareness of ownership and control issues can be better improved
- identify any further areas of research
How was it done - Methodology

Hypotheses
Four hypotheses, derived from literature review and EP experience:
• Both S1 and S3 pupils will be involved in sending/receiving inappropriate images, but prevalence will be greater in S3
• Both girls and boys will be involved in sending and receiving inappropriate images, but girls will be more likely to report sending images than boys, and boys will be more likely to report receiving images than girls
• Girls will be more likely to report negative consequences of sending/receiving inappropriate images than boys will
• Parental involvement in phone contracts may influence sexting behaviour and the monitoring of such behaviour

Large scale, anonymous online survey of S1 and S3 pupils, using open and closed questions
How was it done - Method

- Approval process – educational psychology service and Directorate
- Definition of ‘inappropriate images’
- Development and piloting of questionnaire
- Identification of sample schools
- Parent and pupil permissions
- Practical arrangements for delivery agreed between link EP and identified Guidance or DHT link
- Completed by over 800 pupils in the last two weeks of summer term
- Analysis, dissemination and follow up plans
What are the key findings?

- Mobile phone access is almost universal
- Young people’s reports of what friends do differs from their reports of what they themselves do
- Age makes a difference, but not as much as parents and school staff might think
- Who pays for the phone seems to make a difference to behaviour
- Girls’ and boys’ behaviour is different, and this difference appears to increase with age
- Girls’ and boys’ perceptions of consequences are different and this also appears to increase with age
- Young people are very confused about what the law says
- We’re beginning to gather young people's views about the kind of support that works best
Mobile phone access is almost universal

- 94.5% reported that they have a mobile phone. 5.5% said they did not

- Of those who owned a phone, 93.1% of pupils stated that it was a smart phone

- 61.9% of pupils said their phone was on a contract. 31.3% said their phone was Pay As You Go
Young people’s reports of what friends do differs from their reports of what they themselves do

Have your friends received in appropriate images vs have YOU received inappropriate images

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<th></th>
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<th>S1</th>
<th>S3</th>
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Age makes a difference, but not as much as parents and school staff might think

Yes, I have received an image

Yes, I had asked for the image
Was the image sent by someone you know?

Yes, I have sent an image

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Who pays for the phone seems to make a difference to behaviour - further research opportunity
Girls’ and boys’ behaviour is different, and this difference increases with age

Yes, I had asked for the image

Yes, I have sent an image like this
Girls’ and boys’ perceptions of consequences are different and this also increases with age

What happened to your friend as a result of sending an image?

What happened as a result of receiving the image?

- Something negative
- Something positive
Young people are very confused about what the law says

- Anyone who sends, receives or possesses an inappropriate image is breaking the law if the image is of a young person under the age of 18.
- Anyone who sends an inappropriate image (of a person of any age) to someone who is under the age of 16 is also breaking the law.

What do you think the law says about...

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We’re beginning to gather young people's views about the kind of support that works best

What helpful things can people do?

- Reassure me that all is not lost
- For friends to stick by me
- For friends to communicate disapproval to the person who shared the image
- For people to take practical action such as deleting the image, and involving a trusted adult if necessary
What are the key findings?

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Recommendations…of this research

Training for young people
• Differentiated according to age and gender, but starting early – P7?
• Acknowledge young people’s views that this is normal and negative consequences are rare, but also that low frequency incidents can have very serious and lifelong consequences
• Should include information on the law
• Should focus on reduction, through supporting young people to make informed judgements of risk
Recommendations…continued

• Include information on how to seek support when something goes wrong
• Build in peer support – how to keep your friends safe
• Provide training with multi-agency partners for school staff and parents
• Ensure that training is intelligence led, so it is specific to any community issues
• Plan further research involving young people and parents as partners in the development and delivery
Thoughts…for educational psychology services

1. Need to stop doing no longer relevant
2. Exemplary “classics” and current top priorities
3. What we want to do but can’t yet
4. Present barriers
5. Solutions to the barriers
6. Scanning for the future

Learners
Parents
Practitioners
Teachers
Local Authorities
Volunteers
Employers
Partners

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Psychological Practice

• Establish a National hub to enhance the role of research and best practice. Use technology to do this effectively to best support Scottish Government initiatives and action research within establishments.

• Use expertise about additional support needs to support the team around the child to meet the needs of all young people at risk.

• Ensure a strategic approach to support children and young people with mental health and wellbeing difficulties.
Psychological Practice

• Regular and consistent translation of research into practical approaches that practitioners can use.

• Focus on research, including training for action research, within establishments which builds capacity and measures outcomes and the impact on all.
Psychological Practice

- More joined up thinking required across mental health and wellbeing at national levels.
- Understanding is limited about the contribution educational psychologists make in preventing childhood mental health and wellbeing issues.
- Capacity issues in psychological services about supporting early years while still needing to support older children and young people who experience significant challenges.
Psychological practice

• Agree a professional framework of standards.
• Agree outcomes for the profession in Scotland.
• Be clear about what the profession does well and be involved at the beginning of developments.
• Share outcomes across services and at a national level.
• Develop EPS improvement framework to sit alongside the NIF.
Service Delivery

- Promote a shared view of the role of EPS and use it for inwards and outwards communication.
- Target psychological services resources appropriately to ensure the right skills are deployed in the right places.
- Extend strategic development by focusing on: building capacity in staff and schools, translating research into practical approaches, and better targeted casework.
- Establish joint action with health to address mental health and well-being at a national level (by accessing specialist budgets).
Questions?