



KEEPING YOUR CHILD SAFE

Guidance for parents and carers about the risks and dangers associated with on and off-line grooming and child sexual exploitation (CSE)

- KNOW ABOUT IT**
- TALK ABOUT IT**
- REPORT IT**

KNOW ABOUT IT



Knowing how grooming works is the first step to protecting children and young people

What is grooming?

A definition

“Grooming is when someone builds an online relationship with a young person and tricks them or pressures them into doing something sexual”

www.childline.or.uk

Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking.

Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know – even a family member, friend or professional who works with them.

A child sex abuser is someone who is sexually attracted to children and acts upon their desires.

Child sex abusers find the internet an easier place to engage children in sexually abusive activity because they can act anonymously without revealing their real identity.

Child sex abusers will often pretend to be someone other than who they are, lie about their name, their age and what they look like by setting up fake profiles, as well as abuse from the safety of their own homes in order to:

- Collect and swap child abuse images with others
- Form online networks with other child sex abusers
- Participate in online communities such as blogs, forums and private chat rooms

- Swap personal information on children that they have collected with other child sex abusers
- Try to meet children with the intent to have sex with them

Children and young people may be groomed to:

- Send or post sexually explicit images of themselves online
- Behave sexually or take part in sexual activities on webcam or using a smartphone camera
- Have sexual conversations by text or online

Child sex abusers may threaten to send images, video or copies of conversations to the child or young person's friends and family to ensure they continue to take part in online sexual activity. These Images or videos may continue to be shared long after the sexual abuse has stopped.

It is important to be aware that groomers can be female as well as male – and can be any age - sometimes of a similar or same age as the victim.

Many children and young people don't understand that they have been groomed or that what has happened to them is abuse.

What to look out for



The signs of grooming aren't always obvious and groomers will often go to great lengths not to be identified. However, it is important to be aware that some abusers can be hidden in plain sight and, on the surface, might never be considered a danger to children and young people.

If a child is being groomed they may:

- be very secretive about what they are doing online
- profess to having older boyfriends or girlfriends
- go to unusual places to meet friends, such as short-stay hotels
- be taken away on trips and holidays
- be given gifts of money and items, such as clothes or mobile phones
- have access to drugs and alcohol.

In older children, signs of grooming can easily be mistaken for 'normal' teenage behaviour, but you may notice unexplained changes.

Watch out for anything different about them, whether changes are physical, emotional and behavioural (including inappropriate sexualised behaviour for their age):

- becoming withdrawn
- anxious
- clingy
- depressed
- aggressive
- having sleep problems
- eating disorders
- wetting the bed
- soiling clothing
- taking risks
- missing school
- changes in eating habits
- obsessive behaviour
- nightmares
- taking drugs
- misusing alcohol
- self-harming
- having suicidal thought

Groomers will spend a long time gaining a child's trust. This can involve gaining the trust of a whole family so they can have one-to-one contact with a child. Be aware that you too can be duped and manipulated by an abuser.

TALK ABOUT IT



We don't know how common grooming is because many children don't, won't or can't tell anyone what is happening to them.

Grooming can affect any child. Groomers will exploit any vulnerability to increase the child or young person's dependence on them so that they become less likely to talk to family and friends.

Children may not speak out because they are:

- ashamed
- feeling guilty
- unaware that they're being abused
- believe they are in a relationship with their abuser as a real 'boyfriend' or 'girlfriend'.

REPORT IT



How can I protect my child and others?

CEOP, the Child Exploitation Online Protection agency, helps keep children safe from online grooming and sexual exploitation. If someone's acted inappropriately to a child or young person you know, report it to CEOP.

Anyone can make a report on the CEOP website:

www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre

There are a number of other ways to report abuse online via the internet:

www.internetmatters.org/report-issue

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do/report-abuse/>

You can also call the **NSPCC** helpline on 0808 800 5000


Or email email help@nspcc.org.uk

Or text 88858.

Children and young people can call **Childline** on 0800 1111

Or call **The Mix** on 0808 808 4994 (text 80849).

Or call the **Stop it Now!** helpline on 0808 1000 900 anonymously



top tips...

Grooming can be a tricky subject to talk about with your child but the tips below may help.

Be approachable

Let them know you are there to help them if they get into trouble online – and if they are concerned about something they can come to you. Although it is hard, try not to over-react if they share something with you that causes you alarm. If your child is scared to come to you for help, this may put them in even more danger.

Be the one to start the conversation

There are lots of ways your child can help you with learning more about technology and they can be way ahead of adults in the way of new advances and what is trending. When they get home from school or college, ask them how their online day was, as well as their real world day. Ask them to help with any technological problems you may be experiencing with your smartphone, tablet or laptop to get the conversation started.

Talk to them about their online friendships

Find out what sites they go to, where they met their online friends, how they communicate and what information they share. Make sure they know that having thousands of online 'friends' isn't always safe. Advise them never to arrange to meet someone in real life they only know online

With younger children

Talk about grooming as you would stranger danger – a stranger is anyone you don't know, whether in real life or online. Tell them they shouldn't talk privately (eg, go into online chat rooms) or give personal information to anyone they don't know whilst gaming online, for example. Discuss with them what 'personal information' is.

This leaflet has been produced using advice from the NSPCC and Internet Matters. There is lots of other useful websites, where you can find good advice and support.

Useful websites and resources



Parent Info is a comprehensive, free resource for schools covering a range of safeguarding topics and information about apps and when they are updated etc. The content is updated by CEOP (Child Exploitation & Online Protection Centre). The direct link follows which you may like to share with your school communities via meetings, newsletters and on your websites <http://parentinfo.org/>

Safer for Professionals, Parents & Carers provides regular updates, guides & videos to add to your knowledge & effectiveness to safeguard children in a digital era <https://inege.com/professionals-service/sign-up/>

A Guide to Snapchat Basics: Watch this video to take you through the essentials [Watch now](#)

E-Safety - Safeguarding Children in a Digital World: Providing a deeper understanding of the risks posed to children in the online environment [Click here](#)

YouTube: Did you know that YouTube is one of the most popular online destinations for children to watch content, with around three quarters of those aged 5-15 using the video site? YouTube is a platform that allows users to upload and share videos worldwide. This means that your child may be exposed to any user uploaded content from anywhere in the world. Keep your child safer by watching our guide which outlines features such as restricted mode, leading by example and the YouTube Kids app [Watch Now!](#)

Online Gaming: Over half of 8-15 year olds now play games online. Gaming can be a great way for children to relax, socialize and have fun. But there are some risks and with so many games available, it's important to know how to keep children safe. Click the link for tips and advice that will keep you up-to-date with the most popular online games, help you decide what's appropriate for your child and help them play safely.

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/online-games-helping-children-play-safe/?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medi-

[um=email&utm_content=5%20gaming%20tips&utm_campaign=170801-cam-netaware](#)

Advice for helping children set up a new profile: The UK Safer Internet Centre shares advice for parents and carers when helping their child set up a profile on a new site or game. Key points include: using a family email address; not using personal information (full name or date of birth) in a username; and making sure that profile pictures don't include personal information clues such as school uniforms and house or street names [UK Safer Internet Centre](#)

Sharing images playlists now available on Hwb website: [Five new playlists](#) focusing on the topic of sharing images have been published for children and young people, education practitioners, parents and carers and governors. These new playlists explore the power of image and examine both the potential positive and negative aspects of sharing images. The resources discuss the possible risks a child or young person may encounter and provide guidance on how to prevent and deal with these situations