

Grooming

Information for parents and carers of children* aged 11+

*We use "child/children" to refer to anyone under the age of 18

What is grooming?

Grooming is a process that "involves the offender building a relationship with a child, and sometimes with their wider family, gaining their trust and a position of power over the child in preparation for abuse." Many people's understanding of "grooming" is limited to sexual exploitation. However, the grooming process can also be applied to other situations, e.g. gaining a child's trust so that they commit crimes such as theft or drug dealing, or [radicalising them](#).

Unfortunately, young people can be especially vulnerable to grooming as they may lack the life experience to recognise when they are being taken advantage of. Many young people have access to social media and the internet therefore the opportunity for online grooming is ever-present. It's important for parents and carers to have an overview of what their children do online, who they talk to and who their online friends are. It's also important to know how to guide children in the safe use of devices and the internet. Visit [Use Parental Controls to Keep Your Child Safe - NSPCC](#) and [Having a conversation with your child](#) for more information. **It is really important to recognise that the groomer may be someone you know, for example through a friend or family, or at a club they go to – it isn't always a stranger.**

What does the grooming process look like?

TARGET

A groomer will identify a child's vulnerability; for example, they may notice they are often by themselves at the park and will prey on their loneliness. Grooming can occur online too, with the perpetrator striking up a conversation, perhaps giving compliments on their profile picture or how well they play an online game.

TEST

The groomer will offer compliments, gifts such as money, expensive trainers, a phone, and will aim to make the child feel special. They will then test the child's loyalty by asking them to run small errands or hold onto items for them, whilst rewarding this loyalty with more gifts.

TRAP

The groomer will now control the child by isolating them from their friends and family, making threats against them if the child tells anyone. They will demand payback for all the gifts previously given, which could include moving and selling drugs, and sexual exploitation. The child will now feel indebted and trapped.

These videos describe the process of grooming for a sexual purpose

[Online grooming – what parents need to know](#)
(3 mins)

[An in-person scenario - Taylor's Story](#)
(2min 30)

How do I protect my child, and what are the signs that they could be being groomed?

Be curious about their friendship groups and where they are when they're not at school or with you. Make sure they know they can come to you if they are approached by new 'friends' when they are out and about, especially older people. Remind them about [Childline](#) as a source of support, too. If you have concerns, share them with family members and the Designated Safe-guarding Lead (DSL) at your child's school. There are many signs that a child may be being groomed and/or exploited, including a change in their behaviour, having gifts/money that cannot be accounted for, being very secretive about their phone or internet use and lying about where they have been and who they have been with. Be conscious of any changes in presentation: they may begin to take more interest in their appearance and in the clothes they wear. (There could be genuine reasons for any of these but it is important to be open minded about any changes you might see.) Visit [Grooming - NSPCC](#) for more information.

Support and Report

[NSPCC Helpline | NSPCC](#)

Help and advice if you have concerns about a child's welfare

[Police website](#)

You can report any information to the police: 999 in an emergency, or otherwise via 101 or our website

[Crimestoppers](#)

If it's not an emergency, visit Crimestoppers to report your concerns anonymously