

FURTHER HELP AND SUPPORT

Pace: Parents against child sexual exploitation helps parents across the UK understand what is happening to their child and how they can leave exploitative relationships. www.paceuk.info

Parents Protect: helps parents and carers protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation by providing child safety resources. www.parentsprotect.co.uk Tel: 0808 1000 900

The Children's Society: Provides useful information and resources in relation to CSE. www.childrenssociety.org.uk

CEOP: Provides information, advice and resources for supporting your child with their online safety www.ceop.police.uk

Brook: Provides useful guides to sexual health and wellbeing www.brook.org.uk

BISH: Provides useful guides to talking about sex, relationships and pornography with your teenager www.bishuk.com/parents

NSPCC: provides a wide range of services including information for parents on their website and a helpline number. www.nspcc.org.uk parent helpline: 0808 800 5000

**YMCA
DOWNSLINK GROUP**



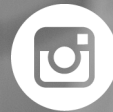
YMCA WISE PROJECT

Supporting children and young people to stay safe

FOR MORE
INFORMATION PLEASE
SEE OUR WEBSITE:
www.ymcadlg.org/wise



THE WISE PROJECT



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**YMCA WISE PARENT
AND CARER'S GUIDE
TO GROOMING**

What is grooming?

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 - for example a family member, friend or professional. Groomers may be male or female. They could be any age. Many children and young people don't understand that they have been groomed or that what has happened is abuse.

What are the signs of grooming?

The signs of grooming aren't always obvious and groomers will often go to great lengths not to be identified. If a child is being groomed they may:

- be very secretive, including about what they are doing online
- have older boyfriends or girlfriends
- go to unusual places to meet friends
- have new things such as clothes or mobile phones that they can't or won't explain
- 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 in behaviour or personality, or inappropriate sexual behaviour for their age.

How does grooming happen?

Grooming happens both online and in person. Groomers will hide their true intentions and may spend a long time gaining a child's trust. Groomers may try to gain the trust of a whole family to allow them to be left alone with a child and if they work with children they may use similar tactics with their colleagues.

Groomers do this by:

- pretending to be someone they are not, for example saying they are the same age online
- offering advice or understanding
- buying gifts
- giving the child attention
- using their professional position or reputation
- taking them on trips, outings or holidays
- using secrets and intimidation to control children
- using online social networks

How are children groomed online?

Groomers can use social media sites, instant messaging apps including teen dating apps, or online gaming platforms to connect with a young person or child. They can spend time learning about a young person's interests from their online profiles and then use this knowledge to help them build up a relationship away from adult supervision. It's easy for groomers to hide their identity online - they may pretend to be a child and then chat and become 'friends' with children they are targeting.

Groomers may look for:

- usernames or comments that are flirtatious or have a sexual meaning
- public comments that suggest a child has low self-esteem or is vulnerable.

Groomers don't always target a particular child. Sometimes they will send messages to hundreds of young people and wait to see who responds.

How common is grooming?

We don't know how common grooming is because often children don't tell anyone what is happening to them.

Children may not speak out because they are:

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

What can you do to support your child?

- Talk to your child about grooming and let them know you are there if they have questions or want to share concerns
- Be curious about new friends, unexplained gifts or secretive behaviour and ask questions to help you decide if you need to be concerned
- Talk to your child about online dangers. For younger children it is useful to use the context of stranger danger. For older children it can be useful to explore the website www.thinkuknow.co.uk together
- Let your child know that you understand how easy it is to get into difficulties online. Ensure they know they must tell you if anyone makes inappropriate comments and that you will help
- Talk to your child about their online friends. For those they do not know in the real world consider deleting or limiting what they share, e.g. photos, videos, locations
- Learn how to report any inappropriate contact made to your child online through www.ceop.police.uk