

03 GROOMING

Online grooming is the process by which someone tricks, coerces or manipulates a young person into trusting them, and making the young person believe they are a friend or boyfriend/girlfriend.

Online grooming is incredibly easy; an adult has so many ways to gain access to young people, and often they create fake profiles and identities in order to conceal their real intentions from the young person they target. Apps like Kik, Oovoo, Omegle, as well as social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, give online predators easy access to children and young people. They are very convincing and young people can quickly fall foul of a predator. The bottom line is that the predator will aim to meet up with the young person; they will use flattery, manipulation, lies, threats and coercion in order to get access to the young person in real life.

The NSPCC estimates that one in four young people have experienced something upsetting on a social media site. This could include inappropriate videos and cyberbullying but it is likely that being contacted and abused by an online predator makes up a significant number of these figures. It is impossible to know exactly how many children and young people have been targeted and abused online but given that one in twenty UK children are abused (NSPCC, 2015) and the prevalence of the internet in everyday life, it is safe to assume that the number is significant.

This video aims to highlight the dangers of online predators and how they operate. An online predator will frequently;

- ▶ Express the same interests as the young person
- ▶ Ask the young person for information about themselves, their family and friends
- ▶ Come across as sympathetic and helpful
- ▶ Ask the young person to delete conversations they have had
- ▶ Ask for access to the young person's apps/social media platforms, in order to contact them over multiple platforms
- ▶ Ask the young person to send them pictures or videos
- ▶ Ask the young person to watch inappropriate content online
- ▶ Send the young person gifts or money
- ▶ Ask to meet the young person

Any or all of these warning signs can and should be shared with young people to make them aware of the dangers. Encourage young people to be curious. Why would a stranger want to talk to them? Why would they want pictures? Why would they want to meet up? The main thing to emphasise is that anyone a young person has met and only spoken to online is in fact a stranger. It is easy for a predator to lie about their identity, and their end goal is to have real-life access to a young person in order to abuse them.

GROOMING continued

It is vital that any event of online grooming is reported to relevant authorities. CEOP have a reporting system (www.ceop.police.uk), which anyone can use to report abuse. The police non-emergency number is a good resource also. Site administrators, particularly on Facebook, are good at investigating and suspending fake accounts. It is a good idea for the young person to keep screenshots or print screens of any activity with an unknown person online. Grooming is now punishable by law and is defined as communication with a child with the intention of meeting up for sex. An easy way for a young person to “check” is, if the other person suggests meeting up, tell them they will bring a parent or guardian. A genuine person shouldn’t have a problem with this but a predator will quickly refuse and may end all contact with the young person immediately. Young people should be told to NEVER meet up with someone they have only had online contact with.

There are ways for young people to protect themselves. They should ensure their security settings are appropriately set to “Friends Only”, they should only accept friend and follow requests from people they know in real life and they should never give out personal information (including pictures) to people they don’t know.

Video Resources on Online Grooming

Consequences:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hK5OeGeudBM>

Jigsaw:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_o8auwnJtqE

Tom’s Story:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qMtcqFU1RLQ>

Claire Thought She Knew:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z5WEnqnq1Hk>

Matt Thought He Knew:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JpyO5XlfCo>

Lucy and the Boy:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kwcl-VP3FYc>

IDEAS FOR ACTIVITIES

▶ RISKY BEHAVIOUR:

In groups, young people must rank statements in order of risk.

1. I have 2,500 friends on Facebook; I’m really popular.
2. I’d love to be a model, so I’ve sent some test shots to an agent online.
3. I only have 100 friends on Facebook, but it’s all people I know really well.
4. I speak to people on Omegle all the time; it’s a great way to meet new friends.
5. I added my phone number to my Facebook account to make my profile more secure.
6. I have made my Instagram account private, so people have to request to follow me.
7. I’ve been talking to my friend’s older brother on Whatsapp. He tells me I’m beautiful, and asked me for some naked pictures. I know him, so I can trust him with them.
8. Some guys I talk to on Xbox Live are having a gaming session soon. They’ve asked me to go along, so we can get some beers and play Call of Duty together.
9. I’ve been talking to a girl on Kik for a while. She wants to meet up and suggested I bring a friend to prove she’s not a paedophile.
10. I only use Snapchat with my friends; I don’t want any weirdos looking at my story.
11. I got a new car at the weekend, so I posted lots of pictures of it online to show it off to my friends.
12. I enjoy fashion blogging, and post a picture of the outfit I’m wearing on my Tumblr every day.

Encourage discussion and debate from the young people. Some scenarios are obviously risky (1, 2, 4, 8), but others present an element of risk that some young people wouldn’t recognise (5, 7, 9, 11, 12). Others are good practice for social media (3, 6, 10).

* *An alternative activity is to take each statement individually and have the group come up with reasons why it is/isn’t a risky behaviour.*

GROOMING continued

▶ TRUE OR FALSE

Young people must decide whether the following statements are true or false.

1. It is okay to have lots of friends on social media; this shows how popular you are.
 2. A safe adult will never talk online to young people they don't know in real life or ask you to send inappropriate pictures or videos.
 3. If someone tries to talk to you on Kik or Oovoo, it's rude to ignore them.
 4. You shouldn't talk to your parents or teachers if you have a problem online; they won't understand and you'll only get in trouble.
 5. If someone flatters you or pays you compliments, it means they're your friend.
 6. It's okay to accept gifts or money from someone you meet online.
 7. You should never put your phone number on a social media account.
 8. Only girls are targeted by online predators; boys don't need to worry about it.
 9. I've been talking to someone for over six months; they can't be a predator.
 10. You can report online abuse to the police.
1. **False.** The more people you have as "friends," the more people have access to your personal information and the higher the risk.
 2. **True.**
 3. **False.** Young people don't have to talk to anyone they don't want to; it's better to be "rude" and ignore a stranger than to put themselves in danger.
 4. **False.** Parents and teachers are there for support. Young people won't get in trouble for reporting online abuse; they haven't done anything wrong.
 5. **False.** Online predators often use flattery and compliments to gain a young person's trust.
 6. **False.** Often, this is a way for a predator to gain control over a young person. If the young person accepts a gift they are building up a debt, which the predator will demand "payment" for later on.
 7. **True.**
 8. **False.** Boys are targeted just as much as girls. See CEOP videos on "Tom and Matt" for good examples of boys being groomed online.
 9. **False.** Often grooming does take months and a predator will continue for as long as necessary.
 10. **True.** The police non-emergency service can assist with online abuse reports.

If an adult or young person has any questions or worries about online abuse, or any aspect of online safety, they can contact:

Nexus NI

www.nexusni.org

CEOP

www.ceop.police.uk

Think You Know

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

NSPCC

www.nspcc.org.uk