



Online Grooming

Online sexual exploitation or 'grooming' describes how people who want to sexually harm children and young people get close to them, and often their families, and gain their trust. Online grooming can be defined as someone (an adult) making contact with a child online with the motive of preparing them for sex either on or offline. Thankfully in reality it doesn't happen very often but when it does the repercussions are very serious.

What to look out for

It's very hard to be specific about the signs of online grooming or sexual exploitation. But the signs listed below may be an indication that something is wrong:

- Your child may seek more help and reassurance than usual
- They may become withdrawn and be very anxious
- They may be spending more time online than normal or they may have dramatically cut it down if they are scared
- They may switch off the screen quickly if a parent is approaching



- Talk to your child about who they are 'friends' with online. It can be a difficult conversation to have but, just as you warn them about the dangers of talking to strangers in the 'real' world, the same principle applies online. Remind them that if they don't know someone offline, then you can't always be sure they are who they say they are online and – especially for younger children – they shouldn't be friends on social networks with people they don't know in real life.
- Make sure their privacy settings on social networking sites are set to private: You can find help with this on Facebook at www.facebook.com/help/parents
- If you or your child is worried about someone's behaviour online then you can report suspicious behaviour to CEOP at <http://ceop.police.uk/safetycentre> In an emergency you can dial 999