

## 8. GROOMING

Grooming is a process used to prepare a child for sexual abuse.

An offender's aim when grooming will be to gain access to a child and build a relationship with that child. Grooming can take many different forms, from one-off contact which may include sexual advances, to a series of events over time.

Online it is easier for an offender to lie and gain one-to-one contact with a child, for example through a social networking or gaming site. They can share images or videos relating to their claimed common interests and build a 'relationship' away from any adult supervision.

Once a relationship is established an offender may then introduce sexual themes to the conversation, for example, asking the child about their sexual experiences, sharing pornography with them or asking them for sexual pictures of themselves. Different offenders will have different approaches so whereas this process may be very quick it can also take days, weeks or even months. Often an offender will attempt to get a child to meet them in the real world in order to abuse them. Increasingly some offenders are also persuading children to perform sexual acts on webcam.

### **What can parents and carers do to protect their child online?**

Parents and carers need to be mindful that part of the fun of being online is communicating and often sites are designed to do so with people you don't know. It is important to talk to your child about who they are friends with and how to manage these online relationships.

Look out for an unhealthy or changed pattern in internet usage. Has your child become more secretive about who they are talking to and where they conduct their online conversations? Talk to your child about the dangers of meeting 'online' acquaintances in the real world, explaining why you are concerned for their safety

### **Not sure where to start?**

1. Talk to your child about what sites they use, the friends they have, how they know them, how they communicate and the type of information they share.
2. Talk to your child about online grooming. Explain how easy it can be to lie online and the reasons why an adult may wish to contact them. It is always better to have talked about grooming before a perpetrator has tried to groom.
3. For some children the [NSPCC](#) 'Underwear rule' might be a good structure for you to start with.
4. Talk about their online friends. Ask them to think carefully about who they chat and share information with online, especially if they don't know them in the real world.
5. Let your child know that you are always there for support. Let them know that you understand how easy it can be to get into difficulties online. Get them to talk to you if anyone makes inappropriate/sexual comments and ensure they know that, no matter what's happened, you are there to help.
6. Learn how to report any inappropriate contact made to your child online. This can be done via the [CEOP](#) .
7. If someone has acted inappropriately towards your child, it may be sexual chat, being asked to do something that makes them feel uncomfortable or someone being insistent on meeting up, you must report it to [CEOP](#) . Our Child Protection Officer would always be willing to support you.

