

# ONLINE GROOMING

## WHAT IS IT?



FIRST PRINCIPLE

[norfolk.police.uk/firstprinciple](http://norfolk.police.uk/firstprinciple)  
[suffolk.police.uk/firstprinciple](http://suffolk.police.uk/firstprinciple)

## Statistics

- **Unknown 'Friends' :**  
19% of children will often add friends without knowing who they are and 34% will do this once or twice.
- **Scary People:**  
26% of children say they have come into contact with '*scary people*' online.
- **Fake Solicitation:**  
10% of children have encountered someone who seemed interested in them, but they were not who they said they were.
- **Meetups:**  
Just under 1 in 5 children have met up in real life with someone they only knew online.

Source: [Cybersurvey – In Their Own Words – The Digital Lives of Schoolchildren.](#)

## PREVENT CRIME PROTECT COMMUNITIES



**NORFOLK**  
CONSTABULARY  
*Our Priority is You*



**SUFFOLK**  
CONSTABULARY

## What is online grooming?

Online grooming is where someone befriends a child online and builds up their trust with the intention of exploiting them and causing them harm.

Harm caused by grooming can be sexual abuse, both in person and online, and exploitation to obtain sexually explicit images and videos of the child.

Grooming techniques could also be used as part of the radicalisation process or to obtain financial information from the child or their family.

Source: [Online grooming - Childnet](#)

Most people talk to others online as it is a great way of staying connected. However, it is important that children and young people are aware of the dangers and can recognise them.

## How can it happen?

Grooming can take place over a short or long period of time. It often starts out publicly on social media or in gaming chat but then usually moves across to a private chat.

Anyone could act as a groomer online, regardless of their age, gender or race. Groomers are very skilled at what they do and often befriend a child by appearing to have the same hobbies and interests as them. Using fake accounts and photos, they may also appear to be the same age as the child. However, not all groomers will choose to mask their age or gender. Some groomers may impersonate an aspirational figure such as a modelling scout, sports coach, celebrity or influencer, whilst others may use their age and experience to develop a 'mentor' type relationship with their victim.

A groomer often uses the same sites, games and apps as children in order to gain their trust and build a friendship. Children can be flattered at first by the attention given to them by this new 'online friend', particularly if they are offering support, showing understanding or giving validation. However, they may also seek to **manipulate**, **blackmail** and **control** the child, potentially isolating them from their friends and family.

It's important to remember that children may not understand or recognise they are

being or have been groomed or see their 'online friend' as untrustworthy or abusive.

Source: [Online grooming - Childnet](#)

*"I feel anxious about losing friends if I'm not on social media" Girl, 12*

Source: [Cybersurvey – In Their Own Words – The Digital Lives of Schoolchildren.](#)

## Where can it happen?

Online grooming can take place in a number of places. An example of these are listed below;

- Social networking websites;
- Instant messaging and live streaming apps;
- Photo sharing apps and sites, like Instagram;
- Chat rooms;
- Dating apps;
- Online gaming sites.

Source: [Online grooming | Childline](#)

NSPCC Net Aware is a guide to social media, apps and games. It is important that adults have a knowledge of these platforms in order to aid communication with children and young people.

**50% of children think 'sometimes or most of the time parents don't understand enough about online issues'**

Source: [Cybersurvey – In Their Own Words – The Digital Lives of Schoolchildren.](#)

## Who is at risk?

Any child who has **access to the internet** is at risk of being groomed online, regardless of their background, age, gender, race or location.

Some children may be more at risk due to other vulnerabilities and disabilities.

Source: [Online grooming - Childnet](#)

In 2020, nearly all children aged 5-15 (97%) went online via a device; an increase since 2019.

Source: [Ofcom – Children and parents media use and attitudes report 2020-21](#)

## Is my child being groomed?

Online grooming may be hard to identify even when it is happening in your own home. Children being groomed may be told not to talk to anyone about it or told to delete messages. However, there are still signs to be aware of (although a lot of these are quite common among teens) and look out for increased instances of:

- wanting to spend more and more time on the internet;
- being secretive about who they are talking to online and what sites they visit;
- switching screens when you come near the computer;

- possessing items – electronic devices or phones – you haven't given them;
- using sexual language, you wouldn't expect them to know;
- becoming emotionally volatile.

Source: <https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/online-grooming/learn-about-it/>

22% of children felt someone was trying to control or stalk them online.

Source: [Cybersurvey – In Their Own Words – The Digital Lives of Schoolchildren.](#)

## What can I do to protect my child?

For up to date guidance and resources to assist with you keeping your child safe online please see the following:

<https://www.childline.org.uk/>

<https://www.childnet.com/>

<https://www.internetmatters.org/>

<https://net-aware.org.uk>

<https://nspcc.org.uk>

## First Principle: Related links

Check out all of our Crime Prevention information using the following links or by using the QR code to take you to the First Principle Pages Alternatively go to our website at <https://www.suffolk.police.uk/> and look in the 1<sup>st</sup> Principle A-Z of Crime Prevention.

Allotment Security

Anti-Social Behaviour

ATM Security

Beach Hut Security

Boat Security

Building Site Security

Business Security

Caravan Security

Caravan Storage

Card Security

Catalytic Converters

Church Security

Cold Callers

Commercial CCTV

Counterfeit Banknotes

County Lines Advice

for Landlords

Cyber Crime

Cycle Security

Dangerous Dogs

Dog Fouling

Dog Theft

Domestic CCTV

Domestic Violence

Farm Security

Fraud Prevention

Grooming

Hate Crime

Heating Oil

Home Improvements

Home Security

Home Security for  
Tenants

Horses and Stables

Keyless Vehicles

Key Safe Security

Lock Snapping

Mopeds and Scooters

Motorcycle Security

Neighbour Disputes

Occupiers Liability

Personal Security

Power Tool Security

Products Brochure

Rural Crime

Security Alarms

Sheds and Garages

Social Media

Social Media for

Parents

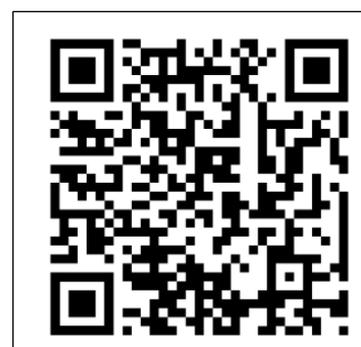
Suspicious Behaviour

Shoplifting

Taxi Driver Safety

Vehicle Security

Windows and Doors



### Other Links you might find helpful

Ask the Police  
Secured by Design  
Sold Secure

Crimestoppers  
0800 555 111

Victim Care  
0300 303 3705