



Live My Digital Parental Guide

Relationships & Grooming

What is online grooming and how does it occur?

Grooming happens when someone builds a friendship or romantic relationship with a child for the purposes of exploitation or sexual abuse.

Online groomers could be strangers, or someone they may know – a friend of a friend for example. Groomers use all sorts of tactics online to engage with children; this could be achieved by gaming with them, talking to them in chat rooms, by giving them compliments on their appearance on social media or in some cases by blackmailing them.

48%

of secondary school children have communicated with people they do not know when using social media

How are relationships built online?

Whilst we are used to hearing stories about adults meeting each other online, many are surprised to hear that young people are also using the internet, and social media in particular as a tool for flirting and seeking relationships.

At 13 years old, children are able to access dating apps such as Tinder to publically search for romantic connections. Social networks such as Snapchat, Facebook or WhatsApp allow young people to privately or publically exchange romantic communication through pictures, videos and text.



Jargon Buster

Tinder:

A location-based dating app that uses data from Facebook to facilitate communication between mutually interested users

Grindr:

A location-based dating app aimed at gay and bisexual men

Chatroulette:

A website that pairs people at random for webcam-based conversations

Omegle:

A website that also pairs people at random, but for text or webcam-based conversations

Tinderella:

An attractive woman discovered on Tinder

Ghosting:

Takes place when someone you've had a romantic interest in suddenly stops contact

Catfish:

People who fabricate online identities, often to build romantic connections

Groomer:

Someone who seeks to sexually harm a child

Sexting:

The act of sending or receiving sexually explicit content photos, messages or videos



What to do if you're concerned about relationships and grooming

Privacy settings on your child's online accounts should be set to a standard you're both happy with, to ensure strangers can't contact them online

Private information such as your child's home address, the school they go to, or their location should not be disclosed to people they don't trust. Remind them of the importance of not sharing this information

Talk to them about the dangers of grooming or speaking to strangers online, making them feel like they could come to you if they ever had any concerns or worries

Age limits on social networks, apps and games should be communicated to your child (eg. the Terms of Use on Instagram state that you must be at least 13 years old to use the service)

Escalate to your child's school and the police immediately if you have any suspicions that your child may have been groomed

Where to go for further information

There are some fantastic resources available to parents online that offer tips and advice on how to manage issues related to relationships and grooming. We recommend the following:

www.childline.org.uk

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.thinkuknow.co.uk

www.internetmatters.org

www.vodafone.com/content/parents

www.saferinternet.org.uk

www.childnet.com