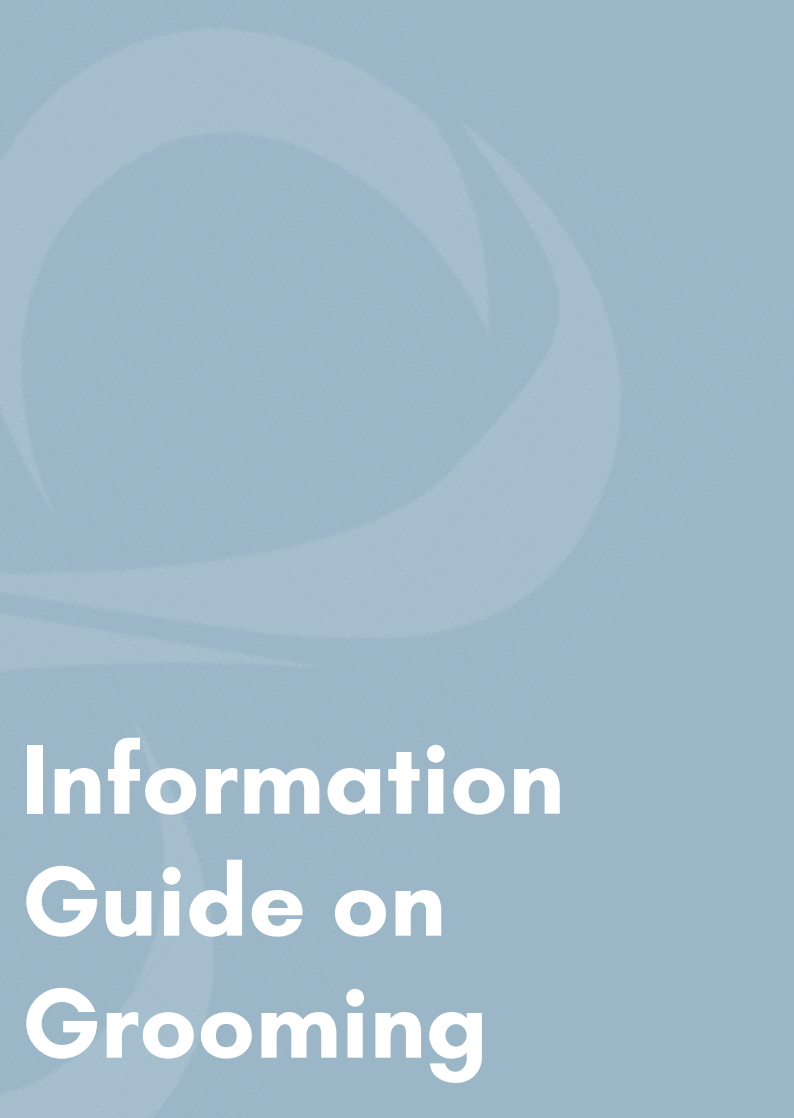




Information Guide on Grooming

What does the word 'grooming' mean?

Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person, so they are able to manipulate them and eventually abuse them. This process can take months or even longer.

People can gain someone's trust by:

- Buying them gifts
- Taking them on outings, holidays and trips
- Pretending to be someone they are not
- Using their professional status and position
- Offering advice and understanding
- Giving children attention

Once a groomer has established trust with the child or young person, they will further exploit them by isolating them from their friends and families. They will use their power and control to make the child become dependent on them and feel they have no choice but to do what the groomer wants them to do.

Groomers may also use secrets as a way to exert power over the child. Groomers may blackmail the child or make them feel ashamed and guilty to avoid them telling anyone about the abuse.

Groomers also use many manipulation strategies to entrap children and young people and persuade them to participate in sexual activities. Groomers may test the child's compliance through using reverse psychology or situation withdrawal, giving the child the impression that they are in charge of the situation.

Patterns and behaviours of grooming and child sexual exploitation

1. Physical contact

They will get you used to their touch over time. This may start out by: tickling, encouraging you to sit on their knee, hugging, rubbing your arms or touching other parts of your body, tucking your hair behind your ears. It can be really difficult to work out if what is happening is ok or not. If it feels uncomfortable, then it is probably not ok. Remember, just because it may be a family member who wants a hug it is ok to say, "I don't feel like a hug". It is your body, your choice.

2. Pushing boundaries

They do this to see what they can get you to do, it will usually start by asking for little things and then increase. It could be something as simple as "I think girls look so pretty with their hair up in a ponytail" "would you put your hair up for me?" Many times, it starts small and then increases.

3. Making you feel special

This could happen by buying gifts, taking you to places, driving you around, taking you to parties, providing alcohol and drugs, telling you how beautiful you are. Abusers may also tell you they love you, usually very quickly into the relationship.

4. Mirroring

They will copy your stories, your feelings, your likes and dislikes, so you will feel more connected to them. They will try to make you believe your relationship is perfect.

5. Encouraging and normalising secretive behaviour

They may say things like “They won’t understand, let’s keep this a secret” “I have bought you a phone, I know you have wanted one for ages, let’s not tell anyone as they might take it away” “If you tell anyone they will stop you seeing me”.

6. Desensitising

They may use sexual words or show you sexual images/ video’s. This is so you become used to anything related to sexual activity and are then less shocked by it and more likely to do sexual things when they ask for it.

7. Threats and blackmail

They may say things like “No one will believe you” “I’ll hurt your family” “If you tell anyone you’ll go to prison” “I’ll send the pictures to everyone”.

8. Guilt and manipulation

They may say things like “It was your choice” “no one made you do it” “you didn’t have a problem taking the phone, accepting my alcohol” “you clearly enjoyed it at the time” “Please don’t leave me, I’ll kill myself if you do”.

9. Pull away and then push back

They may then disappear/ghost you or pull back with less contact, or act like they are not interested and then come back. This is to make you want them more.

Organised exploitative gangs

With these gangs, they will often use young people to recruit other young people with the lure of exciting parties, drugs or alcohol. These groups may also use the boyfriend and the online model.

Groups that target young people specifically online

This involves groups in chat rooms on social media. They may encourage you to send sexual images or videos of yourself. They may also threaten you with exposing the images and videos or revealing personal conversations to family, friends or the community.

Peer on peer

Peer on peer grooming involves the exploitation of a young person by someone of a similar age to them. This could be someone from their school or from another circle of friends. It can often occur as a result of sexual exploitation online, in which the survivor is encouraged to share explicit images or dialogue with someone they think is a friend or acquaintance.

Myths around grooming and CSE

Myth or truth? - Child sexual exploitation is rare and doesn't happen where I live

MYTH! - CSE happens more often than people think, it is often hidden and is not always obvious. Knowing the signs of CSE can be really important in helping stop the continuation of CSE.

Myth or truth? - CSE only happens to young girls and women

MYTH! - CSE can happen to anyone of any gender. Boys and young men often find it harder to talk about their feelings or concerns.

Myth or truth? - CSE only happens to children who are in care, who come from a 'bad' family or are of a particular race, religion or economic background

MYTH! - CSE can happen to anyone of any religion, ethnicity and economic background. Young people who are deemed 'vulnerable' are more at risk of CSE however, any child can be a victim.

Myth or truth? - CSE only happens to older children

MYTH! - The average age of victims of CSE is 13, with the charity Barnardo's working with children as young as 10. Similarly, the interim report of the Children's Commissioner's Inquiry identified children are at greater risk between the ages of 4 and 19.

Myth or truth? - A lot of these exploited children are over 16 and have consented to sex

MYTH! - Even if a child appears to have consented to sexual acts this is not true consent as they are often pressured or manipulated into it.

Myth or truth? - CSE only takes one form

MYTH! - There are many forms of CSE as discussed in this booklet. It is important to remember that more than one form may be used.

Impacts of CSE

Grooming can have many short and long-term effects on the child or young person.

Psychological impacts:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Addiction
- Self-esteem
- Eating disorder
- PTSD
- Self-image
- Nightmares
- Flashbacks
- Attachment problems

Physical impacts:

- Physical injuries
- Pregnancy
- STIs
- Weight loss
- Sickness
- Self-harm
- General ill health
- Hair loss
- Addictions
- Poor diet

Social impacts:

- Isolation from friends/family
- Education
- Hobbies and interests
- Risky behaviour
- Difficulty making and keeping relationships
- Avoiding people or situations
- Moving areas

Economic impacts:

- Financial instability
- Stealing
- Unable to work
- Housing problems
- Trouble supporting children
- Difficulty accessing mainstream education
- Drug/alcohol 'debt'

What is consent?

Consenting to performing sexual activities or having someone's penis in your mouth, anus or vagina means agreeing to it through choice with the freedom and capacity to do so.

It is **NOT** consent if:

- You are asleep, drunk or under the influence of drugs
- Pressured, manipulated, tricked or scared into saying yes
- Young or too vulnerable to consent freely or with capacity

It is important to remember that consent can be withdrawn at any time including during the sexual act itself. It is also key to remember that just because you consented to something once does not mean you have consented to it again, consent should be sought before every sexual encounter. If someone is not sure if consent has been given, they should always check with you.

Further help and support

RASAC provides further information via our website and helpline service which can be contacted via calling or email | 0300 303 4787 | www.rasac.co.uk | www.chyps.co.uk | helpline@rasac.co.uk

Rape Crisis England and Wales | 0808 500 2222 | 24/7 Support line | www.rapecrisis.org.uk | Live chat via their website

CEOP - <https://www.ceop.police.uk/ceop-reporting/>

The Police - call 999 if the child is in immediate danger or 101 if you think a crime has been committed.

NSPCC | Call [0808 800 5000](tel:08088005000) | email help@nspcc.org.uk

NSPCC Education - is a dedicated helpline for children and young people who have experienced abuse at school. Report Abuse in Education on 0800 136 663 or email help@nspcc.org.uk.

Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre Kirklees, Calderdale and Wakefield

PO Box 230
Huddersfield
HD1 5UY

Helpline: 0300 303 4787

Websites: www.rasac.co.uk | www.chyps.co.uk

Email: helpline@rasac.co.uk

