

Grooming:

What is child sex abuse?

A child sex abuser (commonly referred to as a paedophile) is someone who is sexually attracted to a child or children and acts upon those desires.

Why do child sex abusers like to use the internet to contact children?

Child sex abusers find the internet an easier place to participate in a range of child sexual abuse activity including contact with children due to the anonymity of the medium. They will often lie and pretend to be younger than they are or people other than themselves, and find a sense of security by operating from the safety of their own homes. They have been known to set up bogus email accounts and chat personas to mask their identity online.

What are children at risk of, from child sex abusers, online?

There are a number of actions which these adults will engage in online. These include:

- Swapping child abuse images in chat areas or through instant messenger with other adults or young people and forming networks with other child abusers to share tips on how to groom more effectively and how to avoid being caught.
- Swapping personal information of children that they have collected with other abusers.
- Participating in online communities such as blogs, forums and chat rooms with the intention to groom children, collect sexually explicit images and meet them to have sex.

What is online grooming?

The Sexual Offences Act 2003 defines online grooming as: "A course of conduct enacted by a suspected paedophile, which would give a reasonable person cause for concern that any meeting with a child arising from the conduct would be for unlawful purposes."

Often, adults who want to engage children in sexual acts, or talk to them for sexual gratification will seek out young people who desire friendship. They will often use a number of grooming techniques including building trust with the child through lying, creating different personas and then attempting to engage the child in more intimate forms of communication including compromising a child with the use of images and webcams. Child sex abusers will often use blackmail and guilt as methods of securing a meeting with the child.