Grooming

Making you aware of the potential dangers online!

What Is It?

By definition grooming is when either a stranger or a known person builds an emotional connection with a child or teenager to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking.

Children and teenagers can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - often a family member, friend or professional.

Groomers can be male or female and of any age.

Many children and young people don't understand that they have been groomed or that what has happened is technically abuse.

Groomers often now use popular social media sites, apps or games to try to access children and teenagers.

What Are The Signs?

The signs of grooming are not always obvious. However the most recognized signs of grooming are:

- Being very secretive, especially about their online activity (websites/apps use).
- They may have an older boyfriend or girlfriend.
- They tend to go to unusual places to meet their friends.
- They have possession of new things such as clothes or mobile phones that they can't or won't explain how they got them.
- They have access to drugs and alcohol.

They may show or become:

- Withdrawn/anxious/clingy
- Depressed /aggressive or obsessive behaviour
- Sleeping problems/eating disorders
- soils clothes/wetting the bed/nightmares
- Truancy/school absences
- drugs/alcohol
- self-harming/suicidal

How Does Grooming Work?

Flattery: An abuser will do whatever they can to make their victim feel special, such as flattery and buying gifts.

Sexual chat: Abusers may try to get young people to talk about sex. It is illegal for an adult to have sex with anyone under 16.

Sharing intimate pictures: once private pictures have been shared online they can be copied and shared openly across the web. Abusers may threaten to show images to others if the victim does not do what they want (blackmail) .

Keeping secrets: Abusers might ask for conversations to be kept secret and tell the victim that they will be in trouble if they tell others .

Mood swings: People who abuse try to control their victims by flattering them and giving them lots of attention.

Broken webcam: It is easy to record and fake a webcam feed. Sometimes who they see is not always the same person at the other end.

What Can You Do To Help?

- Ask them questions about do they think everyone online is who they say they are.
- Check settings on social media accounts and gaming accounts. They should be set to private.
- Ask them about their friends, especially where they met them.
- Monitor online activity—chat rooms, social media and game play.

Websites For Support

https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/grooming/

www.ceop.police.uk

www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC helpline telephone number: 0808 800 5000

News Story: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-england-essex-45576031/breck-bednar-gamer-teen-s-mum-backs-grooming-risk-