



Safeguarding Newsletter

July 2019

Grooming is often discovered not disclosed - so how can teachers spot the signs?

Since the NSPCC successfully campaigned for a new law to make it illegal for adults to send sexual messages to children, over 5,000 online grooming offences have been recorded by police forces in England and Wales*. Anyone can groom another person - it doesn't matter whether they're the same age or much older, male or female. In many cases, children and young people know the person who is grooming them. It might be a neighbour, a coach or a family friend. And grooming doesn't just take place online. Children and young people may speak to people online who they then meet in person. Or they might be groomed by someone they know and stay in touch through text messages and social media. Any child or young person can be groomed, regardless of their background or family circumstances.

Grooming is by its very nature secretive. People who groom children and young people build up their trust over time and, often, they may groom the family as well. In so many cases, grooming is discovered and not disclosed. Children and young people may not speak out because they feel scared, embarrassed or ashamed. They may not even realise that what's happening to them is wrong.

What to look for

Grooming is often discovered because someone else spots or hears something worrying - whether that's a friend, teacher, parent or other family member. So, if grooming is often discovered rather than disclosed, how can we empower teachers and other school staff to make sure they can recognise the signs and take action?

If a child starts behaving in an unusual manner then you know this may be a cause for concern. These signs can often be obvious. For example a child who is normally quiet becomes much more outgoing (or vice versa), grades may drop or they might start using language that they wouldn't usually. But what about when the signs aren't obvious, how can teachers be aware of what's happening?

Of course, teachers don't see what's happening outside of school. And it's all too easy to explain behaviour in other ways. So if a studious pupil is very tired in lessons, you might think that they'd been up late doing homework, or watching television. But it's also possible that they've been receiving messages from someone who is blackmailing or grooming them late at night. Or you might notice that a child who was really popular in the playground has become much more isolated. And it's these behaviour changes that are key to helping to spot when something is wrong.

By being alert to any changes in behaviour and acting on any concerns that you may have, we can continue to ensure that grooming is discovered. And we can make sure that children and young people get the help and support they need.



If you are worried about a child during the school holiday's please contact:

**Hannah Dell, Additional Safeguarding Lead
01494 815211**

Thames Valley Police 101 or 999 in an emergency

Social Care out of hours: 0800 999 7677 or 01296 383962

First Response Team 0845 4600 001

NSPCC 0808 800 5000

Childline 0800 1111

SAFEGUARDING AND SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) KCSIE guidance considered the following groups to be at greater risk – Children and young people who:

- Are disabled and have specific additional needs
- Have SEN
- Are young carers
- Show signs of engaging in anti-social behaviour
- Live in challenging circumstances, for example, with adults with issues around mental health, substance abuse or domestic violence.

They go on to say –

Any child may benefit from early help, but all school and college staff should be particularly alert to the potential need for early help for a child who:

- Is disabled and has specific additional needs
- Has special educational needs (whether or not they have a statutory Education, Health Care Plan).

Children with disabilities and SEN may have an increased vulnerability to abusive situations because

- They may need intimate care and may have cognitive impairments
- A lack of effective communication skills to share concerns and a reliance on adults can also be important factors
- Over trusting