

It is important for professionals to understand the different ways in which children can be groomed for exploitation. Early identification of a child being groomed should ensure support is provided at the earliest opportunity and prevent further harm and abuse.

Each criminal group or individual will groom children in different ways. **This is not a linear process** and professionals need to be alert to changes in models of grooming and exploitation.

Remember, children can be groomed online and in person. Perpetrators may simultaneously use online and physical spaces to groom and exploit children. Children also tell us they don't see a separation between their online and offline lives. Therefore we shouldn't treat these as two separate binaries, but instead recognise their interconnection.

The grooming process

Target

- Observing children
- Finding out their vulnerabilities, needs and wants
- Gaining and developing trust
- Manipulating children to recruit them
- Glamourising their lifestyle
- Sharing information with others in the group

Test

- Test out children's loyalty
- Offer them protection
- Give a sense of belonging
- Might create a dependency
- Introduce them to more established members
- Ask for favours
- Ask to recruit others

Trap

- Experiences of physical, sexual and psychological violence
- Trafficking
- Humiliation and control
- Reinforced dependency
- Blackmail
- Debt bondage
- Isolation from family, friends and society