

# RIVERMEAD INCLUSIVE TRUST

## PARENTS AND CARERS SAFEGUARDING NEWSLETTER

Edition 3



inspiring the journey for  
independence together

### Welcome from the Team

The Rivermead Inclusive Trust Team are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people in our community.

We believe it is important that everybody understands their safeguarding responsibilities and want you to stay up to date with recent changes and learn about how we take care of your children, because they are important to use too.

We are committed to working with pupils, parents, carers and community partners to support them with the ever-increasing range of new and unique challenges that we all face in today's world.



### Check out our safeguarding pages on the school websites.

Rivermead: <https://www.rivermead.org.uk/information-for-parentscarers/917.html>

Hoo St Werburgh and Marlborough Centre: [Safeguarding - Hoo St Werburgh Primary School & Marlborough Centre \(hoo-st-werburgh.medway.sch.uk\)](http://hoo-st-werburgh.medway.sch.uk)

Walderslade Primary School: [Walderslade Primary School - Safeguarding \(walderslade-pri.medway.sch.uk\)](http://walderslade-pri.medway.sch.uk)

Academy of Woodlands: [The Academy of Woodlands - Safeguarding](http://theacademyofwoodlands.com)

Dear Parents/Carers,

Welcome to the third edition of the Rivermead Inclusive Trust Safeguarding Newsletter for Parents and Carers. It aims to keep you updated with essential information regarding safeguarding topics and inform you on how to keep your children safe both inside and outside of school.

This newsletter will explore the following safeguarding areas; Safer Internet, Prevent, and Grooming

If you have any questions regarding the information in this newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact the lead Designated Safeguarding Officer within your child's setting.

## Schools approach to teaching Online Safety

The Rivermead Inclusive Trust schools understand that using online services is an important aspect of raising educational standards, promoting children/pupils/students achievement, and enhancing teaching and learning. The use of online services is embedded throughout the school, therefore, there are a number of controls in place to ensure the safety of learners and staff.

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable, but they can be categorised into four areas of risk:

- **Content:** Being exposed to illegal, inappropriate, or harmful material, e.g. pornography, fake news, self-harm, suicide, and discriminatory or extremist views.
- **Contact:** Being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users, e.g., peer pressure, commercial advertising, and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit children.
- **Conduct:** Personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm, e.g., sending and receiving explicit messages, and cyberbullying.
- **Commerce:** Risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing/or financial scams.



## Prevent Radicalisation and Extremism by Acting Early

It can be hard to know what to do if you're worried someone close is expressing extreme views or hatred, which could lead to them harming themselves or others. Working with other organisations, the [police](#) protect vulnerable people from being exploited by extremists through a Home Office programme called [Prevent](#).

Act early and tell us about your concerns in confidence. You won't be wasting our time and you won't ruin lives, but you might save them.

### DOs and DON'Ts

- Do be aware of any negative influences online and offline.
- Do keep an eye out for any changes big or small that are taking place with increasing intensity.
- Do have that conversation with the person you are worried about, even when it's hard to know where to start or what to say.
- Do trust your instincts and if you are worried seek help and advice.
- Do speak to other people you trust - like schools or community leaders about your concerns.
- Do act early and tell us, so together we can support the person you care about move away from extremism.

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- Do not keep your worries to yourself. You're not alone - together with our partners, we're here to help.
  - Don't think you can't make a difference - you can by acting early and sharing your concerns.
  - Don't leave things, if you're concerned seek help.
  - Don't be afraid to contact us in confidence and tell us your concerns. You won't be wasting our time and you won't ruin lives. But you could save them.

## Tips for Talking

If you're worried about someone close becoming radicalised or holding extreme views, it can be difficult to know how to start a conversation. Here are some ways to help you make that start but don't feel you need to take this step before calling us.

- The best way is to start off by asking a question and then listening to them answer.
- Try and bring them on board first and challenge them later.
- Create a space and the opportunity for them to talk.
- Do not try and do a counter-narrative, even though you might find their views offensive, let them express themselves.
- Next time say you want to explore their views in more detail and take an aspect of what they are saying and counter it with a different viewpoint (could be historical or a theological context).
- Try and engage in healthy debate.
- Seek help and support.

## Groomed, Radicalised, Gone

The complexities of radicalisation when a child engages in potential terrorism are explored and critiqued in this short documentary by the BBC. It comments on Rhianan Rudd who at 15 became the youngest girl charged with terror offences in the UK but took her own life in a children's home in May 2022. It was later recognised that she was exploited and groomed herself.

BBC News investigates her plight and explores the issues of how the police and other agencies dealt with her case. The link to the short programme is available here [BBC iPlayer - The Big Cases - Groomed, Radicalised, Gone](#)

# Share a concern

Call the ACT Early Support Line on  
0800 011 3764, in confidence, to share your concerns  
with our specially trained officers. The Support Line is  
open 9:00am – 5:00pm every day.

[Share a concern](#)

## Staying Safe Online

Young people can see all kinds of things online via social media and through online games. The popularity of online gaming has given extremists more opportunities to make their narratives sound more mainstream and reach out and radicalise others.

Radicalisers use techniques to groom people and draw them in and might even seem or look harmless to start with.

It is not easy to challenge a young person who wants their privacy- and your trust. But it's important to find out who they might be coming into contact with online. Have the conversation.

Be vigilant and find out who they might be coming into contact with online.

### [Online reporting form](#)



# Grooming

## What is grooming?

Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them.

Children and young people who are groomed can be **sexually abused**, **exploited** or **trafficked**.

Anybody can be a groomer, no matter their age, gender or race. Grooming can take place over a short or long period of time - from weeks to years. Groomers may also build a relationship with the young person's family or friends to make them seem trustworthy or authoritative.

## Types of grooming

Children and young people can be groomed online, in person or both - by a stranger or someone they know. This could be a family member, a friend or someone who has targeted them - like a teacher, faith group leader or sports coach. When a child is groomed online, groomers may hide who they are by sending photos or videos of other people. Sometimes this'll be of someone younger than them to gain the trust of a "peer". They might target one child online or contact lots of children very quickly and wait for them to respond.

The relationship a groomer builds can take different forms. This could be:

- a romantic relationship
- as a mentor
- an authority figure
- a dominant and persistent figure

A groomer can use the same sites, games and apps as young people, spending time learning about a young person's interests and use this to build a relationship with them. Children can be groomed online through:

- social media networks
- text messages and messaging apps, like WhatsApp
- email
- text, voice and video chats in forums, games, and apps.

Whether online or in person, groomers can use tactics like:

- pretending to be younger
- giving advice or showing understanding
- buying gifts
- giving attention
- taking them on trips, outings, or holidays.

Groomers might also try and isolate children from their friends and family, making them feel dependent on them and giving the groomer power and control over them. They might use blackmail to make a child feel guilt and shame or introduce the idea of 'secrets' to control, frighten and intimidate.

It is important to remember that children and young people may not understand they've been groomed. They may have complicated feelings, like loyalty, admiration, love, as well as fear, distress and confusion.

### **Signs of grooming**

It can be difficult to tell if a child is being groomed - the signs are not always obvious and may be hidden. Older children might behave in a way that seems to be "normal" teenage behaviour, masking underlying problems.

#### **Some of the signs you might see include:**

- being very secretive about how they are spending their time, including when online
- having an older boyfriend or girlfriend
- having money or new things like clothes and mobile phones that they can't or won't explain
- underage drinking or drug taking
- spending more or less time online or on their devices
- being upset, withdrawn or distressed
- [sexualised behaviour](#), language or an understanding of sex that is not appropriate for their age
- spending more time away from home or going missing for periods of time.

A child is unlikely to know they have been groomed. They might be worried or confused and less likely to speak to an adult they trust. If you're worried about a child and want to talk to them, we have advice on [having difficult conversations](#).

### **Effects of grooming**

Grooming can have both short and long-term effects. The impact of grooming can last a lifetime, no matter whether it happened in person, online or both.

A child or young person might have difficulty sleeping, be anxious or struggle to concentrate or cope with schoolwork. They may become withdrawn, uncommunicative, and angry or upset.

### **Who is at risk**

Any child is at risk of being groomed. And it's important to remember that both boys and girls can be groomed.

Children who are groomed online could be abused by someone they know. They could also be abused by someone who commits a one-off act or a stranger who builds a relationship with them.

Some children are more at risk of grooming, particularly those who are vulnerable. Children in care, with disabilities or who are neglected can be targeted by groomers. Groomers will exploit

any vulnerability to increase the likelihood a child or young person will become dependent on them and less likely to speak out.

### **Report grooming**

CEOP make reporting online grooming easy. Whether you're a parent, carer, worried adult or young person, you can make a [CEOP report online](#).

You can also contact your local child protection services or the police to report your concerns about any type of grooming - whether it's happening online, in person or both.

It's important to remember that it's against the law to make or share images of child abuse. If you see a video or photo that shows a child being abused, don't comment, like or share it. Instead, you can report it to:

- the website it is on
- the police

Worried about how to support a young person who has had a sexual image or video of themselves shared online? If they're under 18, they can use Childline and the Internet Watch Foundation's discreet [Report Remove](#) tool to see if it can be taken down. Young people can get support from Childline throughout the process.

## **Useful Resources For Further Information**

The following websites are recommended links for parents/cares. They contain huge amounts of useful resources on general online safety advice, to specific concerns or targeted support for more vulnerable children:

- [Internet Matters](#)
- [NCA-CEOP: Thinkuknow](#)
- [Childnet](#)
- NSPCC [Online Safety](#)
- [Parent Zone](#)
- [Parents Protect](#)



## Worried about a child or young person?



If you have concerns that a child or young person living in Medway is suffering from harm please phone **01634 334 466** or the 24-hour emergency number **03000 419 191**

Medway Children's Safeguarding Partnership <https://www.medwayscp.org.uk/mscb/>

If you have concerns about a child, you can also phone:

NSPCC on **0808 800 5000**

Child Line on **0800 1111**

