

Unwanted grooming - the warning signs

Socialising online can be a great way for kids to build friendships, but it can also put them at risk.

Unwanted contact is any type of online communication that lead them into a situation where they might do something they regret. This can happen even if they initially welcomed the contact. It can come from strangers, online 'friends' your child has not met face-to-face, or from someone they actually know.

Warning signs for your kids

Encourage your kids to be wary if an online 'friend':

- asks a lot of questions about personal information soon after meeting
- starts asking them for favours and does things in return — abusers often use promises, gifts and favours to gain trust
- wants to keep the relationship secret — online groomers typically try to keep their relationships with their targets extremely private from the beginning, asking for it to be something 'special' just between them
- contacts them frequently and in different ways, like texting, through Instagram or online chat services
- asks them things like who else uses their computer or which room their computer is in
- compliments them on their appearance or body or asks things like, "have you ever been kissed"?
- insists on meeting — tries to make them feel guilty or even threatens them if they are unwilling.