

# Safer Internet Day 6th February 2024

Children and vulnerable adults can be harmed online. There are risks of radicalisation, exploitation, bullying, sexual abuse, and financial and material abuse.

To mark Safer Internet Day 2024, the Safeguarding Partnership has Produced this briefing to raise awareness of the risks and of how you can help to safeguard children and adults from online harms.

## In this briefing:

- Key Messages for Practice
- Online radicalisation and the Prevent Duty
- Professionals Online Safety Helpline
- Online Grooming and Sexual Abuse
- Safeguarding Adults and Children with Complex Needs and Disabilities.

## Key messages for your practice

The online activity of children, young people and vulnerable adults should always be considered as part of any assessment. Online activity can be just as influential on safety and wellbeing as face to face interactions.

Ask questions and be curious about people's online lives.

Explicitly explore what devices people have access to and what they do on them.

Explore with parents and carers what safety mechanisms are in place - this matters just as much in residential placements as it does in the family home.

Explore how much children, young people and vulnerable adults understand about the issues they may face online.

The more isolated someone is, the more they may rely on online contact for social and emotional support. This may leave them more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.

If you notice a change in behaviour or signs of distress, remember this might be related to online experiences. Ask!

**Online abuse is a safeguarding concern for children and for vulnerable adults.**

If you are worried about a child's safety report it to the MASH Team

If you are worried about an adult with care and support needs report it to adult protection and safeguarding

# Online Radicalisation

Radicalisation is a process by which individuals, often young people, move from supporting moderate mainstream views to supporting extreme ideological views. This process can occur online through exposure to and engagement with violent ideological propaganda, or offline through extremist networks. Radicalisation makes those at risk more likely to support terrorism and violent acts of extremism, and possibly even commit such criminal acts themselves.

Anyone can be radicalised but there are some factors which may make a person more vulnerable. These include:

- being easily influenced or impressionable
- having low self-esteem or being isolated
- feeling that rejection, discrimination or injustice is taking place in society experiencing community tension amongst different groups
- being disrespectful or angry towards family and peers
- having a strong need for acceptance or belonging
- experiencing grief such as loss of a loved one.

## Online Risks

- Radicalisers use techniques to groom people and draw them in and might even seem or look harmless to start with.
- Be vigilant and find out who children, young people and vulnerable adults might be coming into contact with online, and what they are seeing, hearing and talking about.
- Young people can see all kinds of things online via social media and through online gaming. The popularity of online gaming has given extremists more opportunities to make their narratives sound more mainstream and reach out and radicalise others.
- Extremist groups, of all ideologies, utilise social media platforms and internet forums, which they know are full of people reaching out online to combat feelings of isolation and loneliness, stress, anxiety or rejection.

## Preventing Terrorism

The Government has in place a counter-terrorism strategy called CONTEST. Prevent is one of the strands of CONTEST, which aims to prevent people from becoming or supporting terrorists. The strategy provides a stronger focus on safeguarding and supporting those vulnerable to radicalisation with tailored support and multiagency risk management.

If you are concerned about a child or vulnerable person being vulnerable to radicalisation, then please contact your local Prevent lead:

Emily.Knight@haverling.gov.uk or 01708433082

Statutory guidance

**Revised Prevent duty guidance: for  
England and Wales**

Updated 1 April 2021



GOV.UK

Guidance

**Understanding and identifying  
radicalisation risk in your education  
setting**

Published 24 October 2022

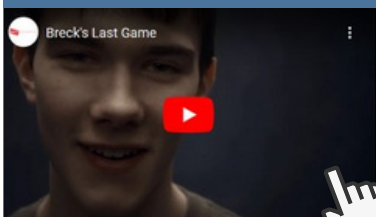
# Online Grooming and Sexual Abuse of Adults and Children

Both adults and children are at risk of online grooming. Adults with care and support needs and children are at higher risk of online grooming than the wider population. Grooming can be for sexual exploitation, sexual abuse, child criminal exploitation, financial abuse, radicalisation or predatory marriage.

**When you are assessing risks around grooming or sexual abuse, think about people's online lives, in addition to their in-person relationships.**

- Ask questions about online contacts and activity
- Find out how much time they spend online
- Talk about the risks of sharing private images online
- Talk about the difficulties of identifying people online
- Remind people that sharing nude or indecent images online, even if it is a friend, sibling, boyfriend/girlfriend, can be a criminal offence.
- Support people to understand how their own behaviour may harm or impact others too.
- Develop your own knowledge of how and why young and vulnerable people engage in technology assisted harmful sexual behaviour

## Breck Bednar's Story: Grooming in Online Gaming Communities



Over the course of a year, Breck was groomed online by an 18-year-old man through an online gaming community. The groomer used lies, manipulation and false promises to gain Breck's trust. In 2014, Breck was murdered by his online groomer. The Breck Foundation provides a range of resources to help parents and professionals reduce the risk of harm through online grooming.

- Boys can be groomed and sexually exploited too.
- Effective and creative education for children around safety in online gaming is vital.



NSPCC have prepared a guide to recognising and responding to the risks of child grooming. Grooming can happen in many contexts, including online.



HELPLINE

### Professionals Online Safety Helpline

Supporting professionals working with children and young people, with any online safety issue they may be having

CALL  
0344 381 4772\*

EMAIL  
helpline@safelnternet.org.uk

\*Calls cost the same as standard landline starting 9p or 10p if your phone tariff offers inclusive calls to landlines, calls to 0300 numbers will also be included.

The Children's Society

The Children's Society has resources and guidance to support you in understanding and safeguarding children from online grooming and all types of related abuse.

Stop It Now!

UK & IRELAND

Helping prevent child sexual abuse

Around one-third of child sexual abuse is carried out by under-18s and online harm is a growing problem as young people's use of technology has increased. To combat these issues, the Lucy Faithful Foundation launched the Risk of Online Sexual Abuse project.

# Safeguarding Adults and Children With Complex Needs and Disabilities

People with complex needs and disabilities face a higher risk of online abuse than the wider population. There is an increased vulnerability to all forms of online abuse including cyber-bullying, sexual abuse and exploitation, other forms of criminal exploitation, radicalisation, financial abuse and online scams.

## Resources for



These resources from the UK Safer Internet Centre explore the challenges that neurodiverse young people may face online with regards to rigid thinking, discerning who or what is truthful online and situations that can lead to strong emotions.

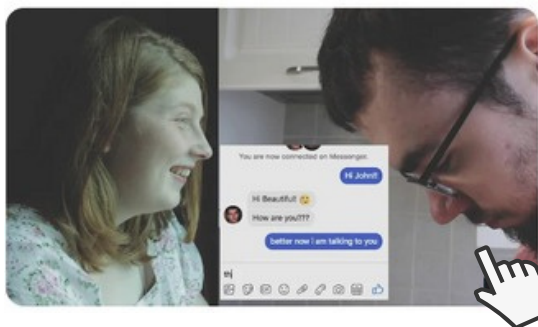


If you are concerned about fraud, including online scams, impacting a vulnerable adult or child report it to Action Fraud



foundation for people with learning disabilities

Here is an easy read guide to support people to stay safe on social media.



This short film illustrates the risks and motivations of people with Learning Disabilities engaging in online relationships

