

Shetland Child Protection Committee

Safeguarding Children and Young People in Shetland

Explore online together

Ask your child to show you their favorite things to do online, and show an interest in what they do - just like you would offline. This will give you a much better idea of what they're getting up to.

Children don't think of people they've met online through social networking and online games as strangers, they're just online friends. So it's important to keep track of who your child's talking to. Ask them questions like:

- Who do they know that has the most online friends?
- How can they know so many people?
- How do they choose who to become friends with online?

Explain to your child that it's easy for people to lie about themselves online, like their age, for example, because you have never met them.

You could also become 'friends' with your child so you can see their profile and posts but your child may not want to 'friend' you, especially as they get older. Agree that your child can 'friend' a trusted adult like an aunt or uncle so they can let you know if they see anything worrying on your child's profile.

Online line grooming

Groomers no longer need to meet children in real life to abuse them.

Increasingly, groomers are sexually exploiting their victims by persuading them to take part in online sexual activity.

Groomers can use social media sites, instant messaging apps including teen dating apps, or online gaming platforms to connect with a young person or child.

They can spend time learning about a young person's interests from their online profiles and then use this knowledge to help them build up a relationship.

Groomers don't always target a particular child. Sometimes they will send messages to hundreds of young people and wait to see who responds.

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It's easy for groomers to hide their identity online - they may pretend to be a child and then chat and become 'friends' with children they are targeting. If they think it is 'safe enough', will then try to isolate their victim and may use flattery and promises of gifts, or threats and intimidation in order to achieve some control

You should assume that if a site or app is popular with young people then **people with a sexual interest in children will try to use** it to communicate with them. This doesn't mean you should panic or not let your children use them, simply that they should be aware that there can be risks on any platform they are using.

Nudes /Nude Selfies

Nudes are when someone shares sexual, naked or semi-naked images or videos of themselves or others, or sends sexually explicit messages. This can be seen as harmless, but creating or sharing explicit images of a child is illegal, even if the person doing it is a child. **A young person is breaking the law if they:**

- take an explicit photo or video of themselves or a friend under the age of 18
- share an explicit image or video of a youth, even if it's shared between peers of the same age
- Possess, download or store an explicit image or video of a youth under the age of 18, even if the youth gave their permission for it to be created.

There are many reasons why a young person may want to send a naked or semi-naked picture, video or message to someone else.

- joining in because they think that 'everyone is doing it'
- boosting their self-esteem
- exploring their sexual feelings
- to get attention and connect with new people on social media
- flirting with others and testing their sexual identity
- **they may find it difficult to say no if somebody asks them for an explicit image**, especially if the person asking is persistent

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Use parental controls to filter, restrict, monitor or report content

You can **set up parental controls** to stop your child from seeing unsuitable or harmful content online:

- Internet Service Providers (ISPs), such as Virgin Media, TalkTalk, Sky or BT, provide controls to help you filter or restrict content.
- Laptops, phones, tablets, game consoles and other devices that connect to the internet have settings to activate parental controls.
- Software packages are available - some for free - that can help you filter, restrict or monitor what your child can see online.

As your child gets older you can change the level of control that you use. If your child asks you to remove the controls completely, and you are happy to do so, make sure you agree what behavior is acceptable online first.

For more information about the work of the Shetland Child Protection Committee visit :-

<http://www.safershetland.com>

Below is a list of extremely well presented websites, excellent for demystifying children's internet use and help for when any problems occur:

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

<http://www.whoishostingthis.com/resources/e-safety/#child-friendly-browsing>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>

To check the suitability of the apps your child uses visit:

<https://www.net-aware.org.uk/>

<https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>