

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about ONLINE GROOMING

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

Online grooming is when someone builds a relationship with a child or young person online to gain their trust for the purpose of sexual abuse, exploitation, radicalisation, or criminal activity – such as county lines or financial scams. According to the NSPCC, police in the UK recorded over 7,000 offences involving sexual communication with a child in a single year – an increase of 89% since 2017/18.

STRANGERS USING FAKE IDENTITIES

Groomers often pose as children or teenagers online to build trust. They may create convincing fake profiles, share photos stolen from real people, or mimic the interests of the child. By pretending to be someone their age, they make conversations feel safe and reliable. Over time, they may ask for personal details, photos, or suggest meeting in person, exposing children to significant emotional and physical harm.

EXPLOITATION THROUGH GIFTS AND FLATTERY

To gain trust quickly, groomers often send gifts, gaming credits, or money. Alongside material offerings, they use exclusive compliments, affection, and attention to create emotional dependency. These tactics make children feel valued and special, lowering their defences. Once trust is secured, groomers may escalate their requests, often asking for photos or private conversations, making the child feel pressured or obligated to continue.

GROUP CHATS AS HIDDEN PATHWAYS

Unmonitored group chats on platforms like WhatsApp or Discord provide a cover for groomers. They can watch how children interact, identify those who seem vulnerable, and then move conversations into private messaging. This transition makes detection difficult for trusted adults. The seemingly harmless group setting often masks the presence of predators, giving children a false sense of security.

THE RISE OF SEXTORTION

Sextortion involves pressuring children into sharing explicit content, then blackmailing them for more. Offenders may claim to have hacked a child's device, threaten to share images with friends or family, or demand money. Many victims remain silent out of fear and shame. This grooming crime is particularly dangerous because children often feel trapped, believing there's no safe way to escape the situation.

GAMING PLATFORMS AS GROOMING GATEWAYS

Games like Roblox, Fortnite, or Call of Duty, which include live chat features, are frequent targets for groomers. Conversations often begin casually during gameplay and can become manipulative over time. Groomers may offer in-game gifts, credits, or exclusive add-ons to build rapport. Children using headsets or private chat features are especially at risk, as conversations are harder for adults to monitor.

CRIMINAL & RADICALISATION RISKS

Grooming is not always sexual. Some offenders manipulate children into criminal activities such as drug running or online fraud. Others attempt to radicalise young people with extremist ideologies. Groomers often use fear, money, shame, or promises of belonging to control their victims. These forms of exploitation can be just as harmful as sexual grooming, and often leave lasting psychological and social consequences.

Advice for Parents & Educators

KEEP CONVERSATIONS REGULAR

Rather than having one "big talk" about online safety, weave conversations into everyday life. Ask questions about children's online friendships and interests. Share real-life examples to make discussions relatable and encourage honesty instead of secrecy. When children feel comfortable discussing their digital lives, they are far more likely to share concerns or admit when something feels wrong, reducing the chance of risky interactions going unnoticed.

UNDERSTAND THE PLATFORMS CHILDREN USE

Take time to learn about the apps, games, and social platforms children are on. Familiarise yourself with privacy settings, parental controls, and group chat features. Use resources like The National College guides or conduct quick searches to stay updated. By understanding how these platforms operate, you'll be better equipped to set boundaries, guide safe use, and notice any unusual or concerning online behaviour early.

CREATE A "TELL ME" CULTURE

Children often keep silent because they fear being punished or losing access to their devices. Reassure them that coming forward with concerns won't get them into trouble. Emphasise that you are there to help, not judge. Creating a safe, open environment encourages children to speak up if something feels wrong, and helps to ensure they don't suffer in silence when facing potential grooming risks.

STAY ALERT TO WARNING SIGNS

Be attentive to both behavioural and digital red flags. Sudden secrecy, mood swings, or new online contacts may signal a problem. Watch for unexplained gifts, new social media profiles, or changes in sleep patterns. Increased anxiety or reluctance to attend school can also be indicators. Regularly checking in and showing interest in those whom they communicate with online help prevent small issues from escalating into serious risks.

Meet Our Expert

Staffordshire Police is dedicated to keeping people safe and tackling crime across both the physical and digital world. The force continues to strengthen its digital investigation and safeguarding capabilities to protect children and vulnerable people online, working in partnership with local, regional and national organisations, schools, and the wider community.



See full references list on our website

X @wake_up_weds

f /www.thenationalcollege

@wake.up.wednesday

@wake.up.weds

Users of this guide do so at their own discretion. No liability is entered into. Current as of the date of release: 18.03.2025

STUBBINGTON STUDY CENTRE SUMMER HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES

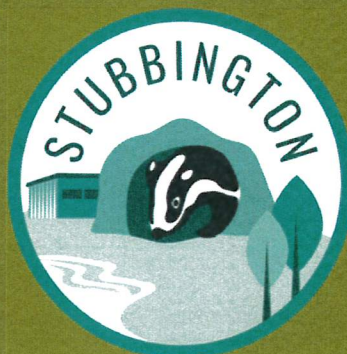
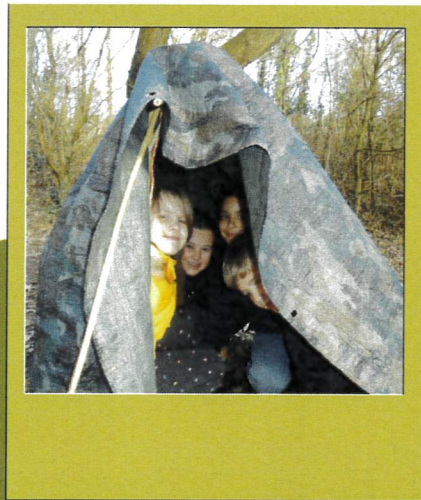
Open to years 3-6

Spend time in the outdoors trying new activities and challenges. Includes sandwich lunch and snacks. Early drop off available (with breakfast) at an extra charge.

27-31 July 2026
3-7 August 2026

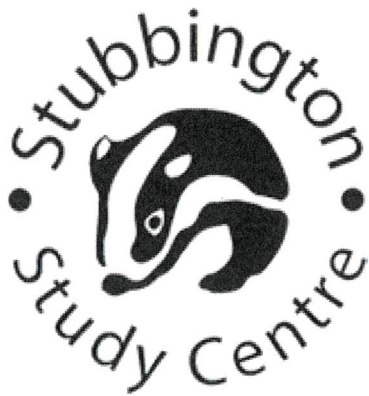
£36 PER DAY
£165 A WEEK

10% sibling
discount



Hampshire
County Council

Stubbington
Study Centre



Hampshire
County Council

Stubbington
Study Centre



STUBBINGTON STUDY CENTRE

Summer Day Camps

Spend time in the outdoors.

Try new activities and challenges.

Explore new environments.

Make new friends and memories.



LOTS OF THINGS FOR CHILDREN TO SEE AND DO

999 DAY

SATURDAY 20 JUNE • 10AM-4PM
WEST STREET, FAREHAM

COME AND MEET OUR LOCAL EMERGENCY SERVICES FOR A FREE FUN-FILLED DAY FOR ALL THE FAMILY!

POLICE CARS	FIRE ENGINES
AMBULANCES	COASTGUARD

AND LOTS MORE!

FREE ACTIVITIES WITH WONDER TOTS!

For more information visit www.fareham.gov.uk/events

 **FAREHAM**
BOROUGH COUNCIL

 **rrt** RAPID RELIEF TEAM

May Half Term

Drop off your young people

Southampton Culture Club for Kids: Story Worlds (6½-12yrs)

📅 Tue 26, Wed 27, Thu 28 May
🕒 9am-4pm
📍 SeaCity
💷 £35, £90 all three days



Bugs in Boxes (4+)

📅 Tue 26 May
🕒 10.30am, 11.30am, 1pm, 2pm
📍 Tudor House 💷 £6

Tour for All:

Southampton Myths and Mysteries (6+)

📅 Tue 26 May 🕒 11am
📍 Tudor House
💷 £10 (children FREE)

Art for All: Clay Capybaras (5+)

📅 Wed 27 May
🕒 10.30am, 12.30pm, 2.30pm
📍 Art Gallery 💷 £8

Art for All: Birds, Beetles and Butterflies with Watercolour (7+)

📅 Thu 28 May
🕒 10.30am, 1.30pm
📍 Tudor House 💷 £8



Art for All: Make a Clay Stitch! (4+)

📅 Thu 28 May
🕒 10.30am, 12.30pm, 2.30pm
📍 Art Gallery 💷 £8



Toddler Time:

Under the Sea (under 4's and friends)

📅 Fri 29 May 🕒 10.30am
📍 SeaCity 💷 £6

Art for All: Minecraft Mosaic Worlds (7+)

📅 Fri 29 May
🕒 10.30am, 12.30pm, 2.30pm
📍 Art Gallery 💷 £8

