

ONLINE GROOMING

Category: Commercial Law, Dispute Resolution, Media and OTT
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Child Protection week in May is a time to raise awareness of the many dangers that face children. Online grooming is a particularly dangerous activity taking place on the internet daily. Many parents and even children themselves do not know what online grooming is or how to recognise it.

What is Online Grooming?

Online grooming occurs when an adult forms a relationship with a child or younger person with the intent of later having sexual relations with the child or using the child to commit other crimes. .

How does Online Grooming happen?

It is very easy for online groomers to find their victims through social networking sites. Technology has made the world and all those in it very accessible. Online grooming can happen when an adult creates a fake profile on a social media site, often to appear as the same age as the child and befriends the child, or chats to the young person in a chat room and even via instant messaging.

Children can be groomed by a complete stranger or even someone they know such as friend family member or a professional person. Groomers lure children or young people with gifts, attention, listening and understanding their issues or problems or taking them to “cool places” etc.

How to recognise if a child is being Groomed Online?

It is not easy to recognise the signs of online grooming and perpetrators will take measures to protect their identities.

A child or young person may exhibit the following signs if they are being groomed:

- Become very secretive of their online activity or whereabouts;
- Be in possession of new things “given to them by friends”.

- Become defensive when asked questions regarding “boyfriends” or “girlfriends”.
- Start hanging out at new or different places than they did before.

What can be done about Online Grooming?

If a child or young person is being groomed, they must:

- Tell an adult immediately whether it's a teacher, parent or even a friend's parent;
- Block the person from social media sites or instant messaging apps,
- Report the person to the internet service provider or social media platform immediately;
- Avoid chatting to or befriending strangers.

Parents can assist their children by reporting the person to the social media platform or service provider. If the person is anonymous or difficult to trace the social media platform or internet service provider can trace the person. Parents can also open a case at their local police station and report the grooming or attempted grooming.

Parents need to become educated and internet savvy knowing the dangers that can harm their children online. Watch out for the signs!

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