



# Safer Seven

On: Online Risks and Harms



## 1. Online Risks and Harms

Online risks and harms span across the majority of 'traditional' safeguarding and exploitation concerns; much of the abuse that plays out online will also be against the law.

The internet and new technologies should be seen as a positive development, however, as with 'offline' life, there can be risks to those who use it.

People intent on harming, exploiting or abusing others now have more ways of doing so and individuals can be exposed to online harms 24/7 wherever they are.

## 2. What are the risks?

This abuse is not limited to children. Adults are also at risk of harm online, including, but not limited to: Bullying; Domestic Abuse (including Stalking, Honour Based Abuse and Forced Marriage); Hate Crime; Frauds and Scams; Modern Slavery (including CSE and County Lines); Radicalisation and Sexual Abuse, including the sharing of indecent images of children.

Online risks can also be associated with gaming, gambling and negative impacts on Emotional Health and Wellbeing.

## 3. Online Grooming

Online grooming is where someone makes friends with an individual (of any age) via the internet, for example, through social media, dating sites or gaming platforms and builds up their trust with the intention of exploiting them and causing them harm. Online grooming techniques can result in harming individuals both on and offline, not just in relation to sexual abuse but also financial abuse or as part of the radicalisation process, among others.

## 4. Response

It is easy to think that to take away access to the internet would be the best solution to protect a child or adult that has been harmed, is at risk of harm or when something goes wrong online. However, we also need to understand that the internet has also become one of the main vehicles for communicating with friends, family and other support systems. Individuals should be supported and shown how to use the internet safely.

## 5. The Law

Things that are illegal offline are also illegal online: This can often be overlooked, or assumed that illegal online behaviour may not be identified or followed up. Various legislation is in place that can be used when an online crime has been committed. Crimes can include exploitation; harassment; hate crime; fraud; grooming; and illegal file sharing (including child abuse images) amongst others. The Police and other enforcement agencies WILL investigate and prosecute as appropriate, should illegal online behaviour come to their attention

## 6. Reporting

**If you are concerned that somebody is a risk:**

**West Midlands Police - 999**

**Dudley Safeguarding:**

<http://safeguarding.dudley.gov.uk>

**Children: 0300 555 0050**

**Adults: 0300 555 0055**

## 7. What to do next

For information and advice on Online Risks and Harms please visit: <http://www.dudleysafeandsound.org/online-safety.html>

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