



The impact of grooming in 2012



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INTRODUCTION

This report provides an insight into the contacts ChildLine has had from young people who have been sexually exploited through grooming both in online and face-to-face situations.

Grooming refers to actions deliberately aimed at establishing an emotional connection and trust with a child or young person in order to increase the likelihood of them engaging in sexual behaviour or exploitation. Grooming may also include threats or bribes, which persuade the child or young person that it would be impossible to ask for help.

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In 2011/12 413 children and young people contacted ChildLine about situations that they described as grooming or had the features of grooming and sexual exploitation as defined by the Department of Education. At ChildLine, we know that contacts from children about grooming are usually the first time a young person has been able to tell anyone.

The report is based on information gathered from 413 counselling sessions by ChildLine during 2011/12.

These disclosures are only the tip of the iceberg. The 15,993 contacts we have about sexual abuse will predominantly have aspects of grooming usually by someone well known to the young person.

The impact on these children and young people is deep and long lasting; their stories give clear messages about the support adults can give to end this abuse.

We have called this report ***Caught in a trap*** because that is how children and young people describe the experience of being enticed into situations where they are then sexually exploited and abused. Because they have been groomed they feel they cannot ask for help, except through ChildLine.

They describe themselves as being in a cycle of fear and shame, where they think no-one will believe what is happening and that they are to blame for the exploitation they are suffering.

The recent high profile cases we have seen in the news, from the cases of abuse in Rochdale and the Savile enquiries, have made these hidden experiences of abused children and young people more public.



In both these high profile examples, the public has learned with astonishment the duration of the abuse, and that children are revealed to have suffered for months or years without having been able to disclose what had happened. **Even when they had disclosed, too often they were disbelieved.**

This report provides an insight into the contacts ChildLine has had from young people who have been sexually exploited through grooming both in online and face-to-face situations.



**"HE TOLD ME
HE WOULD KILL
MY MOTHER."**

A child told ChildLine of a local baby-sitter who abused her.

Often, in effect, the abuser successfully grooms not only the child, but also other members of the family and the community at large.

As one adult survivor told ChildLine, speaking of historic abuse by her father: "When I told my mother she told me not to make such terrible things up. And nobody else would have believed me. He was a judge."

Another said: "My father was a policeman and a Mason. I tell you this because I want you to know how liked and respected he was in our community. But nobody knew what happened to us children when the front door shut behind him."

When the abuser is a parent, carer, or is well known to the family, children and young people tell ChildLine, **the emotional grooming becomes more intense as they become more of a danger to the abuser.** "He told me he would kill my mother," a child told ChildLine of a local baby-sitter who abused her.

"He said he would be sent to prison and I would go into care, it was my job to suffer," another told ChildLine.

Young people say that it is very difficult to break free of this trap and tell someone. They also don't recognise the process of being drawn into a situation as grooming.

**"HE SAID HE WOULD
BE SENT TO PRISON
AND I WOULD GO
INTO CARE, IT WAS
MY JOB TO SUFFER."**

A child told ChildLine.

According to the NSPCC's most recent prevalence survey, both sexual abuse and physical abuse have decreased in the last decade but we are seeing disturbing changes in how young people are being groomed, resulting in sexual abuse.

They talk about being engaged in friendships through the internet, being asked "to go a bit further" **by exchanging photos or messages which are then used as a threat to trap them.**

"THEY ASKED HER TO SEND EXPLICIT PICTURES WHICH SHE SAID SHE DIDN'T ENJOY, BUT THEY TOLD HER THEY WOULD LOVE HER FOR IT. SHE COULDN'T BELIEVE HER LUCK, THAT A BOY COULD LOVE HER."

A disabled child said to a ChildLine counsellor.

In face-to-face situations, these friendships come with flattering offers of a "loving relationship", alcohol or social opportunities.

A ChildLine counsellor reports that a disabled child rang and said: "Some boys older than her complimented her which she liked as she was always insecure due to her disability. They asked her to send explicit pictures which she said she didn't enjoy, but they told her they would love her for it. She couldn't believe her luck, that a boy could love her."

The young people involved describe the long-term impact on their lives as devastating whether this is through abusive images, messages or experiences of direct sexual abuse.



SUMMARY

- During 2011/12, ChildLine counsellors dealt with **315,111 counselling sessions with children and young people. This was a 19% increase compared to 2010/11.**
- 5 per cent (15,993), of the contacts received in 2011/12 were about sexual abuse making this the fifth most common reason to contact ChildLine overall. There is an increase in the prevalence of young people reporting sexual abuse with age. It was the fifth most common reason for young people aged 12 and 13 to contact ChildLine and the second most common for 15 year olds.
- In 413 counselling interactions, the child or young person specifically described aspects of sexual grooming. In 56 per cent of these they told us they were being sexually abused and in **20 per cent they were at risk of abuse**. They also spoke about feeling suicidal (3 per cent), having family relationship issues (2 per cent), and depression and mental health issues (2 per cent).
- ChildLine is often the first contact point for these children and young people, in the **413 interactions 82 per cent did not use the word "grooming"** and they did not at first understand sexual exploitation. Of the remaining 12 per cent the majority only knew they had been groomed because this had been identified by an adult. This reflects the complex issue at hand: grooming is often not recognised as such by the child and so remains hidden whether it is online or face-to-face.
- Where age was known, the age group with the highest number of counselling interactions was 12-15 year olds (62 per cent) followed by 16-18 year olds (32 per cent) and lastly 11 and under (6 per cent). Where gender was known, 80 per cent of contacts were from girls and 20 per cent from boys.
- Where children and young people talk about the perpetrator they were predominantly male. This supports the research by the Child Exploitation and Online Protection unit (2011), which **identified 87 per cent of investigated grooming offenders as male**. The proportion of male perpetrators does differ depending on the gender of the child involved. Same-sex grooming is a much more common occurrence for boys and the prevalence of this becomes more significant in the 16 to 18-year-old age range.

82 PER CENT DID NOT
AT FIRST CONTACT
UNDERSTAND SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION

SCARED AND ALONE

Young people, professionals and families find it hard to recognise grooming and sexual exploitation.

ONE YOUNG PERSON SAID:

"I AM MEETING THE POLICE NEXT WEEK TO TALK ABOUT MY EX-BOYFRIEND. THE POLICE THINK THAT I HAVE BEEN GROOMED BY HIM AS HE IS OLDER THAN ME. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I AM GOING TO SAY AND I'M WORRIED WHAT PEOPLE THINK OF ME AS I HAVE LET IT GO ON FOR SUCH A LONG TIME. MY FAMILY ARE SAYING IT IS MY FAULT AND I FEEL REALLY STUPID AS I IGNORED THE WARNING SIGNS THAT IT WASN'T A NORMAL RELATIONSHIP I FEEL REALLY SCARED AND ALONE ."

Sometimes adults misunderstand the role that grooming has played, and assume the young person is consensual, they fail to see that the young person is caught in a trap. In those cases even if the young people ask for help they are not heard. Sometimes the young people themselves do not understand how they have been trapped into a situation where they are no longer able to break free, and they themselves believe they have done so willingly.

"I AM HAVING A PANIC ATTACK. I WILL HAVE TO GIVE EVIDENCE BECAUSE I MET A PAEDOPHILE, BUT I WALKED RIGHT INTO THE MESS."

A child told ChildLine.

This belief that grooming is their fault, they were looking for a friend or a boyfriend, prevents them recognizing that the groomer is setting the trap, and prevents them reaching out for help. When they realise they have gone from a seemingly innocent relationship into one which involves them engaging in sexual behaviour, it frightens and appalls them. One young person said: "I am having a panic attack. I will have to give evidence because I met a paedophile, but I walked right into the mess."

Young people often did not see the situation as grooming and were questioning the boundaries around age, consent, and sexual activity. **Young people reported that adults often saw them as consenting, and have told us that they had ended up being groomed because they had felt unloved, unpopular, they were bullied, or felt themselves to be ugly and unattractive.** They had therefore sought relationships and welcomed them.

"I'M WORRIED WHAT PEOPLE THINK OF ME AS I HAVE LET IT GO ON FOR SUCH A LONG TIME."

A young person has told ChildLine.

Young people talk to ChildLine about being lured into activities that cause them to feel a deep shame, leading them to believe that the adults around them would not understand or be supportive. A ChildLine counsellor reported: "The young person rang because she has an older boyfriend who is violent and forces her to have sex with him and his friends. He took photographs of her naked and posted them on a website. Teachers have asked if she is alright, but she is too 'dirty' and 'ashamed' to tell them."

For some young people it is extremely difficult to accept that they have been involved in an exploitive relationship; they wanted to believe that it was a true relationship and that they were loved and in love.

In these cases, breaking free of this trap by talking to ChildLine only happened when the abuse escalated to a point where fear and shame makes it impossible for the young person to endure alone. **Sadly, some young people who had already broken free and told an adult spoke about not getting support to deal with the emotional impact of the shame and self-disgust they felt.**

"I DON'T WANT TO TELL MY MUM AND DAD AS THE POLICE COULD GET INVOLVED AND I DON'T WANT HIM TO GET INTO TROUBLE."

A child told ChildLine.

In their eyes, the emphasis was placed on the criminal aspect of the grooming - by their families and the police - and that served to increase the feeling that they themselves were to blame. They were clear that they were not getting the right support to address their feelings and emotions in order to cope with what had happened to them.

Worryingly, many contacted ChildLine because they felt unable to seek help from their own families. The effect of the grooming made them assume the whole responsibility for their sexual activity and they were sure they would be blamed and punished.

"MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY WOULD BE DISGUSTED AT WHAT I HAVE DONE."

A young person has told ChildLine.

"I AM WORRIED MY PARENTS WILL BE ASHAMED OF ME, AND I KNOW I WILL GET IN TROUBLE FOR TALKING TO STRANGERS ONLINE. I FEEL LIKE I HAVE LET THEM DOWN."

A young person has told ChildLine.

SETTING THE "TRAP"

"HE CHARMED ME AND CALLED ME GORGEOUS."

A young person has told ChildLine.

As has been said, many children do not recognise the gradual process of grooming. Of all counselling interactions where sexual grooming behaviour was described by the young person, online grooming represented the highest proportion at around 60 per cent. This is compared with 40 per cent who talked about grooming having taken place in person.

However in both situations, online and face-to-face, children and young people talked about similar feelings of being coerced into a situation that led to sexual exploitation. **The perpetrators compliment them, making them feel 'special' or 'loved'. Many young people are unsure and unconfident about making new relationships.** In the beginning, young people say that this experience of meeting someone new is easier online than exploring relationships face-to-face. Where young people were talking about someone they have met they describe the relationship in glowing terms, better than the awkward experience with people their own age.

"HE MAKES ME FEEL SPECIAL BECAUSE HE PAYS ATTENTION TO ME AND I LIKE THAT BECAUSE NO-ONE ELSE DOES."

A young person has told ChildLine.

Those who groom encourage dependency, and isolate young people from family or friends who might help them escape the trap. **Young people who have experienced grooming often talk about relationships with family and friends that have broken down and rely on the perpetrator for someone to talk to and confide in about these issues.**

This is particularly the case in the virtual environment where it is easy for the perpetrator to keep their real age and identity anonymous so they can use it to their advantage to build trust with the child.

"NO-ONE HAS SHOWN INTEREST IN ME LIKE THIS BEFORE, HE MADE ME FEEL SPECIAL AND TOLD ME I WAS SPECIAL AND THAT I WAS THE ONLY ONE HE WANTED TO BE WITH."

A young person has told ChildLine.



"GETTING ATTENTION FROM HIM WAS NICE."

A young person has told ChildLine.



"I HAD NO ONE TO TALK TO. ME AND MY PARENTS WEREN'T GETTING ON AND I HAD NO FRIENDS I COULD TRUST."

"HE IS THERE FOR ME WHEN I WANT TO TALK TO SOMEONE ABOUT ALL THE BULLYING AT SCHOOL."

"HE MAKES ME FEEL SAFE."

"HE'S REALLY NICE AND I REALLY TRUST HIM. HE WOULDN'T HURT ME."

In other cases, the perpetrators will bribe the child using gifts including money, alcohol or drugs. This acts as a trap, because the child feels too guilty to ask for help. As one told ChildLine: "I am 13, he is much older, I have been doing stuff for money. I went in his car, we smoked, drank vodka, smoked some drugs. I am too scared to tell my mum." Abusers use this as a way of recruiting young people who are vulnerable, often approaching them in parks, outside school or the chip shop where they hang out with friends on the streets.

"THE MEN GIVE ME DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND MONEY."

The use of bribes and gifts means young people see perpetrators as supportive adults which increases the likelihood of the adults sustaining their contact with young people over a period of time.

"SHE HAS BEEN MAKING ME HAVE SEX WITH HER AND BRINGING ME THINGS IN RETURN."

A young person has told ChildLine.

"THEY MAKE ME GO TO THEIR PARTIES AND GET DRUNK AND THEN THEY DO STUFF WITH ME."

A young person has told ChildLine.

In addition, drugs and alcohol have a disinhibiting effect. They increase the young person's belief that it is their own fault. They don't realise that they are not in full control but feel instead that they cannot ask for help because they will be blamed.

"HE WAS NICE TO ME, GAVE ME MONEY AND PRESENTS AND STUFF."

A young person has told ChildLine.

FROM A "FRIEND" OR "BOYFRIEND" TO AN ABUSER

Young people frequently identify grooming offenders as their 'boyfriends' or really good friends. The establishment of this sort of relationship takes time, it can involve gifts as described above. By complimenting the child or young person, and subtly undermining other relationships, the grooming becomes complex and can lead to sexual abuse.

ELIZABETH'S STORY (PART ONE)

Elizabeth was 15 when she started to contact ChildLine, she used online chats to talk about the grooming situation she had got into over several months.

"I met Billy on a social network site, he asked me to add him as a friend. He was 17 on his profile, we chatted most nights and he said he was in love with me. He wanted me to send pictures of myself to him, asked for my phone number and said if I do this he would send me picture of him and that we could meet up."

Elizabeth said that this seemed OK and they just shared photos to start with. Billy was really nice to her and he started to feel like her boyfriend, she told friends about him and they spoke about a few of them meeting up.

"He started talking about sexual things which I wasn't too worried about at first. My friends said it was just what boys did, so I went along with it, I sent photos of me naked."

It was after this that Billy told Elizabeth that he was 44, but that he did love her and age didn't change anything. When Elizabeth tried to stop the contact, he threatened to share her images on the internet and to all her friends.

"IF I TRIED TO STOP SEEING HIM, I THINK HE WOULD HIT ME AS HE SAYS HE REALLY LOVES ME."

A young person has told ChildLine.

After a young person has engaged with a groomer as a friend or boyfriend and power has been established, the grooming then often escalates to sexual abuse.

Although the types of abuse are different in the online environment from face-to-face abuse, the resulting cycle of abuse has the same devastating impact.

A wide range of abuse was reported by young people, the confidentiality of ChildLine was essential as young people described in detail what had happened to them.

Once it was clear to children and young people that this was not their fault and they could talk freely, many shared relief at getting help.



They spoke about being asked to send sexually explicit images or texts, perform sexual acts on video links, and engage in sexual acts face-to-face with one or more people.



The sharing of images and the threat to use these is common in both face-to-face and online situations. In a few contacts, online grooming did result in face-to-face sexual exploitation.

"HE SAID TO ME THAT HE LOVED ME AND THAT I SHOULD DO THINGS FOR HIM AND IF I DIDN'T HE'D START SHOUTING AT ME, IT'S MY FAULT I AGREED TO MEET HIM."

A young person has told ChildLine.

"IF I TELL ANYONE WHAT IS REALLY HAPPENING I'M SCARED THE MEN WILL HURT ME."

A young person has told ChildLine.

FEELING "DIRTY" AND "ASHAMED"



Grooming can have severe impacts on children and young people. If the grooming includes threats of violence, a child may be in constant fear. If grooming convinces a child that she will not be believed, she will be silenced.

When a young person has established an emotional attachment with the perpetrator, they often find it difficult to understand what is happening.

In these cases there are two types of responses, some children refuse to believe that they are being groomed as they feel that the person they have been involved with truly loves them, and that no one understands. Vulnerable victims become convinced of the legitimacy of their relationship.

Others feel dirty and ashamed that they have let the situation get to this point and this can have tragic impacts on the child or young person's self-esteem.

They feel isolated and depressed and talk about feeling disgusted with themselves. Young people believe the controlling statements that their abusers use and it is a long process to recover from this.

This experience is the same for face-to-face situations or online interactions, the intense feelings, and self-blame make it difficult to talk to anyone about what has happened.

"THEY THINK HE IS GROOMING ME BUT WE ARE IN LOVE AND IF HE WAS TRYING TO HURT ME HE WOULD HAVE TRIED SOMETHING BUT HE HASN'T. I DON'T THINK ANYONE UNDERSTANDS."

A young person has told ChildLine.

"I HATE MYSELF SO MUCH AND I FEEL LIKE I LET HIM DOWN. HE JUST WANTED IT SECRET THEN I HAD TO TELL SOMEONE WHEN HE WANTED TO MEET ON MY OWN."

A young person has told ChildLine.

"I AM CONFUSED. I GOT TOLD THAT I WAS BEING GROOMED AND ABUSED BY THIS GUY I'M FRIENDS WITH BUT PEOPLE DON'T LISTEN TO ME. THEY CAN'T SAY THESE THINGS ABOUT HIM AS THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S HAPPENED BETWEEN US."

A young person has told ChildLine.



When the abuse is severe, often in face-to-face situations, young people speak about feeling so depressed and unworthy because of what has happened that they are suicidal or self-harming.

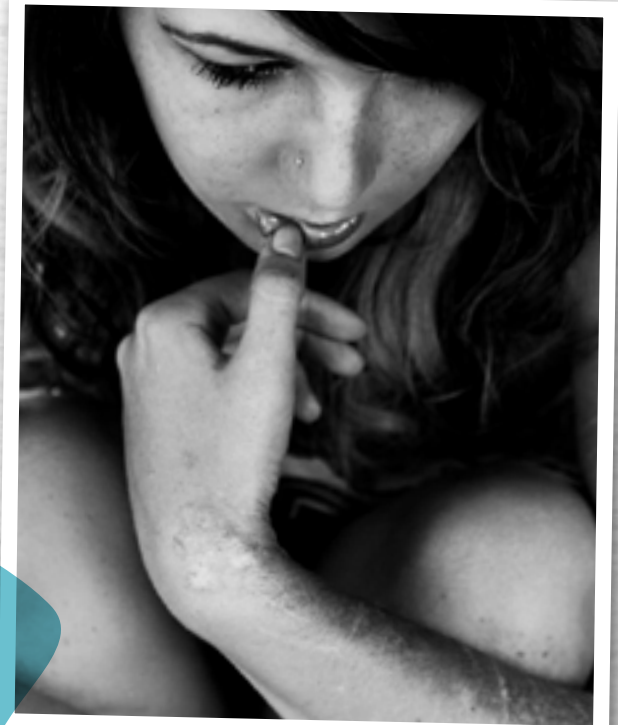
"IT WAS MY FAULT THOUGH BECAUSE I CARRIED ON. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I WAS THINKING AT THE TIME. I JUST WANTED IT TO END."

"I HAVE SELF-HARMED, BECAUSE I HATE MYSELF AND I JUST FEEL NUMB AND DESERVE THE PAIN."

"WHEN I WAS YOUNGER I WENT ON A WEBSITE ON THE INTERNET FOR GAY MEN. I MET A MAN FROM THE WEBSITE AND DID THINGS I SHOULDN'T DO. I FELT DISGUSTING AND APPALLED AT WHAT I HAD DONE. EVEN THOUGH I FELT THIS WAY I HAVE STILL BEEN MEETING PEOPLE FROM THE WEBSITE, I MET SOMEONE TONIGHT. I FEEL LIKE I AM IN A DIFFERENT STATE OF MIND WHEN I GO ON THE WEBSITE. I WANT TO STOP MEETING OLDER MEN."

"I FEEL SUICIDAL BECAUSE OF MY RELATIONSHIP WITH AN OLDER MAN."

"I FEEL SO STUPID AND UPSET, I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD GET IN THIS SITUATION. I FEEL LIKE HURTING MYSELF AND ENDING IT ALL."



ELIZABETH'S STORY (PART TWO)

Elizabeth expressed all these emotions while in contact with ChildLine, all the factors involved made it difficult for her to stop the online contact before it escalated to face-to-face.

“He was the first person ever to say that I was beautiful, to actually give me that attention and constantly tell me he loved me. I was going through a hard time at home no one was paying attention to me. I had no one apart from him. It didn’t seem wrong when he said we should be face-to-face, being able to kiss and sleep together.”

Elizabeth made a decision to stop the contact online as he was keen to meet her face-to-face but he did continue to try to contact and she had very mixed emotions. By talking to ChildLine, she had realised she was being groomed. She described being left with feelings that were so strong that she had started to self harm and couldn’t cope, at this point she had not told anyone about the continued threats.

“At first when I realised I was being groomed I wanted him out of my life but I also liked the way he was saying all this nice stuff about me. Now that he’s gone I just miss him and feel lonely. I just want to forget, forget about him and everything he did but I don’t think it’s that simple as I tried but can’t. I just feel like he’s taken away everything and that my life isn’t going to be the same because he’s hurt me so much.”

Elizabeth did go on to report this situation with the support of ChildLine resulting in police involvement. She continued to contact after the grooming had stopped as she felt the support was based on catching the perpetrator not helping her overcome the experience.

“Since my parents and police found out I have felt really depressed and angry. My parents especially are more interested in finding him, they are driving me crazy about it since they found out. They are constantly asking me what I’m doing. Nobody understands what I’m actually going through.”

At the end of her period of support from ChildLine, Elizabeth said she had started to realise the importance of talking about her feelings and felt she had various strategies to try to help her cope, some of which she said she would try. However, she still had real difficulties in talking to her family and she was left with feelings of shame and embarrassment about what had happened.

Elizabeth's story illustrates well the issues that make it so difficult to break free of this trap.

As in most contacts from young people, **confidentiality was a key issue**. The involvement of police and parents was of only slightly less concern to the young person than the new levels of risk they faced if they stayed silent about their abuse. There are four key things that seem to lead young people to disclose what has happened to them:

1. **The situation escalates and the risks are higher - they may be asked to meet face-to-face (if the grooming is online) or face-to-face situations become more threatening.**
2. **Support from peers to disclose can help a young person reach for help but this requires an acceptance that the relationship they are describing is abusive.**
3. **Where young people are threatened by exposure, or the actual exposure, of sexually explicit images or videos involving them, they are driven by fear to seek help.**
4. **They have the opportunity to talk about what is happening to them due to a supportive adult or service they trust. ChildLine gives a level of confidentiality that young people referred to as making it easier to talk, they need to overcome their concerns about what will happen when they tell someone.**



BREAKING THE "TRAP" THE RIGHT SUPPORT

ChildLine would like to see more support for children and young people so that they can recognise a grooming situation and be able to seek help sooner, before they are truly trapped.

Families and communities should recognise that they can become part of the grooming process and they need an understanding of what they need to do to protect children and young people.

There are three key areas that require action from local communities, protective services, parents, and young people themselves.

The right routes for disclosure

ChildLine will continue to reach out to children and young people to ensure they know that the service is available 24/7, confidential and free. When they contact ChildLine, children and young people are reassured that the grooming they have been exposed to is not their fault, and they can safely discuss their options. Thus they are enabled to break the cycle of abuse that they are experiencing.

We need the support of local communities and supportive adults, services and families, to ensure that children and young people know the ChildLine freephone number, 0800 1111, and that they can contact ChildLine online at www.childline.org.uk

This means accepting that in situations such as grooming, children and young people may want to seek support through a confidential service like ChildLine, before they can fully disclose in person.

The higher prevalence of grooming in 12-18 year olds coincides with their development into adulthood and they need to be informed that they have the right to say no, even if they feel emotionally involved, frightened, guilty or ashamed.

When sexual exploitation is disclosed, we also need to ensure young people get the right kind of emotional support, enabling them to deal with the impact on their current and future lives.

ChildLine is concerned at the lack of emotional support children and young people receive when they disclose grooming and sexual exploitation. The majority of young people told ChildLine about experiencing a lack of understanding from families, police and other adults when they first disclosed sexual exploitation and were struggling to cope with the aftermath. This support needs to be given the same priority as the criminal process.

The right information to help young people and their families understand grooming in all its forms

The prevalence of online grooming reported to ChildLine continues to grow and children and young people need to be more aware of the subtleties of this form of grooming. Young people have the perception that adults will not understand how online grooming can happen and will therefore blame themselves: this only perpetuates the cycle of abuse.

Information about online and face-to-face grooming needs to be relevant to the experience of young people, most of those who reported abuse also didn't think it could happen to them.

A range of joined up information resources are needed to give a similar message to young people, parents and supportive adults. Services should develop information to ensure young people understand that there are a range of types and depths of grooming as part of sexual exploitation. Information needs to outline the specific risks of grooming in online environments and face-to-face, focusing specifically on identifying grooming as early as possible as well as a "no blame" approach to reaching out for help.

ChildLine asks that the government ensures that all social services teams, police forces and senior schools have a package of information available to them. This should include the expansion of web-based information like the online "think you know" resources developed by CEOP.

Changing the perceptions of supportive adults

The need to listen to children and young people and to take their disclosures seriously has been a theme in all recent serious case reviews, enquiries into child abuse, and also in **last year's 15,993 contacts to ChildLine**.

It is heartbreaking to see contacts to ChildLine and the Rochdale review outline that in 2012, the services put in place to safeguard children and young people are still not acting on disclosures that children make. Even more concerning, were the many disclosures from young people that adults close to them would definitely think that young people are to blame for the grooming and sexual exploitation they experienced.

At the heart of this perception of young people is the assumption that they will be seen as consenting or even "asking for it," that it was their fault for seeking out a relationship online or face-to-face.

The reality is young people can be targeted by abusers who are very skilled at trapping them through a complex web of grooming. Adults need to change their perception of young people who experience sexual exploitation; they need to have a better understanding of the grooming process which victimises young people.



"I WAS RAPED AND GROOMED FROM WHEN I WAS 12 YEARS OLD, AND I AM FINDING IT SO HARD TO SLEEP AT NIGHT. NO-ONE KNOWS ABOUT IT AS I DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY WILL THINK OF ME AND I AM SCARED TO TELL ANYONE. I USED TO SELF-HARM REALLY BAD – AND I WANT TO GO BACK TO IT TO TAKE THE PAIN AWAY."

The responsibility to build trust sits firmly with adults. Services need to act to ensure young people know that if they find the courage to report abuse their emotional needs will be met; they will not be blamed; and the cycle of abuse will end. Unless we reach out effectively to counteract the effects of grooming, children will continue to be trapped.

Wherever we have used quotes from young people, names and potentially identifying details have been changed to protect their identity. These quotes are created from real ChildLine contacts but are not necessarily direct quotes from an individual young person.

ChildLine is the UK's free, 24-hour helpline and online service for children. Trained volunteer counsellors comfort, advise and protect children and young people. Calls to ChildLine are confidential, but if a child is in immediate danger the counsellor will let the caller know if they have to break confidentiality and contact the emergency services to save the child's life.

Children and young people can contact ChildLine 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days per year on 0800 1111 and at www.childline.org.uk.

For any enquiries please contact us at ChildlineBusinessSupportTeam@nspcc.org.uk

This report was written by Michelle Turnbull, Rhiannon Davies and Claire Brown.

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