



Safeguarding Policy

September 2025

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1. Named staff and contacts

At Connecting, the person designated to take responsibility for child protection is the Head of Service, who holds lead responsibility for safeguarding on the Connecting Leadership Team, and is available to all staff for advice and guidance.

Designated Safeguarding Lead for **Connecting**: Clare Clay
cclay@educationmentalhealthsolutions.co.uk - 07971 224142

Training completed:

With:

To be renewed:

Deputy Safeguarding Lead for **Connecting**: Carolyn Hall
chall@educationmentalhealthsolutions.co.uk - 07725 752151

Training completed:

With:

To be renewed:

The Connecting Safeguarding team can be contacted during working hours - (Monday – Friday, 9am – 5pm, apart from bank holidays/Connecting closure days).

2. Company Introduction

Connecting's mission is to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children, their families and school communities across the UK. Children may, through the relationships provided to them by Connecting, take the opportunity to share information or work on processing a life event or thought by connecting with a practitioner or one of our services. This may happen in a direct way through a verbal disclosure, or indirectly through play or demeanour or through another child. In addition, there may be some physical evidence of neglect or apparent injury, which is noted by a member of Connecting's staff or Counsellor on Placement. Connecting's staff and Counsellors on Placement, who are working with parents, may also have cause to be concerned about the welfare of that person as well as their children.

3. Purpose and application of Policy

Connecting believes that it is always unacceptable for a child or young person to experience abuse of any kind, and recognises its responsibility to safeguard the welfare of all children and young people. We are fully accountable for ensuring appropriate actions are taken by us in order to safeguard any of our service users. This may also include ensuring our partner agencies have taken appropriate actions. For the purpose of clarity in this policy, when we refer to children or young people, we mean from the ages of 0 (unborn) and anyone who has not yet reached their 18th birthday. For any concerns relating to a young person aged 18 years old or above, please refer to our **Adult Safeguarding Policy**. The child centred approach is fundamental to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of every child. A child centred approach means keeping the child in focus when making decisions about their lives and working in partnership with them and their families.

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the child / young person is paramount.
- all children, regardless of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- working in partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

The purpose and scope of the policy:

- to provide protection for the children and young people who receive Connecting's services, including the children of adult clients.
- to provide all staff and Counsellors on Placement with guidance on procedures they should adopt if they suspect a child or young person may be experiencing, or is at risk of, harm.
- the policy applies to all staff, including senior managers and the board of trustees, paid staff, Counsellors on Placement and sessional workers, agency staff, students or anyone working on behalf of Connecting.

We will seek to safeguard children and young people by:

- valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- adopting safeguarding and child protection guidelines.
- recruiting staff and Counsellors on Placement safely, ensuring all necessary checks are made.
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and Counsellors on Placement.
- sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.
- providing effective management for staff and Counsellors on Placement through supervision, support and training. Our training requirements for staff can be found in our Safeguarding Handbook.

It is essential that members of Connecting's team are aware of their duties concerning safeguarding and ensure that:

- the safety and wellbeing of the child is promoted.
- the law and statutory guidance concerning child protection and safeguarding is complied with.
- the policies of the school, the Local Authority, Safeguarding Partners / Child Protection Committees in which Connecting is working are respected.
- all staff and Counsellors on Placement at Connecting comply with the child protection and safeguarding policy.

It is not the role or responsibility of Connecting to investigate allegations of harm or risk of harm.

Disclosures or concerns arising out of these areas of service delivery will be treated the same and are all covered by this policy.

4. Statutory and legal framework

In England and Wales [The Children Act 1989](#) and [2004](#) provide the overall framework for safeguarding children and promoting their welfare. The child's welfare is to be the paramount consideration in all decision-making.

The Government's guidance on safeguarding children in England is called [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#) (often shortened to Working Together). Working Together acknowledges the need for all providers of children's services, including those in the voluntary sector, to work in collaboration and to agreed local standards.

[Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024](#) sets out what schools and colleges in England must do to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people under the age of 18.

The [Wales Safeguarding Procedures & Practice Guides \(2019\)](#) provide the common standards to guide and inform child protection practice in each of the Local and Regional Safeguarding Children Boards across Wales.

[Keeping Learners Safe 2022](#) is the Welsh Assembly statutory guidance setting out the infrastructure and arrangements that need to be in place to ensure that people in the education service have the skills, means and training necessary to ensure children and young people are protected from harm.

Section 157 and 175 of the [Education Act 2002](#), and the [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#), places upon School Governors the duty to ensure that schools safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

We recommend that Connecting staff and volunteers are also aware of their Local Safeguarding Children Partnership/Safeguarding Boards policies and procedures.

5. Safeguarding Adults

Mental Capacity and Decision-Making

UK Law assumes that all people over the age of 16 have the ability to make their own decisions, unless it has been proved that they can't. It also gives people the right to make any decision that they need to make and gives them the right to make their decisions even if others consider them to be unwise. People make so many decisions that it is easy to take this ability for granted.

The Law says that to make a decision we need to:

- Understand information
- Remember it for long enough
- Think about the information
- Communicate our decision

All children known to Connecting under the age of 18 will be safeguarded in line with child protection policy and procedure.

Please refer to our Adult Safeguarding Policy for further guidance on Mental Capacity & Decision Making.

6. Reporting and Record Keeping (Including confidentiality)

In establishing an initial contract with the child and the parent, the limits of confidentiality must be explained, i.e. that Connecting staff and Counsellors on Placement will need to inform the designated Child Protection Officer / Designated Safeguarding Lead in the school if there are concerns about the child's safety. This is an important part of the contract with the child at the outset of the work. This is in line with national guidance: 'Working Together 2023', 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024' and 'Information Sharing 2018'. It is for the individual to choose what is and is not spoken about during their counselling sessions or assessments. The duty to safeguard children and share information about child protection concerns takes priority over all other considerations, including the confidential nature of the counselling relationship. Connecting fully participates in multi-agency working, in line with government guidance, in order to share information and safeguard children. Please see the [Connecting Confidentiality and Information Sharing Policy](#).

"The Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR do not prohibit the collection or sharing of personal information, but rather provide a framework to ensure that personal information is shared appropriately. In particular, the Data Protection Act 2018 balances the rights of the information subject (the individual whom the information is about) and the possible need to share information about them" (Working Together, 2023).

7. Types of Harm

It is essential that those who work with children and families should be alert to the signs of child abuse, this includes cases where children may disclose non-recent / historical abuse. There are four main categories of abuse (definitions adapted from [Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023](#)):

Physical Abuse

A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Neglect

The persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy, e.g. as a result of substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment).
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger.
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate caregivers).

- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Emotional Abuse

The persistent emotional maltreatment of a child, such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve:

- conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person.
- not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.
- age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children.
- interactions that are beyond a child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction.
- seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another, such as domestic abuse or serious bullying.
- serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children.

Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

Involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve:

- physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing.
- non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse.

Sexual abuse can take place online, and technology can be used to facilitate offline abuse. Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. People of all genders can commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

It's worth highlighting that some children may be more vulnerable to abuse because of their characteristics or their history, e.g. care experience children, children from minority communities, disabled children, young carers and children who have previously been abused or subject to a child protection plan / on the child protection register.

Abuse and neglect are forms of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). ACEs are "highly stressful, and potentially traumatic, events or situations that occur during childhood and/or adolescence. They can be a single event, or prolonged threats to, and breaches of, the young person's safety, security, trust or bodily integrity" (Young Minds, 2018). Examples of such experiences include any form of abuse or neglect (as outlined above), living with someone who abuses drugs or alcohol, living with someone who has gone to

prison, living with someone with serious mental illness or losing a parent through divorce, death or abandonment. Experience of ACEs can impact on children (and adult's) mental and physical health. Other safeguarding concerns include, but are not limited to:

Child-on-child Abuse

Child-on-child abuse is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying).
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse).
- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence).
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party.
- Consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi nudes images and or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery).
- Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

Self-harm

Self-harm is a broad term that can be used to describe a variety of behaviours that lead to physical harm. These include self-cutting or scratching the skin, burning/branding with cigarettes/lighters, scalding, overdose of tablets or other toxins, tying ligatures around the neck, punching oneself or other surfaces, banging limbs/head and hair pulling (Mental Health Foundation, 2006). It may also include risk taking behaviours where the child / young person is careless for their own safety and there is a risk of physical harm. It also includes neglect of physical health for example young people with insulin dependent diabetes who intentionally miss insulin doses. Self-harm usually occurs in response to emotional distress. [Please see the Connecting Risk Assessment and Safety Plans and Guidelines.](#)

Suicide / Suicide Ideation

The term 'suicide' means an act that is intended to end one's life. Suicidal ideations, often called suicidal thoughts or ideas, is a broad term used to describe a range of contemplations, wishes, and preoccupations with death and suicide (PubMed, 2021). These issues can be caused by many factors, including depression and mental illness, stress, financial problems, relationship breakdown, bereavement and abuse. [Please see the Connecting Risk Assessment and Safety Plans and Guidelines.](#)

So-called 'Honour'-Based Abuse

The term 'honour' crime or 'honour'-based abuse refers to an incident or crime involving violence, threats of violence, intimidation, coercion or abuse (including psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional abuse) which has or may have been committed to protect or defend the 'honour' of an individual, family and/or community for alleged or perceived breaches of the family and/or community's code of behaviour. It is estimated that around 76% of victims of 'honour' based abuse are female, but people of all genders are at risk.

Young Carers

A young carer is defined as a young person under the age of 18 who helps to look after a relative with a disability, illness, mental health condition, or drug or alcohol problem. This may involve young people doing extra jobs around the house, such as cooking, cleaning or helping someone get dressed and move around. It may also involve a young person providing a lot of physical help to a parent, brother or sister who is disabled or ill. Without appropriate support, young carers are a risk of having lower self-esteem and heightened anxiety, feeling isolated, being bullied, and being stressed by the responsibility.

Further safeguarding concerns can be found in Appendix 1.

8. Keeping safe online

Online Safety

The breadth of issues classified within online safety is considerable, but can be categorised into four areas of risk:

Content:

- Being exposed to illegal, inappropriate or harmful content, for example: pornography, fake news, racism, misogyny, self-harm, suicide, anti-Semitism, radicalisation and extremism.

Contact:

- Being subjected to harmful online interaction with other users; for example: peer to peer pressure, commercial advertising and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them for sexual, criminal, financial or other purposes.

Conduct:

- Personal online behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm; for example, making, sending and receiving explicit images e.g. consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes and/or pornography, sharing other explicit images and online bullying.

Commerce:

- Risks such as online gambling, inappropriate advertising, phishing and or financial scams. If schools feel their pupils, students or staff are at risk, they can report it to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (<https://apwg.org/>).

9. Best Practice in Handling Safeguarding Disclosure

When responding to safeguarding disclosures made by children, young people, or adults, Connecting staff and Counsellors on Placement should ensure they adhere to the following dos and don'ts.

Do:

- ✓ stay calm - let the individual know that you will need to share what they have told you and refer back to the contract
- ✓ stay with what the individual is saying or doing and only intervene if the individual is putting themselves, or others, at risk
- ✓ report the incident immediately ensuring you follow [Connecting Child Protection Procedures](#)

Do not:

- ✗ promise confidentiality
- ✗ ask any leading questions, however, it is appropriate to ask open/clarifying questions or ask the child if there is anything else they would like to share
- ✗ accept any retraction or backtracking from an individual. If it has been said, it needs to be reported

10. Working Virtually

Safeguarding of those who avail of our services is a fundamental role we all play. This is true when we are working face to face, remotely or virtually. Our policies and procedures remain the same irrespective of how we are delivering our services.

Please speak with your manager should you require any further guidance around safeguarding when working virtually or remotely.

11. Confidentiality

In establishing an initial contract with the child and the parent, the limits of confidentiality must be explained, i.e. that Connecting staff and Counsellors on Placement will need to inform the designated Child Protection Officer / Designated Safeguarding Lead in the school if there are concerns about the child's safety. This is an important part of the contract with the child at the outset of the work. This is in line with national guidance: 'Working Together 2023', 'Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024' and 'Information Sharing 2018'.

It is for the individual to choose what is and is not spoken about during their counselling sessions or assessments. The duty to safeguard children and share information about child protection concerns takes priority over all other considerations, including the confidential nature of the counselling relationship. Connecting fully participates in multi-agency working, in line with government guidance, in order to share

information and safeguard children. Please see the [Connecting Confidentiality and Information Sharing Policy](#).

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Whistleblowing

If you are concerned of a wrong doing or that appropriate action has not been taken to deal with a safeguarding concern, then this is when whistleblowing should take place. This is sometimes referred to as ‘making a disclosure’ or ‘blowing the whistle’. The wrong doing will typically (although not necessarily) be something you have witnessed at work. Please see [Connecting’s Whistleblowing Policy](#) for further information.

12. Staff recruitment

The safeguarding and child protection policy must also safeguard children from harm from those placed in positions of trust or care. At Connecting the following steps are taken:

- A. No direct work with children can begin without receipt of two satisfactory references.
- B. An enhanced DBS/PVG (Scotland) check is carried out for all Connecting staff who work directly with children and young people, and will be updated on a three yearly basis or on a ‘live’ basis for those registered with the DBS/PVG update service. Overseas checks will also be undertaken for any person who has lived abroad in the last 7 years, which will include police checks / letters of good conduct.
- C. Safeguarding Induction Training is delivered to all staff and Counsellors on Placement who work directly with children. Staff who do not work directly with children must complete safeguarding training within their first 6 months of employment.
- D. It is a requirement of Connecting that viewing panels are in place in doors of Connecting rooms, so that the Connecting school-based staff or other staff members can see through the viewing panels.
- E. Connecting provides supervision for Counsellors on Placement on the day their clinical work takes place.
- F. Connecting provides supervision for clinical staff; either weekly or fortnightly dependant on their role. Please see the [Connecting Supervision Policy](#).
- G. Connecting and the school management team maintain an overview of Connecting involvement with children.
- H. The relationship between the member of the Connecting team and a child who receives the service must be restricted to the professional forum, where services are delivered in accordance with BACP ethical standards.
- I. If any member of Connecting’s staff in the school has concerns regarding the conduct of another member of Connecting staff or Counsellor on Placement, they have a duty to report this concern in confidence to their own line manager. This should be referred directly to the Head of Safeguarding if more appropriate. Concerns about, or allegations against, members of Connecting staff or Counsellor on Placement must be referred to your Line Manager, or, if more appropriate, the next

manager up. They will then report to the Director of People & Culture, the Head of Safeguarding, and the Head of Legal and Compliance immediately. In these circumstances, it may also be necessary to follow the **Critical Incident Management Policy**.

- J. If a member of the Connecting team in the school has concerns regarding the conduct of any member of the school staff, they have a duty to follow this procedure and report to the school's Head Teacher, and their Area Manager.

Please also see Connecting's Disclosure and Barring (DBS), Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Policy for further information.

13. Managing Allegations against Staff or Volunteers

As a charity working with vulnerable children, Connecting has a duty to ensure that where an allegation against a member of staff or Counsellor on Placement has been substantiated, steps are taken to investigate the allegation and prevent other children being harmed.

Connecting equally has a wider duty to ensure that the necessary authorities are informed of concerns about situations where a member of staff or Counsellor on Placement has harmed a child, placed a child at risk of harm, or is unsuitable to work with children.

Connecting therefore takes responsibility for making the required referrals, to external regulatory bodies such as, but not limited to, the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and PVG (Scotland) and/or the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

For England and Wales, we will contact the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) immediately to establish whether the LADO, Place2Be or the school will carry out the investigation. If it is decided that Place2Be will carry out an investigation, we will liaise closely with the LADO.

17. Other linked policies

1. **Allegations Against Staff and Volunteers Policy and Procedure**
2. **Disclosure and Barring (DBS), Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Policy**
3. **Risk Assessment and Safety Plans and Guidelines**
4. **Confidentiality and Information Sharing Policy.**
5. **Adult Safeguarding Policy**
6. **Whistleblowing Policy**
7. **Critical Incident Management Policy.**

18. Appendices

1. Other Safeguarding Concerns

Appendix 1 - Other safeguarding concerns

Domestic Abuse

As highlighted above, Domestic Abuse is generally treated as falling under emotional abuse. The cross-government definition (2014) of domestic violence and abuse is as follows:

“Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional.”

Connecting considers that domestic abuse is a child protection issue and that if children witness or hear domestic abuse, this must be treated as a child protection matter, even if they are not directly involved in the incidents. The [Adoption and Children Act 2002](#) states that impairment can be caused by seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another.

The [Domestic Abuse Act 2021](#) brought about some key changes to the way domestic abuse is responded to, those changes include:

- A legal definition of domestic abuse which recognises children as victims in their own right;
- A Domestic Abuse Commissioner to stand up for survivors and life-saving domestic abuse services;
- A legal duty on councils to fund support for survivors in ‘safe accommodation’
- New protections in the family and civil courts for survivors – including a ban on abusers from cross-examining their victims, and a guarantee that survivors can access special measures (including separate waiting rooms, entrances and exits and screens);
- New criminal offences – including post-separation coercive control, non-fatal strangulation, threats to disclose private sexual images

Child Criminal Exploitation (CCE)

As set out in the [Serious Violence Strategy](#), published by the Home Office, where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, control, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into any criminal activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial or other advantage of the perpetrator or facilitator and/or (c) through violence or the threat of violence. The victim may have been criminally exploited even if the activity appears consensual. Child criminal exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

An example of CCE is **County Lines** - As set out in the Serious Violence Strategy, county lines is a term used to describe gangs and organised criminal networks involved in exporting illegal drugs into one or more areas within the UK, using dedicated mobile phone lines or other form of 'deal line'. They are likely to exploit children and vulnerable adults to move and store the drugs and money, and they will often use coercion, intimidation, violence (including sexual violence) and weapons.

Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE)

Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology.

Contextual safeguarding

Contextual safeguarding recognises that as young people grow and develop they are influenced by a whole range of environments and people outside of their family. For example in school or college, in the local community, in their peer groups or online. Children and young people may encounter risk in any of these environments. Sometimes the different contexts are inter-related and can mean that children and young people may encounter multiple risks. Contextual safeguarding looks at how we can best understand these risks, engage with children and young people and help to keep them safe.

Extremism and Prevent Duty

Any concerns about radicalisation and extremist views or behaviours in children and young people must be reported as a safeguarding concern. Connecting works in line with [Prevent Duty 2015](#) guidance and will consult with local Prevent Coordinators where necessary. Extremism is defined in the Prevent strategy as the vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also include in our definition of extremism calls for the death of members of our armed forces" Working Together 2023).

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

Concerns that a child has been, or may be about to be, subjected to FGM, fall under this policy and must also be reported as a safeguarding concern. FGM is a collective term for a range of procedures which involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genitals for non-medical reasons. It is sometimes referred to as female circumcision, or female genital cutting. The practice is medically unnecessary, is extremely painful and has serious health consequences, both at the time when the mutilation is carried out, and in later life.

Forced Marriage

A forced marriage is where one or both people do not, or cannot, consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used to force them into the marriage. In England and Wales it is also when anything is done to make someone marry before they turn 18, even if there is no pressure or abuse ([Marriage and Civil Partnership \(Minimum Age\) Act 2022](#)). The pressure put on people to marry against their will may include; threats or physical/sexual violence and/or emotional or psychological abuse for example making someone feel they are bringing shame on their family. Forced disproportionately affects females but people of all genders can be victims. In the England and Wales in 2023, 69% of cases that came to the awareness of the

Forced Marriage Unit involved female victims, 25% involved children aged 17 and under, and 34% those aged 18-25.

Grooming

Grooming is when someone builds a relationship, trust and emotional connection with a child or young person so they can manipulate, exploit and abuse them. Children and young people who are groomed can be sexually abused, exploited or trafficked. Anybody can be a groomer, no matter their age, gender or race. Grooming can take place over a short or long period of time – from weeks to years. Groomers may also build a relationship with the young person's family or friends to make them seem trustworthy or authoritative.

DRAFT