

What is online child sexual exploitation?

The use of technology or the internet to facilitate the sexual abuse of a child, including the production and sharing of child sexual abuse material online.

It's important to know behind every image or video there is a real child victim being sexually exploited. Regardless of the age of the child, if they are using a device that has access to the internet, they need to be aware of what is acceptable behaviour online and what isn't.

What can online child sexual exploitation look like?

Online child sexual exploitation includes a wide range of behaviours and situations. Most commonly this includes grooming, live streaming, consuming child sexual abuse material, and coercing and blackmailing children for sexual purposes.

This could include:

- An adult engaging a child in a chat about sexual acts
- An adult sending nude or pornographic images of themselves to a child or exposing themselves via live streaming
- Asking a child to view pornographic images/videos
- Asking a child to perform sexual acts, expose themselves or share a sexual image
- Taking or making and sharing or showing indecent images of children
- Online child sexual exploitation is often thought of as adults abusing children, however, research indicates that more and more child exploitation material is being shared via social media, and is being produced by children themselves. This is sometimes called self-generated sexual content and often takes the form of 'sexting' which is requesting, capturing and sharing of explicit material.

It's important to have open and honest conversations with your children, and ensure they'd feel comfortable telling a trusted adult if they are contacted by someone they don't know. Understand what children See, Say and Do online at thinkuknow.org.au.

Identifying online child sexual exploitation

Online child sexual exploitation can be hard to detect, there is no single sign that a child has been abused online. Those offending against children use manipulation to prevent children from speaking to a parent/trusted adult or family members and friends. They may make the child feel special and encourage them to keep their actions a secret or make them feel ashamed about what has happen and tell them they'll be in trouble for their actions.

Potential signs that online child sexual exploitation has or is occurring:

- Unexplained relationships with older people
- A change in the use of words/language the child uses
- Showing sexual behaviours which is not in line with their age/stage of development
- Changes in their online habits – spending more/less time online, only being online in private
- They have unexplained gifts, expensive clothes, mobile phones
- Unexplained money or frequently taking part in activities requiring money
- Changes in mood, behaviour and/or eating habits
- Always tired
- Staying out late, not returning home
- Change in appearance or borrowing clothes from others
- Truancy or drop in performance at school
- Regularly using drugs or drinking alcohol

If your child is a victim of online child sexual exploitation, it is important they know that it is not their fault.

To report online child sexual exploitation, visit
accce.gov.au/report