



ThinkUKnow e-Newsletter - Volume 4, Issue 9

Last week, we participated in National Child Protection Week 2013. This is an annual initiative which shines a light on child protection and encourages everyone to “play their part” in protecting children. Protecting children from online sexual exploitation remains a key tenet of the ThinkUKnow Australia program and will be the focus of this edition of the ThinkUKnow e-newsletter.

What is online grooming?

Online grooming is when an adult makes online contact with someone under the age of 16 with the intentions of facilitating a sexual relationship. It is an offence committed purely in the communication phase, no physical contact need ever occur with the victim for police to step in and investigate.

It is possible the most harmful thing to occur to a child online but also, thankfully, not too common. It is vital, however, that we continue to educate children and young people about online grooming in order to protect themselves, their friends and family members.

The grooming process

The grooming process used to be a long and calculated process whereby an offender would gradually break down the barriers to communication which a young person would normally have in speaking to someone that they didn't know. The offender could pretend to be another young person, but was often upfront with the fact that they were a lot older than the child.

We have seen a marked shift away from this drawn-out process to a much more rapid

Time2Talk

In this section we look at ways to start talking with children and young people about their use of technology.

Do you have any online contacts whom you've never met in person?

What helped you decide that it was okay to add them?

How certain can you be that they are who they say they are?

Are you familiar with the block and report functions of the apps, games and social media sites you use?

What children and young people need to know:

- Not everyone online is who they say they are, make sure friends, followers and contact are people you know and trust
- Learn to block and report on the sites and apps you use. (for more information on this, they can check out our [How-to Guides and FAQs](#). For a parent-friendly version, you can visit our [FAQs for Parents](#))
- Know who to talk to if someone makes you feel uncomfortable online

National Child Protection Week

approach. Many offenders are now soliciting young people within the first few communications and are targeting many young people at the same time in the hope that a few will respond. Some young people may respond to the request for a “sexy chat” or “naked selfie” thinking that it’s just a bit of a laugh and will go no further. Unfortunately, the balance of power often shifts to the offender who uses what the child has already sent as a form of blackmail to continue the relationship.

Grooming gone mobile

Online sex offenders will go wherever young people are and that is increasingly becoming the world of apps. There have been incidents of children and young people being approached by adults on social media apps, such as Instagram, and instant messaging apps, such as Kik messenger.

It is crucial that young people know how to make their accounts private (such as turning privacy on in Instagram and enabling the “ignore new people” function in Kik) so that only people they know and trust can communicate with them. They also need to be aware of how to block and report people through these apps.

Awards

We’d like to extend a huge thank you to all of our ThinkUKnow volunteers who helped us to take out NAPCAN’s Play Your Part Award for Outstanding Prevention Initiative. Our volunteers are the heart and soul of this initiative and this award is great recognition of their amazing efforts.

Congratulations to the other award winners who are all playing their part to keep kids safe online and offline.

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