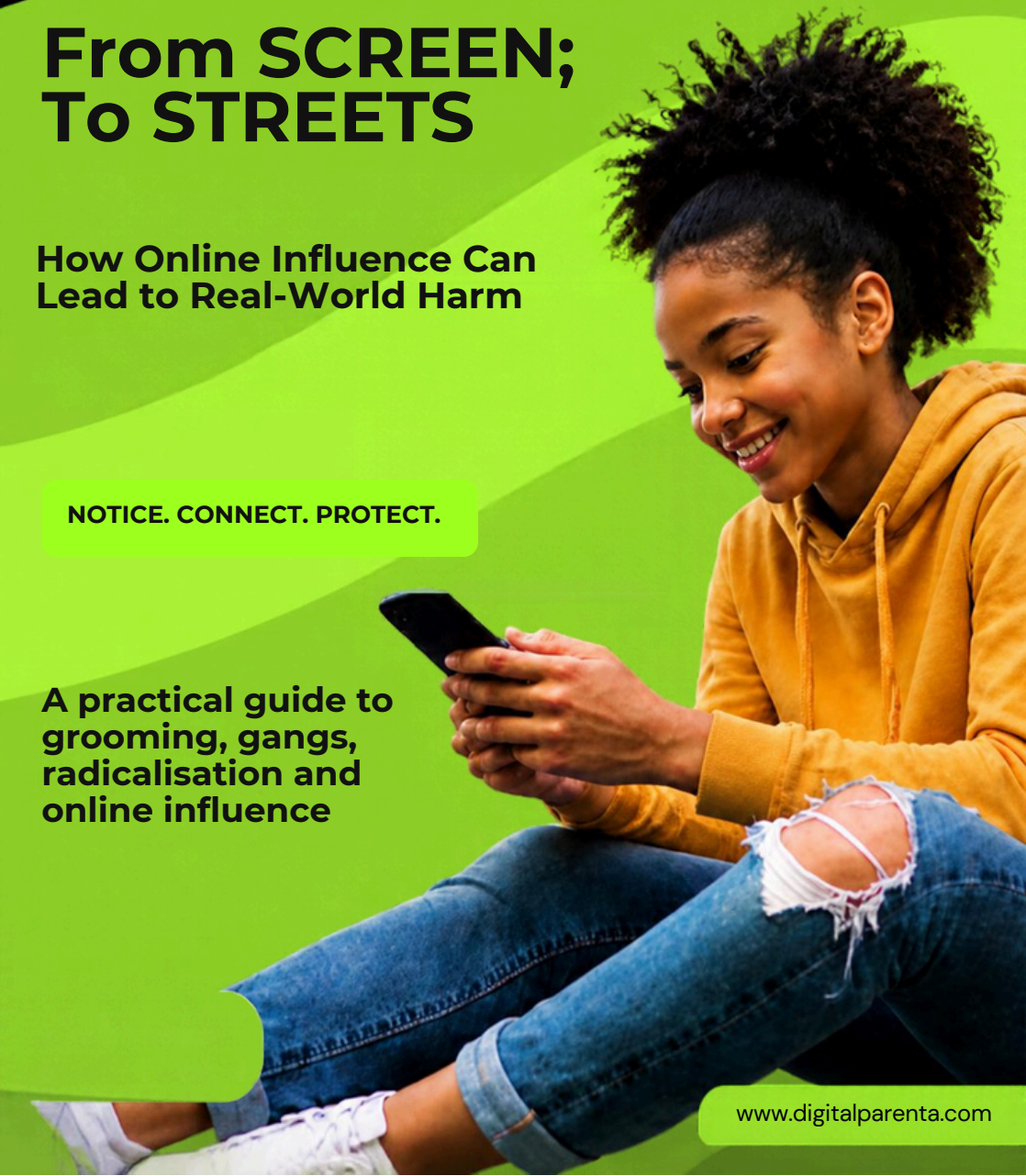
digitalparenta
DIGITAL PARENTING CIC

PARENT & YOUNG PERSON GUIDE

From SCREEN; To STREETS

How Online Influence Can Lead to Real-World Harm

NOTICE. CONNECT. PROTECT.



A practical guide to grooming, gangs, radicalisation and online influence

www.digitalparenta.com

A post can become a pathway

Online content does not stay on a screen. Repeated videos, private messages, group chats and livestreams can shape beliefs, friendships and choices - then lead to unsafe meetings, exploitation, violence or criminal activity offline.

The pathway is rarely obvious

It may begin with humour, status, belonging, gaming, music, money or attention. Harmful influence often grows through repeated contact and small requests, not one dramatic message.

TIP... Watch the movement

DISCOVERY
A video, meme, creator, game or public chat catches attention.

REPETITION
Similar content is recommended, shared and normalised.

CONNECTION
A person or group offers friendship, identity, status or answers.

PRIVATE SPACE
Contact moves to encrypted messages, private groups or disappearing chats.

COMMITMENT
Small favours, secrecy, tests of loyalty, threats or rewards increase.

OFFLINE HARM
A meet-up, delivery, confrontation, weapon, travel or illegal act follows.



Young people are not to blame for being manipulated or exploited. Early, calm support can interrupt the pathway before risk escalates.

When belonging becomes control

People involved in gangs or organised criminal networks may use social media, gaming, messaging and peer networks to identify and groom young people. Child criminal exploitation is abuse: a child may be coered, deceived or pressured into carrying drugs, money or weapons, recruiting others or committing offences.

TIP Common online hooks

- Money, gifts, game credit, clothes, food, transport or a place to stay.
- Status, protection, friendship, romance or a sense of family.
- Music, images and videos that glamourise violence, weapons or criminal lifestyles.
- A quick favour that becomes a debt, threat or test of loyalty.
- Requests to share a location, hold an item, travel, deliver a package or meet someone.

Language matters

A child being controlled is being exploited - not simply “working for”, “running for” or “choosing” a gang. Fear, debt and threats can make leaving feel impossible.

TIP Changes worth exploring

MONEY & ITEMS
Unexplained cash, phones, clothes, travel cards or gifts.

MOVEMENT
Unexplained journeys, taxis, missing episodes or returning late.

CONTACT
New older associates, many calls, multiple phones or secret accounts.

WELLBEING
Injuries, fear, exhaustion, school absence, aggression or withdrawal.

No single sign proves exploitation. Look for patterns, changes and combinations - then share concerns with safeguarding professionals.

Radicalisation is a process through which someone becomes susceptible to supporting terrorism or extremist violence. Online spaces can expose young people to propaganda, conspiracy narratives, hate, dehumanising language and communities that reward increasingly extreme views.

TIP There is no single route or profile

- Content may begin with humour, identity, grievance, current events or a search for belonging.
- Algorithms and peer sharing can repeatedly surface similar material.
- Influencers or groups may present the world as "us versus them" and discourage other viewpoints.
- Private contact can add praise, urgency, secrecy and pressure to prove commitment.

Strong opinions are not proof

A change in political or religious views alone does not mean radicalisation. Be alert to context, fixation, isolation, dehumanisation, threats, violent intent or contact with concerning people and groups.

TIP Open the conversation

ASK "What do you like about this person or channel?" "How do they support that claim?"	**EXPLORE** "What would someone who disagrees say?" "Who benefits if you feel angry or afraid?"
CHECK Compare the claim with reliable sources and look for missing context.	**CONNECT** Keep relationships, school and positive communities strong; isolation increases vulnerability.

Prevent is a safeguarding duty for specified UK authorities. Channel offers voluntary, confidential support for people susceptible to radicalisation; it is not a criminal sanction.

Pause before online tension moves offline

Arguments, humiliation, rumours and performative threats can spread quickly online. An audience may encourage retaliation, arrange confrontations or share live locations. A post made for status can create pressure to "prove" something in person.

TIP Recognise escalation

PUBLIC CHALLENGE Tags, call-outs, threats, countdowns or pressure to respond.	**LOCATION** School gates, parks, parties, homes or live location being shared.
AUDIENCE Group chats or livestream comments encouraging a fight.	**WEAPONS** Images, emojis, coded language or talk about carrying something "for protection".
MOBILISATION People following, ordering taxis or arranging to meet now.	**FEAR** A young person feels unable to stay home, ignore the post or ask for help.



Immediate action

If violence, a weapon, abduction, forced travel or an unsafe meeting may be imminent, call 999. Do not go to the location or confront those involved yourself.

TIP Interrupt the momentum

- **Move the young person to a safe place with a trusted adult.**
- **Do not reply publicly or issue counter-threats.**
- **Save usernames, links, dates and message details where safe; avoid spreading harmful content.**
- **Inform the school or setting's safeguarding lead when pupils or local locations are involved.**

Connect before you correct

A young person may stay silent because they fear punishment, losing their phone, being labelled a "snitch", retaliation or getting someone else in trouble. Your first response should make safety easier, not disclosure harder.

TIP Use the LISTEN response

1. **Listen without interrupting or demanding the whole story at once.**
2. **Identify immediate risks: threats, weapons, travel, debt, older contacts or a planned meeting. Say clearly: "You are not in trouble for telling me. We will deal with this together."**
3. **Take details carefully: platform, username, group, location, time and what is being requested.**
4. **Engage support: school safeguarding lead, children's social care, police or specialist services as appropriate.**
5. **Never confront suspected exploiters or extremist contacts yourself.**

Avoid instant device confiscation

A blanket ban may remove evidence, cut off safe friends and make future disclosure less likely. Make a proportional safety plan with professional advice.

TIP Conversation starters

CONTENT	CONTACT
"What keeps appearing in your feed?" "How does it make you feel after watching?"	"Has anyone offered you money, protection, status or asked you for a favour?"
PRESSURE	**SAFETY**
"Is anyone asking you to keep secrets, prove loyalty or meet offline?"	"What would make it easier to tell me if something started to feel wrong?"







The 7-day influence check

Complete one small action each day. Keep it collaborative: adults should examine their own feeds, reactions and information habits too.

DAY 1 • MAP THE FEED

Compare what appears on each person's feed and discuss why it may be recommended.

DAY 2 • CHECK A CLAIM

Choose one viral claim. Find its original source and two reliable checks.

DAY 3 • CONTACT AUDIT

Review unknown followers, private groups and contacts asking personal questions.

DAY 4 • LOCATION LOCK

Turn off unnecessary location sharing and remove school, routine and home details.

DAY 5 • PRESSURE SCRIPT

Practise: "No. I'm not doing that." "I need to check with an adult."

DAY 6 • TRUSTED TEAM

Name three adults and one professional service a young person could contact.

DAY 7 • FAMILY PROMISE

Agree: "If online pressure moves offline, tell us. Safety comes before punishment."

Our next family check-in date: _____

One online influence I want us to discuss without judgement:

digitalparenta
DIGITAL PARENTING CIC

Act early.
Share concerns.

If you are worried about a young person, record what you have noticed, focus on safety and contact the right service. Exploitation and radicalisation are safeguarding concerns, not problems a family must manage alone.

CEOP Safety Centre - Report concerns about online sexual abuse, grooming or exploitative communication.
www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre

Childline - Confidential support for under-19s, online or by phone: 0800 11111.
www.childline.org.uk

Report Remove - For under-18s in the UK to report sexual images or videos of themselves for removal.
www.childline.org.uk/report remove

NSPCC Helpline - Advice for adults worried about a child: 0808 800 5000.
www.nspcc.org.uk

Police - 999 for immediate danger; 101 for non-emergency concerns.
www.police.uk

contactus@digitalparenta.com
www.digitalparenta.com
08002465422
+44 7578 859301

We help families and communities build safer, healthier digital habits through workshops, school sessions, digital safety guidance and parent support.

SOURCES & FURTHER READING

GOV.UK Prevent duty guidance • Educate Against Hate • NSPCC: Child Criminal Exploitation and county lines CEOP Education

Guidance checked September 2026. Services and contact details can change.

@DigitalParenta