

Myths concerning the online sexual abuse of children

The Internet Watch Foundation¹, an organisation that acts to remove online child sex abuse, has put together information to dispel common myths about the online sexual abuse of children:

The Myth	The Reality
<p>Myth: It's creepy old men, alone in their bedrooms, pretending to be teenagers.</p>	<p>Reality: Many online abusers are much younger than you might have thought and are very socially active. They come across as 'normal', friendly and approachable. Some are open about their age and identity.</p>
<p>Myth: My child is safe at home with me – nothing's going to happen here.</p>	<p>Reality: Self-generated online child sexual abuse often happens when children are at home, in their bedroom, behind a closed door, sometimes with other family members at home.</p>
<p>Myth: I would notice if there was anything wrong.</p>	<p>Reality: Not all children realise they're being abused, and others feel too ashamed to say anything. There is no guarantee you would know anything had happened to your child, unless they tell you.</p>
<p>Myth: Abuse and grooming happens over weeks, months or years.</p>	<p>Reality: The gap between an abuser asking and a child responding can be just a few minutes.</p>
<p>Myth: Online sexual abuse only affects children from unstable or deprived backgrounds.</p>	<p>Reality: The Internet Watch Foundation sees materials with all kinds of children from all kinds of backgrounds. Any child with unsupervised access to the internet is potentially at risk.</p>

¹ <https://talk.iwf.org.uk/what-you-need-to-know/>