



## Grooming

Grooming is when an individual or group manipulates those around them to create opportunities to sexually abuse or exploit children.

It can happen anywhere, including in football. So, it's important you know how these abusers work, what to look out for and how football can help keep children safe.

### Targeting a child

They may deliberately identify a vulnerable child. Some children are targeted because of an obvious vulnerability (such as a disability). Some children are vulnerable as their ambition to succeed in football means they will trust and comply with adults they see as powerful and influential.

Coaches, scouts (talent identification officers), mentors and staff in development pathways may be seen as holding power and the key to a professional future.

### Making the child feel special

They will try and make the child feel special and can use different strategies to do this, such as:

- offering mentoring
- romance, love or affection
- giving advice
- showing understanding
- flattering the child about their football future
- offering one-to-one coaching to help the child progress
- texting and messaging them with tips.

### Offering gifts

In the offline world groomers might offer gifts, lifts and one-to-one coaching or even affection.

They might offer tickets to games, kit, boots and promises of trials or promotion to the first team, or referee promotion.