**CATFISHING**

At National Online Safety we believe in empowering parents, carers and educators with the information they need to hold an informed conversation about online safety with their children, should they feel it is needed. Please visit nationalonlinesafety.com for further guides, hints and tips for adults.

**What you need to know about...**

### Know the Risks

**Catfishing** can escalate very quickly. As someone executing a catfishing scam is looking to achieve a goal - whatever that may be - they are likely to want to get things moving as quickly as possible and may seem desperate or want to build a relationship without even meeting.

**Fraud and Identity Theft**

Catfishers are people who create fake identities and could be taking other people's photos and pretending to be them. It is common for fraudsters to post pictures stolen from social media sites, including Facebook and Instagram. Catfishers may try to limit chat to text-based messaging and anything involving video is likely to be shunned for fear of revealing their true identity.

**Online Grooming**

Catfishers can be anyone and target anyone of any age. They may target children and aim to lure them into a sexual relationship or trick them into sending nude or inappropriate images of themselves.

**Requesting Money**

Catfishers may also try to trick children out of money. After building up trust and developing an online relationship, a catfisher may use an elaborate story to request money urgently. They may ask for cash for a loan, money for travel, or some other form of payment.

### Safety Tips

**Set profiles to private**

Go through children's security and privacy settings thoroughly to ensure that their online profiles are set to private. This means that only friends can see their profile and can contact them. It may also be a good idea to check the child's contact list with them and closely monitor their usage, especially if they are being secretive.

**Be alert**

In some cases, it's difficult to stop young people from talking to new people. In these circumstances, encourage children to be curious and ask lots of questions rather than rely on the information given in someone's online profile. Through the course of conversations, there may be inconsistencies with what is said and catfishers may be vague in response to specific questions about themselves.

**Never meet**

It's vital that children know never to arrange to meet up with people they meet online, and never to send money to them. Tell them to always speak to a trusted adult if they are being pressured into doing something they are not comfortable with.

**Have honest conversations**

Have regular and honest conversations with your child about what is safe to share with people online. Discuss the importance of keeping private information private and that anything that could identify them should not be shared online.

### How to respond

**Offer support**

Always encourage children to talk to a trusted adult about anything that has made them feel uncomfortable online, particularly if someone they don't know has contacted them.

**Report and block**

Make sure that children are aware of how to report and block accounts on all platforms that they use. You can report fake accounts and block users to prevent them from viewing a child's profile.

**Check with Google**

If you are concerned that someone is using a child's photographs for their own benefit, use a Google image search to check. After uploading a photograph, use related images to see if anyone else is using photos that the child has previously shared online. If this is the case, report the user directly to the platform.

**Report to authorities**

If you suspect that a child has been the victim of any fraudulent, illegal or inappropriate activity, then you should immediately report it to the local police or authority.

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**Our Expert**

**Pete Badh**

Pete Badh is a writer with over 10+ years in research and analysis. Working within a specialist area for West Yorkshire Police, Pete has contributed work which has been pivotal in successfully winning high profile cases in court as well as writing as a subject matter expert for industry handbooks.