



Hanging out, or
being groomed?

Riley

"I met him through an online gaming chat. He seemed sound, so we met up and he introduced me to some of his mates. They were a bit older than me and made me feel welcome.

Over time, they started giving me alcohol and encouraging me to drink. One night, after it started raining, they suggested we hang out in the old public toilets in the park. Something didn't feel right, and I said I needed to get home because my Mam would be waiting for me. They ignored me and kept pushing me to come with them.

I remember trying to get the attention of a man walking his dog, but he just walked on. I think he only saw a group of teenagers hanging, messing about, and probably thought we were being a nuisance.

That night, I was assaulted. It was filmed and later used to control and blackmail me.

For a long time, I felt so alone and carried a lot of shame about what had happened. It wasn't until I told my Mam got support that I began to understand I had been groomed and exploited, and that none of it was my fault."

Beyond the behaviour

Riley was groomed online and then manipulated into believing he was friends with his exploiter, because the relationship was made to feel like friendship at first. **Members of the public had opportunities to recognise he was at risk: when he was being bought alcohol and drinking it underage in public spaces.** Scan the QR code to learn how children are being harmed in your community, and how can you can help.

