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# A guide to MAACE meetings

For parents and carers



## Noticing changes?

Have you noticed a change in your child's behaviour? Maybe;

- They suddenly start using abusive language,
- They become hostile or aggressive with you and/ or close family members,
- They are obsessed by their mobile phone.
- They become secretive,
- They disengaged from usual activities
- You find that they are not where you expect them to be.



There may be none of these, but there may be other indicators or concerns that you have, or that have been raised with professionals, for example they may have gone missing/ runaway.

These indicators and changes may mean that your child has been targeted by a person or a group, who have intentionally set out to befriend them and lure them into a friendship/ relationship.

It is unlikely your child will realise they have been groomed. The person/ people will initially be very nice and understanding and may give them things they do not usually have or involve them in things that initially feel like fun.

However, the person/people grooming your child will at some point manipulate, coerce, and control them to do what they require, and your child may not feel they can refuse because of threats and intimidation to them or their family members. Your child may well feel they have made a choice to be involved in what is asked of them, as the groomers will have been very clever in finding out lots of personal information about your child before they begin to pressure them, so they can use this to manipulate them.

## Who needs to be involved?

It is important for a wide range of professional agencies, including Children's Services, Police, Education & Health providers to work with you as soon as there are any indicators that your child may have been groomed. The earlier you can identify what is happening & plan together, the more likely you are to be successful in helping your child.

To help this to happen you will be invited to a Multi-Agency Adult/ Child Exploitation (MAACE) meeting. The person/people grooming your child will be aiming to drive a wedge in the relationship you have with your child, as this will make it much easier to manipulate them. The MAACE meeting provides you the opportunity to seek the help and support you need from services and those around you, so that you can all work in partnership to keep your child safe and you can continue to show your child how much they mean to you. You may find it useful to read about other parents experiences and seek support from [PACE](#) (Parents Against Child Exploitation) .

It is not unusual that parents and families do not know about or may not even have heard of exploitation, and unfortunately it is likely that by the time services become involved, the family relationships may be strained because of the drastic change in your loved one's behaviours.

Parents are invaluable in safeguarding children from exploitation because unlike services, you are there 24 -7. Professionals should do everything they can to support you as parents and carers and help you to understand how your loved one's behaviours are being affected by what they are experiencing rather than being personally generated towards you and other family members.

Any other children you have should receive their own assessment and support plan, as they will be individually impacted by the changes within the house hold and are at risk of being targeted either directly or by association (for example the perceived "status" of their sibling in a gang/peer group may mean the sibling is afforded that status and may be targeted too, even if they are not directly involved themselves).

As a parent, you will be kept informed about the decision to hold a MAACE meeting and about the process by a social worker.

# During the meeting

It is very important that parents attend MAACE meetings. It is your child that is being discussed and you have a right to know what is being said. **If you do not wish to come, you do not have to, but the meeting is your opportunity to;**

- give your views about what is happening
- ask your questions
- say what help you think your family needs

If you have any worries or concerns about the MAACE meeting, talk these through with the social worker, they should be able to reassure you about the process and provide you with further information. If you refuse to attend the MAACE meeting, without having these conversations with the social worker, they may be worried that your child may struggle, and that things may get worse. In some circumstances this can mean they will have to consider if there is a need to start a child protection enquiry. However, if you are able to explain your concerns and share information with the social worker, you may also be able to agree a way forward.

Because it is suspected that your child is being groomed, threatened or harmed, it is important that your child also has the opportunity to attend the MAACE meeting. Children can have an independent advocate attend with them to help them during the meeting. Children can also have an independent advocate to meet them before the MAACE meeting to ensure they have an opportunity to share their views wishes and feelings, even if they are not able to attend in person. The advocacy service in Solihull is provided by the [National Youth Advocacy Service](#).

**The meeting will consider what is working well and where there are any worries for;**

Your child

Your family

Your child's peer groups, friendships & associations

Your child's education (or employment if applicable)

The neighbourhood and places your child spends their time outside of the family home

The online networks your child is linked to.

## Accessibility

You may wish to have help with an interpreter if you speak a different language, or you may have special requirements. Please tell the social worker if you do, so that arrangements can be made to help you. If you have a learning difficulty or disability you can have an advocate to help you prepare and take part in the meeting. In Solihull this advocacy is provided by [Solihull Action Through Advocacy \(SATA\)](#). You can contact them by emailing [office@solihulladvocacy.org.uk](mailto:office@solihulladvocacy.org.uk) or by telephone 0121 706 4696.

## Information during the meeting

There may be parts of the meeting that you will not be able to hear, these may take place before or after the meeting you attend, or you may be asked to step out of the meeting for a while. This will only happen if there is a need to discuss information or intelligence that is related to other people, and therefore cannot be shared with you because of the General Data Protection Regulations . The manager chairing the meeting will explain this to you.

The meeting will start to outline a support and disruption plan and will identify a range of professionals that will work with you to agree what needs to happen . Following the MAACE meeting you will agree a date within 10 working days to meet with these professionals to further develop this plan. You should continue to meet and review progress at least every 12 weeks. These meetings may be more regular if needed and there is no time limit for how long the process can continue, as it is important you and your child have access to support for as long as there are concerns about grooming and exploitation.

Solihull recognises that people can be targeted and exploited whatever their age, so although the services that are available may change, there is a pathway to ensure support can be offered beyond someone's 18th Birthday and an adult worker may join the professionals at MAACE meetings if a need is identified. How parents are involved beyond someone's 18th Birthday will differ and will be directed by the young person themselves as the law recognises them as an adult.

It is not unusual for those targeting & grooming children and young people to back off for a while when professional involvement increases, only to return when professionals close the case as they feel progress has been made. For that reason, it is necessary for you and the multi-agency group to have recognised a prolonged period of sustained progress before deciding to stop the MAACE process. At this point the professionals that you and your child would have been in contact with before the MAACE meetings should continue to work together through the Early Help process for a while. This should ensure continued support and a swift response and re-referral to MAACE if your child is targeted again.

## Contact information

If you are unhappy with an individual agency, their performance and the provision or non-provision of services you should follow the relevant agency's complaints procedure.

For independent information you may wish to contact:

Parents Against Child Exploitation <https://paceuk.info/parent-support-enquiry-form/>

St Giles Trust <https://www.stgilestrust.org.uk/support-us/keep-children-safe/help-for-parents-and-caregivers/?nowprocket=1>

Solihull Citizens Advice— general advice queries **0808 2787 976** open Monday-Friday 10am-2pm

Family Rights Group— A free telephone advice line open Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 3pm (excluding Bank Holidays) on **0808 801 0366**. For Textphone dial **18001** followed by the advice line number <https://frg.org.uk/get-help-and-advice/>

### Intelligence

The Police gather information from a wide range of sources to form an intelligence picture to help them fight crime— this is especially important in cases where a child has been groomed or exploited. If you have any information that may help with this; phone numbers, names, car registration numbers, places, addresses etc. please call [crime stoppers](#) on **0800 555 111**