

Children and young people's safety

2018-2020 Report



Institute of Child Protection Studies

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Executive summary

It is a troubling fact that children and young people are at risk of sexual abuse in places where they should expect to be safe – their school, sports club, church and other youth-serving organisations. Organisations are taking steps to improve children’s safety and are implementing many changes to become safer for children and young people.

The Children and Young People’s Safety project is an on-going research engagement tool, developed by the Institute of Child Protection Studies, at the Australian Catholic University. The project aims to support organisations to develop and improve their child-safe culture. The Institute also uses the information to help answer research questions that will support policy and practice development across Australia and internationally.

The project continues important research work commissioned by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, which handed down its final report in 2017. Since then, governments have agreed to implement National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, and organisations have been working to apply the Principles to better protect and safeguard children from child sexual abuse.

An important aspect of policy and practice changes is the ability to monitor and evaluate their effectiveness. In the case of child sexual abuse this can be difficult for a number of reasons:

1. Child sexual abuse often goes undisclosed; if disclosed it can often involve decades-long gaps between abuse occurring and disclosure (the Royal Commission found the gap was typically 23 years)
2. A reduction in the number of reports of child sexual abuse made through mandatory reporting systems cannot be relied upon as an estimate of whether child sexual abuse is actually happening less often; since the recommendations of the Royal Commission were handed down, organisations, staff, volunteers and the wider community are likely to be more vigilant leading to an increase in officially recorded reports.
3. Like many other countries, Australia does not yet have community-wide prevalence data to show whether actual rates of child sexual abuse rates and other forms of child maltreatment are changing.

The Children and Young People’s Safety project offers two empirically developed survey tools:

1. Children’s Safety Survey
2. Safeguarding Capabilities in Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Survey.

Organisations can use the surveys to measure their conditions of safety. The data is accessible in real time and quickly shows participating organisations, peak bodies, or government whether changes to safeguarding policy and practice are helping move the organisation towards greater conditions of safety for the children and young people they serve.

Organisations that invest in improving the culture of child safety, developing policies and practices that prevent abuse from occurring, and responding more appropriately when abuse does occur need to know how well those changes are demonstrating improved

safeguarding. The data from these surveys can be used to measure improvements in the culture of safety and measure the success of child sexual abuse prevention efforts from the perspective of children and the workforce. This knowledge can help youth-serving organisations protect children and young people from grooming and sexual abuse.

How we use surveys to collect safety data

The two separate surveys collect data from within participating youth-serving organisations. They measure children and young people's perceptions of safety (including use of context-specific scenarios depicting potential grooming/concerning behaviours) and the capabilities of staff and/or volunteers to safeguard and respond appropriately to child sexual abuse within their organisation.

Organisations have access to their results using a largely self-managed process. They can deploy the surveys across their various programs and services. This ensures that any improvements on practice and policy are based on their own circumstances and stakeholder data.

What we found

Findings in this report are based on data collected during 2018-2020.

Children and young people's views of safety

Survey data was collected from **1851 children and young people** aged between 10 and 18. Most (81%) answered questions about their school; a smaller number (19%) answered questions in relation to other youth-serving contexts such as out-of-home care, sports clubs, community service organisations, and after-school-hours care.

Half the young people felt safe all of the time while 4% said they never felt safe. Most young people (85%-89%) said they would tell someone if they felt unsafe – in order of likeliness this would most likely be Mum, a friend or Dad.

Around two thirds of young people had confidence that adults had the skills and disposition to want to help them if they felt unsafe. But **only 34%** of young people said they'd know what to do because they had **discussed it with adults** in the organisation.

Half the young people who responded felt there were barriers to seeking help if they felt unsafe. Many felt that adults didn't care or were too busy to help. Around **one in ten young people felt unsure whether adults would know what to do** even if they were approached for help.

Adults' safeguarding capabilities

The adult safeguarding capabilities survey was completed by **633 staff or volunteers**. Around two thirds were practitioners or front-line workers (e.g. teachers, youth workers, sports coaches). One fifth were middle managers and the rest were organisational leaders or administrative staff. Respondents worked or volunteered in a range of sectors including youth development (43%), education (27%), as well as sport (12%), community services (10%), faith-based organisations (6%) and after school hours care (2%).

Most participants (**85%**) **agreed they were aware of policies** and that their organisation had a culture of child safety. Staff were aware of codes of conduct and they felt that leaders understood the importance of safeguarding. However, some staff weren't sure if training was being offered or how to build the sexual safety skills of young people.

The area of capability among staff and volunteers that scored the lowest (although still relatively high at 78%), **was their confidence to act to prevent or respond to potential or actual abuse**. Participants are confident in fulfilling their mandatory reporting obligations and helping build respectful relationships between young people. But they are less confident supporting a young person who has experienced abuse or including young people's perspectives in addressing sexual abuse risks.

Almost all participants **(95%) had positive attitudes towards safeguarding** and its importance. However, we found a concerning attitude related to pre-employment screening (obtaining Working with Children clearances for all adults) – some participants believed that pre-employment screening is enough to protect and safeguard children from abuse.

Most participants **(87%) felt they had good knowledge of situational prevention strategies**. However, not all participants understood how high staff turnover could influence children and young people's willingness to talk about safety or about the increased likelihood of abuse occurring if adults were alone with children.

These findings are presented in a range of publications targeted to specific audiences: participating organisations have access to their results through online dynamic data visualisation and receive summary reports specific to their organisation; general summaries and annual reports are published on the ACU [Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal](#); child-friendly and youth-friendly summaries are made available; peer-reviewed journal papers are published in academic journals.

What this means – and what I can do

These findings suggest that organisations, families and communities can take the following steps to improve conditions of safety for children and young people:

- Encourage young people to consider who their trusted adults are within organisations (in case mum and dad aren't around and they want to talk immediately).
- Encourage young people to talk to their friends and trusted adults about how they keep safe and what they want in order to feel even safer.
- Foster better relationships between staff/volunteers and young people by initiating conversations about safety that let young people know their safety matters.
- Champion the rights of children to feel safe across their organisation.
- Ensure organisational leaders discuss children's safety regularly with staff, volunteers, children, and families.
- Provide training to staff and volunteers.
- Ensure safeguarding policies and procedures are shared with young people as well as staff, volunteers and families.

PART 1

Introduction

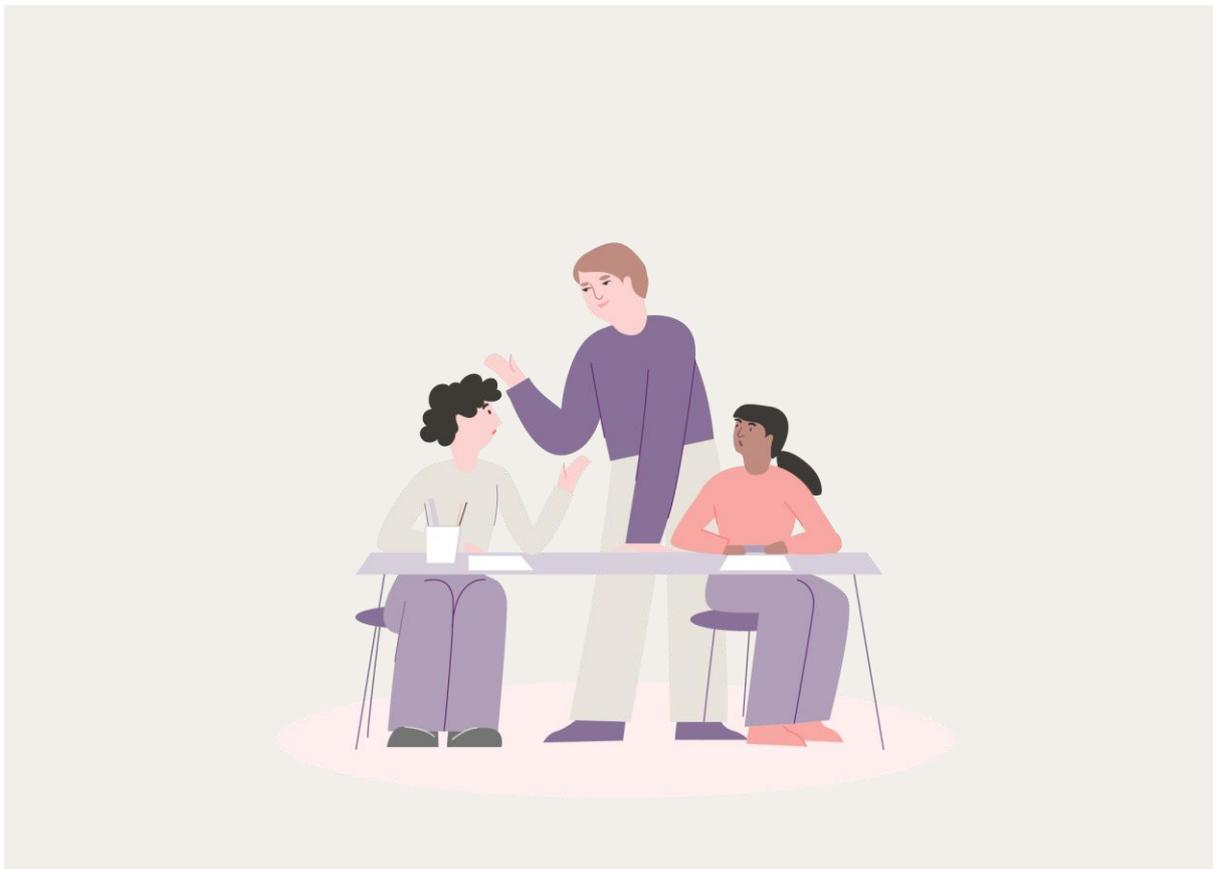
Children and Young People's Safety project

It is a troubling fact that children and young people are at risk of sexual abuse in places where they should expect to be safe. Unfortunately, there is so much that we need to do in schools, residential care units, sporting clubs, holiday camps, other youth-serving organisations as well as in family homes to keep them safe.

The Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2013-17) highlighted the risk of sexual abuse for children and young people within youth-serving organisations. The Children and Young People's Safety (CAYPS) project grew out of research that began during the Royal Commission.

The Institute of Child Protection Studies at Australian Catholic University conducted studies in collaboration with Griffith University and Queensland University of Technology to explore children's experiences of safety within organisations. The research gauged children's perceptions of the way that adults and institutions were acting to keep them safe and respond when they were harmed.

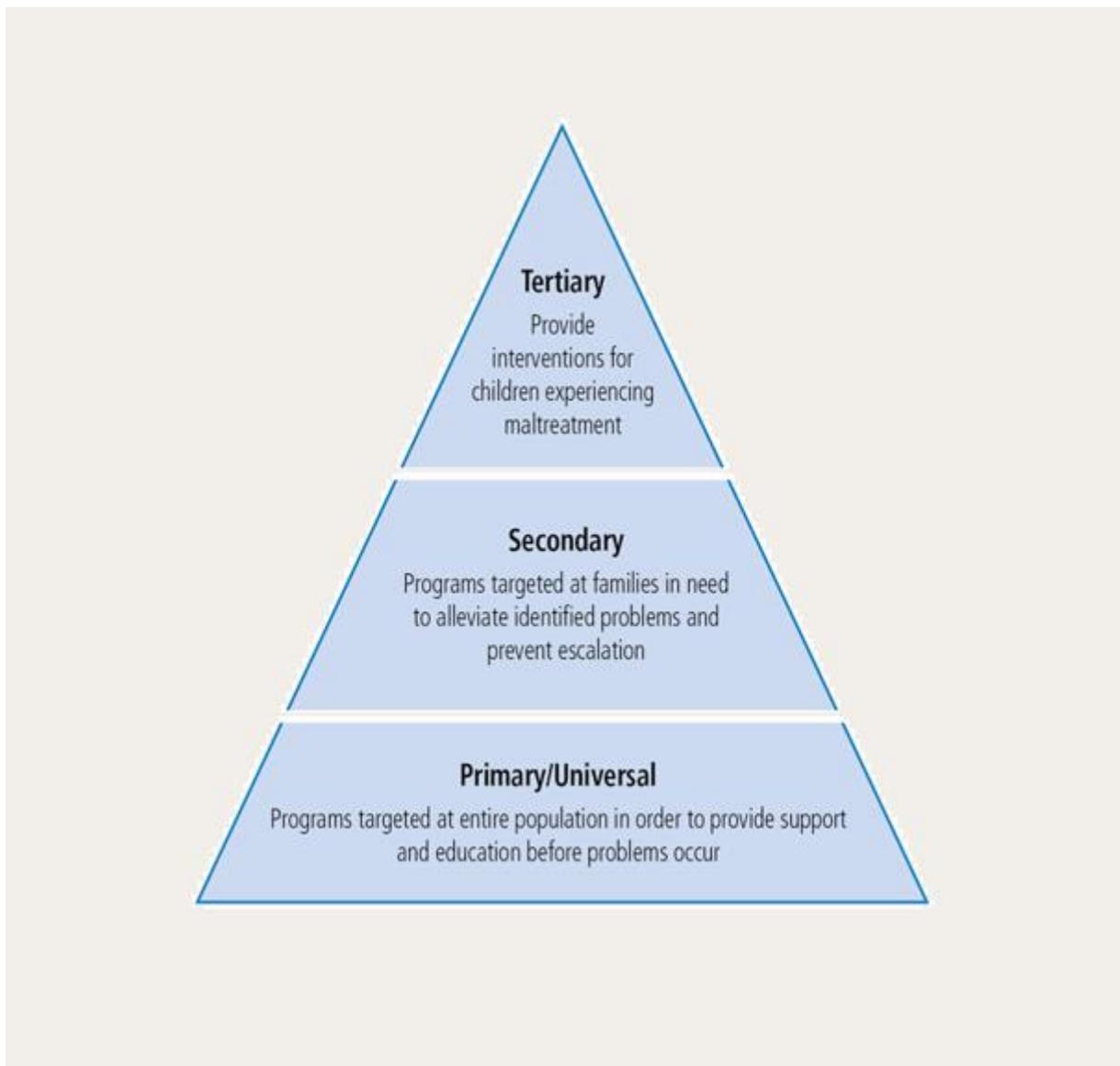
The CAYPS project is part of our commitment to child safety. Through this project, we investigate children and young people's wellbeing, as well as their perceptions of safety within a particular participating organisation.



Approaching child sexual abuse from a public health perspective

Research continues to discuss the problem of child sexual abuse (CSA) with recent research, as well as government focus, on the issue of institutional (organisational) CSA. Many experts argue that CSA is a public health problem which requires a public health solution.

A key concept of using a public health approach to tackle the issue of CSA is that **all organisations** need to be focused on child safety – not just those with vulnerable children or young people at a high risk of being abused or perpetrating abuse. Prevention strategies need to be addressed towards all children and young people, all families and all organisations with consideration for increasing intensity or type of strategy for specific groups (i.e. young people with disabilities, different cultural groups, LGBTIQ+ young people). Interventions need to be proportionate and progressive, available at universal, secondary and tertiary levels. Visit our website for more information about a [public health approach](#).



The impact of child sexual abuse

Children who have been sexually abused may display a range of emotional and behavioural reactions, including an increase in nightmares and/or other sleeping difficulties, withdrawn behaviour, angry outbursts, anxiety, depression and so on.

73%	57%	37%	Six times greater
Post-traumatic stress disorder	Depression	Generalised anxiety disorder	Suicide risk

(Source: Fisher et al., 2017)

Long-term impacts of child sexual abuse include a range of negative consequences for mental and physical health and adjustment across a person's life course including childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Child sexual abuse prevention is vital given the personal costs.

			
Child Poor attachment Difficulty sleeping	Toddler Self-identity issues Academic achievement concerns	Adolescent Suicidality Depression	Adult Physical health problems Sleep issues

Government inquiries and the Australian context

Numerous government inquiries and other investigations have occurred in the USA, England, Ireland, Scotland, New Zealand and Australia. These have revealed that children and young people are at risk of sexual and other forms of abuse in youth-serving organisations. The results of these investigations often lead to recommendations for changes at organisational levels to policy and procedure aimed at preventing child sexual abuse.

Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

Australia held a Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse from 2013 to 2017. The Royal Commission aimed to understand and identify the scope of child sexual abuse within organisations and the failure to address the problem. The Royal Commission developed recommendations to better protect children against sexual abuse and alleviate the impact of abuse on children when it occurs. This was a chance to make institutions and the Australian community safer for children in the future.

Over a period of five years, the Royal Commission provided a unique opportunity for people to share their experiences. It provided a safe place for survivors. It heard over 8000 personal stories in private sessions and received over 1000 written accounts from survivors of abuse. Children, young people and adults who were victims and survivors of child sexual abuse told their stories via in-person private sessions, letters and emails, phone calls, public hearings and invited responses. The stories spoke of lost innocence and childhoods, the impact on health, education, opportunities and on their personal relationships.

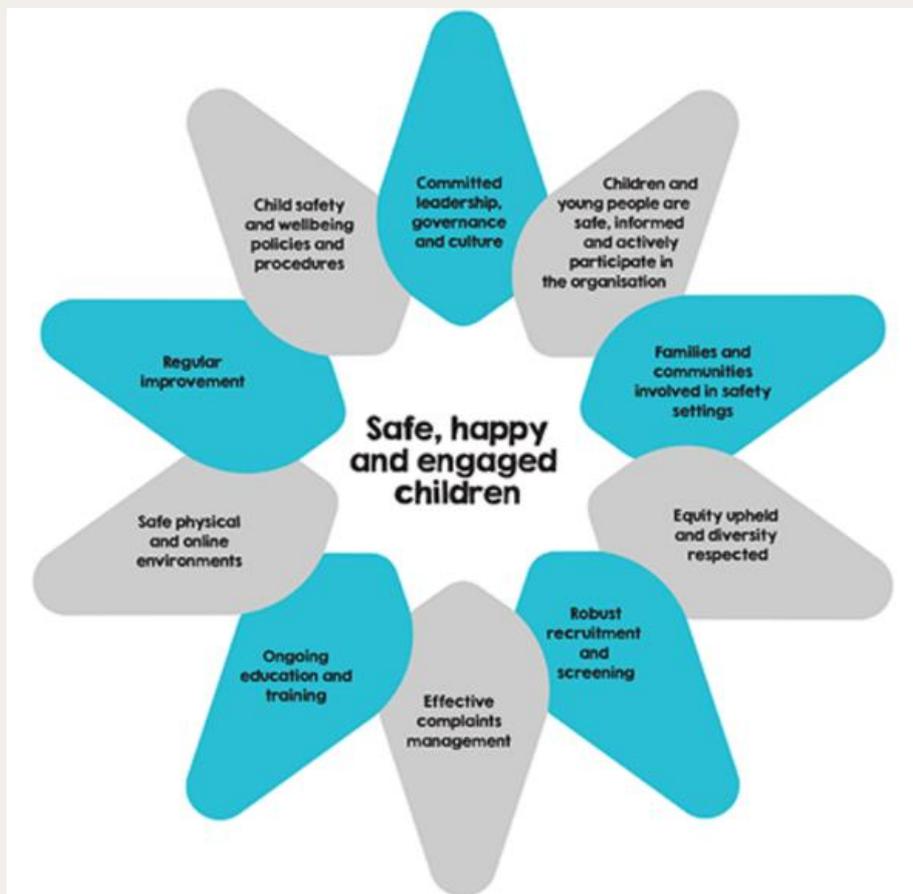
Royal Commission recommendations

The Royal Commission delivered [409 recommendations in the final report](#) to help make children safe. A key outcome of the recommendations was the ten National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. The Principles aim to promote child-safe standards and support youth-serving organisations across Australia to become safer places for children and young people.

The Principles can be used as prompts to change organisational culture, policy and practices to make children and young people safer. They help organisations focus on developing or improving cultures of child safety, developing policy and practice and responding more appropriately when abuse occurs.

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice.
5. People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.
6. Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused.
7. Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training.
8. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.
9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is regularly reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.



(Source: <https://childsafef.humanrights.gov.au/national-principles/about-national-principles>)

Measuring CSA prevention and safeguarding

Measuring success in child sexual abuse prevention

Successful prevention of CSA is difficult to measure. There is a lack of longitudinal prevalence data, and reporting is likely to rise as a result of increased awareness of CSA. In addition, the Royal Commission found it took an average of 23 years for survivors to tell someone about their abuse. These hurdles suggest that other means of identifying the success of the use of interventions, programs and policy and practice changes is needed.

The Children and Young People’s Safety project

The Institute of Child Protection Studies set up the CAYPS project to conduct research into child sexual abuse and safety in youth-serving organisations. The CAYPS project also provides accessible data collection tools to support measuring areas for improvement and the success of CSA prevention efforts in youth-serving organisations.

The CAYPS project is about understanding how children perceive the culture of safety within institutions, and the capabilities of adults working and volunteering in youth-serving organisations that children and young people interact with.

The project involves working with organisations to collect data using two surveys:

Children’s Safety Survey	Safeguarding Capabilities in Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Survey (Safeguarding Capabilities)
<p>Identifies young people’s views on the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the culture of child safety within a youth-serving organisation • ability of staff and volunteers to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse concerns • barriers to children and young people seeking help within their organisation 	<p>Identifies the capabilities of organisations’ workforce (staff, volunteers) across four categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organisational culture and awareness of policies and procedures • confidence to act • attitudes to prevention and agency of children/young people • situational prevention knowledge and education. 

Background to creation of surveys

The Royal Commission identified a lack of data on perceptions of safety from children and young people themselves. Through a funded project, the Institute of Child Protection Studies and its partners created and deployed the Australian Safe Kids and Young People survey (ASK-YP) to collect data. Since the Royal Commission handed down its final report, the ASK-YP has been included within a research engagement tool called the Children's Safety Survey.

To complement data collected on the perceptions of safety of children and young people within organisations, the Institute created the Safeguarding Capabilities Survey. This survey provides a means of investigating the capabilities of staff and volunteers who work within these organisations to prevent and respond to safety issues related to CSA.

The importance of listening to children and young people

It is important in the fight against CSA to hear from children and young people themselves. Indeed, one of the ten National Principles recommends that “children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously”.

There is also a growing body of research that supports the rights of children by involving them in decisions about matters that affect their lives. Research in this area has identified that:

- Children and young people interpret and make sense of the world differently. Therefore, they may perceive and experience safety in different ways to their parents and other adults.
- Children and young people's perceptions about how adults will respond to their safety concerns influence their disclosure and help-seeking behaviours.
- Children need opportunities to influence preventative strategies against child abuse in order to ensure they are as effective as possible.

If we, as a society, fail to engage children and young people, we will likely fail to understand their experience of safety, or worse fail to protect them from grooming and sexual abuse in institutions.

Due to the limited research in this space, there is limited understanding of how children and young people perceive the risk of child sexual abuse and safety in institutions. There are also gaps in what we know about their views and understanding of how institutions should, could and are protecting them from harm.

Understanding staff and volunteers' safeguarding capabilities

An important aspect of understanding an organisation's ability to keep children safe is knowing if workers who interact with children and young people in their workplace know what is required to keep children safe. Do they know what to do? Do they know how to create the conditions of safety that support effective prevention and responses to harm?

This notion of staff and volunteer capability is central to the Australian National Principles and Royal Commission recommendations. Principle 7 recommends that "staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training". However, this is not a new concept. Since the 1980s, when CSA research began in earnest, a range of surveys, questionnaires and measurement tools have been used to assess the effectiveness of such training.

Each of the different measures and questions used throughout the past four decades have strengths and weaknesses; one weakness is the lack of a tool that could cut across multiple sectors and focus on multiple aspects of knowledge, skill and attitude. Many measures are either focused on knowledge, attitudes, or behaviours relating to reporting abuse (rather than prevention) or focused on specific youth sectors (such as teachers, doctors and sports administrators).

Alongside this, there are insufficient appropriate measures to assess the 'child-safe culture' of youth-serving organisations and to assess the level of progress toward achieving a culture based around creating conditions of safety for children.

We created the Safeguarding Capabilities survey to measure the following attributes of staff and volunteers:

- awareness of organisational policies, practice, and safeguarding culture
- confidence to take action when a child or young person voices a concern about their safety and wellbeing
- attitudes in relation to children and young people's knowledge and access to safety education
- knowledge about the risks and prevention of child sexual abuse.

Aim of the CAYPS project

The CAYPS project will make a significant contribution to understanding how to prevent and better respond to child sexual abuse. It will enhance our understanding of:

- how institutional safety issues are constructed by children, and how these perspectives shape their thoughts, behaviours and actions
- the capability of workers to implement and support child-safeguarding policies and practices.

Organisations obtain valuable data regarding children and young people's perceptions of safety and/or staff and volunteers' capabilities to prevent and respond appropriately to abuse. By collecting data on these 'conditions of safety', organisations are able to understand whether the changes they are implementing in light of the Royal Commission's recommendations and the introduction of the National Principles are effectively improving safety for children and young people.

Findings of the project are shared publicly through reports, tailored data visualisation for participating organisations and academic publications made available on the Safeguarding Portal.

See how the surveys work

We have created a site with fictitious data to demonstrate the data visualisation tool. You are welcome to explore:

URL: [Link to dashboard](#)

Username: genericlogon

Password: ICPS2020

Find out more about the Children's Safety Survey and the Safeguarding Capabilities in Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Survey on the [Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal](#) website.



PART 2

How the surveys were deployed

Ethics clearance obtained for the study

The Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) provided the Institute with ethical clearance for the use of both surveys (Children's Safety Survey: 2018-5H, and Safeguarding Capabilities Survey: 2018-222H). The clearance is focused on ensuring that all participants are safe, understand what they are asked to do, and don't feel compelled. Participants are also made aware of who they can turn to if they have concerns about the questions they have been asked.

Recruiting participants for the surveys

Youth-serving organisations are responsible for recruiting children, young people and workers to complete a survey. Organisations determine what methods or strategies (e.g., emails, posters, flyers etc.) to use to tell people about the surveys and encourage their participation.

Organisations appoint a Participant Coordinator. The coordinator invites participants to complete the survey and manages the survey either for the organisation as a whole or for specific services or programs taking part in the survey.

Individuals recruited through an organisation may participate once or twice within a 12-month period.

Consent for ICPS to use the survey results in the research project

When organisations sign up to use one or both surveys, they agree for the Institute to use the survey results as part of the CAYPS research project to understand more about conditions of safety for children and young people across various youth-serving organisations, and to share that information in a variety of reports and publications.

Agreement to complete the Children's Safety Survey

Consent from parents for children and young people to participate

Children and young people aged between 10 and 15 can only participate in the Children's Safety Survey if their parent or carer consents. Although it is not a requirement under the university's ethics clearance for parents/carers to consent for 16-18-year-olds, for consistency and ease of administration, some organisations choose to get parental consent for all participating young people (i.e., those aged 10 to 18).

Youth-serving organisations send an email to parents/carers using an individualised link to a Parent Information Letter and consent form.

Consent from children and young people

Children and young people are also directly asked if they consent to taking part in the research. Children and young people read a Participant Information Letter at the beginning of the survey. It lets them know about their rights and reminds them that they do not have to answer every question and can stop answering questions at any time. They only commence answering the survey if they say "Yes" to the question: "Do you consent to take part in the survey?"

Survey data is captured and stored online

All participants complete the surveys using a device connected to the internet.

The youth-serving organisation determines whether participants complete the survey on-site (e.g., at the school, club, etc.) or are given a link to complete the survey in their own time (i.e., at home). If completing the Children’s Safety Survey on-site, the Institute encourages staff to oversee the completion of the survey. Staff can support children and young people by reading questions (but not leading them to answer in any particular way) and reinforcing the organisation’s desire to hear their views (so there is no need to answer like their peers).

Children’s Safety Survey

The Children’s Safety Survey measures children and young people’s perception of safety, wellbeing and health-related quality of life. The survey is made up of three sections:

1. **Australian Safe Kids and Young People (ASK-YP)** survey developed by the Institute
2. **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)**
3. **Child Health Utility 9 Dimension (CHU9D).**

The SDQ and CHU9D are standard groups of questions used by many researchers around the globe, focused on wellbeing.

Australian Safe Kids and Young People

The Australian Safe Kids and Young People (ASK-YP) survey questions measure four aspects of children and young people’s views about safety.

Child Informed Organisations Safety Climate

The Child Informed Organisational Safety Climate (CIOSC) measures children and young people’s perceptions of adult behaviour and the nature of their relationships with adults in the organisation.

The CIOSC scale includes seven statements. Children and young people are asked to rate each statement.

Question	How true are the following statements for [your organisation/program name]?
Sample statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel safe at [organisation/program name] • Children and young people have at least one adult at [organisation/ program name] who they trust
Answers	3-point scale: Not at all; Some of the time, All of the time or I’m not sure
Scoring	Responses are added up and averaged to determine a ‘total’ score for each statement. The higher the score, the better the perception of organisational safety climate.

Scenarios about safety

Scenarios used in the survey are created through discussions with groups of children and young people. The scenarios help us to understand what some of the areas of risk are and

what concerns that young people have had relative to the different types of organisations and the nature of different activities.

The scenarios present a hypothetical situation in which children and young people may feel unsafe when attending a youth-serving organisation. The scenarios involve either adults interacting with a child or young person, or two young people interacting. We also have a sports-related scenario in which a former peer has become a leader (junior coach).

After children and young people read (or watch and listen to) the animation, they answer questions that measure their sense of safety, their confidence in adults, and what they see as barriers to seeking help should they encounter a concern or an unsafe situation.

A youth-serving organisation selects two scenarios to use in the survey. The Institute works with organisations to help them choose scenarios that best depict the interactions and potential risk scenarios that young people may encounter in different types of organisations (e.g., education, sport, youth development, religious, or welfare settings).

Scenario example

Sally is in the school play and rehearses after school. Her teacher tells her that she is very talented and seems really encouraging. But Sally sometimes feels a bit uncomfortable with her teacher. He always singles Sally out for special attention and encouragement. He's a nice guy and everyone likes him. But Sally is uncomfortable because sometimes her teacher stands really close to her and compliments her in ways that make her feel weird. Sally's teacher has started arranging one-on-one rehearsals with Sally where Sally has to practice romantic scenes with him, saying things like "I love you". Sally's teacher says these rehearsals are important to be ready for the performance.

Usually, the gender of the young person in the scenarios randomly alternates from male to female. However, when appropriate for a particular organisation, only one gender might be chosen (e.g., an all-girls school might choose to always show the scenario with a female young person experiencing the concerning situation).

For more information about the scenarios that organisations can select from, see the [Children's Safety Survey prospectus](#).

Children and young people are asked what they would do in the scenarios, what they would need and how they think the organisation might respond. Questions about these points are grouped into three categories: sense of safety, confidence in adults, and barriers to help seeking.

Sense of safety questions for the scenarios

The sense of safety questions measure whether the children or young people:

- believe the scenario is likely to occur in the organisation (and, if so, whether it would worry or concern them) and
- would tell someone if the scenario occurred (and, if so, who they would tell).

Children and young people are asked the following questions:

	‘How likely is it that...’	‘Would you tell someone?’	‘Who would you tell? ‘What would you need most?’
Sample statements	A young person would be in a situation like this? You'd feel worried if you were in a situation like this? You would talk to someone if this happened to you?	N/A	N/A
Answers	4-point scale: very unlikely, unlikely, likely, very likely, or, I'm not sure.	Dichotomous: Yes/No	Multiple choice (one or more options): A friend, my mum, my dad, my brother or sister, a worker at [your organisation/ program name], another adult at [your organisation/ program name]
Scoring	Responses to the ‘How likely is it’ questions are added up and averaged to determine a ‘total’ score for each statement.		

Confidence in adults

The survey uses the Confidence in Adults scale to measure children and young people’s confidence in adults to prevent and respond to issues concerning interpersonal safety, as depicted in the scenarios.

The scale starts with a question followed by the seven statements. Children and young people are asked to rate each statement.

Question	Based on the scenario, how strongly do you agree or disagree with these statements, for [organisation/program name]?
Sample statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘I would know what to do because we’ve talked about it at [organisation/ program name]’ ‘I have an adult at [organisation/ program name] I trust that I would talk to.’
Answers	5-point scale: Strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree. Or can select ‘I’m not sure’.
Scoring	Responses on the 5-point scale are added up and averaged to determine a ‘total’ score for each statement. The higher the total score

	the stronger the child or young person’s confidence in adults to prevent and respond to issues concerning interpersonal safety.
Indicators	<p>The percentage of children and young people who have confidence in adults to help them is calculated by identifying the proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements.</p> <p>Scores can be presented for the statements where children/young people scored the highest or lowest, or where a high percentage of ‘I’m not sure’ responses was given.</p>

Barriers to help-seeking

The Barriers to Help-seeking scale is used to measure children and young people help-seeking behaviour if they felt unsafe in the youth-serving organisation. It aims to measure their perceptions of barriers that restrict their attempts to seek help. The scale starts with a question followed by 7 statements which children and young people rate.

Question	‘If you were in a situation like this, there might be a number of things that kept you from getting help. How strongly do you agree with the following statements?’
Sample statements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I would deal with this type of thing by myself. • Adults at [organisation/program name] are too busy to deal with things like this.
Answers	5-point scale: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly agree. Or can select ‘I’m not sure’.
Scoring	Responses for the 5-point scale are added up and averaged for a ‘total’ score for each statement. The higher the total score the more barriers children and young people perceive to help seeking.
Indicators	<p>The percentage of children and young people who perceive barriers to help seeking is calculated by identifying the proportion of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements.</p> <p>Scores can be presented for the statements where children/young people scored the highest or lowest, or where a high percentage of ‘I’m not sure’ responses was given.</p>

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire

The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) helps to identify child and adolescent behavioural and emotional problems. Robert Goodman, a child psychiatrist in the United Kingdom, is the main creator of the questionnaire. There are different versions of the questionnaire including some that parents complete and some that young people (aged 11-17) complete.

The Children's Safety Survey uses the youth self-report version of this questionnaire. It includes 25 statements that provide insights into a child or young person's emotional symptoms, conduct problems, hyperactivity/inattention, peer relationships problems, and prosocial behaviour. Young people are asked to respond to a range of different statements using a 3-point scale: Not true, Somewhat true, or Certainly true. Statements cover topics such as being nice to others, doing what you are told, anger and anxiety.

A 'total difficulties' score is calculated by adding up the items (or statements) in four difficulties focused domains. The total difficulties score ranges from 0 to 40. The higher the total score the more difficulties a child or young person is experiencing. A 'total strengths' score is calculated by adding up the items in the prosocial behaviours domain. This score ranges from 0 – 10. The higher the total score the more strengths the child or young person is demonstrating.

Child Health Utility 9 Dimension

The Child Health Utility 9 Dimension (CHU9D) scale is a generic child health-related measure of quality of life. Researchers at Sheffield University developed the scale. Although originally designed for use with children aged 7 to 11 years, recent studies have demonstrated its suitability for young people aged 12 to 17 years.

The CHU9D includes nine categories or domains: worried, sad, pain, tired, annoyed, schoolwork, sleep, daily routine, and ability to join in activities. There are a number of statements within each category. Children and young people are asked to decide which statement best describes how they feel on the day of the survey. They answer using the following 5-point scale: I don't feel...; I feel a little ...; I feel a bit ...; I feel quite....; I feel very...: Weightings¹ are applied to each response and then summed to provide a quality adjusted life years (QALY) score between 0 and 1. We use the CHU9D in the Children's Safety Survey to compare perceptions of safety and quality of life in the participating children and young people. For example, we can see if there is a relationship between how safe a child feels and their quality of life. The CHU9D was selected because other studies have determined that it accurately identifies the health status of children and young people.

We don't report on the SDQ or CHU9D in this report, which focuses solely on the safety aspects of the CAYPS project.

¹Australian weightings are being used as of the date of publication of this report.

The Safeguarding Capabilities Survey

The Safeguarding Capabilities in Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Survey (Safeguarding Capabilities Survey) measures the capabilities of the workforce - staff and volunteers - to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse and other forms of harm to children and young people in youth-serving organisations.

Workers respond to 73 statements that assess capabilities in four areas:

- organisational culture and **awareness** of policy and procedure
- **confidence** to act (to prevent or respond to abuse)
- **attitudes** to prevention and the agency of children and young people
- situational prevention **knowledge** and education

There are a series of statements for each of these four areas. Workers rate each statement. For example:

Factors	Awareness	Confidence	Attitudes	Knowledge
Sample statements	My organisation has policies that clearly identify the types of behaviours that could be perceived as grooming.	I don't really know what is expected of me to create a child safe environment.	The only way to keep children and young people safe is to just do what adults in the organisation think is best.	Some risks of sexual abuse can be reduced when staff know what to do.
Answers	5-point scale: Strongly disagree and Strongly agree. The three options between strongly disagree and strongly agree are not labelled.			
Scoring	Responses are added up and averaged within each of the four areas. The higher the score the stronger the capability (i.e., higher awareness, more confidence, a supportive attitude and higher levels of knowledge). Because some statements are phrased negatively, scores on those items are reversed so that when added up, higher scores indicate a more positive response. When participants do not respond to all questions, the total score is calculated based on the responses they did provide.			
Analysis	The level of participant agreement with each domain is the proportion of participants who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements in that domain. Highly and lowly rated domains are identified by comparing the level of participant agreement for each domain. For example, if 95% of participants agreed or strongly agreed about their confidence to act, compared with only between 60 to 80% reporting high knowledge or awareness, then confidence to act becomes the highest rated domain.			

Making sense of the data

Any responses that are not valid are removed prior to analysis. Participants in either survey who failed to complete any items beyond the introductory questions about them (their age, gender, etc.) were removed prior to analyses.

Reporting of the survey data

Survey results are made available in multiple ways.

Annual report of survey results prepared for the public

The purpose of this annual report is to provide participants, participating organisations and other interested people access to the findings within a given period. The annual report is made available on the Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal.

Organisational reporting

Dashboard

Organisations get access to their own results through an online real-time dashboard. The dashboard presents survey data in an easy-to-read format. The dashboard displays data in the form of graphs, charts and averages, or text. Users can compare their results to the results of every participant who has taken part in the surveys, or to benchmark data informed by initial survey development and deployment.

Report for the youth-serving organisation

All organisations that take part in the research receive a Standard Report that describes results based on participant responses from their organisation.

Some organisations choose to receive a Tailored Report. At the request of participating organisations, we can tailor a report to address their specific information needs, and include analyses of their data exploring issues like: the relationship between safety and wellbeing of the children/young people in their organisation, or differences in safety findings between the children/young people participating in different services, programs and locations.

Publications

Researchers from the Institute use the data from the CAYPS project to develop new resources, practice tools, self-assessment and other measuring instruments and identify new research opportunities. We also write for peer-reviewed academic journals. Publications are available via the Safeguarding Portal.

CHILDREN'S SAFETY SURVEY

2018 - 2020 RESULTS

Who participated?

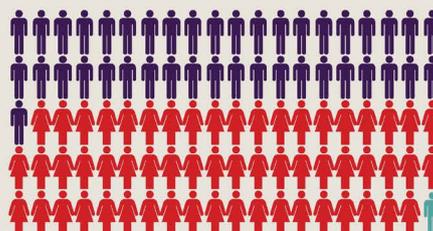
1851 Children and young people



23 Aboriginal 4 Torres Strait



5 both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders



37% Male

62% Female

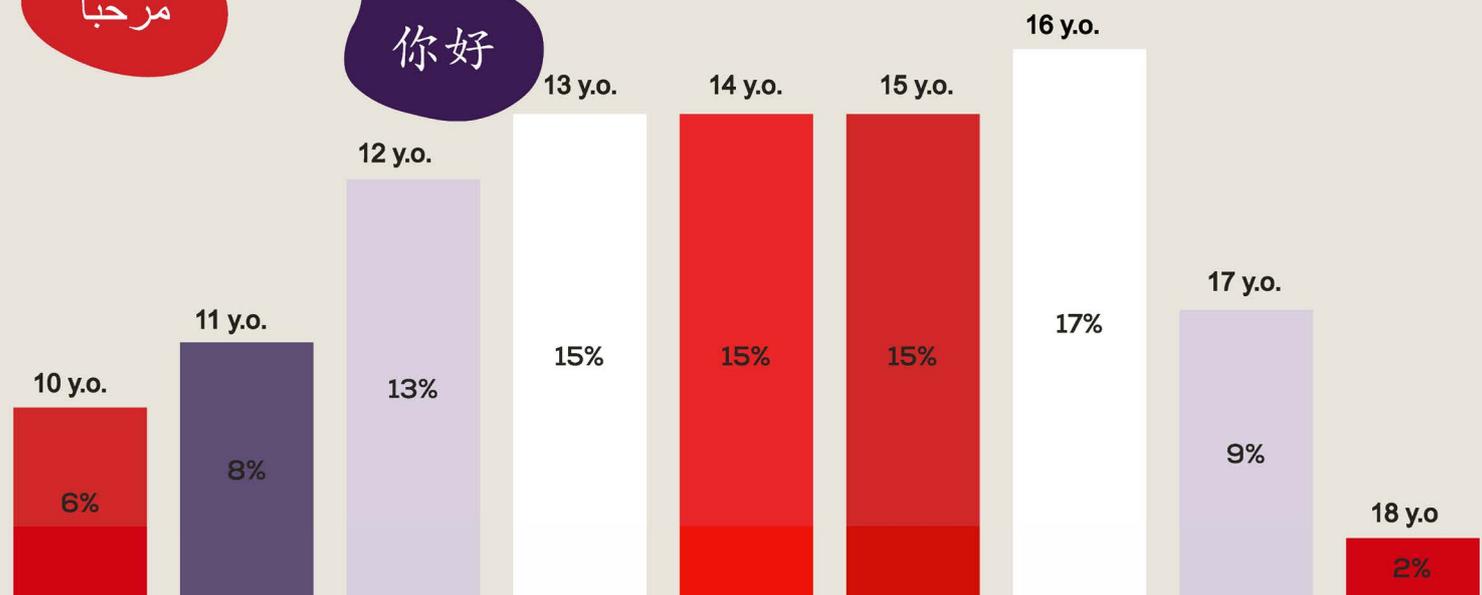
1% Gender diverse

ciao

22% of children and young people spoke languages other than English

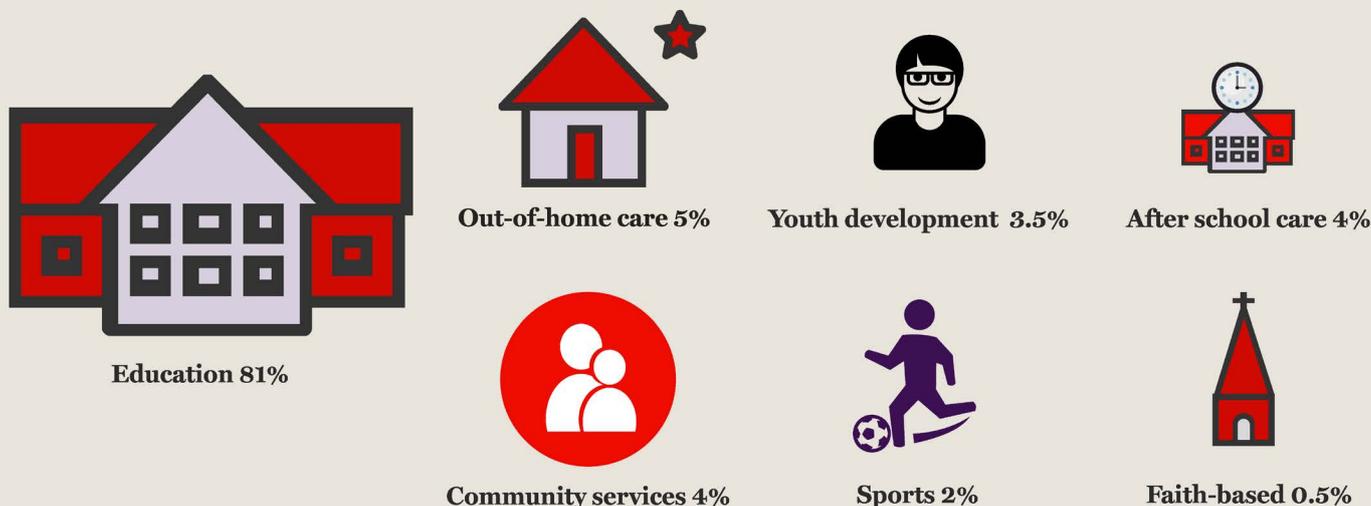
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你好



How old were participants?

Which sectors did organisations belong to?



How often did children and young people feel safe in their organisation?



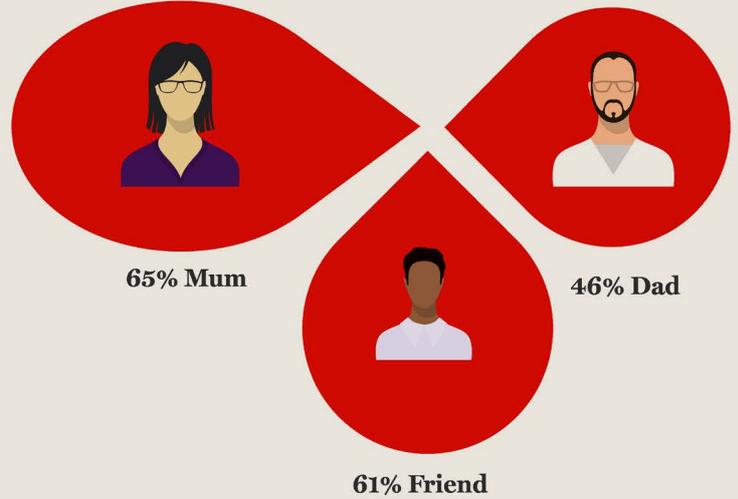
Adult scenario

How children and young people predicted they'd act if feeling unsafe with an adult



89% of participants would tell someone

The top three people children and young people would tell



Did children and young people have confidence in adults?



64% of participants had confidence in adults to help them

71% of participants agreed that adults in their organisation believe it's their job to help unsafe children and young people

Only 34% of participants agreed they'd know what to do in an unsafe situation because their organisation had discussed situations like this

What were the barriers to children and young people seeking help?



Overall, 49% of participants felt there were barriers to them seeking should they feel unsafe



57% of participants felt adults are too busy to help them



60% of participants felt adults don't care about them in situations like this



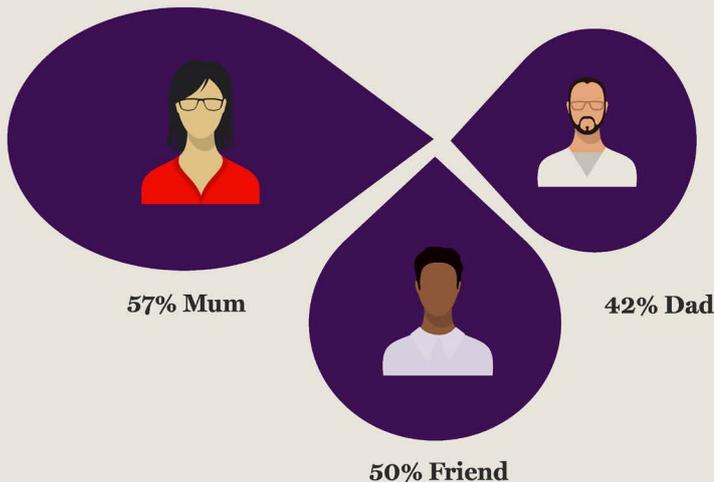
10% of participants were unsure if adults would know what to do

How did children and young people predict they would act if they felt unsafe with a peer?

The top three people children and young people would tell



85% of participants would tell someone



63% of participants had confidence in adults to help them

66% of participants felt adults think it's their job to help them and that they would know what to do

14% of participants were unsure if adults would ask them what they would want to happen if they felt unsafe

Did children and young people have confidence in adults?



What were the barriers to children and young people seeking help?



Overall, 47% of participants agreed there were barriers to seeking help



Similar to adult situations, 9% of participants were unsure if adults would know what to do



57% of participants felt adults don't care about them experiencing unsafe situations like the scenario



35% of participants would feel uncomfortable talking with an adult

SAFEGUARDING CAPABILITIES SURVEY

2018 - 2020 RESULTS

Who participated in the survey?

633 Staff/volunteers



77% Female

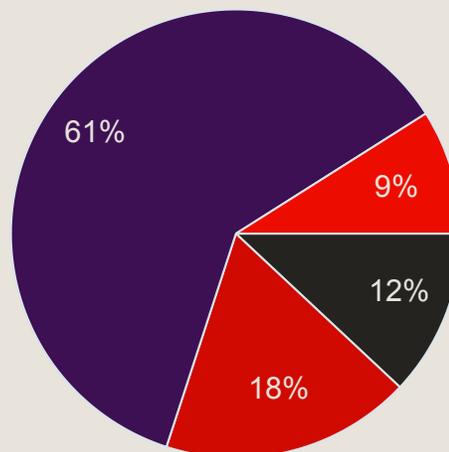
22% Male

1% Gender diverse

Who were the participants?



61% Practitioners/Volunteers
(teacher, social worker
or therapist)



9% Administrators
(not a frontline
staff member)

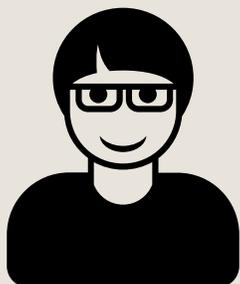


12% Leaders
(CEO, director,
principal)



18% Middle Managers
(team leader, coordinator)

What sector were the participants from?



Youth
development
43%



Education
27%



Sport
12%



Community
services
10%



Faith-based
6%



After
school
care
2%



What were the findings of the study?



Organisational culture

Participants were asked about their level of awareness of policies and procedures and their perception of the culture of child safety within the organisation.

85% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they were aware of policies and procedures and that the organisation had a culture of child safety.

Participants had greater awareness in relation to:

- existing codes of conduct that define how adults should interact with children and young people.
- leaders in their organisation who understand the importance of safeguarding.

Participants had less awareness of:

- how they could be building the sexual safety skills of young people by staff and volunteers.
- whether their organisation was providing staff training about sexual abuse.



Confidence to act

Participants were asked about their level of confidence to take action to prevent abuse or respond to young people's concerns.

78% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they were confident to take action to prevent abuse or respond to young people's concerns.

Participants were most confident in:

- being able to fulfil their mandatory reporting obligations
- helping young people to have respectful relationships with each other.

Participants were least confident in:

- providing appropriate support to young people who have experienced sexual abuse.
- including the perspectives of young people when addressing sexual abuse risks.



Attitudes to prevention

Participants were asked about their attitudes that relate to the prevention of abuse and the agency of children and young people.

95% of participants agreed or strongly agreed to having attitudes that support the prevention and appropriate response to child sexual abuse.

Participants' attitudes most supportive in preventing abuse:

- not believing young people who get sexually abused have usually acted promiscuously or somehow 'asked' for it
- believing a young person's wellbeing is more important than protecting the organisation's reputation if abuse were to occur.

Participants' attitude that may get in the way of good sexual abuse prevention:

- believing that screening staff and volunteers with working with children checks is the only real way to prevent abuse.



Prevention knowledge

Participants were asked about their knowledge related to situational prevention and the role of educating staff and children about abuse.

87% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that they possess knowledge of situational prevention and the role of educating staff and children and young people.

Participants' knowledge was highest regarding the fact that:

- many people, not just the child or young person who was abused themselves, can be affected by sexual abuse.

Participants' knowledge was poorest in relation to areas such as:

- the negative impact that high staff turnover can have in making children and young people less comfortable to speak up about their sexual safety concerns
- child sexual abuse is more likely to occur when there are opportunities for adults to spend time interacting with children out of sight of other adults.

INSTITUTE OF CHILD PROTECTION STUDIES

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WHAT CAN I DO NOW?

2018-2020 Recommendations

Action steps for children and young people



1. **Talk to your friends** about what you want adults to do to help you feel safe in your organisation (like school or a sports club).

2. **Consider who are the trusted adults** you would talk to if you or a friend felt unsafe. You could also talk about this with a parent or carer you trust.

3. **Talk with the trusted adults** in your organisation and tell them about what you would like from them in supporting your right to safety.

4. **Build trusting relationships** with the children and young people through engaging in meaningful conversations on a wide range of topics. Listen, take them seriously.

5. **Initiate safety conversations** explicitly and frequently with children and young people, including both listening to what they want and telling them how you can support them if they felt unsafe.

6. **Champion the rights of children to be safe.** Think how you can raise awareness of children's right to safety across your whole organisation.

Action steps for workers and practitioners



7. **Discuss children's safety often, with everyone.** This includes listening to children and young people themselves, parents, carers, staff (frontline and administration), and volunteers.

8. **Provide ongoing professional learning** for staff and volunteers about safeguarding children and young people and particularly on how to support a child or young person if they have concerns or when they feel unsafe.

9. **Talk about safety processes** you use that go beyond pre-employment suitability screening (i.e., Working with Children Checks) that ensure children and young people's safety.

10. **Share safeguarding policies and procedures** regularly with children and young people using child-friendly language that is suitable for their age.

Action steps for leaders



References

- Fisher, C., Goldsmith, A., Hurcombe, R., & Soares, C. (2017). The impacts of child sexual abuse: A rapid evidence assessment. *Independent Inquiry into Child Abuse*. United Kingdom
- Russell, D., & Higgins, D. (2020). Safeguarding capabilities in preventing child sexual abuse: exploratory factor analysis of a scale measuring safeguarding capabilities in youth-serving organizations workers. *Child Maltreatment*, 25(2), 233-242.



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