

Promoting Safety from Sexual Abuse and Harm in Community Service Organisations

April 2018

The Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission) has highlighted the risks experienced by children and young people in a variety of youth-serving organisations, including community, child, youth and family services. Victims have shared the long-lasting impacts of their abuse and the failure of adults and institutions to take their safety seriously, to prevent abuse and to adequately respond when they were harmed.

This highlights the need for all adults working with children and young people to understand the nature and risks of sexual abuse and other harm in organisations, and to actively prevent and step in when children are hurt.

This guide was informed by a series of focus groups with children, young people and practitioners from Barwon Child Youth & Family, and builds on research conducted by the ACU Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) for the Royal Commission. It is one of a suite of resources developed by ICPS that are available on the Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal ([available at https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/](https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/))

We would like to acknowledge the support and generosity of the Collier Charitable Fund in the development of this tool.



This resource was written by Dr Tim Moore from the ACU Institute of Child Protection Studies for Barwon Child Youth and Family. It is one of a series of resources promoting children's safety within organisational settings. Other child-safe resources are available on ACU's Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal: <https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au>

Contents

This guide contains:

- **An overview of relevant research on sexual abuse in youth-serving organisations**

- **Messages from children and young people on what makes an organisation safe and how they can tell if they are safe**

- **A series of tools to help organisations reflect on their practice**

- **Further Reading**



Key Messages

1.

Children and young people are at heightened risk of experiencing child sexual abuse and other forms of harm within community organisations, particularly when organisations do not have a culture of respecting children and proactively protecting them from harm

2.

Children and young people who are socially vulnerable, experience difficulties in other parts of their lives, have experienced other forms of abuse and harm and/or have mental health or disability are more likely to be sexually abused

3.

Some perpetrators seek out employment in community organisations to have access to children, while others do not have a sexual preference for children but take advantage of opportunities and situations that enable them to have sex with young people

4.

Children and young people experience safety differently to adults and need adult allies to help them identify unsafe people and environments, and to manage threats when they arise. They want to have a say in how organisations keep them safe and respond when they have been harmed.

5.

Organisations implementing strategies to protect children from harm need to recognise that sometimes these strategies make children feel unsafe and can have other negative consequences.

What has been learned from the Royal Commission and its research?

Does institutional child sexual abuse still occur?

Although much of the work conducted by the Royal Commission has focused on historical sexual abuse, research shows that risks remain for children and young people in modern-day organisations. In analysing police files, for example, researchers estimated that each year there are as many as 600 allegations of child sexual abuse in Australian institutions [1]. Children and young people are also at risk of other forms of harm: of experiencing and witnessing family violence, of abuse and neglect within their families, and of bullying and harassment. Research suggests that children and young people who experience one form of harm are at greater risk of experiencing others. As such, it's important for organisations to respond to all forms of abuse and harm and to recognise the vulnerability that children and young people experience.

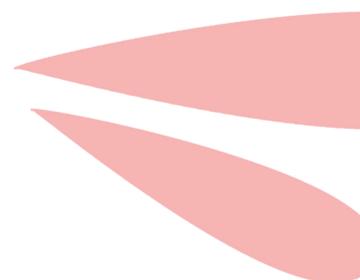
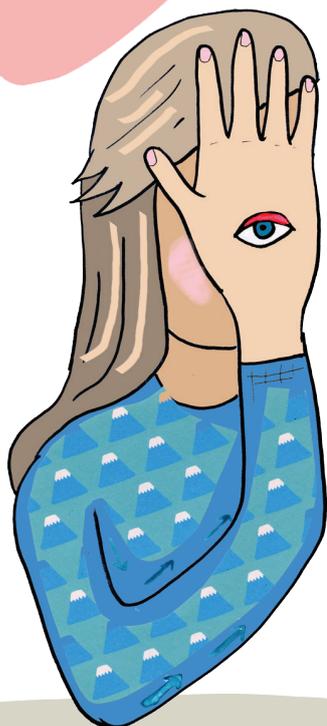


What makes young people so vulnerable to abuse and exploitation?

Children and young people can be hurt by adults, by their peers and by others outside of organisations.

Studies have found that victims of institutional abuse are most likely to be aged 8-14 [1]. During this time, children and young people are vulnerable because they are often reliant on adults, are physically smaller and weaker, less likely to be taken seriously by adults if they raise concerns and because they are often naïve and do not pick up on grooming or inappropriate behaviours [2].

At the same time, researchers [3] argue that during adolescence, children and young people are developing physically and sexually – changes that are noticed by adults who are attracted to young growing bodies. So too do young people's brains change: although developing, they still have limited "executive functioning" (making it difficult to foresee consequences and to problem-solve), and they begin to develop new sexual identities and drives and are vulnerable when adults (and peers) take advantage of their growing sexual curiosity and "exploit their normal needs for independence, intimacy, and romantic connections" [3, p. 2443]. This places many young people at risk when adults violate professional boundaries and exploit their vulnerability.

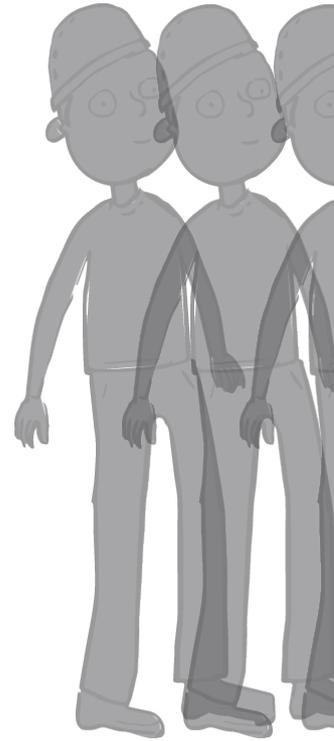


Who are those most likely to experience abuse?

Studies have found that victims of institutional abuse are most likely to be aged 8-14 and be female, and that the abuse is most likely to occur at school and be perpetrated by a peer [1].

Grooming research [4] also has found that children and young people are most vulnerable when they:

- are socially isolated;
- have mental health or behavioural difficulties;
- have a disability;
- have low self-esteem;
- have one parent who is continually absent;
- have been a victim of bullying;
- live in a situation of domestic violence;
- identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, intersex or transgender;
- have a history of physical, emotional or sexual abuse.



To Think About:

How does your organisation provide extra support to vulnerable children and young people and encourage and enable them to raise their concerns?

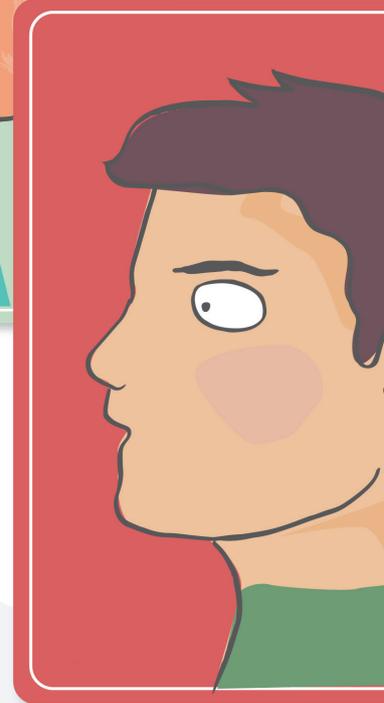
Who is most likely to abuse children and young people?

We now know that perpetrators of sexual abuse are not all the same: some seek out work and environments where they have access to vulnerable children and young people, others find themselves in situations where there are opportunities to offend and where there are limited barriers to harming children, and others breach professional boundaries and form inappropriate relationships.

Those who have a sexual preference for children and young people (often referred to as 'predatory perpetrators') will often seek out roles that facilitate their contact with children, particularly with those who are vulnerable [4]. These adults groom children and young people, act to distance them from other supportive adults and peers, and make them feel as though they are responsible for their abuse. As well as grooming children and young people, they groom adults and organisations and change organisational conditions (to deflect focus from themselves and make it unlikely that other adults will scrutinise their behaviours). These adults, however, do not make up the majority of those who offend.

Other adults who abuse children are those that don't necessarily have an attraction to young people but who may cross appropriate relational boundaries and use children to satisfy their own sexual needs. These 'opportunistic' offenders are less likely to create opportunities for abuse by manipulating the environment but take opportunities when they arise [4].

The last group of offenders are those that are 'situational'. They don't have a sexual preference for children but will abuse children in the absence of other healthy adult relationships or because they feel inadequate, are socially isolated, have low self-esteem and poor coping skills. They may, or may not, groom children and will often see a child's playfulness, shyness or delinquency as a prompt for abuse. They breach professional boundaries [4]. They are often harder to identify as being a threat to children and young people than other perpetrators.



In addition, although many people believe that most abuse that occurs in institutions is perpetrated by adults, research analysis of offending in Australia highlights the fact that young people are most likely to be assaulted by other young people at school and in other youth-serving organisations. Like adult offenders, youth offenders are most likely known to their victims. These young people may have experienced abuse themselves but many have not. Sometimes they act in ways similar to adult offenders, using grooming behaviours including 'sexting', cyber-bullying and sharing indecent images.

Are some organisations riskier than others?

Throughout the life of the Royal Commission a number of characteristics have emerged, of organisations where abuse is more likely to occur. Institutions that do not adequately protect children and young people from sexual abuse are often those;

- that don't have a culture of respecting children and listening to them;
- where there are long-standing and close-knit relationships between adults in the institution, making it less likely that leaders will believe that their peers have abused children;
- with a unhealthy strong ethos of group allegiance and a culture that discourages dissent;
- that have an 'aura of respectability' where parents and other adults do not easily believe that children might be unsafe;
- that are closed off from the broader community and where organisational rules and obligations are given more weight than civil laws or community standards;
- that have inadequate and poorly implemented internal disciplinary processes;
- that discourage complaints;
- that do not have visible and accessible child protection and complaints policies;
- that are more committed to protecting their reputation than protecting children and young people. [5, p. 9]

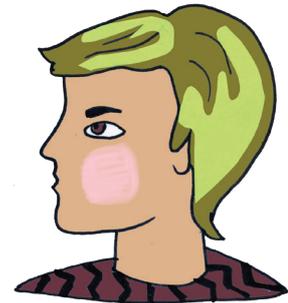
Child to child abuse is most likely to occur when children are together in settings such as residential out-of-home care, boarding schools, youth detention or mental health facilities. Camps and excursions also place children and young people at greater risk [5].



What children and young people have told us about their safety in youth-serving organisations

Between 2014-17, ICPS and Southern Cross University conducted a series of Children's Safety Studies for the Royal Commission. The first study engaged 121 children and young people from a variety of youth-serving organisations in focus groups [6] and 1400 in an online survey [7]. The second study, focused on the specific needs and experiences of children and young people with a disability [8] and the third, on the safety of children and young people in residential care[9].

These projects began by asking children and young people to conceptualise 'safety', to identify the things that compromised their safety in institutions and to critique the ways that adults and institutions prevented and responded to instances of abuse and harm. The following are the important things that we learnt from talking directly to children and young people in those studies as well as things we heard from young people at Barwon Child, Youth & Family.



What does it mean to be safe and feel safe in institutions?

Children and young people think about and experience safety differently to adults:

- they are more vulnerable because they are often smaller and weaker than adults (or older youth), because adults have more power and authority in relationships and because organisations reinforce children's relatively powerless position within the community.
- they rely more heavily on their feelings of safety than what they observe or encounter.
- they have less experience so are less likely to draw on previous situations to assess risk.
- they are often dependent on adults to feel safe, to protect them and to appropriately respond when they are unsafe.
- they want to be involved in preventing harm but also in finding solutions. They prefer to do this in partnership with adults.

WHAT WE *heard*

'They stand over you and make you feel really small. They want to remind you that you are weak and you have to do exactly what they say. There's nothing you can do because you're just a kid and you can't fight back.... That's why kids are unsafe because they can't stand up and protect themselves. If no one is around anything could happen.'

'No one really talks to kids about what really could happen or tell 'em not to worry when the thing they're scared about ain't gonna happen. So kids are all stressing about the wrong things and they don't know what to do if something real bad happens, because no one talked to 'em about it'... 'if they're old enough to understand it they should be talked to 'em about it.'

What are some of children and young people's concerns about safety?

Children and young people told us that they were most worried about:

- peer bullying;
- adults who used their power over children and young people to intimidate, harass and bully;
- being abducted;
- being forced (by a peer or an adult) to do things that they didn't feel safe doing and that caused them harm.



The way that institutions respond to these forms of harm reflect the way they will respond to sexual abuse.

Children also said they have some appreciation of the interpersonal safety risks that exist and have developed some strategies for keeping themselves safe. Examples include: hiding, avoiding unfamiliar and unsafe people and places and acting out when they feel afraid.

However, they reported that they:

recognise that they sometimes make false judgments (that they are unsafe when they are safe and vice versa);

and require adults and institutions to provide them with the information, skills and confidence to build on their own strategies to avoid, manage and seek help when they encounter unsafe adults, peers or environments.

WHAT WE *heard*

'The worst thing they can do is say they're going to do something and then not do it. Because we watch them and if they let us down we're not going to go and ask them again.' [Q: Do you not ask them or do you not ask any adult again?] 'We won't ask any adult if we think that they'll just do the same thing.'

'You think that adults must surely have heard something if you have and that they're dealing with it. 'You know we're used to not being told about things so you just assume that they're dealing with it but haven't told us ... [but] it turns out that sometimes they have no idea' ... 'They're clueless', 'so maybe we need to tell them more and not assume so much and they have to ask more, even when they think things are going OK.'

How do children and young people want to be supported?

Children and young people want to develop relationships with trustworthy, available and powerful adults who can both protect them from harm and support them to: identify risks, develop strategies for dealing with problems and support them to protect themselves.

Sometimes strategies that adults and institutions put in place to keep children and young people safe make them feel unsafe or unintentionally keep them from being protected, particularly when

- they fail to recognise and unintentionally compound children's vulnerability and lack of power;
- they take control or power away from children;
- they make children feel more afraid and do not reduce their fears and concerns;
- they create barriers between children and potentially protective adults (i.e. when children become wary of adults for fears of "stranger danger");
- they are contradictory or don't make sense to children;
- they are not communicated to children;
- they are adult-initiated, focused, driven and accountable only to adults;
- children are not directly involved in the process and when the strategies are not accountable to children.



Children and young people have less confidence in adults and institutions when they are not informed about how children are being protected and have limited faith when they do not see adults responding to children's safety concerns.

Overall, participants stressed the importance of engaging children and young people in the development, implementation and review of policies and practices that focus on their safety within institutions. In working together, participants believed that adults and children and young people could design more responsive strategies, improve children's confidence in adults and increase the likelihood that children and young people would use policies and practices in the event of harm.

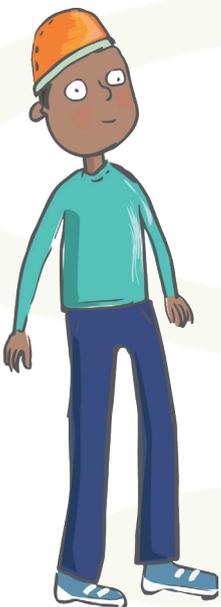
What makes an organisation safe for children and young people?

A lot has been written about the characteristics of a child-safe organisation. What is missing from much of this work is consideration of what children and young people want and what they feel they need. The illustration on the next page is based on findings from the Children's Safety Studies. It highlights the 'signs' that an organisation is safe.

At its centre, a child-safe organisation has a demonstrated commitment to directly and proactively engaging children and young people in child-safe practices, including:

- Informing children and young people about risks, and importantly, what organisations are doing to keep them safe;
- Helping them understand what to do when they come across an unsafe person or place;
- Recognising the particular vulnerabilities and wishes of different groups of kids;
- Ensuring that every child has a trusted adult who is available when they want and need to talk about safety or be helped when they are being harmed; and
- Involving them in ways that promote their safety and respond when they are being harmed.

Children and young people told us that the best way of telling whether an organisation is safe or not includes whether other kids are calm, happy and positively interacting with staff. Conversely, in unsafe organisations children and young people were 'on edge', felt fearful or scared of staff and acted out or were shy in their interactions.



WHAT WE *heard*

'Kids will see that adults want to hear from them and if something was wrong they might come forward because they know that adults want to know and are taking it seriously.'

'The kids would be like all calm, the [staff] are like nice and if you need help and stuff there's someone to help you.' 'Kids are excited to come [there] every day and they don't feel down and they feel happy and they always say they're happy chappies.' 'If they are grateful for being at a good [place] they are even happy to walk a long way to get to [there].'

Children need to feel safe as well as be safe: What this means for practice

Children and young people stress the difference between 'being safe' and 'feeling safe'. They told us that although it was important for institutions to keep them safe from abuse and other causes of harm, they felt that it was crucial that they also feel safe and that their fears about their safety were allayed.

They recognised that often they misjudged a person, a place or a situation: sometimes thinking that someone was safe when they turned out not to be and vice versa. As discussed above, they argued that it was important for adults to listen to their concerns and help them assess whether they were safe or not and to let them know either way. They also argued that sometimes adults did things to protect them from harm, but that unintentionally made children feel unsafe or made them more vulnerable to harm.



Adult safeguarding strategies that unintentionally made children feel unsafe/vulnerable

Examples included:

Not sharing information with children for fear that they might become distressed

Young people told us that they wanted to talk to adults about their safety and that often children and young people know a lot more than adults think.

Encouraging children to be fearful of adults

by over-stating the risks of being harmed. Young people told us that they didn't feel comfortable seeking support from most adults and therefore might not have someone to help them when they were being hurt or were afraid.

Discouraging adults from interacting with children

for fear that they might be seen as a predator. Young people felt that adults, particularly men, were reluctant to develop relationships with children and might not step in when a child needed help.

Adults spending too much time being compliant and not enough time connecting with children.

Young people observed that workers were now required to spend time completing incident reports and other administrative duties and, as a result, were not always available when children needed them.

Services more focused on preventing harm than meeting children's needs.

Young people gave examples of programs and practices that were 'no longer allowed' because organisations thought they were too risky. For example, not being allowed to be alone with a worker meant that they could no longer spend one-on-one time building relationships or participating in activities if their peers were not interested.

Having an identified child-safe officer

when this leads to other trusted adults not seeing children's protection as a shared responsibility. This was particularly an issue for children who were adult-wary and need a personal relationship before raising their concerns.

Examples continued:

Restricting children's independence and being over protective

which both keeps kids from developing skills to protect themselves and from having fun away from the eyes of adults. Young people were frustrated when adults didn't trust them to look after themselves.

Constantly reminding children that they are unsafe

by having locks on doors that restricted their movement, surveillance cameras that made them feel exposed and telling them about potential risks but not how adults are protecting them or how to keep themselves safe.

Adults taking over when children raise concerns or disclose abuse

rather than empowering kids and helping them to feel like they have some influence in times when they already feel vulnerable and weak. They wanted adults to take the lead and, when children need it, to take charge but to do it in a way that respects children.

Discuss

1 The ACU Institute of Child Protection Studies and the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University developed an animation summarising the findings from the Children's Safety Studies. The animation can be used with staff teams and with children and young people to talk about safety. In Attachment 1, "Staff Talk: Thinking About Safety", staff are encouraged to watch the clip and to discuss what implications the study has for their work with children and young people.

2 Activity 2 provides short scenarios from children and young people highlighting some of the 'grey areas' and situations where their safety might be compromised. It gives staff an opportunity to ask 'what do they need?', 'what could we do?' and 'what might get in the way?'

3 In Activity 3 there is a Pulse Check which asks staff teams to consider the extent to which they are Child-Safe.



Further reading

- Moore, T., McArthur, M., Heerde, J., Roche, S., & O'Leary, P. (2016). *Our safety counts: Children and young people's perceptions of safety and institutional responses to their safety concerns*. Melbourne: Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University.

This research report presents the findings of focus groups with Australian children and young people. In it, children and young people talk more about what safety means to them, what they need to be safe and feel safe in institutions and how they would like to be supported when they are abused or harmed.

- Moore, T., McArthur, M., Heerde, J., Roche, S., & O'Leary, P. (2016). *Our safety counts: Children and young people's perceptions of safety and institutional responses to their safety concerns*. Melbourne: Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University.

This report presents the findings of a national on-line survey with 1400 children and young people. It asks 'how safe do children and young people feel in institutions?', 'how well are institutions doing in keeping children safe?' and 'what would children and young people do if they came across an unsafe adult or peer?'

- Robinson, S. (2016) *Feeling safe, being safe: What is important to children and young people with disability and high support needs about safety in institutional settings?* Sydney: Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

This research report presents the findings of a nested study that focused on the needs and experience of children and young people with disability. Sally Robinson reports that children and young people reflected that it can be very hard to know what is safe or unsafe, especially for children and young people with higher support needs. They talked about complexity in relationships, when people were trustworthy on some occasions but not others. Few remembered learning about safety, either at school or anywhere else.

- *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures*

This resource, developed by Saul Audage for the National Centre for Injury Prevention, guides those in youth-serving organisations with guidance and plans for identifying and responding to child sexual abuse in institutions.



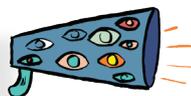
Activity 1. Staff Talk:

“Thinking About Safety”



Why?

This activity is for workers. However, the animation can be used with children and young people, parents, families and communities. This reflexive exercise has been developed for those working directly with children and young people in community organisations but can be modified for other groups.



Who With?

For staff working with children and young people to better understand what children and young people think about safety, what they need to be safe and feel safe in institutions and how they would like adults to prevent and respond to harm.



Time?

It is probably best that you allow 30 minutes to an hour (noting that the YouTube clip goes for 10 minutes)



You'll Need?

Internet access and the technology to project the animation.

The animation, which is available by clicking [here](#) or from

<https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au>



What to do:



Introduce the clip, explaining that:

“This animation was developed by the Institute of Child Protection Studies and the Centre for Children and Young People and presents the findings of three Children’s Safety Studies.

In it, researchers report findings from their studies. It was developed for children and young people but will give you insights into what participants were thinking and feeling.

As you watch, ask yourself ‘what does this mean for our practice?’ and ‘what would children and young people in our organisation need as a result of the things raised in the clip?’



Discuss:

as a group ask yourselves:

What were the key messages that resonated for you?

Are there particular concerns that you can imagine children and young people in our service might raise if they were involved in similar conversations?

One of the key messages in the animation is that for children, “being safe” and “feeling safe” are different things and that sometimes adults do things to protect them that make them feel unsafe. Can you think of anything that you do that might make children feel unnecessarily worried or anxious, less likely to approach you with any concerns they have, or unintentionally make them more at risk?

If so, how can you or your organisation change to reduce the worry or unintentional harm experienced by children?

How can you tell whether your efforts are increasing kids’ feelings of safety?

Activity 1. Staff Talk:

“Thinking About Safety”



Something Different?

You might want to have a “talking circle” where staff and children and young people sit down together and engage in a broader conversation about safety. Children and young people might be asked what things were most relevant to them and what they would like your organisation to do if children and young people are unsafe or feel unsafe.



To Think About:

Although it is important to talk about children’s perceptions of safety, young people have argued that it is also important for you to act on their needs and concerns. We have included an Action Plan template that could be used to identify the ways and means of responding to things you’ve discussed.



Hazard Zones:

Children and young people stressed the fact that they often believed that adults dismissed their fears and concerns. It might be useful to be upfront about this and to recognise that even if kids perceptions are misplaced, their observations might influence their feelings of safety and the ways that they may (or may not) look to you for support into the future.

It is also possible that some members of your team have their own experiences of abuse or have supported children when they have been harmed. It is not likely that they will be affected by the clip but it is always good to ask yourself “how might a survivor respond to a conversation about safety and how can we be sensitive to their needs?”

Activity 2. Safety in Practice

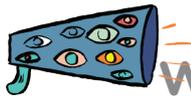
Scenarios to consider

In focus groups with children, young people and staff from a number of organisations, participants told us that they would know what to do in scenarios where a staff member or peer clearly breached professional boundaries or visibly hurt a client. They said, however, that there were a lot of 'grey zones' when factors around relationships made the application of policies a bit unclear. They also raised scenarios where there were unintended consequences of Child Safe Policies that they believed were unfair and detrimental.



Why?

To explore some of the 'grey zones' in practice and to consider how your organisation might respond to a range of scenarios.



Who With?

Staff who are working with children and young people, particularly those developing, implementing and/or reviewing their Child Safe Policies.



Time?

20-60 minutes depending on how much time you spend (if any) referring to your organisation's Child Safe Policies.



You'll Need?

Print-outs of the scenarios
A copy of your organisation's Child Safe Policy (if using the activity to review policies)

What to do:



Provide staff members with the scenarios and question sheet.
Ask them to spend a few minutes reading through the scenarios (individually or in pairs) and to consider how they might play out in your organisation.
They might use the prompt questions to guide their conversations but ultimately you are wanting them to consider the extent to which your Child Safe Policy provides guidance.
In the large group identify any of the scenarios or issues that they describe that are most pressing in your organisation.



Discuss:

as a group ask yourselves:

Do we provide adequate guidance? If not, do you need to provide more detail or is it out of the scope of your program or the policy?

Are there any unintended consequences related to the application of the Child Safe Standards?

If changes to the policy are required: what needs to be changed? How might it be changed? What is the process for changing the Policy? And how do you check that the Policy is meeting client's safety needs without having unintended consequences.

Activity 2. Safety in Practice

Scenarios to consider



Something Different?

You might want to work with a group of your program's staff (and clients, if you can!) to identify other scenarios that might arise in your service that are similarly unclear or problematic. Use these to guide conversations and review your Child Safe Policy.



To Think About:

It is important that if you identify gaps, issues or unintended negative consequences arising in your Child Safe Policy that you act to redress them. Although policies need to be directive they also need to be responsive to your program's situation. When staff find that policies are vague or cannot be universally applied they often lose confidence in them and may not apply them as stringently. If problems with your Child Safe Policy are identified it's important to fix them. Changes should be actively communicated to staff and clients to avoid further confusion.



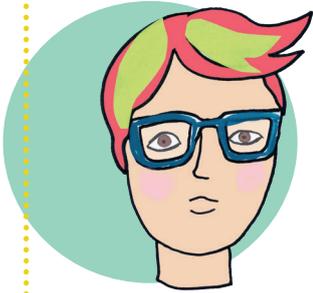
Hazard Zones:

As with any Child Safe discussion, it is important to empower rather than confuse or overwhelm staff (and clients). Make sure you finish the discussion with some clear action items (so that everyone knows what the outcome of the discussion has been). And de-brief about your discussion and/or get the action items checked by someone in another team.

Activity 2. Safety in Practice

Scenarios to consider

RICK



Rick's worker, Matt, plays footy at Rick's football club. Sometimes Rick's Mum can't pick him up from a game so Matt takes him home. A few times they've played computer games at Matt's House. Matt tells Rick to keep these interactions on the down-low because although he is on Rick's team and lots of guys from footy hang out together, Matt's boss is a "bit of a tight ass" and might "get all weird about it". Rick likes hanging out with Matt and doesn't want to get the boys at footy offside.

1. Is it an issue for Rick and Matt to hang out? Are there any things in this story that worry you?

2. Are there any factors (such as the ages of the two people, their gender, etc) that would change how you think about the scenario?

3. If you were Matt's supervisor what would you do or say?

4. What might be the consequences of any decisions that you'd make?

5. Does your Code of Conduct and / or Child Safe Policy give staff guidance on how to manage a situation like this?

NIKITA



Nikita is Aboriginal and is part of a girls' group run at your organisation which her Aunty Nora facilitates. When Nikita's Mum is away she stays at Nora's place and sometimes has her friends around for a party. It's great because everyone loves Nora and feels safe when she's around. Some of Nikita's friends said that they were a bit confused because they'd been told that you can't see staff outside of work but surely it's different with Aunty Nora.

1. Is it an issue for Nikita to stay at her Aunty Nora's place? How about Nikita's friends?

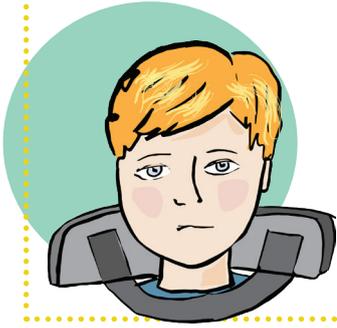
2. Are there any factors (such as age, gender, cultural background, etc) that would change how you think about the scenario?

3. If you were Nora's supervisor what would you do or say?

4. What might be the consequences of any decisions you'd make?

5. Does your Code of Conduct and / or Child Safe Policy give staff guidance on how to manage a situation like this?

MARCUS



Marcus is a quiet kid who doesn't have lots of friends. He has a few physical disabilities which means he needs help getting around, going to the bathroom and getting cleaned up if he's had an accident. He gets really embarrassed when the female staff help him out but he's told that it's probably safer that way. Even though he's been told that he shouldn't let adults do things that make him feel uncomfortable he doesn't think anyone will take any notice.

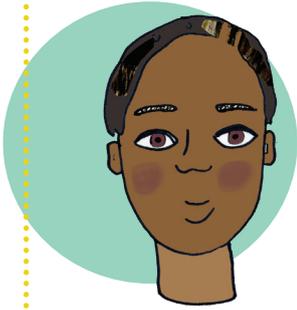
1. Is it an issue that Marcus doesn't have a choice about who helps him?

2. If you were managing the program supporting Marcus how would you know about his concerns?

3. If you found out, what would you do or say?

4. Does your Code of Conduct and / or Child Safe Policy give staff guidance on how to manage a situation like this?

DANE



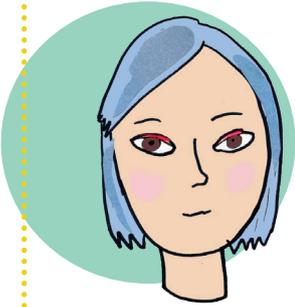
Dane loves going to the monthly boys group. His Mum needs lots of help at home with the other kids and it's his one chance a month to get out and have fun with the other boys and the male volunteers. He's been told that the volunteers can't pick him up anymore because the service has a new Child Safe Policy. He is gutted because his Mum can't take him so he's going to miss out.

1. Are there any Child Safe Policies that your organisation has that might unintentionally exclude children like Dane?

2. Are there any ways that a service could manage the risk, or modify the policy, to enable Dane's participation whilst also reducing the likelihood of him being hurt or harmed?

3. Does your Code of Conduct and / or Child Safe Policy deal with situations like this?

JESSICA



Jessica is a young staff member who is only 18 months older than her clients. Quite often Jessica runs into her 'clients' at parties and other social events. That's where she met Mitch who got her drunk and tried to grope her. She's been told at work that her program has a zero-tolerance policy on outside staff-client interactions so she's decided not to tell her supervisor because she doesn't want to get fired. She's quite upset but has to keep it to herself.

1. Is it an issue that Jessica has interactions with clients outside of the program? How would you decide?

2. What are the unintended consequences for Jessica and, if you were running the program, how might you prevent these from happening?

3. Would your organisation have a responsibility for engaging Mitch about his behaviour if it became known?

4. Does your Code of Conduct and/or Child Safe Policy provide guidance on what Jessica should do or how you might respond to Mitch?

MEL



Two clients, Mel and Jordan, were going out but just broke up. Jordan has sent some revealing photos of Mel to all his mates on social media. They aren't nude but they also aren't very flattering and Mel is distraught. This all occurred off-site and on the weekend.

1. Is it an issue that Jordan distributed the photos?

2. Do you have any responsibility for something that happened on the weekend and off-site? If yes, what? If no, would you let it be?

3. Does your Code of Conduct and/or Child Safe Policy provide guidance on how to respond to a scenario like this?

Activity 3. Pulse Check:

Enhancing children's safety in your organisation

For an organisation to be safe it not only has to do things (like comply with standards) but children and young people have to see adults in the institution doing things to demonstrate their commitment. In Table 1 (below) is a list of ways that children and young people could tell that their organisation was safe and that adults and institutions were taking their safety seriously. We have linked them to the 10 Signs of a Safe Organisation. This Pulse Check asks you to consider how well your organisation demonstrates the 10 Signs and what you might do to improve.



Why?

'Pulse checks' have been developed to help organisations think about their practice and gauge how child-safe they are. It's important to note that they're not about testing or ranking services; we hope they give services a framework to think about where they'd like to be and how they might get there. Pulse checks are included to help organisations by:

- promoting discussion;
- identifying strengths and any gaps that need action;
- and helping to set priorities.



Time?

Between 30 minutes and 2 hours (depending on how much discussion you facilitate).



Copies of the Pulse Check for each Staff Member.



Who With?

Pulse checks can be completed by individuals but are most helpful when completed as a group.

- The pulse check can be used whether you have already developed child-safety policies and practices or are just starting out. They are not exhaustive - you will find that as you discuss things you may think of other areas that need attention in your organisation.
- Pulse checks might be used in staff meetings or planning days or as a continual process of reflection: it's up to you!

Activity 3. Pulse Check:

Enhancing children's safety in your organisation

What to do:



- 1** Go through the indicators and consider how your service acts on each one. Each person rates how well your organisation does this.
- 2** Brainstorm things that you are currently doing well and things that could be done to improve how the service acts on each area.
- 3** Develop a plan, which can be reviewed at future staff meetings or development days.

Something Different?



If your team is more visual or you would like to make this activity more interactive cut out each of the indicators and give them to participating staff.

Complete the task as a "Values Line" where staff place the indicators on a continuum from "Doing Badly" to "Doing Very Well". The value of completing the task on a handout is that you will have a record so if you choose to be more interactive make sure you take a photo of the results so that you can refer back to it later.

Activity 3. Pulse Check

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | What we need to do to improve? |
|--|---|-------------|------------|-------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| | Never | Hardly Ever | Some-times | Often | Almost Always | |
| Safe Signs  1. The organisation shows that it values and takes children and young people's safety seriously | Indicators The organisation recognises and articulates the value it places on children and their safety in its organisational documents as well as those available to children, young people and their families | | | | | |
|  2. The organisation knows who and what things might hurt children and young people & acts when they're unsafe | Indicators Staff at the organisation demonstrate their commitment to children and young people in ways that clients can observe | | | | | |
| | Indicators The organisation has strategies for keeping up-to-date with research about risks and practice approaches for keeping children and young people safe | | | | | |
| | Indicators Staff are provided with training and professional development opportunities on contemporary understanding of child sexual abuse and best-practice responses | | | | | |

Safe Signs



3.

Children and young people play a role in identifying and shaping responses to abuse



4.

The organisation is upfront about the risks to children and young people and how they're being managed



5.

The organisation recognises children and young people's strengths and vulnerabilities and empowers them

| Indicators | 1 Never | 2 Hardly Ever | 3 Some-times | 4 Often | 5 Almost Always | What we need to do to improve? |
|--|------------|------------------|-----------------|------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Organisations provide children and young people formal and informal opportunities to identify their worries and concerns, their experiences of safety and opportunities to provide feedback on safeguarding strategies | | | | | | |
| Organisations provide child-friendly information about some of the risks that might exist within their organisation to children, young people and parents | | | | | | |
| Organisations make sure that children, young people and families have access to policies and information about organisation's child-safe strategies | | | | | | |
| Organisations have mechanisms in place to identify and respond to children and young people's physical, emotional and sexual safety needs and adopt strengths-based approaches | | | | | | |

| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | What we need to do to improve? |
|--|---|-------|-------------|------------|-------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| | Indicators | Never | Hardly Ever | Some-times | Often | Almost Always | |
| <p>6.</p>  <p>The organisation actively protects and empowers children and young people who might need extra support</p> | <p>Organisations understand the particular vulnerabilities of individuals groups of children and young people and develops and implements policies that respond to these risk factors</p> | | | | | | |
| <p>7.</p>  <p>Alliances are built and trusted staff are available when children and young people need them</p> | <p>Organisations act to ensure that every child and young person has at least one adult to whom they can turn if they feel unsafe or encounter an unsafe adult, peer or environment.</p> | | | | | | |



| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | |
|---|-------|-------------|------------|-------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| | Never | Hardly Ever | Some-times | Often | Almost Always | What we need to do to improve? |
| Safe Signs  8. When children encounter unsafe people they are given a say on what should happen and adults act on their needs and wishes | | | | | | |
| Indicators <p>In addition to responding to legislative requirements, organisations understand what children and young people need when they are unsafe and when they have been harmed. Policies include detail on how these needs are met.</p> <p>Child-safe policies and practices empower children and young people to help shape the way that organisations support them through and after disclosure.</p> | | | | | | |
| 9. The organisation is happy to have someone come in to check they are doing a good job  | | | | | | |
| Indicators <p>The organisation fosters relationships with external bodies who can critique their approach to safeguarding children. The organisation encourages visits from parents, carers and other important people in the lives of children and young people and fosters transparency in its operation.</p> <p>The organisation has robust, child-friendly complaints processes and engages children and young people in evaluation, service improvement and quality assurance processes.</p> | | | | | | |
| 10. The organisation values children and young people's feedback - even when it's bad - and have child-friendly ways of getting complaints  | | | | | | |

References

1. Bromfield, L., et al., *Child Sexual Abuse in Australian Institutional Contexts 2008-13: Findings from Administrative Data*. 2017, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse: Sydney.
2. Moore, T.P., *Children and young people's views on institutional safety: it's not just because we're little*. Child Abuse & Neglect, 2017.
3. Wurtele, S.K., *Preventing the sexual exploitation of minors in youth-serving organizations*. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 2012. 34(12): p. 2442-2453.
4. O'Leary, P., E. Koh, & , and A. Dare, *Grooming and child sexual abuse in institutional contexts* 2017, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse: Sydney.
5. Parkinson P. and Cashmore J., *Assessing the different dimensions and degrees of risk of child sexual abuse*. 2017, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse: Sydney.
6. Moore, T., et al., *Taking us seriously: children and young people talk about safety and institutional responses to their safety concerns*. 2015, Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University: Melbourne.
7. Moore, T., et al., *Our Safety Counts: Children and young people's perceptions of safety and institutional responses to their safety concerns*. 2016, Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University: Melbourne.
8. Robinson, S., *Feeling safe, being safe: what is important to children and young people with disability and high support needs about safety in institutional settings?* 2016.
9. Moore, T., et al., *Safe and sound: Exploring the safety of young people in residential care*. 2016, Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University: Melbourne.

