



## OVERVIEW

During the uncertain time of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to take the time to ensure that children and young people's wellbeing is nurtured and that their views and wishes are heard and considered.

There are a variety of ways in which we can be more child centred in our approach. The Institute of Child Protection Studies has developed a series of resources for all adults who support children and young people based on the Kids Central Toolkit.

The series includes an overview and a range of tip sheets based on the Kids Central principles.

Find these tip sheets on the [Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal](#)



## Principle 5: Keep Me in the Loop during COVID-19

**Children are provided with information and given opportunities to participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives.**

Some people feel that when negative or scary events occur, we should:

- shield children and young people from these events
- hide negative news from them
- not disclose what's happening to them
- not allow them to be involved.

But children and young people are seeing and hearing so much about COVID-19 firsthand that it's almost impossible to shield them, even if we wanted to! It's all over the TV, in the news, on websites, in ads and in games. It's even included in school study topics. They are asking questions and talking to each other and their families about all the changes and their concerns.

Principle 5, in our Keeping Kids Central toolkit, takes the approach that children and young people need to be kept in the loop. They have the right to be informed and be provided with opportunities to participate in decisions that affect their lives. When doing this, keep Principle 2, I'm one of a kind in mind so that you communicate at their appropriate level considering each child or young person's unique situation.

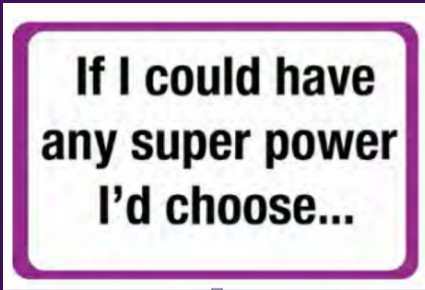
**When we keep kids in the loop outcomes are more responsive and successful**

When children and young people are provided with the opportunity to engage and determine their own issues and challenges, they can also develop their own solutions. When children and young people are involved in decision making, often both they and their families are more engaged. They feel empowered by the process and feel proud about being part of the solution.

Parents have shared that when they understand what's going on for their children they feel relief. Many are anxious about what their kids are experiencing and feel worried about whether they're doing right by them. They feel comforted when they hear that their children are often doing OK or better than they initially believed.

### Activity 1: Talking cards

Use this activity to break the ice and build rapport, to break up discussions or to get conversations started.



Click on the page icon above to access the activity.

### Activity 2: What I want

Use this activity to develop a quick understanding of a child's immediate needs or to invite children into a conversation about their needs and wishes.



Click on the page icon above to access the activity.

## Why involve children and young people?

### It's their right

In 1989, the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child was signed by many countries around the world, including Australia. This Convention is one of the most important agreements relating to children and young people ever developed.

The Convention sets out the fundamental rights of children and young people such as, the right to:

- access health, education and social supports
- express their views freely in all matters affecting them
- expect their their views should be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.

Australia has obligations to make those rights real; to provide, protect and respect those rights for each child and young person.

### It's reassuring

Children and young people tell us that that they want to know what's happening around them and in their family's lives. Families can:

- have open conversations reassure them that the situation is not their fault, that they aren't alone, that there are people who can support them and that things will get better.
- help their children to feel less worried when they know that people understand their situation and are helping them.

### It's empowering

When workers and families engage and ask children and young people for their thoughts and views, they feel valued and empowered. Too often children and young people have no control over situations that are impacting on their families. This can create feelings of helplessness and anxiety. Involving them helps to address these feelings and decrease them to some extent.

### It increases children's safety

The more children and young people are provided with the opportunity to talk, the more opportunities they have to raise their own fears and concerns. Giving children and young people the space to share their thoughts increases opportunities for adults to respond if safety concerns are raised.

### It builds skills

Being involved in decision making allows children and young people to develop new skills needed for the future including:

- negotiation
- problem solving
- communication.

---

These activities keep children and young people involved, engaged, prepared for their future and in the loop.

