



Who ELSE MATTERS?



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 6: Who Else Matters during COVID-19?

Children and young people live in communities with strengths and resources. The best outcomes are often achieved in partnership with others who can assist them in an ongoing way.

During periods of uncertainty and change many children, young people and their families can feel isolated and disconnected from their usual support networks. This has been evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the period of isolation, children and young people couldn't enjoy all the usual routines of life: school, sporting activities, family visits, playing with friends or shopping. They may have been disconnected from formal networks such as workers, teachers, support services or informal networks, including family, friends, neighbours, clubs, churches or the broader community.

Now that children and young people are beginning to re-enter their communities, they are returning to school, going to playgrounds and parks again, attending parties and connecting with friends.

Some children and young people may be struggling to return to the 'new normal' after such dramatic changes. This can leave them feeling disempowered and disconnected from their extended families and communities.

As our communities start to slowly open up and we get used to a new sense of normal, children, young people and families may require help to re-engage and re-establish their networks and supports. Parents, carers and workers can offer support to redevelop and sustain these vital relationships.

You can play an important role in supporting children and young people to learn and experience community. Your support can help children and young people build relationships outside their family, understand who to trust, who to respect and how.

Activity 1: People in our lives, People in my life

Use these activities to identify people who are special in the lives of children and families.



Click on the page icon above to access the activity.

Activity 2: It takes a village to raise a child

Use this activity to identify who children and young people might want to (re)connect with as a means of support.



Click on the page icon above to access the activity.

Who can be a support?

We know that parents who have their own support, are better equipped to support their children.

Parents have told us that in times of chaos and crisis they often lose touch with some of their own friends, services and community supporters. For parents to be the key supporters for their children, they need to have a team of supporters outside their family for themselves and their children, a team who can help them to access the resources available in their local communities and encourage them as a family (as in Principle 3).

Natural support groups for families can be developed through existing activities such as:

- parent groups and play groups
- community groups such as sports, church or scouts and guides
- school activities such as fetes, committees, reading days, tuck shop duty
- family art and music programs.

If getting to these events is a barrier, try to organise safe transport to enable children, young people and their families to attend.

Research on development and resilience has shown that children and young people are most likely to thrive when surrounded by groups of strong, positive, trustworthy and consistent adults who enable children and young people to take risks and to grow in a nurturing environment.

“Every child deserves a champion, an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be.”

Rita Pierson, Educator, TED Talk, 2013

Children and young people need consistent, stable and trusting relationships with other adults. These adults might be grandparents, current or previous teachers, leaders in sports or community clubs, older peers from school or friends of the extended family.

It is a powerful process for parents, carers and workers to take the time to sit with children and young people to help them identify the people they see as significant in their lives. Once the important people have been identified, it becomes a shared responsibility to help ensure that these relationships are nurtured, supported and encouraged. Examples of nurturing include:

- facilitating regular phone calls, texts, FaceTime or Skype communication
- organising a catch up or reunion
- baking a cake and sharing it
- creating keepsake boxes of cards or gifts from the trusted adult friend.

Explore the many other activities in our Keeping Kids Central toolkit to help you identify and connect children, young people and families with their significant supporters.