



Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia



Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines

April 2016

Disclaimer

This guide is intended to assist a broad range of organisations in their efforts to become more child safe. It provides general information only and each organisation will need to consider the information and develop strategies and practices suited to its own specific needs, consistent with its duty of care.

The examples provided are not exhaustive or an endorsement of any organisation. Readers are encouraged to contact the owners of examples if they plan to replicate their work or to seek further information about the examples.

Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

The Commissioner for Children and Young People WA acknowledges the unique contribution of Aboriginal people's culture and heritage to Western Australian society. For the purposes of this report, the term 'Aboriginal' encompasses Western Australia's diverse language groups and also recognises those of Torres Strait Islander descent.

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Message from the Commissioner

Every day thousands of WA children and young people participate in activities outside their home, such as education, sport, recreation, health care and support services. These activities are provided by a wide range of government, non-government and community organisations.

For most children and young people this participation is positive and beneficial. However, the vulnerability of children and young people to abuse in organisations has been the focus of much attention in recent times through the work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and other inquiries both in Australia and overseas.

These inquiries continue to highlight that children and young people can be vulnerable to abuse where organisations neglect their responsibilities, fail to listen to children and young people, and prioritise the reputation of the organisation over the protection of children and young people.

Understanding what is needed to improve the safety of children and young people when in the care of organisations is not a new endeavour. A range of frameworks, research and resources have been produced in the last 15 years. However it is clear from inquiries that despite all efforts we are not there yet – children continue to be harmed and there is much work to be done in both small and large organisations.

My office, with support from other organisations, has developed a range of resources to assist WA organisations to identify and manage risks that affect the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. This resource, *Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines*, provides an overview of nine key domains for organisations to consider and enact to strengthen their organisational leadership and governance and create a tangible culture of safety for children in organisations.

The nine domains have been informed by the available materials and frameworks of other jurisdictions, and the views of more than 360 children and young people who participated in a consultation on child safety held by my office in 2014–15.

The empowerment and participation of children and young people is essential in creating a culture of safety. It is second only to leaders of organisations making sure safety is attended to. Empowering children to participate in every domain area will without doubt strengthen an organisation's culture of safety.

In WA there is currently no legislation or compulsory standards requiring all organisations providing services and activities for children to attend to child safety. There is just the imperative to protect children and young people. Children have the right to be safe from harm, everywhere.

I encourage you as a leader, worker, volunteer, parent, board member or community member to read these guidelines, consider how you will contribute to the cultural change process in the organisations that you are part of, and take action to advocate for and implement the domains and practices of child safe organisations.

Colin Pettit

Commissioner for Children and Young People WA



Children have the right to be properly cared for and to be protected from violence, abuse and neglect at all times and in all places. (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19)¹

Introduction

‘Learning from institutional sexual abuse cases indicates that there is something about institutions, as environments for child sexual abuse, which appears to aggravate the vulnerability of potential victims and amplifies the power over them that abusers can exercise. This means that institutions are high risk environments for children, young people and indeed other vulnerable people. Such a high risk, coupled with the vulnerability of potential victims, requires a higher investment in mitigation.’²

The Commissioner for Children and Young People WA has a statutory responsibility to promote and monitor the wellbeing of children and young people under the age of 18 years in Western Australia. Under the *Commissioner for Children and Young People Act 2006*, the Commissioner must give priority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and to children and young people who are vulnerable or disadvantaged for any reason.

The Commissioner is also required to observe the following principles:

- Children and young people are entitled to live in a caring and nurturing environment
- and to be protected from harm and exploitation.
- The contributions made by children and young people to the community should be recognised for their value and merit.
- The views of children and young people on all matters affecting them should be given serious consideration and taken into account.
- Parents, families and communities have the primary role in safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of their children and young people and should be supported in carrying out their role.

In 2014 the Commissioner commenced a project to encourage and support the implementation of principles and practices of child safe organisations in WA. A reference group comprised of key stakeholders from government and non-government agencies was formed to advise the development of the project.

A survey developed by the office was completed by 40 agencies that provide a range of services to children including welfare, health, child care, sport, arts and recreation programs in metropolitan, regional and remote areas.

Results indicated these organisations were implementing relevant policies and practices, however this was being undertaken in largely fragmented ways and focused primarily on employment screening during recruitment processes and reporting obligations when child abuse is disclosed or suspected.

While these types of policies and practices are important and necessary, they do not alone provide a satisfactorily safe environment for children and young people.

The protection of children and young people must be embedded in the everyday thinking and practices of people and organisations who work with them.

There was a strong indication from the agencies that information and support to implement child safe principles and practices would be welcomed. Feedback from this survey along with the views and ideas of the children and young people consulted by the office³ has informed the resources that have been developed:

- *Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines*
- *Child Safe Organisations WA: In brief*
- *Child Safe Organisations WA: Self-assessment and review tool*
- *Child Safe Organisations WA: Seminar workbook*
- *Feeling Safe and Respected Wherever You Are: Information for children and young people.*

Organisations are encouraged to use these resources to review and enhance their child safe and friendly strategies across their organisation and services.



What does child safe and friendly mean?

A child safe and friendly organisation values children, understands safety doesn't just happen and balances a safety focus with positive interactions and environments that contribute to the healthy development of children.

It 'takes action to protect children from physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and cultural abuse and from neglect. In a child safe organisation, this commitment to protecting children is embedded in the organisation's culture and responsibility for taking action is understood and accepted at all levels of the organisation.'⁴ In general terms, a child safe and friendly organisation is one that deliberately and systematically:

- creates conditions that reduce the likelihood of harm occurring
- creates conditions that increase the likelihood of any harm being discovered
- responds appropriately to any disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm.⁵

Children and young people's participation and empowerment

Children and young people have the right to participate in decisions and processes that affect them. Including them in the development of child safe and friendly organisations upholds this right and is an important strategy in building their confidence.

Children of all ages, cultures and abilities need to feel empowered and supported to raise any concerns they have, from types of equipment or activities, to bullying or abuse by another child, to complaints about the behaviour of an adult.

Safety within an organisation cannot be discussed with children and young people in isolation from their care and safety outside of an organisation. When children and young people are empowered and encouraged to discuss safety within an organisation, they may raise concerns about safety outside of the organisation, such as in other organisations, at home, online or elsewhere in the community. Staff and volunteers must be able to respond appropriately to any concern raised by a child or young person regardless of where the problem is occurring.

Empowering children and young people to participate in developing a culture of safety is secondary only to leaders in organisations taking responsibility for ensuring the entire organisation is attentive and action-orientated towards being child safe and friendly. This includes ensuring staff and volunteers feel empowered and supported to respond to children and young people, to raise concerns and to enact child safe and friendly practices.



The nine domains

In building a child safe and friendly culture, organisations are encouraged to consider the following nine domains:



These domains are informed by numerous existing frameworks and research documents including the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference (2005) *Creating Safe Environments for Children* –

Organisations, Employees and Volunteers,⁶ the Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians (2013) *Principles for Child Safety in Organisations*,⁷ and the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual

Abuse (2014) *Interim Report*⁸ and (2016) *Consultation Paper Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Out-of-Home Care*⁹. A table of comparative frameworks is provided in Appendix A.

The nine domains are also reflective of:

- the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- the views of children and young people who participated in the Commissioner's consultation on creating child safe organisations, and other relevant Australian consultations.

Children and young people involved in the Commissioner's 2015 consultation on Child Safe Organisations provided clear messages to organisations:

- Staff and volunteers need to be engaging, trustworthy and involved.
- Supervision and adult scrutiny to monitor children and young people is critical, particularly regarding bullying issues.
- Be proactive in connecting with children and young people to enable them to raise issues.
- Take children and young people seriously if they raise a matter of concern, and ensure that staff and volunteers have appropriate training and processes to deal with such matters effectively.
- Pay attention to children and young people who may be more vulnerable, particularly those without the natural allies of strong friendship groups or parental support.
- Choices, options and respect for the differences of individuals are important.
- Discuss the environmental issues and programing of activities with children and young people in regard to safety as an ongoing quality improvement activity.

In addition, the Commissioner's 2015 consultation with WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people emphasised the importance of recognising culture to individual and community resilience. 'Culture supports children and young people's development, promotes resilience and can be a protective factor that reduces the exposure to, and effects of, risks to wellbeing.'¹⁰

If children, young people, parents, carers, staff and volunteers feel their cultural identity is valued and respected within the organisation, they will be better able to participate and to speak up.¹¹

Using the nine domains to improve child safety

Creating and maintaining a safe and friendly organisation is a dynamic and ongoing process of learning, monitoring and reviewing, and different types of organisations will have varying levels of risk and engage with children and young people of different ages, abilities and with different levels of vulnerability.

Recognising this diversity, these guidelines outline a range of practical strategies and processes under each domain that, if implemented well and collectively, will increase the capacity of organisations to be safe and friendly for all children and young people.

Leaders in organisations will be best placed to consider how the strategies listed in the following chapters complement, align with, or enhance existing organisational processes, standards, quality systems or continuous improvement mechanisms.

The following continuous improvement cycle is recommended for organisations in their work to establish and maintain the highest quality child safe and friendly environments.



The *Child Safe Organisations WA: Self-assessment and review tool*¹² will assist organisations in their work to review and monitor practice across the nine domains.

This self-assessment and review tool focuses on the culture and behaviours of child safe and friendly organisations, and is available from the Commissioner's website www.ccp.wa.gov.au

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1. United Nations 1989, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 5.
 2. Munro E & Fish A 2015, *Hear no evil, see no evil: Understanding failure to identify and report child sexual abuse in institutional contexts*, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, p. 35.
 3. Commissioner for Children and Young People WA 2015, *Creating Child-Safe Organisations – Report on consultation with children and young people*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Perth.
 4. Child Safety Commissioner 2006, *A Guide for Creating a Child-safe Organisation*, Child Safety Commissioner, Melbourne, p. 1.
 5. Australian Children’s Commissioners and Guardians 2013, *Principles for Child Safety in Organisations*, <<http://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au>>, p. 2.
 6. Community and Disability Services Ministers’ Conference (CDSMC) 2005, *Creating Safe Environments for Children – Organisations, Employees and Volunteers*, <http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/child_safe_organisations>
 7. Australian Children’s Commissioners and Guardians 2013, *Principles for Child Safety in Organisations*, <<http://www.ccyp.wa.gov.au>>
 8. Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2014, *Interim Report Volume 1*, Commonwealth of Australia, Sydney.
 9. Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2016, *Consultation Paper Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Out-of-Home Care*, Commonwealth of Australia, Sydney.
 10. Commissioner for Children and Young People WA 2015, *“Listen to Us”: Using the views of WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to improve policy and service delivery*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Perth, p. 14.
 11. Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) 2014, *VACCA Submission in response to the Child Safe Organisations Issues Paper*, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney.
 12. Commissioner for Children and Young People WA 2016, *Child Safe Organisations WA: Self-assessment and review tool*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Perth.



All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child. (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 3)¹³

Leadership, governance and culture

“I think that adults think they know what kids need to be safe but I don’t think that they do. They base it on what they remember from when they were kids and the world is different now. So they need to talk to kids and find out what it means to them.” Young person¹⁴

Leaders of organisations, including board members, chief executives, directors and managers, are responsible for creating and maintaining an organisational culture where the prevention of child abuse is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers and that all members within the organisation – staff, volunteers, parents, carers, children and young people – feel confident to safely discuss any child safety concerns.

To be effective in establishing a child safe and friendly organisation, leaders will need to implement each of the nine domains and review them regularly.

This includes leaders:

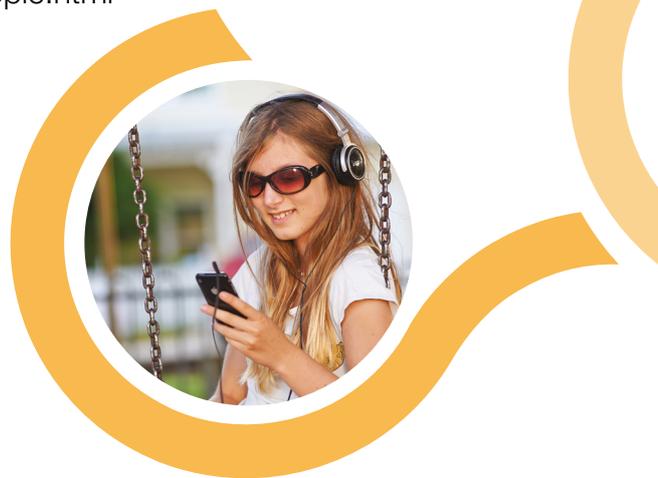
- establishing an organisational commitment to child safety that is publicly available and articulates how the commitment is actioned
- understanding child abuse and promoting child safety awareness throughout the organisation
- embedding respect for diversity and cultural differences in all policies and practices that affirms a child and young person’s cultural identity, gender identity or religious beliefs are fundamental to their wellbeing
- ensuring practices are in place that promote the inclusion and safety of children and young people with disability
- ensuring policies and processes are in place, are utilised and are continuously reviewed
- embedding mechanisms in organisational processes to promote accountability

- implementing strategies for cultural change within the organisation that build on existing strengths, address areas that require attention and lead to improvements in everyday practice
- being accountable for child safety, including incorporating child safety in all duty statements, selection processes and performance agreements
- establishing a clear and transparent organisational structure, with clear lines of authority, responsibility, accountability and communication
- utilising a structured approach to risk management, which provides a clear process for reaching decisions about whether to accept or not accept certain risks and the implementation of mechanisms to eliminate or mitigate identified risks
- planning the work of the organisation to minimise situations where children and young people may be harmed, considering the increased level of risk associated with some activities and the particular vulnerability of some children and young people
- responding immediately to any child safety concerns that do arise
- ensuring all staff, volunteers, parents, carers and children and young people have the opportunity to have a say in, and influence decisions about, child safety policies and practices

- ensuring everyone understands their responsibilities and has confidence in the organisation's child safety approach
- welcoming external scrutiny.

Examples

- **Children First** – Life without Barriers www.lwb.org.au/childrenfirst/
- **Guiding principles of good governance** – Australian Institute of Company Directors www.companydirectors.com.au/director-resource-centre/governance-and-director-issues/guiding-principles-of-good-governance
- **Safe Clubs 4 Kids** – A partnership between the Department of Sport and Recreation, WA Sports Federation, Department for Child Protection and Family Support's Working with Children Screening Unit, WA Police Child Abuse Squad, Surf Life Saving WA www.dsr.wa.gov.au/safe-clubs-4-kids
- **Safeguarding children** – YMCA Perth www.ymcawa.org.au/index.php/safeguarding-children-and-young-people.html



13. United Nations 1989, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 2.
14. Moore T, McArthur M, Noble-Carr D & Harcourt D 2015, *Taking Us Seriously: Children and Young People Talk about Safety and Institutional Responses to their Safety Concerns*, Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, p. 29.



Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account. (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 12)¹⁵

Empowering children to participate

“Lots of adults don’t care enough about kids and this stuff is going to keep happening. Until they see us as having good ideas and believe us [when things go wrong] nothing will change.” Young person¹⁶

‘It is firmly established that a central dynamic of the abuse of children is the exploitation of power in order to gain submission or silence. There are particular power relationships inherent in community services organisations where there may be close relationships between children and adults in positions of trust and authority. Practices focused upon empowerment and participation of children and organisational structures and systems which encourage children to be listened to are key aspects of building capacity for child safe organisations, and demonstrate commitment to creating a child-friendly organisational culture.’¹⁷

To empower children and young people to participate in building a child safe and friendly environment, organisations can:

- talk to children and young people about their rights and responsibilities –

make sure children and young people know it is their right to feel safe at all times, and that the organisation has a responsibility to promote their safety and wellbeing

- build children and young people’s confidence and assist them to develop skills for participation
- develop and implement strategies for promoting the participation of vulnerable children and young people. Recognise and respond to the specific needs of different groups, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex children and young people, barriers experienced by children and young people with a disability, and the importance of culture for Aboriginal children and young people, and children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds



- involve children and young people in creating an environment that reflects their developmental needs, lives and identities
- create opportunities for children and young people to be involved in developing policy and practices, and evaluation and review processes
- create opportunities for children and young people to take on leadership roles, such as youth safety officers, or to be involved in recruitment processes
- express all relevant policies, code of conduct and complaints management processes in language that is accessible and understood by children and young people
- provide children and young people with a variety of safe ways to share their concerns
- provide abuse prevention education to equip children and young people with the skills and knowledge to keep themselves safe, such as protective behaviours programs and information about online safety.

Examples

- **Atypical Advisors** – Australian Theatre for Young People www.atyp.com.au/atypical-advisors
- **Child safe environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children** – South Australian Government www.families.sa.gov.au/pages/protectingchildren/CSEATSI
- **Involving Children and Young People: Participation Guidelines and practice examples** – Commissioner for Children and Young People WA www.ccyp.wa.gov.au
- **Safe Schools Toolkit – Resource Gallery to support National Safe Schools Framework** – Department of Education and Training www.safeschoolshub.edu.au
- **Youth Participation Toolkit: Organisations and Youth Participation Kits** – Department of Local Government and Communities www.dlgc.wa.gov.au/Publications/Pages/Youth-Participation-Toolkit-Organisations.aspx

15. United Nations 1989, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 5.
16. Moore T, McArthur M, Noble-Carr D & Harcourt D 2015, *Taking Us Seriously: Children and Young People Talk about Safety and Institutional Responses to their Safety Concerns*, Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, p. 6.
17. Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference (CDSMC) 2005, *Creating Safe Environments for Children – Organisations, Employees and Volunteers*, p. 3, <http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/child_safe_organisations>



Parents, carers or significant others with caring responsibilities have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of their child. This includes being informed about the organisation's operations and their children's progress, and being involved in decisions affecting their children. (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 18)¹⁸

Involving family and community

"I think that if your parents trust them, they're probably OK. I mean you'll still check them out but you don't have to be as worried if someone you trust trusts them." Young person¹⁹

Child safe and friendly organisations welcome families and carers into the organisation and recognise the culture and structure of families are varied, as is the role different family members may play in a child's life.

Some children and young people live apart from their family and the organisation needs to be sensitive to the rights and roles of adults with different caring responsibilities. Generally, families and carers are best placed to advise about their children and young people's needs and capabilities.

To involve families and carers, organisations can:

- respect cultural difference and think about safety and wellbeing concepts from a cultural perspective
- acknowledge in policies that a child and young person's cultural identity, gender identity or religious beliefs are fundamental to their wellbeing and affirm respect for diversity
- provide timely information in a form and language that is accessible, including information about the organisation's child safe and friendly policies and complaints processes

- create regular opportunities for discussion and feedback
- involve parents and carers when developing and reviewing organisational policies and address issues that affect their children and young people
- identify and reduce barriers to family and community involvement
- involve parents and carers promptly when a problem is identified
- seek guidance from experienced others in regards to the needs of children and young people with disabilities or complex needs or from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Organisations ensure child safe practices, such as appropriate screening and situational prevention strategies, continue to be applied when involving family and community members.

Examples

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Cultural Needs** – SNAICC www.snaicc.org.au/_uploads/rsfil/02932.pdf
- **Information for Parents: Things to look at when selecting child safe activities or services for your child** – Commissioner for Children and Young People Victoria www.ccpv.vic.gov.au/childsafetycommissioner/downloads/childsafeparentguide.pdf

- **Parent guides: Talking to children; Choosing child safe organisations; Yarning up about child sexual abuse** – Child Wise www.childwise.org.au
- **Partnerships with families** – Early Childhood Australia www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp/e-learning-videos/talking-about-practice/partnerships-with-families/
- **Resources for Service Directors: Cultural Connections** – Child Australia www.childaustralia.org.au/Resources/Service-Directors/Cultural-Connections-Handbook
- **Resources for Service Directors: Welcoming conversations with culturally and linguistically diverse families: An educator’s guide** – Child Australia www.childaustralia.org.au/Resources/Service-Directors/Resources-for-Bicultural-Inclusion



18. United Nations 1989, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 5.
19. Moore T, McArthur M, Noble-Carr D & Harcourt D 2015, *Taking Us Seriously: Children and Young People Talk about Safety and Institutional Responses to their Safety Concerns*, Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, p. 34.



Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 34)²⁰

Child safe and friendly policies

“When I tell an adult about a problem I want them to understand and listen to what I say and believe me.” Girl, 10 years²¹

Child safe and friendly policies are part of a governance framework that includes an overarching child safe and friendly policy, a risk management strategy and a code of conduct.

The overarching policy outlines the organisation’s commitment to child safety and actions that will be taken to meet this obligation.

An effective code of conduct provides direction about the behaviour, relationships, attitudes and responsibilities expected of board members, staff and volunteers, and stipulates the process that will be followed if the code is not observed.

Other detailed policies and processes aim to reduce the likelihood of abuse occurring and increase the likelihood of any abuse being discovered.

Effective child safe and friendly policies must cover:

- the duty of all those employed by, or involved with, the organisation to prevent harm to children and young people with whom they have contact
- child protection awareness training and training on organisational child safety processes for staff and volunteers
- processes for raising and discussing concerns about poor or unsafe practices
- reporting obligations of staff and volunteers concerning suspected or discovered abuse by an adult and concerning situations where a child or young person may harm another child
- responding to concerns raised by children and young people about bullying and/or abuse occurring at home, in other places or online

- legislative or policy requirements to share information with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children and young people are at risk
- processes for managing concerns and incidents
- disciplinary processes and grievance procedures
- any confidentiality or privacy requirements that may apply
- inclusivity, including recognition of the diverse needs, identities, cultures and vulnerabilities of children and young people
- guidelines for physical contact between adults and children and young people, and between children and young people
- guidelines for outside-hours contact with children and young people and their families
- standards for adult/child ratios
- cyber safe guidelines including use of social media
- support and guidance for staff, volunteers, children and young people and their families when concerns are expressed about harm to a child or young person.

Policies need to be accessible and understood by board members, staff and volunteers, children and young people, parents and carers, members of advisory bodies and other stakeholders.

Policies developed in consultation with stakeholders will assist in making sure they make sense to the organisation's circumstances and can be implemented. Embedding policies and processes in inductions, and then continually revisiting, will increase awareness and understanding.

Examples

- **Child Safe Organisations code of conduct** – NSW Office of the Children's Guardian www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au
- **Child Safe Policy** – Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) www.vacca.org/about-us/vacca-policies/
- **Code of Conduct** – YMCA Brisbane www.ymcabrisbane.org/YMCAStaffCodeofConduct.pdf
- **Effective handling of complaints and procedural fairness (natural justice)** – Ombudsman WA www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au



20. United Nations 1989, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 10.

21. Commissioner for Children and Young People WA 2015, *Creating Child-Safe Organisations – Report on consultation with children and young people*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Perth, raw data.



'Studies have demonstrated that one of the most effective safeguards within organisations or professional settings is to provide frequent, open and supportive supervision of staff.'²²

Managing staff and volunteers

“Make sure everyone is friendly. Hire people you trust and know they won't do any harm to children.” Girl, 14 years²³

Child safe and friendly organisations will take all necessary steps to identify the most suitable people to work with children and discourage unsuitable people from applying or being appointed.

Policies and practices related to managing staff and volunteers will include:

- an explicit statement of commitment to child safety in all recruitment and selection processes
- placing the organisation's child safe and friendly policy, code of conduct and screening and complaints/grievance procedures in information/induction packages, job descriptions and staff/volunteer contracts
- incorporating clear reference to what is expected in terms of behaviour, commitment and responsibility for child safety in contracts, statements of appointment to a position and duty statements
- various selection techniques for prospective staff and volunteers, such as criminal history checks, confirmation of identity, authentication of qualifications and professional registration, and comprehensive reference checks (that ask specific questions about the applicant's suitability for working with children, young people and vulnerable groups)

- culturally inclusive recruitment
- orientation, induction and ongoing support and supervision for staff and volunteers that explore values, attitudes, expectations and workplace practices that may otherwise remain hidden
- ongoing education of staff and volunteers in child abuse awareness, child abuse prevention and safe practices
- opportunities to share workplace observations and problems, and to safely explore views about child safety issues with a designated staff person or trusted person.



Examples

- **Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy Toolkit** – Queensland Government www.bluecard.qld.gov.au/risk-management.html
- **Risk management framework** – Uniting Care Queensland www.unitingcareqld.com.au/advocacy/child-safety
- **Safer Organisations Safer Children Booklet** – Working with Children Screening Unit, Department for Child Protection and Family Support www.workingwithchildren.wa.gov.au

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22. Munro E & Fish A 2015, *Hear no evil, see no evil: Understanding failure to identify and report child sexual abuse in institutional contexts*, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, p. 36.
 23. Commissioner for Children and Young People WA 2015, *Creating Child-Safe Organisations – Report on consultation with children and young people*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Perth, raw data.



'Environmental strategies will vary depending on the organisation and activities. Strategies will be different for organisations with physical sites, online sites, multiple sites for activities, and undefined space (e.g. mentoring organisations). If an organisation does not control its own space, back-up strategies should be used to ensure contact with and between young people can be monitored.'²⁴

Safe environments - physical and online

If I were the manager I would... "help them learn, show them around, tell them the places they can go to and not. Give them a smile." Boy, 8 years²⁵

Creating safer environments draws on crime prevention research that emphasises reducing opportunities for potential offending behaviours by making the crime more risky and increasing the effort to commit crime.²⁶

Child safe and friendly organisations will consider how their physical and online spaces are designed or adjusted to increase child safety while also supporting the healthy development of children and young people and positive interactions.

The following strategies are drawn from *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures*.²⁷

Visibility

- open visible spaces in gardens and outdoors
- clear lines of sight throughout the buildings
- locking rooms/storerooms to prevent children from being isolated
- installing windows in doors
- implementing a 'no closed door' policy
- installing bright lighting in all areas
- using surveillance equipment in high-risk environments where natural surveillance is not feasible
- random checks.

Privacy

- guidelines to reduce the risk of inappropriate or harmful contact between adults and children and young people or between children/young people, during activities such as toileting, showering and changing clothes.

Access

- monitoring who is present at all times, including when people outside the organisation are allowed in and under what circumstances
- consider the vulnerability of children, age and gender mix
- consider staff roles particularly where there is no direct supervision.

Off-site activities

- policies for excursions, camps and other off-site activities, managing toilet breaks and use of public transportation
- guidelines about transportation – can a young person be alone with a staff member/volunteer in a car? What are pick-up procedures at the end of the day or the event?

Online environments

- guidelines about taking and storage of photos of children and young people
- guidelines and education about cyber-safety and online security for children and young people
- guidelines for staff and volunteers about communication with children and young people via personal phones, emails and social media.

Examples

- **Education resources** – Office of the Children's eSafety Commissioner www.esafety.gov.au/education-resources
- **Guidelines for Photographing Children** – Department of Sport and Recreation www.dsr.wa.gov.au/support-and-advice/safety-and-integrity-in-sport/child-protection/photographing-children
- **Playgrounds** – Kidsafe WA www.kidsafewa.com.au/playgrounds
- **Social Media Toolkit** – Play by the Rules www.playbytherules.net.au/toolkits/social-media-toolkit
- **ThinkUKnow** – Australian Federal Police, Microsoft Australia, Datacom and the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, and supported by the State Police Forces and Neighbourhood Watch Australasia www.thinkuknow.org.au/youth

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24. Saul J & Audage NC 2007, *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Atlanta, USA, p. 15.
 25. Commissioner for Children and Young People WA 2015, *Creating Child-Safe Organisations – Report on consultation with children and young people*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Perth, raw data.
 26. Wortley RK & Smallbone SW 2006, *Situational Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse*, Criminal Justice Press, New York, USA.
 27. Saul J & Audage NC 2007, *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Atlanta, USA.



Children have a right to know about their rights. (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 4)²⁸

Child friendly complaint process and reporting

“Make an email address for complaints. Have a helpline available to call. Handing out weekly surveys. Get a machine that if you press the button you can report if you are shy. A tell-it-all box which kids that feel unsecure or uncomfortable can write their worries and only camp leaders can read and try and solve the issue. Remind the children to tell them when there is a problem. Ask how we are doing once in a while.” Children and young people²⁹

‘Complaints systems are a fundamental part of ongoing organisational development to meet the needs of its intended consumers. They are also an important mechanism for correcting mistakes and for protecting people from abuse and mistreatment.

Independent inquiries into child abuse, in Australia and internationally, consistently cite the same reasons children and young people give for not reporting abuse. These include not knowing how, or who to complain to and fear of not being believed or other repercussions if they do make a complaint.’³⁰

Child safe and friendly organisations establish guidelines for listening to children and young people, dealing with concerns or complaints about behaviour towards a child, or between children, and disclosure or discovery of abuse.

In 2009, the Commissioner held consultations with children and young people in WA to understand the issues and challenges they face when making a complaint.

To make speaking up easier, they suggested:

Make the system accessible to them

- the system should be easy to locate and as clear as possible
- promote your feedback systems to children and young people
- be proactive by creating opportunities to ask children and young people about any issues that might be affecting them.

Take them seriously

- complaints made by children and young people must be taken seriously
- organisations must understand that children and young people will often change their behaviour or circumstances rather than make a complaint, but this does not mean everything is okay.

Make the system responsive

- assure children and young people they will be listened to straight away
- be flexible in how you receive complaints – wherever possible, children and young people should have the opportunity to lodge a complaint face-to-face
- give options on how and when they will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of their complaint.

Support advocates of children and young people

- children and young people will seek advice from their friends, parents, guardians and teachers. Agencies can support advocates to lodge complaints on behalf of children.

Be respectful and avoid additional barriers

- children and young people want people to listen, understand and be willing and able to take action where necessary. The boundaries of confidentiality need to be considered and carefully explained to avoid breaches of trust.³¹

Other research and good practice indicates that child friendly complaints processes should also include guidelines for staff and volunteers on:

- discussing and listening to different types of complaints, such as concerns, suspicions, unsafe behaviour, environments or practices and/or allegations about staff, volunteer, children or young people's behaviour
- dealing with concerns or complaints of harm or abuse of a child or young person by someone outside of the organisation
- sharing information internally and externally.^{32 33 34}

Complaints processes will also identify responsibility for the oversight of all complaints made (and analysis of any systems issues within an organisation) and all complaints made previously about individuals (multiple concerns over time).

Responsibility for tracking implementation and completion of actions arising out of complaints will also be clear.

Complaints processes and disciplinary proceedings must be clear and facilitate procedural fairness and natural justice for a person suspected of abusing a child. This is a complex area where organisations will benefit from independent expert human resources and legal advice.³⁵

Examples

- **Advocate for Children in Care**
– Department for Child Protection and Family Support www.dcp.wa.gov.au/ChildrenInCare/Pages/AdvocateforChildreninCare.aspx
- **Bringing Child Rights into Your Classroom: An Educator's Guide** – SNAICC www.snaicc.org.au/_uploads/rsfil/03204.pdf
- **Charter of Rights** – Anglicare WA www.anglicarewa.org.au/resources/charter-of-children-s-rights.aspx
- **Safe at School? Exploring safety and harm of students with cognitive disability** – Centre for Children and Young People www.cryp.scu.edu.au/index.php/129



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28. United Nations 1989, *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, Geneva, Switzerland, p. 2.
 29. Commissioner for Children and Young People WA 2015, *Creating Child-Safe Organisations – Report on consultation with children and young people*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Perth, pp. 23, 24.
 30. Commissioner for Children and Young People WA 2013, *Are you listening? Guidelines for making complaints systems accessible and responsive to children and young people*, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA, Perth, p. 5.
 31. Ibid, p. 7.
 32. Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse 2014, *Interim Report Volume 1*, Commonwealth of Australia, Sydney.
 33. Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians 2013, *Principles for Child Safety in Organisations*, <<http://www.cryp.wa.gov.au>>
 34. Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference (CDSMC) 2005, *Creating Safe Environments for Children – Organisations, Employees and Volunteers*. <http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/child_safe_organisations>
 35. Ibid.



'Building the capacity of organisations to be child safe is central to the broader goal of developing and sustaining child safe environments.'³⁶

Education and development

"Adults have to watch kids more. Not be so caught up in their own little world. If a kid changes then they should ask, ask the kid's friends, find out what's going on. That's their job. They shouldn't wait until the kid says something because that's going to be too late." Young person³⁷

A lack of understanding and knowledge of child abuse contributes to a culture of complacency and even denial.

Child safe and friendly policies, risk management plans and other preventative approaches rely upon people accepting child abuse can occur within organisations.

Child safe and friendly organisations will provide or source externally:

- education for staff and volunteers about the dynamics and indicators of child abuse
- education for staff and volunteers about child development, including child sexual development
- training opportunities that include safely exploring opinions and values and dealing with staff and volunteer feelings about child abuse
- training and development in how to be culturally responsive
- training and resources to support the participation of children and young people
- training and resources to support the participation of families and communities
- training about the process of disclosure and responding to children and young people that includes emotional support, safety considerations and reporting
- education about policies, procedures and reporting arrangements within the organisation and legal reporting obligations
- comprehensive and specific training for recruitment personnel, delivered by trainers with expertise relevant to the organisation

- training resources for participants that are accessible, evidence-informed and reviewed regularly
- education and information for children, young people and parents and carers about child abuse, protective behaviours and online safety. While organisations may not be in a position themselves to provide this training or information, they may be well placed to advise parents of options available for themselves and their children and young people.



Examples

- **Bursting the bubble: Information for young people about abuse in families**
– Domestic Violence Resource Centre, Victoria www.burstingthebubble.com/services.htm
- **Education programs: Creating child safer organisations and communities**
– Child Wise www.childwise.org.au/page/17/training-programs
- **Learning and Development Calendar for Partner Agencies and Foster Carers**
– Department for Child Protection and Family Support www.cpfs.moodle.com.au/
- **Resources for parents and children**
– Protective Behaviours Australia www.protective-behaviours.org.au/resources/
- **The Line** – healthy and respectful relationships campaign for young people aged 12 to 20 years. Information for young people, parents, teachers, including culturally diverse resources www.theline.org.au/
- **Tips and info for teens: Sexual abuse**
– Kids Helpline www.kidshelpline.com.au/teens/tips/sexual-abuse-the-facts/

36. Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference (CDSMC) 2005, *Creating Safe Environments for Children – Organisations, Employees and Volunteers*, p. 4, <http://www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/child_safe_organisations>

37. Moore T, McArthur M, Noble-Carr D & Harcourt D 2015, *Taking Us Seriously: Children and Young People Talk about Safety and Institutional Responses to their Safety Concerns*, Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, p. 50.



'High reliability organisations do not try to constantly close the gap between procedures and practice by exhorting people to stick to the rules. Instead, they continually invest in their understanding of the reasons beneath the gap. This is where they try to learn – learn about ineffective guidance; learn about novel, adaptive strategies and where they do and do not work.'³⁸

Continuous improvement

“There should be someone like the Royal Commission who comes in and does a check to make sure the organisation is doing what they say they’re doing. It should be a surprise and there should be real consequences if they’re not protecting kids properly.” Young person³⁹

Organisations must remain attentive and responsive to new challenges in order to maintain a child safe and friendly environment.

An ongoing cycle of assessment, action and reflection will assist organisations to be vigilant as they regularly review, update and refine policies and practices to assess their effectiveness and strive for excellence.

These processes require openness to external influence and accountability, and commitment to quality assurance and improvement practices.

Child safe and friendly organisations will:

- consider how these domains complement, align with or enhance existing organisational processes, standards, quality systems or continuous improvement mechanisms
- maintain a culture of awareness through regular and open communication
- confirm policies and processes continue to be implemented even when staff changes occur
- regularly review the nine domains, or a similar framework, for safety in organisations
- maintain records of methods of review, schedules and reviews conducted
- implement audits either internally or by an external agency
- ensure policies and processes are dated and new versions/changes are brought to the attention of staff and volunteers, and that any changes in policies are implemented and changes can be demonstrated



- undertake a thorough review at the earliest opportunity when a complaint has occurred and is finalised to identify the cause of the problem, systemic issues and failures, organisational risks and areas for improvement or changes required
- consider reviews as opportunities for checking accountability and understanding of policies and practices at all levels of the organisation, and involve children and young people and their families in these reviews to build confidence of all involved in the organisation in the child safety approach
- consider using an external expert to offer an independent review of complaint handling.

Examples

- **Accreditation manual 1.9 Continuous Quality Improvement** – Department of Health www.health.gov.au/
- **Child Safe Organisations WA: Self-assessment and review tool** – Commissioner for Children and Young People WA www.ccyp.wa.gov.au
- **Self-Assessment and Improvement uploads** – Early Childhood Australia www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/search

38. Dekker S, cited in Munro E & Fish A 2015, *Hear no evil, see no evil: Understanding failure to identify and report child sexual abuse in institutional contexts*, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney, p. 32.

39. Moore T, McArthur M, Noble-Carr D & Harcourt D 2015, *Taking Us Seriously: Children and Young People Talk about Safety and Institutional Responses to their Safety Concerns*, Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University, Melbourne, p. 66.



Appendix A: Australian Child Safe Frameworks

2001	2005	2005	2009
Child Wise Choose with Care 12 Steps to a Child Safe Organisation	Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference Guidelines for Building the Capacity of Child-Safe Organisations	NSW Office of the Children's Guardian Child Safe Organisations	Australian Childhood Foundation Safeguarding Children Program
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. An open and aware culture 2. Understanding child abuse 3. Managing risk to minimise abuse 4. Child protection policies and procedures 5. Clear boundaries 6. Recruitment and selection 7. Screening of representatives 8. Support and supervision 9. Empowering children and young people 10. Training and education 11. Complaints and disclosures 12. Legal responsibilities 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Systems to ensure Adaptation, Innovation and Continuous Improvement 2. Governance and Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Child-Safe Policy • Risk Management • A Code of Conduct • Privacy and Data Protection 3. Participation and Empowerment of Children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling and Promoting the Participation of Children • Inclusive and Empowering Language • Strategies to reduce the potential for undiscovered or ongoing harm 4. Human Resources Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment and Selection Practices acknowledge the importance of Child Safety • Job Descriptions / Duty Statements • Staff Support, Supervision and Performance Management • Complaints Management and Disciplinary Proceedings 5. Education and Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness and Understanding of Child Abuse and Organisational Responsibilities • Support for Organisations in Building, Maintaining and Strengthening Child-Safe Capacity 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Child Safe policies 2. Child Safe code of conduct 3. Effective staff recruitment and training 4. Privacy considerations 5. Plan for managing risk 6. Encourages children and young people to participate 7. Deals with concerns or complaints about behaviours towards a child 8. Attends Child Safe Organisation training 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commitment to safeguarding children 2. Personnel roles and conduct 3. Recruitment and screening practices 4. Personnel induction and training 5. Involving children and parents 6. Child abuse reports and allegations 7. Supporting a child safe culture

2013	2016	2016
Australian Children’s Commissioners and Guardians Principles for Child Safety in Organisations	Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Consultation Paper Out-of-Home Care	Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Take a preventative, proactive and participatory approach to child safety 2. Implement child safety policies and procedures 3. Value and empower children to participate in decisions which affect their lives 4. Foster a culture of openness that supports all persons to safely disclose risks of harm to children. 5. Respect diversity in cultures and child rearing practices while keeping child safety paramount 6. Provide written guidance on appropriate conduct and behaviour towards children 7. Engage only the most suitable people to work with children and have high quality staff and volunteer supervision and professional development 8. Ensure children know who to talk with if they are worried or are feeling unsafe, and that they are comfortable to do so 9. Report suspected abuse, neglect or mistreatment promptly to the appropriate authorities 10. Share information appropriately and lawfully with other organisations where the safety and wellbeing of children is at risk 11. Value and communicate with families and carers 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organisational leadership, governance and culture 2. Human resources management 3. Child safe policy and procedures 4. Education and training 5. Children’s participation and empowerment 6. Family and community involvement 7. Physical and online environment 8. Review and continuous improvement 9. Child focussed complaint process 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leadership, governance and culture 2. Empowering children to participate 3. Involving family and community 4. Child safe and friendly policies 5. Managing staff and volunteers 6. Safe environments physical and online 7. Child friendly complaint process and reporting 8. Education and development 9. Continuous improvement



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Not all children and young people in this publication took part in this project. They are all Western Australian children and young people who have provided permission for the Commissioner to use the images.