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Taking youth safety seriously

Defence Youth Safety Forum

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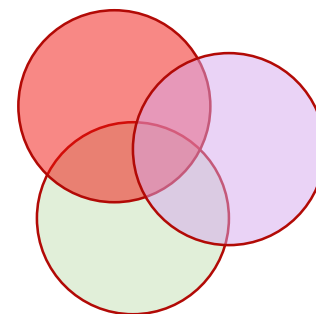
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Prevention

Prevention – based on knowledge of causes and contributing factors

Child Sexual Abuse occurs at the intersection of:

- Motivation (of a potential offender)
- Vulnerability (of a potential victim)
- Opportunity



Prevention means addressing the **preconditions** that facilitate abuse at each of these levels.

Create and support **conditions of safety** within families, organisations and communities.

Requires **organisational culture change**, supported by **effective leadership strategies**.

Knowledge of risk factors

Child sexual abuse risk factors focus on characteristics of potential *victims* and *offenders*.

Victim characteristics:

- Age (middle childhood and around puberty: 8-13, but particularly 6-7 and again at 10-12)
- Gender (female) – but boys are also frequently abused – particularly in institutional contexts
- Previous experience of child maltreatment (physical or emotional abuse, neglect, family violence)
- Child disability
- Level of assertiveness
- Social and structural disadvantage (e.g. poverty or discrimination experienced by single parents, CALD or some Indigenous communities)
- Family dysfunction and parent characteristics (parenting skills, mental health, drug/alcohol issues)

Knowledge of risk factors (cont'd)

Child sexual abuse risk factors focus on characteristics of potential *victims* and *offenders*.

Offender characteristics:

- Gender (male) - but women can also offend sexually
- Problems such as substance abuse
- Prior history of abuse (though 'victim-to-offender' cycle is not determinative, and problematic)
- Psychopathology and personality characteristics (charming, but deviant attitudes)
- Engage in 'grooming' behaviour – de-sensitising a child/young person
- (NB: social status and sexual orientation of offenders are myths that are not supported by the research)

Environmental factors

Risks, enablers and protective factors

What do we know about organisational contexts?

- Are all organisations equal?
- To supplement research about victim- and perpetrator-factors, we need to explore what it is about different organisational settings that might increase or decrease the risks.
- Can organisations change, and increase conditions of safety for children?

Shifting the paradigm

Preventing ‘bad’ people isn’t enough

Sexual abuse prevention strategies in organisations have focused on **screening** to identify those with a history of child sexual abuse.

However:

- First-time abusers have no offence history
- Much abuse goes undetected or unreported, so won’t be identified in screening
- Young people also engage in sexually abusive behaviours (around 30–60% of incidents relate to peers)

<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/2016/06/22/public-health-approach-preventing-child-maltreatment>

Box Office lessons: The power of the situation



Box Office lessons on Social Psychology

Social Psychology knowledge from the 1970s explored on the big screen
Demonstrates the “power of the situation” to influence individual behavior
Implications for child-safety in organisations:

- We have failed—and will continue to fail—if we try and focus *solely* on identifying, weeding out, or preventing ‘bad people’ from joining organisations

What is the role of leaders? Given the ‘power of the situation’, how can we use our leadership roles to shape the situational context, and move towards conditions of safety?

<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/2016/06/22/public-health-approach-preventing-child-maltreatment>

Key risks in child-related organisations

- Grooming process prior to the act of sexual abuse is a precursor to offending that relies upon relationship and trust-building between the victim, the perpetrator, and the institutional community.
- The modus operandi of perpetrators may differ between institutional contexts, as different settings allow for different opportunities for, and facilitators of, abuse.
- New technology, mobile phones, and social media open up new avenues for communication, and therefore grooming, for potential abusers.
- Climate, culture and norms in organisations can facilitate abuse:
 - “Just as children are 'groomed' by adults to allow them to perpetrate sexual acts, other adults are also 'groomed' (or desensitised) to perceive potentially risky behaviour as harmless.” (van Dam, 2001)

<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/2016/06/22/public-health-approach-preventing-child-maltreatment>

OVERVIEW:

3 elements of child-safe environments

- 1 Screening for known perpetrators
- 2 Managing situational risks
- 3 Creating positive cultures

Screening for known perpetrators

1

Pre-employment screening

Having pre-employment vetting is the first chapter in the book, not the final chapter!

- Understanding differences between a **police check** and a **Working With Children Check**:
 - More extensive, but also more targeted
 - See *Pre-employment screening: Working With Children Checks and Police Checks* <aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/pre-employment-screening-working-children-checks-and-police-checks>
- Understanding your obligations – in many jurisdictions, employers are prohibited from employing someone in a child-related occupation who does not have a Working With Children Check.
- Recognising the **limitations of pre-employment screening** – most child sex offenders do not have criminal records.

Mandatory reporting

The legal requirement to report concerns of harm

- Feeds into the database on which screening processes rely
- Laws differ depending on which state/territory you live, and about what type of abuse/harm (or in many jurisdictions, risk of harm) there is a concern
- Sexual abuse and physical abuse are the two types of harm about which it is mandatory for some people to report concerns in all Australian state/territories; but...
 - The categories of **people** who are so required varies from very restrictive (e.g., in Qld) or very expansive (NT)
 - The **situations** in which the sexual abuse occurred also determines whether or not a notification is mandatory e.g., in WA, sexual abuse has to be reported by child care or after-hours school workers, but it is limited to abuse occurring in the care setting.

<http://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>

Mandatory reporting (cont'd)

The legal requirement to report concerns of harm

- A growing number of jurisdictions have “**failure to disclose**” legislation, which covers all adults with a ‘reasonable belief’ that a sexual offence has been committed against a child. It is separate from mandatory reporting obligations of specified professionals. E.g.
VIC:
<http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>
- New South Wales: a person who *knows or believes* that a serious indictable offence has been committed and they have information which might be of material assistance to the police or prosecution must report the information to police or another authority. It is an offence to fail to do this without reasonable excuse. (*Crimes Act 1900* (NSW) s.316(1).)

<http://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-and-neglect>

Managing situational risks

2

Situational crime prevention

A situational crime prevention framework can:

- Provide a lens for understanding how child victimisation occurs in institutions
- Serve as a foundation for development of effective prevention strategies in different contexts through:
 - Development of policies to address risks
 - Monitoring and ongoing actions.

Situational crime prevention

- Address the limits of both pre-employment and ongoing screening/suitability assessments
- Focus on creating safe *environments* rather than safe *individuals*
- Have been successfully applied to reducing a range of criminal behaviours

Underlying premise: Under the right circumstances, anyone could offend

Key focus is on *opportunity reduction*:

- Making crime more risky
- Making crime more effortful
- Reducing rewards
- Removing excuses
- Preventing—and not tolerating—potential ‘grooming’ behaviour

Not all organisations are equal

Different organisations will have a different risk profile and present different opportunities for grooming behaviour to occur or go undetected

Family-like environments carry the highest risk:

- Staff required to act in *loco parentis*
- Physical contact, showering, changing clothes (e.g. sports)
- Sleep-overs/camps
- Transport (at odd hours)

Not all organisations are equal (cont'd)

Leaders need to drive a process for risk-analysis of organisational activities that focus on issues such as:

- Level of observation/supervision of adult-child interactions
- Use of adults as role-models or mentors
- Use of social media or other potentially private communication avenues
- A culture where abuse might be tolerated (e.g. gender stereotypes, homophobia, alcohol)

Applying the Situational Prevention Model

Based on Kaufman et al. (2010)

Steps to reducing risks:

1. Conduct Initial Risk Assessment
2. Confirm key risks with stakeholders (staff, parents, children)
3. Link risks to risk reduction and prevention strategies
4. Prioritise risks
5. Implement proposed risk reduction and prevention strategies
6. Ongoing monitoring

Don't lose sight of the big picture:

It is not only about 'risk'...

What are the opportunities for building resilience?

How can staff act as a support for young people who might be vulnerable to, or who have actually experienced maltreatment in the home or elsewhere?

- Sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, or exposure to family violence

Some possible protective factors or supports:

- Being a positive role model (safe; boundaries)
- Encouraging and responding appropriately to abuse occurring elsewhere
- Fostering inclusion and peer support

Creating positive organisational cultures

3

Strategies for creating child-safe organisations

Examples:

- Values-based interviewing
- Create induction programs – where acceptable behaviour is defined
- Reinforce with ongoing professional development
- Implement supervision, mentoring and accountability for staff
- Understanding and comply with mandatory reporting obligations
- Analysis of—and implementation of strategies to address—risks across the organisation (situational prevention)
- Ask for, and respond to, the views of children and young people about safety within the organisation
- Develop (regularly review and update) child abuse policies, procedures, and standards

Facilitating disclosure

Disclosure is the *process* of telling someone about a harmful incident

Could be referring to disclosure of offences from a range of **contexts**—within or beyond the organisation—such as:

- Between peers at schools or youth-serving organisations
- Between peers outside of schools or youth-serving organisations
- At home – by a family member (sibling/parent/other); neighbour; acquaintance
- Elsewhere – by a known or unknown offender

Facilitating disclosure (cont'd)

Disclosure could relate to experiencing a **variety of abusive behaviours, not just sexual abuse:**

- Physical sexual assault, unwanted requests, as well as a range of *online offences* or using digital media (including images, 'sexting', bullying, etc.)

Organisational cultures might allow for a variety of forms of bullying, harassment and intimidation to occur, which in turn can increase a child's vulnerability to sexual abuse though feeling 'different' (e.g., homophobia; sexism, or more subtle forms of gender stereotypes of masculinity/femininity, etc.), or because of the use of alcohol or other substances (Higgins, 2013).

Barriers to disclosure

Disclosure is complex

Barriers to a young person disclosing sexual assault include:

- Relationship between victim and perpetrator
- Fear of not being believed or being blamed for the assault
- Cultural factors and values
- Concerns about how disclosure will impact on significant others
- Expectations and attitudes about what is “normal” for males and females in heterosexual relationships
- Being a male victim/survivor – clash with gendered expectations of masculinity, and fear of being labelled “gay”

Key safeguarding strategies for young people

- Promote respectful relationships
- Create physically safe environments
- Create emotionally safe environments that:
 - Facilitate disclosures
 - Respond appropriately to disclosures
 - Provide a supportive/therapeutic context for victim/survivors

Moving from child-safe compliance to embracing safeguarding climate change

REFLECTION Questions:

- What are the risks of ‘compliance’ without fully understanding the rationale for change?
- What can we learn from the environmental ‘climate change’ experience? What were the phases/steps, and how far along is the child safeguarding movement?
- What can we learn from other areas:
 - Banking Royal Commission
 - Gender Equality (watch an Episode of ‘Man Men’ if you want a reminder of life as it was)
 - Occupational Health and Safety
- What are the key phases or stages of culture change?
 - Diagnosis (understanding the problems, and what are the key things to change)
 - Preparation (understanding, and disrupting the old culture)
 - Implementation/Transformation
 - Monitoring including a careful watch for unintended consequences
 - Embedding & Accountability

Culture change affects the whole of the organisation:

- Shared understandings of what child sexual abuse is, grooming processes, and risks
- Statement about the consequences of offending and of breaches of code of conduct
- Clear, published policies and procedures that are child/victim-centred (with regular training, review, monitoring and evaluation)
- Prevention education programs for young people, adult workers/volunteers, and families
- Education on the long-term impacts of child sexual abuse, and other forms of abuse, bullying and harassment

National Safe Schools Framework (2011)

“Promoting and providing a supportive learning environment in which all students can expect to feel safe”.

See: www.mceetya.edu.au/verve/_resources/natsafeschools_file.pdf

Key questions for changing culture

1. Do we understand the problems? (i.e., what are the known risk factors; where do they relate to the operation and climate of my organisational unit?)
2. What are the levers for change?
3. What are the obstacles to change?
4. Who are the champions?
5. Who are the blockers, how do I win them over?
6. Who is accountable?
7. How does 'climate change' become embedded and normalised?

The task of culture change

Culture is:

What people see, do, think, know and feel.

To know if ***culture change*** regarding conditions of safety is occurring, involves measuring:

- Adults' attitudes, knowledge, skills, behaviours and behavioural expectations, and self-efficacy
- Children/young people's attitudes, knowledge, behaviours and behavioural expectations, and self-efficacy

See p. 64: Kaufman, K. L., Erooga, M., with Stewart, K., Zatkin, J., McConnell, E., Tews, H., & Higgins, D. (2016). *Risk profiles for institutional child sexual abuse: A literature review*. Sydney: Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney.
<http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/policy-and-research/our-research/published-research/risk-profiles-for-institutional-child-sexual-abuse>

Protective participation: keeping kids central

- Children and young people value being helped to better understand risks and to make better judgements on ***when to trust*** and when to be wary.
- Because young people understand and experience safety differently from adults, organisations need to understand what safety means to kids and ***act to respond to their fears***.
- Children and young ***people want organisations to provide*** safe physical environments: places that are bright and cheerful, where kids are able to move around, to play and to "hang out" with friends and people they trust.
- ***Including young people*** in the development of strategies and responses for their own safety results in a greater likelihood that children will utilise and feel positive about them.

Moore (2017): <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/protection-through-participation>

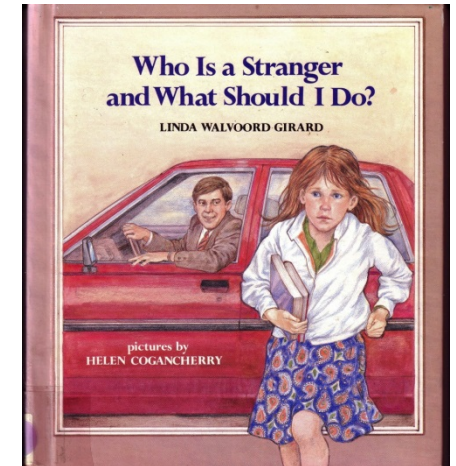
Protective participation (cont'd)

- For young people's participation to be successful it needs to be **supported by the whole organisation**, and dialogue about safety needs to be ongoing and built into as many interactions between adults and children as possible.
- Children and young people need adults and peers they can **trust**, and these adults must be accessible, physically present and available when needed.
- Raising concerns with an adult can be difficult, potentially embarrassing, shameful or uncomfortable. Adults need to **respond respectfully to concerns** and in ways that allay young people's fears and discomfort.

Moore, 2017. <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/protection-through-participation>

Children's Safety Study findings

- *Being safe and feeling safe* are different for children and young people
- Some strategies for *keeping kids safe* may unintentionally:
 - make kids feel less safe
 - make children afraid of adults
 - make adults afraid of children
 - fail to recognise children's vulnerability and lack of power
 - take control or power away from children
 - fail to improve children's confidence in institutions' capacity to keep them safe
- Primarily compliance-focused strategies may fail to meet children's real and felt needs
- Peer sexual violence and sexual exploitation more significant than institutional child sexual abuse for young people in residential care



Children's Safety Study animation: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaxjSu4UGlw&t=24s>

Child-safe strategies need to be more than compliance-oriented

- They need to be informed by, respond to, and empower children and young people (who are the key beneficiaries of investments)
- They need to be aware of the potential for – and reduce the likelihood of – unintended consequences
- They need to be regularly evaluated and adjusted
- They need to complement and be integrated into other institutional policies and initiatives
- They can be enhanced through partnerships

Training as a key plank of prevention

CSA prevention training is necessary for all employees/volunteers working with children, including training on how to:

- Recognise early warning signs of abuse
- Equip leaders and other adults to identify and 'call out' boundary violations and policy breaches
- Talk to children and young people about sex
- Recognise and report abuse – for both staff and resident children
- Best-serve children with a prior history of either victimisation and perpetration

Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS)

A nationally recognised centre of research excellence in the field of child, youth and family welfare.

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☞ Quadara, A. (2008). Responding to young people disclosing sexual assault: A resource for schools. <<https://aifs.gov.au/publications/responding-young-people-disclosing-sexual-assault>>

☞ CFCA resources relating to Protecting Children:

<<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/topics/child-abuse-and-neglect-prevention>>

<<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/topics/child-safe-organisations>>

<<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/topics/national-framework-protecting-australias-children>>

☞ Protecting Australia's Children Research and Evaluation Register: <<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/pacra/>>

ICPS Resources for Child-Safe Organisations

Research reports:

- [Taking us seriously: children and young people talk about safety and institutional responses to their safety concerns](#)
2015, Tim Moore, Morag McArthur, Debbie Noble-Carr, Deborah Harcourt
- [Our safety counts: Children and young people's perceptions of safety and institutional responses to their safety concerns](#)
2016, Tim Moore, Morag McArthur, Jessica Heerde, Steven Roche, Patrick O'Leary
- [Safe and sound: Exploring the safety of young people in residential care](#)
2016, Tim Moore, Morag McArthur, Steven Roche, Jodi Death, Clare Tilbury
- [Help-Seeking Needs and Gaps for Preventing Child Sexual Abuse](#)
2017, Vicky Saunders, Morag McArthur

Additional Resources and Tools:

- [Kid Central Toolkit](#)
- Research to Practice Issues:
 - Issue 11: [Being Safe and Feeling Safe: Children's Conceptualisations of Interpersonal Safety](#)
 - Issue 12: [Children's views about safety in institutions.](#)
 - Issue 13: [Our Safety Counts: Key findings from the Australian Survey of Kids and Young People – Perceptions of interpersonal safety and characteristics of safe institutions.](#)
 - Issue 14: [Our Safety Counts: Key findings from the Australian Survey of Kids and Young People – help-seeking and institutional responses to safety concerns.](#)

Other resources for creating child-safe organisations

- The Australian Council for Children and Youth Organisation's *Safeguarding Children* is an accreditation program run by the Australian Childhood Foundation
www.safeguardingchildren.com.au
- Life Without Barriers – *We Put Children First*
www.lwb.org.au/childrenfirst
- Childwise has published *12 Steps to Building Child Safe Organisations* and conducts regular training, such as *Choose with Care* and cybersafety programs
www.childwise.net
- Erooga, M. (ed). (2012). *Creating safer organisations: Practical steps to prevent the abuse of children by those working with them*. Wiley-Blackwell: Chichester, UK.
- Developing an understanding of how children understand and experience safety in institutions
<http://www.acu.edu.au/621059>
- CFCA resources on organisational issues:
<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/topics/child-safe-organisations>
<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/child-maltreatment-organisations-risk-factors-and-strate>
- Protecting Australia's Children Research Register:
<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/topics/child-safe-organisations>
<https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/child-maltreatment-organisations-risk-factors-and-strate>
- Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse
<http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/policy-and-research/our-policy-work/making-institutions-child-safe.aspx>