Commissioner for Children and Young People
Western Australia



# National Principles for Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines

Revised November 2019




This is the second edition of *Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines*, produced by the Commissioner for Children and Young People. This edition replaces the 2016 edition shown here.

### 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 practice examples provided are not exhaustive or an endorsement of any organisation. Readers are encouraged to contact the owners of practice 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. The use of the term 'Aboriginal' in this way is not intended to imply equivalence between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, though similarities exist.

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Commissioner for Children and Young People WA
Ground Floor, 1 Alvan Street, Subiaco WA 6008
Telephone: (08) 6213 2297
Country freecall: 1800 072 444
Email: info@ccyp.wa.gov.au
Web: ccyp.wa.gov.au

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# Message from the Commissioner

## Ensuring children and young people are safe from harm is everyone's responsibility.

West Australian children and young people are regularly involved in activities and organisations outside of the home – including school, sport, churches, recreation and health care – that are provided by government, non-government and community-based organisations.

Children and young people rely on the adults entrusted with their care to both protect and empower them to be safe from any form of abuse or harm.

To achieve this, every organisation must embed a child safe culture across all activities and services, with leaders, staff and volunteers being vigilant in providing child safe and friendly environments and interactions.

These Child Safe Organisations guidelines were first produced in 2016 and formed the base for ongoing work by my office to promote the need for child safe practices across all types of organisations.

Our aim is to help leaders, staff and volunteers within organisations to place the safety of children and young people at the forefront of their activities and to encourage parents and carers to seek information and ask questions about the child safe strategies used in places their children are attending.

The guidelines have been distributed widely and used by many.

Since the guidelines were first released, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse handed down its findings and recommendations about child safety in institutions and the Council of Australian Governments have endorsed the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations reflect the ten child safe standards recommended by the Royal Commission, however, importantly the Principles are clear that children should be safe from all types of harm, physical, emotional and neglect as well as sexual abuse.

I encourage all adults in the roles you have, whether it may be as a leader, employee, volunteer, parent or community member, to be active in developing a culture that prioritises child safety and wellbeing within the organisations you are involved in.

I particularly challenge those in leadership roles to ensure that risks are identified, strategies are embedded and reviewed, and children and young people are empowered to participate and speak up about any concerns they have so they feel safe and respected wherever they are.

**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.** (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19)[1]

# Introduction

'Protecting children and promoting their safety is everyone's business. It is a national priority that requires a national solution. Everyone – the Australian Government and state and territory governments, sectors and institutions, and communities, families and individuals – has a role to play to better protect children in institutions.'[2]

The Commissioner for Children and Young People released the first edition of the Child Safe Organisations WA resources in April 2016. These resources were developed from consultations with children and young people and relevant organisations, research reports and the work of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission). The following table outlines actions locally and nationally since then.

This edition of the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines* follows the same format as the previous guidelines. Minor modifications have been made to incorporate the language of the National Principles.

The aim of these guidelines is to provide concise information and practical examples for organisations to assist them in reviewing and enhancing their child safe and friendly strategies across their services and activities.

## Child Safe Organisation Principles in WA: Timeline

| | |
|---|---|
| Nov 2019 | The Commissioner revises the existing WA resources and releases the *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations WA: Guidelines and Self-Assessment and Review Tool*. |
| Feb 2019 | The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations are developed by the National Office for Child Safety and the Australian Human Rights Commission. These are agreed to by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to drive national consistency in the application of Child Safe Standards across Australia. |
| Jul 2018 | The National Office for Child Safety is established to lead the implementation of national priorities from the Royal Commission, including the implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations. |
| Jun 2018 | The WA Government accepts in principle the Royal Commission recommendations to implement mandatory Child Safe Standards in WA. |
| Dec 2017 | The Royal Commission Final Report is released, recommending the mandatory implementation of Child Safe Standards across all organisations that work with children and young people. |
| Aug 2017 | The Australian Government agrees to a Commonwealth Child Safe Framework. |
| Jul 2016 | The Royal Commission releases its Creating Child Safe Institutions research report. |
| Apr 2016 | The Commissioner releases the Child Safe Organisations WA resources to support organisations in implementing child safe principles and practices. The Commissioner's staff provided Child Safe Organisations seminars for approximately 600 people. |

## What does child safe and friendly mean?

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

Children and young people involved in the Commissioner's 2015 consultation on child safe organisations provided clear messages to organisations about what they can be doing to make them feel safe:

- 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 programming of activities with children and young people in regard to safety as an ongoing quality improvement activity.[3]

In addition, the Commissioner's 2015 consultation with WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people emphasised the importance of 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.'[4]

Culturally responsive approaches should be considered at all stages of creating and maintaining a safe and friendly organisation. 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.[5]

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.'[6] In general terms, a child safe and friendly organisation is one that deliberately and systematically:

- creates an environment where children's safety and wellbeing is the centre of thought, values and actions[7]
- places emphasis on genuine engagement with, and valuing of children
- 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.[8]

# National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

1. Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational **leadership, governance** and **culture.**

2. Children and young people are informed about their **rights, participate** in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

3. Families and communities are **informed** and **involved** in promoting child safety and wellbeing.

4. **Equity** is upheld and **diverse needs** respected in policy and practice.

5. People working with children and young people are suitable and **supported** to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice.

6. Processes to respond to **complaints** and **concerns** are child focused.

7. **Staff** and **volunteers** are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through **ongoing education** and **training**.

8. **Physical** and **online environments** promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed.

9. Implementation of the national child safe principles is **regularly reviewed** and **improved**.

10. **Policies** and **procedures** document how the organisation is safe for children and young people.

*National Principles for Child Safe Organisations,* Australian Human Rights Commission – childsafe.humanrights.gov.au

## National Principles for Child Safe Organisations WA

The Commissioner's original resources (2016) outlined nine child safe domains for organisations to implement, with an additional expectation that the diverse needs of children and young people would be considered and addressed across each of the nine areas. The National Principles for Child Safe Organisations WA (2019) consist of ten principles, which are equivalent to the previous nine domains; the tenth principle explicitly addresses equity and diversity as a separate area.

The revised resources are informed by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians (2013) *Principles for Child Safety in Organisations*,[9] the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017) *Final Report*,[10] and the Australian Human Rights Commission *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations* (2018).

The Royal Commission made 51 recommendations related to child safety within institutions. In June 2018 the WA State Government accepted or accepted in principle each of the 36 recommendations about child safety that apply to the State Government. These recommendations include the introduction of legislative requirements for organisations undertaking child related work to comply with the National Principles and for an independent oversight body to be introduced to monitor and enforce the principles.[11]

There is currently no legislation in WA making the implementation of these principles compulsory. There is however the imperative to protect children and young people from harm and the community expectation that organisations will take appropriate steps to promote their safety. Organisations who are systematically implementing and reviewing their implementation of each of the child safe principles will be well placed to meet any future legislative and oversight requirements.

## Using the principles to improve child safety

Principles are statements that are a guide for behaviour. Each of the ten principles are achievable, relevant and reliable when implemented in reducing the likelihood of children and young people experiencing harm when in the care of organisations.[12] All of the principles are of equal importance and are interrelated. They should be considered holistically, not in isolation, as there are necessary overlaps.

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.

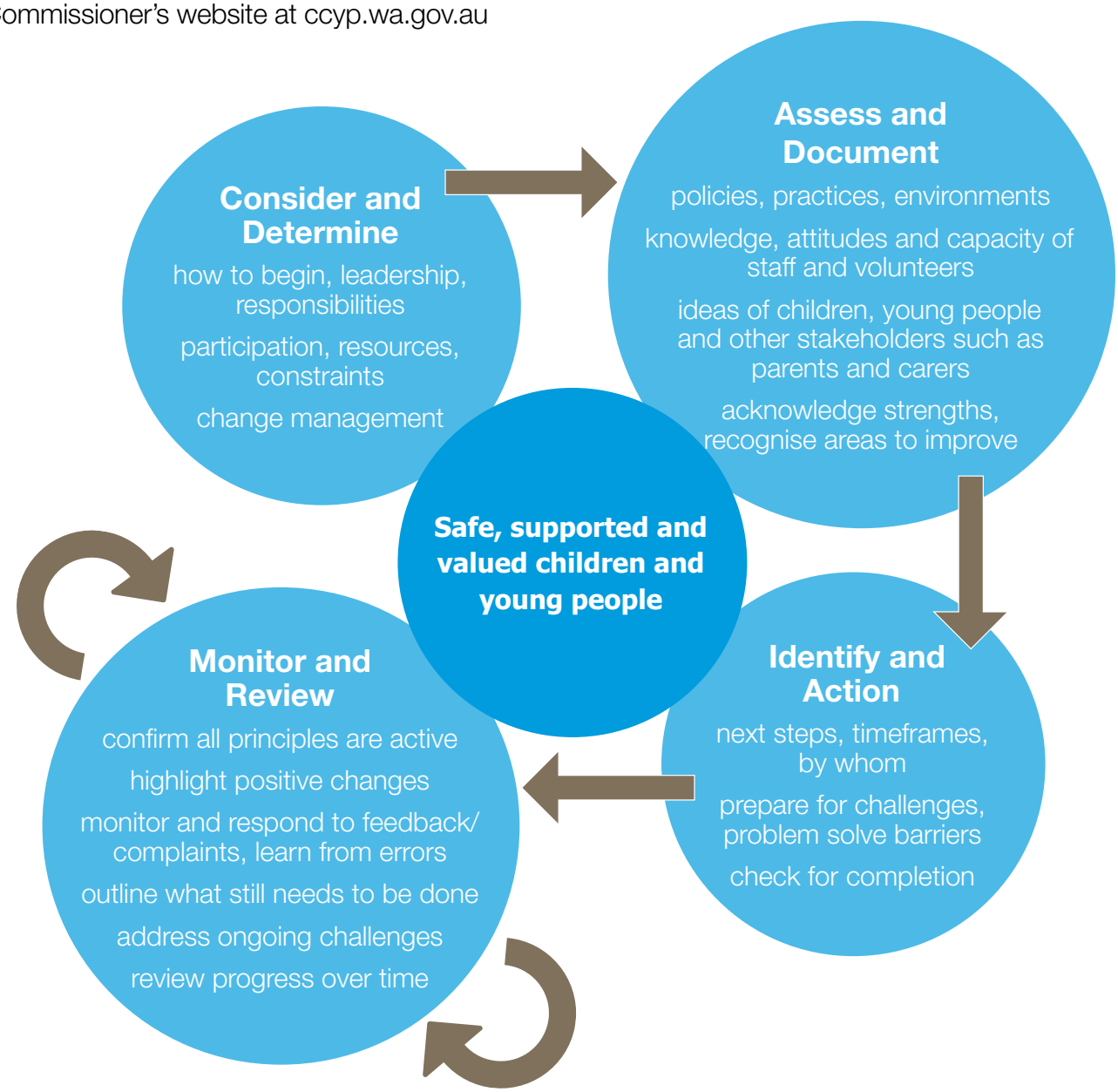
Leaders in organisations will be best placed to consider how the principles and actions listed in the following chapters complement, align with, or enhance existing organisational processes, standards, quality systems or continuous improvement mechanisms.

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 *National Principles for Child Safe Organisations WA: Self-assessment and review tool*[13] will also assist organisations to review and monitor actions and strategies across the ten principles.

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 at ccyp.wa.gov.au

The examples and resources in these guidelines provide readily accessible illustrations of the principles in action. They are not exhaustive and organisations are encouraged to contact their peak bodies or funding agencies to seek support and to share work and strategies that have been successful in particular types of organisations or areas of service delivery.





**All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child.** (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 3)[14]

# 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 person[15]

## National Principle 1 – Child safety and wellbeing is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture

Leaders of organisations, including board and committee members, chief executives, directors and managers, are responsible for creating and maintaining an organisational culture that ensures the prevention of child abuse is the responsibility of all staff and volunteers.

To be effective in establishing a child safe and friendly organisation, leaders will need to implement each of the ten principles and review them regularly. Whilst governance arrangements will vary depending on the type, nature, size and capacity of an organisation, they should be transparent and all members within the organisation – staff, volunteers, parents, carers and children should feel confident to safely discuss any child safety concerns.

### Key action areas

- **1.1** The organisation makes a public commitment to child safety.
- **1.2** A child safe culture is championed and modelled at all levels of the organisation from the top down and the bottom up.
- **1.3** Governance arrangements facilitate implementation of the child safety and wellbeing policy at all levels.
- **1.4** A Code of Conduct provides guidelines for staff and volunteers on expected behavioural standards and responsibilities.
- **1.5** Risk management strategies focus on preventing, identifying and mitigating risks to children and young people.
- **1.6** Staff and volunteers understand their obligations on information sharing and recordkeeping.

### Indicators this principle is upheld

- The organisation has publicly available and current documents such as a child safety and wellbeing policy, practice guidance, information sharing protocols, staff and volunteer codes of conduct and risk management strategies.
- Organisational leaders model and regularly reinforce attitudes and behaviours that value children and young people and a commitment to child safety, child wellbeing and cultural safety. This commitment is clear in duty statements, performance agreements, and staff and volunteer review processes.
- Staff, volunteers, children and young people have a sound knowledge of children's rights, including their rights to feel safe and be heard, and the accountabilities that accompany these rights.
- Leaders promote sharing good practice and learnings about child safety and wellbeing.

### Supporting practices

- A clear and transparent organisational structure outlines clear lines of authority, responsibility, accountability and communication.
- A structured approach to risk management is used to provide 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.
- The work of the organisation is planned 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.
- Practices are in place to ensure that records of the organisation's activities and decisions are made and maintained appropriately.
- 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.
- Respect for diversity and cultural differences is embedded in all policies and practices and affirms that a child and young person's cultural identity or religious beliefs are fundamental to their wellbeing.
- Practices are in place that promote the inclusion and safety of children and young people with disability.
- Policies and processes are utilised and are continuously reviewed.
- Everyone understands their responsibilities and has confidence in the organisation's child safety approach.
- Any child safety concerns that arise are responded to immediately.
- The organisation welcomes external scrutiny.

## Examples and resources

- **Charter of Commitment to Children and Young People**, Australian Human Rights Commission – childsafe.humanrights.gov.au
- **We Put Children First**, Life without Barriers – lwb.org.au
- **Creating a child-safe culture**, Parkerville Children and Youth Care – parkerville.org.au
- **Role of the board: Governance relations**, Australian Institute of Company Directors – aicd.companydirectors.com.au
- **Our Safeguarding Policy**, YMCA Perth – ymcawa.org.au
- **State Records Office of WA** – sro.wa.gov.au

More examples and resources are available on the Commissioner's website at ccyp.wa.gov.au





**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)[16]

# 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 person[17]

## National Principle 2 – Children and young people are informed about their rights, participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously

'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.'[18]

### Key action areas

**2.1** Children and young people are informed about all of their rights, including to safety, information and participation.

**2.2** The importance of friendships is recognised and support from peers is encouraged, to help children and young people feel safe and be less isolated.

**2.3** Where relevant to the setting or context, children may be offered access to sexual abuse prevention programs and to relevant related information in an age appropriate way.

**2.4** Staff and volunteers are attuned to signs of harm and facilitate child-friendly ways for children to express their views, participate in decision-making and raise their concerns.

### Indicators this principle is upheld

- The organisation has programs and resources to educate children and young people on their rights, including their right to safety and right to be listened to.
- The organisation is proactive in providing age appropriate platforms to regularly seek children and young people's views and encourage participation in decision-making.
- Staff and volunteers have a good understanding of children and young people's developmental needs.
- Opportunities for participating are documented and regularly reviewed.
- The organisational environment is friendly and welcoming for children and young people.
- Children and young people participate in decision-making in the organisation, including in relation to safety issues and risk identification.
- Children and young people can identify trusted adults and friends.
- Children and young people are informed about their roles and responsibilities in helping to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their peers.

### Supporting practices

- Children and young people are informed the organisation has a responsibility to promote their safety and wellbeing; all relevant policies, code of conduct and complaints management processes are written in language that is accessible and easily understood by young people.
- Children and young people are involved in creating an environment that reflects their developmental needs, lives and identities.
- The specific needs of different groups of children and young people are acknowledged and responded to, such as those living in regional and remote communities, the barriers experienced by those with disability, and the importance of culture for Aboriginal children and young people and those from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- The organisation builds children and young people's confidence and assists them to develop skills in participation, decision-making and leadership.
- Children and young people are provided with a variety of safe ways to share their concerns.

### Examples and resources

- **Feeling safe and respected in organisations**, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA – ccyp.wa.gov.au
- **Involving Children and Young People: Participation guidelines**, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA – ccyp.wa.gov.au
- **Involving Children and Young People: Practice examples**, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA – ccyp.wa.gov.au
- **Rights of WA Children and Young People,** Commissioner for Children and Young People WA – ccyp.wa.gov.au
- **Student Wellbeing Hub**, Australian Government – studentwellbeinghub.edu.au
- **Youth Participation Toolkit: Organisations**, WA Department of Communities; Community Grants, Funding and Initiatives – dlgc.communities.wa.gov.au

More examples and resources are available on the Commissioner's website at ccyp.wa.gov.au



**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)[19]

# Involving family and community

"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 person[20]

## National Principle 3 – Families and communities are informed and involved in promoting child safety and wellbeing

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. In a safe environment, children, young people, family and community members feel that their culture and identity are respected and their views valued.

### Key action areas

- **3.1** Families participate in decisions affecting their child.
- **3.2** The organisation engages and openly communicates with families and the community about its child safe approach and relevant information is accessible.
- **3.3** Families and communities have a say in the development and review of the organisation's policies and practices.
- **3.4** Families, carers and the community are informed about the organisation's operations and governance.

### Indicators this principle is upheld

- The organisation is responsive to the needs of families and communities, including to cultural safety aspects.
- The organisation creates opportunities for families and communities to be involved in how the organisation operates, including encouraging their children's participation and feedback.
- The organisation has clear and accessible information for families and communities about the organisation's operations and policies, including a child safety and wellbeing policy, Code of Conduct, record keeping practices and complaints and investigation processes.
- The organisation seeks feedback from families and communities on issues of child safety and wellbeing and incorporates this into their policies and practices.
- The organisation engages with and supports approaches that build cultural safety through partnerships and respectful relationships.



### Supporting practices

- Barriers to family and community involvement are identified and reduced.
- Parents and carers are involved sensitively and promptly when a problem is identified.

### Examples and resources

- **Build strong partnerships with families**, Early Childhood Resource Hub Australia – ecrh.edu.au
- **Child Safe Organisations WA: Information for parents, carers and family**, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA – ccyp.wa.gov.au
- **Guide for parents and carers**, Australian Human Rights Commission – childsafe.humanrights.gov.au
- **Parents and carers**, Kidshelpline – kidshelpline.com.au
- **Resources for Service Directors: Welcoming conversations with culturally and linguistically diverse families: An educator's guide**, Child Australia – childaustralia.org.au
- **Safety**, all types of safety information by age group, including personal safety, Raising Children Network – raisingchildren.net.au
- **Talk soon. Talk often. A guide for parents talking to their kids about sex**, WA Department of Health – healthywa.wa.gov.au

More examples and resources are available on the Commissioner's website at ccyp.wa.gov.au



**All children have these rights, no matter who they are, where they live, what their parents do, what language they speak, what their religion is, their sex or gender, what their culture is, whether they have disability, whether they are rich or poor. No child should be treated unfairly on any basis** (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 18)[21]

# Equity upheld and diverse needs respected

"My culture is who I am, it is a part of everything I do. It connects me to my family and makes me unique." 17 year-old young person[22]

## National Principle 4 – Equity is upheld and diverse needs respected in policy and practice

The strengths and differences of all children and young people should be celebrated regardless of age, ability, sex, gender, economic or cultural background. When organisations recognise and respond to the diverse needs of children and young people and their families, they will be more child centred and enable children and young people to participate more effectively.

Children and young people and their families will feel comfortable and welcome when services and activities are provided in culturally safe and inclusive ways. A culturally safe environment is one 'where there is no assault, challenge or denial of [a person's] identity, of who they are and what they need.'[23] Involving families, community leaders or specialists will reduce the risk of exclusion, bullying, abuse or discrimination.

Furthermore, families and communities are more likely to access services that are culturally safe and experience better outcomes in such services.

### Key action areas

**4.1** The organisation, including staff and volunteers, understands children and young people's diverse circumstances, and provides support and responds to those who are vulnerable.

**4.2** Children and young people have access to information, support and complaints processes in ways that are culturally safe, accessible and easy to understand.

**4.3** The organisation pays particular attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; children with disability; children from culturally and

linguistically diverse backgrounds; those who are unable to live at home; and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and young people.

### Indicators this principle is upheld

- The organisation has specific policies in place that promote equity and respect diversity for the safety and wellbeing of all children and young people.
- The organisation produces child-friendly material in accessible language and formats that promotes inclusion and informs all children and young people of the support and complaints processes available to them.
- Board members, employees and volunteers champion attitudes and behaviours that respect the human rights of all children and young people, and are inclusive, well informed and responsive to diverse needs.
- Board members, staff and volunteers reflect on how discrimination and exclusion, whether intentional or unintentional, may work against a safe and inclusive culture and they develop proactive strategies to address this.
- Staff and volunteers are trained to recognise and respond effectively to children and young people with diverse needs.

### Supporting practices

- Safety and wellbeing concepts are thought about from different cultural perspectives.
- Staff and volunteers understand a child or young person's cultural identity or religious beliefs are fundamental to their wellbeing.
- Families are empowered to participate in the organisation.
- Board members, staff and volunteers are from diverse backgrounds.
- Organisations seek guidance from experienced others in regard to the needs of children and young people with disabilities, complex needs or from culturally diverse backgrounds.

### Examples and resources

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Cultural Needs**, SNAICC – snaicc.org.au
- **Engaging with Aboriginal Children and Young People Toolkit**, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA – ccyp.wa.gov.au
- **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex (LGBTI) children and young people**, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA – ccyp.wa.gov.au
- **Keeping Aboriginal Children Safe In A Mainstream Organisation**, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency – vacca.org
- **National Standards for Disability Services**, Australian Government – dss.gov.au
- **Resources for Service Directors: Cultural Connections**, Child Australia – childaustralia.org.au
- **Speaking out about Disability**, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA – ccyp.wa.gov.au

More examples and resources are available on the Commissioner's website at ccyp.wa.gov.au



**Organisations, services and facilities for children and young people should meet standards, particularly in the areas of safety, health, number and suitability of staff, as well as supervision.** (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 3.3)[24]

# Managing staff and volunteers

"Make sure everyone is friendly. Hire people you trust and know they won't do any harm to children." 14 year-old young person[25]

## National Principle 5 – People working with children and young people are suitable and supported to reflect child safety and wellbeing values in practice

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. '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.'[26]



### Key action areas

5.1 Recruitment, including advertising, referee checks and staff and volunteer pre-employment screening emphasise child safety and wellbeing.

5.2 Relevant staff and volunteers have current working with children checks or equivalent backgrounds.

5.3 All staff and volunteers receive an appropriate induction and are aware of their responsibilities to children and young people, including record keeping, information sharing and reporting obligations.

5.4 Ongoing supervision and people management is focused on child safety and wellbeing.

### Indicators this principle is upheld

- The organisation emphasises its commitment to child safety and wellbeing when advertising for, recruiting, and screening staff and volunteers.
- Duty statements, selection criteria and referee checks demonstrate children and young people are valued and respected, commitment to child safety and wellbeing, understanding of children's developmental needs and culturally safe practices.
- Employers, staff and volunteers in an organisation have completed background check requirements.
- Staff and volunteers understand the child safety policy and procedures of the organisation and meet their record keeping, information sharing and reporting responsibilities.
- Ongoing staff support, supervision and performance management processes involve child safety elements.
- The organisation maintains suitable record keeping systems and protocols for staff and volunteers.
- The organisation has a range of tools and processes to monitor and mitigate risk.

### Supportive practices

- Recruitment processes for prospective staff and volunteers include various selection techniques, 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 and young people).
- Culturally inclusive recruitment.
- Orientation, induction and ongoing support and supervision for staff and volunteers occurs and explores 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.
- Staff and volunteers have opportunities to share workplace observations and problems, and to safely explore views about child safety issues with a designated staff member or trusted person.

### Examples and resources

- **Child and youth risk management strategies and resources**, Queensland Government – qld.gov.au
- **Child Safe, Child Friendly Risk Management Framework**, Uniting Care Queensland – unitingcareqld.com.au
- **Child Safe Code of Conduct template**, Australian Human Rights Commission – childsafe.humanrights.gov.au
- **Child Safety: Working With Children Check**, Government of Western Australia – workingwithchildren.wa.gov.au
- **Human Resources Practices for Child Safe Organisations**, Victorian Government – providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au

More examples and resources are available on the Commissioner's website at ccyp.wa.gov.au



**Children have a right to know about their rights.** (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 4)[27]

# 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 people[28]

## National Principle 6 – Processes to respond to complaints and concerns are child focused

'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.'[29]

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



## Key action areas

**6.1** The organisation has an accessible, child focused complaint handling policy which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of leadership, staff and volunteers; approaches to dealing with different types of complaints; breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct; and obligations to act and report.

**6.2** Effective complaint handling processes are understood by children and young people, families, staff and volunteers, and are culturally safe.

**6.3** Complaints are taken seriously and responded to promptly and thoroughly.

**6.4** The organisation has policies and procedures in place that address reporting of complaints and concerns to relevant authorities, whether or not the law requires reporting, and co-operates with law enforcement.

**6.5** Reporting, privacy and employment law obligations are met.

## Indicators this principle is upheld

- Staff and volunteers are well-informed about their roles and responsibilities, reporting and privacy obligations, and processes for responding to disclosures. They feel empowered and supported to draw attention to breaches of the Code of Conduct within the organisation and to challenge these behaviours.
- The complaints handling policy prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children and young people and recognises the role of families and communities in understanding and using the policy.
- Policies and procedures demonstrate regard for fairness to all parties to a complaint or investigation including support and information as appropriate.
- Staff and volunteers have a good knowledge of the different ways children and young people express concerns or distress and disclose harm.
- Information about all complaints and concerns, including breaches of relevant policies or the Code of Conduct, is recorded and analysed, including in relation to processes, timeframes and record keeping practices. Systemic issues are identified and mitigated through this process.
- Children and young people know who to talk to if they are feeling unsafe and know what will happen.
- Timely feedback is provided to children and young people, families, staff and volunteers who raise concerns or complaints. This includes reporting back on incidents, concerns and complaints.

## Supporting practices

- Be proactive by creating opportunities to ask children and young people about any issues that might be affecting them.
- Be flexible in how you receive complaints — wherever possible, children and young people should have the opportunity to lodge a complaint face-to-face.
- Support advocates to lodge complaints on behalf of children, as children and young people will seek advice from their friends, parents, guardians and teachers.
- Listen to children and young people, understand them, 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.[30]

- Give options on how and when they will be kept informed of the progress and outcome of their complaint. Ensure follow through.
- Provide guidelines for staff and volunteers on:
  - discussing and listening to different types of complaints, such as concerns, bullying or harm by another child, suspicions, unsafe behaviour, environments or practices and/or allegations about staff or volunteer 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.[31,32,33]
- Complaints processes should 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 should also be clear.
- Complaints processes and disciplinary proceedings must be clear and facilitate procedural fairness and natural justice for all parties involved in the complaint. This is a complex area where organisations will benefit from independent expert human resources and legal advice.[34]

## Examples and resources

- **Advocate for Children in Care**, WA Department of Communities, Child Protection and Family Support – dcp.wa.gov.au
- **Bringing Child Rights into Your Classroom: An Educator's Guide**, SNAICC – snaicc.org.au
- **Complaint Handling Guide: Upholding the rights of children and young people**, Australian Government – pmc.gov.au
- **Effective handling of complaints**, Ombudsman WA – ombudsman.wa.gov.au
- **Guidelines for complaint management in organizations, Australian and New Zealand Standard (AS/NZS 10002:2014)**, Standards Australia – standards.org.au
- **Safety of children with a disability**, Commission for Children and Young People Victoria – ccyp.vic.gov.au
- **Tips for children and young people on how to make a complaint**, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA – ccyp.wa.gov.au

More examples and resources are available on the Commissioner's website at ccyp.wa.gov.au





**Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, in body or mind** (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 4)[35]

# Education and development

"Undergoing training for all staff."
"It would make me feel very safe if I knew they [staff] were sensible people."
Young people[36]

**National Principle 7 – Staff and volunteers are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and young people safe through ongoing education and training**

'Building the capacity of organisations to be child safe is central to the broader goal of developing and sustaining child safe environments.'[37] 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. Children, young people and their families also need to be aware of the child safe strategies within an organisation.

**Key action areas:**

- **7.1** Staff and volunteers are trained and supported to effectively implement the organisation's child safety and wellbeing policy.
- **7.2** Staff and volunteers receive training and information to recognise indicators of child harm, including harm caused by other children and young people.
- **7.3** Staff and volunteers receive training and information to respond effectively to issues of child safety and wellbeing and support colleagues who disclose harm.
- **7.4** Staff and volunteers receive training and information on how to build culturally safe environments for children and young people.

### Indicators this principle is upheld

- The organisation provides regular opportunities to educate and train staff on child safety and wellbeing policies and procedures and evidence-based practice.
- The organisation provides a supportive and safe environment for staff and volunteers who disclose harm or risk to children and young people.
- Staff and volunteers receive training on the rights of children and young people in relation to records being created about children and young people and their use.
- Staff and volunteers recognise the range of indicators of child harm.
- Staff and volunteers respond effectively when issues of child safety and wellbeing or cultural safety arise.

### Supporting practices

Child safe and friendly organisations provide or source externally:

- education on culturally safe and inclusive practices
- 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-based and reviewed regularly
- education and information for children, young people and parents and carers about child abuse, protective behaviours and online safety.

### Examples and resources

- **Child Safe Organisations E-learning modules**, Australian Human Rights Commission – childsafe.humanrights.gov.au
- **Child Safety Training**, Child Wise – childwise.org.au
- **Learning and Development Calendar for Partner Agencies and Foster Carers**, WA Department of Communities – cpfs.moodle.com.au
- **Resources for Educators: personal safety**, Bravehearts – bravehearts.org.au
- **Resources for parents and children**, Protective Behaviours NSW – protective-behaviours.org.au
- **SECCA App**, relationship and sexuality education for people of all ages and abilities, SECCA – secca.org.au
- **What is Abuse?** Kids Helpline – kidshelpline.com.au
- **What's OK at home?** Information for young people about abuse in families, Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria – woah.org.au

More examples and resources are available on the Commissioner's website at ccyp.wa.gov.au



**Children have the right to get information that is important to their wellbeing from radio, newspapers, books, computers and other sources. Adults should make sure that the information children get is not harmful, and help them find and understand the information they need.** (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 17)[38]

# 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." 8 year-old young person[39]

## National Principle 8 – Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing while minimising the opportunity for children and young people to be harmed

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.[40]

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.

'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.'[41]

### Key action areas

**8.1** Staff and volunteers identify and mitigate risks in the online and physical environments without compromising a child's right to privacy, access to information, social connections and learning opportunities.

**8.2** The online environment is used in accordance with the organisation's Code of Conduct and child safety and wellbeing policy and practices.

**8.3** Risk management plans consider risks posed by organisational settings, activities and the physical environment.

**8.4** Organisations that contract facilities and services from third parties have procurement policies that ensure the safety of children and young people.

## Indicators this principle is upheld

- The organisation's risk management strategy addresses physical and online risks, including risks arising from child to child and adult to child interactions and the state and nature of physical spaces.
- The organisation's policies promote the use of safe online applications for children and young people to learn, communicate and seek help.
- The organisation considers ways in which the physical environment might promote cultural safety.
- Staff and volunteers are proactive in identifying and mitigating physical and online risks.
- Staff and volunteers access and use online environments in line with the organisation's Code of Conduct and relevant communication protocols.
- Children and young people and their families are informed, in culturally appropriate ways, about the use of the organisation's technology and safety tools.
- Third party contractors for the provision of facilities and services have appropriate measures in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

## Supporting practices

The following strategies are drawn from *Preventing Child Sexual Abuse Within Youth-serving Organizations: Getting Started on Policies and Procedures*.[42]

### Visibility

- Implementing a 'no closed door' policy.
- Random checks.
- 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 and bright lighting in all areas.
- Using surveillance equipment in high-risk environments where natural surveillance is not feasible.

### Privacy

- Guidelines to reduce risk during activities such as toileting, showering and changing clothes between an adult and children and young people, and also the risk of inappropriate or harmful contact between children.





### 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 and resources

- **Checklist for online safety**, Australian Human Rights Commission – childsafe.humanrights.gov.au
- **Resources for educators**, Office of the eSafety Commissioner – esafety.gov.au
- **Guidelines for photographing children**, WA Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries – dlgsc.wa.gov.au
- **Kidsafe WA** – kidsafewa.com.au
- **Social media**, Play by the Rules – playbytherules.net.au
- **Risk management,** NSW Office of the Children's Guardian – kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au
- **R U Legal**, advice and education for parents and young people about cyberbullying, sexting, image based abuse, Legal Aid WA – legalaid.wa.gov.au
- **ThinkUKnow online safety**, Australian Federal Police and partners – thinkuknow.org.au

More examples and resources are available on the Commissioner's website at ccyp.wa.gov.au



**Organisations have a responsibility to ensure children's rights are protected. They can help families to protect children's rights and create an environment where children can grow and reach their potential.** (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 4)[43]

# 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 person[44]

### National Principle 9 – Implementation of the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations WA is regularly reviewed and improved

Organisations must remain attentive and responsive to new challenges in order to maintain a child safe and friendly environment. '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.'[45]

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.

### Key action areas

**9.1** The organisation regularly reviews, evaluates and improves child safe practices.

**9.2** Complaints, concerns and safety incidents are analysed to identify causes and systemic failures so as to inform continuous improvement.

**9.3** The organisation reports on the findings of relevant reviews to staff, volunteers, community, families, and children and young people.

### Indicators this principle is upheld

- The organisation seeks the participation of children and young people, parents and communities in its regular reviews of child safety and wellbeing policies, procedures and practices.
- Child safety and wellbeing indicators are included in documentation used for reviews.
- Review outcomes are considered and implemented to improve child safe practices.
- Regular analysis of complaints demonstrates improvement in child safe practices.

### Supporting practices

- Consider how these principles 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.
- Ensure policies and processes are dated and new versions or changes are brought to the attention of staff and volunteers, and that any changes in policies are implemented and changes can be demonstrated.
- Maintain records of methods of review, schedules and reviews conducted.
- Implement audits either internally or by an external agency.
- 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 safe approach.
- Consider using an external expert to offer an independent review of complaint handling.

### Examples and resources

- **Child Safe Organisations WA: Self-Assessment and Review Tool**, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA – ccyp.wa.gov.au
- **Commonwealth Child Safe Framework**, Australian Government – pmc.gov.au
- **Quality improvement**, Early Childhood Resource Hub – ecrh.edu.au
- **Organisational self-assessment**, Australian Human Rights Commission – childsafe.humanrights.gov.au
- **Creating a Child Safe Organisation**, Play by the Rules – playbytherules.net.au

More examples and resources are available on the Commissioner's website at ccyp.wa.gov.au




**Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.** (Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 34)[46]

# Child safe and friendly policies

"The centre should have clear instructions on appropriate behaviours and what to do if something happens, like in public swimming pools." Young person[47]

## National Principle 10 – Policies and procedures document how the organisation is safe for children and young people

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.

Policies developed in consultation with stakeholders will assist in making sure they make sense to the organisation's circumstances and can be implemented.

### Key action areas

**10.1** Policies and procedures address all National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

**10.2** Policies and procedures are documented and easy to understand.

**10.3** Best practice models and stakeholder consultation informs the development of policies and procedures.

**10.4** Leaders champion and model compliance with policies and procedures.

**10.5** Staff and volunteers understand and implement policies and procedures.

## Indicators this principle is upheld

- The organisation's child safety and wellbeing policy is comprehensive and addresses all ten principles.
- The organisation's child safety and wellbeing policy and procedures are documented in a language and format that is easily understood and accessible to staff, volunteers, families, and children and young people.
- Audits of the organisation's policies and procedures provide evidence of how the organisation is child safe through its governance, leadership and culture.
- Practice within the organisation is consistent across the board and compliant with child safe policies and procedures, including culturally safe work practices.
- Interviews or surveys of children and young people, families and community members demonstrate confidence in and awareness of the organisation's policies and procedures on promoting a child safe culture.
- Surveys of executive, staff and volunteers demonstrate high levels of understanding of policies, procedures and practice requirements of the organisation.

## Supporting practices

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
- 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
- inclusivity, including recognition of the cultures of Aboriginal children and young people and children and young people from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds, and the safety of children and young people with disability
- guidelines for outside-hours contact with children and young people and their families.

## Examples and resources

- **Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy template**, Australian Human Rights Commission – childsafe.humanrights.gov.au
- **Child Safe Policy**, Commissioner for Children and Young People WA – ccyp.wa.gov.au
- **Child Safe Resources**, NSW Office of the Children's Guardian – kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au
- **Resources for Child Safe Standards**, Department of Health and Human Services, Victoria – providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au

More examples and resources are available on the Commissioner's website at ccyp.wa.gov.au

# Implementing the ten principles

Children and young people have the right to be safe and respected wherever they are. That is **why** the community expects organisations to take appropriate steps to promote their safety. The ten National Principles for Child Safe Organisations provide guidance about **what** behaviours and practices organisations should have in place. A clear organisational plan that focuses on **how** the principles will be implemented will increase the likelihood that the key actions and supporting practices will yield their intended outcomes. This table summarises best practice considerations in implementation.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **P** | Plan implementation | • Leadership commitment to implementation and an open culture<br>• Child safety is the clear and constant focus<br>• Children and young people are empowered to participate<br>• Create a supported structure for implementation and reporting back |
| **R** | Readiness of individuals and organisations | • Assess the needs of individuals and the organisation<br>• Self-assessment and review processes are suited to the complexity of the organisation<br>• Training and continuous support for those leading implementation<br>• Everyone is clear why improvement is needed |
| **A** | Ability and capacity of individuals and the organisation | • Improve knowledge, attitudes and skills of staff and volunteers<br>• Support individual behavioural change<br>• Feedback mechanisms are in place |
| **C** | Coordination | • Clear coordinator(s)<br>• Active planning processes that foster involvement and teamwork<br>• Clear roles and responsibilities across the organisation<br>• Early focus on sustainability of child safe practices<br>• Monitoring or evaluation of ongoing activities |
| **T** | Targeted | • Adopt a risk management approach<br>• Barriers to implementation are identified and addressed<br>• Right mix of implementation strategies |
| **I** | Iterative cycles – continuous improvement | • Plan, do, check, act<br>• Areas of risk are mitigated<br>• Learning from mistakes, complaints and successes<br>• Accountable structure for moving change forward |
| **C** | Collaboration | • Identify who can help<br>• Active engagement of internal stakeholders, parents, community members and children and young people<br>• Seek support from funding agencies or peak bodies<br>• Source specialist knowledge or external review |
| **E** | Effectiveness and efficiency | • Align to existing organisational development activities, accreditation or funder requirements<br>• Exchange successful strategies with similar organisations<br>• Embed principles into routine practices in your organisation |

Adapted from: John Litt, Michael Weingarten 2010, *Putting prevention into practice: how can you do it ethically, effectively and efficiently?* Swiss Primary Care. 2010;10(14):266-7.147 and Parenting Research Centre 2016, *Implementation best practice: A rapid evidence assessment*, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney.



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**Commissioner for Children and Young People**
Western Australia

Ground Floor, 1 Alvan Street, Subiaco WA 6008
Telephone: (08) 6213 2297
Country freecall: 1800 072 444
Email: info@ccyp.wa.gov.au
Web: **ccyp.wa.gov.au**

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