

PRINCIPLE ONE

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SAFETY
AND WELLBEING ARE OF PRIMARY IMPORTANCE



KEEP
ME
SAFE



dhcs | ACT



Institute of Child Protection Studies

KEEP ME SAFE

IN THIS SECTION YOU WILL FIND

- Talking about tough stuff with kids and parents
- What to do when a child discloses abuse, harm or fear of harm
- Creating a kid-safe service
- Planning for safety
- Power and children's safety
- Tools and activities for kids on safety
- A scenario to consider
- Links to lots of helpful resources



1.1

INTRODUCTION

Keep Me Safe

To grow and develop, children and young people need to be provided with safe and secure environments and be surrounded by adults who will protect them from harm. Homelessness can and often does place children and young people in circumstances that may threaten their safety and wellbeing. In these instances, it is the responsibility of all adults to respond quickly and appropriately to ensure that children and young people are protected from harm. Often this will be by supporting parents to protect their children, but also may require workers and organisations to place the needs of the child and their best interests above their parents' wishes.

Services also have a responsibility to ensure that children and young people are safe while engaged in their programs: by identifying and minimising environmental risks, by engaging professional and adequately trained and supervised staff and by creating a setting where children and young people can discuss their concerns.

1.2

WHEN ENGAGING WITH CHILDREN

- **Seeing** children is the first step towards creating safety. The more visible children are and the more adults they have in their lives who are conscious of child safety, the less likely it is that abuse and harm can be hidden and the more likely it is that children will be able to ask for help.

- **Discover** - what is important to the child, what they worry about and what are the risks to their safety? Wherever possible this will include the opportunity to talk to children themselves. Get into the habit of drawing attention to children's needs, for example by always asking yourself, staff and parents how they are doing.

- **Do** - what is important to the child, what do they worry about and what are the risks.

- **Understand** the child's **context** including family circumstances, culture, language, diversity of experience, needs and abilities, age and stage of development. Be aware that children whose families experience homelessness may be very isolated.

- **Provide creative and flexible responses** that fit the child and their context. Be aware of how your personal and work contexts may affect responses to a child and don't be afraid to ask for help from other workers and supervisors. Always address safety needs as the first priority.

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1.3

WHAT KIDS TELL US

In *Finding their Way Home*, children told us some important things about safety. These included:

1. Kids see and feel safety in different ways.

They stressed that it was important for adults to spend time with individual kids to understand what they were feeling and what they wanted and needed to feel safe.

2. Being and feeling safe are different things

a) Children don't always feel unsafe even though they might be in unsafe situations. This was particularly the case if they were with their parents, when they believed that their parents and other adults were able to protect them or when they were not exposed to particular threats. Some shared that they were quite unaware of the risks surrounding their families and, in some cases, saw their experience of homelessness as an adventure or holiday.

b) Children sometimes feel unsafe even though adults might think that they're safe. Children told us that they often worried about and were afraid of things even when adults around them (a) believed that they were doing alright or (b) thought that they were now safe and out of harm's way.

c) Parents' feelings of safety often influence kids' feelings of safety. Support to parents is often the best assistance available to kids

I was only worried when Mum was worried, scared when Mum was scared

(Boy, aged 11)

3. To feel safe, kids often need:

a) To know what's happening, who's looking after their families and that things are going to get better.

Feeling safe is the most important. You've gotta know that things are gonna be ok for everyone or you like stress out majorly. And it's not just about you, man, you gotta know that the people who are important to you are ok too that your Mum's not gonna get bashed or something. You're not at home unless you have that

(Young man, aged 15)

b) Some stability and predictability. Chaos often causes feelings of instability and fear.

You're only safe if you know what's gonna happen next

(Boy, aged 11)

c) Some involvement in finding solutions. Older children in particular said that they needed to feel as though they were a part of finding solutions to their family's problems. This was particularly the case if they felt responsible for their parents' or siblings' safety.

Participation can increase children's safety. The more opportunities that children are given to meaningfully talk about their lives the more opportunities they have to raise their fears, concerns and any safety issues they might have. Giving kids opportunities to share these things increases the likelihood that workers can respond.

You know you've got that job to do, to protect your Mum. And that's all you think about and you stress that she's gonna get hurt if you're not around so it's hard to calm down even when there're people around to help. It takes ages to get comfortable again and give that stuff up

(Young man, aged 15)

d) Kids don't always share their feelings with parents for fear of causing them stress or worry, or with other adults for fear that their family might be judged, disrespected or broken up. As such, they stressed the importance of adults spending time with kids, building a trusting relationship and allowing opportunities for important conversations to occur.

At first I didn't tell Mum that stuff was going on because I didn't want her to worry about me

(Young man, aged 14)

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1.4

CHILD-SAFE ORGANISATIONS

ALL CHILDREN HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE SAFE AND TO FEEL SAFE ALL OF THE TIME

A child-safe organisation values children and is committed to treating their needs and their safety as the top priority because children are more vulnerable and less powerful than adults. It means taking serious steps to keep children safe from physical, sexual or emotional abuse, neglect or any kind of harm, as well as creating an environment where kids can talk about their worries safely.

THE HEAVY STUFF

Children who are homeless are often exposed to unsafe people and places and are at greater risk of being abused during periods of chaos and crisis. These negative experiences can seriously affect children in the present, but also for many years to come. As such, it is critical that all adults involved in the life of a child protect them and shield them from harm. Most often services can do this by supporting parents to support their children, but it may also require services to proactively and directly respond to children's immediate needs.

1

PROTECTION: Establish safety for children as quickly as possible. Research shows that the earlier children get help, the more likely they are to have good health, do well at school and break cycles of homelessness, poverty and violence.

2

TALK ABOUT TOUGH STUFF: Children who accompany their parents in homelessness often have a lot of worries about safety. Spell out clearly what your service does to ensure children's safety and what happens if there are concerns. Make sure you have honest conversations about the heavy stuff – it is very important for children to know how they will be kept safe, and that they can talk about this at any time. For example, you might say something like this:



3

FACE THE RISKS TO CHILDREN IN YOUR ORGANISATION:

Recognise that there are ongoing and real risks to children from staff, parents and other service users, including more powerful children. Be alert to and proactive about these risks. Protect children and staff from allegations of abuse by avoiding situations where staff are alone with children, particularly in cross-gender situations; ensuring good parental supervision and good note taking practices; and working with children in full view of other responsible adults.

EXAMPLE

Safety for kids is very important. So if you are worried or feeling unsafe you can talk to us about it and we will listen. Someone might be hurting you or making you feel scared with words or the way they touch you or by making you do things you don't want to do. Or maybe you are worried about the safety of someone in your family or a friend... It is important that you tell someone who can help as everyone deserves to be safe. You should also know that if you tell us that someone is hurting you or might hurt you, then we can't keep it a secret, we have to get help for you. That's because it is the job of adults to keep kids safe.

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4

HANDLING TOUGH STUFF WELL: Create an environment in your service where kids can talk about their worries and ensure those worries will be heard and skilfully acted on. Children will often blame themselves for problems in their family, and even for abuse. They may be thinking something like, 'if I was a better kid/if I did better at school/if I wasn't so naughty he wouldn't have hit me or mum'. It's very important to give kids a chance to talk about it, and to reflect back to them that lots of kids feel like that. If kids are hurt by adults it's never the child's fault, no matter what they've done or how they have behaved. See page 9 for more on talking about tough stuff.

At [one service], the workers would talk to the kids as well as the parents but at others they didn't. It was good when they talked to you - treated you like a person. If they just ignored you it made you feel weird

(Boy, aged 11)

5

ENSURE A SERVICE CULTURE THAT COMMUNICATES CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO SAFETY

It may seem obvious, but children are reliant on adults to create safe, nurturing environments for them. They can and should be active participants in creating safety, however, they do not have the same power or the same responsibility that adults have. Create a culture of awareness, respectful openness and reflectivity in your service, where staff are encouraged to be open about their concerns, dilemmas and challenges in a respectful and supportive work environment. *Have a look at the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.*

Children who experience homelessness are often exposed to unsafe people, places and experiences. The effect that this exposure has on children can be mitigated by the level of support that their families and communities can provide them and their own capacity to understand and deal with threats.

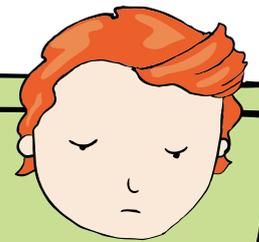
When I was first taken from my Mum I didn't really know what was going on..people wouldn't talk to me about it. They didn't ask how I felt about things. I was just taken from one place to another and no one told me anything. I'd be put in one foster home and then another one and placements and I didn't know what was going on and no-one would talk to me about it. I would have given anything for a program or a worker where someone would talk to me.

I was with my Mum in the rehab centre. It would have been heaps better if people had talked to me about stuff. It would have been good if someone

was letting me know what was going on. But because my Mum was only an alcoholic and not as bad as other people they didn't see her as that big a problem and didn't talk to me much.

I didn't really have anyone. Maybe if there was a youth worker or someone for kids to come and talk to you. Because you always have issues so it would have helped if someone had asked me about my opinion on my Mum or what might help - that would have been good. It would have helped.

(Young man, 21)



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PLANNING FOR INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN'S SAFETY

Part of your assessment and case-planning process should focus on safety. Where there are concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing, a safety plan should be made. These recognise the unique vulnerability of children and the responsibility of adults to ensure children's safety. Check your organisation's policy and procedures manual for guidance on what to do when there are concerns about safety, abuse or neglect. Then take a look at the example safety plans and the tools in this guide. Always put information from assessment tools like the safety plan together with the rest of your assessment and what you learn from parents and from any other relevant services or people supporting a child or family.

Safety plans work best when everyone (the child, parents, other significant people or services) who needs to be involved agrees and is committed to making them work. (See Guide 6 'Who Else Matters' for more on working together). Where possible engage the child in safety planning (again, see the Tools on pages 29-33 and Guide 5: 'Keep Me in the Loop' for ideas). The first example in the tools (Tool 1A: Safety plan A), on page 29, is for families and children to agree on what they will all do in an unsafe situation. The second example (Tool 1B: Safety plan B), on pages 31-33, is more focused on how multiple services involved with a child or family can ensure safety and clarify roles and responsibilities.



NAPCAN has a large range safety brochures and information to help you talk with parents about child safety. Some examples are:

- It's not ok to shake babies
- 30 ways to build a child's confidence
- Being a dad
- Alternatives to smacking children
- Keeping children safe from sexual abuse

Brochures can be ordered from the NAPCAN online store and cost a small amount (about 6c per copy):

www.napcan.org.au

Also visit the Parentlink website:

www.parentlink.act.gov.au/parenting

ANOTHER EXAMPLE of a safety or care plan can be found on Carers Australia's Young Carers website (www.youngcarers.net.au)

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1.6

DEVELOPING CHILDREN'S SAFETY NETWORKS

The more safe adults that a child has in their lives the more safe they are likely to be. This is particularly the case for children who are experiencing significant changes and whose parents might not be as able to watch out for them, to discuss safety issues or provide them with information as they would be in less stressful situations.

Helping families to help children find and connect with safe adults can be beneficial not only in the short term but also into the future. Supportive adults can help families transition in and out of the system and provide children with some stability – especially when adults attached to services like yours have to cease their involvement.

Children place great value on this consistency and stability and report how difficult they find it when they do not have this.

TALKING ABOUT SAFETY

Talking to children and their parents about safety does not mean reading a list of rules or asking a list of intimidating questions. In fact talking about safety skilfully helps to create a sense of safety and security for children and parents.

Safety should be part of your initial engagement and relationship-building conversations. Like any other conversation with service users, it is important to be **respectful** and **clear** at the same time.

- Be clear that kids' safety is a high priority. Parents must understand and agree that if something happens and there are safety concerns about a child, the service will act. This needs to be communicated with great warmth and care. It is important that parents feel they are in a sensitive, caring environment and that they will - wherever it is safe to do so - be involved in difficult decisions about safety. For example, you might say something like:

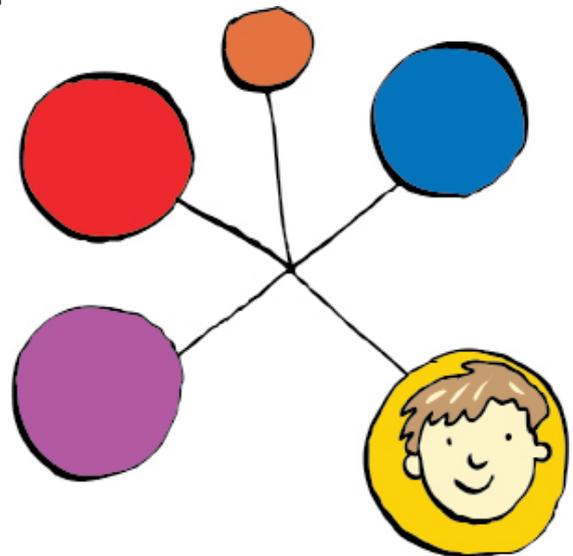
Safety for your children and for you is our top priority. If something happens that could harm you or your child we have a responsibility to help keep you all safe. This is what we will do... Step 1, Step 2, Step 3.'

4 MESSAGES TO GIVE KIDS WHEN THEY TALK ABOUT TOUGH STUFF

1. I believe you
2. You did the right thing by talking to a safe adult
3. It is never OK for kids to get hurt
4. I promise I will get back to you and tell you what will happen next

For more on talking about tough stuff, see pages 4-5

- Discuss how confidentiality works (see Talking Tips on page 13 and the Tools at the end of this guide for ideas on how). Make sure this is part of a supportive conversation and that parents also understand what supports are available to help them to prevent safety concerns becoming a problem.



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The workers were very nice, there was no bad workers there, they were pretty good. Mum would get upset sometimes at the workers because when other people were stressing her out, she was like scared for her safety and she had to worry about people taking our stuff, they were stealing our stuff, we had like clothes stolen"

(Young woman, 12yrs)



Helping to create a sense of safety

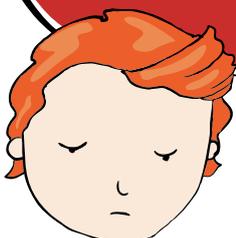
Children, like adults, need to feel physically and psychologically safe in order to be able to recover from difficult or traumatic experiences. Even once a child is in a safe environment, they may still feel unsafe. They may be stuck in the fight/flight or stress response because they've needed to constantly be alert to potential danger. Their ability to sleep well, be physically healthy, make healthy decisions, learn new skills and cope with the challenges they are facing will be seriously inhibited if they continue to feel unsafe.

PERCEPTION OF PARENT'S SAFETY

Be aware that children's sense of safety is dependent to a large degree on their perception of whether their parent or carer is safe. In the Children's experiences of homelessness research project children said that they only felt safe when they knew they and their parents were going to be OK.

I was only worried when Mum was worried, scared when Mum was scared

(Boy, aged 11, Children's Experiences of Homelessness)



Learning to relax

Help children learn skills to relax, sleep better and enjoy themselves more:

- **Sport and play, relaxation exercises, yoga:** Physical activities help children be in the present, help their bodies feel good and process the potentially harmful chemicals (such as cortisol and adrenalin) that may otherwise continue to hang around in their bodies, contributing to a 'bad' feeling.
- **Laughter and positive experiences** help to produce the 'happy' hormones like serotonin and assist to produce a relaxation response.
- **Encourage parents to participate** too; they are likely to benefit in the same way.

Relaxation can't substitute for problem solving, but it can help create a better head space for dealing with difficult problems.

There should be stuff for kids: people they can talk to about stuff and not worry that people are going to think bad of their parents or get them into trouble. Kids won't tell unless they know people are safe and they're not going to help unless they think people are going to do something to help

(Young man, aged 14)

KEEP ME SAFE

Safe expression of difficult feelings

Help children develop a language and awareness around feelings so they can gain more control (often called 'mastery') over their feelings and their behaviour and develop the ability to make positive conscious choices:

- help children acknowledge, express and manage their emotions safely
- help children deal with mixed and confusing feelings towards the violent or abusive parent/adult
- use tools like books, posters, pictures, stickers and simple emotional language
- endeavour to enable children to access skilled children's counsellors when they need to and
- maintain consistency in relationships with workers and counsellors.

Predictability enhances safety

Help to establish a sense of psychological safety by encouraging:

- predictable daily routines (mealtimes, playtimes, bedtimes, story times)
- clear boundaries about safe behaviour
- parents and children to establish or adapt and re-establish nurturing routines as quickly as possible in new environments. What is a ritual or a routine that children or families can carry with them through unsettling changes?
- predictable people and places – children feel safer when they are interacting with the same workers (as long as they are safe) and in familiar places.

Because we didn't know if we were staying for one night or for a week or for months we could never get settled
(Young woman, aged 21)

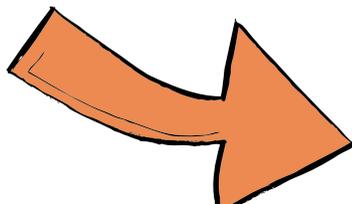


KEEP ME SAFE

1.7

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED FAMILY VIOLENCE

Research tells us that many children experience homelessness because one or both parents are escaping family violence. Family violence is very damaging for children. However, the good news is that when children who have experienced family violence get effective support and intervention it not only improves their lives right now, it also helps prevent violence from continuing on to the next generation. The sooner children get help, the better.



Workers can help children with the following messages:

- You are not alone
- It is not your fault, family violence is an adult problem
- It is OK to name and express painful feelings and to grieve losses
- Painful feelings can be expressed without harming anyone
- Violence is never OK
- Problems can be solved without violence

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1.8

ABUSE AND NEGLECT: WHY DON'T CHILDREN TELL?

Large numbers of Australian children experience abuse.

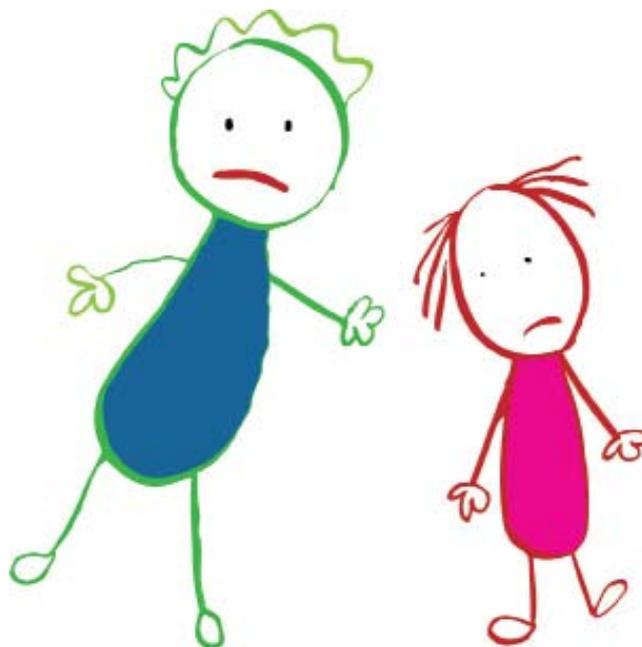
Those most at risk of experiencing abuse are usually those who are least connected to their communities and those with a limited number of adults around them who protect them from harm. Due to the often isolating and chaotic nature of homelessness, children are at a greater risk of abuse and may need extra protection to ensure that they are safe from harm.

Children who are physically, sexually or emotionally abused or neglected are often taught to keep it secret and this secrecy is what prevents them from speaking out about what happens to them. They often don't disclose because they:

- feel ashamed
- are scared of what will happen if they do disclose
- worry that they won't be believed or taken seriously
- believe they are strange or that there is something wrong with them
- are afraid of getting into trouble or getting the abuser into trouble
- are isolated by the abuse
- feel embarrassed or guilty
- have been taught to believe that it is somehow their fault
- do not know how to talk about the abuse or express their confusion, fear or hurt
- have low confidence; low confidence is reinforced by learning difficulties and emotional difficulties
- don't want to upset or split up the family or other people
- don't want people to find out.

Child abuse and neglect is Australia's most significant social problem. Last year over 30,000 Australian children were proven to have been abused or neglected.

(NAPCAN, 2009)



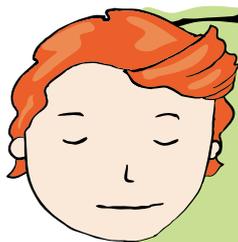
KEEP ME SAFE

How can children learn to protect themselves?

Many people find it difficult to talk with children about how to protect themselves from abuse. One way to address this is to include it in a general discussion about safety that may include road safety and strangers, as well as bullying and unwanted touching, talking or behaviour of any person. For children to protect themselves it helps to know and understand some principles of personal safety:

- Knowledge of their bodies and a sense of body ownership
- Building confidence and self-esteem
- Training children to communicate assertively, to say no and ask for help if they feel unsafe
- Teaching self-protective skills and behaviours (which can be supported by an understanding of child rights)
- Helping children develop safety plans and safety networks

Visit the CHILDWISE website www.childwise.net for resources and factsheets like "Talking To Your Children About Safety" and protective behaviours information.



RECOGNISING THAT PARENTS MAY ALSO HAVE EXPERIENCES:

Sometimes parents may have experienced a level of abuse and trauma that makes it extremely difficult for them to provide a safe and nurturing environment for their children. There are resources available to help you understand the impact of abuse and neglect, how it affects attachment and what can be done to help children and young people build connections with their families and with other supportive networks in the healthiest way possible. A good resource has been published by the Child Safety Commissioner, *Victoria From Isolation to Connection: a guide to understanding and working with traumatised children and young people*. It's available at www.ocsc.vic.gov.au/downloads/isolationto-connection-september-2009.pdf

The handbook *Through Young Black Eyes* developed by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care outlines information helpful for assisting children, families and communities from all backgrounds around issues of abuse and harm to children. It's available at: www.snaicc.asn.au

SNAICC has also published *Keep your family safe*: leaflet for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children about family violence and child abuse and many other fantastic resources for services, communities and families available at: www.snaicc.asn.au

KEEP ME SAFE

1.9

TALKING TO PARENTS ABOUT CHILD-SAFETY CONCERNS

Your relationship with parents is important and the way you communicate with parents about child-safety concerns has the potential to alienate them or involve them in solving the problem. It can be very challenging to talk to a parent about such sensitive issues, however, always remember that your responsibility to the best interests of the child comes first. Your reasons for talking to parents can be varied, however, in all cases communication should be respectful, sensitive and skilful:

- Get to know a parent and their perspective on their child's wellbeing
- You may suspect abuse or neglect or see possible signs of abuse in a child and wish to talk to a parent about it
- You may need to tell a parent that you have serious concerns about their safety and that actions (including notifying Care and Protection or the police) need to be taken.

There are many situations where harm is not clear cut. There may also be times when your own emotional response to a situation (anger, disbelief etc) will get in the way of a useful conversation, so ensure that you seek advice and support from experienced supervisors and colleagues.



When talking to parents:

- Ensure the appropriate person talks to the parents
- Be professional
- Be clear and honest about the service's concerns and responsibilities and steps that will be taken
- Be objective and avoid blaming or judging
- Stay calm and neutral
- Explain confidentiality and its limitations
- Take care to keep children's confidences unless it is essential to tell for their safety (remember to let children know you can't promise to keep some things confidential)
- Explain how the service will continue to support the child and parent and if extra supports can be offered
- Always ask for a parent's response, allow them to ask questions and listen very attentively.



KEEP ME SAFE



WHAT TO DO WHEN A CHILD DISCLOSES ABUSE OR FEAR OF HARM

Children will disclose abuse to a trusted adult in different ways. They may tell you very clearly what has happened to them. A direct disclosure should always be treated seriously and will require action on your part.

There are other indicators of harm to children such as when they:

- talk about something a friend has experienced or needs help with
- hint that they want to be asked something
- suddenly refuse to see or visit someone
- say or do sexual things that are inappropriate for their age (this is a complex area and you may need help, for example from experts at the Child At Risk Assessment Unit Canberra Hospital to determine what is within the normal range of sexual behaviours).

They may also

- minimise the abuse or it's impact
- disclose and then retract, saying they have told a lie.

Disclosure may also be unintentional in response to a situation or discussion. Disclosure can be a process that takes days, weeks or longer and children may test the waters with a trusted adult over a period of time.



WHAT IS MANDATORY REPORTING?

It is the legal requirement to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. In the ACT people mandated to notify their concerns are: doctors, nurses, dentists, midwives, teachers, police, school counsellors, child care workers, the public advocate and official visitors and people who provide services or have contact with children, young people and their families in work contexts. However, anyone can notify Child Protection of concerns at any time; they will be protected by law if they report their concerns in good faith.

WHAT MUST BE NOTIFIED?

A belief, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person has experienced or is experiencing sexual abuse or non-accidental physical injury; where the belief arises from information obtained by the person during the course of or because of the person's work (paid or unpaid).

It is mandatory to report physical abuse (non-accidental injury) and sexual abuse in the ACT. In the ACT the identity of notifiers is explicitly protected.

WHY IS THERE MANDATORY REPORTING?

It acknowledges the seriousness of child abuse and reinforces the responsibility of community members to report suspected cases of child abuse and neglect. Mandatory reporting has been found to increase public awareness of child abuse, both within mandated professional groups and within the community at large.

Excerpts from: Australian Institute of Family Studies *Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect*, AIFS, 2009

www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/sheets/rs3/rs3.html

FOR MORE INFO see section 356 of the Children and Young People Act 2008
www.legislation.act.gov.au/a/2008-19/

CARE AND PROTECTION CONTACT DETAILS

Centralised intake service: 1300 556 729
After hours ph: 62070720 or 1300 556 729



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It is not your responsibility to investigate the abuse. As soon as possible after the disclosure, discuss it with your supervisor and write notes of the disclosure. You may be legally obliged to notify Care and Protection services of the situation (mandatory reporting; see the boxed text, left), or your organisation's policies may oblige you to make a notification. If you believe a crime has been committed you may be legally obliged to contact the police.

If you do make a notification to Care and Protection, do not stop supporting the child. One of the worst things you can do is to 'drop' a child once they've made a disclosure. You have an important ongoing support role to play. Do not assume that Care and Protection will now take over and meet all the child's support needs. Do collaborate with Care and Protection and work towards providing the best possible support for the child with all agencies working together. See Guide 6: 'Who Else Matters' for more on working together well.

The ACT government has produced a handbook Keeping Children and Young People Safe: A guide to reporting child abuse and neglect in the ACT, which has tips about how to respond when a child discloses abuse, harm or fear of harm:

- When a child or young person discloses that he or she has been abused or neglected, the child or young person may be feeling scared, guilty, ashamed, angry, and powerless. A child or young person's disclosure is a message that they want the abuse to stop.
- You, in turn, may feel a sense of outrage, disgust, sadness, anger and sometimes, disbelief. It is important that you remain calm and in control of your feelings in order to reassure and support the child or young person.
- If you suspect abuse, but the child or young person has not told anyone, be aware of the emotional distress that the child or young person may be experiencing. Approach the child or young person in a caring and sensitive manner and tell the child or young person that you want to listen and help. Do not make any promises you are unable to keep.

Possible ways you can show your care and concern

- listen carefully to what the child or young person is saying
- control expressions of panic or shock
- reassure the child or young person that you believe him or her
- reassure the child or young person that to disclose was the right thing to do
- reassure the child or young person that they are not to blame (only if the child indicates this is what they believe)
- acknowledge that it is hard to talk about such things
- indicate what you will do, i.e. that you will talk to someone who can give you some advice about what should happen next
- if you are not in a position to answer all the questions that a child or young person may have, explain that you don't know but will pass on their questions or concerns to the relevant person and get back to them.

You will not be helping the child if you:

- express anger or disgust about the alleged abuser;
- make promises you cannot keep, such as promising that you will not tell anyone; or
- seek further details beyond those that the child or young person freely wants to discuss
- remember that quizzing children about details may be interpreted as disbelief.

Your role is to support and listen to the child or young person, not to conduct an investigation.

KEEP ME SAFE

What about confidentiality?

- Confidentiality and privacy are important but should not override the safety of children or young people.
- Sharing information between Care and Protection Services and other agencies is essential in order to protect children and young people from experiencing abuse or neglect.
- Chapter 25 of the Children and Young People Act 2008 provides the legal framework for Care and Protection Services to ask for, receive and give information to specified people and agencies.
- When making a decision about sharing information about a child or young person, the decision maker must regard the best interests of the child or young person as the paramount consideration.



“Children have a very little voice. If you’re not listening you will miss it”

(Through a child's eyes, 2001)

(Excerpt from *Keeping Children and Young People Safe: a shared community responsibility*, DHCS ACT, January 2009)

STAFF REFLECTION ACTIVITY

1

Read the short article ***Responding to children and young people’s disclosures of abuse*** and discuss how it applies to your service
www.aifs.gov.au/nch/pubs/brief/pb2/pb2.pdf

Page 2 of this article discusses how children may disclose abuse indirectly, by hinting or through their behaviour.

- Have you had experiences of children disclosing abuse in indirect ways?
- How did you respond at the time? Can you think of anything different you would do next time to ensure the child’s safety and wellbeing?
- Is your engagement with children done in a way that allows them opportunities and invites them to talk about what may be worrying them without putting them under pressure?

2

Read the ***UN Convention on Rights of the Child*** (www.unicef.org/crc/).

- How do you talk about safety and abuse with children and their parents to ensure they know it is important in your service?
- How does your service recognise and promote children’s rights?
- Which rights does your service address well?
- Which rights are not addressed so well?
- Brainstorm ways to improve the integration of child rights into your organisation and use these in your strategic planning.

KEEP ME SAFE

1.11

RECRUITING SAFE AND SKILLED PEOPLE TO WORK WITH KIDS

Recruitment is about identifying people who will work within your organisation's values to create safe and friendly environments for children. Good recruitment, selection and reference-checking practices means that potential staff are learning right from the beginning about the priorities, values and practices of your organisation when working with children and families.

Good practices also help to prevent unsuitable people from working with children. During the **selection and interviewing process** discover applicants' responses to your organisation's commitment to prioritising children's safety and wellbeing. To do this you could use questions designed by children, like those above.

You can find out more about an applicant by conducting thorough **reference checks** with people who have worked with them before, or who know them well.

All people who work with children in the ACT have to complete a Police check. For Application forms go to: www.afp.gov.au

EXAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS WRITTEN BY CHILDREN

✓ How would you earn the trust of children that you work with?

✓ Why do you think it is important to involve children?

✓ How would you help someone to talk to you, if they were shy?

✓ What would you do if a child was really rude to you?

From Are You Recruiting?

[www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/
social/children/fund/participation/
rurecruiting.htm](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/social/children/fund/participation/rurecruiting.htm)

LINKS TO USEFUL RESOURCES

The **NSW commission for children and young people** has lots of example formats for recruitment and induction of the right staff.

For recruitment application forms, inducting new team members, interview questions, interview schedules, recruitment and selection, referee schedules, suitability checks and job descriptions Go to: www.kids.nsw.gov.au/kids/working/safefriendly/rightpeople.cfm

The commission also has parents' guides, policy development guides, codes of conduct for kids and workers and risk assessment pdfs.

KEEP ME SAFE

1.12

POLICIES AND CODES OF CONDUCT

Having a policy and a code of conduct shows staff, children and their families and the community that you are an organisation that is committed to prioritising children's safety and their needs.

Policy

A 'Children's Policy' guides you on how to treat the children in your organisation, and how to encourage their participation (there's more on participation in *Guide 5 'Count Me In'*). You want this policy to reduce the risk of harm to kids in your organisation and raise awareness about the importance of creating a safe environment for children.

A child-safe policy should include clear simple statements about:

- The role of your organisation
- Children's safety being top priority for your organisation
- Clearly state your commitment to children
- What are the principles that guide your work with children, eg the best interests of the child, participation, child-friendly environment
- The role of other organisations (Child Protection, police, other services)
- How the safety of children is ensured and acted on
- Ways of working with children and parents, other related policies, programs, assessment and engagement processes
- Who is responsible for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children
- What to do if there are concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing
- List steps to be taken, who to talk to, who makes the decision
- Under what circumstances notifications are made to Child Protection
- What process is followed if a report to Child Protection authorities is made (include contact details for Care and Protection)
- How children are followed up and supported when there are concerns, or a report to Child Protection is made
- What expectations the organisation has of staff and their conduct, level of skill, training and supervision and recruitment
- How children and families can make complaints
- How complaints are acted upon
- What process will be followed if a complaint is made about a staff member behaving inappropriately towards or harming a child.

A child-friendly version of children's rights in your service should be displayed and available for children (see page 3 or Guide 5)

You can provide parents and carers with *A Parent's Guide to Choosing Child-Safe and Child-Friendly Programs* resource to help them understand what makes an organisation safe for children.



KEEP ME SAFE

Code of Conduct

A code of conduct should be read, understood and signed by all new staff members as part of their contract on their first day of work. A code of conduct:

- outlines your organisation's values
- provides boundaries for behaviour of staff, parents and children
- shows how to respond when anyone does not behave properly
- gives guidance on how to protect children and staff and prevent situations of inappropriate conduct occurring, for example:
- responsibility of staff to be mindful of how their behaviour could be perceived by children and parents including:
- inappropriate touching or contact
- inappropriate communication
- allocation of tasks to workers who are the same gender as clients wherever appropriate
- policies on presence of 2 workers wherever possible when working with children
- parental supervision and involvement
- supervision of staff, induction and probation processes



Policy tip: Protecting children and staff from allegations of abuse

Plan so that children, workers and other adults are not put into situations where abuse or harm could occur. Some ways of doing this are:

- Good note taking
- Plan for 2 workers to be present with children when possible, the same gender as children if possible, or both genders
- Avoid situations where workers are alone with children and not visible to others
- Good supervision and accountability processes for staff
- Reflect on how your behaviour, language and decisions could affect or be interpreted by service users
- Use supervision and professional development opportunities to reflect on and develop your skills.

KEEP ME SAFE

1.13

MANAGE YOUR RISKS

Keeping kids safe and reducing the risk of abuse or harm should become part of your organisation's culture. A **risk** means the potential for something to go wrong. **Risk management** means identifying the potential for an accident or incident to occur and taking steps to reduce the possibility of it occurring. For example, you can plan programs for children so that there are always 2 or more workers present, that way it is less likely that a worker will behave inappropriately, as they have a higher level of support and accountability. Children will also benefit from a higher level of supervision, and having greater choice about who they feel comfortable interacting with. Set your workers and the children up to succeed, not to fail.

the man followed us around and looked for us and tried to get us and he nearly ran me over and he was still there when we moved back to our house...and he used to follow us and one time I was stuck in the middle of the roundabout for about an hour and there was no other cars there except him, because it was at night, I had ridden over to my friends house and I had to ride home, he was just going around it really fast.

(Boy, 10yrs)



“Risks to children have been defined mainly from an adult perspective even though it is apparent that children’s understandings of risk may differ from those of their parents and that young people have unique insights into their own experiences and situation. It is important that we understand children’s own perceptions, as this will help ensure interventions aimed at protecting their wellbeing are relevant and effective.”

KEEP ME SAFE

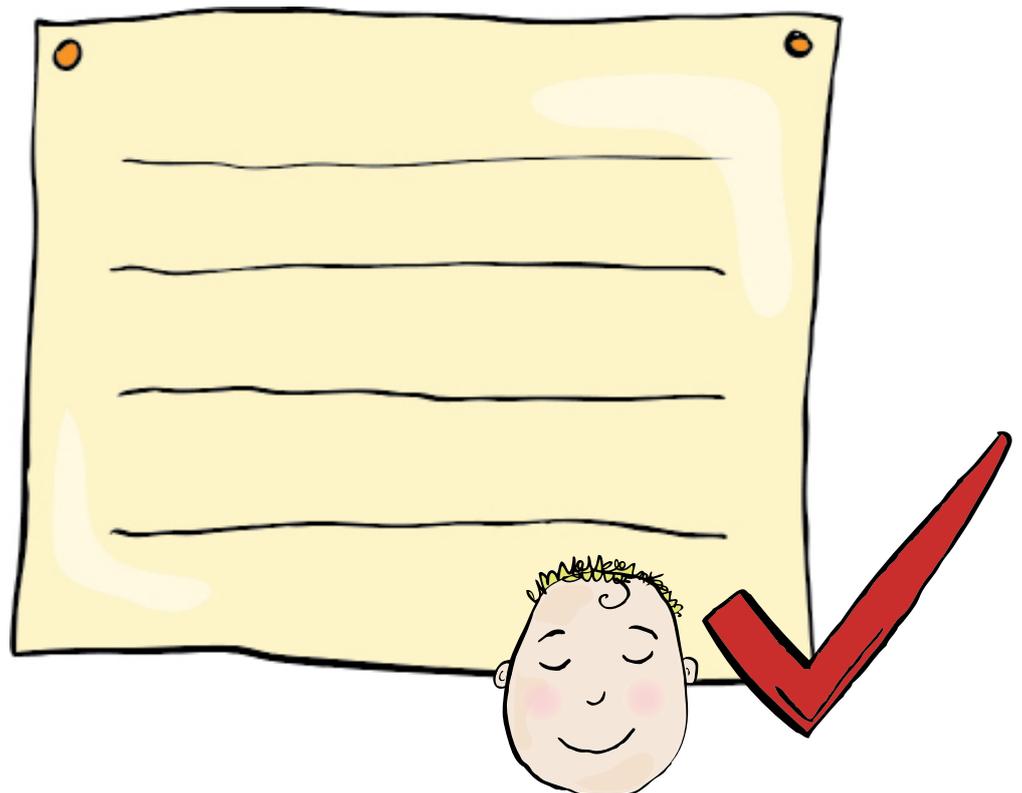
Some examples of risks:

- An absent father threatens to hurt or take the children if he ever finds them or if they ever tell anyone about the way he abused them
- A 17-year-old boy whose mother is receiving support from your service sexually assaults/ makes unwanted sexual contact with a 12-year-old girl whose mother is also being supported by your service
- A parent complains to the manager of your service after her 13-year-old daughter says that a male staff member has been coming on to her
- A young child says he feels unsafe in the refuge, especially around unknown adults and older children, and says he wants to run away if his parent won't leave the refuge
- A parent with a mental illness threatens her children to prevent them talking to anyone about what has happened at home.

The Finding Your Risks resource developed by the NSW Commission for Children and Young people can help you assess risks in your program activities and for ideas on how to reduce risks. Download it from www.kids.nsw.gov.au

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- How would you respond in each of the examples on the left?
- What guidance do your organisation's policies give to help you decide what to do in each situation?
- Who would you consult if you needed advice?
- Can you think of other risk situations that you have found challenging?
- What could be done to prevent these situations from occurring? (ie, risk management)



KEEP ME SAFE

1.14

CHILD SAFETY AND CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

No matter what the context is, child safety and the best interests of the child must always be the top priority for any service working with children and families.

Each family will have their own way of applying the beliefs and cultural norms of their cultural context to raising children. In situations of prolonged stress it is likely that parents will make decisions and behave in ways that may not be usual for them.

It is also important to remember that families from refugee and diverse cultural backgrounds may have lost their normal cultural and familial support networks. They may also have been informed of Australian laws about child abuse and neglect without having been equipped or assisted to adapt traditional child rearing and discipline practices to this new context.

When working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (A&TSI) children and families it is important to acknowledge the impact of colonisation, dispossession and child-removal policies. The journey of reclaiming identity, connection to land and culture and heritage for A&TSI people is both an individual and a collective one. High levels of self awareness, good communication and listening skills and an ability to recognise one's own cultural biases are very important skills for workers to develop. Without these skills there is a risk that interventions could cause harm to children and alienate families from the services that are needed to assist them and prevent harm to children.



“No one should condone, in the name of culture and tradition, any practice that is harmful to a child. However, there is also the risk that harm may result from inappropriate intervention by ill-informed ethnocentric childcare or health professionals”

(from Koramoa, Lynch and Kinnair, 2002)

Staff Reflection activity

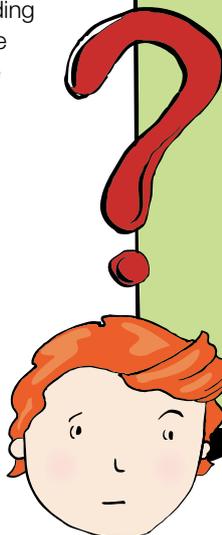
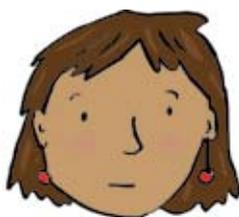
- 1 How does your service work with children and families: a) from A&TSI backgrounds? b) from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds?
- 2 Think of a situation in your work where it has been challenging to assess what was in the best interests of the child. What were the complicating factors?
- 3 If this situation were to happen again, how would you work to ensure that the child's safety and wellbeing is prioritised while at the same time being sensitive to and respectful of cultural factors?
- 4 Can you think of times when your values and your cultural background and history have influenced your ability to engage with, understand and work well with a child or family? What have you learnt from this experience?

KEEP ME SAFE

1.15

SCENARIO TO CONSIDER: THE WATSON FAMILY

The Watson family have been clients of your service for some time now. Louise (Mum) and her two children, Kelly (9) and Marcus (11), were referred to you by the Domestic Violence Crisis Service after Louise's partner physically assaulted her while the children were at school. Although the children were not privy to the violence, Marcus has talked about being afraid of his Mum's partner and is glad that they don't have to be with him anymore. Louise has found living in a refuge quite overwhelming, particularly as she believes that the children have come into contact with other families that she describes as 'unsafe' (because she believes they are caught up in the drug scene, they use violent or aggressive language and because their 'chaos' makes the household unsettling). She has decided to leave the service and return to her abusive partner. Marcus comes to one of your staff, pleading to get you to change his Mum's mind. He says he can't tell his Mum how he feels because she'll be upset, but he doesn't want her to get hurt again.



What are your responsibilities to the Watson children?

- What could your service do so that the Watsons can still get the support they need even if they leave the homelessness service (from you or from someone else)
- What would a safety plan for this family look like?

Use the example safety plan proformas attached as Tools 1A & 1B or use your service's safety plan format. For example, you could help Louise, Marcus and Kelly make a safety plan so they all know what to do if they move back in with Louise's partner and he becomes violent again.

- How would you support Louise to think about and establish safety for her children in each of these interrelated areas:
 - a. physical safety
 - b. psychological safety
 - c. social safety
- In this situation how would you decide if and when to involve external organisations (like Care and Protection, the police or other agencies) in order to ensure the safety of Louise and her children?

KEEP ME SAFE



PULSE CHECK “KEEP ME SAFE”

PULSE CHECKS ARE HERE TO HELP ORGANISATIONS BY:

- promoting discussion;
- identifying strengths and any gaps that need action; and
- helping to set priorities

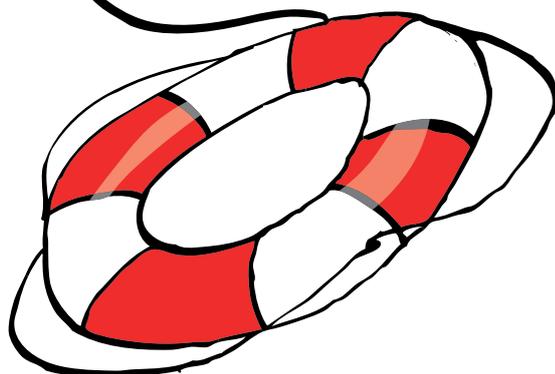
The pulse check can be used whether you have already developed child-safe policies and practices or are just starting out. It is not exhaustive - you will find that as you discuss it you may think of other areas that need attention in your organisation.



STEP 1: go through the indicators and list how your service acts on each one

STEP 2: each person rates how well the service does this

STEP 3: brainstorm things that could be done to improve how the service acts on each area



KEEP ME SAFE

	INDICATORS	HOW WE DO THIS list how this is currently done	1----2----3----4----5 NEVER SOMETIMES ALWAYS (rate the service by circling a number)	THINGS WE COULD DO (list or brainstorm ideas)
<p>CHILD: COMMUNICATE WITH CHILDREN ABOUT SAFETY</p> <p>The commitment to the primacy of children's safety and wellbeing is transparent and clearly articulated to all staff and service users (including children, young people and parents)</p>	<p>a. The services' commitment to children's safety is explained in a clear and developmentally appropriate way with each child/family</p> <p>b. The service culture and environment communicates to service users that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is a safe place for kids • Kids' safety is important • Kids are important <p>c. Service policies and procedures clearly articulate the service's commitment to children's safety and wellbeing and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff code of conduct • Consequences of inappropriate conduct <p>d. Staff are adequately trained and supported to be able to explain the service's</p>			

KEEP ME SAFE

	INDICATORS	HOW WE DO THIS list how this is currently done	1----2-----3-----4-----5 NEVER SOMETIMES ALWAYS (rate the service by circling a number)	THINGS WE COULD DO (list or brainstorm ideas)
<p>SERVICES PROVIDED A SAFE SERVICE FOR CHILDREN: SAFE PLACE, SAFE RELATIONSHIPS</p> <p>Homelessness services minimise children's exposure to people, situations and events that may affect their sense of safety and security</p> <p>Processes exist for consultation and support of workers in developing and implementing safety plans</p>	<p>a) The service has policies and procedures that set out how a safe environment for children is developed and maintained. For example;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participation • Planning • Identifying risks • Responding to risks <p>b) Staff are trained and supported to assess safety issues for children as part of a holistic assessment process*</p> <p>c) Safety plans are developed in response to safety concerns identified in assessment*</p> <p>d) Safety plans are effective in minimising children's exposure to people, situations and events that affect their sense of safety</p> <p>e) The service has policies to guide staff when assessing safety for children from A&TSI, diverse cultural backgrounds, children with special needs</p>			

*For more information on assessments see Guide 2: 'I'm one of a kind'

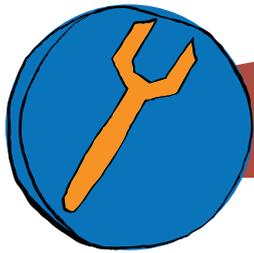
KEEP ME SAFE

	INDICATORS	HOW WE DO THIS list how this is currently done	1----2----3----4----5 NEVER SOMETIMES ALWAYS (rate the service by circling a number)	THINGS WE COULD DO (list or brainstorm ideas)
<p>PROGRAM/ ORGANISATION (PLANNING FOR SAFE PROGRAMS, SAFE STAFF)</p> <p>Homelessness services minimise children's exposure to people, situations and events that may affect their sense of safety and security</p> <p>Processes exist for consultation and support of workers in developing and implementing safety plans</p>	<p>a) The service has a way to systematically plan programs that are safe for children</p> <p>b) When potential issues around safety arise, programs are reviewed and adapted to improve safety and security for children</p> <p>c) The service has processes for identifying risks and preventing harm to children including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe facilities and physical environment • Appropriate staff, trained and supported to work with children • Clear policies and procedures for responding to harm and risks of harm • Clear, child-friendly complaint policies <p>d) Recruitment processes include screening of staff for child safety</p> <p>e) Processes for screening of staff are reviewed regularly and updated</p> <p>f) Child safety is an important part of staff performance reviews</p>			

KEEP ME SAFE

	INDICATORS	HOW WE DO THIS list how this is currently done	1----2----3----4----5 NEVER SOMETIMES ALWAYS (rate the service by circling a number)	THINGS WE COULD DO (list or brainstorm ideas)
<p>SYSTEM: A WEB OF SAFETY (SAFE SUPPORT NETWORKS)</p> <p>We have connections with other services and key community resources to ensure that we are able to meet children's needs for safety and security</p>	<p>a. Links are made with relevant services and key people, to enable planning and communication around children's safety</p> <p>b. When needed, the service collaborates with other services to ensure safety plans are developed, agreed on and implemented by all relevant services</p> <p>c. When we collaborate to enhance a child's safety, responsibilities are clearly defined and case plans, expectations, time lines are clarified (who does what by when)</p> <p>d. We collaborate with other services to ensure the allocation of resources to implement each child's safety plan</p> <p>e. We communicate regularly with relevant services to ensure each child remains safe and that plans can be adjusted in response to changing circumstances</p> <p>f. The service links with specialist services to ensure that the safety needs of children from A&TSI and diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, children with disabilities and other children with special needs are met</p>			

KEEP ME SAFE



TOOL 1A: IDENTIFYING RISKS

LINKED TO:

- Sections 1.6 & 1.9



WHY?

- To begin a discussion about safety
- To help families develop strategies and to plan ways of responding to any risks they might face
- To help children develop a sense of safety in the knowledge that their concerns have been raised and dealt with.

Some parents will want to shield particular risks from their children. This is their right. However, it might be useful to explain to parents that sometimes children pick up on their parent's concerns and / or are highly aware of their family's circumstance. In these instances, children sometimes feel unable to talk about their feelings because they think such conversations with children are taboo. Allowing parents to engage with children using the tools in this guide may be of use.



WHO WITH?

- With parents
- With children aged 6+ who feel comfortable about talking about safety



TIME?

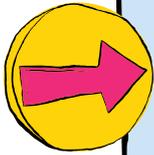
- 15-25 minutes with homework



YOU'LL NEED?

- Copies of the template (or your own)
- A list of contact details of available friends, family and services
- Proforma for Tool 1B "Safety Plan"

KEEP ME SAFE



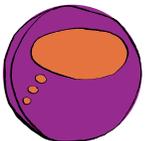
WHAT TO DO:

- This activity can either be completed with parents who are then supported to share their plan with their children OR as a family group. Either way, it is important that children feel as if they have a good understanding of the issues and are given the opportunity to ask questions. Children may have concerns that their parents are not aware of: so this activity might best be completed alongside one of the other tools in this guide.
- In the first box, families are encouraged to identify any risks or concerns that they might have. Generally it is a good idea to brainstorm these before filling in the other columns but be flexible: risks will undoubtedly arise as you go through the process
- Question two might relate to any of the risks identified. Where there are multiple risks that parents would like their children to be prepared for, repeat the questions.
- Questions three and four are about important contacts. Complete these with families and, as part of the process, ask them if they think that these people would know about their circumstance and that they have been identified. If not, developing a plan for letting these people know might be useful.



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- For younger children it might be useful to draw a flow chart which they can keep in their room or on the fridge



TO THINK ABOUT:

- Principals comment that they would benefit from having a copy of safety plans for children and explicitly state that unless they are aware of these arrangements they can do little if a risk arises in the school ground. Encourage the family to consider making copies and providing them to teachers, friends and family



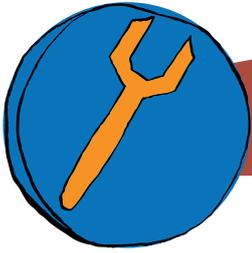
HAZARD ZONES:

- Children tell us that they can be distressed when risks are raised without solutions or strategies. Although this activity might be completed over a few sessions, it is important that children's fears and concerns are addressed: even with short term solutions

KEEP ME SAFE

Identifying Risk	
What are the early warning signs?	
What are the things that I can do to protect myself and the children?	
Who else can help?	
What can they do?	
How can they be alerted when I need them?	

KEEP ME SAFE



TOOL 1B: SAFETY PLAN

LINKED TO:

- Sections 1.6 & 1.9



WHY?

- To help families develop a plan for when they are confronted by potential threats to their safety



WHO WITH?

- With parents
- With children aged 6+ who feel comfortable about talking about safety



TIME?

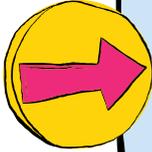
- 15-25 minutes with homework



YOU'LL NEED?

- Copies of the template (or your own)
- A list of contact details of available friends, family and services

KEEP ME SAFE



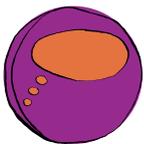
WHAT TO DO:

- As with 1A, this activity can either be completed with parents who are then supported to share their plan with their children OR as a family group. Either way, it is important that children feel as if they have a good understanding of the issues and are given the opportunity to ask questions. Children may have concerns that their parents are not aware of: so this activity might best be completed alongside one of the other tools in this guide.
- In the first box, families should identify what the key threats that their families might face, particularly those where there is imminent danger (ie when a violent partner tries to enter the property)
- Parents should then complete the following sections as appropriate FOR EACH threat (multiple photocopies of the table might be needed)
- Parents should be encouraged to share the plan with the child so that they are aware of what they need to do.
- After completing, parents should be supported to complete the second proforma "Some Important Contacts" and the "Family Safety Card".
- Copies of this proforma might be given to children to keep in their bags or in a place easily accessible.
- Where appropriate, a copy might be given to the child's school for reference.



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- For younger children it might be useful to draw a flow chart which they can keep in their room or on the fridge



TO THINK ABOUT:

- Principals comment that they would benefit from having a copy of safety plans for children and explicitly state that unless they are aware of these arrangements they can do little if a risk arises in the school ground. Encourage the family to consider making copies and providing them to teachers, friends and family



HAZARD ZONES:

- Plans should be clear and concrete and understood by parents and children if they need to enact them independently. Plans are only useful if people know when and how to use them.
- Children tell us that they can be distressed when risks are raised without solutions or strategies. Although this activity might be completed over a few sessions, it is important that children's fears and concerns are addressed: even with short term solutions

KEEP ME SAFE



OUR SAFETY PLAN

	THE ARRANGEMENTS I HAVE ORGANISED FOR MY KIDS:
HOW I WILL ALERT THEM	
WHAT THEY SHOULD DO	
WHERE THEY SHOULD GO	
WHAT THEY SHOULD TAKE	
WHO THEY SHOULD TALK TO	

SOME IMPORTANT CONTACTS:	Name:	Phone Number:
A SAFE FAMILY MEMBER		
A NEIGHBOUR OR FRIEND		
A WORKER / ORGANISATION		
THE POLICE		
HOMELESSNESS SERVICE		

KEEP ME SAFE

FAMILY SAFETY CARD	
FIRST NAME:	
NICKNAME:	
PARENT/GUARDIAN'S NAME:	
STREET ADDRESS:	
HOME TELEPHONE:	
FAMILY MEETING PLACE:	
SECRET CODE:	
OTHER PERSON TO TRUST NAME:	
PHONE NUMBER:	
Other safety helpers (fireman, teacher, police, school principal, neighbour)	

SOME EMERGENCY NUMBERS

Police: 131444

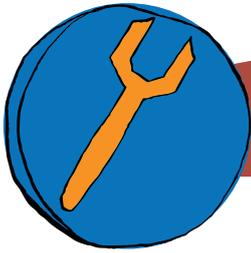
.....
Lifeline: 13114

.....
Kids Helpline: 1800 55 1800

.....
Interpreting service: 131 450



KEEP ME SAFE



TOOL 1C: HOW I'M FEELING

LINKED TO:

- Sections 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 2.1 & 5.13



WHY?

- To hear from children about how they are feeling
- To give children permission to talk about or express their feelings in a safe and non-threatening way

.....

This exercise can be used repeatedly. Faces can be put up on the wall or the fridge. If someone is experiencing difficulties and unable to communicate verbally, you can point out the faces or even play a guessing game with them – say, Tom looks anxious about something, you can say: 'now, I'm guessing that this face matches how you are feeling.' (Guess the right face, or if you know they will respond to a bit of humour guess the completely wrong face and keep going until you get it right.)



WHO WITH?

- Children as individuals, in groups or as a family
- Great for young children aged 4 onwards



TIME?

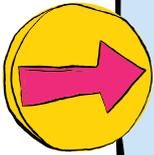
- 5 - 15 minutes



YOU'LL NEED?

- Copy of the feelings sheet
- Textas, crayons or magnets [if you want to do it on a fridge or magnetic board]

KEEP ME SAFE



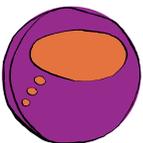
WHAT TO DO:

- Begin by discussing feelings and introducing the feelings page. Stress the point that it's OK to have any feeling: sad, happy, angry. Sometimes it's hard to find them or talk about them but that's OK.
- Ask the children about the faces: 'how is this child feeling?', 'which child looks happiest?', 'what do you think might have happened to this child?'
- Ask a few questions that show how the feelings page might be used to capture your feelings 'I had a birthday party on the weekend. Which face do you think describes how I felt when I was playing games with my kids?', 'which picture might describe how I'm feeling right now?', 'which feeling is most like yours at the moment?'
- Get children to circle the feelings they have about what's happening in their lives or use the empty boxes to add their own – for example 'circle the face that shows how you feel about living here'.
- Ask questions like:
 - 'I wonder what happened that you feel...[angry/sad/confused] about?'
 - 'Sometimes it's hard to use words to say how we feel and so I look at the faces and I can see two that I felt today. When I stubbed my toe on the door I felt like this [point to picture], but that only lasted a little while; when we were playing football I felt [point to the picture] like this – what name would you give those pictures?'
 - 'When you think about your future how do you feel?' (With 7 years upwards only, as 'the future' won't make sense to younger children)



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- You might want to laminate and cut up a copy of the feelings page and put all the feelings out and have children pick out faces that describe how they're going
- Cut-out faces can be used to develop a timeline ('My Journey' exercise in the All About Me booklet) of a day, week or period of a child's life. 'How did you feel at the start of the day?', 'Later in the day?', 'what happened to make you change from being happy to sad?'
- Use a clay face and get kids to sculpt feelings (see Tool 5B: Clay Faces)



TO THINK ABOUT:

- Kids at different ages and stages will have different abilities in regards to understanding and naming emotions. Be mindful that kids will think differently: this is OK!
- With older kids gauge to see whether they think the faces are too childish: if they are find another one (there are a few online) or get them to make their own faces.



HAZARD ZONES:

- It is important that children are encouraged to express their feelings so try not to understate, compensate or minimise kids' emotions by saying things like 'it can't be that bad' or 'cheer up, things are gonna be better' or 'it sounds like you're taking it too personally'. Let the kids express themselves before acting upon them.

How Are You Feeling Today?



Pleased



Lonely



Scared



Curious



Hysterical



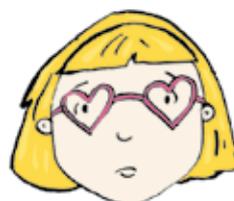
Trusting



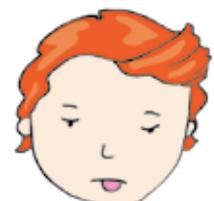
Jealous



Exhausted



Frightened



Bored



Shocked



Ecstatic



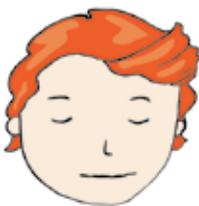
Shy



Content



Frustrated



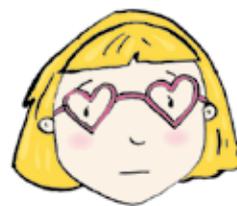
Tired



Sorry



Overwhelmed



Guilty



Sad



Alarmed



Hopeful



Angry



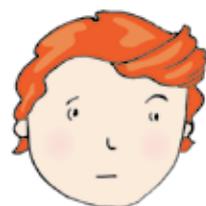
Happy



Depressed



Worried

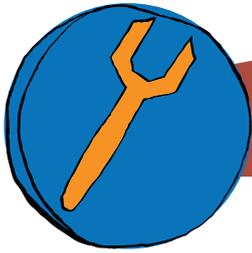


Confused



Something else?

KEEP ME SAFE



TOOL 1D: THINGS THAT MAKE ME FEEL SAFE

LINKED TO:

- This tool can be used in all situations where you might engage children directly about their feelings
- Sections 1.4, 1.5, 1.6 & 2.1 & 2.11,



WHY?

- To introduce the topic of safety to children
- To hear from children about the things that help make them feel safe
- To help with safety planning for individual children
- To help families understand what each child needs to feel safe



WHO WITH?

- Children as individuals, in groups or as a family
- 5 – 10 year olds



TIME?

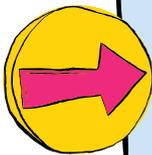
- 15-25 minutes



YOU'LL NEED?

- Template
- Coloured pencils / textas

KEEP ME SAFE



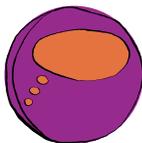
WHAT TO DO:

- Start by explaining the metaphor of the blanket 'I love lying in bed with my blanket. I feel warm and safe and I can hide from the world if I like. On this girl's blanket there are things that make her feel safe: people in her family, her animals, places she can go'.
- Ask children what feeling safe means to them: What does it feel like? When do they feel most safe? What are some of the things that they need to feel safe?
- Get the kids to decide in which of the domains the 'things that make me feel safe' best sit. The domains include: people in my family, other people, animals, places, feelings, things I know, things people can do



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- Kids might feel more comfortable cutting images, words or pictures from magazines; using stickers; sculpting answers from plasticine
- If you have time and are working with a creative child why not make your own safety blanket using the domains identified and patchwork pieces representing the things that help this particular child feel safe



TO THINK ABOUT:

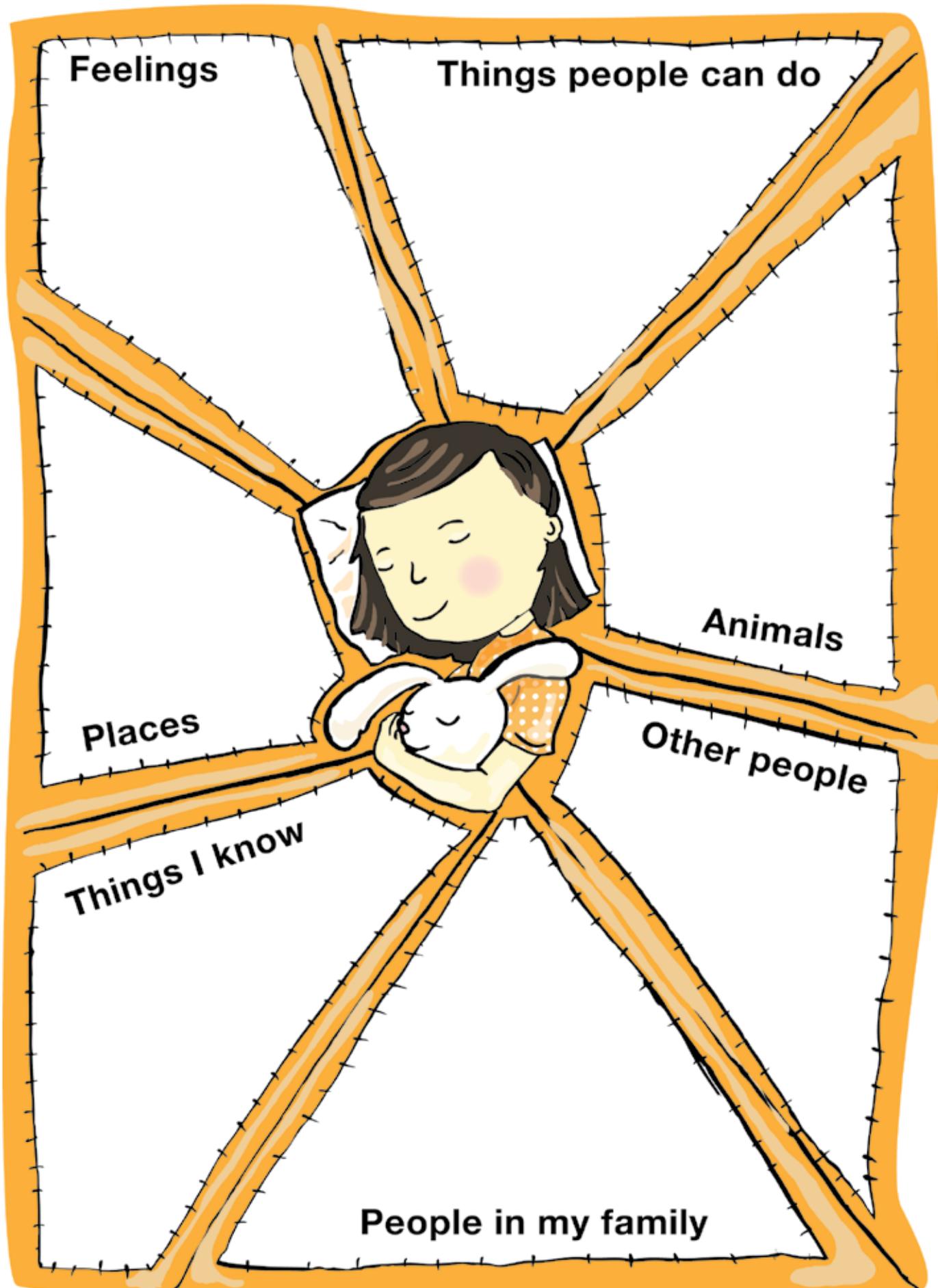
- Some kids don't have many spaces or things that make them feel safe: be mindful of this and don't assume anything.
- Help create some spaces for kids where they can feel safe, being mindful that they need to be sustainable (ie its OK that there is a safe space in your refuge but this needs to be recreated at their new flat etc).



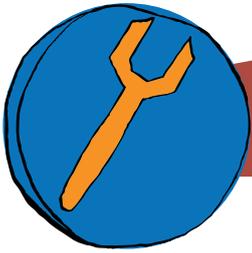
HAZARD ZONES:

- Be aware that kids might want to disclose information about times when they've felt unsafe. It's important that you have made it clear about how you might deal with these messages (see 1.6) and that you've created a space where they know that it's OK to talk if they need to.

Things That Make Me Feel Safe



KEEP ME SAFE



TOOL 1E: WORRYOMETER

LINKED TO:

- Sections 1.4, 1.5, 1.6 & 2.1



WHY?

- To get a sense of how unsafe or worried children are feeling
- To allow exploration of what is making children feel unsafe, what helps them feel safer and less safe
- To help with safety planning for individual children
- To help children identify what worries them
- To help children begin to differentiate between big worries and little worries. This can also enable better prioritising in the case planning process



WHO WITH?

- Children as individuals, in groups or as a family
- Children aged 5 – 14 years



TIME?

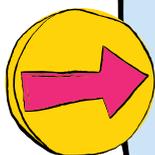
- 5-30mins



YOU'LL NEED?

- The template

KEEP ME SAFE



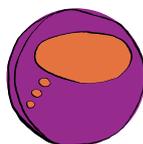
WHAT TO DO:

- Introduce the concept of safety and how you might experience it in your body: 'we're going to talk about feeling safe. When I feel scared or unsafe I can feel it in my body. Can you think of how I might feel it in my body – what happens in my tummy? To my palms? To my heart?'
- Then introduce the worryometer: 'sometimes I imagine that I've got a big thermometer in my tummy from my belly button up to my throat and sometimes I try to work out how worried I am: like if I'm not worried it might be here [point to navel] or if I'm really worried it might be here [at the throat].'
- Check in to see if the kids get the concept – maybe by asking them to tell them how they feel at different times of the day.
- Ask children to colour in or mark how worried they feel right now, if the base of the worryometer is 0 (meaning not worried at all about anything) and the top is 10 (the most worried I've ever been, about lots of things)
- Explore gently what is causing them to feel worried – maybe they want to draw these things next to the thermometer or you could play a guessing game and draw the pictures yourself until you guess the right things.
- Hand out copies of the printed worry-o-meter and finish by asking 'what could help get that worry meter closer to 0?' Brainstorm ideas that might help or, again, draw pictures or play a guessing game if that's easier for the child.



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- Show kids an old fashioned thermometer (with mercury bead that rises and falls according to temperature) if you have one available.
- Draw a big thermometer on a piece of paper and call it the 'worryometer'. Explain how thermometers measure temperature and ask children if they have ever seen or used a thermometer.
- Kids might feel more comfortable cutting images, words or pictures from magazines; using stickers; sculpting answers from plasticine.
- It may also be useful to explore what are the biggest worries children have and what are smaller worries and perhaps exploring how to deal with some of those worries so there are less worries adding up to make a high temperature.
- If you are working with 2 or more children, facilitate the process so that ways one child uses to reduce worries may be used or adapted by other children and they can help each other with ideas.



TO THINK ABOUT:

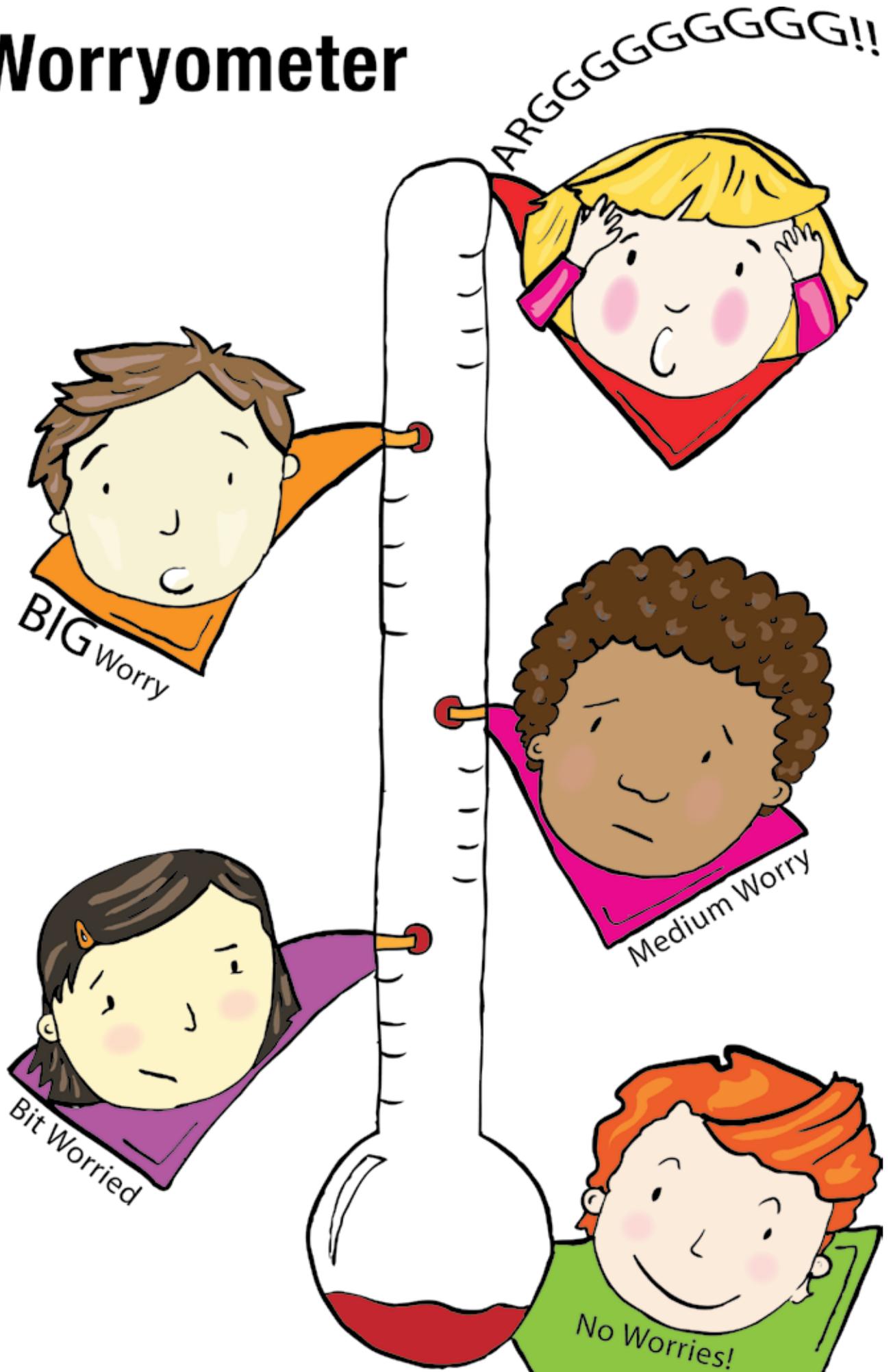
- Some kids don't have many spaces or things that make them feel safe: be mindful of this and don't assume anything.
- Help create some spaces for kids where they can feel safe, being mindful that they need to be sustainable (ie its OK that there is a safe space in your refuge but this needs to be recreated at their new flat etc).



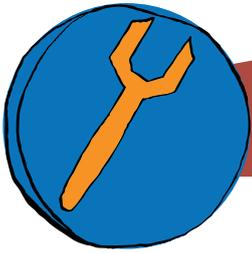
HAZARD ZONES:

- Be aware that kids might want to disclose information about what is worrying them. Take it gently and don't probe. Make this as fun as possible. The focus is on awareness of how worried they are and then, if possible, getting an understanding of what is worrying them.

Worryometer



KEEP ME SAFE



TOOL 1F: HELPING HANDS

LINKED TO:

- Sections 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 6.1, 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6



WHY?

- To find out who children can trust in their networks
- To see how small or large a child's safety network is
- Helps with making safety plans, to fill in safety cards for each family member



WHO WITH?

- Individuals, groups or families
- Children aged 4 – 14 years



TIME?

- 15-25 minutes depending on how many people [if there is a group/family]

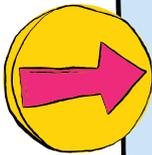


YOU'LL NEED?

- A range of coloured paper or cardboard, pens or crayons



KEEP ME SAFE



WHAT TO DO:

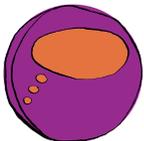
- Trace around each child's hand onto the paper or cardboard. This can be done in pairs if there is more than 1 child or with parents helping children
- Ask the children to:
 - write your name or draw yourself in the palm/middle of the hand
 - think of people you feel safe with and write their name or draw their picture in each finger and the thumb. (If children can't write their names, offer to write underneath each drawing)
 - If they have trouble thinking of people, ask 'Who could you go to if you were feeling unsafe or needed help?' or 'Who would you ask if you had a question?'

Some common suggestions are: family members, neighbours, friends' parents, workers, principals, teachers



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- For older kids maybe cut out little circles / squares in different colours and ask children to write the names of special people in their lives. Once completed, ask them to put them out on the floor and to then identify people after asking particular questions like "who I'd go to if I needed a hug" or "if I was worried about my Mum" or "if I was feeling sick".



TO THINK ABOUT:

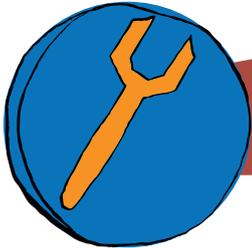
- Some children may prefer to trace around their own hands as it does involve a bit of touching and they may feel uncomfortable about that.



HAZARD ZONES:

- Some children may not have many people they can trust or perhaps none at all. In this case, use the activity to talk about people, like the police, teachers, school principals and workers whose job it is to keep kids safe – maybe one of them can become one of their safety network. They may also wish to add a pet.

KEEP ME SAFE



TOOL 1G: RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

LINKED TO:

- Sections, 1.8, 1.10, 5.1



WHY?

- To respond to children's safety issues and concerns that might arise in discussions / planning



WHO WITH?

- Children 8+ with their parents (if possible and appropriate)



TIME?

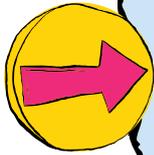
- 5-20 mins



YOU'LL NEED?

- Already completed tools that highlight issues of concern (to ensure that you've got them all!)
- The proforma

KEEP ME SAFE



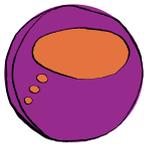
WHAT TO DO:

- Work with the child to develop a plan for responding / managing the issues that they have raised. Be as informal / formal as the situation might require.



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- The questions in this tool do not need to be answered using the proforma. If more comfortable, have a general discussion but keep a note if possible: this helps kids know that you've taken their concerns on board and that you are going to do something about them.
- Have kids draw / represent their concerns in the space provided rather than fill it with adult-driven words.



TO THINK ABOUT:

- Plans are only good if they are enacted. Set a time to review how things are going – and let the child determine whether your agreements have been honoured.



HAZARD ZONES:

- be careful not to further worry the child by appearing to be overly alarmed or dismissive by understating its importance



Responding to concerns

CHILD'S NAME: _____

AGE: _____ DATE: _____

Principal worker: _____ Phone Number: _____

	PHONE NUMBERS
People /agencies involved in development and support of plan:	
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

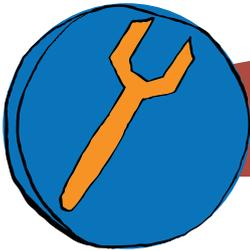
CHILD SAFETY CONCERNS

ACTIONS TO ADDRESS CONCERNS

BY WHEN AND BY WHOM

WHAT HAPPENED? DID IT WORK?

KEEP ME SAFE



TOOL 1H: SAFE SPACES

LINKED TO:

- Sections 1.4, 1.6, 4.3, 4.4



WHY?

- To help kids develop skills in relaxing
- Ending off a group session



WHO WITH?

- Children aged 6-14 years



TIME?

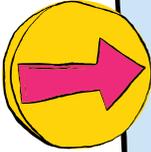
- 15mins +



YOU'LL NEED?

- Nothing
- Soft, gentle music (optional)
- Cushions (optional)

KEEP ME SAFE



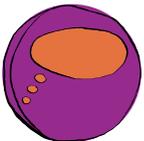
WHAT TO DO:

- Find a quiet space where kids can relax without distraction (this might be inside or outside). If you have some gentle music you can play this in the background to help children get into the right zone.
- Read/adapt the attached script slowly, giving kids enough time to relax their bodies and empty their minds.
- After completing the meditation allow the kids some time to re-energise. Offer them a glass of water and some fresh fruit. Some kids might like to stay in the quiet area or have some time alone. Take the cues from the kids themselves.



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- There are a range of meditation for kids tapes around the place. Trial them out with kids to see if they better meet their needs



.....

TO THINK ABOUT:

- Some kids find it incredibly difficult to relax, particularly in a group setting. Give kids permission to find some space to do something quiet that won't distract other kids – like colouring in, playing with lego or story writing.
- We've included some tips on creating a safe space for relaxation / meditation activities for kids below.



HAZARD ZONES:

- It's important that you have enough time for the activity and that there aren't people coming in and out all the time

KEEP ME SAFE

Some tips from www.Meditations4kids.com CREATING A MEDITATION SPACE

To get the best out of your meditation it helps to have a special space to meditate in. A special place to meditate encourages you to create a regular routine.

You can create this space in a corner of a bedroom, in the garden, in the lounge room... wherever you like. Just ensure that the space will be relatively quiet when you need it to be, allowing you to sit in peace.

If you use a cushion, stool or chair ensure that it is nearby and ready for use to make the process of getting into meditation as easy as possible. You can decorate your space with meaningful pieces of art or natural objects to make it that extra bit special. Often it is making the decision to sit and meditate that is the difficult part of the process not the actual meditation itself. Therefore anything you can do to encourage yourself will ultimately be of benefit.

THE MOST COMFORTABLE SITTING POSITIONS

There are a variety of ways to sit comfortably during meditation, with or without support. You can sit on a high cushion on the floor with your legs crossed. This is a very basic form of the traditional Indian lotus position. There are many zafus or high round cushions that support this style of sitting.

You can sit back on your ankles in the traditional Japanese seiza position. For this position you can use a meditation stool to take the pressure off your knees and ankles and to keep your back straight. If you would prefer not to sit on the floor you can sit on a chair. Simply ensure that you can put your feet flat on the ground to keep yourself steady, balanced and grounded and that your back doesn't slouch into the back of the chair.

Lying down is not the best position for meditating as it is energetically vibrant and it is far too easy to fall asleep.



KEEP ME SAFE

MEDITATION SCRIPT:

At different times in our lives we can feel stress. We can be worried or anxious or afraid and our bodies let us know how they're feeling and prepare us to either 'fight' or 'flight'. Sometimes, though, our bodies don't really help us deal with a situation. When we're angry, our body might tense up and our heart beat so fast that we can't think straight—all we want to do is get into a rage and belt someone. When we're scared, we might start to breathe really quickly; when we're nervous we start to twitch and forget things.

At times like these, we need to be able to relax a bit and take control. We need to look within us for somewhere safe where we can get rid of all the negative feelings and thoughts and other things that are holding us back.

We're going to find one of those spaces today. A place that you can go back to when you need to think clearly, where you can feel safe and in control.

What I want you to do is find a nice, comfortable spot away from anything that might distract you. Choose to do this exercise. Choose to forget about everything else around you and to focus just on you.

When you've found a comfy spot, have a bit of a wriggle until you're able to slowly settle down and relax.

What I want you to do now is to be aware of your breathing. Hear the air, feel the air as you breathe it in... and out... in and out... in and out...

As you breathe out, feel all the yucky, bad and unhappy thoughts and feelings leave your body. As you breathe in, feel your body relax. As you breathe in and out... in and out... in and out...

Focus on your toes - tense them up for three seconds - three, two, one, and then let them go limp. Let them totally relax

Now focus on your calves, the bottom of your legs, tense them up - three, two, one, and then let them go limp. Let them totally relax.

[Repeat: top of legs, bottom, hands, arms, chest, face]

Now focus again on your breathing. As you breathe in, feel your body become filled with warmth. As you breathe out, feel yourself breathe out any tensions or troubles. Breathing in... and out... in... and out...

I want you now to picture a place where you feel safe. It could be your bedroom at home. It could be the park. It could be lying down beside a river or on the beach.

Take a minute to become aware of everything that's around you. What can you hear? What can you see? What can you smell?

As you breathe in, feel yourself floating down to this special place. As you breathe out, feel all your worries float away.

As you're lying there in your special place, know that it is your place. No one can come here unless you invite them. In this special place you can be yourself without worrying about how anyone else will react— you are all alone in this special place.

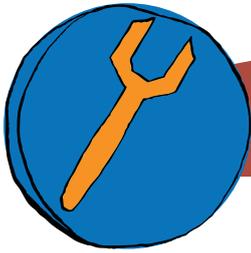
At any time, when you're feeling scared or lonely or stressed, you can find this place by just closing your eyes and taking a few breaths. Breathe in the peacefulness of your special place and breathe out anything that's making your body become stressed.

When you're ready, start to leave your special place and, in your own time, feel your body return.

In your own time, slowly get back and open your eyes.

REINFORCE ABILITY TO RETURN TO SAFE SPACE AT ANY TIME.

KEEP ME SAFE



TOOL 11: JUMPING JELLYFISH

LINKED TO:

- Sections 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.14, 5.13



WHY?

- To explore safety and trust in a fun way
- To allow children to experiment with trusting someone else in a safe environment
- To help workers and parents gain understanding of a child's sense of safety and ability to trust
- A great opportunity to talk about feelings, how we know when we feel safe, how we know if we feel unsafe, listening to our body's messages and our feelings



WHO WITH?

- Children aged 4+
- Individual kids, groups or families. This version is good for 5 to 15 year olds. Children can pair up with a worker or other children as part of a group, or this can be done with a family



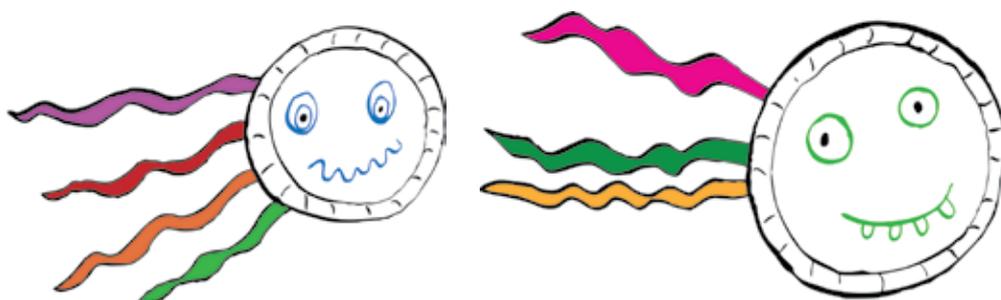
TIME?

- 20 - 40 mins (including discussion)

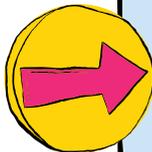


YOU'LL NEED?

- Paper plates, frisbees or other flat round or square objects
- Crepe paper (optional - jellyfish can be drawn onto the plates or cut crepe paper in strips and staple or sticky tape around the outside rim of the plate to make legs)
- A large space indoors or outdoors
- blindfolds



KEEP ME SAFE



WHAT TO DO:

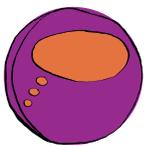
- Ask children what the word 'trust' means.
- Ask 'how do you know if you can trust somebody?' 'What happens in your body when you don't feel like you can trust someone?' (give examples).
- This is a game about safety and trust. Explain, as with all games, that the child can choose not to play or if they feel unsafe or unhappy at any point they can speak up and the game can be changed to help them feel safer.
- Worker first demonstrates to the child/ren by asking who thinks they can be trusted to lead the worker blindfolded across the 'beach' and help them not to step on any jellyfish. The jellyfish [paper plates or similar] have been spread out on the floor or grass. The child can either hold the blindfolded person's hand and guide them or stand near them and tell them how many steps, which direction etc. If there's more than one child, they can cooperate to direct the worker.
- Once the worker is safely at the other side, take the blindfold off. Ask the children: 'What was it like being trusted? Was it easy or hard to keep me safe? How did you feel when it looked like I might not be safe? How did you feel when we got through safely? Discuss anything that went wrong [difficulties explaining directions, children needing to push to keep you safe etc] and discuss guidelines or rules to make it work better next time.
- Share what it was like to be blindfolded and having to trust someone else. Point to 'feelings faces' to help – 'I felt a bit scared when you didn't say anything and I felt like I was on my own for a while' etc. 'I knew I was scared because my heart beat faster, and I got butterflies in my tummy'. Use this as a chance to introduce listening to our bodies and understanding our feelings, how do we know when something is scaring us?
- Swap roles if the children are comfortable doing this and try it again. Ask the same questions of the child: 'What was it like having to trust me? Was there any time when you felt unsafe? How do you know when you are feeling unsafe – what happened in your body?'

KEEP ME SAFE



SOMETHING DIFFERENT?

- Change the jellyfish into something else – black holes, monsters or, if you know a child well, you can draw or paint fears/things they worry about onto the plates. Use this exercise as a building block for talking about people they can trust in their lives and for helping the child learn to listen to their own internal warning signs about unsafe people and situations.
- When working with a group of children larger than say 8, children might pretend to be the jellyfish themselves. Start by getting kids to decide what noise they think a jelly fish makes and have them sit around the room. Have the blindfolded person try to make their way through the field of jellyfish unsupported – listening for the jellyfish as they walk. Then repeat with someone directing them from afar (or by their side if you like). Discuss the same questions as above.



TO THINK ABOUT:

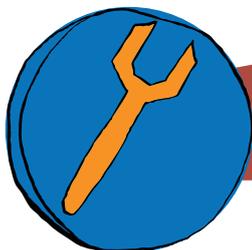
- Games can provide kids with a space in which they can talk about topics they might not always feel comfortable engaging with otherwise. Make sure that you ensure that these activities are safe and fun and enable kids to opt out if need be.



HAZARD ZONES:

- Keep the game light and fun by demonstrating what it's like to be blindfolded, in a light-hearted way. Be aware that some kids who have been in extremely unsafe situations may not want to play this game or they may not want to use the blindfold, or maybe they will show you that they can't play it by mucking up instead. Do not force it in any way. That is OK, they can watch, they can take on the role of the guide, or the role of placing or moving the jellyfish, or they can do the bits they feel comfortable with – perhaps experimenting with closing their eyes some of the time or looking straight ahead instead of down. All of this gives you a lot of information about the child's needs and sense of safety and how they judge if something is safe or if a person can be trusted. You can say things like 'it is hard to trust people when you don't feel safe, and that's OK, it's normal.' And it shows that the child has some good skills to protect themselves, which you can revisit later.

KEEP ME SAFE



OTHER TOOLS RELATED TO PRINCIPLE 1

LINKED TO:

Tool:	Relates to sections
3I	1.6 and 1.74
5A	1.2 and 1.4
5E	1.1
6A	1.6
6B	1.6
6C	1.6
6D	1.6
6E	1.6
6F	1.6

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- *Through Young Black eyes: a handbook to protect children from the effects of family violence and child abuse* (2007 update) www.srs.snaicc.asn.au/_uploads/nwslt/00309.pdf
- *Keep your family safe: leaflet for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children about family violence and child abuse*

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