



Prof Daryl Higgins Australian Catholic University, Institute of Child Protection Studies

Child-safe churches

A transformative culture

Institute of Child Protection Studies

www.acu.edu.au/icps

Professor Daryl Higgins, ICPS Director

The Institute of Child Protection Studies (ICPS) enhances outcomes for children, young people and families through:

- quality, child-centred research
- program evaluation
- training and community education
- advocacy and policy development

We are nationally recognised for our expertise in child protection, and preventing and responding to the abuse and neglect of children.

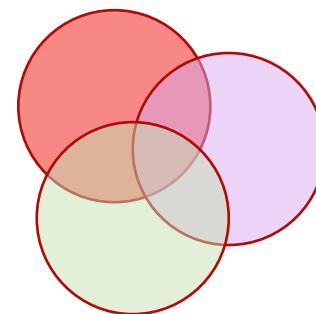
We promote children's participation, strengthen service systems, inform practice and support child-safe communities.

Prevention

Prevention – based on knowledge of causes and contributing factors

Child Sexual Abuse occurs at the intersection of:

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



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

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

REFLECTION: How does ‘culture’ affect opportunity in my church?

Environmental factors

Risks, enablers and protective factors

What do we know about organisational contexts?

- How do organizational environments facilitate—or impede—opportunity to abuse?
- Are all organisations equal?
- To supplement research about victim- and perpetrator-factors, we need to explore what it is about different organisational settings that might increase or decrease the risks.
- Can churches transform – and increase conditions of safety for children?

REFLECTION: Where does my church fit on a risk-matrix?

Shifting the paradigm

Preventing ‘bad’ people isn’t enough

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

However:

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

Focusing on the individual ignores the “power of the situation” to influence individual behaviour, and the capacity of systemic approaches to prevention

Boyd 2008; Pratt & Miller, 2012

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

Box Office lessons: The power of the situation



Box Office lessons on Social Psychology

Social Psychology knowledge from the 1970s explored on the big screen.

Demonstrates the “power of the situation” to influence individual behaviour

Implications for child-safety in organisations:

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

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

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

Key risks in child-related organisations

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

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

Church-specific risk factors

Kaufman et al. (2016)

Unique church/faith-based risks

Opportunity – high level of adult-child interaction:

- In the UK, churches were the single largest employer of full-time youth workers (not counting voluntary activities)
- could attract those with paedophilic interest

Considerable cultural and political influence of churches militates against disclosure or intervention

- the authority conferred on clergy allow them to act without fear of repercussions
- some studies find the vow of celibacy attracts some men with a sexual dysfunction
- religious doctrines and practices – including self-governance, and ‘forgiveness’

Kaufman, K. L., Erooga, M., with Stewart, K., Zatzkin, J., McConnell, E., Tews, H., & Higgins, D. (2016). *Risk profiles for institutional child sexual abuse: A literature review*. Sydney: Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Sydney.

<http://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/policy-and-research/our-research/published-research/risk-profiles-for-institutional-child-sexual-abuse>

Findings from a case study

Higgins (2001)

Key features of poor response identified in the case study

- Minimisation and denial of initial allegation of sexual abuse
- Failure to encourage victims to report allegations to statutory authority/police
- Inappropriate response to legal actions
- Sex-role beliefs
- Inappropriate (or absence of) support for victims and perpetrators
- Poor leadership
- Polarisation of the church community
- Doctrines and practices that support patriarch (see following slide)

Higgins, D. J. (2001). A case study of child sexual abuse within a church community.
Journal of Religion and Abuse, 3(1/2), 5-19. doi: https://doi.org/10.1300/J154v03n01_02

Findings from a case study2

Higgins (2001)

Doctrinal beliefs that may contribute to risk of abuse & poor responses

- the absence of women in key leadership positions with any authority, leading to an absence of gender-appropriate role models and support
- patriarchal and authoritarian beliefs about the family, which create an environment in which victims are less likely to question the authority of their abuser
- doctrines about sin, through which an emphasis on 'personal sin' to the exclusion of social justice issues, can easily lead to victim-blaming
- teachings regarding repentance and forgiveness, which may lead to premature attempts to seek forgiveness from the victim or to holding victims partially responsible for their own abuse
- the role of civil authorities—for example, teachings against the use of court proceedings, based on biblical passages referring to civil suits, can lead to confusion about the appropriateness of reporting abuse
- reverence for church leaders (for example, priests being viewed as 'indelibly marked') can make victims reluctant to speak about abuse at the hands of clergy members, and members of the Church reluctant to question the actions church leaders take in dealing with situations of abuse within the Church

Higgins, D. J. (2001). A case study of child sexual abuse within a church community. *Journal of Religion and Abuse*, 3(1/2), 5-19. doi: https://doi.org/10.1300/J154v03n01_02

Powerful perpetrators... in the UK, US and Australia

Erooga, Kaufman & Zatkin (2019)

Examination of 17 high profile cases with ‘powerful’ perpetrators

- ‘modus operandi’ typical of ‘powerful perpetrators’ can differ from other perpetrators
- Most common strategy: use of threats and coercion to gain cooperation
 - But less antisocial and psychopathic behaviour
- Providing attention to make victims feel special and gain trust
- Grooming the organization/other staff
 - Ability to manipulate rules, policies, and safety practices
- Using strategies to spend time alone
- Minimising detection (including denial if confronted)

Marcus Erooga, Keith Kaufman & Judith G. Zatkin (2019) Powerful perpetrators, hidden in plain sight: an international analysis of organisational child sexual abuse cases, *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, DOI: [10.1080/13552600.2019.1645897](https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2019.1645897)

Powerful perpetrators

... 2

Erooga, Kaufman & Zatkin (2019)

Implications:

- Recognise that due to the doctrinal and practical issues raised earlier, churches are at particular risk for ‘powerful perpetrators’ to emerge and flourish
- Knowledge of typical strategies of ‘powerful perpetrators’ should be built in to safeguarding training and awareness raising for churches and faith-based communities
- Develop ‘upward facing’ safety strategies (including guidelines directed at the behaviours of clergy, leaders, and others within the hierarchy of church organisations)
- Clear processes and strategies for laity and more junior clergy and staff to address concerning behaviour they observe in leaders

Marcus Erooga, Keith Kaufman & Judith G. Zatkin (2019) Powerful perpetrators, hidden in plain sight: an international analysis of organisational child sexual abuse cases, *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, DOI: [10.1080/13552600.2019.1645897](https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2019.1645897)

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to CSA

Key Church-related Recommendations

Alignment with the 10 Child-safe Standards

- Knowledge of child sexual abuse risk factors, indicators, and impacts
- Selection, screening and training of candidates for clergy/religious life
 - Targeted programs for those receiving people from overseas
- Ongoing formation support and supervision
- Education on professional responsibilities, ethics in ministry, complaint-handling policies and responsibilities to respond to allegations of CSA
- Training on child development and how to work with children

OVERVIEW:

3 elements of child-safe environments

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

Screening for known perpetrators

1

Pre-employment screening

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

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

Mandatory reporting

The legal requirement to report concerns of harm

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

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

Mandatory reporting (cont'd)

Reportable Conduct

- A number of jurisdictions have recently implemented (and others are actively considering) a reportable conduct scheme to oversee how organisations prevent and respond to **allegations of child abuse and misconduct**. It covers certain *employers* who work with children.
- Victoria: <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme>
- ACT: <http://www.ombudsman.act.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme>
- NSW: <https://www.ombo.nsw.gov.au/what-we-do/our-work/employment-related-child-protection/reportable-allegations-and-convictions>
- Victoria now has “failure to disclose” legislation, which covers all adults with a ‘reasonable belief’ that a sexual offence has been committed against a child. It is separate from mandatory reporting obligations of specified professionals. See: <http://www.justice.vic.gov.au/home/safer+communities/protecting+children+and+families/failure+to+disclose+offence>

Managing situational risks

2

Situational crime prevention

A situational crime prevention framework can:

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

Situational crime prevention

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

Underlying premise: Under the right circumstances, anyone could offend

Key focus is on *opportunity reduction*:

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

Not all organisations are equal

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

Family-like environments carry the highest risk:

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

Don't lose sight of the big picture:

It is not only about 'risk'...

What are the opportunities for building resilience?

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

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

Some possible protective factors or supports:

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

Not all organisations are equal (cont'd)

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

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

Applying the Situational Prevention Model

Based on Kaufman et al. (2010)

Steps to reducing risks:

1. Conduct Initial Risk Assessment
2. Confirm key risks with stakeholders (leaders, workers, parents, and particularly children & young people themselves) – including. frequency/severity
3. Link risks to risk-reduction and prevention strategies
4. Prioritise risks
5. Implement proposed risk-reduction and prevention strategies
6. Ongoing monitoring

Creating positive organisational cultures & meeting survivor needs

3

Key safeguarding strategies for young people

- Promote respectful relationships
- Create physically safe environments
- Adopt child-centred practice
 - Child-centred practice is often compromised by the contexts, organisational cultures and commitments of leadership and peers
 - Children rarely have opportunities to inform or provide feedback on their practice
- Create emotionally safe environments that:
 - Facilitate disclosures
 - Respond appropriately to disclosures
 - Provide a supportive/therapeutic context for victim/survivors

Facilitating disclosure

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

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

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

In some settings, such as sports clubs, the use of alcohol or other substances poses an additional risk (Higgins, 2013).

Denomination-wide approaches are enhanced by:

- Agreed definitions of child sexual abuse across contexts and settings
- Statement about the consequences of offending
- Clear, published policies and procedures that are victim-centred (with regular training, review, monitoring and evaluation)
- Prevention education programs for young people, clergy, adult workers/volunteers, and families
- Strategies to involve children and young people ('protective participation' – Tim Moore)
- Education on the long-term impacts of sexual assault

National Safe Schools Framework (2011)

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

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

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

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

To embed safeguarding, consider promotion of:

- Awareness of the causes of institutional child sexual abuse and organisational risk factors, including those specific to church settings, and different contexts of church activities
- Skills in how to provide child-centred responses to disclosures
- Policies that address acceptable behaviour; professional development, supervision, mentoring and accountability
- Strategies to address risks, based on the situational prevention model – including awareness of boundary violations
- Strategies to overcome difficulties adults face in speaking up about concerns and breaches of policy; skills and strategies to break down barriers
- Skills for clergy and other adult leaders to ask for—and respond to—the views of children and young people about safety within organisations
- Culture change through leadership, governance, and practice
- Sexual education & sexual abuse prevention education for children and young people
- Effective pre-employment strategies such as values-based interviewing

Child-safe.... And child-centred

Two complementary but distinct elements to safeguarding:

- Child-safe organisations - embrace policies and practices committed to supporting and enabling the safety of children and young people
- Child-centred practice – covers the range of activities adopted by workers to ensure that children of adults with multiple and complex needs receive appropriate support

Why is it important:

- Inquiries revealed the reality that children and young people have experience harm in institutions charged with their care
- Organisations to place children's safety and wellbeing at their core

Resources

4

Child-friendly policies & engagement strategies

<https://www.cpsltd.org.au/news-and-media/cpsl-publishes-how-to-guide-for-engaging-children-young-people-in-conversations-about-safeguarding/>

e.g., Catholic Professional Standards Ltd:

<https://www.cpsltd.org.au/>

2.12 Attachment 2: Child-friendly Standards Commitment

NATIONAL CATHOLIC SAFEGUARDING STANDARDS 

Our commitment is to create safe spaces and protect young people from harm

What children need to know...

- You are awesome – just as you are!
- You will always be welcomed and your thoughts and feelings are valued.
- If you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, we will support you in feeling proud and strong of your culture.
- Your background, culture, language and religion will be respected and valued.
- You can play, pray and learn in spaces that are safe and friendly.
- If you feel unsafe or you are worried about a friend's safety, talk with a trusted adult.
- You will be involved in decisions that are about you, and your safety.
- Your information will only be shared in order to help people look after you.

The people who support and teach you will:

- Listen without judging you.
- Talk to you about how to stay safe and keep your body safe.
- Help you, if you or your friends are being hurt or feel unsafe.
- Talk with your family and community about how to keep you safe.
- Learn different ways to keep all young people safe.
- Ask for your ideas on how to keep young people safe.
- Not hurt you with words or actions.
- Sign a code of conduct to promise to help keep you safe.




A 'how-to guide' for engaging children and young people in conversations about safeguarding



Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility

ACU Safeguarding Children and Young People portal

<https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au>

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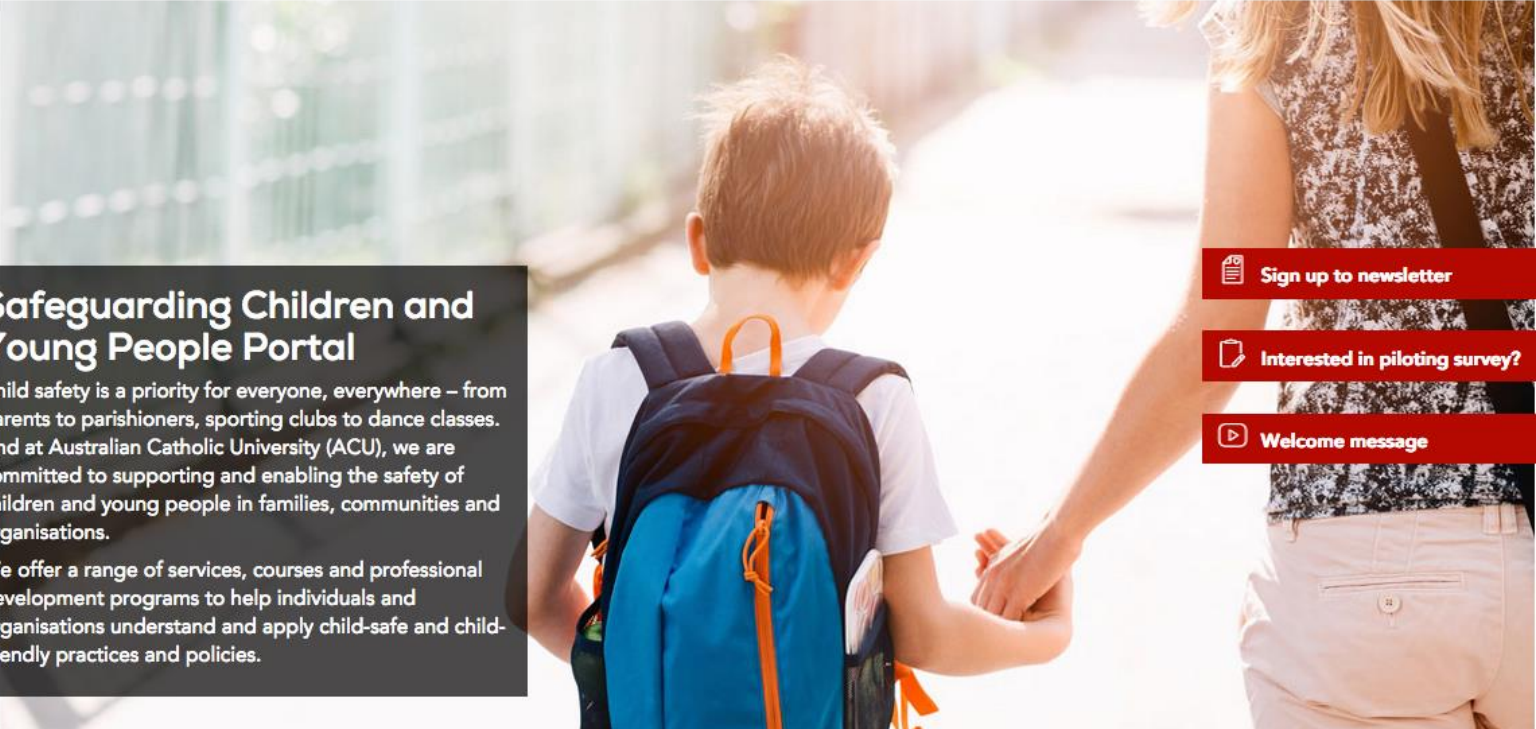
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SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTAL

Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal

Child safety is a priority for everyone, everywhere – from parents to parishioners, sporting clubs to dance classes. And at Australian Catholic University (ACU), we are committed to supporting and enabling the safety of children and young people in families, communities and organisations.

We offer a range of services, courses and professional development programs to help individuals and organisations understand and apply child-safe and child-friendly practices and policies.



 [Sign up to newsletter](#)

 [Interested in piloting survey?](#)

 [Welcome message](#)

What is the Safeguarding Portal?

A central pathway to the range of ACU research projects, professional development opportunities, and capacity-building tools:

Research and Resources: a range of research reports and resources

Practice Tools: resources to support organisations to keep children and young people safe.

Qualifications and Professional Learning: learning opportunities to develop skills and knowledge related to safeguarding children and young people.

Self-Assessment: surveys that organisations can use to self-assess their progress towards supporting conditions of safety in organisations

Researcher Profiles: Find out more about the expertise of ACU staff

ACU Child Safeguarding Capability Framework

- 1. Nature of abuse and risk factors** - Understands the nature of sexual abuse and other types of abuse experienced by children and young people and factors that influence the risk of abuse occurring
- 2. Child-safe organisational cultures and governance** - Fosters child-safe organisational cultures and environments through leadership, governance, and practice
- 3. Risk-management strategies** - Develops and implements effective strategies that address risks, based on the situational prevention model, and takes appropriate action when concerns and issues arise

- 4. Participation of children and young people** - Facilitates children and young people's engagement in child-centred participatory processes, including those that enable and respond to disclosures and complaints
- 5. Education and prevention** - Applies sex education and sexual abuse prevention models to address the safety needs of children and young people
- 6. Responsive care and support** - Responds appropriately to the ongoing needs of children and young people who have experienced abuse and manages the impact of this abuse on other children and young people, staff, families and the institution/organisation

Monitoring and evaluation – Are organisations improving in their journey of creating conditions of safety for children and young people, as a result of implementation of safeguarding strategies?

Children's Safety Study findings

- Being safe and feeling safe are different
- Lack of safety can be due to their physical, generational, organizational and political vulnerability
- Young people are often skeptical about adults and institutions capacity to keep them safe → varying degrees of help-seeking
- Adults need to actively protect children and young people and responds to their issues and support them to understand and manage safety issues in the context of a supportive relationship.
- Therefore, adults need to understand:
 - how children conceptualise, experience and deal with safety issues;
 - the dynamics of sexual abuse and other safety concerns and proactively engage children and young people
- A lack of confidence in adults and institutions reduces the likelihood of help-seeking and disclosure:
 - Institutions that work with children and young people need to find ways to identify those who don't feel safe and develop strategies to increase their confidence in adults.
 - There is a need to reconsider the nature and scope of education and information provided to children and young people about abuse and dealing with unsafe adults and peers – and it must be informed by the needs of young people of different ages and genders.

'It was good that you talked to us about this stuff and let us have a say ... We had fun and even though it was like serious for bits it was OK because it's something we should talk about and think about and it's good to hear what other people think because we don't talk about this stuff that much.' (YP-3)

Practice tools

To help organisations:

- reflect on—and enhance—practice
- identify ways to prevent harm
- how to respond when children experience abuse
- promote safety and child safe strategies
- engage with children and young people
- empower children & young people.

https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/practice_tools



Situational Crime Prevention

This article by Sam Morley and Prof Daryl Higgins from ICPS discusses the role of situational crime prevention strategies to preventing child sexual abuse in institution.



The gift of childhood

This stimulus paper by Catholic Education South Australia supports the reflection of individuals, schools and other organisations on the gift of children and childhood.



Promoting Safety from Sexual Abuse and Harm in Community Service Organisations

This guide by Dr Tim Moore presents facts about child sexual abuse and activities for staff and volunteers to work through.



Tools and resources for how to support children through child-centred approaches

The tools and resources can be used by services and practitioners to build on current work to work with and support children.



Protective Participation: The Voices of Young People on Safety

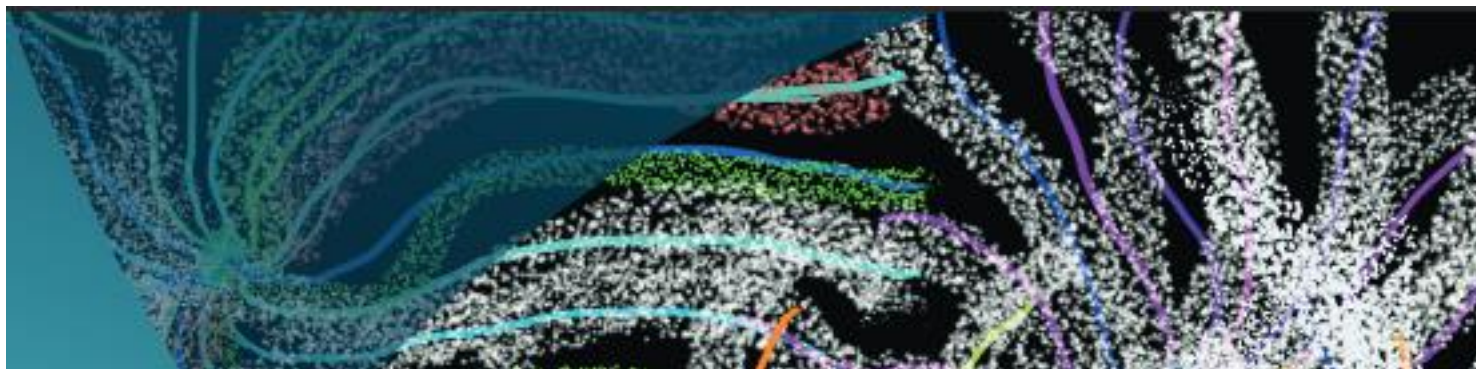
Including children and young people can be difficult when discussing sensitive issues. This tool can help organisations involve children meaningfully

Child-centred theology



Children: Close to the Mystery of God

A CESA Stimulus Paper



https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/practice_tools/articles/the_gift_of_childhood

Primary prevention

Issue 19: McArthur, M., & Saunders, V. (2018). [Opportunities for Prevention: Improving access to information, education and support about child sexual abuse \(PDF File, 880.0 KB\)](#). Issue 19, Research to Practice Series. Canberra: Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australia Catholic University.
<https://www.acu.edu.au/about-acu/institutes-academies-and-centres/institute-of-child-protection-studies/publications/publications-by-format-type/practice-based-publications>

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Research to Practice Series Opportunities for Prevention: Improving access to information, education and support about child sexual abuse

The Institute of Child Protection Studies Research to Practice Series links the findings of research undertaken by the Institute of Child Protection Studies, to the development of policy and practice in the area of child, youth and family welfare.

About the Institute of Child Protection Studies

The Institute of Child Protection Studies at the Australian Catholic University was established in 2005 to carry out high quality research, evaluation and professional development to enhance outcomes for children, young people and families.

Vicky Saunders, Morag McArthur

ISSN 2209-3397

Opportunities for Prevention: Improving access to information, education and support about child sexual abuse

Issue 19 of the ICPS Research to Practice series explores the opportunities for preventing child sexual abuse through improving access to information, education and support; the relevant target groups; and implications for policy and practice. It is based on a study conducted by ICPS for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, which examined the service needs and help-seeking behaviours of professionals, parents, community members and individuals in relation to concerns about child sexual abuse, as well as the functions and effectiveness of existing services. More information about the project is provided at the end of the issue.



The task of culture change

Culture is what people see, do, think, know and feel.

To know if ***culture change*** regarding conditions of safety is occurring, involves measuring the current climate of organisations.

Two key informants for this are:

- Adults' attitudes, knowledge, skills, behaviours and behavioural expectations, and self-efficacy (leaders, staff & volunteers)
- Children/young people's attitudes, knowledge, behaviours and behavioural expectations, and self-efficacy

Self-assessment

<https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/self-assessment>

To help organisations:

- Access evidence-informed assessment tools that help organisations assess and track change over time.
- **The Australian Safe Kids and Young People Survey (ASK-YP Survey)**
- Assess perceptions of safety of young people aged 10+
- **Staff attitudes, skills and behaviours** (in development)
- Assess capability of adults to protectively work with children



Building Capability – learning opportunities

https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au/qualifications_professional_learning

Online learning modules

- Gaining insight
- Leading child safety
- Making kids visible
- Support me to flourish
- Dealing with the tough stuff
- Sustaining child safety

Now available – enrolment is free till June



Click here



Safeguarding Children and Young People Portal > Qualifications and professional learning

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTAL Qualifications and professional learning



We offer a range of postgraduate and professional learning programs to support safeguarding practice and capabilities for individuals and organisations. Participants develop knowledge and understandings of contemporary issues and responses to safeguarding children and young people, and explore the conditions and factors that facilitate or impede child-safe environments.

Postgraduate programs

Graduate Certificate in Safeguarding Children and Young People

Our ACU Graduate Certificate in Safeguarding Children and Young People is a proactive response to the current moral, social and political imperatives to secure the safety and wellbeing of all young people. It gives you the opportunity to develop knowledge and understanding of contemporary issues and responses to safeguarding children and young people, exploring the conditions and factors that facilitate or impede child-safe environments.

Flexible choices for individuals

You can enrol in an award program, or in individual units.



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Register for piloting survey >

The Big Picture

Children and Young People's Safety Project

Safeguarding Portal

ACU's one-stop shop for **resources training and survey tools** to support organisations to develop a culture of safeguarding.

Children's Safety Survey

A survey tool youth-serving organisations can use to measure **children's perceptions** of safety

Safeguarding Capabilities Survey

A survey tool youth-serving organisations can use to measure **staff and volunteers** capabilities to safeguard children

<https://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au>

The Children's Safety Survey

- Developed in partnership with children and young people.
- Focus groups with 110 children and young people across Australia
- Australia's leading children's researchers and expert child protection practitioners provided expertise into the development of the survey
- Designed for children and young people aged 10-18 to complete independently with minimal adult intervention.
- Provides organisations with an opportunity to gain an understanding of children's perceptions of safety.

Elements of the Children's Safety Survey

Elements of the Children's Safety Survey

1. The Australian Safe Kids and Young People Survey

- Child Informed Org Safety Climate
- Sense of Safety*
- Confidence in Adults*
- Barriers to Help Seeking*

*Young people watch an ***animated scenario*** regarding an ***unsafe situation with an adult*** and again with an ***unsafe situation regarding a peer***.

2. The Child Health Utility 9 Dimension (CHU 9D)

- Measures health-related quality of life of children and young
- Currently used in over 190 research projects.

3. The Strengths and Difficulty Questionnaire (SDQ)

- Developed by Robert Goodman (1997)
- Measures 5 factors of well-being
- Cited in over 4000 articles, it is
- Used in the Growing up in Australia study.

Past findings

	Range	Multi-sector findings (2019) Mean	Family Support Service (2018) Mean	Royal Commission (2015) Mean
Child Informed Organisational Safety Climate	0 - 2	1.31	1.69	1.44
Confidence in Adults (Adult scenario)	1 - 5	3.57	4.21	3.66
Confidence in Adults (Peer Scenario)	1 - 5	3.50	4.15	3.62
Barriers to Help Seeking (Adult scenario)	1 - 5	3.49	3.76	3.39
Barriers to Help Seeking (Peer)	1 - 5	3.50	3.73	3.39
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Difficulties)	0 - 30	12.19	13.04	N/A
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (Prosocial)	1 - 5	7.80	7.97	N/A
Quality of Life (low score is better)	1 - 5	2.06	1.76	N/A

Sector comparisons

	Children's Safety Survey					
Organisation	<i>n</i>	CIOSC	CIA-A	CIA-P	BtHS-A	BtHS-P
School	5	1.69	3.74	3.87	4.43	3.71
School	72	1.10	3.51	3.46	3.03	3.16
School	79	1.12	3.36	3.19	3.17	3.30
School	82	1.24	3.55	3.35	3.18	3.14
OOHC		-	-	-	-	-
Sport	5	1.81	3.87	4.33	4.24	4.20
Sport	18	1.62	3.85	3.91	4.01	4.20
Sport	1	1.67	3.86	3.00	3.00	3.00
AHSC	6	1.47	3.82	3.70	3.90	3.52
Faith-based	7	1.48	3.51	3.89	3.70	3.67
Youth Org	55	1.73	4.09	4.00	4.11	4.07
Youth Org	4	1.89	5.00	5.00	4.71	4.89

Correlations with children's wellbeing

- Better perceptions of safety (all aspects) in youth-serving organisations are associated with positive wellbeing in young people.
- The relationship between wellbeing and perceptions of safety is most significant in the education sector

The Safeguarding Capabilities Survey

Youth-serving organisations can use data to identify learning and professional development needs in relation to safeguarding children.

The Safeguarding Capabilities Survey:

- provides a means of understanding and measuring the capabilities of staff and volunteers to safeguard children and young people.
- Allows the collection of data enabling reflection upon safeguarding practices and tailor specific policies, procedures and training programs
- can be implemented on multiple occasions to identify whether organisational change efforts are contributing to improvements

Elements of the SCS

1. Organisational Culture

- Awareness of safeguarding policies, procedures and practices.
- explore awareness of policies that affect the participant directly,
- expectations of leadership in creating an organisational culture of safety

2. Confidence to act

- The degree to which staff feel confident to implement safeguarding strategies
- Such as:
 - providing support for children and young people to keep themselves safe
 - approaching colleagues when they feel someone hasn't followed a child-safe policy
 - supporting a child/young person may be—or feel—unsafe, and responding

3. Attitudes to prevention

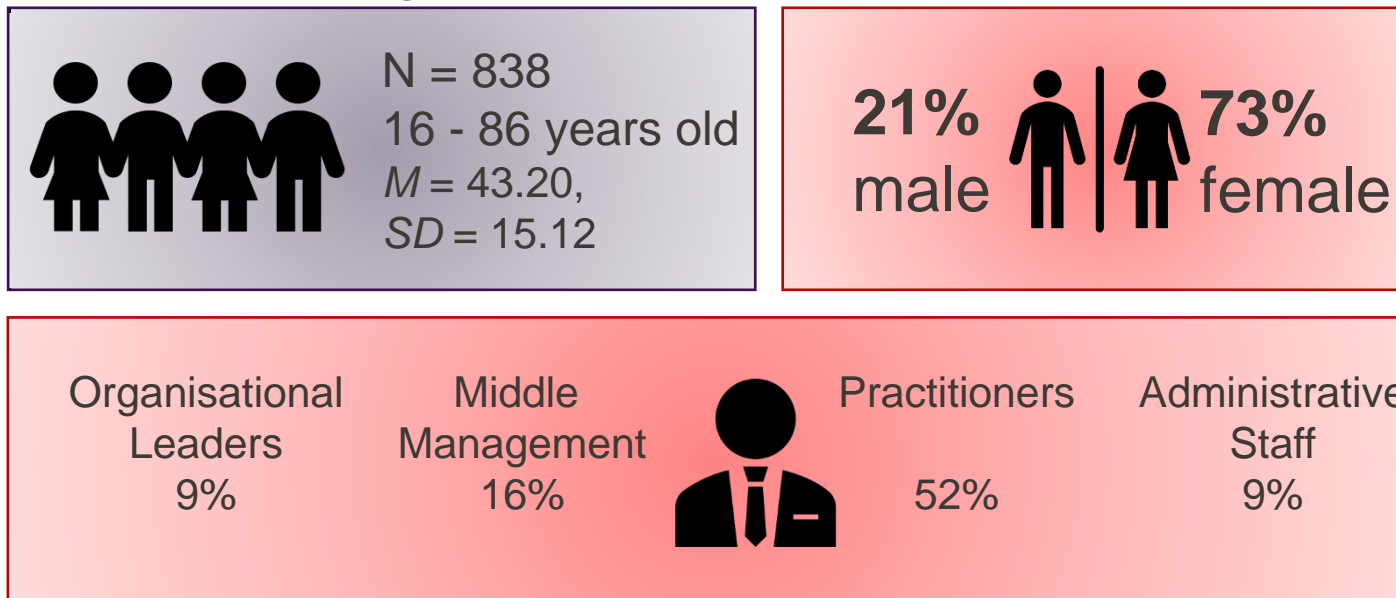
- Attitudes towards the activities that are needed to support prevention of child sexual abuse
- Sense of personal responsibility staff have for prevention activities.
- The role of staff in prevention, as well as that of children and young people

4. Situational Prevention Knowledge

- Knowledge of situational prevention strategies
- Such as:
 - modifying environmental factors to reduce opportunities abuse
 - the education of children/young people and the staff who work with them

Who has taken part so far?

Schools, out-of-home care, sports clubs, youth development clubs,
faith-based organisations



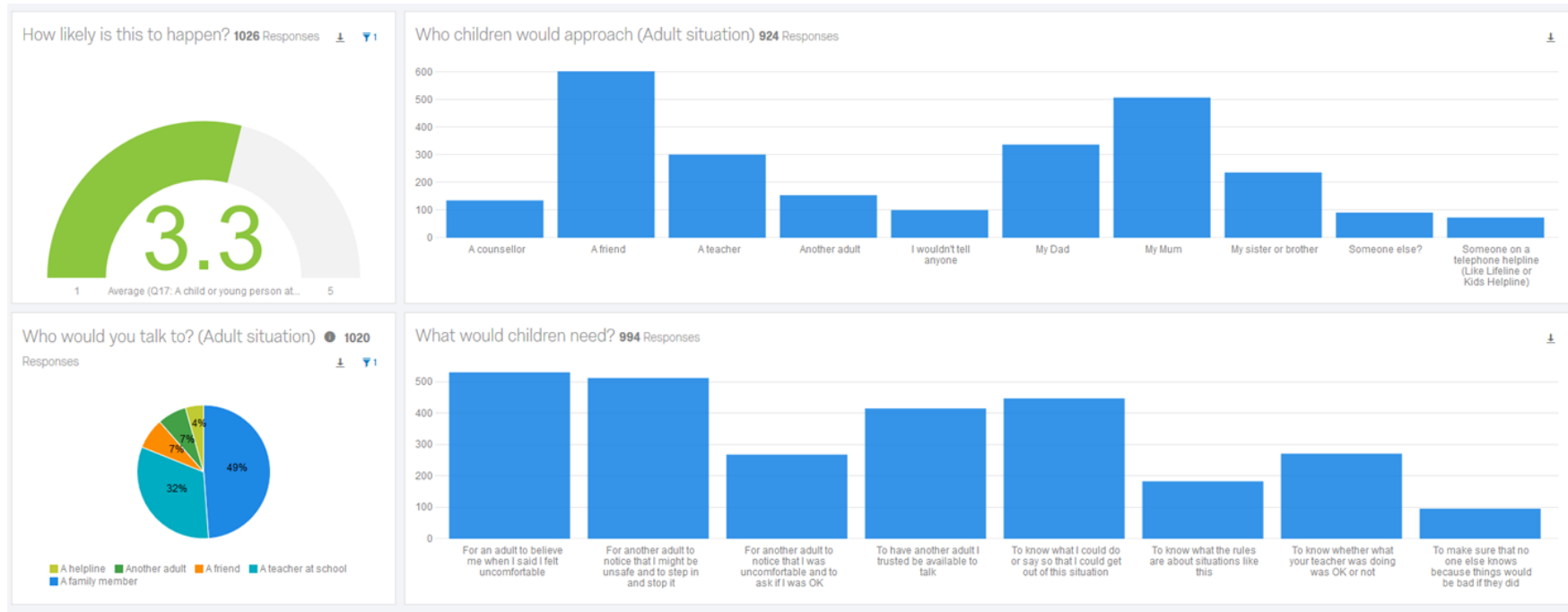
Past findings

	Range	Multi-sector findings (2019) Mean
Organisational Culture and awareness of policies and procedures	1 - 5	4.01
Confidence to act	1 - 5	3.97
Attitudes to prevention and agency of children and young people	1 - 5	4.32
Situational Prevention Knowledge and Education	1 - 5	4.07

Sector comparisons

Safeguarding Capabilities Survey						
Organisation	<i>n</i>	Aware	Conf	Att	Know	Overall
School	51	4.14	3.90	4.42	3.93	12.25
School	48	4.13	4.00	4.34	4.10	12.44
School	16	3.71	3.62	4.29	3.68	11.59
School	60	4.21	4.04	4.27	4.03	12.34
OOHC	66	4.03	4.20	4.49	4.14	12.83
Sport	10	3.62	3.71	4.55	4.15	10
Sport	60	3.47	3.59	4.22	4.03	11.84
Sport	8	4.15	4.01	4.21	3.60	11.82
AHSC	15	3.94	3.90	4.20	4.24	12.34
Faith-based	38	3.97	3.96	4.37	4.18	12.51
Youth Org	228	4.01	3.97	4.32	4.07	12.36
Youth Org	47	4.33	4.29	4.31	4.25	12.85

Dashboard access



Conclusions/Summary

- The surveys can be used by youth-serving organizations seeking to better understand their workforce's capacity to fulfill legal and moral obligations to protect children from institutional child sexual abuse.
- The Children's Safety Survey gives organisations a unique opportunity to engage children as per standards and principles being enshrined in law and supporting giving children and young people a voice
- Organisations taking part in both surveys will be able to identify whether their strategies have an impact on staff and as a result on children and young people's perceptions of safety
- Both surveys have the potential to provide insights regarding how to improve children's well-being as well as their safety

Other resources for creating child-safe organisations

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

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