

CHILD SAFETY



NQF Child Safe Culture Guide

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About this guide

This Guide has been prepared using resources developed by governments and peak organisations across Australia, namely:

- Australian Human Rights Commission
- Commission for Children and Young People, Victoria
- Department of Education and Training, Victoria
- National Office for Child Safety
- NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian
- NSW Department of Education
- The eSafety Commissioner
- ThinkUKnow
- Western Australia Commissioner for Children and Young People

We thank these organisations for their permission to include their information in this publication.

The Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) acknowledges the input of SNAICC, the National Voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children in the preparation of this Guide. In particular, ACECQA acknowledges that this Guide includes information that originally appeared in the SNAICC resource Keeping Our Kids Safe: Cultural Safety and the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.

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Acknowledgement of Country



Artist: Chad Briggs

Area: Brisbane

Title of painting: *Lifelines and Bloodlines*

Lifelines and Bloodlines is an original artwork by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artist, Chad Briggs. To learn more about Chad's background and work please visit his [website](#) or watch his [YouTube](#) video.

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) acknowledges all Traditional Owners and Custodians across Australia.

And the Country, Lands, waterways, skies, and seas to which they are connected.

We recognise the contributions, histories, cultures, knowledges, perspectives of education and care of children with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Using the Child Safe Culture Guide

This guide helps approved providers and their staff to:

- work together to create, maintain and improve a child safe culture
- reflect on their roles and responsibilities in taking these actions.

This guide helps all staff understand and use digital technologies safely with children. It includes:

- approved providers
- nominated supervisors
- service leaders including family day care (FDC) coordinators
- early childhood teachers and educators including FDC educators (collectively referred to as educators)
- support staff including FDC educator assistants
- volunteers
- students on practicum placements
- persons with management or control.

This guide explains how the laws and frameworks listed below work together to create a safe online environment for children:

- [Education and Care Services National Law](#) (National Law)
- [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#) (National Regulations), including the National Quality Standard
- [Approved Learning Frameworks](#) (ALFs), including Early Years Learning Framework V2.0 (EYLF), My Time Our Place V2.0 (MTOP) and Victorian Early Years Learning and Development Framework (VEYLDF).
- [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) (National Principles)
- State or Territory Child Safe Standards (Child Safe Standards).

Approved providers and their services should incorporate key components of this Guide into their existing policies and procedures. The content in the Guide is also relevant when undertaking self-assessment, quality improvement planning and risk assessments, and within their service's ongoing professional development for all staff on child safety.

This Guide helps approved providers and their staff to understand their legal and practical responsibilities to create and maintain a child safe culture, in compliance with the National Law and National Regulations.

As part of the National Quality Framework (NQF), the approved learning frameworks help educators use trauma-informed practices to keep all children safe. They also emphasise the importance of respecting children's rights and explain how to teach all children about body safety in ways that are suitable for their age and development, and are respectful of their cultural backgrounds.

This Guide also helps approved providers and their staff to understand their ethical and legal responsibilities to implement the 10 National Principles and the Child Safe Standards, where applicable, in different states and territories.

Like the National Principles, jurisdictions' mandatory Child Safe Standards provide a framework for making organisations safer for children.

State and Territory Child Safe Standards				
Australian Capital Territory	New South Wales	Queensland	Tasmania	Victoria
	If an organisation is complying with the National Principles, they are deemed to be complying with the NSW Child Safe Standards	Due to come into effect from 1 October 2025 and mandatory from 1 April 2026		11 Child Safe Standards that are legislated for early childhood education and care (ECEC) services

Services must refer to the relevant legislated Child Safe Standards in your jurisdiction and any associated guidance provided by your state or territory, to ensure compliance.

More information about online safety is available in the [NQF Online Safety Guide](#).

Content warning



Information included in the attached guide contains content about child maltreatment, abuse and harm, including child sexual abuse, and may cause distress for some people.

Some of the content of this guide may be difficult for people with lived experience of child maltreatment, abuse, neglect, racism or who have experienced barriers to expressing their human rights or exclusion from an organisation due to their cultural identity. Ensure you or any staff working through this content know how to access support.

If you have concerns about the safety of a child or young person and wish to [make a report](#), details are available on how to report in your state or territory. More information on making a report is also contained in [this guide](#).

If a child is in immediate danger or risk of harm call the police on Triple Zero (000).

If you or someone you know needs support, help is available:

- For support, contact 13YARN on 13 92 76 (at any time, 24/7) or go to 13yarn.org.au.
- Visit Strong Brother Strong Sister at sbssfoundation.org for information and support and mentoring programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people
- For domestic, family, and sexual violence counselling and support, contact 1800RESPECT - Phone: 1800 737 732
- For short-term support if you are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping or staying safe, contact Lifeline - Phone: 13 11 14
- For free professional phone and online counselling for anyone affected by suicide living in Australia, contact Suicide Call Back Service - Phone: 1300 659 467
- Sexual Abuse and Redress Support Service - Phone: 1800 211 028
- [Bravehearts \(support for child sexual abuse survivors\)](http://Bravehearts (support for child sexual abuse survivors)) - Phone: 1800 272 831
- For free 24/7, confidential and private counselling service specifically for children and young people aged 5 to 25 years, contact Kids Helpline - Phone: 1800 55 1800
- For information and support for anxiety, depression and suicide prevention for everyone in Australia, contact Beyond Blue - Phone: 1300 224 636
- For information and support for anyone who is affected by complex trauma, contact Blue Knot Foundation - Phone: 1300 657 380
- For LGBTIQA+ support and referrals- QLife - Support and Referrals - Phone: 1800 184 527
- For counselling and support for Australian men, contact MensLine Australia - Phone: 1300 789 978
- For advice for men about family violence, contact Men's Referral Service - Phone: 1300 766 491
- Your organisation may also have access to an employee assistance program (EAP) – ask your employer for details.

Chapter 1: Building a Child Safe Culture

Chapter 1: Building a Child Safe Culture



Scan QR code to watch the video or use this [link](#)

Introduction

Everyone has a role in keeping children safe in education and care services. A child safe culture promotes children's safety and takes steps to prevent child maltreatment, abuse and neglect. Any allegations or indications of child maltreatment, abuse and neglect are responded to in a timely manner, including reporting to the relevant authorities.

Child abuse is defined by the World Health Organisation as any form of physical and/or emotional ill treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation. This can result in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power. The different types of child maltreatment, abuse and neglect are explored further in this Guide (see [Chapter 4: Protective Behaviours and Child Safe Pedagogical Practices](#))

Approved providers must create and maintain a child safe culture in all aspects of their service, in both physical and online environments. Everyone should be aware of the risks and indicators of child maltreatment, abuse and neglect in their daily practices with children. Strong relationships with children, families, and communities help identify and prevent abuse.

"Protecting children from child sexual abuse starts with a conversation. It starts with adults in children's lives taking up the mantle, understanding the problem, dispelling the myths, and becoming educated on how they can protect their children. Child sexual abuse is preventable, which means right now change is possible."

Alison Geale, CEO of Bravehearts¹

¹ National Office for Child Safety. How to keep children and young people safe (<https://www.childsafe-ty.gov.au/about-child-sexual-abuse/how-keep-children-and-young-people-safe>).

Child safe education and care organisation

A child safe education and care organisation:

- puts children's safety first and promotes their dignity, rights and cultural safety
- proactively identifies, monitors and mitigates child safety risks
- protects children from child maltreatment, abuse and neglect
- responds appropriately to disclosures and suspicions of harm
- embeds a commitment to child safety throughout the organisation
- creates a culture that prioritises reporting, where everyone feels safe to report concerns
- reflects the United Conventions on the Rights of the Child
- aims for children to be active and informed members of their communities, informed by Goal 2 of the [Alice Springs \(Mparntwe\) Education Declaration](#).

Services need to be proactive in creating and maintaining a child safe culture. This can be achieved through both workplace changes (like policies and procedures) and relationship elements (like knowledge and interactions). It is important that services address any attitudes and behaviours to help all children and families (including those with diverse needs and backgrounds) feel safe.



"We can take steps to help children avoid harm and feel safe and confident when they're online. We can do this by paying attention to their online experiences, helping them build skills, using safety features in games and apps, and making it easy for them to ask for help if things go wrong."

eSafety Commissioner²

² The eSafety Commissioner. Protecting children from sexual abuse online (<https://www.esafety.gov.au/parents/issues-and-advice/protecting-children-from-sexual-abuse-online#:~:text=they%20need%20help.,How%20it%C2%A0happens,-Child%20sexual%20abuse>)

Creating a child safe culture in services

To create and maintain safe environments for children, everyone involved in an education and care service should use child safe practices.

Child safe practices, also known as **child safeguarding**, involve proactive measures to ensure that all staff understand their responsibilities in creating a child safe environment, both physically and online, while also supporting children and families within the service. This approach focuses on preventing harm before it occurs.

In contrast, **child protection** involves responding to and addressing instances of child abuse or neglect that have already taken place.

Educators must comprehend both concepts and their respective roles in each. Emphasising prevention and taking early action are crucial to maintaining a safe environment for children.



What does this look like in practice?

For everyone

Organisational culture:

- Understand the different child safety laws and frameworks that apply to the organisation.
- Show commitment to child safety and encourage raising concerns.
- Have policies and procedures to prevent, respond to, and report child maltreatment, abuse and neglect.

- Discuss shared values and behaviours that support child safety.
- Regularly review and reflect on current child safe policies and procedures with all staff.
- Plan for how children’s safety is managed in all service types, including family day care (FDC), Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) and single-educator settings.
- Establish recruitment, induction, and professional development practices that focus on child safety.
- Complete self-assessments and risk assessments of current practices and progress in creating child safe environments (both offline and online).
- Identify areas for improvement and include these in the Quality Improvement Plan.

Practices with children:

- Understand different forms and indicators of child maltreatment, abuse and neglect.
- Talk to children about their rights and how they can raise concerns with adults.
- Respect and seek children’s views and opinions.
- Take any disclosures of child maltreatment, abuse and neglect seriously, and respond using trauma-informed practices.
- Teach children about consent and body safety in an age and developmentally appropriate way, based on the Approved Learning Frameworks. Explain these intentional teaching moments to families beforehand.
- Provide culturally safe and responsive environments for all children, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, culturally and linguistically diverse children, LGBTIQA+ children and children with additional needs.
- Implement preventative practices like effective supervision, appropriate behaviour support and ongoing professional development.

Practices with families and communities:

- Involve families and local communities in creating a child safe culture and offer support (or referrals) when needed.
- Understand your community to recognise when a child may be at risk and implement protective behaviours, including having culturally safe conversations with families that identify factors in the child’s life to decrease risk, for example, kinship ties.

Resources

To access resources related to this chapter, please scan the QR code or click this [link](#).



Scan the QR code to access all the resources from this chapter

Chapter 2: Leadership, policies and continuous improvement

Chapter 2: Leadership, policies and continuous improvement

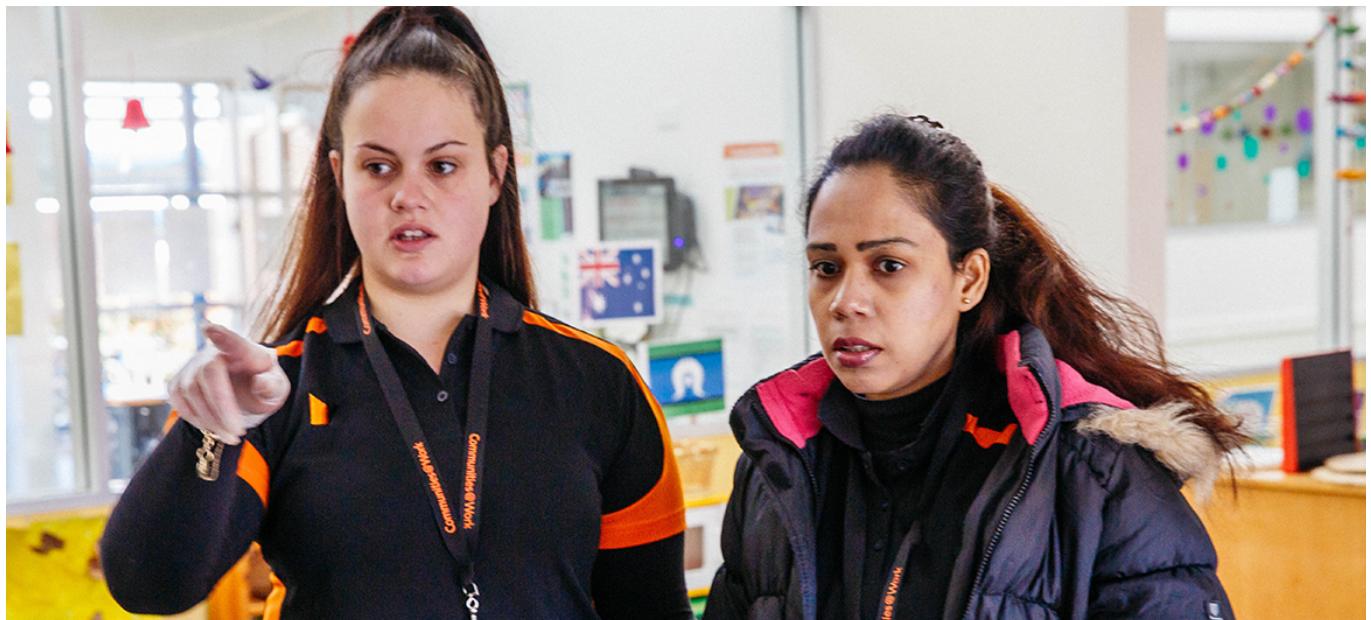


Scan QR code to watch the video or use this [link](#)

Leaders model a child safe culture

A strong child safe culture is underpinned by strong leadership practices and comprehensive policies and procedures, which prioritise children's safety and create a culture of ongoing reflection and continuous improvement.

A child safe culture is championed and modelled by approved providers and service leaders. However, anyone at the service can be a leader and should always advocate for children's safety and ensure child safeguarding practices are in place.



What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Promote the importance of child safety at the service and demonstrate what it looks like, including through discussing and promoting child safe pedagogical practice.
- Lead by example and find ways to improve child safety, including identifying and fixing risks before they become problems.
- Take child safety issues seriously, respond quickly, and ensure all staff and volunteers have the resources they need.
- Create an environment where all staff feel supported and encouraged to raise concerns, making it normal to report issues.
- Consider what professional development opportunities should be made available for all staff at the service to understand and implement child safe practices.
- Be aware that staff may have their own trauma, so provide support like an Employee Assistance Program and inform them ahead of meetings about detailed child safety discussions.
- Consider additional support required for voluntary boards and committees in understanding their leadership role in promoting child safety.

For everyone

- Emphasise child safety throughout the service with regular discussions at team meetings and with children and families.
- Implement and support practices that show the service puts children first.
- Prioritise children’s safety in all communications, including the service’s website, emails, posters, and newsletters.
- Understand and follow the service’s child safe policies and procedures.
- Participate in regular child safety training, including refresher courses.
- Learn about and support [children’s safety online](#).

Service policies and procedures prioritise children's safety



"How do our policies and procedures actually help keep children safe—not just meet compliance?"

Policies and procedures:

- set the expectations and standards for keeping children safe
- explain how to create a child safe environment
- explain how to respond when an incident occurs which compromises child safety.

A list of the policies and procedures required under the NQF is in the [Guide to the NQF](#). ACECQA has [published guidelines](#) for these policies. If you use ACECQA's guidelines, make sure you reflect and adapt them to fit your service's unique context.

Useful Tool available

You can access the ***Child safety policies and procedures checklist*** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers

- Make sure all policies and procedures prioritise children’s safety and include the National Principles and relevant state/territory Child Safe Standards.
- Review child safety policies and practices regularly and get feedback from everyone, including staff, children, families, and the community.
- Understand that policies and procedures are only effective when everyone knows and follows them.
- Include these policies and procedures in staff induction processes and ongoing professional development opportunities.
- Consider conducting a survey to check if all staff understand the service’s policies and procedures
- Use the [Child Safe Culture Risk Assessment and Self-Assessment tool](#) to reflect on your service’s policies and procedures and child safe practices. More information on this is available under [Continuous improvement](#).

The Code of Conduct

Every service must have a Code of Conduct (Code) ([regulation 168\(2\)\(i\)\(i\)](#)). This Code provides guidelines for how staff and volunteers should behave, both with other adults and with children. Relationships between everyone at the service should be based on respect, fairness, and equality. Good relationships help create a positive environment for children and families.

The Code of Conduct should:

- explain the expected behaviour, attitudes, and responsibilities of everyone at the service
- cover the use of both physical and online environments
- encourage reporting of any issues
- clearly state what happens if there is a breach of the Code.

There are many resources to help create a Code of Conduct, like the Early Childhood Australia [Code of Ethics](#) or the Australian Human Rights Commission [Code of Conduct for child safe organisations](#).

Services may also consider creating a Code of Conduct for children and families (with children), so they understand appropriate behaviours that keep them safe.

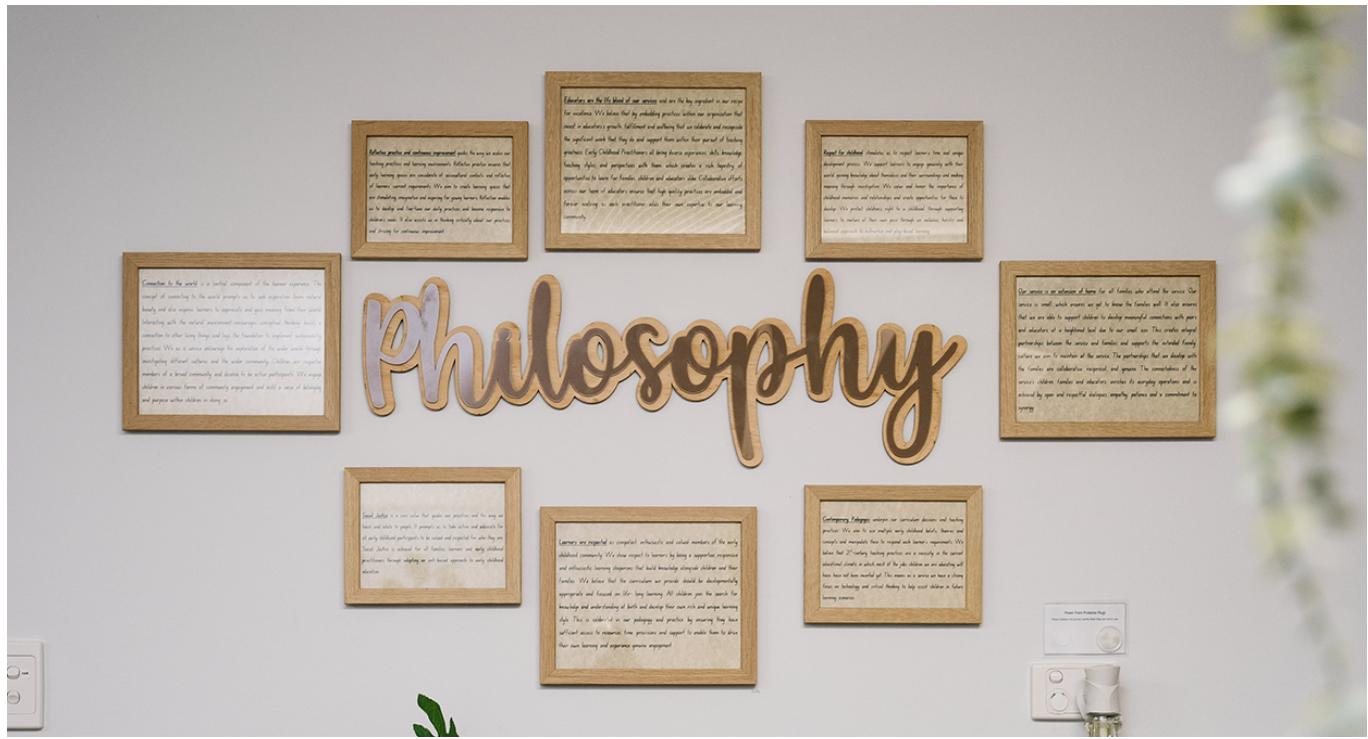
What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Make sure the Code of Conduct is easy to access and understand.
- Include the Code in induction and training for all staff.
- Use the Code to guide ongoing discussions about child safety.

Service philosophy

Every service must have a Statement of Philosophy that guides its operations. This statement should show a clear commitment to child safety.



What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers

Base the Statement of Philosophy on:

- [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) and/or state/territory Child Safe Standards (where applicable)
- The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#).

For everyone

- Follow the Statement of Philosophy and its commitment to child safety.
- Help review the Statement of Philosophy, so everyone feels it belongs to them.

Continuous improvement

To keep children safe, services need to regularly review and improve their child safety practices.

Continuous improvement means being:

- open and willing to learn from mistakes
- curious about feedback and working with the community to improve.



Useful Tool available

You can download the ***Child Safe Culture Self-assessment and Risk assessment tool*** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

What does this look like in practice?

For everyone

- Embed a culture of continuous improvement at the service to make the service a safe place for children. Include everyone at the service (including staff, children, families and communities) in continuous improvement practices.
- Make risk assessments a regular part of Quality Improvement Plans and improving child safety at the service.
- Consider strategies to manage times when staff are alone working with children (for example, FDC services or single-educator models).
- Use complaints or incidents to reflect on responses and improve the service's practices, policies and procedures.

Case Study – Supporting educators



Supporting educators

Tameeka is an early childhood teacher for 3-year-olds at a preschool co-located on a school site. Last week, she went to a conference and learned about child safety and how important it is to listen to children and include their voices as active citizens in the service. When she got back, she wanted to make some changes in her room. She talked to her coworker, Toby, about her ideas to help children share their opinions. Toby liked this suggestion but wasn't very excited about making it a big part of their program. Tameeka talked to Chris, the educational leader, and they looked at the Early Years Learning Framework V2.0 to find ways to help children feel more empowered across the service.

Two weeks later, there was a team meeting to review 6 policies. Tameeka chose to work on the Child Safety Policy. After reading it, she noticed some important things were missing, like who to talk to if she needed to raise a concern or make a complaint about a coworker and how to make sure children know they are safe. She also saw that the policy was copied from another preschool and has not been changed to suit the service.

Tameeka talked to Stacie, the deputy principal and Nominated Supervisor, and they made a plan:

1 – Monthly Child Safety Topics

- Each month, they will talk about different safety topics, like:
 - the difference between child protection and child safety
 - how children know they are in a safe place
 - educators' knowledge about child abuse and reporting
 - tips to show everyone that the preschool is a child safe space.

2 – Reviewing Policies and Procedures

- They will update the policies to match their preschool's values by:
 - asking children to draw pictures of what makes them feel safe and including these in the policy
 - asking families about their thoughts on child safety.
- adding practical steps to improve safety, like:
 - putting up posters to show children how to report concerns
 - being clear about supervision practices
 - adding safety messages to sign-in systems and digital communications
 - defining everyone's roles in keeping children safe.

Working with local Aboriginal Elders to involve them in child safety plans.

3 – Sharing Ideas

Tameeka will talk to other educators from the conference to get more ideas.

4 – Team Meetings

They will discuss how to implement the changes to the policy.

5 – Quality Improvement Plan

They will add the new child safety plan to their continuous improvement practices.

Tameeka also wants to become a child safety champion, and likes the saying “child safety is everyone’s business.” She plans to:

- talk about her new safety ideas with her colleagues, even though this may be a difficult topic to share
- ask questions at team meetings to help everyone think about their practices
- share useful information with her colleagues.

Questions to guide reflection on practice

These questions help you think about what you're doing well and what you can improve.

For approved providers and service leaders

- What steps do approved providers and service leaders take to promote child safety, and how do they share this with all staff (including relief educators or agency staff), volunteers, children, families, and the community?
- How does everyone at the service demonstrate that they are a champion for child safety? Discuss examples of how this can be seen in attitudes, behaviours, and actions?
- How does the service prioritise child safety in its policies and procedures?
- When complaints are received or issues arise, how does the service reflect on these and use them as an opportunity to improve its policies and procedures?
- How do approved providers and service leaders encourage continuous improvement in child safety at the service?
- How is child safety included in the service's Quality Improvement Plan and self-assessment processes?
- What does child safe leadership look like, including by educators who are not service leaders?



Family Day Care guidance

- How are FDC educators, who often work alone with children, supported to be involved in the service's review and continuous improvement process in relation to effective risk management?

Useful Tool available

You can access the **Questions to guide reflection on practice** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

Resources

To access resources related to this chapter, please scan the QR code or click this [link](#).

There are several tools available for this chapter. You can access these in the Tools section on the next page or select each link below if you are using the web version of this PDF.

[Questions to guide reflection on practice](#)

[Child Safe Culture self-assessment and risk assessment tool](#)

[Child safety policies and procedures checklist](#)



Scan the QR code to access all the resources from this chapter

Chapter 2: Resource tools

To access tools related to this chapter, please scan the QR code or click this [link](#).



Scan QR code to access Chapter 2 tools

Leadership, policies and continuous improvement

These questions help you think about what you're doing well and what you can improve.

For approved providers and service leaders

- What steps do approved providers and service leaders take to promote child safety, and how do they share this with all staff (including relief educators or agency staff), volunteers, children, families, and the community?
- How does everyone at the service demonstrate that they are a champion for child safety? Discuss examples of how this can be seen in attitudes, behaviours, and actions?
- How does the service prioritise child safety in its policies and procedures?
- When complaints are received or issues arise, how does the service reflect on these and use them as an opportunity to improve its policies and procedures?
- How do approved providers and service leaders encourage continuous improvement in child safety at the service?
- How is child safety included in the service's Quality Improvement Plan and self-assessment processes?
- What does child safe leadership look like, including by educators who are not service leaders?
- How are family day care educators, who often work alone with children, supported to be involved in the service's review and continuous improvement process in relation to effective risk management?

Child safety policies and procedures checklist

Leadership, policies and continuous improvement

A list of the policies and procedures required under the NQF is in the [Guide to the NQF](#).

ACECQA has published [guidelines](#) for these policies. If you use ACECQA's guidelines, make sure you reflect and adapt them to fit your service's unique context.

The below checklist can be used to review your service's policies and procedures, using a child safety perspective:

Include policies and procedures required under the National Regulations about providing a child safe environment, including:

- the promotion of a culture of child safety and wellbeing within the service, and
- the safe use of online environments at the service ([regulation 168\(2\)\(h\)](#)).

Identify the responsibilities and actions of the approved provider, service leaders, all staff, and volunteers.

Explain the process for raising concerns about practices that put children at risk.

Include information about reporting obligations and processes for everyone regarding allegations of maltreatment, child abuse, or neglect.

Embed child safety in all aspects of the service's operations.

Provide opportunities for children to share their thoughts on safety issues.

Ensure policies promote equity and respect diversity when considering the safety of all children.

Support all staff to implement practices that help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families feel culturally safe, ensuring that their rights, including cultural rights, are reflected in practice.

Ensure children with additional needs have their rights reflected, to be implemented by all staff.

Ensure children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds have their rights reflected, to be implemented by all staff.

Ensure children and young people who identify as LGBTIQA+ have their rights reflected, to be implemented by all staff.

Decide if child safety concepts should be in one document or spread across many, based on the service's needs.

Include information about building child safe online and physical environments.

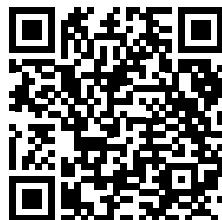
Make sure child safe practices are part of all staff's routines, especially when leaders and educators change.

Include preventative and protective actions to support child safeguarding.

Make sure any other organisations providing services to children at the service know and follow the service's policies and procedures.

Chapter 3: Child's voice and cultural safety

Chapter 3: Child's voice and cultural safety



Scan QR code to watch the video or use this [link](#)

Promoting children's voices and cultural safety

Approved providers, service leaders, and educators are professionals who have a deep understanding of children. They follow the Approved Learning Frameworks (ALFs) to respect all children's voices and ways of communicating, celebrate diversity, and embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in their work with children and families.

The approved learning frameworks support children's rights and safety, promoting their wellbeing and abilities as active citizens. They reflect the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, recognising children's right to play and be involved in decisions affecting their lives.

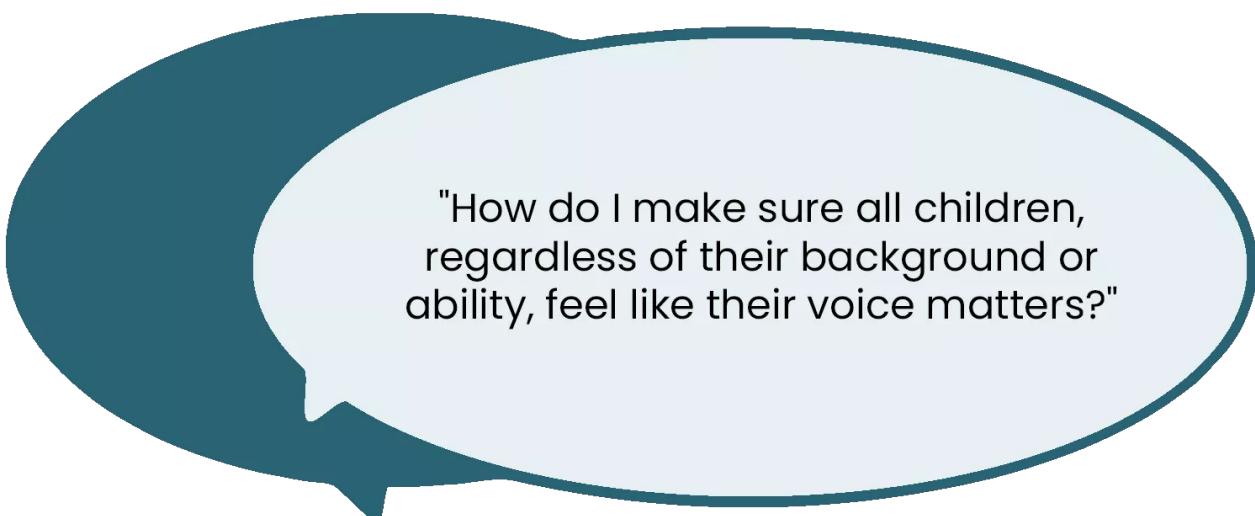


Developing children's voices

When educators ignore non-verbal and verbal 'no's' from children, it teaches children they have no control and reinforces learned helplessness making them more vulnerable to abuse.

NSW Department of Education³

Educators are uniquely positioned to observe children's development, interactions and behaviour, to identify any issues of concern and help keep them safe. They encourage children's voices and promote their agency.



"How do I make sure all children, regardless of their background or ability, feel like their voice matters?"

It's important for children to know that the service is committed to keeping them safe and to have access to information and programs about safety. This helps children recognise safe places and understand how they are protected. In such safe places, children feel comfortable making decisions and sharing their thoughts and concerns.

Children have the right to be heard, listened to, and believed. A child safe organisation asks for children's opinions about decisions that affect them in ways that respect their age, development, and cultural background. Children should be encouraged and supported to regularly share their thoughts and feel confident to report problems, especially if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Making sure children know their voice is important and will be believed is a key part of a child safe culture and helps them feel like active members of their community.

Resources like the [Empowerment and Participation Guide](#) provides further ideas and strategies for engaging children in age and developmentally appropriate ways.

³ NSW Department of Education - [Implementing the Child Safe Standards](#): A guide for early childhood education and outside school hours care services.

What does this look like in practice?

For service leaders

- Provide children with information and feedback about how the service keeps them safe.
- Help children to understand appropriate interactions between educators and children and know who to report to if they see something wrong or makes them feel uncomfortable.
- Provide resources or pathways for children and families to access support services when needed.
- Provide training and resources on how to manage a disclosure of maltreatment, abuse or neglect by a child or young person.

For educators

- Support children to feel safe when interacting with educators and other children.
- Provide a range of opportunities for children to feel valued and empowered to make choices and solve problems during their time at the service.
- Listen to and respect children's voices and non-verbal cues.
- Support children to raise concerns if they feel unhappy or unsafe and act upon their concerns.
- Use visual cues and simple language to explain behaviour expectations
- Demonstrate positive communication, like using calm voices, respectful listening, and acknowledging feelings.
- Acknowledge children's feelings and help them name emotions using resources, pictures, feelings charts etc
- Have quiet, calm areas where children can go if they're feeling overwhelmed or where they can talk to an educator in private.
- Comfort children when they're upset and guide them through problem-solving.

For everyone

- Know how to respond to a disclosure of maltreatment, abuse or neglect by a child or young person.

Empowering children

Empowering children to voice their concerns provides a service with feedback which can be used to prioritise areas for improvement. When children are involved in age-appropriate decision-making, they are empowered to see that their contributions are meaningful.

A child safe culture puts children at the centre of all decisions, for example, believing what children say and ensuring a child's perspective is considered when making decisions. The approved learning frameworks recognise that children and young people have unique capabilities, experiences and views that can help make services child safe. Ignoring these strengths can disempower children. An education and care service may be the only place in a child's life where their thoughts, ideas and words are valued and listened to.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Create, promote and model a respectful, child safe culture, where children's views are always listened to, including their right to say 'no'.
- Provide training opportunities for educators to reflect on the cultural rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- Provide training opportunities for educators to reflect on and support culturally and linguistically diverse children, LGBTIQA+ children and children with additional needs.
- Make public statements showing the service's commitment to empowering children.
- Challenge any staff bias and stereotypes to prevent child and family disempowerment.

For educators

- Provide time for children to express themselves, clarify what they mean and provide feedback.
- Empower children by encouraging them to express their views and feelings, to have a voice, and be involved in decision making.
- Ask for children's views in developmentally appropriate ways, recognising children's preferred ways of communication.
- Explain the context of a situation to children, ask them questions in different ways, and give them different opportunities to contribute.
- Support children to develop skills to handle problems and challenges and build their confidence.

- Support each child's participation in a range of learning experiences and respect their right not to participate.
- Use child friendly programs to teach children about their rights.
- Help children identify trusted educators, adults and friends.
- Discuss safety and encourage children to talk about what makes them feel safe.
- Teach body safety and respect for personal space.
- Educate children about acceptable behaviour in both physical and online environments.

Practical ways to empower children

- Be aware of and respond to infants' verbal and non-verbal cues like smiles, gestures, and discomfort.
- Ask infants' permission throughout the day, for example, before checking or changing their nappies and picking them up.
- Let children decide the rules of a game and play by those rules.
- Offer children real choices and respect their decisions.
- Respect a child's choice to not join a game or activity.
- Encourage children to express negative feelings and acknowledge them.
- When children share concerns, stop and listen attentively.
- Give children chances to make choices or give feedback on activities.
- Provide feedback to children on how their views influenced decisions.
- Provide children with opportunities to have input into the development or review of policies and procedures.



Outside School Hours Care guidance

- In OSHC settings, encourage positive peer relationships and leadership by:
 - using a buddy system for new children
 - offering activities that include pair or small group work led by children and young people, such as planning activities and projects.

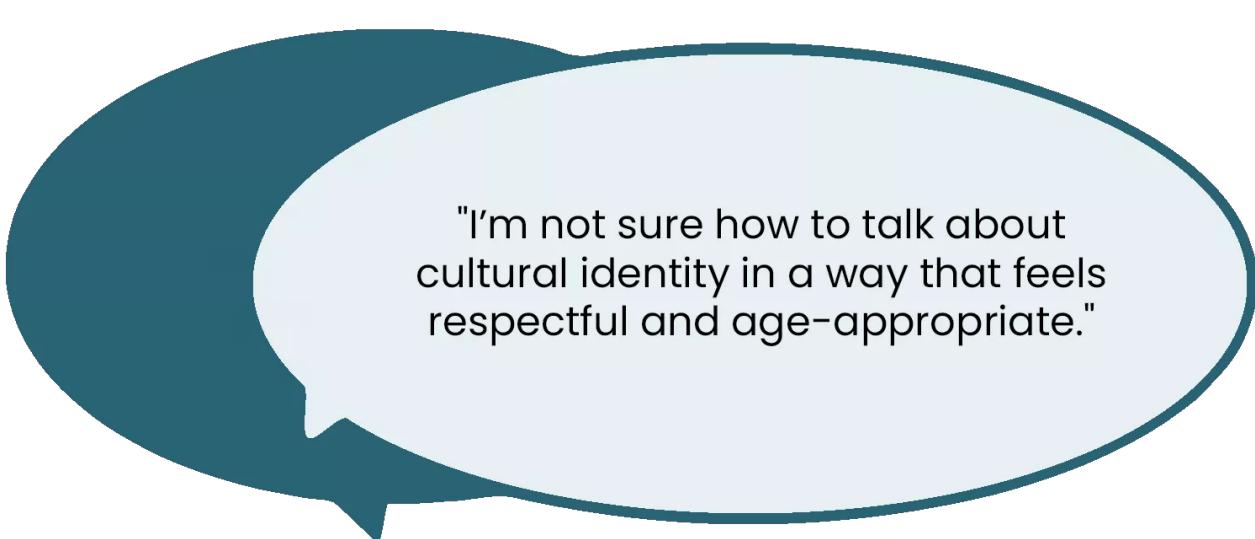
Demonstrating equity and respect for cultural diversity

An essential component of a child safe environment is cultural safety and security, where educators work in culturally sensitive ways, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being, knowing and doing. In this way, educators value the experiences and contributions of children, families and staff with culturally diverse backgrounds.

The [Children and Young People's Commissioner in Victoria](#) has identified that some children are more likely to face disempowerment, discrimination, abuse or harm, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- children from diverse cultural backgrounds, including refugees
- LGBTIQA+ children
- children with additional needs.

Children from diverse backgrounds may be more vulnerable and need extra care. For example, the [Telethon Kids Institute](#) has identified that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children might not report abuse due to a lack of cultural safety and/or a fear of authorities intruding into their families and communities, based on historic experiences of systemic racism, forced removal, bias and abuse. Asylum-seeking families may also need extra support due to past experiences with authorities.



"I'm not sure how to talk about cultural identity in a way that feels respectful and age-appropriate."

Services committed to equity and culturally safe practice ensure all children can participate. Educators do this by creating inclusive environments and making reasonable adjustments to meet each child's needs.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Provide child-friendly materials in different languages and formats to promote inclusion.
- Make sure all children know how to make a complaint.
- Champion inclusive approaches that respect all children's rights and diverse needs.
- Work with educators to reflect on and address any intentional or unintentional discrimination and exclusion at the service.

For everyone

- Ensure children see their identities and cultures reflected in the service's learning environment.
- Respect and celebrate diversity in all forms, including culture, gender, abilities, and family structures.
- Undertake training to recognise and respond to the diverse needs of the service's community.
- Actively discourage discrimination against children, families and educators on the basis of culture, gender, age, sexuality, disability or religion.

Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures

It's everyone's responsibility to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and perspectives in services, even if no children from these backgrounds are enrolled.

Establishing a culturally safe organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children requires an ongoing commitment by everyone in the organisation to:

- reflect on their attitudes and practices
- challenge their biases and assumptions
- actively contribute to building an anti-racist and inclusive place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



The guiding principles of the National Law, along with the approved learning frameworks, make it clear that educators should use inclusive teaching practices to create culturally safe places for children and families. Services are encouraged to engage with their local community to ensure their child safe approach reflects the diversity of the children, families and communities they serve.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Regularly reflect on how the service embeds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and identify ways to improve.
- Seek guidance from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, Elders and community members to ensure their perspectives are reflected in your service's Statement of Philosophy, policies and procedures and Quality Improvement Plan.

For everyone

- Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to see themselves, their identities and their cultures reflected in the service's learning environment.
- Listen to and act on the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.
- Create a culturally safe environment where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children feel respected, heard and empowered to speak up.
- Use children's preferred forms of communication, like drawing and pictures, to share their ideas.
- Include a daily Acknowledgement of Country and regular Yarning Circles with children, families and community members.
- Include local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and language learning, including through visual resources.

Case Study – Supporting educators



Helping Lyle find his voice

Saxton is an experienced family day care educator. A new child, Lyle, who is 4 years old (and appears shy, quiet and rarely talks), starts attending his residence.

Saxton notices that Lyle's mother, Tilly, and his older sister, Elise, do many things for him and don't talk to him about their actions or engage him regularly in conversation. To encourage Lyle's autonomy, Saxton decides to focus on supporting Lyle's language skills and building his confidence:

- Saxton watches Lyle's body language throughout the day to understand his feelings about different experiences or routines.
- He takes his time and waits for Lyle to respond when asked questions.
- At mealtimes, Saxton offers Lyle choices, like banana or apple, and encourages him to talk about foods that he likes and doesn't like.
- Saxton reads stories about emotions and includes these in play.
- He describes his own feelings to model emotions for Lyle.

Throughout the day, Saxton gives Lyle choices in play activities and daily routines, like what and when to move to another activity or what to carry to the car at pick up time (artwork, shoes, hat, etc). Over time, Lyle responds positively to being able to make these choices, share his opinions and express how he is feeling.

Tilly notices Lyle communicating more at home, such as saying when he doesn't like something and asking for help with tasks. Saxton shares his strategies with Tilly and explains the benefits of offering Lyle choices to support his developing confidence and autonomy. They agree to model conversations asking Lyle about the activity he is doing and encouraging him to express what he would like to do next, to empower Lyle to use his voice.

Saxton and Tilly respect Lyle's choices and continue to support his language development and growing independence.

Questions to guide reflection on practice

These questions help you think about what you're doing well and what you can improve.

For approved providers and service leaders

- How does the service show that it values children, their rights, and their views?
- How does the service make Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families and staff feel culturally safe?
- How do approved providers and service leaders support educators to work with children and families with different cultures, genders, ages, abilities, neurotypes, sexualities, family structures and religions?
- How does the service celebrate diversity?
- How does the service actively discourage discrimination against children, families and staff?
- How can you safely challenge any biases in educators' interactions that discourage children from voicing their opinions?

For educators

- How do you identify and plan for children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage?
- How do you help children communicate their views and needs?
- How do you adapt to the diverse needs of children?
- How do you promote children's rights and encourage positive discussions about diversity?
- How do you make sure all children have equitable opportunities to participate and share their views?
- How do your and other educators' practices engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in ways that reflect their identities and their cultures in the service's learning environment?
- How are children of all ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds included?
- How do you help children understand and describe their feelings?

Useful Tool available

You can access the **Questions to guide reflection on practice** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

Resources

To access resources related to this chapter, please scan the QR code or click this [link](#).

There are several tools available for this chapter. You can access these in the Tools section on the next page or select each link below if you are using the web version of this PDF.

[Questions to guide reflection on practice](#)



Scan the QR code to access all the resources from this chapter

Chapter 3: Resource tools

To access tools related to this chapter, please scan the QR code or click this [link](#).



Scan QR code to access Chapter 3 tools

Questions to guide reflection on practice



Child's voice and cultural safety

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- How are children of all ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds included?
- How do you help children understand and describe their feelings?

Chapter 4: Protective behaviours and child safe pedagogical practices



Content Warning: This chapter includes information on child maltreatment, abuse and harm, which may be distressing for some people. If you or someone you know needs support, [help is available](#).

Chapter 4: Protective behaviours and child safe pedagogical practices



Scan QR code to watch the video or use this [link](#)

Protective behaviour and child safe pedagogy

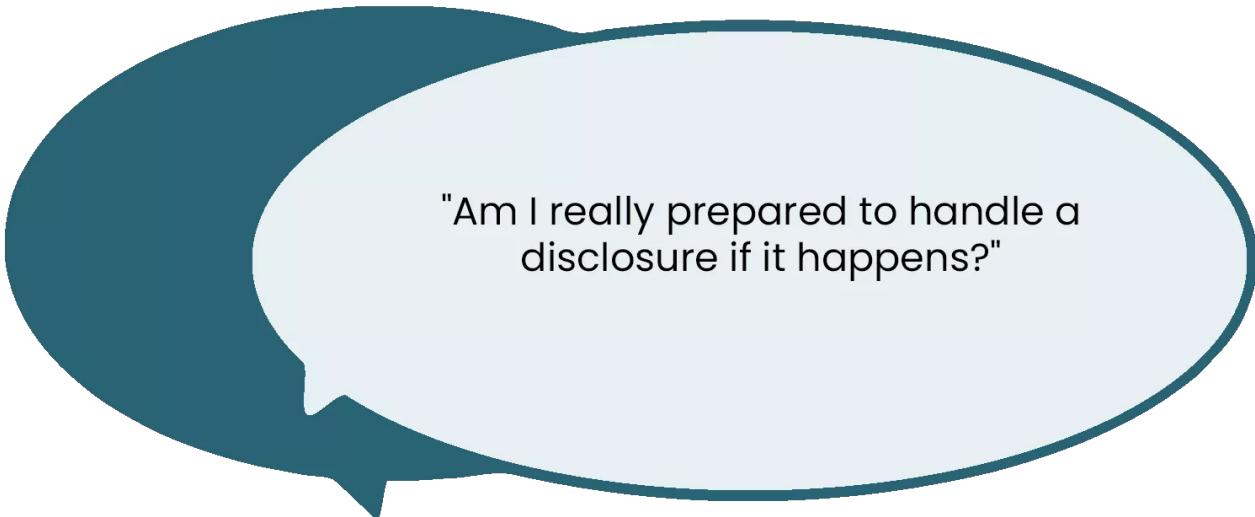
The NQF aims to keep children safe, healthy, and happy in education and care services. This happens when leaders give clear guidance to educators on how to work collaboratively with children and promote their independence.

Trauma informed care

Educators need to understand:

- trauma-informed care
- effective supervision and monitoring
- appropriate and inappropriate discipline
- child maltreatment and abuse
- grooming
- online abuse.

Educators should keep learning about child safety beyond their NQF qualifications. This helps them use the latest practices in trauma-informed care and continue to reflect on how their teaching pedagogy supports child safe practices. The approved provider should also ensure that staff qualifications, knowledge and competencies across the service are sufficient to support the child safe culture of the service and support all children.



"Am I really prepared to handle a disclosure if it happens?"

Support for [children experiencing vulnerability](#) should be strengths-based and culturally safe, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from diverse backgrounds, children with disabilities, and other children who may be experiencing vulnerability. These children may need extra support due to their circumstances. For example, the [Telethon Kids Institute](#) has identified that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children may be less likely to talk to staff at the service about issues that worry them or to disclose child abuse because of fear of authorities intruding into their families and communities, based on historic experiences of systemic racism, forced removal, bias and abuse.

A trauma-informed approach means understanding how traumatic experiences affect people and being careful with how information is shared and responded to. It aims to protect individuals from further harm. [Kids First Australia](#) has identified that well-informed and supported educators are more likely to follow child safe practices and report concerns.

Receiving reports of harm can be distressing. Educators, staff, and volunteers need to know where to get support and how to help their colleagues. Comprehensive training on child safety issues is important but can be tough for some, especially survivors of abuse.

Identifying child maltreatment, abuse and neglect



See [support](#) page if help is needed when reading this section.

A child safe service supports educators, staff, and volunteers to recognise signs that a child may be experiencing maltreatment, abuse, or neglect.

Sometimes a child will tell someone if they are being harmed, however all educators, staff, and volunteers must be attuned to and watch for changes in children's behaviour, emotions, or physical appearance.

Child abuse is defined by the [World Health Organisation](#) as any form of physical or emotional mistreatment, sexual abuse, neglect, or exploitation that harms a child's health, survival, development, or dignity in a relationship of trust or power.

Types of abuse

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is when someone uses physical force against a child, causing injuries like cuts, bruises, burns, fractures, harm, pain, breach of dignity or even death, or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, harm, pain, or breach of dignity. It includes actions like biting, hitting, kicking, pushing, shaking, throwing, burning, or pulling hair.

Note: an act can still be physical abuse if it doesn't cause an "injury", if it causes pain/breach of dignity/emotional harm.

Emotional and/or psychological abuse

Emotional and/or psychological abuse can be a single incident or a compounding pattern of incidents where a family fails to provide an emotionally supportive environment. Emotional and psychological abuse includes:

- acts of rejection such as ignoring the child or withholding affection
- isolating the child from social interaction
- terrorising or threatening the child to induce fear
- corrupting the child by encouraging antisocial or deviant behavioural patterns
- non-physical forms of hostile treatment, such as verbally abusing, ridiculing, belittling or discriminating against the child

- neglecting the child's medical, mental and educational needs
- involving the child in or exposing them to domestic violence
- when a family or carer fails to provide an emotionally supportive environment or engages in non-physical acts (e.g. through comments or through excluding them) which convey to a child that they are worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted or endangered.

Emotional and/or psychological abuse is associated with every type of abuse. Whether children and young people are victims of physical or sexual abuse or neglect, they are always impacted emotionally and psychologically. Emotional and/or psychological abuse can happen in person or online, for example, through cyberbullying.

Family and domestic violence

Family and domestic violence is behaviour by a person towards a family member of that person if that behaviour is:

- physically or sexually abusive
- emotionally or psychologically abusive
- economically abusive
- threatening or coercive
- controlling or dominating, causing fear for safety.

Family violence also includes behaviour that causes a child to witness or be exposed to these actions. The child may be directly targeted or may witness the violence.

Neglect

Neglect is a failure to provide conditions that are necessary for the healthy development and wellbeing of the child, and can include physical neglect, emotional neglect, educational neglect and environmental neglect.

Signs of child maltreatment, abuse and neglect

There are a range of signs that may indicate a child has experienced or is experiencing maltreatment, such as physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, or exposure to family and domestic violence. However, these signs are not definitive and can also be associated with other developmental, psychological, or environmental factors. Every child is different and may respond or present in their own unique way, so it is important to consider the broader context and seek guidance when concerned.

Useful Tool available

These signs are listed in the ***Common signs of child maltreatment, abuse and neglect tool***. This list is not exhaustive, and some signs may indicate more than one type of abuse. For example, bruising and injuries may indicate physical harm, but may also be present in cases of sexual abuse and grooming. You can find this tool in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

In all states and territories, educators are mandatory reporters and must report if they think a child is being maltreated, abused, or neglected. If an educator is concerned about a child's physical state or behaviour, even if they haven't seen or been told about abuse, they should still take action. This can include talking to a service leader about how to report and support the child. It should be noted that telling someone at your service does not mean you no longer need to report to an external authority.

Practical examples of child abuse that can sometimes be missed include:

- talking to a child in a sexually explicit way
- grooming a child for future sexual activity (both offline and online)
- forcing a child to watch pornography
- witnessing family and domestic violence
- not providing enough nutrition, supervision, or medical care, putting the child's development at serious risk

Child sexual abuse



The [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#) defines child sexual abuse as any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standard.

Sexually abusive behaviours can include:

- the fondling of genitals
- masturbation
- oral sex
- vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or any other object
- fondling of breasts
- voyeurism, exhibitionism
- exposing the child to or involving the child in pornography.

It includes child grooming and manipulative behaviours, which refer to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child, to lower the child's inhibitions prior to, during and following sexual contact with the child.

A myth is that people often think child abuse is only done by strangers or immediate family members. However, the fact is children can be abused by any family member or someone else known to the child in a position of power, like educators, coaches, or family friends.

Useful Tool available

You can access the ***Myths and facts about child abuse tool*** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

Myths and facts about child sexual abuse

There are many [myths about child sexual abuse](#). Perpetrators may use these myths to hide their actions or threaten children to keep the abuse secret. It's important to know the facts to identify and prevent risks to children.

Indicators that may suggest a risk of abusive behaviour in adults

Family Members:

- One parent trying to alienate the child from another parent.
- Overprotective, controlling or volatile relationships.
- Child reluctant to be alone with certain family members.
- Child and sibling behaving inappropriately with each other, for example, like girlfriend and boyfriend.

Any Adults:

- Touching a child inappropriately.
- Befriending the child's parents and visiting their home.
- Undermining the child's reputation, so that the child won't be believed.
- Bringing up sexual topics with the child.
- Giving the child special treatment or gifts.
- Inappropriate contact through calls, emails, or social media.

Identifying and reporting inappropriate adult conduct

- Educators, staff, and volunteers should watch for signs of adults engaging in abuse or grooming.
- Report concerns if you feel uncomfortable about an adult's behaviour with children, including if you:
 - suspect they may be engaging in sexual abuse of one or more children
 - suspect they are grooming the child or other adults, to engage in sexual activity
 - reasonably believe they are at risk of engaging in sexual activity with one or more children.
- This may include residents or assistants in a family day care setting. You do not need to wait until you have evidence or proof that they are undertaking child abuse or harm.

Grooming

The National Office for Child Safety defines grooming as intentional behaviours that manipulate and control a child, as well as their family, kin and carers, other support networks, or organisations in order to perpetrate child sexual abuse.

Grooming, through manipulative behaviours, is when an adult prepares a child for sexual abuse. Perpetrators may sexually abuse children by using manipulative behaviours or strategies as part of a process commonly involving prosocial behaviours violating personal boundaries, to obtain sexual contact with children in the periods prior to, during and following sexual contact. Grooming can happen in person or online. It is a sexual offence and must be reported.

Online child grooming is the process of establishing and building a relationship with a child or young person while online, to facilitate sexual abuse that occurs either in person or online. This is achieved through use of the internet or other technologies, such as phones, social media, gaming, chat and messaging apps.

The intent of grooming is to:

- gain access to the child or young person to perpetrate child sexual abuse.
- obtain sexual material of the child or young person.
- obtain the child or young person's trust and/or compliance.
- maintain the child or young person's silence, and/or
- avoid discovery of sexual abuse – which may include undermining the reputation of children or their parents to help avoid suspicion if allegations are made.

The [National Office for Child Safety](#) has identified the following examples of grooming:

- Building trust with special attention or gifts
- Treating the child like an adult
- Gaining the trust of the child's family
- Isolating the child from supportive people
- Coercing or manipulating the child including to produce child sexual abuse imagery
- Non-sexual touching of the child that develops into sexual behaviour over time.

People who manipulate and groom children may also groom members of the service they are involved with, or individuals around the child such as educators, volunteers and family members. They do this to be seen as safe and trustworthy.

People who sexually abuse or manipulate and groom children can silence a child to try and stop them disclosing the abuse by:

- telling them it's their fault and they will get in trouble
- making it difficult for them to let someone know
- telling them no one will believe them
- normalising overly intimate contact
- threatening them.



"How do I support staff to notice and report early warning signs—without creating a culture of fear?"

Approved providers and their service leaders should provide educators with training and resources so they can identify conduct that, on its own, does not constitute grooming or abuse. Repeated instances of this conduct may reveal a pattern of behaviour that indicates there is a risk to children. These instances may include, for example:

- being alone with a child when there is no professional reason for doing so
- spending time with a child outside an organisation
- offering children privileges, rewards, gifts, benefits and favouritism
- sharing inappropriate images (however, any images that meet the state or territory's reportable conduct thresholds, for example those of a violent or sexual nature, should be reported immediately).

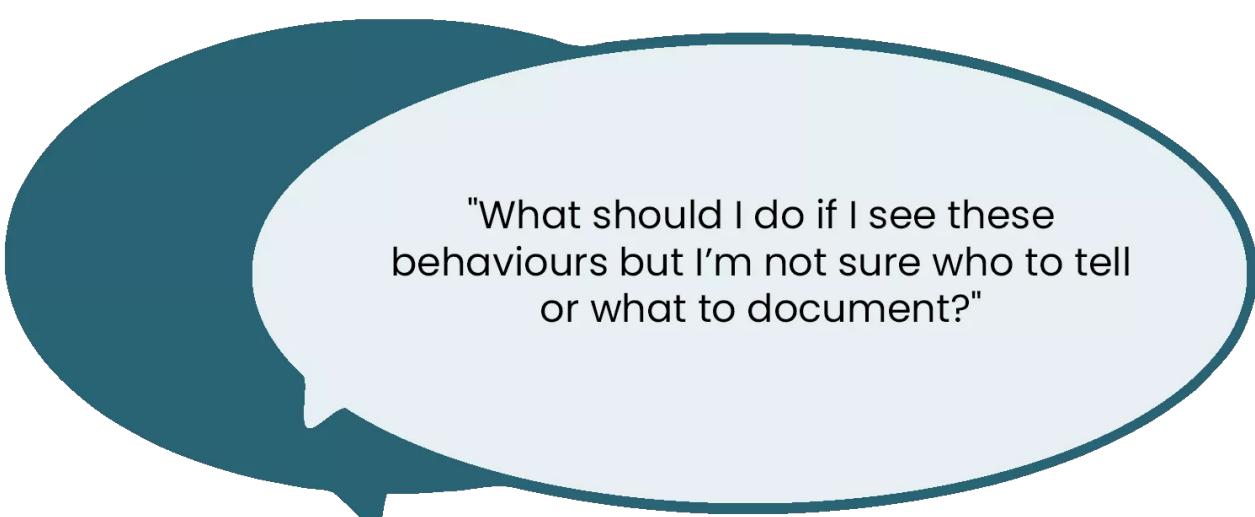
Concerning or harmful sexual behaviours displayed by a child

Children's sexual development includes curiosity about their bodies and sexual identity.

Sexual behaviours displayed by children and young people that fall outside what may be considered developmentally, socially, and culturally expected, may cause harm to themselves or others, and occur either face to face and/or via technology.

Sexual development is normal. It begins from birth and continues throughout childhood and adolescence. It involves physical and biological changes, as well as changes in sexual knowledge, including beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. Educators should support this as part of a child's overall development, teaching respect, dignity, and safety from an early age. Services should share information with families about what their child will learn about body safety and violence prevention.

Children under 16 cannot legally consent to sexual activities. This age is higher in some states and territories. It is important that children who have displayed concerning or harmful sexual behaviours are not viewed in the same way as adults who perpetrate sexual abuse. When these behaviours involve another child or young person, this may include a lack of consent, reciprocity, mutuality and involve the use of coercion, force or a misuse of power.



"What should I do if I see these behaviours but I'm not sure who to tell or what to document?"

See the information sheet [Child Protection Guide Traffic Lights Sexual Behaviours](#) for an overview of how to monitor and respond to sexual behaviours displayed by children and young people. It explains reasons for specific behaviours, suggested responses and provides case studies.

How to identify and respond to children who have displayed concerning or harmful sexual behaviours

For everyone

- Listen and respond to all safety concerns, including undertaking reporting requirements in your state/territory.
- Understand and undertake professional development about the difference between developmentally expected sexual behaviour and concerning or harmful behaviour.
- Support children to feel comfortable to talk about their sexual development, body safety and to disclose concerns. Teach them about respect, dignity and safety from an early age.
- Respond to concerns about sexual behaviours, even if they seem typical.
- Tailor responses to the child's needs and circumstances.
- Engage and include the child's family or support network in responses as appropriate.
- Identify local support agencies for help that is age-appropriate for children and families.
- Understand that children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours are not the same as adult perpetrators of sexual abuse and respond appropriately.
- Recognise that not all children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviour have been sexually abused.
- Use strengths-based language when referring to children and young people who have displayed concerning or harmful sexual behaviours, to avoid stigmatising or labelling children.

Protective behaviours, practices and places support children

Protective behaviours are the ways educators intentionally help children learn how to be safe and handle unsafe situations.

Protective practices and systems keep children safe, for example, the National Law and Regulations, National Quality Standard (NQS), National Principles, Child Safe Standards (where they apply), and the service's child safe policies and procedures. The pedagogical practices educators implement in their daily interactions and learning environments with children should be child focussed and underpinned by a trauma-informed approach.

Educators also need to make sure the service environment is safe and consider how adequate and active supervision supports a child safe environment, including: where equipment is placed, play spaces in secluded areas or rest rooms with limited ease of view, window coverings (including with children's artwork) and supervising online activities.

It's really important to think about how to keep children safe in single educator services and family day care settings, as these environments may pose unique risks, for example during rest periods or when children may need to undress, such as to remove wet clothing after water play.



Supervision in education and care settings

Approved providers, nominated supervisors, staff, volunteers, and family day care educators must ensure that no child being educated and cared for by the service is subjected to any form of corporal punishment or any discipline that is unreasonable in the circumstances (section 166 of the National Law).

For advice on what constitutes inappropriate discipline and what is required under the National Law and Regulations, see the [ACECQA Information Sheet: Inappropriate Discipline](#).

How supervision keeps children safe

Approved providers, nominated supervisors and family day care educators must ensure all children being educated and cared for by the service are adequately supervised, including during excursions and on transportation provided or arranged by the service (section 165).

Educators need to know where their colleagues are within the service and how this may affect their supervision of children.

It's important to actively supervise children, especially when they move around or change activities.

The design and layout of the service's environment and supervision practices of educators help with keeping children safe. Organising activities, trips, and schedules carefully can support effective supervision. For example:

- actively engaging with children's play
- minimising situations where educators are alone with children
- knowing when certain children will require additional support for particular activities
- making sure windows aren't covered, to avoid blind spots
- closely watching interactions in playhouses and bathrooms.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Include supervision practices in policies and review after incidents.
- Discuss supervision strategies regularly with educators including family day care educators.
- Assess risks in physical and online environments to agree supervision strategies and create supervision plans.
- Ensure all educators know their supervision roles.

For educators

- Communicate and work together to effectively supervise children.
- Consider children's needs for privacy in developing effective supervision strategies.
- Understand different supervision needs for individual children, and the group dynamics.
- Use various supervision skills and practices, like positioning in relation to children and other educators and monitoring noise, stress or activity levels while maintaining engagement with children.
- Maintain the required educator-to child ratios at all times, including during transitions like toileting or meal breaks.
- Conduct regular headcounts, especially during indoor/outdoor transitions.
- Consider if wearing high-vis vests, wristbands or other strategies can assist to easily identify children and educators, for example when on excursions.



Family Day Care guidance

- In family day care, adjust supervision practices for children of different ages, who may also be in different parts of the approved area.



Outside School Hours Care guidance

- In outside school hours care, have supervision practices that show respect for the age range of children going to and from bathrooms and during transitions.

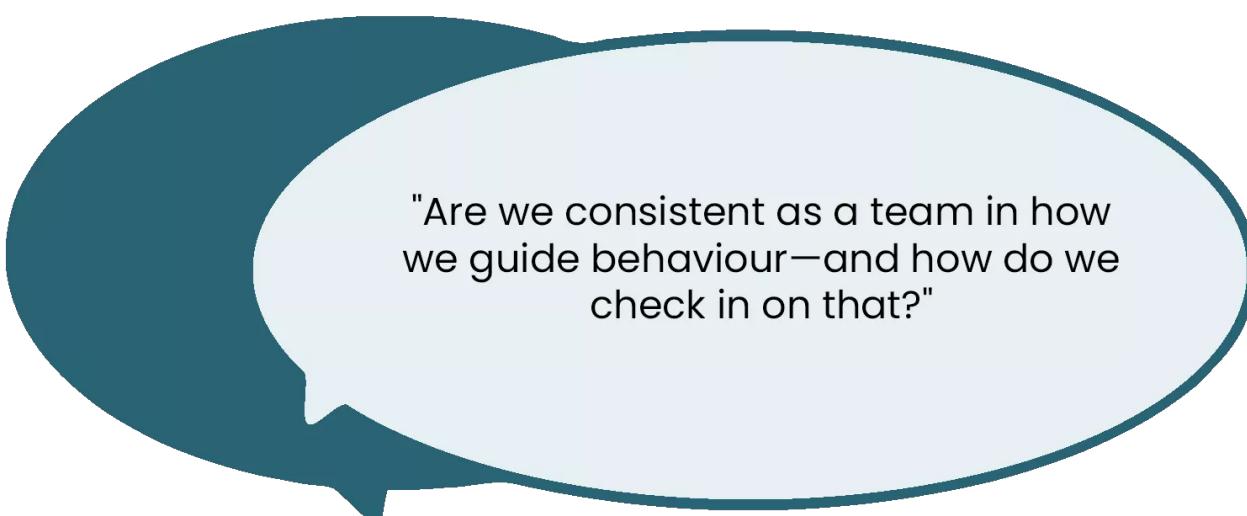
Appropriate behaviour guidance

Educators who see each child as capable and competent, with the right to be heard and make decisions, help to build a child safe service. Building trusting relationships helps children feel secure.

Regulations 155 and 156 require the approved provider to take reasonable steps to ensure educators:

- encourage children to express themselves
- allow children to undertake experiences that develop self-reliance and self-esteem
- maintain children's dignity and rights
- give each child positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour
- have regard to children's family and cultural values, age, physical and intellectual development and abilities, and
- provide children with opportunities to interact and develop respectful and positive relationships with each other, staff members and volunteers at the service.

When implementing the approved learning frameworks, educators can promote protective behaviours and children's 'Belonging, Being and Becoming' (or similarly through the VEYLDF) by supporting children to learn how their and others' behaviours and actions affect themselves and others. Using a positive approach to guide behaviour helps children learn to regulate their own actions and develop social skills.



"Are we consistent as a team in how we guide behaviour—and how do we check in on that?"

Inappropriate discipline in education and care settings

Approved providers, nominated supervisors, staff, volunteers, and family day care educators must ensure that no child being educated and cared for by the service is subjected to any form of corporal punishment or any discipline that is unreasonable in the circumstances (section 166 of the National Law). For advice on what constitutes inappropriate discipline and what is required under the National Law and Regulations, see the [ACECQA Information Sheet: Inappropriate Discipline](#).

What does this look like in practice?

For service leaders

- Work with educators to create a strong team that builds caring and responsive relationships with children and families.
- Think about and improve the service’s policies and strategies to support positive behaviour.
- Encourage educators to discuss and critically reflect on their teaching pedagogy and how it supports child safe practice.

For educators

- Set up the learning environment, guided by the approved learning frameworks, to support children’s social and emotional skills.
- Be proactive in guiding children’s behaviour positively.
- Understand each child’s feelings and help them manage their emotions.
- Support individual needs by creating behaviour plans for children with additional needs.
- Plan for the inclusion of every child, including those who may have diagnosed behavioural or social challenges.
- Respond positively to children who seek attention.
- Work with leaders to get extra support for children when needed, for example, through the [Australian Government’s Inclusion Support Program](#).

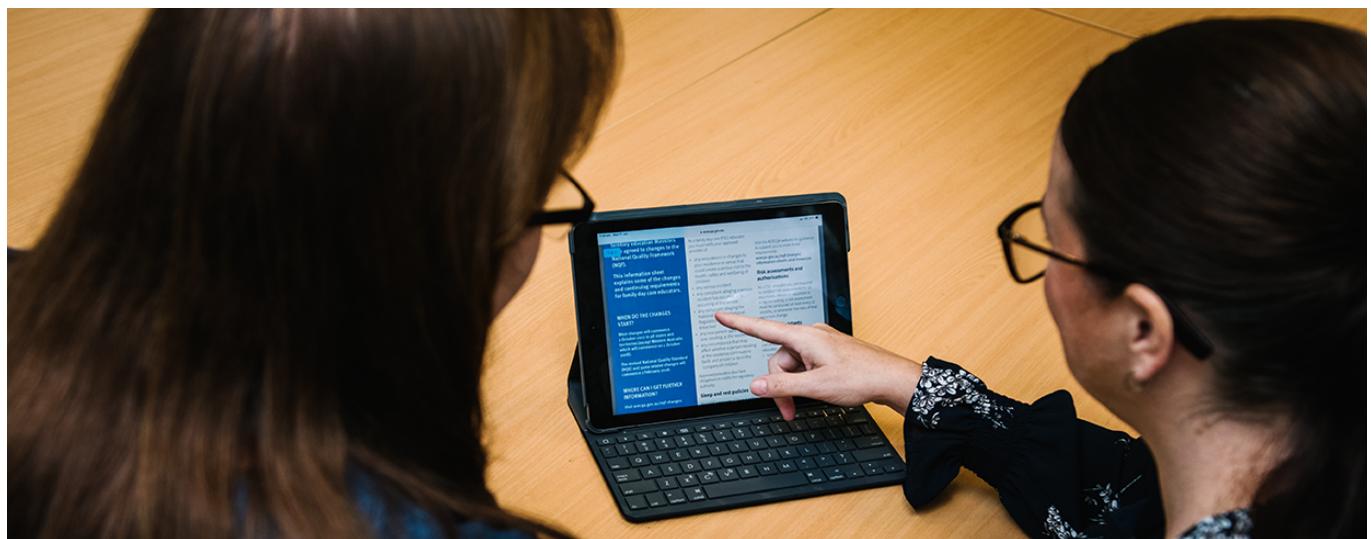
How leadership can support educators to keep children safe

Leaders should find and share up-to-date knowledge, resources, and training on how to identify, understand, report, and respond to child maltreatment, abuse and harm.

This includes teaching children appropriate behaviour and supporting them with strategies that respect their dignity and rights.

Leaders should be able to respond quickly to incidents involving children showing warning signs of abuse or neglect. It's important to know the reporting pathways in your state or territory.

Leaders set the expectations and model behaviours for educators to develop respectful teaching, build responsive relationships, and create a child safe environment.



What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Provide regular training on child safety policies and evidence-based practices, including cultural safety.
- Create a safe space for educators and volunteers to report harm or risks to children.
- Ensure everyone knows the signs of child maltreatment abuse and their reporting obligations.

Case Study – Supporting educators



Teo's plan for better child safety training

Teo is the new OSHC Coordinator for a regional service run by a Board of parent volunteers. He notices that only educators working directly with children undertake regular child safety training. The Board, the administrative assistant, and short-term volunteers and students do not get this training.

Teo talks to educators and finds that the current training is not helpful or relevant to their service's diverse community. He remembers a conversation with an educator, Sanje, who was uncomfortable talking about child safety. Teo thinks about [research showing that many children experienced child sexual abuse](#) (1 in 3 girls and 1 in 7 boys in Australia) and realises some of his team might have experienced trauma themselves. He understands he doesn't need to know everyone's personal story to create a trauma-informed approach to the service's leadership practices.

Teo makes a plan to improve the training for everyone at the service. He will:

1 – Discuss with the Board:

- Highlight the need for everyone to get training on the service's child safety policies and procedures, reporting, complaint handling, cultural safety, service philosophy, and Code of Conduct.

2 – Change Training Structure:

- Use child safety professionals from an approved training organisation to deliver training.
- Make training sensitive to participants' individual needs.
- Promote the Employee Assistance Program through emails, team meetings, flyers, and conversations.
- Provide content warnings before training sessions and offer alternative ways to access the information.

3 – Learn More:

- Learn how to have safe conversations with educators and recognise signs of distress.

4 – Team Meetings:

- Include a regular agenda item on effective supervision and organising environments to minimise times when educators are alone with children.
- Focus on online safety, including the use of devices, in OSCH settings.

5 – Feedback:

- Create an anonymous online survey for feedback on training effectiveness.

6 – Volunteers and Students:

- Include a video from the training organisation as part of their induction process.

Questions to guide reflection on practice

These questions help you think about what you're doing well and what you can improve.

For approved providers and service leaders

- How do educators know what inappropriate behaviour by other adults looks like?
- How can educators be supported and build confidence for reporting concerns or asking for help with reporting?
- How do educators know what behaviours are appropriate or inappropriate by children?
- How are staff supported when they feel overwhelmed by a child's behaviour? Is there a policy to guide this?
- If a child has an inclusion or behaviour management plan, how are educators supported to follow and review it regularly?
- How do you know educators understand positive behaviours and child safe environments?
- How do you know educators respect the dignity and rights of all children?

For educators

- How are you consistent with your language and behaviour towards all children?
- How do you check your expectations for children are appropriate for the child's age and development?
- How do you know how children are feeling at the service? What do challenging situations look like for them?
- How do your mood or bias affect your reactions to children and others?
- How do your experiences, beliefs, and attitudes influence how you guide children's behaviour?
- What opportunities do children have to help make decisions about rules and expectations in relation to their own and others' behaviour?
- How do you work with families and other professionals to ensure behaviour guidance strategies include all children and enable them to fully participate?

Outside School Hours Care guidance



- For school-age children, how do you build partnerships with their school to:
 - Promote a consistent approach to guiding behaviour?
 - Provide engaging and educational activities offering activities that include pair or small group work led by children and young people, such as planning activities and projects?

Useful Tool available

You can access the **Questions to guide reflection on practice** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

Resources

To access resources related to this chapter, please scan the QR code or click this [link](#).

There are several tools available for this chapter. You can access these in the Tools section on the next page or select each link below if you are using the web version of this PDF.

[Questions to guide reflection on practice](#)

[Common signs of child maltreatment, abuse and neglect](#)

[Myths and facts about child abuse](#)



Scan the QR code to access all the resources from this chapter

Chapter 4: Resource tools

To access tools related to this chapter, please scan the QR code or click this [link](#).



Scan QR code to access Chapter 4 tools

Protective behaviours and child safe pedagogical practices

These questions help you think about what you're doing well and what you can improve.

For approved providers and service leaders

- How do educators know what inappropriate behaviour by other adults looks like? How can educators be supported and build confidence for reporting concerns or asking for help with reporting?
- How do educators know what behaviours are appropriate or inappropriate by children?
- How are staff supported when they feel overwhelmed by a child's behaviour? Is there a policy to guide this?
- If a child has an inclusion or behaviour management plan, do educators follow and review it regularly?
- How do you know educators understand positive behaviours and child safe environments?
- How do you know educators respect the dignity and rights of all children?

For educators

- How are you consistent with your language and behaviour towards all children?
- How do you check your expectations for children are appropriate for the child's age and development?
- How do you know how children are feeling at the service? What do challenging situations look like for them?
- How do your mood or bias affect your reactions to children and others?
- How do your experiences, beliefs, and attitudes influence how you guide children's behaviour?
- What opportunities do children have to help make decisions about rules and expectations in relation to their own and others' behaviour?
- How do you work with families and other professionals to ensure behaviour guidance strategies include all children and enable them to fully participate?
- For school age children, how do you build partnerships with their school to:
 - promote a consistent approach to guiding behaviour
 - provide engaging and educational activities.

Protective behaviours and child safe pedagogical practices

Physical signs

- Bruises, cuts, or burns, especially in unusual places or shapes or may resemble an object.
- Broken bones or injuries that don't match the explanation.
- Injuries to private body parts (e.g. bruising, bleeding, infection or anything causing pain to go to the toilet).
- Wearing clothes that hide injuries, even if it's not the right weather.
- Sexually transmitted diseases or frequent urinary tract infections (e.g. child showing distress or avoidance at toilet time, or pain or other physical indicators when changing nappies).
- Appearing dirty or unwashed,
- Regularly hungry, tired, or lacking energy.
- Health problems that aren't being treated.
- Delays in talking, emotional, mental, or physical development.
- Injuries from a lack of parental supervision.

Behavioural signs

For infants and toddlers:

- Self-stimulatory behaviours, for example, rocking, head banging.
- Crying excessively, or not at all.
- Listless and immobile and/or emancipated and pale.
- Significant delays in gross motor development and coordination.

For all children:

- Telling someone about abuse or showing it in drawings or writing.
- Unlikely explanations for injuries or not remembering how they happened.
- Sudden changes in behaviour, like becoming nervous, depressed, or aggressive.
- Not wanting to go home or being afraid of a family member.
- Fear of physical contact with adults.
- Inappropriate sexual behaviour for their age.
- Talking about or attempting self-harm or harming others.
- Possessing expensive items given by a "friend."

Common signs of child maltreatment, abuse and neglect

- Acting like a caretaker for family members.
- Being overly compliant or passive.
- Being very demanding or aggressive.
- Low tolerance for frustration.
- Poor self-image and low self-esteem.
- Unexplained mood swings or depression.
- Behaving in ways that are not appropriate for their age.
- Poor social skills and lack of friends.
- Eating a lot when food is available or not eating when very hungry.
- Begging for or stealing food.
- Being overly friendly with strangers.
- Poor attendance at school or education and care services.

These indicators have been sourced from the [Victorian Government](#) can be shared with educators and volunteers to identify risk of harm to children.

Challenging myths about child abuse and sexual abuse to children with facts

Protective behaviours and child safe pedagogical practices

Approved providers and service leaders can help all educators, staff and volunteers in the service understand the difference between facts and myths about child sexual abuse through discussions and training. This helps keep children safe.

Child abuse myths and facts

Myth: Children make up stories about sexual abuse.

Fact: Children should be believed and disclosures taken seriously.

Myth: If a child didn't say "no" or try to stop the abuse, they are partly to blame.

Fact: Children are never to blame for abuse.

Myth: Children invite sexual abuse by acting seductively.

Fact: No child wants to be abused.

Myth: Children can misinterpret and wrongly accuse an adult of sexual abuse.

Fact: Children's disclosures should be taken seriously.

Myth: Children aren't affected by domestic violence if they don't see it happen.

Fact: Children can be affected even if they don't see the violence.

Myth: Evidence from a child is less reliable than from an adult.

Fact: Children's evidence is important and should be trusted.

Myth: If a child retracts their statement, they must be lying.

Fact: Children might retract their statements due to fear or pressure.

Myth: The parents are at fault for the sexual abuse and should have protected their child.

Fact: The perpetrator is always responsible.

Myth: Sexual abuse can't happen in an education and care service.

Fact: Abuse can happen anywhere, including in education and care services.

Myth: Strangers pose the greatest risk to children.

Fact: Most perpetrators are known to the child.

Myth: People who abuse their own children are not a danger to other children.

Fact: Perpetrators can harm other children too.

Myth: Incest and child abuse only occur in poor families.

Fact: Abuse can happen in any family.

Myth: Some children enjoy sexual attention from adults, and it won't harm them.

Fact: Sexual abuse is always harmful to children.

Myth: Incest or child abuse is acceptable in some cultures.

Fact: Abuse is illegal and harmful across Australia.

Myth: If child abuse is reported, the child will be removed from their family.

Fact: Reporting abuse aims to protect the child.

Myth: Sexual abuse is not harmful to children; it's the fuss that causes problems.

Fact: Sexual abuse is very harmful to children.

Myth: Children are safe and can't be abused online.

Fact: Children can be abused online.

Facts about child sexual abuse

These facts help challenge the myths about child sexual abuse:

- Children may demonstrate problematic or harmful sexual behaviour towards other children.
- Children may act differently if they have been sexually abused.
- The more times a perpetrator has abused children, the more likely they are to do it again.
- Perpetrators often abuse children because they have access and opportunity, not just because of attraction.
- Some children who are abused might not seem upset and might even act warmly towards the perpetrator.
- Some acts of sexual abuse might not leave any physical signs.
- There is a higher risk of abuse by a sibling in families with violence, harsh discipline, neglect, and exposure to pornography.
- There is a strong link between domestic violence and higher rates of child sexual abuse, especially by family members.
- Children might only feel safe to tell about abuse after their parents separate.

For further information about myths about child abuse, visit [Bravehearts](#) or the [Queensland Government](#).

Chapter 5: Recruitment

Chapter 5: Recruitment



Scan QR code to watch the video or use this [link](#)

Use child safe recruitment practices

Hiring people who are committed to children’s safety helps services create, maintain, and improve child safe environments.

Use child safe recruitment practices to hire everyone, including service leaders, educators, and other staff. This means both permanent and temporary, full-time, part-time, casual staff, and contractors.

Child safe recruitment practices help approved providers and services find people who fit their child safe culture, and understand the risks of hiring the wrong person. They also help people applying for roles understand how to support the service’s child safe environment.

The recruitment process

Why is it important?

A thorough recruitment process will provide:

- a sense of the values and practices of an applicant
- insights into attitudes toward children and behaviours they use to interact with children
- an understanding of how an applicant may develop and maintain relationships with children and colleagues
- a full understanding of their suitability and associated commitment to children and their safety, including carefully checking their work history and following up any child safety concerns
- how the applicant’s views align with the service’s Code of Conduct, Statement of Commitment to Child Safety, Statement of Philosophy and child safety policies and procedures.



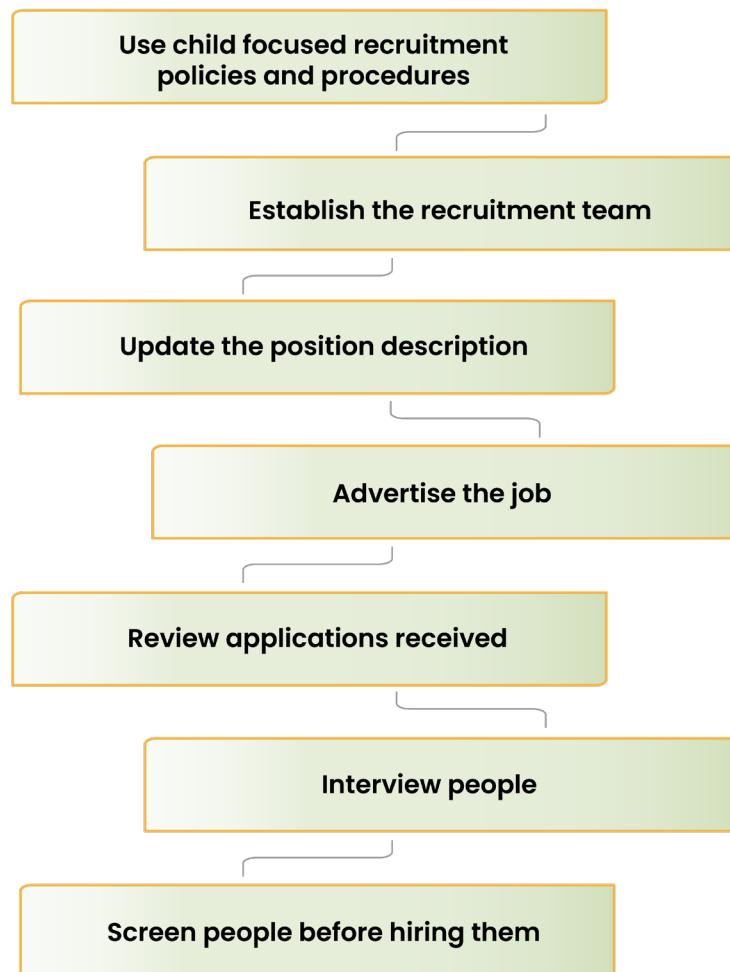
Obtaining a Working with Children/Vulnerable People Check (WWCC/WWVP) or the relevant teacher registration is a necessary minimum step, including for volunteers and students on practicum placements. However, it is often mistakenly assumed that this is the only requirement for safeguarding children. A WWCC/WWVP alone does not determine whether a person is fit to work with children in a specific role or support a child-safe culture.

The recruitment process



"I understand the importance of Child Safety Standards, but I'm unsure about how to effectively ensure child safety during the recruitment process."

This chapter will take you through the recruitment process step by step to ensure all service staff implement child-safe practices. You can navigate through the chapters using the process diagram below or by using the menu.



Use child-focused recruitment policies and procedures

Implementing child-focused recruitment policies and procedures enhances a service’s ability to recruit and retain the best individuals for working with children, fostering a culture centred on child safety.

Child-focused recruitment policies and procedures also support educators to uphold practices and professional beliefs that align with the child safe culture and practices of the service. The recruitment policy and procedures should be communicated to all staff, championed by the approved provider and their service leaders and followed consistently by all.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers

- Make sure recruitment policies and procedures focus on child safety.
- Put child safety at the centre of hiring.
- Include child safety in all position descriptions.
- Help service leaders understand their role in child safe hiring, including:
 - implementing examples of good child safety practices
 - teaching them to identify, raise and manage child safety concerns during hiring.
- Review hiring practices regularly and reflect upon employee exit surveys after staff leave to find ways to improve.

For service leaders

- Follow the service’s child safe recruitment policies and procedures consistently (see [Preparing NQF policies and procedures](#) for more advice on how to achieve this).
- Consider more than one person for a job.
- Encourage children to have a say in hiring processes by using appropriate strategies to gather their ideas, for example, by discussing topics to talk to applicants about (see [Chapter 3 Child’s Voice and Cultural Safety](#) for more details and examples).

- Use hiring processes that show:
 - commitment to child safety
 - transparency (being open and clear)
 - respect for diversity, including cultural safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families
 - ethical decision-making
 - choosing the best person for the job
 - fair treatment for everyone
 - fair procedures.
- Conduct verbal referee checks.
- Keep good records and follow the same steps for every applicant.
- Tell staff, families and the community about child safe recruitment policies and procedures and their role in following them.

Key reasons why services don't use the best hiring practices:



- Needing to hire staff quickly (including to meet workforce demands) but skipping important steps.
- Not wanting to have difficult conversations, particularly about referee feedback showing concerns or inconsistencies.
- Recruitment teams not having enough training on child safe recruitment.

Ensure recruiters have strong child safety skills

Approved providers need to support staff who undertake the recruitment process to have strong child safety awareness and understand its relevance to recruiting the right person.



Ensuring the individuals who may be part of a recruitment team/panel have the skills and capabilities to understand recruitment from a child safety perspective can help minimise risks and ensure the wellbeing of children. Involving multiple perspectives in the hiring process can reduce bias and lead to more balanced decisions.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers

- Help staff who are hiring understand that child safety is critical and they shouldn't skip steps even if they need staff quickly.
- Train existing staff properly so they have the right skills and knowledge for hiring.
- Make sure staff don't assume that applicants know how to keep children safe.

For approved providers and service leaders

- Be careful of the halo effect, when you hire someone just because you like them. The halo effect occurs during recruitment when the recruiter hires a person primarily because they were personable and likeable.
- Choose people based on their child safety skills, values, attitudes, actions, work experience, and references.

Update the position description

Having clear child safety expectations in position descriptions makes it easy to understand the role and what's expected.

Focusing on child safety ensures that both candidates and staff undertaking recruitment share a common understanding of the responsibilities associated with the position. It is crucial to outline the specific child safety experience, behaviours, and practices that all applicants must possess. These criteria should be thoroughly assessed during interviews and reference checks to ensure that candidates are qualified and genuinely committed to creating a safe environment for children.

Useful Tool available

You can access the **Position description tool** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Include child safety practices and language in all position descriptions. For example, say that the service is committed to keeping children safe.
- Be clear about what each job involves and the child safety rules they must follow, including obligations for reporting requirements.
- Make sure the position descriptions say that people must:
 - be committed to child safety
 - respect and value children
 - understand or be willing to learn about and support children's developmental needs
 - use culturally safe practices.

Advertise the job

A detailed job ad shows that the service is serious about keeping children safe and doesn't tolerate child maltreatment, abuse or harm. It can also discourage people who aren't right for the job.

By making the organisation's values and expectations about child safety clear, the job ad builds trust and transparency with potential candidates. Additionally, a good job ad showcases the positive environment the service offers for educators promoting a culture that prioritises the safety and wellbeing of children.

Useful Tool available

You can access the ***Job advertisement tool*** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Give clear information about the service's commitment to keep children safe and how the successful applicant will contribute to its child safe culture.
- Include the service's child safety documents, such as:
 - Statement of Philosophy
 - Code of Conduct
 - child safety policy and procedures.
- Tell applicants that there will be strict pre-employment checks.
- Tell applicants that the service is committed to a welcoming environment for a diverse workforce, including applicants:
 - who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
 - with different cultural or language backgrounds
 - with additional needs.

Review applications received

Reviewing applications is a critical step in identifying suitable candidates who prioritise child safety.

Applicants should show their commitment to child safety. Services can effectively short-list candidates by looking at the way their application explains their values in relation to child safety. Candidates who highlight child safe practices and take a proactive approach are likely to be a good fit for the service's child safe culture. Analysing these aspects can help identify relevant questions to be asked at the interview.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Check if the applicant prioritises child safety, including:
 - knowing and practicing child safety rules
 - keeping professional boundaries with children
 - focusing on children's rights
 - helping children have a say in decisions.
- Look for potential warning signs, like
 - gaps in employment history
 - inconsistencies that might show the applicant is hiding something
 - unexplained gaps in employment history (it's okay to take a break, but ask why, they may have taken travel or parental leave)
 - leaving a leadership job to take a lower-level job without a clear reason
 - changing jobs often
 - previous allegations or concerns
 - things that don't sound right or show they don't care about child safety
 - references are colleagues or family members, not supervisors
 - not giving a previous employer as a reference or references not matching recent work history
- Check if the applicant has proof of:
 - any child safety training, like child protection training
 - a current valid WWCC or relevant teacher registration.

Interview people

The best way to hold an interview is to have a face-to-face meeting or a video call during the hiring process. This provides time to talk with the applicant and ask them about their child safe values, attitudes, and understanding of professional boundaries and responsibility.



An interview allows services to get a better understanding of applicants' views and child safe practices and see if their values match the service's child safety priorities.

Useful Tool available

You can access the **Types of questions** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Ask open-ended questions during the interview to learn about the applicant's values, attitudes, and understanding of boundaries and responsibility.
- Compare the applicant's suitability to the child safety priorities and values of the service.
- Do face-to-face interviews or video calls: A quick phone call isn't enough. Another staff member should join the interview too.
- If using a recruitment agency: Ask for a copy of the interview to make sure child safety questions were asked and that they did a criminal history check.
- Think about involving children: They can help create interview questions or join the interview.
- Watch out for the 'halo effect': Don't hire someone just because they seem nice. Look at their skills and responses.

During the interview:

- Ask open-ended questions to see if the applicant:
 - Cares about child safety
 - Follows the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations or where relevant, their jurisdiction's Child Safe Standards
 - Respects and values children and their rights and interests
 - Knows how to support children's learning and development
 - Uses culturally safe practices
 - Can meet the service's child safety requirements.
- Ask behavioural questions so the applicant can give examples of how they handled certain situations.
- Ask questions about their work history: Look for warning signs or inconsistencies. Find out why they're leaving their current job and previous jobs.
- Ask questions about any past issues or concerns: Complaints, problems with colleagues, formal actions against them, improper conduct, or current Enforceable Undertakings.
- Don't ask questions that are illegal or discriminatory. Sometimes it's hard to avoid asking about personal or health information, like gender, marital status, age, and family responsibilities.
- Get more information if needed: Ask for examples to support their answers.

After the interview:

- Think about your impression of the applicants: Why do they want to work with children?
- Take your time: Reflect on the applicants' answers before proceeding to hire someone.

Involving children in recruitment



Children's involvement

Children have a say in the education and care service, referred to as an active voice. With educators' supervision, children can help when their service is hiring new educators by:

- drawing pictures of what they want educators to do and adding them to job ads
- helping create position descriptions or interview questions by saying what they value most in educators.

Families should be informed about their child's involvement in the hiring process, how it will work, and must give consent.

Screen people before employing them

Pre-employment screening is an important step to help stop any educators and staff who might abuse or harm children from working with them. This screening can happen before or after the interview. One good thing about doing it before the interview is that it lets you ask follow-up questions during the interview.

Working with Children Checks (WWCC)

WWCC and teacher registration are part of the checks that help to protect children from abuse and harm.

It's not a perfect system. It doesn't mean the person is definitely safe to work with children, it just means there's no known history showing they have harmed children. Refer to State and Territory Working with Children/Vulnerable People Check Screening Units for details.

Checking and recording an applicant's WWCC is important, but it has limits. It only covers people who have been reported or are known to authorities. It can't identify those who haven't been caught or who haven't done anything wrong yet. It also doesn't check if a person is suitable to work with children in a specific job.



Relying too much on the WWCC without other checks can risk children's safety because it ignores other ways to identify risks.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Verify WWCCs through jurisdictional processes and record that you've done it.
- Ensure applicants can't work until they have a current clear WWCC that has been verified (not just an application).
- Check the applicant's age to see if they need a WWCC. The age requirement for a WWCC varies by place, from 13 to 18 years old. Educators must be 18 or older to work with children unsupervised ([regulation 120](#)).
- Make sure casual staff and those from a recruitment agency have provided their WWCC and that it has been verified by your service.

- Ongoing management of staff should include monitoring/reviewing screening checks. Strategies include:
 - Maintaining a secure register with WWCC numbers, expiry dates, and status.
 - Set automated reminders before expiry to notify both the staff member and management.
 - Make it clear in staff induction and policies that it's each staff member's responsibility to renew their WWCC before it expires.



Family Day Care guidance

- People living in a family day care residence and family day care educator assistants must be fit and proper ([regulation 163](#)). Ask the potential educator how they ensure the fitness and propriety of adults living in the residence.

Useful Tool available

You can access the **State and Territory WWCC/WWVP screening units tool** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

Reference checking

Reference checking is important because it verifies an applicant's past experiences and behaviours, ensuring they align with the values and child safe practices required for working with children.



While written referee reports are helpful, verbal referee checks are strongly recommended. Ask referees and previous employers about the applicant's attitude towards child safety. Research shows that referees give better answers when asked directly, rather than in writing.

Useful Tool available

You can access the **Referee checks tool** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Ensure recruitment agencies have undertaken verbal referee checks for applicants.
- Do at least two verbal referee checks, not just written ones.
- Don't rely on referee reports from colleagues or families instead of supervisors.
- Record verbal referee checks in the service's system.
- Check if you need to contact other organisations on the applicant's resume.
- Observe how the referee answers and ask for more details if needed, especially if their answers don't match with another referee.
- Verify information about the applicant and ask any follow up questions (see Referee checklist).

Prohibited Persons Register

Approved providers must not employ or engage a prohibited person or suspended family day care educator, as required under [section 188](#) of the National Law.

- Use the NQA IT System public portal to check if an applicant is a prohibited person or a suspended family day care educator on the NQF Prohibited Persons Register. This can also be checked by contacting the State or Territory regulatory authority.
- Ensure that applicants from recruitment agencies are also checked against the Prohibited Persons Register by the approved provider, as agencies can't access this information.

Additional checks are recommended to confirm the applicant's identity and that their answers are true.

- Do a criminal history check after offering the job but before the applicant starts working.
- Check the applicant's identity documents (such as a driver's license or passport) to make sure they have the same name as on the WWCC.
- See and record an original or certified copy of their qualification and approved training ([regulation 146](#) and [regulation 147](#) require the staff record to have proof of qualifications and training).

For educators

- Provide two professional referees who can be contacted, with one being the current supervisor.
- Provide a character referee if there is no professional job history. These referees could be a university lecturer or a Registered Training Organisation trainer, but not a family member.
- Complete a Prohibition notice declaration form stating that they are not subject to a prohibition notice.

Case Study – Supporting educators



Recruiting staff without following a child safe process

Shona is the director of an Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) service and is short on staff. An educator suggests her university friend Koa, who is studying teaching and can start working right away.

Shona is eager to get more staff, so she calls Koa for a casual chat about his experience and asks him to start work the next day. Koa shows a current WWCC. During the first week, Shona supervises Koa to help him learn the role. After a week, she lets Koa work unsupervised with children on the school playground, which has limited line of sight for other educators.

Shona notices Koa plays very physically with the children, joining in contact sports and letting them jump on him. Sometimes this leads to tickling games with all the kids laughing and piling onto Koa and each other.

The service allows children to keep their mobile phones with them. One month after Koa starts, a parent calls Shona, worried that Koa has been sending personal messages to their 11-year-old child via an app.

Shona reports the incident to the regulatory authority and follows her jurisdiction's process for making notifications and reports under legislative reporting schemes and suspends Koa while an investigation happens.

Shona didn't follow a proper recruitment process, and has hired someone unsuitable, increasing the risk of child abuse and harm. Shona should have:

- given Koa a job description that focuses on child safety
- had a face-to-face interview with child safety questions
- completed a thorough pre-employment screening process, including referee checks.

Questions to guide reflection on practice

These questions help you think about what you're doing well and what you can improve.

For approved providers and service leaders

- How do your recruitment processes show a focus on child safety?
- What does this look like for children and staff, and how does it reflect the local community's diversity?
- How is child-safe recruitment described in your policies and procedures?
- How do applicants know your service focuses on child safety?
- How and when do educators and service leaders discuss and show how the management systems support risk management and continuous improvement, especially in recruitment and staff selection?
- What training is given to the people who recruit staff to ensure they can hire the right employees from a child safety perspective?
- Who do recruitment staff talk to if they have concerns about an applicant and need professional advice or a second opinion?
- How do you ensure all job descriptions include information about the service's commitment to child safety and the responsibilities of each staff member to keep children safe?
- How do children participate in the hiring process, and how are their opinions considered?
- How are children in outside school hours care or family day care settings engaged in this process?
- How are recruitment practices reviewed after staff leave to find ways to improve?

Useful Tool available

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Resources

To access resources related to this chapter, please scan the QR code or click this [link](#).

There are several tools available for this chapter. You can access these in the Tools section on the next page or select each link below if you are using the web version of this PDF.

[Job advertisements](#)

[Types of questions to ask during an interviews](#)

[State and territory working with children / vulnerable people check screening units](#)

[Referee checks](#)

[Position descriptions](#)

[Questions to guide reflection on practice](#)



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Chapter 5: Resource tools

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Scan QR code to access Chapter 5 tools

Recruitment

Examples of appropriate statements to include in the job advertisement:

- This service is a child safe organisation and we strongly uphold our child safety policies and procedures.
- We are committed to supporting each child to learn and develop in a safe environment.
- We work closely with families to ensure children’s health, safety and wellbeing.
- We ensure the safety, health and wellbeing of children at the service.
- We are committed to improving the educational and developmental outcomes for all children attending the service.
- We promote continuous improvement in the provision of quality education and care.
- We support and emphasise the rights and best interests of the child as paramount.
- Children are at the centre of all our decision making at the service.
- This service implements practices that demonstrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are valued and welcomed.
- This service promotes the safety and inclusion of all children, including those with additional needs.
- We strongly encourage applications from people with culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds.
- This service is committed to continuous engagement with professional development in child protection for staff.
- There is a zero-tolerance culture of child maltreatment, abuse and neglect in this service.

Recruitment

Competency-based questions

Competency-based questions or questions about child safety knowledge and attitudes can be used to reveal an applicant’s skills, experience and practices in relation to child safety. Applicants’ responses should be compared with the child safe values of the service. Examples include:

- What do you see as the role of an educator? What is your understanding of professional boundaries between educators and children? How do you (or would you) maintain professional boundaries with children?
- Describe what you would consider to be appropriate and inappropriate conduct between an educator and a child.
- What is your understanding of your role as a mandatory reporter?
- Can you describe what you understand about Child Safety policies? How do you demonstrate these in your work with children?
- Can you describe your understanding of ‘child safe’ as opposed to ‘child protection’?
- Have you worked with someone who you thought was a good child safety leader? What characteristics did they model that particularly impressed you?
- How would you go about ensuring children are able to participate in decisions made by the service?
- How would you describe your approach to engaging with children?
- How would you welcome a new child to the service?
- What is your real-life experience and understanding of children’s physical, cultural and emotional needs?
- What are your attitudes and beliefs to children’s rights and how they can be upheld by educators?
- What is your understanding of, and willingness to learn about, the importance of cultural safety, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children?
- What is your understanding of, and willingness to learn about the diverse needs of children?
- Describe how your values and past behaviour align with a commitment to child safety and zero tolerance of child abuse and harm.

Types of questions to ask during an interview

Behavioural questions

Behavioural questions attempt to reveal past or future behaviours. Examples include:

- What would you do if a child disclosed abuse, neglect or harm to you?
- What would you do if you witnessed a child hurting another child?
- What is your approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety and inclusive practices for all children?
- What would you do if you thought a colleague was acting inappropriately with a child?
- What would you do if an allegation of child abuse or harm was raised against you?
- Please describe a time when you comforted a distressed child.
- Describe a time when you supported a child whose behaviour you found challenging.
- When using technologies with children, what can you do to ensure children are safe?

Scenario-based questions

Scenario-based questions attempt to reveal problem-solving skills, self-management and education and care knowledge or expertise. Examples include:

- Describe a time where you handled a complaint or allegation involving a child's safety.
- Describe a time when you disagreed with your supervisor or colleague about professional behaviour or a decision affecting a child's safety.
- Describe a time you made a poor professional decision about children's safety. What did you learn from it and what would you do differently if this happened again?
- You become aware that a parent of a child attending your service is experiencing family violence. How do you respond?
- A colleague has told you that they take pictures of children while at the service and send them to the child's parents using their personal phone. How would you respond?
- Another educator has just strongly disciplined a child for what you believe to be a minor matter. What would you do?
- How would you cope with a situation in which a colleague upset you or a child?
- What do you think your role is in contributing to children's safety?
- Have you ever had to respond to a colleague whose behaviours around children concerned you? What did you do? If not, what would you do if this happened in the future?

Types of questions to ask during an interview

- Can you give some examples about what inappropriate behaviour by a colleague might look like? Scenario-based questions attempt to reveal problem-solving skills, self-management and education and care knowledge or expertise. Examples include:
- Describe a time where you handled a complaint or allegation involving a child's safety.
- Describe a time when you disagreed with your supervisor or colleague about professional behaviour or a decision affecting a child's safety.
- Describe a time you made a poor professional decision about children's safety. What did you learn from it and what would you do differently if this happened again?
- You become aware that a parent of a child attending your service is experiencing family violence. How do you respond?
- A colleague has told you that they take pictures of children while at the service and send them to the child's parents using their personal phone. How would you respond?
- Another educator has just strongly disciplined a child for what you believe to be a minor matter. What would you do?
- How would you cope with a situation in which a colleague upset you or a child?
- What do you think your role is in contributing to children's safety?
- Have you ever had to respond to a colleague whose behaviours around children concerned you? What did you do? If not, what would you do if this happened in the future?
- Can you give some examples about what inappropriate behaviour by a colleague might look like?

Additional questions

Some questions will not fit neatly into the above categories, however, they are still useful to ask an applicant. Examples include:

- Can you describe the reasons that make you want to work with children?
- How is the safety of children important to you?
- How do you think children you've worked with before would describe you?

State and territory working with children/ vulnerable people check screening units



Recruitment

The following list outlines the organisations responsible for working with children or vulnerable people check screenings in each state and territory, other than Tasmania, and for working with vulnerable people registration in Tasmania.

State and territory screening units		
Australian Capital Territory	ACT Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate	accesscanberra.act.gov.au
New South Wales	New South Wales Office of the Children's Guardian	ocg.nsw.gov.au
Northern Territory	Northern Territory Government	nt.gov.au
Queensland	Queensland Blue Card Services	bluecard.qld.gov.au
South Australia	South Australia Screening Unit of the Department of Human Services (DHS)	SA.GOV.AU – Working with Children Checks (www.sa.gov.au)
Tasmania	Tasmania Department of Justice	justice.tas.gov.au
Victoria	Working with Children Check Victoria, Department of Government Services	workingwithchildren.vic.gov.au
Western Australia	Western Australia Department of Communities	workingwithchildren.wa.gov.au

Recruitment

Examples of items to ask a referee about an applicant:

- Ask the referee if they have:
 - directly supervised the applicant
 - observed their interactions with children.
- Confirm a range of information about the applicant including:
 - the identity of the applicant
 - qualifications are accurate
 - length of employment
 - the position they held
 - is committed to child safety
 - respects and values children
 - understands or has a willingness to learn about how to support children's developmental needs
 - demonstrates culturally safe practices and appropriate interactions with children and families
 - has not been the subject of any compliance action (including a prohibition notice) under the National Law or any other relevant law
 - has not had any finding of improper or unprofessional conduct
 - has not been the subject of a complaint
 - provided an accurate reason for leaving the service and confirm with the employer.
- Ask for character references if the applicant has never worked before or has just left education; these character references should not be from family members or be given as much weight as professional references. For example, a university lecturer or RTO trainer could provide a character reference.
- Check the referees against the applicant's employment history.
- Ask if they have ever had concerns or received complaints about the applicant's work with children or families.

Referee checks

Possible questions to ask a referee to assess the applicant's suitability to work with children:

- What level of contact has the applicant previously had with children? Were they in a leadership position in your organisation?
- How would you describe the types of relationships and interactions the applicant has had with children?
- Can you share an example of a time when you observed the applicant responding to a child's challenging behaviour? How did the applicant manage the situation? What was the outcome for the child?
- Are you aware of any concerns about the applicant's attitude towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, children from CALD backgrounds or children with additional needs?
- Did you have any disciplinary matters relating to the applicant or concerns about their adherence with the organisation's Code of Conduct? Explore further, if required, if there have been previous unproven accusations or concerns about them.
- Are you aware of any compliance action relating to the applicant under the National Law?
- Do you have any concerns about the applicant working directly with children?
- Do you know why the applicant is looking for a new role? Would you employ them again to work with children? Are you aware of why the applicant chose to leave your employment?

Recruitment

Examples of child safety experience, behaviours and practices that could be included in a position description:

- Uphold the safety, rights and wellbeing of all children and promote a culture of child safety with a zero-tolerance approach to child maltreatment, abuse and neglect.
- Prioritise the rights, health and safety of all children.
- Always demonstrate a strong commitment to child safety and child safe practices.
- Understand and follow reporting requirements and processes.
- Establish and maintain a physically, culturally and emotionally safe and healthy service environment for children, staff and visitors.
- Support children to have a voice in the recruitment process and be listened to, for example asking them what they think is important in a new educator (or applicant).
- Value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and always work to develop, maintain and improve cultural safety.
- Actively engage in providing and maintaining a culturally responsive, safe and welcoming environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.
- Follow the service’s policies and procedures in providing a safe environment for children and colleagues.
- Foster an inclusive and diverse workplace where every individual is treated with respect and dignity.
- Develop and maintain positive and respectful relationships with children.
- Demonstrate practices that promote the inclusion of all children.
- Engage in professional development and training in child protection continuously.
- Model appropriate behaviour towards and with children at all times.
- Guide educators, staff members and volunteers in providing a child safe environment for children.
- Implement experiences that support children to understand protective behaviours.

Recruitment

These questions help you think about what you're doing well and what you can improve.

For approved providers and service leaders

- How do your recruitment processes show a focus on child safety?
- What does this look like for children and staff, and how does it reflect the local community's diversity?
- How is child-safe recruitment described in your policies and procedures?
- How do applicants know your service focuses on child safety?
- How and when do educators and service leaders discuss and show how the management systems support risk management and continuous improvement, especially in recruitment and staff selection?
- What training is given to the people who recruit staff to ensure they can hire the right employees from a child safety perspective?
- Who do recruitment staff talk to if they have concerns about an applicant and need professional advice or a second opinion?
- How do you ensure all job descriptions include information about the service's commitment to child safety and the responsibilities of each staff member to keep children safe?
- How do children participate in the hiring process, and how are their opinions considered?
- How are children in outside school hours care or family day care settings engaged in this process?
- How are recruitment practices reviewed after staff leave to find ways to improve?

Chapter 6: Induction and probation

Chapter 6: Induction and probation



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Professional development on child safety

When new staff join, they go through an induction process to learn about the service's practices, including how to keep children safe.

It is important that a child safe induction process is established for all staff, educators, volunteers, students and persons with management or control (such as new management committee members or board members). They should understand what is expected of them in their role and how to create a child safe environment. An organisational chart helps new starters identify who has oversight of child safety at the service.



Next, there's a probation period when leaders watch new staff closely to make sure they understand their responsibilities, are doing their job effectively, are increasing in confidence, and fit in with the team. After the probation period, staff receive ongoing support and supervision from service leaders and regular training to keep improving. Service leaders check in with new staff to give feedback and address any concerns.

When services have comprehensive induction, probation and ongoing supervision processes, staff feel welcomed and supported, where they are more likely to stay long-term and contribute to the service's child safe environment.

Induction

When new staff join a service, they go through a process called induction to learn about the service, their role and how to keep children safe. New staff need to read important documents and complete any required training. They are supervised by service leaders and existing team members to make sure they know their roles and behave appropriately with children. Induction processes for students, support staff and volunteers should also be undertaken.



What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Whenever possible, make sure new staff finish all aspects of their induction before working with children unsupervised.
- Help new staff learn about their roles, the service's child safe culture, and how to report concerns.
- Give new staff access to important documents like the service's Code of Conduct, child safety policies and procedures, complaints handling processes, Statement of Philosophy, supervision plans, risk assessments, and the NQF (including the approved learning frameworks). Check their understanding of these documents in follow-up conversations.
- Talk about how the new staff member can keep children safe and implement the child safe practices that are reflected in the [Approved Learning Frameworks](#), including the EYLF and MTOP (V2.0), and VEYLDF (for services in Victoria).
- [Provide resources and training](#) on child safety topics, including online safety.
- Consider using an acknowledgement form or template or add detail in the employment contract or development plan for new starters, to show they understand their role and obligations.
- Work with students, volunteers and educators who are yet to commence their formal studies or are actively working towards an early childhood qualification to understand child safety concepts and practices at the service.
- Consider having annual refresher sessions on child safety for all staff.

For everyone

- When starting a new position/role ensure you ask and are provided with information on:
 - The service's commitment to child safety.
 - What safe and unsafe behaviour looks like.
 - The service's expectations for you to report any concerns or breaches.
 - Who to speak to if you feel unsure or concerned.

Child safe probation process

When new staff start working at a service, they have a probation period. This is a trial time to see if the job is a good fit for them and to help them understand how they contribute to keeping children safe.



What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Give new staff regular support and supervision, focusing on child safety.
- Have regular meetings to:
 - give feedback on how well they are following child safety procedures, including examples of good and bad practice, and views from children and families.
 - encourage them to talk about how they are keeping children safe and what extra help they may need.
- Provide a safe space for new staff to talk about their views on child safety with a buddy or mentor.
- Role model child safe behaviours and how policies and procedures are implemented at the service.

For everyone

- Complete required training (e.g., child protection, mandatory reporting training).
- Actively participate in team discussions about child safety.
- Ask questions or seek help when unsure or if you have concerns.
- Discuss any challenges you may be facing in relation to supervision or safety.

Ongoing supervision and management

Ongoing supervision helps all staff understand how they can implement the service's child safe practices. Staff should get regular training, support, and guidance to do their jobs well.

This supervision should promote the service's child safe culture and continually improve staff knowledge, understanding and practices.

Ongoing supervision of staff is described in the National Quality Standard and the Guide to the NQF as:

A system of regular performance review alongside individual learning and development plans is essential to the development of child safety skills and professional knowledge of educators. Performance planning and review ensures that the knowledge, skills and practices of educators and other staff members are current, and that areas requiring further development are addressed.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Make checking child safety practices a key part of supervising staff.
- Check if staff understand child safety policies and procedures.
- Provide more support to less-experienced staff and those working towards qualifications.
- Ensure staff are available across the service with qualifications, knowledge and experience to support less experienced staff.
- Make sure supervisors have the tools to address child safety issues.
- Address warning signs of inappropriate behaviour immediately.
- Enable team members, children, and families to give feedback.
- Encourage a culture of reporting concerns with staff, children and families.
- Offer ongoing training to maintain the service's child safe culture.

For educators

Talk about child safety at every team meeting, including:

- practical examples of how to follow the service's child safe policies and procedures
- reading and discussing articles and information about child safety
- discussing real-life examples of child safety issues
- watching videos about child safety topics
- participating in events like Child Safety Week, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day, National Child Protection Week.

Case study – Creating a positive child safe culture through effective induction



Creating a positive child safe culture through effective induction

A service has recently had a high turnover of educators. When Suki became the new director, she noticed there was no induction process for new staff. She also saw that current educators didn't have an official role in helping new starters.

Suki asked the current educators what they wished they had known when they started (including appropriate behaviour guidance). She used this information to create an induction policy, procedures, and a checklist for new educators.

She also heard that educators couldn't find important documents like the child safety policy, Code of Conduct, and Service Philosophy so she moved them to a place where everyone could easily find them.

She implemented a new mentoring system for current educators to share key information with new starters. She also planned time for new educators to read materials and talk with team members when they weren't working with children.

Suki realised that current educators weren't familiar with the child safety policies and their role in creating a safe culture. She remembered talking to children who said different educators gave them different advice on how to behave.

To help all educators, Suki decided to use some of the changes she had made to the service's induction strategies with existing staff. She planned professional development on behaviour guidance for all staff.

Suki shared her plans with all staff, explaining how the new process would help everyone meet their child safety responsibilities and that reflections on the service's child safety culture would become a regular part of their team meetings in the future.

Questions to guide reflection on practice

These questions help you think about what you're doing well and what you can improve.

For approved providers and service leaders

- What policies and procedures support the induction, probation, and ongoing supervision of staff?
- How do service leaders make sure staff understand their roles and the importance of child safety?
- How do children and families contribute to the induction and probation of staff?
- What training is provided to service leaders to help them support new staff with child safety?
- How do service leaders build trust, so staff feel safe to speak up about child safety concerns?

For educators

- What role do existing educators have in the induction process?
- How does the induction process explain the commitment to child safety and staff's responsibilities?
- How do service leaders and staff discuss how the service manages risks and improves practices?

Useful Tool available

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Resources

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[Questions to guide reflection on practice](#)



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Chapter 6: Resource tools

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Induction, probation and ongoing management

These questions help you think about what you're doing well and what you can improve.

For approved providers and service leaders

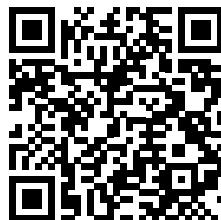
- What policies and procedures support the induction, probation, and ongoing supervision of staff?
- How do service leaders make sure staff understand their roles and the importance of child safety?
- How do children and families contribute to the induction and probation of staff?
- What training is provided to service leaders to help them support new staff with child safety?
- How do service leaders build trust, so staff feel safe to speak up about child safety concerns?

For everyone

- What role do existing educators have in the induction process?
- How does the induction process explain the commitment to child safety and staff's responsibilities?
- How do service leaders and staff discuss how the service manages risks and improves practices?

Chapter 7: Professional development

Chapter 7: Professional development



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Professional development on child safety

Regular training helps staff understand child safety policies and procedures. Everyone is responsible for continuing to learn about child safety.

Services should plan regular training sessions on different child safety topics. These sessions should match each person's learning style, skills and knowledge.

A child safe culture means that educators feel confident to prevent, identify, respond to, and report child maltreatment, abuse and neglect. This is supported by service leadership that encourages continual learning and keeps educators up to date with the latest practices.

Everyone, including leaders, educators, volunteers, FDC educator assistants and students, must know:

- the existence and application of current child protection law
- any obligations they have under that law ([regulation 84](#)).

They should be ready to act to protect any child at risk of child maltreatment, abuse or neglect.



Child protection means responding to and dealing with cases of child abuse or neglect that have already happened.

Child safeguarding means **taking steps to prevent harm** from happening in the first place.

Educators need to understand both concepts and their role in each. Preventing harm and acting early are key to keeping children safe and having a child safe environment.

Staff training on child safety

When staff are well-informed, trained, and supported, they are much better placed to implement the service’s child safe values. Approved providers and service leaders should invest in building staff skills and confidence to create a child safe culture.

Training should be designed to meet the needs of different staff and services. It should also be trauma-informed, meaning it takes into account the emotional impact of the training content. Child safety training can be confronting and can trigger emotions. It’s important to have support systems in place, like employee assistance programs, to help staff cope with these feelings.



What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Keep up with the latest child safety information and share it with educators.
- Inform staff about any changes under the NQF and state or territory child safety requirements.
- Plan training sessions that fit the needs of the service and staff, including mentoring staff and engaging external experts if required.
- Ensure persons in day-to-day charge, nominated supervisors and family day care co-ordinators have undertaken the child protection training, if required, in their state or territory ([section 162A](#)).
- Use staff meetings to develop practical skills and regularly discuss child safety.

- Use the [NQF Child Safe Culture Guide](#) and [NQF Online Safety Guides](#), including questions to guide reflection on practice to inform training and discussions with staff.
- Find ways to include the voices and perspectives of children in staff training on child safety.
- Invite local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and community members to speak at staff meetings or service events.
- Invite local culturally and/or linguistically diverse community members to speak at staff meetings or events.
- Develop simple instructions/checklist for responding to child maltreatment, abuse and neglect.
- Share guidelines, information sheets, and posters about child safety.
- Encourage staff to attend child safety conferences or forums ([including online courses and workshops](#)).
- Keep records of training ([regulation 146](#) and [regulation 147](#)) and regularly assess staff training needs, including within regular performance review processes.
- Support educators to teach children about personal safety, in line with the approved learning frameworks.

For everyone

- Regularly participate in education and professional development to improve understanding of child safety practices.

Useful Tool available

You can access the ***Online learning, professional development and resources*** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

How to support child safe practices



Am I giving staff enough time and space to really engage with child safety policies—or just expecting them to ‘get it’?”

There are a range of actions that approved providers and service leaders can take to support educators, staff members and volunteers to reflect upon their child safe practices.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Give educators time to review and discuss child safety policies and procedures, including at team meetings or during FDC co-ordinator visits.
- Provide training on recognising and responding to child maltreatment, abuse and neglect, including grooming and manipulative behaviours and online safety.
- Undertake child safe self-assessment and risk assessments supported by the NQF Child Safe Culture and Online Safety self-assessment and risk assessment tools.

For service leaders

- Make sure inclusion plans are in place for children with additional needs and review them regularly.
- Help educators stay aware of where they and others are to ensure children are effectively supervised.
- Support educators to understand why indoor and outdoor spaces should be organised to minimise times when educators are alone with children.
- Teach educators how to raise and document concerns.
- Ensure educators understand how their positive behaviours and environments can keep children safe.
- Provide opportunities for learning from ongoing professional development to be discussed across the service.

Case Study – Supporting educators to undertake professional development



Supporting educators to undertake professional development.

Lewis is the new director at a service where he has worked for over 3 years. He knows some educators well, but many are new.

When Lewis was an educator, he noticed that child safety training wasn't a priority. He wants to change this and create a plan for the next year to help everyone understand and maintain a child safe environment. He focuses on finding ongoing education and professional development for educators.

Lewis prepares a list of possible topics about child safety and talks to each educator to learn what they know and what they want to learn. He finds out that most educators know how to report child safety concerns and give children a voice in safety practices. Some want to build their confidence and promote the service as a safe place.

Lewis works with a small group of interested educators to create a plan for the next year. Their plan includes:

- Regular discussions about child safety at staff meetings.
- Professional development workshops on child safety provided by the service, that incorporates the NQF Child Safe Culture Guide and NQF Online Safety Guides, including questions to guide reflection on practice.
- Reviewing the relevant sections of the NQF Child Safe Culture and Online Safety self-assessment and risk assessment tools.
- Child safety resources in the staff room from the [National Office of Child Safety](#) and the [eSafety Commissioner](#).
- Online child safety training for new educators and refresher courses for current staff.
- Updating the professional development process to include a one-on-one planning session with the director at the start of the year to create a personalised development program including a focus on child safety.

Questions to guide reflection on practice

These questions help you think about what you're doing well and what you can improve.

For everyone

- How does the service support regular learning and professional development for all staff and volunteers in child safety?
- How does the service ensure staff and volunteers are confident in asking for help with reporting inappropriate conduct?
- How does the service ensure ongoing education for all staff, including casual and relief educators, about child safety expectations and culture?
- How are staff and volunteers made aware of the signs of child maltreatment, abuse, and neglect?
- How does the service provide education for educators working with children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage?

For service leaders

- How do you model child safe behaviour to your team?
- How do you communicate expectations about professional conduct and ethical behaviour in creating a child safe culture?
- What guidance do you provide to staff on maintaining professional boundaries?
- What steps can you take to ensure you and others are confident in your state or territory's reporting processes and in supporting your team to understand these?
- How do you provide ongoing professional development that encourages reflective practice and continuous improvement in child safety?
- How do you foster a supportive and collaborative child safe culture that aligns with the service's philosophy and policies?
- How do you acknowledge and celebrate examples of a child safe culture within the team?

For educators

- How do you stay informed about the latest practices in creating and maintaining a child safe culture?
- What strategies do you use to build strong, positive relationships with children and families?
- How do you ensure your actions are guided by ethical principles and the service's policies and procedures, Statement of Philosophy and Code of Conduct?
- How do you reflect on any biases or practices that may affect your work?
- How do you support and champion child safety decisions?
- How do you foster open communication to build trust and contribute to a child safe environment, including with families and communities?

Useful Tool available

You can access the **Questions to guide reflection on practice** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

Resources

To access resources related to this chapter, please scan the QR code or click this [link](#).

There are several tools available for this chapter. You can access these in the Tools section on the next page or select each link below if you are using the web version of this PDF.

[Questions to guide reflection on practice](#)

[Online learning, professional development and resources](#)



Scan the QR code to access all the resources from this chapter

Chapter 7: Resource tools

To access tools related to this chapter, please scan the QR code or click this [link](#).



Scan QR code to access Chapter 7 tools

Questions to guide reflection on practice

Professional development

These questions help you think about what you're doing well and what you can improve.

For everyone

- How does the service support regular learning and professional development for all staff and volunteers in child safety?
- How does the service ensure staff and volunteers are confident in asking for help with reporting inappropriate conduct?
- How does the service ensure ongoing education for all staff, including casual and relief educators, about child safety expectations and culture?
- How are staff and volunteers made aware of the signs of child maltreatment, abuse, and neglect?
- How does the service provide education for educators working with children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage?

For service leaders

- How do you model child safe behaviour to your team?
- How do you communicate expectations about professional conduct and ethical behaviour in creating a child safe culture?
- What guidance do you provide to staff on maintaining professional boundaries?
- What steps can you take to ensure you and others are confident in your state or territory's reporting processes and in supporting your team to understand these?
- How do you provide ongoing professional development that encourages reflective practice and continuous improvement in child safety?
- How do you foster a supportive and collaborative child safe culture that aligns with the service's philosophy and policies?
- How do you acknowledge and celebrate examples of a child safe culture within the team?

For educators

- How do you stay informed about the latest practices in creating and maintaining a child safe culture?
- What strategies do you use to build strong, positive relationships with children and families?
- How do you ensure your actions are guided by ethical principles and the service's policies and procedures, Statement of Philosophy and Code of Conduct?
- How do you reflect on any biases or practices that may affect your work?
- How do you support and champion child safety decisions?
- How do you foster open communication to build trust and contribute to a child safe environment, including with families and communities?

Professional development

eSafety Commissioner

- [eSafety Early Years program](#)
- [eSafety Early Years professional learning](#)

National Office for Child Safety

- [Resources to help organisations create and maintain child safe environments](#)
- [Having conversations with children and young people](#)

National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse

- [Foundations of child sexual abuse online self-paced course](#)

Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)

Child Safe Organisations training resources including:

- [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#)
- [Video on the National Principles and building a child safe culture](#)
- [Introductory self-assessment tool for organisations](#)
- [eLearning modules on the National Principles](#)
- [Practical tools](#)

National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN)

- [Online professional development workshops](#)

SNAICC

- [A Place for Culture – foundational course cultural safety for early years services](#)

Australian Childhood Foundation

- [Child safe online training modules options](#)

Australian Institute of Family Studies

- [Webinars](#)
- [Practice Guides](#)
- [Resource sheets](#)

Office of the Children's Guardian - NSW

- [Free webinars and face to face training](#)
- [eLearning courses](#)
- [Policy and Practice in Focus: An ECEC Child Safe Podcast Miniseries](#)

Commissioner for Children and Young People - Victoria

- [Events and on-demand videos](#)

The Office of the Independent Regulator - Tasmania

- [Complete the Training form to request advice on the Child and Youth Safe Framework](#)

University of Tasmania

- [An Introduction to Children's Rights and Safety free short course](#)

Australian Catholic University

- [Safeguarding Children and young people portal](#)

Chapter 8: Complaints and Disclosures

Chapter 8: Complaints and Disclosures



Scan QR code to watch the video or use this [link](#)

A child safe complaints process

A healthy complaints culture is important to keep children safe and improve service quality. Complaints help identify problems and provide opportunities for improvement.

Complaints and disclosure processes play an important role in responding to child safety concerns. This includes understanding:

- the features of a child safe and child-focused complaints culture
- how to respond to disclosures
- how to conduct investigations and make notifications and reports under legislative reporting schemes.

Educators put children's health and safety first by speaking up about their concerns and taking other people's concerns seriously.

"Silence allows abuse to continue."

—Victim-survivor of child sexual abuse in a Tasmanian institution.

About complaints

When thinking about complaints, approved providers and service staff should think broadly.

A complaint can be about many things, like inappropriate behaviour by staff, broken equipment, or inadequate policies. It can be:

- a concern
- an allegation
- a grievance
- a statement that something is unacceptable.

A person may not expressly state that they are making a complaint.

Complaints can be made to:

- approved providers
- people at the service like nominated supervisors, directors, educators or OSHC/FDC coordinators
- external bodies like the NQF regulatory authority, police, a child protection agency, or the eSafety Commissioner.

Complaints can be made:

- verbally (in formal or informal conversations)
- in writing (letter, email, SMS, social media platform, digital form).

Anyone can make a complaint, including:

- a child or young person
- an adult or child on behalf of a child
- an educator or any staff member
- a volunteer or student on practicum placement
- a parent or family member
- a visiting professional (for example allied health) or member of the public.

Useful Tool available

You can access the ***Examples of complaints tool*** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

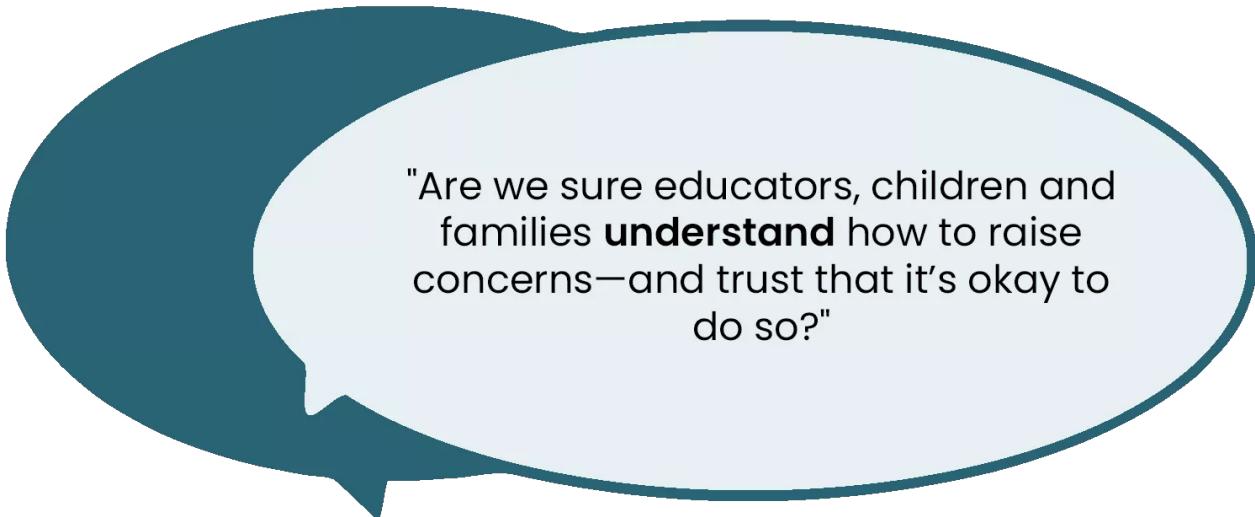
Child safe and child-focused complaints practices

The complaints process should put children's rights and needs first. Children's immediate safety should be prioritised when responding to complaints.

Creating a child safe and child-focused complaints culture

A child safe environment is one where children feel comfortable speaking up. Service leaders and educators should explain to children that they have the right to share their views and that they will be listened to and responded to quickly and respectfully. They should encourage children to voice their concerns and find ways for younger children and those with limited verbal skills to express their views. Families should also be encouraged to raise concerns.

If a service is not receiving many complaints, it might mean that children and adults don't feel safe expressing their concerns. The service should reflect on how complaints are handled and whether their policies and procedures are effective for their service's community.



"Are we sure educators, children and families **understand** how to raise concerns—and trust that it's okay to do so?"

Factors that discourage children from raising complaints

Child maltreatment, abuse or neglect can occur and persist if the service does not handle complaints and investigations effectively and prioritise listening and responding to children.

Service leaders and educators can have a positive or negative influence over the environment and how comfortable children feel to express themselves and raise any concerns. See [Chapter 3 – Child's Voice and Cultural Safety](#) to find out more about positive practices to support children to voice any issues or concerns.

Barriers are more likely to develop when the service prioritises the interests of the organisation over the interests of children.

Children are less likely to speak up if they:

- do not have a trusted adult to open up to
- fear they won't be listened to or believed
- do not have access to a child-friendly reporting process and do not know who to talk to or how to make a complaint
- feel intimidated, scared or unsafe, especially if they are near the person they have concerns about
- follow cultural practices where voicing concerns is not encouraged
- are experiencing particular vulnerabilities or disadvantage, such as having additional needs, being non-verbal, or having limited English language skills
- have past experiences that make it harder to speak up.

A child-focused complaints process

Every service is different, so each one should have a complaints handling process that fits the service's context. A child-focused complaints culture should be encouraged throughout the organisation, including by the approved provider and their staff.

Under the NQF, [services must have policies and procedures for dealing with complaints](#) (regulation 168). A child safe complaints process should be clearly documented and include:

- ways to make a complaint
- how complaints are received by the service
- how to respond to a complaint, including the roles and responsibilities of staff and the approved provider
- when and how an internal investigation will be conducted, including when an external agency is also investigating (like the police or regulatory authority)
- familiarising children and families with the complaints handling policy and procedure
- identifying when to notify the NQF regulatory authority
- identifying when to notify an agency (like police or child protection) under a mandatory reporting and/or reportable conduct scheme
- how to keep a record of complaints and reports made to authorities (for example, in the service's complaints register)
- keeping children and families informed during and after an investigation
- privacy and confidentiality for those who make a complaint or are the subject of a complaint
- support services available to staff after receiving a disclosure.

Engaging children in developing a child-friendly, child safe complaints process

Creating a child-friendly version of the complaints handling policy can help children understand what to do if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe, or if they have a concern or complaint. For example, this could be a flowchart or poster that shows children what to do.

A child safe complaints process should:

- be easy to understand and use
- be accessible, available and presented in an age and developmentally appropriate format
- include children's voices, opinions and ideas
- teach children about the complaints process so they know what to do if they have a complaint, for example through stories or dramatic play.

Responding to disclosures from a child

Children usually tell an adult they trust if something is wrong, so educators and anyone working with children need to know how to respond confidently. The service's complaints handling process must explain how staff and volunteers should respond to a child who has made a disclosure.

What does this look like in practice?

For everyone

- Listen carefully to children. Give the child your full attention, don't judge and maintain a calm environment where the child feels safe to share their feelings.
- Respectfully interrupt the child if they begin to disclose in front of other children, and move the conversation to a safe and private space.
- Reassure the child that you believe them and that they did the right thing by speaking up. Recognise their bravery/strength for talking about something difficult.
- Find out what the child needs to feel safe at the service.
- Let the child know what will happen next and that you might need to share some information to keep them safe.
- When talking to the child, don't make promises you can't keep, like saying you won't tell anyone.
- Monitor your emotions. Don't show shock or anger, especially if the perpetrator is a member of the child's family.
- Write down what the child said as soon as possible after the conversation. Make sure any other adult witnesses also write down what the child said.
- Only ask for more information from the child if they want to share, for example, "Is there anything else you'd like to tell me?".
- Don't ask leading questions. If you understand the situation, stop asking questions.
- Only tell the people you need to tell to keep the child safe.
- Record what the child said 'in their own words'.
- Ask the child if they have any questions and answer honestly.

For more ideas on how to respond to disclosures made by a child refer to resources provided by the [National Office for Child Safety](#).

After the child talks to you, get support for your own wellbeing from a supervisor or service leader. Follow any mandatory reporting or reportable conduct obligations in your state/territory.

How to respond to complaints

The complaints handling process should be clearly explained to all staff, children and families. The name and telephone number of the person to contact for complaints should be easy to find.

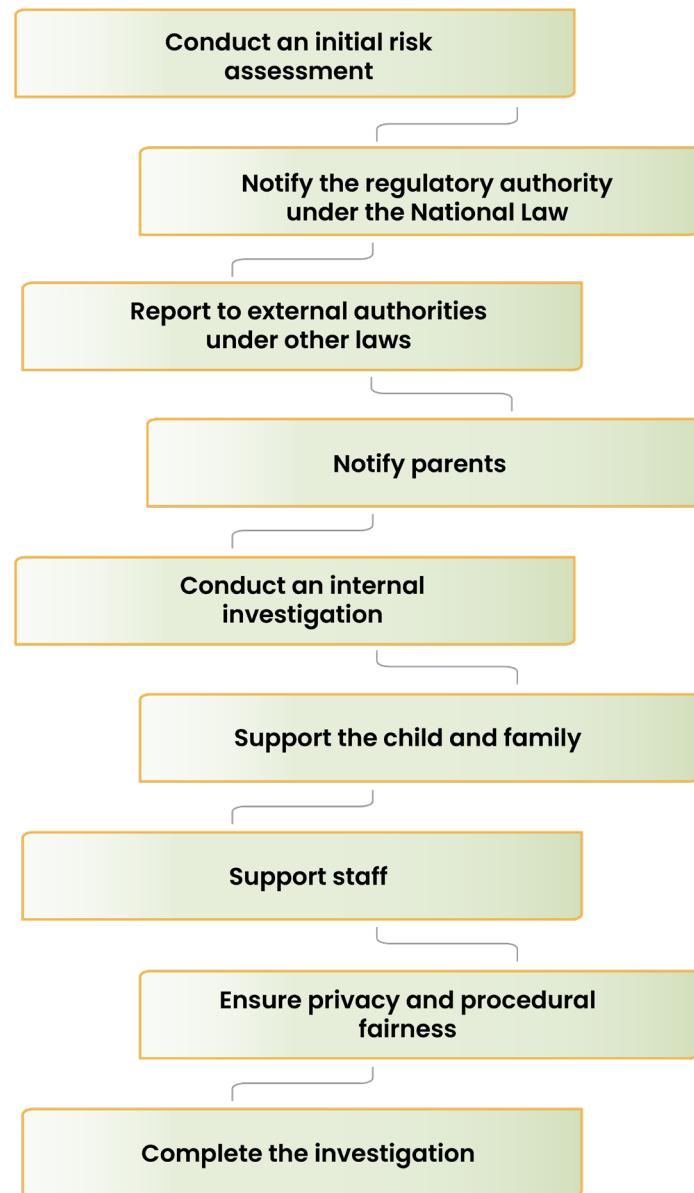
Services should create a culture that encourages people to speak up if they have a concern, knowing that they will be listened to and taken seriously. The complaints process, in line with guidance in the Guide to the NQF and the service's policies and procedures, should also establish reasonable expectations, and communicate these, for how a complaint will be managed. This should include planning around what can and cannot be communicated back to a complainant.

If the service receives a complaint about a child being deliberately harmed, don't respond in the same way as you would to an accident. If there's an allegation of child maltreatment, abuse, or neglect, don't bring the person who has made the complaint together with the person who they have complained about. Report any allegations of child maltreatment, abuse or neglect using the required steps for your state or territory.



Complaints process

The following diagram explains the steps to take after receiving a complaint:



Useful Tool available

You can access the **Complaints process** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

Conduct an initial risk assessment

After a complaint has been received, the approved provider or service leader should take prompt action to write down the complaint in the service's complaints register, gather all information available, gaining advice from relevant authorities to assist in determining if you need to make a report/notification and decide on a course of action.

When you are gathering and recording information you should also consider any evidence that may need to be collected and shared with an investigation team.

Conduct a risk assessment

Risk assessments are an important first step in responding to a complaint.

Useful Tool available

You can access the *Incident response template tool* in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Identify risks, including immediate risks, to children and manage them quickly and effectively.
- Determine which external agencies need to be notified about the complaint, such as the NQF regulatory authority, police, child protection agency or reportable conduct scheme.
- Identify if an internal investigation will be conducted and who will be involved.

Notify the regulatory authority under the National Law

Effective communication and prompt reporting of any complaints or incidents are crucial to ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children

After you have notified the regulatory authority continue to work with them and follow their advice throughout the process.

Notifying the regulatory authority of complaints

Under the National Law and National Regulations, the approved provider must notify the regulatory authority within 24 hours of a complaint made by any person alleging that:

- a serious incident has occurred or is occurring while a child was being educated and cared for by the service, and/or
- the National Law has been breached ([section 174\(2\)\(b\)](#) of the National Law).

For more details, check the “Complaints” section of ACECQA’s [National Decision Tree](#).

A serious incident is defined in [regulation 12](#) of the National Law and must be notified to the regulatory authority within 24 hours.

Serious incidents include:

- death of a child
- serious injury/trauma which a reasonable person would consider required urgent medical attention, or for which a child attended (or should have attended) a hospital
- serious illness for which the child attended (or should have attended) a hospital
- any emergency for which emergency services attended
- any circumstance where a child:
 - appears to be missed or cannot be accounted for,
 - appears to have been taken or removed from the premises in a way that breaches the National Regulations, or
 - is mistakenly locked in or locked out of the premises.

Complaints about breaches of the National Law may relate to any aspect of the NQF, including:

- the physical environment
- the adequacy of education and care and programming
- interactions between staff and children, including inappropriate behaviour or inappropriate discipline

- educator qualifications
- staffing arrangements and educator-to-child ratios
- children's supervision
- matters that impact the health, safety and wellbeing of children at the service
- how interactions between children are managed and supported
- how behavioural challenges are managed and supported, or
- how the medical needs of a child are managed and supported.

An actual breach of the law does not have to be proven before a notification is made. Once an allegation is made of a breach of the National Law, you must notify the Regulatory Authority.



A breach of a law other than the National Law does not need to be notified to the regulatory authority but may need to be notified to other bodies, including the police and child protection agencies.

Notifying the regulatory authority of any circumstances that pose a risk

The approved provider must notify the regulatory authority within 7 days of becoming aware of a circumstance arising at the service that poses a risk to the health, safety or wellbeing of a child ([section 174\(2\)](#) and [regulation 175\(2\)\(c\)](#)).

For examples of circumstances that need to be notified, refer to ACECQA's [National Decision Tree](#).

The approved provider should follow organisational policies and procedures for guidance on managing an employee who is subject to an allegation or complaint, and may seek guidance from the regulatory authority on whether the employee should remain at work during and after an investigation.

Notifying the regulatory authority of physical and/or sexual abuse of a child

The approved provider must notify the regulatory authority within 7 days of any incident or allegation of physical or sexual abuse at the service ([section 174\(2\)](#) and [regulation 175\(2\)\(d\)-\(e\)](#)).

However, if this meets the definition of a serious incident under [regulation 12](#), it must be notified within 24 hours.

A perpetrator of physical abuse may be an adult, adolescent or another child.

Incidents and allegations also need to be notified if they occur during an excursion, transportation to or from the service, or in an area of an FDC educator's residence that is not part of the service premise.

Report to external authorities under other laws

Approved providers, educators, and staff must report incidents or suspected incidents of child maltreatment, abuse or neglect involving children in line with state and territory laws, including child protection legislation and reportable conduct schemes.

Reporting to child protection agencies

Reporting to a child protection agency is separate from notifying the regulatory authority under NQF requirements.

This may be about an incident that happened outside the service, such as in the child's home, or within the education and care service.

The approved provider should also seek guidance from the relevant external authorities on talking to families and staff involved, and what can be shared.

Reportable conduct schemes

Reportable conduct schemes, where they exist in a state or territory, are designed to keep children safe in organisations or services.

All staff and volunteers need to understand their responsibilities under these schemes in their state or territory.

The approved provider should also seek guidance from the relevant external authorities on talking to families and staff involved, and what can be shared.

Examples of reportable conduct may include (however, check with the specific requirements with the specific state/territory reportable conduct scheme):

- a sexual offence
- sexual misconduct
- neglect of a child
- an assault against a child
- ill-treatment of a child
- behaviour causing significant psychological or emotional harm to a child.

Children's online safety

If there are concerns about children's online safety, these may also need to be reported to the police and child protection agencies. You should also contact the federal police – [Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation](#), and the [eSafety Commissioner](#), if concerns include:

- cyberbullying of a child
- adult cyber abuse
- image-based abuse
- illegal and restricted content.

Notify parents

The approved provider must tell a child's parent as soon as practicable (but not later than 24 hours) if their child is involved in an incident, injury, trauma or illness while being educated and cared for by the service ([regulation 86](#)). They may also seek advice from external authorities on when to tell the family and how much information to share, for example, the police may wish to talk to the parents ahead of the service sharing any information with families.

The approved provider should not wait until an internal investigation has been concluded to notify parents.

The approved provider should also plan for talking to other families, and what and how to share information about an incident or concern, while maintaining privacy and confidentiality of those involved. Seek guidance from external authorities on steps to take, when relevant.



Conduct an internal investigation

Not every complaint about a service requires an internal investigation. The approved provider or service leader will need to decide whether an internal investigation is needed. The process should be in line with the service's complaints handling process and comply with reporting requirements under the National Law and any reporting requirements under other laws.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Ensure any internal investigation is fair to both the child and the adult or child whom concerns or allegations have been made about.
- Establish whether the complaint is about child safety or staff misconduct.
- Work with authorities like the police or child protection agency, if needed.
- Find out from that authority what the next steps in the external investigation will be, what contribution (if any) the service can make to that process, and whether the service can start or continue its own investigation.
- If the complaint is about online harm, file a report with the [ACCCE](#) and [eSafety Commissioner](#).
- Carefully plan the investigation process to avoid causing more trauma to the child.
- Have one trusted educator as the contact person for the child.
- Inform the child's parent or guardian unless directed by an external authority not to do so, and seek guidance from external authorities on when and how this conversation occurs.
- Seek guidance from external authorities if it is appropriate to talk to staff, other children and families at the service and what level of information to provide.
- Offer a community member's presence for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children, culturally and linguistically diverse children, or children with additional needs.
- Identify any specific needs the child has, like communication support.
- Ensure anyone who interviews children has had appropriate training.
- Make sure any interviews with children are safe, comfortable, and only happen once.
- Let the child explain what happened in their own words.
- Use open-ended questions like 'Please tell me about what happened?'
- Avoid asking too many questions as this may overwhelm a child.

Keep the child and family informed

Keeping families and children involved during the complaints process is important for their safety and wellbeing.

In some cases, it may not be appropriate to speak directly to the family. Services should seek guidance from external agencies such as the NQF regulatory authority, police or child protection agency on when to talk to children and families directly involved in a reportable matter or concern and what can be shared. Services should also seek guidance from external agencies on whether it is appropriate to talk to other staff and families at the service and when and how this should be done.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Provide support to the child and their family throughout the complaints handling process and any investigation.
- Check in with the child and their family regularly to update them on the process, timeframes, and next steps, while considering privacy and confidentiality obligations.



Provide support to staff who may be involved in the process

Staff involved in the process, such as staff members receiving a complaint, disclosure, or providing support to the family, including during any external or internal investigations, should be informed of requirements to maintain privacy and confidentiality. Support and opportunities for debriefing should also be provided.

Under the NQF, no serious detrimental action can be taken against someone for speaking up if:

- they are asked to under the National Law, or
- they believe that the National Law has been broken, or
- they believe that a child's safety, health, or wellbeing is at risk at the service.

Approved providers may wish to seek guidance from external authorities on what to share with other staff members.

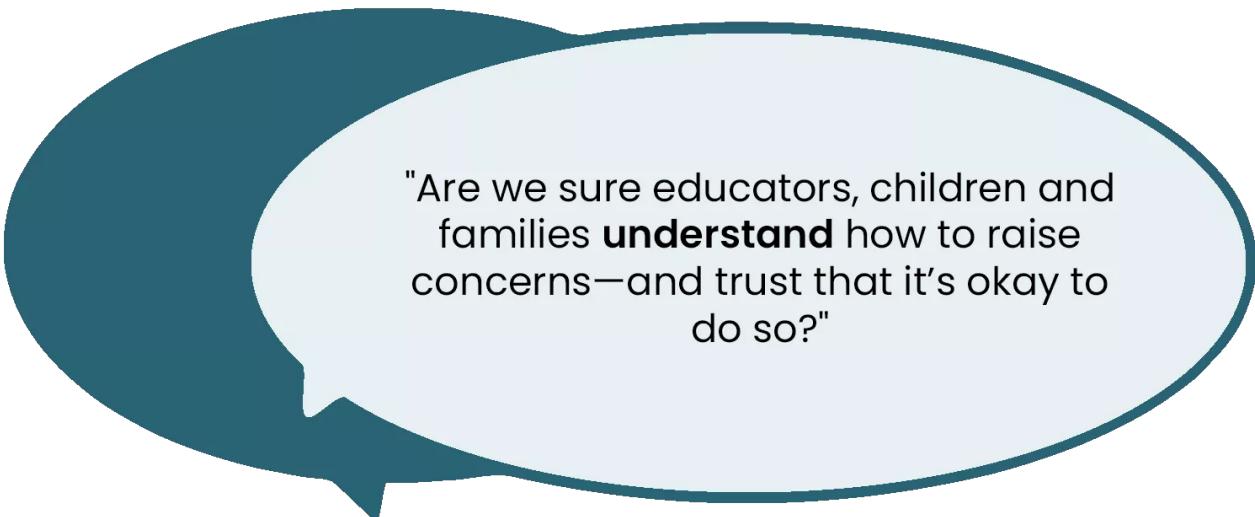
What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Staff and volunteers who receive disclosures from children may feel upset by what they've heard. Offer support to staff throughout the process. Give them a chance to talk about what they heard (debrief), offer counselling, and adjust their workload if needed.
- Create a healthy complaints culture where complaints are used to reflect on improvements to be made at the service.
- Let staff know if there is any information they can share with the child about the progress of their complaint.
- Talk to staff about requirements for maintaining privacy and confidentiality for all involved in the process.
- Ensure all staff know the process for reporting any complaints received, including with the approved provider or service leader, and any mandatory reporting or reportable conduct requirements.

Privacy and procedural fairness

Complaints and disclosures may reveal personal or sensitive information. Children have the same right to privacy as adults, except when a reporting obligation is triggered, and their personal information needs to be shared confidentially. Complaints handling policies and procedures should include information about maintaining privacy and confidentiality, in a way that complies with the law and is in the best interests of children.



"Are we sure educators, children and families **understand** how to raise concerns—and trust that it's okay to do so?"

It is important to be fair to the person who is the subject of a complaint, so that they are given an opportunity to respond to any allegations and comment on any findings. The timing of any conversation with them should be carefully planned, as an investigation may be needed first, to gather more information. This investigation may include an external investigation, and the approved provider and service leader may need to seek guidance from external authorities. A decision may also need to be made about whether it is appropriate for the person to continue working with children during the investigation.

If a complaint is made about the conduct of another child, they should not be stigmatised or isolated, and should be provided with support to address any issues contributing to their behaviour. This may include discussing their behaviour with their family and offering referrals to gain support from other professionals. See [Concerning or harmful sexual behaviours displayed by a child](#) section for more information.

After an investigation has been completed

It is important to keep a record of any internal investigation. Child safe services should analyse complaints to improve child safety practices at the service, update policies, procedures and risk assessments and reflect on the process to ensure staff, children and families are offered appropriate support.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Write a report:
 - explain why the investigation was done
 - describe what the investigation covered
 - list any decisions made and who made them
 - include the evidence found and what the investigator thinks about it
 - decide on final recommendations based on the risk assessment and the final outcome.
- Share the outcome:
 - tell all relevant parties about the investigation results, having regard to privacy and confidentiality obligations. This may include a complainant, and consideration should be given to how much information should be shared
 - make sure any conversations with children are age and developmentally appropriate and use words the child will understand
 - get advice from other external authorities (like the NQF regulatory authority, child protection or police) on what details can be shared with any family directly involved and with other families and staff at the service.
- If the allegation isn't proved, be careful how you tell the child. It's important that children feel believed. Saying something wasn't "proved" might make them think you don't believe them.
- Encourage children to share their thoughts and feelings about the investigation. Use their feedback to make the complaints handling process better.
- Review the service's policies and procedures, self-assessment and risk assessment and quality improvement plan.
- Critically reflect on the process of the investigation, including the privacy and confidentiality of those involved.
- Consider if further professional development is required for educators.

Resources for reporting child abuse

For information about reporting child maltreatment, abuse and neglect, visit [Reporting child abuse and neglect](#).

For information about Commonwealth, state and territory child protection legislation, visit [Australian child protection legislation](#).

Different organisations are responsible for reportable conduct schemes in each state and territory.

State and Territory Child Safe Standards	Reportable conduct scheme web resource
ACT	https://www.ombudsman.act.gov.au/accountability-and-oversight/ reportable-conduct
NSW	https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/organisations/reportable-conduct-scheme
NT	Not applicable
QLD	https://www.qfcc.qld.gov.au/childsafe/reportable-conduct-scheme
SA	Not applicable
TAS	https://oir.tas.gov.au/organisations/reportable-conduct-scheme
VIC	https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme
WA	https://www.ombudsman.wa.gov.au/.../Reportable_Conduct.htm

Useful Tool available

You can access the ***Reporting and responding schemes tool*** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

Questions to guide reflection on practice

These questions help you think about what you're doing well and what you can improve.

For approved providers and service leaders

- What steps does the service do to create a culture of reporting and encouraging everyone to speak up when something feels wrong?
- How does the service make sure the complaints handling process is easy for both children and adults to use?
- What is the process for staff and volunteers to report concerns about a colleague and how can you ensure this process is clear?
- How does an educator know the difference between the service's reporting process and the process for making a mandatory report? Do staff know where to find additional resources in the state or territory to help with making a mandatory report?
- What, if any, is the Reportable Conduct Scheme in the state or territory, and are staff familiar with the service's obligations under that scheme?
- How does the service decide if an internal investigation is needed? Who can you talk to for advice on how to investigate? What steps are taken during internal investigations to ensure children are safeguarded and the process is fair to the person being investigated?

For educators

- Who are the local contacts within the community that can support educators, children and families?
- How do educators, volunteers and staff help children express themselves and voice their concerns in a child friendly way?
- How do educators and staff respond when children make a disclosure?
- How do staff prioritise child safety after a complaint is received?
- How do staff support and communicate with families after receiving a complaint?
- How do you confirm all staff know how to access or refer to support services for themselves and others?

Useful Tool available

You can access the **Questions to guide reflection on practice** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

Resources

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[Questions to guide reflection on practice](#)

[Complaints process](#)

[Example of complaints](#)

[Reporting and responding schemes tool](#)

[Incident response template](#)



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Chapter 8: Resource tools

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Scan QR code to access Chapter 8 tools

Questions to guide reflection on practice

Complaints and disclosures

These questions help you think about what you're doing well and what you can improve.

For approved providers and service leaders

- What steps does the service do to create a culture of reporting and encouraging everyone to speak up when something feels wrong?
- How does the service make sure the complaints handling process is easy for both children and adults to use?
- What is the process for staff and volunteers to report concerns about a colleague and how can you ensure this process is clear?
- How does an educator know the difference between the service's reporting process and the process for making a mandatory report? Do staff know where to find additional resources in the state or territory to help with making a mandatory report?
- What, if any, is the Reportable Conduct Scheme in the state or territory, and are staff familiar with the service's obligations under that scheme?
- How does the service decide if an internal investigation is needed? Who can you talk to for advice on how to investigate? What steps are taken during internal investigations to ensure children are safeguarded and the process is fair to the person being investigated?

For everyone

- Who are the local contacts within the community that can support educators, children and families?
- How do educators, volunteers and staff help children express themselves and voice their concerns in a child friendly way?
- How do educators and staff respond when children make a disclosure?
- How do staff prioritise child safety after a complaint is received?
- How do staff support and communicate with families after receiving a complaint?
- How do you confirm all staff know how to access or refer to support services for themselves and others?

How to respond to complaints

Complaints and disclosures

The following diagram explains steps to take after receiving a complaint, concern or disclosure about a child being at risk of child maltreatment, abuse or neglect:

Steps to take after receiving a complaint

Write it down

Record the complaint, for example in the service's complaints register.



Conduct an initial risk assessment

- Identify risks to child/ren and steps to ensure safety
- Identify which external agencies to notify or make a report to
- Plan for an investigation (internal and/or external)
- Identify and secure any evidence that may need to be collected and shared with an investigation team (e.g. witness statements, CCTV footage.)



Notify the regulatory authority under the National Law

If the complaint alleges:

- that a serious incident has occurred or is occurring while a child was being educated and cared for by the service (s174(2)(b)(i)) or
- that the National Law has been breached (s174(2)(b)(ii)) or
- that an incident or allegation of physical or sexual harm has occurred, or is occurring, while the child is or the children are being educated and cared for by the education and care service (r175(2)(d)-(e))
- seek guidance on whether the person subject to allegation or complaint should keep working with children, during and after investigation.
- continue to work with the regulatory authority and follow their advice throughout the process.

How to respond to complaints



Reporting to external authorities under other laws

Contact the:

- police, and/or
- child protection agency as a mandatory reporter, and/or
- reportable conduct scheme, and/or
- contact the federal police – Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation, and the eSafety Commissioner if it's about children's online safety.



Notifying parents

- Seek guidance from external authorities on when and how to tell the family and whether to talk to the child and plan conversations.
- Seek guidance from external authorities on whether to, how and when to talk to other families at the service and plan conversations.



Conduct an internal investigation

Maintain confidentiality throughout the complaint handling process.



Support the child and family

Keep them informed and provide support throughout the process.



Support staff

Ensure staff involved in the process understand confidentiality requirements.

Use a trauma-informed approach to help staff involved in the process, for example through an employee assistance program.



After the investigation has been completed

Make sure to write down the steps that were taken (including any investigations and advice received from expert authorities), and the outcome. Keep it in a secure location.

Examples of complaints

Complaints and disclosures

The following examples show a range of complaints that may be raised about a service:

- A family member posts on social media about an educator's inappropriate conversation with their child.
- A health practitioner observes inappropriate behaviour by a staff member and informs the service director.
- A parent emails a snapshot of a parent group chat to the service, which questions an educator's interactions.
- A practicum student raises concerns about practices observed at the service.
- A child tells a volunteer about an educator mistreating them.
- A child tells an educator about another child being hurt by an educator.
- A child tells their parents about a visiting teacher picking on them.
- A member of the public contacts the regulatory authority about an educator hitting a child, which they observed during an excursion.
- A parent finds unexpected marks on their child when they return home from the service and reports this to the police.
- A child tells an educator about something uncomfortable they saw online, while at the service.

Chapter 9: Families and the local community

Chapter 9: Families and the local community



Scan QR code to watch the video or use this [link](#)

Child safe engagement with families and communities

Children are safer and thrive when their families are involved in the service's child safe practices.

Involving families and the community helps build strong relationships and maintain a child safe culture.

Establishing respectful partnerships with families, including their diverse circumstances and goals for their children, helps keep children safe.



The importance of building strong partnerships with families and communities

Services should build strong, respectful relationships with families. This helps keep families informed and involved in their child's safety, learning and development.

Strong partnerships help families:

- increase trust and confidence in the service
- better understand educators' roles and responsibilities in keeping their child safe
- share information with other families for support
- learn what helps make a child safe organisation and things they can do to keep children safe.

Strong partnerships help educators:

- gain information to support children's safety
- understand current issues affecting families and children.



"Do our relationships with families support open conversations about tough topics, like abuse or grooming?"

Families will disengage if they feel their involvement is just for show or doesn't lead to change. Services should actively involve families in creating a child safe culture and act on their concerns about child safety. It's important for families to understand the signs of [child maltreatment](#), abuse and neglect.

Useful Tool available

You can access the ***Speaking to families about safety concerns tool*** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

What does this look like in practice?

For everyone

- Talk to families about child safety, for example, ask what safety means to them and their child, and what worries their child.
- Inform families and the community about the service's responsibilities in creating a child safe culture.
- Work with families to reinforce key messages about child safety, including:
 - how children should be treated
 - appropriate and inappropriate behaviour by adults
 - teaching children to speak up if they feel unsafe.
- Use [speaking to families about safety concerns](#) tool to discuss child safety concerns with families.
- Help families understand that perpetrators may groom family members to gain access to children.

The importance of connecting to communities

Community partnerships that are based on open communication, consultation and collaboration contribute to child safe environments.

Supporting children and educators to learn more about the cultures that exist within Australia includes engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities about how to embed their perspectives in the philosophy of the service and in planning and curriculum. This is an important part of establishing and maintaining a culturally safe environment for all children.

What does this look like in practice?

For everyone

- Support children's cultural safety and their sense of belonging by connecting them to, and engaging with, their local community.
- Engage community members and Elders from the local community in committees, policy reviews and planning activities.
- Invite members of diverse groups within the community to share their interests, experiences and expertise with the service.
- Develop respectful connections with community members that can be used to promote child safe practices across the community.

Understanding and responding to families and communities

Building a child safe culture means understanding and responding to the needs of families and the local community.

Educators and service leaders should create a safe environment that respects children and family cultures, traditional practices, heritage, and beliefs. There is guidance available in the [approved learning frameworks](#) about embedding culturally safe practices throughout the service, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

What does this look like in practice?

For everyone

- Develop strong relationships with families and community members to respect their identities and cultures.
- Support families to feel comfortable asking questions about child safety and work with them to address issues as they arise.
- Encourage families to give feedback on child safety concerns and act on their feedback.
- Provide opportunities for families to help develop and review child safety policies and procedures.
- When discussing these topics with families, remind them that the goal is to keep children safe from maltreatment, abuse and neglect and to support their learning and development.

Engaging with families to create a child safe culture

A child safe culture enables educators to have sensitive conversations with families about child safety concerns. This may include talking to families about protective behaviours to support their child's safety, children's harmful sexual behaviour, or any allegations of child maltreatment, abuse or neglect.

The [Office of the Children's Guardian](#) has identified that there can be a higher risk of opportunities for child maltreatment, abuse or neglect to occur in services that are 'closed' or not transparent with families about their governance, processes and code of conduct. This is especially the case if families believe the authority and attitude of the service means they cannot question its practices.

What does this look like in practice?

For approved providers and service leaders

- Take [complaints](#) seriously and have a comprehensive, child-centred complaints-handling system.
- Regularly update families about the service's child safety practices.
- Make sure families know where to find child safety policies and procedures. Remove any barriers that would prevent families from accessing and understanding them.

For everyone

- Regularly consult families to understand what keeps their children safe. Ask families what makes them feel comfortable and culturally safe and take any concerns seriously.
- Respect each family's background and cultural identity and use this information to inform educators' practices.
- Ensure children and families with diverse needs and family structures feel included. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, culturally and linguistically diverse families, LGBTIQA+ family members and family members with additional needs.
- Be aware of any legal restrictions on family members' contact with children.

Practical ways to engage families about child safety

Make sure families know who they can contact, with any ideas or concerns for a child, such as a safety officer, room leader, FDC/OSHC coordinator or centre director. Include a child safety section on your website, in your newsletter, on flyers, and in email signatures. Organise events for families to talk about child safety. Make child safety information accessible in multiple ways, for example using [translating services](#).

Case Study – Creating a child safe culture through community partnerships



Creating a child safe culture through community partnerships

A long day care service is in an area of high socioeconomic disadvantage, with many families experiencing financial instability and housing insecurity. The service works with families and the community to help children thrive, and have established two programs:

Community Pantry: The service uses part of its budget to buy food for families in need. They partner with a community organisation to get fresh food and cooked meals for families. Families appreciate the top up to their pantries and being able to access a hot meal once a week.

Clothing Exchange: The service started a clothing exchange program and uses social media and leaflets to promote it. People donate or exchange clothes, shoes, blankets, and sleeping bags which are cleaned by a local laundromat. Families are encouraged to take what they need without judgment and about 20 items are taken each day.

These programs build trust and support systems for families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage in the service's community. By working with community organisations, the service supports the safety and wellbeing of all children.

Questions to guide reflection on practice

These questions help you think about what you're doing well and what you can improve.

For approved providers and service leaders

- How does the service keep families regularly updated on child safety?
- How does the service ensure this information comes from reputable child safety organisations?
- How do service leaders and educators respond to families' concerns about a child's safety?
- What information about child safety is shared with the local community?

Useful Tool available

You can access the ***Questions to guide reflection on practice*** in the Tools section at the end of this chapter or use this [link](#) if you are using the web version of this PDF.

Resources

To access resources related to this chapter, please scan the QR code or click this [link](#).

There are several tools available for this chapter. You can access these in the Tools section on the next page or select each link below if you are using the web version of this PDF.

[Questions to guide reflection on practice](#)

[Speaking to families about safety concerns](#)

[Incident response template](#)

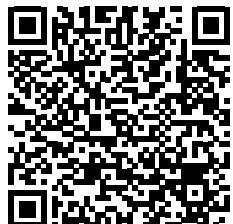
[Reporting and responding schemes tool](#)



Scan the QR code to access all the resources from this chapter

Chapter 9: Resource tools

To access tools related to this chapter, please scan the QR code or click this [link](#).



Scan QR code to access Chapter 9 tools

Questions to guide reflection on practice

Families and communities

These questions help you think about what you're doing well and what you can improve.

For approved providers and service leaders

- How does the service keep families regularly updated on child safety?
- How does the service ensure this information comes from reputable child safety organisations?
- How do service leaders and educators respond to families' concerns about a child's safety?
- What information about child safety is shared with the local community?

Speaking to families about safety concerns



Families and communities

If a service has concerns about a child's safety and it's appropriate to speak to the family, consider the following information before speaking to them.

In some cases, it may not be appropriate to speak directly to the family. Services should seek guidance from external agencies such as the NQF regulatory authority, police or child protection agency on when to talk to children and families directly involved in a reportable matter or concern and what can be shared. Services should also seek guidance from external agencies on whether it is appropriate to talk to other staff and families at the service and when and how this should be done.

- Make sure the right person talks to the family, like an educator with a good relationship with the family, and has all the information before talking to them (for example, family background, observations, support or referral guidance).
- Plan what to say and consider any safety risks or protective factors for the child. Talk to a manager to prepare for conversations with families and/or plan who should talk to the family if the educator is not comfortable or confident to do so.
- Choose a private, comfortable place for the conversation. Ask if the family wants a support person, especially if English isn't their first language.
- Be open and honest about your concerns and responsibilities.
- Use facts and avoid jargon, judgment, or blame.
- Ask the family if there is anything they'd like to say and give them an opportunity to speak while listening carefully and without bias.
- Discuss next steps and any support the service can provide.
- Seek support for whoever speaks to the family, before and after the conversation.
- Share additional support resources, like Bravehearts, Lifeline, or the National Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Counselling Service.

After speaking to the family, make a written record of the conversation and follow up on any questions. Store all records securely and according to privacy laws.

If you're concerned about a child's treatment at home, remember that the child may have strong connections to their family and mixed feelings about the perpetrator.

If there's an immediate risk to the child, contact emergency services or the relevant child protection agency.

Glossary

Explore definitions of terms from the NQF Child Safe Culture Guide. Select letter groups below to reveal corresponding lists of terms and their definitions.

A – B

Active citizenship: is about displaying values of respect, inclusion and helping others, as well as appreciating diversity in all its forms. It involves helping out and being connected to your local community. (Adapted from Be an active citizen, Australian Government 2022).

Active learning environment: an active learning environment is one in which children are encouraged to explore and interact with the environment to make (or construct) meaning and knowledge through their experiences, social interactions and negotiations with others. In an active learning environment, educators play a crucial role of encouraging children to discover deeper meanings and make connections among ideas and between concepts, processes and representations. This requires educators to be engaged with children's emotions and thinking. (Adapted from South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework, General introduction).

Active listening: is concentrating on more than what is being said (such as gestures, facial expression and body language) and involves listening to and acknowledging what is being said in ways that enhance mutual understanding.

Additional needs: the term used for children who require or will benefit or be able to participate more fully from specific considerations, adaptations or differentiation of any aspects of the curriculum, including resources and the environment.

Agency: being able to make choices and decisions, to influence events and to have an impact on one's world.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): An engineered system that generates predictive outputs such as content, forecasts, recommendations, or decisions for a given set of human-defined objectives or parameters without explicit programming. AI systems are designed to operate with varying levels of automation.

Body safety awareness: Teaching children, from a young age, that they are the boss of their body and what they say goes is incredibly empowering. It includes exploring body boundaries, respect, consent, feelings and emotions, choices, recognizing bullying behaviours and body safety. Learning these important and life-long skills are crucial in developing children's confidence and will help them to recognise their rights — especially in regards to their body.

C

Child maltreatment, abuse and neglect: The term Child maltreatment is often used interchangeably with the terms 'child abuse and neglect'. This guide uses child maltreatment, abuse and neglect and defers to the definition provided by the World Health Organisation (2006) and includes:

All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.

(<https://aifs.gov.au/resources/policy-and-practice-papers/what-child-abuse-and-neglect>)

Child grooming: grooming, through manipulative behaviours, is when an adult prepares a child for sexual abuse. Perpetrators may sexually abuse children by using manipulative behaviours or strategies as part of a process commonly involving prosocial behaviours violating personal boundaries, to obtain sexual contact with children in the periods prior to, during and following sexual contact. Grooming can happen in person or online. It is a sexual offense and must be reported.

Child protection: means responding to and dealing with cases of child abuse or neglect that have already happened.

Child safeguarding: means taking steps to prevent harm from happening in the first place.

Child sexual exploitation: when a child is manipulated or coerced to participate in a sexual activity in exchange for, or the promise of, an incentive. This can include incentives such as food, accommodation, clothing, drugs, alcohol, cigarettes or money. It can also include incentives such as love, affection, or safety. Child sexual exploitation is a distinct form of child sexual abuse because of this notion of exchange or reward.

Children: refers to each baby, toddler, three to five year old and school age child and means children as individuals and as members of a group in the education and care setting, unless otherwise stated.

Children who have displayed harmful sexual behaviours: includes a broad range of sexual behaviours in children and young people. This includes behaviours that affect their own development, as well as behaviours that are coercive, sexually aggressive or predatory to others.

Children living with disability: disability is part of human diversity. There are many different kinds of disability and they can result from accidents, illness or genetic disorders. Disability may affect mobility, ability to learn, ability to communicate, or ability to engage with others and with experiences. Some children may have more than one type of disability. A disability may be visible or hidden, may be permanent or temporary and may have minimal or substantial impact on a child's abilities.

Citizens: participating members of local, national, and global communities.

Code of Conduct: A child safe Code of Conduct is a document outlining expected behaviours from all members of an organisation, and behaviours that are unacceptable, when interacting with children and young people.

Communities: social, cultural or geographic contexts, groups or networks that share a common purpose, heritage, rights and responsibilities and/ or other bonds. ‘Communities’ is used variously to refer, for example, to the community within early childhood settings, extended kinships, the local geographic community and broader Australian and global society.

Cyberbullying: cyberbullying is when someone uses the internet to be mean to a child or young person, so they feel bad or upset.

D – K

Disclosure: is a process by which a child conveys or attempts to convey that they are being or have been sexually abused, or by which an adult conveys or attempts to convey that they were sexually abused as a child. This may take many forms, and might be verbal or non-verbal. Nonverbal disclosures using painting or drawing, gesticulating, or through behavioural changes, are more common among young children and children with cognitive or communication impairments. Children, in particular, may also seek to disclose sexual abuse through emotional or behavioural cues, such as heightened anxiety, withdrawal or aggression.

Enforceable undertaking: is a written undertaking from a person, in which the person sets out what they will do or refrain from doing, to comply with the National Law and Regulations.

Family/Family member: In relation to a child, family/family member means:

- a parent, grandparent, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, or cousin of the child, whether of the whole blood or half blood and whether that relationship arises by marriage (including a de facto relationship) or by adoption or otherwise; or
- a relative of the child according to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander tradition; or
- a person with whom the child resides in a family-like relationship; or
- a person who is recognised in the child’s community as having a familial role in respect of the child.

Fitness and propriety: describes a person’s suitability to be involved in the operation of an education and care service. More information on the meaning of fitness and propriety is available in the National Law and Guide to the NQF.

Generative artificial intelligence (AI): A branch of AI that develops generative models with the capability of learning to generate novel content such as images, text, and other media with similar properties as their training data.

Geotag: A piece of electronic data that shows where someone or something is and can, for example, be attached to a photograph or comment on social media.

Halo effect: The halo effect can occur during recruitment if the recruiter hires a person primarily because they were personable and likeable. Instead, individuals should always be selected based upon their demonstration of child safe skills, values and behaviours. When the ‘halo effect’ occurs, the approved provider and/or the service leader may ignore any concerns, comments or behaviours that may indicate an applicant is not right for the position, instead choosing to employ them because they seem ‘nice’.

Harmful content: Harmful content includes:

- sexually explicit material
- false or misleading information
- violence
- extremism or terrorism
- hateful or offensive material.

Illegal content: Illegal content includes:

- images and videos of child sexual abuse
- content that advocates terrorist acts
- content that promotes, incites or instructs in crime or violence
- footage of real violence, cruelty and criminal activity.

Image-based abuse: sharing, or threatening to share, an intimate image or video without the consent of the person shown.

Kinships systems: a kinship system is an aspect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social organisation. It is a complex system that determines the relationships, roles, responsibilities, and obligations to one another and includes ceremonial business around land, lore, births, marriages and deaths. There are different structures and relationships that are not necessarily biological and covers more than people. Kinship includes a connection to Country: animals, places, ancestors, weather systems and plants.

L – P

LGBTIQA+: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual, and other identities not fully represented in the acronym.

Mandatory reporter: A person who is required by either state or territory law to report known and suspected cases of child abuse and neglect to a nominated government department or agency. Usually, they need to report to a child protection authority.

National Law: Unless otherwise specified, the Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010 or, in Western Australia, the Education and Care Services National Law (WA) Act 2012. This applied law system sets a national standard for children’s education and care across Australia. See the ACECQA website for the Application Act or legislation that applies in each jurisdiction.

National Principles: National Principles for Child Safe Organisations are a set of ten principles that guide organisations in developing child safe cultures and practices.

National Regulations: The Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011. The National Regulations support the National Law by providing detail on a range of operational requirements for an education and care service.

Offender: is generally used for a person who is found by a court to have done something unlawful.

Online hate: Online hate can be defined as any hateful posts about a person or group based on their race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability or gender.

Organisational culture: Organisational culture is the set of collective actions, values, beliefs, attitudes, systems, and rules that outline and influence employee behaviour within an organisation.

Parent: in relation to a child, includes— (a) a guardian of the child; and (b) a person who has parental responsibility for the child under a decision or order of a court.

Pedagogy: is the art, craft and science of educating. Pedagogy is the foundation for educators’ professional practice, especially those aspects that involve building and nurturing relationships, curriculum decision-making, teaching and learning.

Perpetrator: an adult who has sexually abused a child or young person, but who may or may not have been convicted of this crime.

Persons with Management or Control: person with management or control means a person referred to in section 5A of the National Law. It relates to the approved provider.

Prosocial behaviour: is doing something to benefit, help or care for someone else because you believe that other people’s feelings and experiences are important.

R – Z

Reconciliation: “At its heart, Reconciliation is about strengthening relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous peoples, for the benefit of all Australians.” (<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/reconciliation/what-is-reconciliation>)

Reportable conduct: is conduct that must be reported under legislation that obliges designated institutions to report allegations of institutional child sexual abuse to an independent statutory body.

Restricted content/Restricted access system: a Restricted Access System aims to limit the exposure of children and young people under 18 to pornography and other age-inappropriate online content.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse: The Royal Commission presented a final report to the Governor-General in December 2017 after a 5 year inquiry and made many recommendations about national, state and territory mechanisms for working with children checks (WWCC), mandatory reporting and child safety obligations, teacher registration/accreditation, Reportable Conduct Schemes and Child Safe Standards. Each jurisdiction has responded to the recommendations and is at different stages of maturity and have different obligations, requirements, thresholds and information sharing mechanisms for inter-related child protection mechanisms.

Serious detrimental action: cannot be taken against a person for making a disclosure. Serious detrimental action includes dismissal, involuntary transfer, loss of promotion or demotion (National Law, section 296)

Sexting: means sending a sexual message or text, with or without a photo or video. It can be done using a phone service or any platform that allows people to connect via an online message or chat function.

Smart toys: Smart toys generally require an internet connection to operate as the computing task is on a central server.

Staff member: in relation to an education and care service, means any individual (other than a volunteer) employed, appointed or engaged to work in or as part of an education and care service, whether as a family day care coordinator, educator or otherwise (National Law).

Staff misconduct: In an early education and care setting, refers to when a staff member’s behaviour breaches the code of conduct or they act in a way that is unacceptable when interacting with children and young people, or other staff and families.

Technologies: includes much more than computers and digital technologies used for information, communication and entertainment. It involves the development of new objects or tools by people that help them in their lives. There are 3 broad types of technology: mechanical (e.g. wheels, blocks, levers and gears) analogue technology (e.g. film-based photography, drawing, painting); and digital technology (e.g. mobile phones and computers) (ECA 2018).

Technology toys: technology toys usually need to be connected to a phone, tablet or computer via Bluetooth connection but generally do not require an internet connection to work the device.

Trauma: children may be exposed to four different types of trauma:

1. Single incident trauma which can result from experiencing a time-limited and often unexpected traumatic event (e.g. a car accident, bushfire, loss of a loved one)
2. Complex trauma which can result from exposure to severe, sustained and harmful interpersonal events (e.g. physical, emotional or sexual abuse, profound neglect, domestic and family violence)
3. Historical trauma which refers to multigenerational trauma experienced by a specific cultural group (e.g. the intergenerational impacts of the European colonisation and forced removal of children from families and communities on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities)
4. Intergenerational trauma which can result when unresolved complex trauma impacts on the next generation's capacity to parent and leads to intergenerational harm. When exposed to traumatic events at a young age, children may not have developed or will have lost their sense of safety, trust and belonging.

Trauma informed practice: responsive practice made possible by awareness of the impact of trauma on children's learning, development and wellbeing. This includes recognising the signs and symptoms of trauma in children, responding by making places and relationships feel safe and supportive to children, and helping children to develop their capacity for emotional regulation.

Unwanted contact: Unwanted contact is any type of online communication that makes you feel uncomfortable, unsafe or harassed. It can be with a stranger or someone you know.

Victim and survivor: Victims and survivors are terms used for those who have experienced child sexual abuse. It should be recognised that not all people with lived experience of child sexual abuse will identify with these terms.