Risk Management and the Child Safe Standards

Part 2: Identifying risk

A resource for child-related organisations

NSW GOVERNMENT

Contents

Introduction

Organisations that work with children have a responsibility to keep them safe from harm and abuse. Almost all child-related organisations will deal with some element of risk. This can include financial risk, as well as Work, Health and Safety (WH&S) risks. Organisations also need to be aware of risks that may contribute to the abuse or neglect of children.

Ultimately, child safety should be a shared objective of organisations and the communities they operate in. It cannot occur without effective risk management.

Risk Management: Responding to Risk describes why it's important to manage risk and breaks down the steps needed to mitigate it. It will take you through the process of creating a Child Safe Risk Management Plan and explain why this kind of plan is valuable.

Risk Management: Identifying Risk describes the kinds of risk, including abuse and grooming, and explores different kinds of offenders and motivations for offending.

The Child Safe Standards inform both resources, which have been written for anyone in an organisation who has a role in reducing the risk of harm to children. Both parts are supported by further resources from the OCG.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse found that if adults were able to recognise abuse and grooming, they were more likely to prevent it occurring, or to report it if it was seen or suspected.

Some actions undertaken by perpetrators, particularly grooming, are very subtle. Some, of themselves, aren't harmful. They are cumulative, however, and taken as a whole are highly indicative that someone is preparing to harm a child. Sometimes they can only be identified when looked at together, when they reveal a pattern of behaviour. This cannot occur unless the grooming activities are recognised as being potentially of concern.

Of course, not every action undertaken by adults working alongside children is grooming or abuse. This is why codes of conduct are so important. They are a set of rules that adults must follow. Any breaches need to be reported. In this way patterns of behaviour can be revealed and isolated incidents can be assessed against repeated breaches.

The OCG has resources to support you develop all these important documents. See our website for links to PDFs, videos and eLearning.

TYPES OF ABUSE

Identifying the types of risk children can be exposed to

This resource discusses different types of harm and explores the factors that increase the likelihood of children and young people being abused. It breaks abuse down into physical, sexual, psychological and neglect, and looks at risks arising from physical and online environments.

What is abuse?

Children and young people can be exposed to different kinds of harm and abuse.

Risks to children which can cause harm, or leave them vulnerable to harm[*]

Physical abuse	■ Physical punishment ■ Pushing, shoving, punching, slapping, kicking resulting in injury, burns, choking or bruising ■ Threatening to physically harm a child ■ Genital mutilation ■ Peer-to-peer violence.
Neglect	■ Lack of supervision ■ Not providing adequate nourishment ■ Not providing adequate medical care, clothing or shelter ■ Lack of education.
Emotional abuse	■ Bullying ■ Threatening and abusive language ■ Intimidation ■ Shaming and name calling ■ Ignoring and isolating a child ■ Exposure to domestic and family violence.
Sexual abuse	■ Sexual touching of a child ■ Grooming ■ Production, distribution or possession of child abuse material (pornography) ■ Descriptions of sexual acts without a legitimate reason.
Sexual misconduct	■ Sexual comments, conversations or communications ■ Comments to a child that express a desire to act in a sexual manner towards them or another child.

* Some reporting bodies include ill-treatment as a form of harm.

Factors that increase the risk of children being harmed

There can be a number of factors involving children that increase the likelihood of abuse occurring. Before beginning your risk assessment you should consider how these factors can affect the outcome of your assessment, especially in terms of which children and young people are more vulnerable.

Being transparent about how abuse can occur or assessing the likelihood of it occurring does not mean that it will occur at your organisation. Rather, it means you have considered the likelihood of it and that you can put interventions in place to prevent or minimise it.

While most people who work with children are committed to providing a safe place for them, organisations that fail to consider the risk of harm because they don't believe it can happen at their organisation leave children exposed.

Having effective prevention strategies and interventions not only lowers the risk of harm but also places organisations in a position to effectively respond to an incident should it occur. Furthermore, it allows the organisation to develop strong child safe policies and practices that reduce the opportunities for harm and abuse to occur.

Vulnerability risk

Factors affecting the risk of harm to children[1]		
Factor	**How it can put children at risk**	**How to prevent it being a factor**
Diverse backgrounds	Some children from diverse cultural backgrounds may lack the language skills required to report abuse. Different cultural norms, such as the unqualified respect for the head of the household may also contribute to them being reluctant to report abuse. Some children and young people from refugee backgrounds may have a distrust of authority figures. Some young women may also fear their future marriage prospects will be lessened if they disclose abuse, which could affect her 'reputation' and provoke a sense of shame.[2]	Workers in the organisation can be recruited from the child's cultural background, increasing the opportunity for the child to communicate their concerns. The child can also be supported to learn English, and community members can be encouraged to interact with the organisation.
Children with physical disability or intellectual disability	Children with intellectual disabilities, communication disorders or behavioural disorders are at higher risk of all forms of abuse and are often deliberately targeted for this reason. Studies estimate these children are three to five times more likely to be abused.[3] It can be hard for children with communication difficulties to convey their experience of abuse or name perpetrators. Moreover, children with intellectual disabilities or cognitive impairments may be less likely to be believed or listened to. Some are unaware that what has happened to them is abuse because they haven't been provided with appropriate sex education and protective behaviour programs. Some children with disability need help with personal or medical care. This relative intimacy may also create a risk of abuse within an organisational setting. The likelihood of detection may be reduced because this assistance is often provided in private. Additionally, being physically assisted in this way frequently may affect a child's understanding of what is and is not appropriate.	All children should be encouraged to let their carers know if they feel sad, upset or scared. They should be provided with accessible means to communicate, and given an ability and age appropriate understanding of what is acceptable, and what is unacceptable behaviour by adults interacting with children. Organisations should ask, 'How can each child be supported to tell us if something is wrong?'

Factors affecting the risk of harm to children

Factor	How it can put children at risk	How to prevent it being a factor
Age	All children are vulnerable to abuse because of their dependence on adults. For the most part, adults are physically stronger than children and have social power. In matters reported to the OCG, children aged between 13 and 15 years and between 1 and 6 years were the highest represented age groups each accounting for approximately a quarter of alleged victims.[4] The power imbalance between children and adults is enhanced in certain organisational contexts. These include organisations that are, for example: ■ very strict and authoritarian ■ closed to the outside world or do not involve families or the community ■ hierarchical and ordered where those in authority have significant power or unquestionable authority. Additionally, children may not understand that what is happening is wrong and may not have the capacity to communicate what has happened to them.	All children should be empowered with protective behaviour strategies and be offered accessible means to report harm and abuse.
The child's family	Some children fail to speak up if they feel sad, upset or scared because they are not encouraged to do so in their own families.	Protective behaviour strategies will assist children to recognise unsafe situations and encourage them to speak up. Organisations should provide children who indicate a reluctance to speak up with encouragement and methods that help them understand that the 'rules' in the organisation are child-centred. Where possible, consideration should also be given to providing access or referrals to: ■ Delivering early intervention programs for the child ■ Parenting programs and support processes ■ Developing stronger parent/child relationships.

Factors affecting the risk of harm to children

Factor	How it can put children at risk	How to prevent it being a factor
First Nations backgrounds	Some First Nations children and young people may have a lack of trust in authority figures. Inter-generational trauma may also impact their desire to speak up regarding abuse.	First Nations children should be supported by celebration of their culture, and by acknowledgement of past trauma. This can be facilitated by understanding the history of First Nations people in Australia, and forming genuine, trusting relationships with community members, including parents, carers and elders.
Children and young people in remote areas, or who are in closed institutions, such as boarding schools and juvenile justice facilities, may lack access to trusted adults they can report abuse to	Cultural characteristics that arise in closed organisations[5] include: ■ Secrecy, where information sharing on any level is restricted ■ Abuse of power, where people exert significant control over the lives and actions of those engaging with the organisation on any level ■ Prioritisation of discipline, order and conformity over the wellbeing of individual children ■ Isolation from the outside world, including oversight authorities ■ Prioritising the organisation's reputation over the safety of children ■ Failure to deal with complaints and undertake investigations.	Extra support for these children and young people should be offered by providing methods of communication that are appropriate to their circumstances. Responsible adults, including parents, carers and teachers should explore how communication can be facilitated for them, and reinforcing to them that they have the right to speak up about anything that concerns them. They should also be given an understanding of what is appropriate behaviour, and what isn't. Children are less likely to be harmed in organisations which involve families and communities in programs, activities and services. Organisations should encourage their participation and welcome their feedback.

Factors affecting the risk of harm to children

Factor	How it can put children at risk	How to prevent it being a factor
The child has been abused previously	Research indicates that children who have been abused or neglected can be more vulnerable to subsequent sexual victimisation, because of the impacts of the initial maltreatment. These impacts include:[6] ■ low self-esteem or a sense of powerlessness – feeling they 'deserve' the abuse because it is happening again ■ poor relationships that lead to social isolation and ostracism by their peers ■ heightened need for affection and attention ■ poor interpersonal relationships with family or carers ■ developmental disorders or cognitive impairments resulting directly from prior trauma ■ they have 'shut down' emotionally ■ they may have previously reported and not been believed, and feel they will not be believed this time either.	All children should be supported to understand what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behaviour by the adults looking after them. If a history of abuse is known about, these children should be offered extra support and intervention. All children in organisations should be encouraged to participate in the decisions affecting them, which leads to feelings of empowerment and confidence to speak up if they need to.
Children are not listened to in the organisation	Children who speak up and who are not listened to will be reluctant to speak up again. This is important not just for 'big' things like disclosing abuse, but also 'small' things, like where they would like to sit on the mat for story time, for example. Valuing the child's input on all levels will help them feel empowered.	Workers should use responsive approaches, such as using or learning key phrases in the child's first language when they are interacting with them. All adults in your organisation should be supported to understand what they need to do if a child speaks up about something that concerns them.
Sexuality and gender orientation	Some children may become vulnerable because of their sexuality or gender orientation. This could be because they have become isolated from their family and friends, or because they are deliberately targeted by people seeking to exploit their emotional vulnerabilities.	All children should know what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behaviour by adults. They should be encouraged to discuss their feelings in appropriate ways and supported to be empowered and confident.

You may not know if children in your organisation have any of the vulnerabilities described above. This means you should build preventative factors into your risk management planning so that all children feel safe and protected.

Organisational risk

Organisations may have limited opportunities to reduce vulnerability, situational or propensity risks. By addressing organisational risks, however, they can reduce or entirely remove the risk of harm to children.

Factors affecting the risk of harm to children		
Factor	**How it can put children at risk**	**How to prevent it being a factor**
Leaders fail to see child safety as a priority	Leaders who do not see child safety as their priority may not encourage a child safe culture. A child safe culture is one where: ■ the best interests of children are paramount ■ children's rights are prioritised ■ children are listened to and respected ■ abuse is reported internally and externally. Additionally, cultures where adults recognise signs of abuse but do not respond, or dismiss their concerns, risks exposing children to ongoing abuse. This is because it can facilitate a 'bystander' culture, where inaction is acceptable. Such cultures also reduce the likelihood that children will speak up about safety concerns.	Child safety should be seen as the priority by leaders. They should model the behaviour they expect their staff and volunteers to follow. They should ensure the organisation has appropriate policies and procedures, and that all breaches of these are responded to. Without child safety being prioritised, secondary aims (such as protecting the reputation of a perpetrator or an organisation) can become the primary focus. This can mean the organisation may not implement strategies, make decisions to protect children, or may fail to report incidents of abuse when required.
Emphasis on power, aggression, strength and competition	These cultures can make the disclosure of abuse difficult because it may be considered a weakness. The normalisation of violence or sexualised conduct can also create an environment where abuse may go unrecognised or be viewed as unavoidable. This can impact the proper identification and response to child abuse.	Leaders should ensure that all those interacting with the organisation understand child safety is the priority, even more than winning. When child safety is prioritised, violence and sexualised behaviour can be seen as inappropriate and harmful, rather than a necessary 'rite of passage.' Once this understanding is reached, children are safer, and organisations become more respected.
Sexuality and gender orientation	Some adults in organisations may target children because of the children's sexuality or gender orientation. This could be because they believe the children are isolated from their family and friends, or are seen as being emotionally vulnerable.	All adults should be encouraged to follow the organisation's Code of Conduct. It should ensure there is no bias demonstrated by staff towards children because of the children's sexuality or gender orientation (nor race, culture etc.). Supervision and training should ensure all staff report any concerning behaviour observed in other adults.

Factors affecting the risk of harm to children

Factor	How it can put children at risk	How to prevent it being a factor
Lack of understanding or awareness of child abuse	Leaders and staff may have little understanding of the strategies adopted by perpetrators when accessing and abusing children, and how and where abuse tends to occur. When this happens and staff do not readily know and understand their obligations to protect children, children can be exposed to ongoing abuse because they are unable to identify harm or respond appropriately.	In situations where leaders do not understand the implications of child safety strategies, it is often the case that their staff fail to recognise them as well, or fail to enact them. It is vital that leaders not only understand what it takes to be child safe, but support this understanding being rolled out across the organisation to all its stakeholders, including (in an age-appropriate form) to children. These strategies include having codes of conduct which describe appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, as well as reporting mechanisms which are accessible to everyone in the organisation, and which follow recognised processes to ensure fair and transparent responses to any allegations of abuse.
Protection of reputation of the organisation	Organisations that rely on their reputation as safe and nurturing environments for children can be quick to defend threats to their image. This can mean organisations do not respond adequately to matters relating to child abuse and can place the interests of the organisations and their reputation above those of a child. This may lead to: ■ organisations taking no or inadequate action in response to complaints ■ allegations being concealed, or an approach of 'damage control' being adopted ■ abuse being considered irregular behaviour by an individual member of staff.	Leaders should understand that one of the best ways to protect the reputation of their organisation is not via cover ups, poor investigations or excuses. Organisations with the best reputations take robust steps to prevent abuse from happening in the first place, and have systems in place to recognise and respond to it if it does occur. These organisations build on their reputations as being safe places for children, and they do this proactively by demonstrating how they do this.

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Factors affecting the risk of harm to children

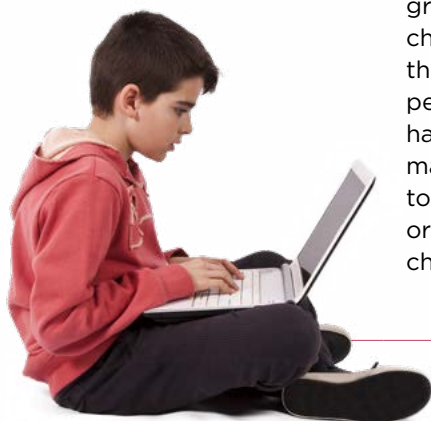| Factor	How it can put children at risk	How to prevent it being a factor
Unclear expectations about staff-child relationships	Organisations are more vulnerable to abuse occurring when expectations about adult and child relationships are not articulated in, for example, a Code of Conduct, and staff are not held accountable to standards of behaviour.	Leaders who ensure their organisations have robust policies and procedures to support a child safe culture oversee environments where children are less vulnerable to abuse than those where they're not in place. Codes of conduct are integral in these environments, as they set clear expectations of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. All breaches of codes of conduct should be reported and responded to, to ensure children are safe and that staff and volunteers understand the expectations that are placed on them when interacting with children.
Culture of not listening to and respecting children	Children are exposed to a higher risk of abuse in organisations where they are not listened to. This is because it can create environments where they may not feel comfortable to disclose abuse. The tendency to disbelieve children can be more likely for some cohorts of children, such as children with disability or intellectual disability, children in detention or with low self-esteem.	Leaders should ensure that all children and young people feel empowered to speak up regardless of their situation in the organisation. This can be by the provision of protective behaviours training, and by modelling situations where they are empowered to speak up about anything that concerns them. Leaders should model behaviour that demonstrates all children should be believed if they're raising concerns about harm and abuse.
Close-knit and longstanding relationships between adults	In an organisation where staff are close or have known each other for a long time, it may be difficult to question long standing co-workers. They may ignore or reinterpret abusive behaviours to reconcile uncomfortable information. This may lead staff and volunteers to view a colleague's behaviour as harmless or innocent, even when it indicates grooming or abuse. Voicing concerns may be interpreted as disruptive in some organisational environments and may not be welcome. This risk may be higher when there is a culture that normalises violence or sexualised conduct (see above).	Leaders should ensure that codes of conduct describe appropriate behaviour. This allows inappropriate behaviour to be recognised and responded to. It can be difficult to acknowledge when a long-standing coworker is acting inappropriately, however if staff and volunteers are encouraged to respond to *all* breaches of a Code of Conduct, it assists people to speak up if they recognise behaviour that requires reporting. They can feel confident they are reporting a breach – this is not necessarily the same as accusing someone of abusive behaviour.

Factors affecting the risk of harm to children

Factor	How it can put children at risk	How to prevent it being a factor
Lack of access to a trusted adult	Organisations where children do not have access to a trusted adult carry a higher risk of child abuse. This is because children may be isolated and can have no one to disclose abuse to when it occurs.	Leaders in these environments should support all children and young people to speak up – they should also ensure appropriate mechanisms are in place so that children have a means to communicate their concerns. This includes those who are isolated or who have disability, or who are in other situations which make it more difficult for them to report harm.
Invisible child safe policies and procedures	Invisible or no child safe policies and procedures can increase opportunities for perpetrators to abuse children because organisations may not have established acceptable child safe practices, clear professional boundaries, and mechanisms for identifying and reporting inappropriate behaviour. These organisations may even be targeted by perpetrators because they do not appear to emphasise child safety.	Leaders should ensure that effective policies and procedures exist in their organisations and that these are utilised. Leaders should also ensure that these policies are updated regularly, especially after critical incidents, so they reflect best practice outcomes in terms of keeping children safe from harm and abuse.
Internal disciplinary processes that are not adequate	Where internal procedures are not applied consistently or are too weak to deal with allegations of child abuse, concerns about child safety or other complaints may not be dealt with in a way that prioritises the best interests of children.	Leaders should ensure that all staff and volunteers have faith that disciplinary processes will be fair and transparent. Where this happens, they are more likely to raise concerns.

Situational risk

Factors affecting the risk of harm to children

Factor	How it can put children at risk	How to prevent it being a factor
Opportunity to be alone with children and young people	Organisations that have physical spaces where interactions with children cannot be observed by other adults creates a risk of child abuse. Additional risk arises where interactions occur offsite because there are increased opportunities for adults to be alone with children.	Areas that have clear lines of sight (natural surveillance) provide a natural deterrent to unacceptable behaviour. Spaces should be designed to reflect this understanding. Where this is not possible, rules and procedures should be put in place to restrict the opportunities for adults to be alone with children, or to clearly describe the circumstances where this takes place and what is expected of the adults in these situations.
Opportunities to form relationships that could involve physical contact and/or emotional closeness	The risk of children being harmed increases when they spend time one-on-one with adults without oversight. The opportunity to form relationships that could involve physical contact and emotional closeness, for example, where a child is dependent on an adult for success, can present opportunities to cross professional boundaries. Some children may be reluctant to tell people about abuse because they feel it will impact on their chances of success. For example, a child or adolescent who is a gifted musician or athlete and who is very dependent upon a teacher or coach, or because of the financial stability of their family, may feel reliant on the perpetrator.	All children should be encouraged to talk about anything that makes them sad, upset or angry. The use of protective behaviour programs when young should mean they feel supported and encouraged to continually speak up as they grow older.
Use of online environments	Some perpetrators use the internet and social networking sites to contact and groom children. People who work with children can often connect with them through social media or through their personal emails. This allows the adult to have private conversations. Perpetrators may use online interactions with children to build relationships and groom children or may use online environments to abuse children (for example, cyber-bullying).	Where possible, children and young people should be supervised while using devices, particularly those who are younger or more vulnerable. In addition, all children and young people should be given clear rules and boundaries surrounding the interactions they have with others on social media. Codes of conduct should also describe what appropriate contact looks like when adults are required to contact young people online.

Propensity risk

Factors affecting the risk of harm to children		
Factor	**How it can put children at risk**	**How to prevent it being a factor**
Staff gender ratios	While more men abuse children than women, it needs to be stressed that this is a relatively small proportion of the male population as a whole. It also needs to be noted that 3-10% of abusers are female.[7] In NSW in 2020/21, male and female employees were the subject of reportable allegations in equal numbers. However male employees were the subject of 82% of notifications involving allegations of a sexual nature, while female employees were the subject of 71% of both the neglect and ill-treatment allegations.[8]	Risk prevention strategies must be directed at all staff.
Context	While sexual interest in children is a common factor for those who offend against them, the Royal Commission found that anti-social behaviour was also a contributing factor. This becomes more relevant when living arrangements are considered. Juvenile Justice facilities, for example can have a greater risk of peer-on-peer abuse because individuals with both these characteristics may be 'clustered' together.[9] Other residential environments which may be more conducive to abuse include boys' schools and non-related co-residences, such as out-of-home care.	Children and young people who are in contact with those who demonstrate anti-social behaviour should be provided extra support so they can recognise inappropriate behaviour, and know how to respond to it if it occurs.

Case study

A group of children and young people in a particular military environment suffered widespread abuse in the 1970s and 80s. This included 'bastardisation' practices such as having boot polish and toothpaste smeared on their genitals and their anal areas. Others were sexually abused to a harsher degree. They were discouraged from reporting because they didn't want to be labelled 'dobbers' and be humiliated. Most didn't believe that reporting the abuse would result in anything changing, other than them being humiliated. They were told that it was a 'rite of passage'. Some of those who did attempt to report the abuse were dishonourably discharged.

Factors leading to environmental risk	Ways to prevent this type of abuse from occurring
A hierarchical 'closed' environment	Cadets existed in an environment that was to some degree self-controlling, in that those people who existed in it operated on its own rules, and not those of the outside society. Since these roles allowed the abuse, nothing was done if cadets attempted to report it. The Royal Commission later found that adults had failed in their duty of care to junior recruits, who were children. Child safe organisations are open to scrutiny and inspection of their child safe practices. They promote it and support the engagement of families and communities.
No reporting mechanisms	Without clear and transparent reporting methods and processes, those children and young people who were abused had no access to make complaints against their abusers.
Organisational tolerance for abuse	There were no policies that specifically said abuse was not allowed, nor which encouraged reporting it. Tolerance, and sometimes even support for abuse (in the belief it helped children to 'toughen up' and created a stronger sense of team) meant children and young people were exposed to more abuse, and had less means to escape from it and report it.
	Adults failing to report this abuse was a cultural failure (acceptance of abuse), structural failure (no mechanisms to report internally), governance failure (lack of effective leadership) and social failure (no support to report externally).
No empowerment of children and young people	The cadets in this situation were vulnerable both due to their age and their position at the bottom of the navy hierarchy. Support for children and young people in these kinds of situations can assist them to understand that some actions are wrong, and also provide them with an understanding that reporting them is not only allowed, but is encouraged.

Abuse

Emotional abuse

The OCG's Reportable Conduct Unit considers emotional abuse to be, 'Behaviour that causes significant psychological or emotional harm that is intentional or reckless (without reasonable excuse), obviously or very clearly unreasonable and which results in significant emotional harm or trauma to a child.' Emotional abuse (also known as psychological abuse) comprised over half of all abuse notifications in Australia, including just under 6,000 cases in NSW in 2018/19.[10] It can be defined as a repeated and inappropriate exposure of a child to emotional responses and situations that do not match their emotional and intellectual development. Although it's possible for 'one-off' incidents to cause serious harm, in general it's ongoing incidents that cause the greatest impact. All types of abuse and neglect harm children psychologically, but the terms 'psychological harm' or 'emotional abuse' apply to behaviour which damages the confidence and self-esteem of a child or young person, resulting in serious emotional deprivation, trauma or disturbance. It is a pattern of intentional verbal or behavioral actions or lack of actions that convey to a child the message that they are worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered, or only of value to meet someone else's needs.[11] It also includes the witnessing of domestic abuse and substance abuse. The table below shows different kinds of psychological harm.

Types of harm	What can increase the likelihood of it occurring (risk factors)	What can reduce the likelihood of it occurring (risk controls)
Persistent undermining of a child or young person's confidence	The organisation values winning over other measures of success. The organisation reinforces the concept of lowering self-esteem to 'push' children and young people to try harder in order to achieve 'victory'.	A Statement of Commitment to Child Safety that upholds the rights of children and demonstrates your organisation's respect for them. Having policies and procedures that describe how your organisation engages and empowers the children and young people it works with.
Using inflammatory or derogatory language with children	The adult believes that to achieve success, there are no limits when 'pushing' the child. Bystander adults foster an inflammatory environment by not correcting or 'pulling-up' offensive language and remarks directed at children and young people during activities.	Having a Code of Conduct that describes appropriate behaviour. It should be clear what kind of language or descriptions are acceptable and unacceptable. Organisations provide policies and training so that adults are clear about their behaviour so that children and young people always feel empowered, supported and encouraged.
Letting children know they are not at the adult's 'standard'	The adult's personal values and beliefs lead them to believe that belittling or manipulating children is an acceptable form of interaction.	Leaders promote a culture where children are valued. They encourage the reporting of all breaches of policies and codes of conduct and challenge poor child safe practices. Adults receive regular information about how to treat and speak to children and inappropriate behaviour is addressed in a way that is appropriate for their age and intellectual development. The organisation has a culture of reporting poor child safe practice.

Types of harm	What can increase the likelihood of it occurring (risk factors)	What can reduce the likelihood of it occurring (risk controls)
Excluding certain children who are seen as 'weaker' or less likeable than other children	Having a culture where the voice of children is not listened to. Having a belief that some children are just not able to participate. When goals aren't clearly communicated, such as when winning is considered more important than equitable participation.	The organisation's culture is child-centred. It is inclusive and welcoming and this is seen in how all staff, from leaders down, choose to interact with children and young people. The leadership team ensures all children have equitable access to services, activities and events. Equity is prioritised over equality. Recognising that isolating some children and young people by defining them as weak or unlikeable can be a grooming technique to isolate them socially from their peers which makes them more vulnerable to abuse.
Encouraging children to use defamatory or belittling language towards others	Having a culture which allows abuse between children to occur. Allowing young people to bully and intimidate each other. Having staff who are overly authoritarian so that children and young people mimic their attitudes.	The organisation has mechanisms in place to respond to complaints or allegations of abuse or harm by other children. This process is widely promoted within the organisation and children are aware of who to speak to if they have a concern. Children and young people are given age and intellectual ability-appropriate information that allows them to recognise bullying, actions that disempower them and other forms of emotional abuse. Adults are child-focused when supervising children and use initiatives to support positive outcomes.
Noticing a child might be a victim of psychological abuse by a parent, carer or spectator	Derogatory and intimidating language can escalate to threats of violence. It may occur when young people officiate at sporting events, for example, or is sometimes directed towards players as well. This kind of behaviour can easily cause distress for children and young people.	Having an organisational culture that supports treating children with respect. All adults engaged in the organisation should demonstrate to the community how your organisation values and respects children and model their behaviour accordingly. Having a spectator or parent Code of Conduct that is upheld and promoted, including at events outside the physical environment of your organisations, such as at sporting events or overnight camps. This should include what other spectators can do in an appropriate way to respond to instances of abuse by other adults.
Ignoring cultural safety obligations[12]	Organisations that do not consider cultural safety risk children being exposed to criticism of their language, nationality or other features of their cultural heritage.	Ensuring that all children and young people, and their families, are treated with respect. Applying Child Safe Standards 3 and 4.

Reflective questions:

1. Does your organisation value children and their opinions?
2. Do you promote the empowerment and participation of children?
3. Does your organisation prioritise the psychological safety of children over winning?
4. How does your organisation train its workers to recognise psychological abuse? Does it identify the settings it can occur in?
5. How does your organisation respond to instances of psychological harm? If an adult was to shout out inappropriate comments from the sideline or become abusive to a child who had wet themselves in a child-care setting, for example, how would your organisation respond?
6. How does your Code of Conduct describe how psychological harm is not acceptable?

Indicators of emotional abuse

| Children	Parents or caregivers
■ Constant feelings of worthlessness about life and themselves	■ Constant criticism, belittling, teasing of a child or young person, or ignoring or withholding praise and attention
■ Unable to value others	■ Excessive or unreasonable demands
■ Lack of trust in people	■ Persistent hostility and severe verbal abuse, rejection and scapegoating
■ Lack of people skills necessary for daily functioning	■ Belief that a particular child or young person in their care is bad or 'evil'
■ Extreme attention-seeking behaviour	■ Using inappropriate physical or social isolation as punishment
■ Is obsessively eager to please or obey adults	■ Domestic violence.
■ Takes extreme risks, is markedly disruptive, bullying or aggressive	
■ Is highly self critical, depressed or anxious	
■ Suicide threats or attempts	
■ Persistent running away from home.	

Remember, these indicators are only possible signs of abuse and neglect. They don't necessarily mean abuse or neglect is occurring, nor are they the only signs of harm.
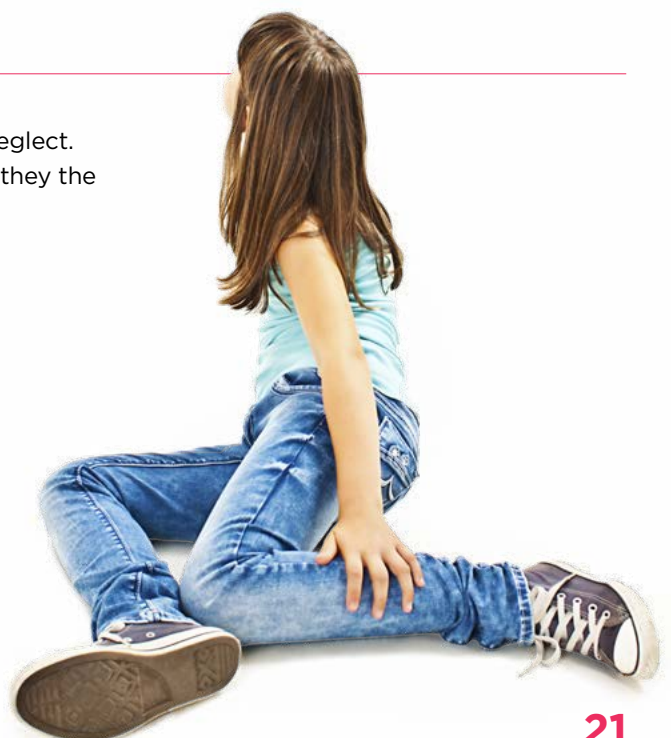
Case study
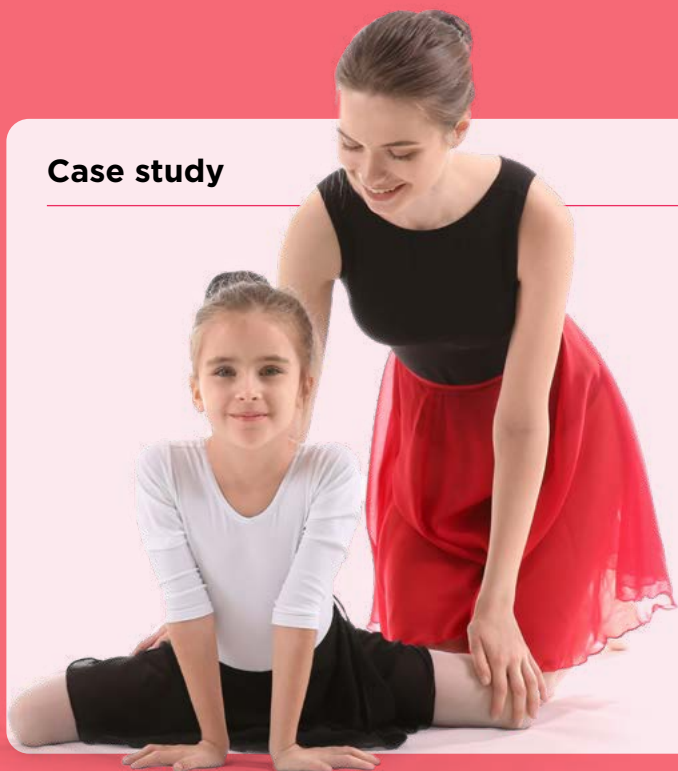
High Point Dance school is a well-respected academy of dance. Children who attend it appear in local productions and often win Eisteddfods. The teachers there, Miss Grace and Mr Andre, have high expectations of the children who attend there and train them hard. Students who fail to meet their expectations aren't offered positions at the school the following term. As part of the tough regime students are expected to complete a food diary, and each week they are inspected by Mr Andre. If they admit to having eaten fast food or sugary snacks they're made to stand up and explain to the group why they did. They're also weighed in each week in front of the whole class. Students who don't gain weight are given preferential treatment.

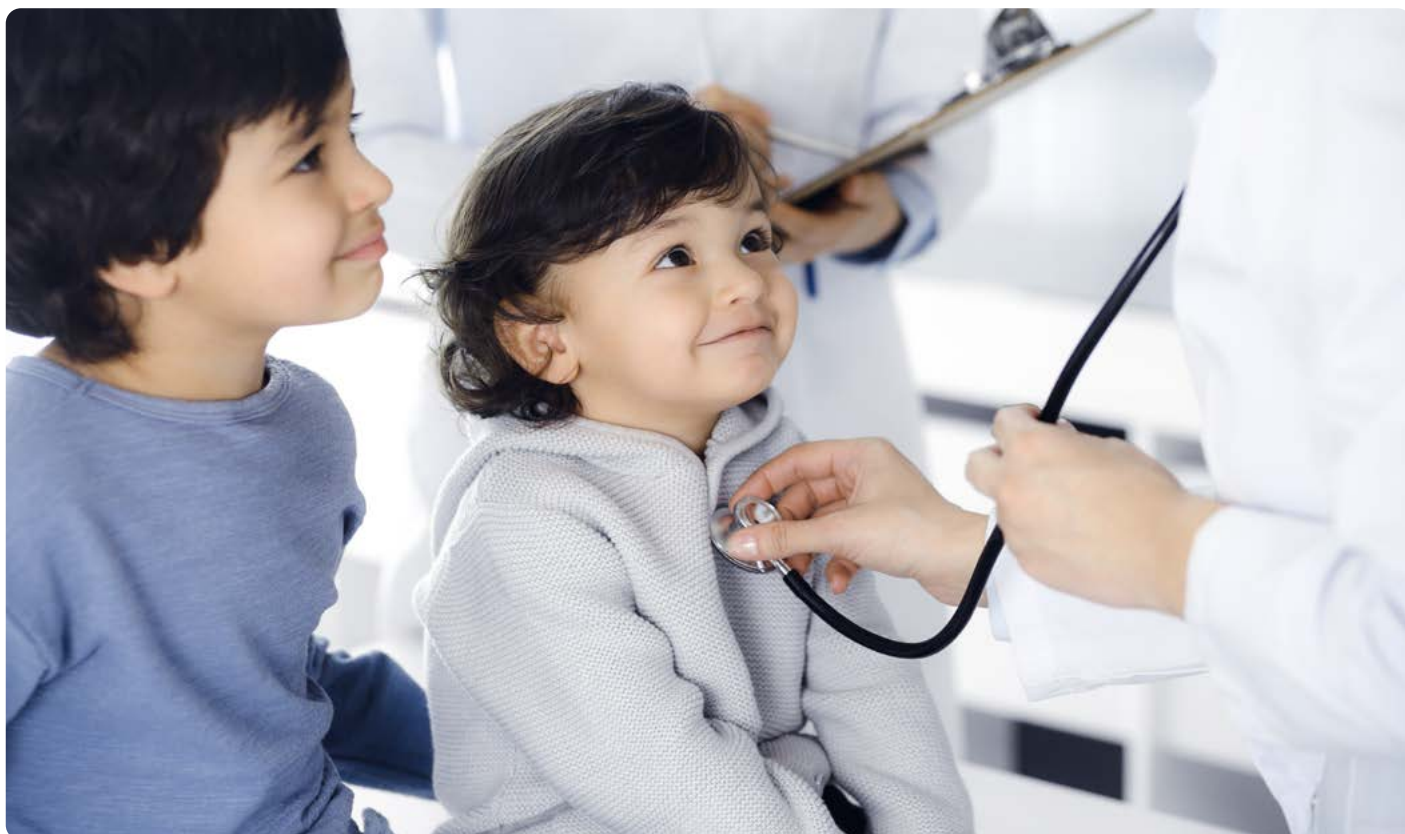| Factors leading to psychological harm (risk factors)	Ways to prevent this type of abuse from occurring (risk controls)
The constant and persistent pressure placed on children to look and act a certain way that could lead to them having ongoing eating disorders	A leadership team should demonstrate that it values children by encouraging inclusivity and acceptance by its actions.
Publicly shaming the child among their peers and other adults and placing the emphasis on the child's appearance and body weight	Having an organisation that is well informed about providing safe and happy environments for children engaging in recreational activities. Minimising peer competitiveness so that children develop strong relationships with their peers, which helps to provide some protection from abuse.
The behaviour appeared to be accepted by parents	Having a publicly available child safe policy that explains to children, parents and carers how the organisation values and respects children and explains who they can speak to if they have concerns. Codes of conduct also describe what kinds of comments are acceptable, and which ones aren't.

Neglect

Neglect was the second most commonly occurring form of child maltreatment in Australia in 2015/16. Half of all reports of abuse that year came from NSW, from a national total of over 11,000.[13] Neglect is not confined to the home and may occur in organisational settings. It happens when a child is not provided with food, adequate supervision, medical care, shelter or protection.

It may even be lethal as in cases where children are left unattended on play equipment, or abscond and make their way to bushland or a roadside. The table below provides examples of neglect.

Types of neglect	What can increase the likelihood of it occurring (risk factors)	What can reduce the likelihood of it occurring (risk controls)
Lack of supervision	Lack of supervision in an organisational setting can occur when the organisation has not developed appropriate procedures to ensure all children interacting with adults are kept in sight, so that interventions can occur if necessary. Examples are: ■ A child not being adequately supervised during a camp and absconding, coming into danger or harming another child, or taking drugs ■ A child leaving a day care unattended or being left behind at a day care after closing ■ Holding a special event and not having enough adults to ensure the safety of children ■ Failing to prevent a child being harmed by an adult or another child.	Having appropriate supervision policies and procedures that minimise the opportunity for children to be unsupervised. Having policies and procedures that include (where necessary) sign in/out sheets, supervision rosters and descriptions of how many adults have oversight of a given number of children. Ensuring there are sufficient adult workers to support the number of children at an event. Explaining to children the expected behaviours of them in an age appropriate way. For example, overnight camps should provide children with rules around their expected behaviour, as well as the behaviour they can expect from the adults running the camp.

Types of harm	What can increase the likelihood of it occurring (risk factors)	What can reduce the likelihood of it occurring (risk controls)
Failure to provide reasonable medical attention	Sometimes a child may be hurt, but their injuries are not appropriately attended to by an organisation's staff and volunteers. Examples are: ■ Situations where carers have little regard for the safety and well-being of children ■ Cases where staff don't believe it is their responsibility to provide medical assistance ■ Not believing a child is injured even when they are in distress. A child with disability may not be able to communicate their needs and may indicate abuse via non verbal cues ■ Making a child play or train while injured ■ Not being trained to recognise or respond to injuries (such as staff not having First Aid training).	Conducting a risk assessment of services provided in order to anticipate under what circumstances medical treatment may be required, including when an ambulance should be called. Having policies and procedures that describe which staff in which roles require First Aid certificates. Ensuring staff working with children with disability are trained to recognise the ways they indicate genuine distress and pain. Ensuring child-centred mindsets so that the likelihood of a child competing with an injury is reduced or eliminated. Supporting mandatory reporters to make reports concerning the health and welfare of children.

Types of harm	What can increase the likelihood of it occurring (risk factors)	What can reduce the likelihood of it occurring (risk controls)
Lack of adequate nourishment	Some organisations provide food or have breaks where food is eaten or drinks are available. Neglect can occur when: ■ An organisation does not offer a variety of healthy food options or the meals are of poor quality and fail to meet accepted nutritional requirements ■ Adults have not factored in sufficient drink or food breaks ■ Changes in weather or levels of activity do not allow for the need to drink more water ■ Children's allergies are not addressed, including those who are likely to suffer anaphylactic shock from the foods of others around them ■ Lack of resources to provide nutritional meals ■ An organisation employs insufficiently skilled staff who are unaware of nutritional requirements.	Conducting a risk assessment of the services your organisation provides and putting in place effective strategies to ensure children have access to nourishment and hydration. Having policies and procedures that clearly describe: ■ When food breaks should occur ■ When drink breaks should occur ■ What kinds of food specific children should or shouldn't eat ■ What kinds of food should be banned within your organisation (including known allergens such as peanuts, as well as discretionary options such as junk food) ■ Ensure staff are trained to understand the nutritional requirements of children and young people ■ Engage children and find out what healthy foods they like eating ■ Ensure adequate budget is set aside if providing meals ■ Choking hazards. Policies should be flexible enough to allow for changes in temperature and activity levels, so children and young people (and their carers) are given more opportunities for drink breaks in warmer weather, during sporting events, dance competitions etc.
Lack of shelter, appropriate clothing or sunscreen	All children should be protected from the elements. Neglect can occur when children are not protected from: ■ Sun ■ Heat ■ Cold ■ Rain or hail. No policy describing the limits of weather extremes that children can be exposed to.	Conducting a risk assessment of the service you provide and making provisions to reduce the likelihood of children being exposed to inclement weather. Having a policy that prevents certain activities from occurring in extreme weather. Providing adequate shelter in response to various weather conditions. Ensuring sunscreen is available, and a 'no hat, no play' policy is in place, if applicable.

Types of harm	What can increase the likelihood of it occurring (risk factors)	What can reduce the likelihood of it occurring (risk controls)
Noticing a child may be experiencing neglect in the home	Sometimes workers in organisations become aware that a child is being neglected at home. If that's the case, there are steps they should take to protect the child including reporting the matter to the Department of Communities and Justice. Some signs to consider that the child is being neglected include: ■ The child is always hungry and looks malnourished ■ The child steals food ■ The child generally presents as unclean ■ The child has medical needs that do not appear to be met.	Keeping children safe is everybody's responsibility. Organisations that value children explain to all their staff and volunteers their obligations to identify and report abuse.

Reflective questions:

1. Does your organisation have policies and procedures that ensure children are supervised appropriately?
2. When planning excursions or special events do you consider dietary requirements and drink breaks?
3. Does your organisation provide adequate shelter from extreme weather conditions (for example, would you expect children to participate in outdoor sports on extremely hot days without regular breaks and adequate shelter from the sun)?
4. Does your organisation provide training on how to identify children that might be being abused in the home?
5. Do your policies and procedures describe which staff should hold First Aid certificates?

It's important to remember that maltreatment can make children more vulnerable to sexual victimisation. Its impacts include:[14]

■ low self-esteem or a sense of powerlessness

■ poor relationships that lead to social isolation and ostracism by their peers

■ heightened need for affection and attention

■ poor interpersonal relationships with family or carers

■ developmental disorders or cognitive impairments resulting directly from prior trauma.

Case study

The Summer Soccer Cup was a new round robin outdoor soccer tournament. In total over 20 teams signed up to participate, comprising nearly 200 children. Committee members put a lot of work into ensuring the children had sufficient adult supervision and that the matches fit within a tight schedule. On the day of the competition the temperature reached 42 degrees. Despite their other good work, the organisers had failed to mitigate for the risk of extreme weather conditions and the need to provide sunscreen and shelter. As a result children were left in the sun for an hour per game. While there were no drink breaks scheduled, the officials called for them after some children complained of dizziness and symptoms of heat stroke. This put delays into the schedule, so that by mid-afternoon some volunteers had to leave, meaning some children were left unsupervised.

Although the organisers sent volunteers to purchase water and sunscreen, none of the children or spectators had enough cover or shade. Parents and spectators complained to the organisers, and one parent went to the media as their child suffered significant sunburn and heat exhaustion.

Some of the factors that led to an increased risk of neglect	Ways to have prevented the abuse from occurring
The leadership team did not consider all the risks that children could be exposed to, even things outside their control like weather – and how this could impact not just due to heat, but flow on effects like volunteers leaving children unattended	The organisers should have conducted a thorough risk management assessment which included all possible contingencies and flow on effects. Having a contingency plan meant they could have continued with their organised schedule while also keeping players – and spectators and volunteers – safe.
There were no pre-existing policies or procedures that described the conditions under which children should be prevented from playing, or in which they would need other forms of support such as increased breaks, water, shade and sunscreen	Policies and procedures should describe what should occur in extreme weather events in order to prevent children suffering neglect.

While this example is of a one-off event, neglect is often chronic and ongoing. Policies and procedures should describe how to prevent these kinds of situations, as well as isolated incidents.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse is the third most common kind of child maltreatment for children in Australia. It was reported more than 2,500 times in NSW in 2015/16, from a national total of over 8,000.[15] It is never acceptable when working with children. It is not an appropriate response or method of enforcing discipline. It should not be allowed to occur whether inflicted on a child by an adult or another child. The table below shows different kinds of physical harm in organisational settings.

Types of harm	What can increase the likelihood of it occurring? (risk factors)	What can reduce the likelihood of it occurring? (risk controls)
An adult losing their temper and hitting a child	If adults do not have the skills to manage a child's challenging behaviour and believe a physical response is acceptable they may physically assault a child.	A Code of Conduct makes it clear to workers that physical violence is never acceptable. Workers should be trained and encouraged to understand and adhere to the Code, to identify and report any breaches and to recognise there will be an established disciplinary process to handle any incidents where the Code is breached. Training can take the form of inductions, mentoring, on-the-job instruction, or formal qualifications on recognising what is physical abuse and how to handle challenging behaviours. Adults working with children and young people who have challenging behaviours should be offered extra support.
Children and young people displaying violent behaviour towards each other	In some sectors, like sport, there may be an emphasis on winning at all costs, or aggression being an acceptable part of the organisation's culture. This can lead to children being subjected to physical abuse for failure, or in the name of victory.	An organisational culture that upholds the right of children to be safe is essential. This can be expressed in your organisation's Statement of Commitment to Child Safety.
Adults displaying violent or physical behaviours towards children and young people to 'toughen them up'	A person's cultural or personal beliefs may lead them to believe that a physical response to challenging behaviour is appropriate. For example: ■ 'A good smack never did anyone harm' ■ 'If a child bites, bite them back, they'll soon learn' ■ 'Kids these days are too soft'.	It is reasonable for staff members to have their own personal beliefs or cultural traditions but they should be made aware that as an employee, they are subject to their organisation's values, and that they should apply these so that the rights of children are respected and upheld. Having policies, and providing training and information around how to keep children safe in your organisation can encourage staff to follow your organisation's policies and codes of conduct.

Types of harm	What can increase the likelihood of it occurring? (risk factors)	What can reduce the likelihood of it occurring? (risk controls)
Bullying	If the leadership in the organisation fails to value children and turns a blind eye to aggression and violence, children are more at risk.	Leaders should model a zero tolerance approach towards physical violence and aggression so that all children are safe, feel safe, and are able to voice their opinion. Having a culture of reporting and well-developed policies and codes of conduct that ensures all instances of suspected harm and abuse are reported is also essential.
Peer on peer violence, fights	If adults in the organisation demonstrate violence and aggression in how they work with children or each other, then children in the organisation may come to believe that a physical response is acceptable to both adults and their peers.	Information programs that encourage non-violence support children to be safe. Staff training, protective behaviour programs, posters, social media posts and leaders modelling appropriate behaviour should all support policies and procedures that keep children safe. Having someone in your organisation they know they can speak to can also help.
If you think a child may be subject to physical abuse whether in your organisation or at home, you may have mandatory obligations to report it to the appropriate authority	A child may be at risk of physical abuse at home. Some signs to consider that may indicate the child is being harmed: ■ bruises, scratches, scars, bites or burn marks ■ the child refuses to undress or wears inappropriate clothing i.e. long sleeves in summer ■ an adult is observed harming the child.	Organisations that value children will have a reporting policy that explains to workers their obligations as a mandatory reporter. They also reinforce that keeping children safe is everybody's responsibility.

Reflective questions:

1. How does the culture of your organisation promote positive relationships and peaceful communication?
2. How do you ensure that all adults in your organisation are capable of managing challenging behaviour, without resorting to violence?
3. If a child was assaulted by an adult, how would your organisation respond to it?
4. What policies and procedures do you have that support children being kept safe from physical harm?
5. If your organisation is competitive by nature (sports, some sectors of the arts, for example) how do you reinforce that non-aggression is more important than winning?

Case study

LazyDayz Child Services is an early childhood education provider with a good reputation in the local community. Tamara and Kate are currently studying their Certificate III in Childcare and have been placed at LazyDayz. While working at the centre they see that Miss Pauline has seniority over the other carers on the floor. One day Tamara noticed a young boy had wet his pants. She then heard his teacher say she was going to tell Miss Pauline, who then smacked the boy quite firmly. She was obviously very cross with him. Tamara filmed Miss Pauline roughly undressing him before screaming at him to clean up the mess he made from wetting his pants. He was obviously upset, however none of the other educators offered him comfort or help.

Tamara showed Kate the footage and asked for advice. Kate revealed she had once seen Miss Pauline hold a girl down and force feed her because she refused to eat her lunch. Neither Kate nor Tamara wanted to raise their concerns with the Centre Director because she had a long-standing relationship with Miss Pauline and they felt their complaint would not be taken seriously. They contacted their TAFE teacher to ask for advice, and she contacted the Early Childhood Education Department and let them know what had occurred.*

Kate and Tamara were given instruction on the reporting thresholds for Risk of Significant Harm, and their obligations as mandatory reporters.

Some of the factors that led to the increased risk of physical abuse	Ways to prevent the abuse
The lack of leadership in the organisation meant Miss Pauline had an assumed authority over the organisation. This meant her aggressive and often violent methods of disciplining children were considered normal practice	A leadership team that valued children would discourage Miss Pauline from acting on her personal beliefs. Instead it would emphasise the need to conform to the organisation's policies, procedures and codes of conduct when responding to and disciplining children. Leaders should have ensured all staff received training in contemporary best practices for managing behaviour in early childhood.

* They could also have reported directly to the OCG's Reportable Conduct Unit, which now has provision for junior staff to voice their concerns if they feel their leaders won't respond to a complaint in a reasonable way. You can view an online complaints form here: https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/organisations/reportable-conduct-scheme/making-complaint

Sexual abuse

Reporting on sexual abuse is problematic, as some people deal with its ramifications for many years before coming forward. Some people never reveal what has happened to them. NSW had over 2,500 reports of sexual abuse in 2015/16.[16] While sexual abuse can have long lasting effects by itself, the Royal Commission found that it rarely occurs in isolation from other types of maltreatment. A study in the US revealed 94% of survivors had experienced other forms of abuse and neglect. Nearly three quarters of them had undergone four or more instances. In Australia, nearly 60% of survivors had experienced another form of maltreatment.

The most common forms were emotional abuse (80.7%), physical abuse (64.4%) and neglect (15.7%).[17] Child sexual abuse in organisations has happened on many occasions in the past, and a quick look at most newspapers shows that it's still an all-too-common event. Many offenders seek access to their victims through their employment and seek public positions in an effort to make themselves helpful and indispensable, if possible. In these roles they become skilled in grooming entire organisations, including using their positional power and authority.[18]

The Royal Commission noted:

Many complex and interconnected factors can influence the way that victims are affected by child sexual abuse. While no single factor can accurately predict how a victim will respond, some factors appear to influence either the severity or type of impacts they experience. These factors include:

- the characteristics of the abuse (such as the type, duration and frequency)
- the relationship of the offender to the child
- the social, historical and institutional contexts of the abuse
- the victim's circumstances, experiences and characteristics (such as age, gender, disability, prior maltreatment, and experiences with disclosing the abuse).[19]

Sexual abuse includes sexual touching, grooming, possessing or producing child abuse material and discussing sexual behaviour when it isn't necessary. It's a crime in NSW for an adult to involve a child or young person in any kind of sexual activity. It's also a crime for any adult in NSW to fail to report if they know, or have reason to believe, a child is being harmed.

Sexual abuse is not limited to adults and children. 93% of those who experienced abuse in a school setting and who gave evidence at the Royal Commission had been abused by a boy under 18. Risk management in organisational settings should always consider the risk of peer-to-peer harm, as well as the potential harm by adults to children and young people.

Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Volume 13, p 107.

What can increase the likelihood of it occurring? (risk factors)	What can reduce the likelihood of it occurring? (risk controls)
If an adult has joined a child-related organisation with the intent to harm children, they may conduct a deliberate strategy of manipulation against specific children and young people (often the most vulnerable)	■ Having a child safe recruitment policy ■ Having well developed codes of conduct and child safe policies and procedures ■ Leaders who model expected standards of behaviour for adults and who promote the rights of children ■ Having a culture of valuing children ■ Having a culture where all breaches of a Code of Conduct and instances of inappropriate behaviour are reported and responded to, whether to external agencies if necessary, but also internally for misconduct that doesn't meet external reporting thresholds.
Where there are opportunities to offend against a child and the risk of being caught is low	■ Developing a child safe risk management plan that identifies areas of risk in your organisation ■ Having child safe policies and procedures embedded into everyday practice ■ Recognising and promoting that children have a right to be safe ■ Promoting a culture of reporting for children whenever they feel sad, scared or upset.

What can increase the likelihood of it occurring? (risk factors)	What can reduce the likelihood of it occurring? (risk controls)
Where there are opportunities for adults to spend one-on-one time with a child, particularly when the contact is regular, such as being in a car, receiving treatment, counselling sessions etc.	▪ Policies and procedures that clearly describe what is acceptable and what is unacceptable when adults are alone with children ▪ Keeping records of when adults are alone with children that describe the circumstances of the contact ▪ For car travel, keeping records of trips, who is present, licence details etc. make adults more accountable ▪ For counselling sessions, having them occur in places that allow for some observation while still remaining mindful of the child's privacy ▪ Providing children and young people with protective behaviour training so they can talk about anything they feel uncomfortable about, and so they can recognise inappropriate behaviour by adults.
Adults who have difficulty forming an intimate relationship with another adult, or who are facing external pressures or who are undergoing, or have undergone, a significant traumatic event (such as marital breakdown, loss of job etc.) may commence an inappropriate relationship with a child	▪ Ensuring that all staff and volunteers are trained and supported to understand that having an intimate relationship with a child or young person is never acceptable ▪ Ensuring staff are trained to recognise inappropriate relationships between adults and children and young people – and are also trained about the importance of reporting them ▪ Having codes of conduct that all adults and children and young people understand ▪ Having leaders who model child-centred values at all times.

Effects of abuse

For many people, the abuse can have profound and lasting impacts. They may experience deep, complex trauma, which can pervade all aspects of their lives, and cause a range of effects across their lifespans. Other victims do not perceive themselves to be profoundly harmed by the experience.

Some impacts on victims are immediate and temporary, while others can last throughout adulthood. Some emerge later in life; others may fade away only to re-emerge or manifest in response to triggers or events. As victims have new experiences or enter new stages of development over their life courses, the feeling about their abuse may manifest in different ways.[20]

Child sexual abuse can affect many areas of a person's life, including their:

- mental health
- interpersonal relationships
- physical health
- sexual identity, gender identity and sexual behaviour
- connection to culture
- spirituality and religious involvement
- interactions with society
- education, employment and economic security.

For some victims, child sexual abuse results in them taking their own lives.[21]

Reflective questions:

1. How does your organisation's culture support adults to understand that they share the responsibility for keeping children safe?
2. What training and support exists to ensure staff feel confident to report colleagues if they feel their behaviour breaches a Code of Conduct?
3. How are children supported to make reports of inappropriate behaviour by adults?
4. How are your workers confident that any matter will be investigated thoroughly and fairly and that they won't be targeted as a result of making a report?
5. What policies or procedures do you have to support children in cases where they are alone with adults?

Case study

Marcus is a gymnastics coach. His wife, Kate, works with the juniors and takes responsibility for the administration of the club. Marcus takes the senior class and has a great reputation for creating winners. His students are dedicated to the sport and train well. Marcus has adult children who also train at the club. Marcus's good friend Paul works with them, as well as Suzanne, a young trainer who helps with the seniors and elite athletes.

Jenna is sixteen and has recently transferred from another club. She quickly demonstrates her natural talent for the sport. She is soon promoted to the elite class and starts representing the club at regional and national competitions. Not long after this Suzanne notices a few incidents where she feels Marcus is acting inappropriately with Jenna. On one occasion he pulled her into an embrace, apparently to congratulate her on perfecting a technique. On another occasion Suzanne saw Jenna and Marcus talking to each other outside the centre when she was locking up, and they appeared to be very close. She also became aware that sometimes Jenna stayed at Marcus's house prior to travelling to competitions the next day.

Suzanne recognised that these actions breached the club's Code of Conduct, although they didn't actually indicate Jenna was being harmed. She felt reluctant to come forward because she was worried Paul or Kate would not take her concerns seriously, or even fire her. She didn't know what to do or who to speak to – and she didn't want to lose her job, which she really loved.

Factors leading to sexual abuse	Ways to prevent this type of abuse from occurring
There does not appear to be anyone in the organisation who could remain impartial in an investigation of the breaches of the Code of Conduct	All organisations should have a culture of reporting and responding to issues or breaches of their Code of Conduct. They should have a reporting policy that outlines the investigative process, including instances where allegations are made against senior members of staff. Leaders should model appropriate behaviour around children.
The power imbalance in the organisation could mean that the breaches of the Code of Conduct are likely to escalate in seriousness and may place Jenna at risk of serious harm	The club should have a robust Code of Conduct that is accessible and promoted regularly so that all children, young people and adults in the organisation, parents and carers understand what is acceptable behaviour.

Environmental and online risks

The physical environment can play a part in increasing or decreasing the risk of harm or abuse to children. It can include rooms without windows, places which are out of the line of sight of other adults and windows which are covered with posters and artwork, which prevent observation of the room inside. Changing the environment to make it safer for children and young people is known as situational prevention. It can also be applied to the online environment. The table below shows examples of physical and environmental risk.

Area	What can increase the likelihood of it occurring? (risk factors)	What can reduce the likelihood of it occurring? (risk controls)
Physical environment		
Closed off areas of a building	Areas that do not provide for natural lines of sight pose additional risks to children as inappropriate behaviour is more likely to be undetected.	▪ Look at ways to increase supervision by ensuring children stay within the line of sight of more than one adult ▪ Ensuring adults and children understand the rules around closed off areas ▪ Ensuring children know who they can speak to if they feel unsafe ▪ Teaching children protective behaviour strategies.
Areas out of the line of sight of other adults	If an adult is not in the direct line of sight of other adults when delivering services, it increases the likelihood of inappropriate behaviour being undetected. This could include a child travelling alone in a car with an adult.	▪ Policies, procedures and codes of conduct that clearly describe what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in these situations ▪ Ensuring both adults and children feel confident to report any behaviour which breaches a Code of Conduct.
Closed rooms without natural lines of sight where children are one-on-one with adults	Areas such as treatment and counselling rooms possess an increased risk of harm, especially if doors are locked and they don't have any natural lines of sight such as windows or doors without glass panels (lines of sight also need to allow for the privacy of children in some situations).	▪ Respecting privacy while also ensuring children are safe can be difficult ▪ There should be a clear reason for an adult being alone with the child. Other caring adults in the child's life should be aware of the need for privacy and the reason for the interaction ▪ Protective behaviour training helps children recognise if they feel unsafe and supports them reporting any concerns they have.

Area	What can increase the likelihood of it occurring? (risk factors)	What can reduce the likelihood of it occurring? (risk controls)
Online environment		
Engaging with children through private messaging	Private messaging is the equivalent of having a one-on-one conversation with a child. It increases the possibility of the conversation becoming personal which may lead to the child being at risk of harm.	■ Ensuring adults understand your organisation's policies regarding communicating with children and young people. Preference should be given for bulk contact such as group texts or social media posts ■ If a child is messaged directly it should be via platforms established and accessible by the organisation, or via a parent's email account and not through a worker or volunteer's private social media account or email address.
Connecting with children through their private social media	If children are allowed to engage with workers through social media, there is a risk that they will be exposed to content that is not appropriate for their age and development.	■ Children and young people should be given instruction not to engage with adults from organisations in private social media settings. Staff and volunteers should reinforce the message ■ The organisation's social media policy should also describe which, if any, social media interactions between adults and children are appropriate, and which are not ■ Codes of conduct should describe what kinds of social media contact are acceptable and what are unacceptable.
Use of images on the organisation's social media page	If images or names of children are shared publicly on social media there is a risk that they are exposed to other adults who may attempt to contact them in order to later abuse them.	■ Permission should be sought from parents and carers before images are shared on social media ■ Where possible, permission to view the images should be limited to the members of the organisation or their families and friends. Note: Images of children under the responsibility of the Minister for Families and Communities (children and young people in out-of-home care) must not be published.

Reflective questions:

1. How do you ensure that any private or secluded areas of the physical environment in your organisation are used according to specific policies or codes of conduct?
2. How have you educated adults in your organisation around engaging with children through personal messaging?
3. How could you rate adult understanding of your organisation's social media policy?
4. What kinds of resources have been provided to children to support them with protective behaviours and staying safe online?
5. How could you rate children's understanding of your organisation's policies around appropriate communication between adults and children?

Facts about online sexual material (pornography)

- The national average age for seeing porn for the first time is 13 years old, with children as young as four years reporting seeing it

- A study of 16–17-year olds found that 51% had been asked to watch porn by a partner, and 44% were asked to do something sexual that a partner saw

- Child-on-child sexual abuse has been associated with more frequent porn use

- Exposure to porn can make children and young people more vulnerable to grooming, offers exposure to sexual harassment and can normalise sexting, exploitation and unrealistic expectations of women and sex in general, including sexual harassment and abuse

- It can expose children and young people to a range of mental health issues including shock and trauma, distortions of a sense of self, addiction and compulsive behaviours, impacting the ability to learn and focus. It can lead to anxiety, depression and self-harm.[22]

What is your organisation's risk mitigation policy for children accessing online sexual material while in your care?

Are all your staff and volunteers aware that accessing, sharing or storing child abuse material is a criminal offence that must be reported to NSW Police?

Are all your staff and volunteers aware of the special care provisions of the NSW Crimes Act which increases the age of consent from 16 to 18 in some circumstances?

Case study

An after-school service operates out of an old building with heritage listing. Children are separated into age groups and divided into one of its five small rooms. These have large, heavy wooden doors and windows that are above head height.

Marie is the centre director. She is handing out leaflets advertising the organisation's holiday care service. She attempts to enter the Cheeky Monkeys room where Brayden is the educator, but it is locked.

She knocks on the door and Brayden opens it. He explains they were having story time and it was too noisy, so he closed the door. Marie notices all the children are sitting in the corner of the room on cushions where they aren't visible from outside.

She gives Brayden the flyers, but as she leaves she hears the children urge Brayden to come back. Some are also asking if it is their turn to sit on his lap.

Factors leading to environmental risk	Ways to prevent this type of abuse from occurring
Being out of the line of natural sight and behind a closed door increases the likelihood a child might be harmed as there is no opportunity for them to be observed via natural surveillance	It may not always be possible to modify the physical environment of some buildings. Keeping the door always open would help, but more importantly, having strategies in place that prevent adults being alone with children, such as having more than one adult in the room where staffing allows it, or having an adult 'float' between various rooms.
In this scenario Brayden has the children sitting on his knee during story time. This can increase the likelihood of a child being harmed because it may be Brayden's way of engaging the child in inappropriate touching or testing the child's resistance. It also allows him to choose favourites, meaning some children may allow abuse to occur so he would 'like' them more. This can also mean that the 'favourite' is then isolated from other children, which removes their network of peer support	Child safe policies should include guidance on safe and appropriate touching. A rule that didn't allow sitting children on your knee would mean Marie would be able to report Brayden. If the incidents continued, she would also have options for further disciplinary action.

RECOGNISING GROOMING AND OFFENDING BEHAVIOUR

Identifying grooming and patterns of behaviour

Grooming is the manipulation of children and adults by an offender in order to abuse a child. This guide will describe grooming and explore how, when child safe practices are embedded into your organisational culture, the opportunity to groom children for abuse can be easier to identify and stop.

Understanding grooming behaviour

Some offenders use violence, the threat of violence or their authority over children in order to abuse them. Others abuse because they see an opportunity and take it. These types of offender behaviours are looked at in more depth later in this guide.

Around 25% of offenders rely on grooming.[23] This is a process where a person manipulates a child or group of children and sometimes those looking after them including parents, carers, teachers and leaders. They do this to establish a position of 'trust', so they can then later abuse the child.

Understanding grooming or recognising the signs that a child is being groomed is difficult and often only becomes apparent with hindsight. Sometimes it's because we only see a small thing – and we aren't aware of the bigger picture. It can also be because we naturally want to believe that a person's actions towards a child and their co-workers are honest ones, that is, we believe they are a caring person.

Often when offences are brought to light, the caring adults in the child's life can feel angry, exploited, betrayed and foolish for believing the offender was a good person. This is because the person has lied and hidden their true intentions while pretending to be of good character. It is part of their plan. They prefer that people don't question their actions. They don't want to be reported and would rather have people excuse their behaviour by saying things like, 'Oh, they're good, it's just a small rule they've broken. That's just how they are. They're like that with everyone.'

We don't want to think the people we work with, or friends, family members or the people in our community who we trust to care for our children would harm them. This may cause some people to be reluctant to raise an allegation of inappropriate behaviour because they believe a person is acting in a way that is really in the best interests of a child. It could also be because making an allegation against a person, particularly when the person is highly regarded, can be very confronting. Having a culture of reporting even small incidents can help reduce grooming occurring.

Knowing the signs of grooming can help your organisation develop policies and codes of conduct that prevent it. There are a range of behavioural indicators which may suggest a person is grooming. The Office of the Children's Guardian has compiled the list of grooming behaviours in the pages following from its workplace misconduct records. Not every instance of these behaviours indicates grooming is occurring, but if they go against your Code of Conduct or workplace rules, they should always be reported.

Indicators of grooming

**Breach of professional conduct
(in a professional setting)**

- Spending time alone with the child under the pretext of professional reasons:
    - Providing unofficial counselling or breaching the boundaries of professional counselling
    - Discussing intimate matters about the child such as the child's sexuality or their own sexuality
    - Discussing intimate personal matters with the child that you would only normally discuss with close associates, such as marriage breakdowns or other family concerns
    - Arranging meetings with a child in an area that does not have natural surveillance, such as a locked room, café or in the child's home.

Manipulating situations to be alone with the child

- Transporting a child in a personal vehicle alone
- Seeking information about the child's movements and activities outside the professional setting
- Finding reasons to contact the child outside of the professional setting, such as delivering 'missing' homework or sharing computer games
- Requesting a child's contact details on the pretext of professional reasons
- Contacting a child directly rather than through their guardian.

**Breach of professional conduct
(outside professional setting)***

- Attending events not related to the professional relationship:
    - Birthday parties
    - Sporting events
    - Award ceremonies
    - Dance contests
    - Drama presentations
    - Inviting a child to their award ceremonies or other special events.

Public or secret meetings

- Arranging to meet a child in secluded or secret setting
- Requesting a child visits their home for a massage or to discuss their sporting or academic achievements
- Visiting a child who is at home sick or alone
- Inviting a child on holiday or overnight break
- Taking a child shopping
- Meeting a child at the movies
- Meeting a child for coffee or a meal
- Requesting a child go to their home for non-professional reasons such as to play video games or just 'hang out'.

Secondary employment

- Offering to babysit in breach of a Code of Conduct, or offering to care for children at low or no cost
- Personal tuition or mentoring, particularly if this gives the person time alone with a child.

* In religious contexts, some youth leaders may attend functions such as those appearing in this list. The organisation's Safe Church Policy should describe how risk is mitigated in these situations.

Communication with the child for non-professional reasons

- Communicating with a child on a device they purchased and have asked the child to keep secret
- Personal emails, letters or private messaging on social media
- Linking with a child though social media, chat rooms with Skype, Zoom or other platforms used by schools etc.
- Communicating with a child in code or 'text talk'
- Talking to a child in peer group slang
- Engaging a child in late night contact
- Asking a child to send photographs
- Asking a child to keep the contact secret.

Gifts and benefits

- Giving a child or group of children gifts with the exclusion of others or in secret
- Encouraging a child to give them gifts
- Paying for a child to attend events such as football games or concerts
- Giving a child a 'personal' gift such as a locket or jewellery with an inscription
- Purchasing a phone for a child
- Allowing a child to break the rules.

Physical contact (some of these examples may also constitute sexual misconduct)

- Brushing against a child
- Breaching social norms in touching while performing a legitimate task
- 'Accidental' yet deliberate touching of intimate areas
- Engaging in activities that result in touching such as rough play, wrestling or tickling
- Adjusting a child's clothing inappropriately
- Restricting or trapping a child
- Massaging or caressing a child
- Hugging a child (not to comfort) or insisting a child hugs them
- Sitting a child on their lap
- Kissing a child
- Taking photographs of a child with or without their guardian's knowledge or consent.

Special treatment

- Allowing a child to break rules
- Showing favouritism
- Consistently selecting one child for demonstration and special treatment
- Allowing a child to access their smart phone, computer or tablet
- Connecting and sharing information through social media
- Allowing or requesting a child sit on the lap of an adult
- Giving a child birthday or Valentine's Day cards
- Arranging job interviews or casual work for a child
- Having a special (pet) name for a child.

Note: Sometimes the 'special' treatment might involve continually shaming a child. This contributes to their social isolation and leaves them more vulnerable to harm.

Grooming is not limited to adults and children. Young people may also manipulate other children and young people to meet their sexual desires, or to not report their inappropriate actions.

Influencing guardianship

- Influencing the child's family or relationship with their family
- Influencing a parent or guardian to cause them to believe they are a person of integrity or expertise
- Making themselves appear invaluable to a child's success and achievements
- Showing a special interest in a child and their ability
- Undermining parental guidance
- Ignoring requests from parents to limit contact with a child
- Telling a child their 'friendship' should be a secret
- Telling a child their parents don't understand them or their relationship
- Telling a child they will not be believed if they speak up
- Seeking invitations to a child's home for family functions.

Influencing other professionals or colleagues

- Undermining other professionals in the organisation to deflect or disguise their behaviour
- Minimising breaches of codes of conduct as being 'trivial rules'
- Ignoring warnings from others about their breach of professional conduct or boundaries
- Encouraging others to breach professional conduct or boundaries as a way of minimising or deflecting their own breaches
- Arranging extra activities that involve a child and which also require their supervision
- Volunteering for tasks that leave them alone with a child
- Cause colleagues to believe a child has a crush on them, or blaming a child for inappropriate behaviour
- Describing behaviour changes in the child victim as trivial, 'It's just their age'.

Desensitisation (some of these examples may also constitute sexual misconduct)

- Flattering or complimenting the child
- Flattering a parent, either personally or about their child
- Flirting with a child
- Purporting to have a 'special relationship'
- Talking openly about promiscuity (with adults or in front of children) in an effort to desensitise others to their behaviour
- Engaging in sexual banter or innuendo with a child or their peers including sending inappropriate 'memes' or social media content
- Telling jokes with sexual undertones
- Exposing a child to pornography
- Talking to a child about their sexuality, or an adult's sexuality
- Entering private areas such as change rooms unnecessarily or unannounced
- Engaging in nudity or partially undressing in front of a child
- Unnecessary or inappropriate supervision of a child during a personal care activity such as toileting or undressing
- Normalising their sexual behaviour to the child such as explaining that the action of the offender is normal when you 'love each other'
- Asking a child 'do you love me?', or manipulating them to do something by saying, 'If you loved me you'd do it'
- Having a child pose in an adult or sexualised way for photographs
- Sending a child pictures of themselves or others naked or in a state of partial undress
- Commenting on the sexual characteristics of a child, such as puberty, the growth of their breasts or the way they are dressing
- Threatening a child not to disclose their relationship including the threat of violence (to the child or their family or guardians).

Targeting vulnerable children: Perpetrators may target vulnerable children because they feel those children have fewer caring adults in their lives or have less ability to report abuse. Conversely, these children may be looking for a supportive relationship. Perpetrators will seek to exploit both their isolation and their desire for support.

Anyone who suspects a child is being groomed (or harmed in any other way) should call the Child Protection Helpline on 132 111 (TTY 1 800 212 396), NSW Police and the Reportable Conduct Unit of the OCG.
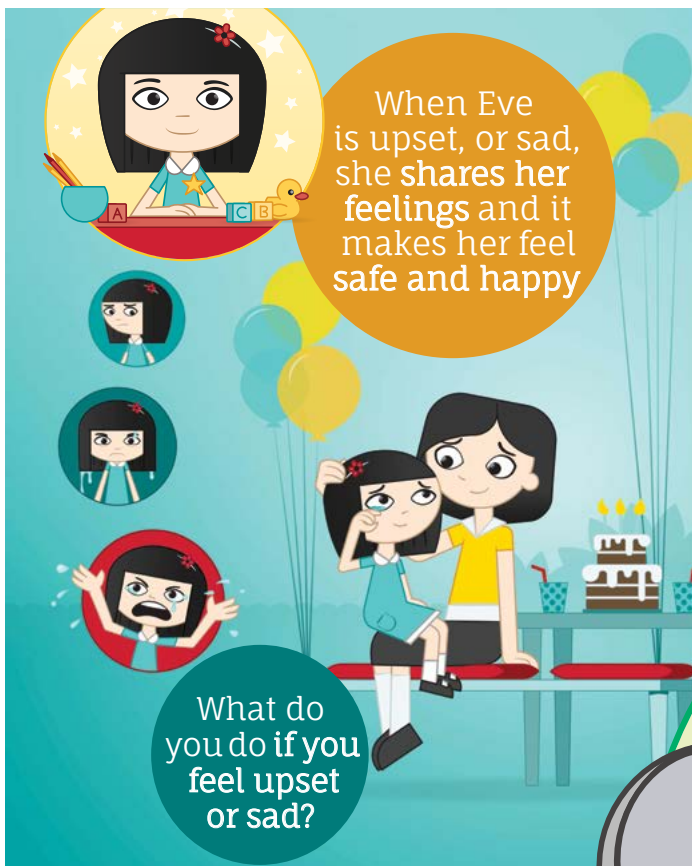
As well as encouraging a culture of reporting all breaches of a Code of Conduct that are observed, your leaders should ensure that your organisation's policies and procedures are consistently enforced.

Risk management protocols should also be followed after an allegation is received. See the OCG's Complaints Management resource for more information on this.

Protective behaviours

Teaching children about how to stay safe can also help protect them. This is commonly referred to as 'protective behaviours' and the Office of the Children's Guardian has developed a number of resources to help carers and guardians in this way. For more information visit https://ocg.nsw.gov.au/resources

When Eve is upset, or sad, she **shares her feelings** and it makes her feel **safe and happy**

What do you do **if you feel upset or sad?**

Sam loves to explore with his mates but always in **safe places**

Where do you feel safe?

RECOGNISING OFFENDERS

Recognising offenders

Part C looks at different kinds of offenders, and their motivations to offend. Knowing this information is crucial so that you can identify and prevent abuse from happening.

Understanding the behaviour of offenders

Understanding the characteristics of an offender and what steps an organisation can take to prevent those offences, particularly in the case of opportunistic or situational offenders, helps to keep children safe.

There are a number of studies that have attempted to identify the characteristics and predispositions of people who abuse children. One study showed that the majority of offenders had no previous history of abuse and claimed that they had not sought employment with children in order to abuse them, nor had they previously been attracted to them.

The evidence is unclear regarding how many offenders deliberately seek work with children in order to commit abuse. One study found 57% of offenders chose their profession either solely or partly so they had access to children, however another found only 2% fell into this category. 29% of offenders sampled in that study had, however, befriended a parent in order to gain access to a child.[24]

In these instances, the abuse of children occurred either because the offender exploited an opportunity that was presented to them or because they recognised a sexual interest in children after being in close proximity to them. This study did not preclude that there are some people (determined offenders and paedophiles) who *do* have a sexual propensity towards children and who *do* try to seek to create opportunities to be close to them, including seeking employment in child-related roles, because they intend to offend against them.

The descriptions of the types of offenders that follow relate to their propensity to offend. More information on how to use this information to prevent harm to children is found in Part 1 of the Risk Management and the Child Safe Standards resource under Developing a Child Safe Risk Management Plan.

Research has identified that there are three types of offenders:

Determined

This type of offender is described as persistent and calculating. They have an unambiguous sexual interest in children. They are prepared to invest effort if necessary and may become adept at creating opportunities to offend and avoiding detection. This person is often described as a paedophile* and may also be referred to as a persistent or motivated offender.

Preventing them from harming children can be difficult. A determined offender may be quite skilled at grooming children (and the caring adults in their life) to ensure they have access to children and that their abuse will be undetected.

Opportunistic

Generally, this type of offender will exploit chances for personal gain at the expense of others but is unlikely to invest significant effort in creating opportunities. They often have no special or unusual sexual interest in children, and will only sexually abuse in low-risk, low-effort situations.

Rather than plan, they are more likely to exploit a small lapse in child safe practice, especially if they feel the chance of being caught is low.

An example of an opportunistic offender could be an adult regularly driving a child home from a sporting event, who learns the child lives in a difficult or stressful family situation, such as separated parents, an out-of-home care arrangement or a domestic violence situation.

Situational

This type of offender usually has conventional social values. They often have adequate self-control and are sensitive to informal social controls. They will, however, succumb to temptation in specific sets of circumstances. A typical scenario is one where they convince a child they are in love and that their 'relationship' is normal.

An example of a situational offender is a counsellor who feels they have developed a 'special bond' with one of their clients and starts behaving in inappropriate ways in order to convince the child the relationship is appropriate.

The actions of both situational and opportunistic offenders generally require less intensive risk controls. These can include strong guardianship which includes increased supervision and monitoring and the use of natural surveillance opportunities.

* A paedophile may also be used to describe someone who is attracted to children, particularly pre-pubescent children.

Steps of offending behaviour

In each of these models, there are four stages offenders must take before abusing a child:

1

Internal motivation
A person needs to have motivation to abuse a child sexually. This may be ingrained (they may be a paedophile) or it can be triggered by an event. The kind of event can vary. Some offenders talk about a marital breakdown or loss of job which they feel justifies them seeking the attention of a child.

2

Overcoming internal inhibitions
In order to act on their motivation to offend against a child, a potential offender has to overcome their own internal inhibitions. This means switching off the little voice in their head that says this feeling about children is not acceptable. Inhibitions may also include thoughts relating to the risks of being caught, including loss of their job, the disdain of family and friends and potential imprisonment. A potential offender rationalises and justifies their intentions to themselves before proceeding.

3

Overcoming external barriers
Offenders must next overcome any external impediments to committing sexual abuse. They do this by manipulating the protective adults in the child's life to enable them to be alone with a child. Some grooming of other adults will occur, and the offender may establish online contact with the child via text or email.

If the organisational culture is robust enough, potential offenders can't proceed past this stage.

4

Overcoming a child's resistance
The final stage a potential offender takes is to overcome the child's resistance. Often they groom them to undermine or overcome their reluctance to be abused. Grooming may take place over a period of time and can require significant effort. Offenders can convince the child their relationship is 'real.' Alternatively, they may encourage the child to do something small, but still wrong, and then use evidence of this to blackmail the child to go further. Sometimes grooming does not occur, and the abuser will overcome the child's resistance by threatening violence against them or people they care about.

Reflective questions:

1. How do you train your staff to recognise instances of grooming?
2. How do you train your staff to report any breach of your organisation's Code of Conduct?
3. Do your staff understand there are different kinds of offenders, and can they identify them?
4. Do your staff understand the different stages offenders go through before they abuse children?
5. How do you ensure children in your organisation can cultivate protective behaviours to keep them safe from harm and know how to report any instances of harm they experience or witness?

" **Offenders come from all walks of life. We have professionals, we have businessmen, tradies, a whole gamut of offenders, there is no stereotypical person who engages online in this space.**
Detective Acting Superintendent Goddard[25]

Situational prevention

Situational Crime Prevention is the name given by criminologists to crime prevention strategies that are aimed at reducing the criminal opportunities which arise from the routines of everyday life. It can reduce the likelihood of certain crimes – including the abuse of children. It is one way of addressing situational risk factors. More information on this is found in Part 1 of the Risk Management and the Child Safe Standards resource under Developing a Child Safe Risk Management Plan.

Situational prevention aims to make changes to the environment and organisational culture, rather than trying to change an offender's criminal disposition. It can be used to reduce everyday crimes, for example;

- electronic tagging of retail items to prevent theft
- closed circuit television to observe criminal acts
- the use of plastic cups in pubs as these cannot be used as weapons like glasses can.

Situational prevention strategies do not need to be complex or expensive. Some can be as simple as placing signs in 'crime hot spots' to remind patrons that:

'Thieves operate in this area. Have you secured your vehicle and removed your personal belongings?'

In a child safe setting this relates to changing the environmental factors that assist or prevent harm or abuse of a child occurring, such as the availability of secluded or obstructed areas where adults can be alone with them.

The central concepts of Situational Prevention can be found in the three crime prevention theories which follow.

Rational choice theory

This theory suggests that a person commits a crime after considering the likely outcome. Will the benefit of the crime outweigh the potential costs? If the perceived gain outweighs the likely punishment, or the risk of being caught is low, offenders may then decide to commit the crime.

In a child-related environment, encouraging adults to follow policies, procedures and codes of conduct, and having an organisational culture that prevents or minimises the opportunity for inappropriate behaviour is important. Reducing excuses, including instances of small breaches, and applying good governance (such as having leaders who model appropriate behaviour) increases the risk for the potential offender – which means that the likelihood of an offence occurring is decreased.

Routine activity theory

This theory suggests that for a crime in child-related settings to occur three key characteristics need to be present: a motivated offender, a suitable victim and a lack of control, which is sometimes called appropriate guardianship.

In other words, for predatory crimes to occur there needs to be a suitable target, an absence of a capable guardian and a motivated offender.

Opportunities to commit this type of crime are more likely to be found in 'routine activities' where adults are in close contact with children, such as going to school, one-on-one sessions and recreational activities. They could be a teacher, a counsellor or a parent giving a child a lift and they are often motivated by a cycle of predictability.

Crime pattern theory

This theory explores the role of environmental cues in everyday activities and how these may motivate or assist offenders. It considers an awareness of how physical spaces may contribute to the decisions an offender makes in selecting a target.

In a child safe context, this theory says that an environment is poorly designed if it does not have clear lines of sight, or if it has secluded, private rooms (such as offices) or rooms which do not allow for easy observation from the outside (such as those without windows or glass that is frosted or obstructed by artwork).

Making systematic and permanent changes to social and physical environments can reduce the likelihood of inappropriate behaviour taking place.

Increasing the effort needed to engage in inappropriate behaviour

Studies looking at when and how people offend against children have shown that an organisation is safer when leaders take steps to create a safe environment and not focus their efforts on changing a person's desire to harm a child.

They create places where adults know the rules, where everyone applies them and where there are consequences for failing to follow them. They have cultures where children are valued and listened to and where complaints and allegations are encouraged and acted upon. In these environments offenders are less likely to engage in abuse and harm because the vigilance of the organisation means they are more likely to be caught. They are less likely to switch off that little voice in their head that tells them what they want to do is wrong because everyone else in the organisation follows and lives the values of the organisation.

A situational prevention approach to being child safe means:

- Increasing the effort needed to engage in offending behaviour
- Increasing the risk of the offender being caught
- Removing any excuses for poor behaviour.

The following table looks at situational precipitators. This is a crime theory tool that looks at what things are needed to prevent a crime in a child safe setting. These are the things all organisations should instigate to make it more difficult for offenders to commit abuse.

Checklist for situational prevention

Increase the effort	Increase the risks of the offender being caught	Remove excuses
Deflect offenders Do your workers understand and employ the Child Safe Standards to underpin your organisation's child safe culture? Do your job advertisements promote your organisation's commitment to being child safe and state the requirement for workers to hold a Working With Children Check? Does your organisation have a child safe recruitment policy? Does your organisation make its Statement of Commitment to Child Safety and its child safe policies available on your publications and on social media? **Screen applicants** Does your organisation verify the Working With Children Checks of all your child-related workers? Is there a robust interview process to understand the applicant's values in respect of child safety, welfare and well-being? Do you conduct reference checks for all applicants to confirm previous employment histories and any instances of inappropriate behaviour with children? **Modify physical environment** Where possible, have you modified the physical environment to assist in natural surveillance? Have you closed off, barricaded or locked all secluded areas such as closets, storerooms or areas which are out of sight? Do you use rules to make the above areas 'out of bounds'? Do you use clear glass in doors and windows to assist natural surveillance?	**Extend guardianship** Do you encourage and support the inclusion of parents, families and children in programs and decision making? Do you encourage and support children to have a voice and speak up if they feel unsafe, upset or scared? Do you teach children protective behaviours? **Assist natural surveillance** Do you make sure areas are well lit? Where possible, do you design open plan spaces where children interact with adults? Do you ask children to identify areas where they do not feel safe? Do you ensure that interior windows are not obscured with posters, frosted glass, etc.? Do you ensure children are not in isolated areas unless accompanied by more than one adult? **Reduce anonymity** Are all your workers easily identifiable to parents and families because of their uniforms or name badges? Do you encourage feedback on all areas of the service, including about workers, the environment and culture of the organisation?	**Set rules** Do you have child safe policies, procedures and codes of conduct for workers, children and families and ensure they are applied consistently, and have clear outcomes when breaches are identified? Do you have child safe policies and codes of conduct that describe expected day-to-day practice? Do your workers have role descriptions outlining their duties and responsibilities? Does your organisation have regular feedback opportunities? **Post instructions** Are all your policies, procedures and codes of conduct accessible and discussed regularly in team and parent meetings? Are all your stakeholders aware of what to do if they suspect or witness harm to children? Do you have prominent posters demonstrating your organisation's commitment to being a Child Safe Organisation? **Governance and leadership** Is there a disciplinary policy for all breaches of codes of conduct? Is there ongoing mentoring, support and guidance about child safe best practices in the workplace? Are there performance appraisals identifying and responding to any concerning behaviour? Is there support for stakeholders who make complaints or allegations?

Reflective questions:

1. Have your leaders or staff had training in understanding situational prevention techniques?
2. Are there any areas of your organisation where staff are able to be alone with children where they are out of sight of other adults?
3. How does your organisation attempt to ensure that adults working with children are safe and responsible?
4. Do you have a Code of Conduct?
5. How do you ensure all adults working with children understand the consequences for breaching a Code of Conduct?

Case study

Jim volunteers in his local church. He has recently completed the OCG's Child Safe eLearning package, and has recognised that there are some areas of the church's environment where adults are able to be alone with children.

At the next staff meeting, Jim makes the following suggestions.

The church should have a Safe Church Policy and adults engaging with the church should adhere to it.

The choir office should remain locked and out of bounds while children are in the building. The door to the sacristy should have a window in it.

The current method of the choir mistress contacting the children's choir via personal texts should be replaced by something accessible to children and the organisation, but not public. Remember, Facebook groups should only be used for young people aged over 13.

There was some initial resistance to Jim's suggestions, as no one in the church's committee of management could believe that the people they worked with would abuse children or young people. They trusted that they had a safe environment.

At the next meeting, a month later, Jim presented the committee with a range of newspaper clippings from other churches where abuse had taken place. The committee then voted to support Jim's suggestions.

Factors leading to environmental risk	Ways to reduce the risk
Private rooms and areas where children were present with adults without natural observation opportunities	Locks to prevent entry to rooms, windows installed in doors and rules forbidding adults to be alone with children.
Opportunities for adults to engage in private messaging with children and young people	Rules that forbid adults from contacting children and young people privately by electronic means.
An organisational culture that didn't believe abuse could happen in this environment	Developing an understanding that while abuse may not be likely, having appropriate interventions in place will remove or reduce the likelihood of it ever occurring.

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