



Protection through participation: Involving children in child-safe organisations

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2016



Australian Government

Australian Institute of Family Studies
Child Family Community Australia



Institute of
Child
Protection
Studies





- aims to
 - understand how and why sexual abuse occurred within Australian institutions
 - provide guidance as to how future abuse might be prevented



- *The societal norm that ‘children should be **seen but not heard**’, which prevailed for unknown decades, **provided the opportunity for some adults to abuse the power** which their relationship with the child gave them. When the required silence of the child was accompanied by an unquestioning **belief by adults** in the integrity of the carer for the child, be they youth worker, teacher, residential supervisor or cleric, the **power imbalance was entrenched** to the inevitable detriment of many children.*
- *We must ensure that in the future the institution does not silence the child. The institution must work to ensure that the child can be heard. ([Hon Justice McClennan AM, 2015](#))*

How do children perceive & experience safety in institutions and how do institutions respond?

Children's Safety Study
(ACU, QUT & Griffith
University)

Safety of Children & Young
People
with disability
(Southern Cross University)

Safety of Children & Young
People
in Residential Care
(ACU, QUT & Griffith
University)

Taking Us
Seriously

Our
Safety
Counts

Feeling
Safe:
Being
Safe

Safe &
Sound

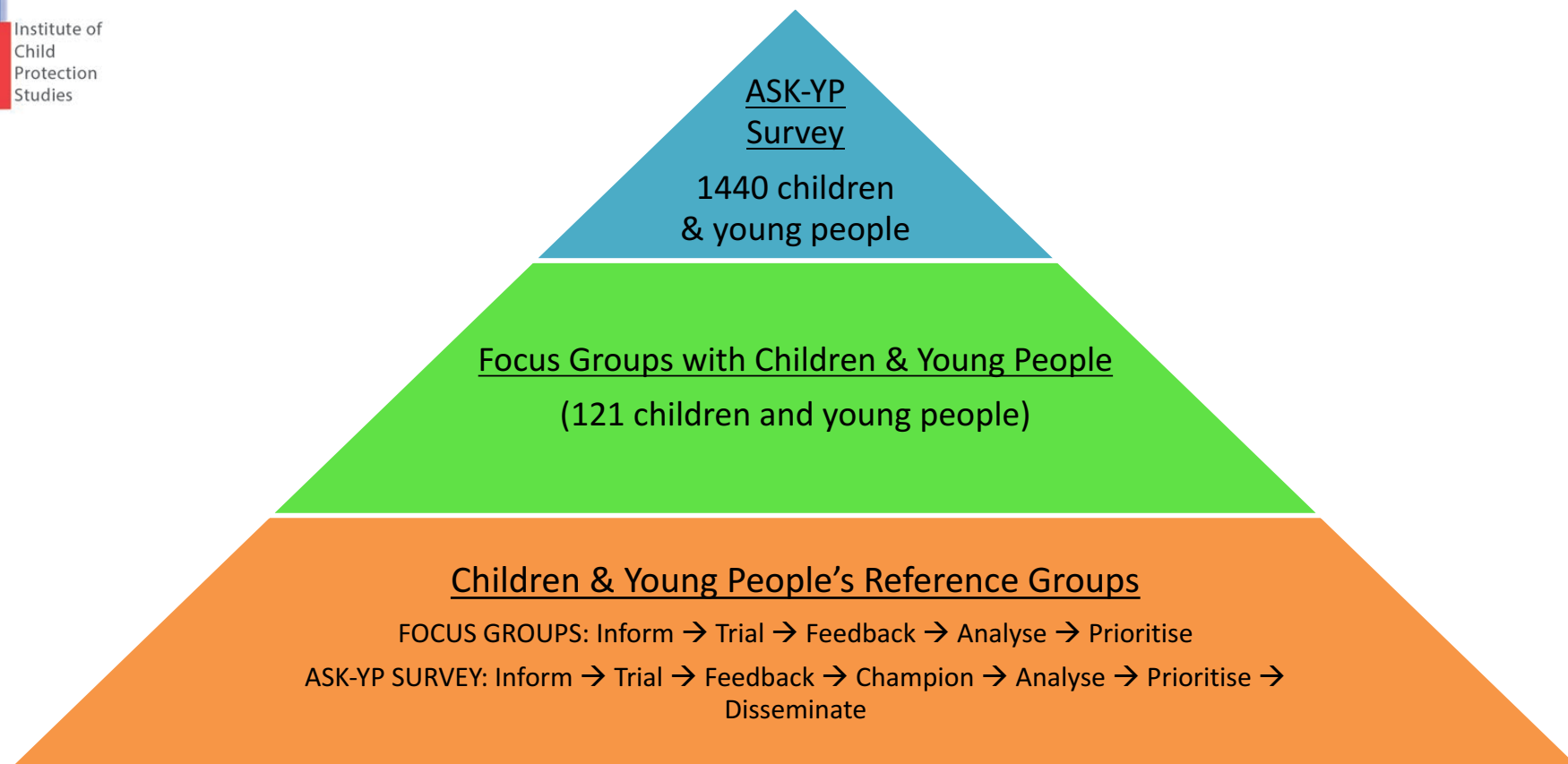
Childhood Studies

Children's
Rights

Children's
Participation

Standpoint
Theory

Child informed
policy &
practice



What does
safety
mean



What
safety
concerns
do you
have?



What do
you need
to be safe
and feel
safe?



How well
do
institutions
do in
keeping
you safe?



What
needs to be
done to
improve
your
safety?



Why do children value participation?

Participation demonstrates respect for children and young people

- *‘Lots of adults don’t care enough about kids and this stuff is going to keep happening. Until they see us as having good ideas and believe us [when things go wrong] nothing will change.’ (MX-2)*



Being heard is important

- *“Cos just talking to people takes a big load off your chest, like a huge weight is lifted off you. So there does need to be more people. Because its hard to talk to people, you’ve got to trust them a lot ... there are not many people that I can trust, that I can tell.”*
(16 year old male, Who Cares?)





Participation helps adults understand what children and young people need to be safe and feel safe

- *‘You think that adults must surely have heard something if you have and that they’re dealing with it.’ ‘You know we’re used to not being told about things so you just assume that they’re dealing with it but haven’t told us ... [but] it turns out that sometimes they have no idea ... They’re clueless’, ‘so maybe we need to tell them more and not assume so much and they have to ask more, even when they think things are going OK.’ (YP-1)*

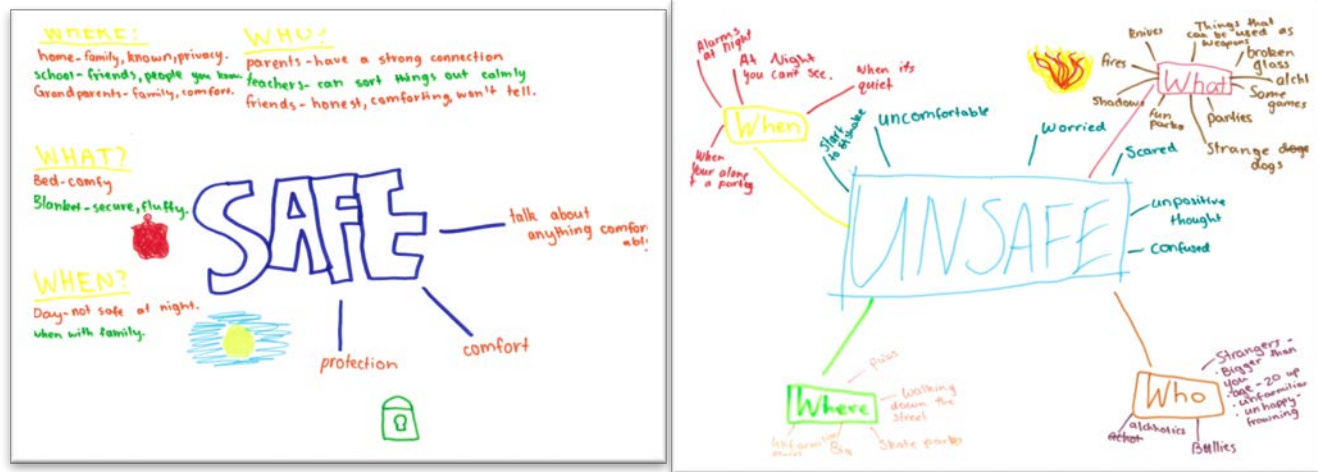


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www.glasbergen.com



**"YOUR MOTHER AND I FOUND OUT YOU'VE BEEN BLOGGING.
WE DON'T KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS, BUT WE'D LIKE YOU TO STOP."**

Understanding what safety means to children and young people





What does it mean to be safe?



- **Being safe and feeling safe are two different things**
 - Kids are more concerned about **FEELING SAFE** and adults are more concerned about kids **BEING SAFE** and often forget that to **BE SAFE** they need both
- **Children tell whether they're safe or not based:**
 - On their bodies
 - On their behaviours
 - On other's behaviours
 - On what they've seen or heard
 - On what they've experienced
- **To be safe, kids need:**
 - Familiarity, predictability and some sense of control
 - To be with those they trust
 - For adults to be adult-like, to demonstrate their respect for kids, to use their power **FOR** children, to take control, to do what they say they are going to do



TOOL 4C: FRIENDLY MAPS

LINKED TO:

- Sections 4.3, 4.4, 4.5 & 5.13



WHY?

- To gauge how child-friendly your space is
- To get feedback from kids about what spaces feel safe and those that don't
- To get ideas on how things might be improved for children



WHO WITH?

- Children aged 5 to 14 years



TIME?

- 10 mins to 40 mins depending on ages



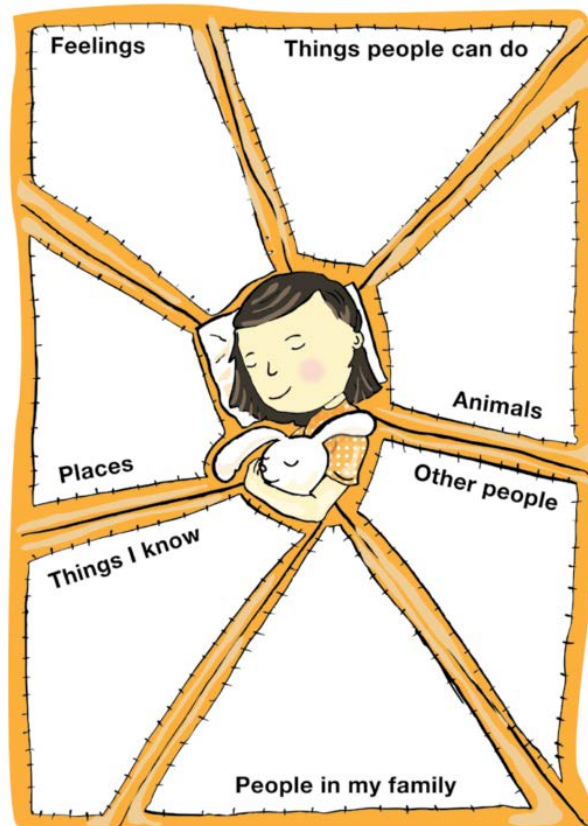
YOU'LL NEED?

- A3 sheet of paper,
- coloured textas or crayons



Friendly Maps is available on the ICPS website
or by clicking [here](#)

Things That Make Me Feel Safe



“Things that make me feel safe” is
available on the ICPS website or by
clicking [here](#)

Participation affords children and young people opportunities to help adults understand and respond to their needs

- *Adults think they know what kids need to be safe, but I don't think that they do. They base it on what they remember from when they were kids and the world is different now. So they need to talk to kids and find out what it means to them.*





Recognise that things are different now....

“I don’t feel safe at SeaWorld: I don’t like people, I don’t like bears, I don’t like animals, I don’t like SeaWorld or zoos...

I hate the zoo and I’m worried the tiger will get out of it’s cage and it will attack me and I will die and someone will film it and it will be on youtube”



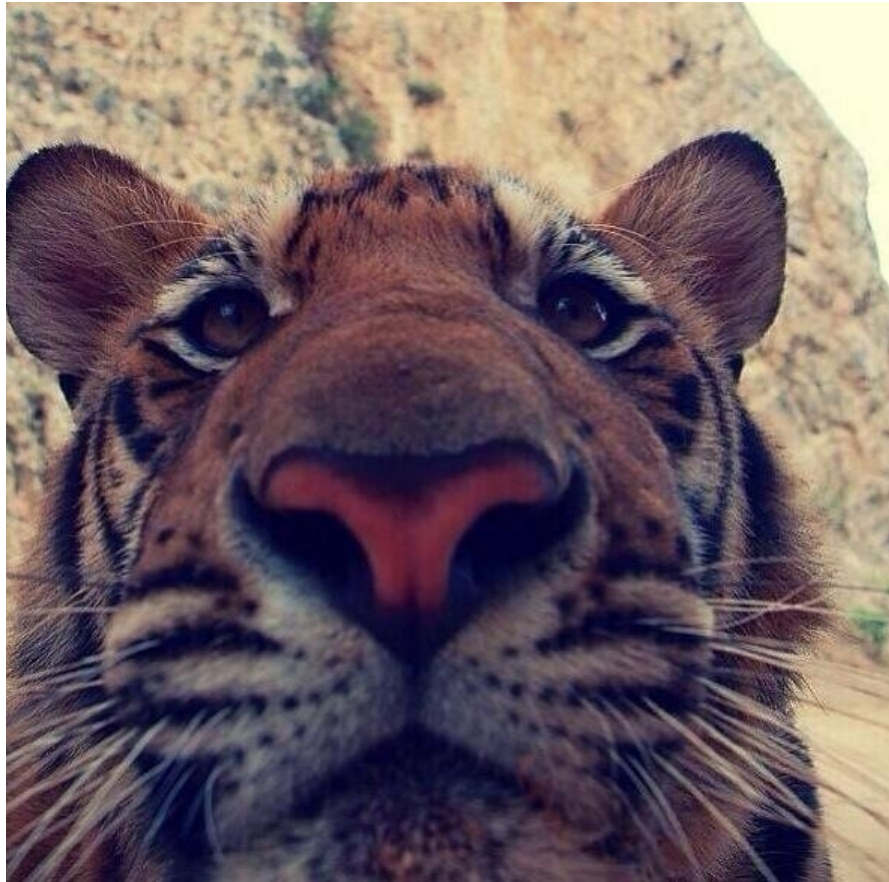


Image source: https://www.reddit.com/r/aww/comments/1ryxvo/tiger_selfie/



Participation helps children and young people inform how to protect them



- *‘Every school should do what we just did [in the focus group]. Talk about what risks there are and if it’s a big risk and what’s been done and what we think should be done. How else can they find out what young adults think and how can we hear what’s been done?’ (YP-3)*

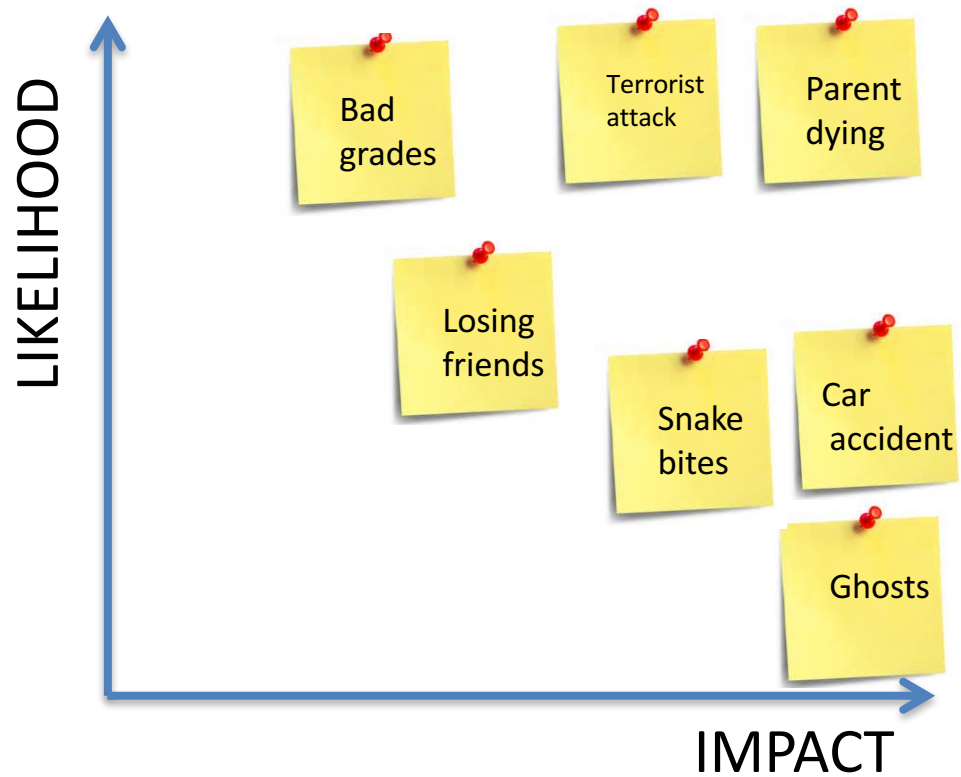
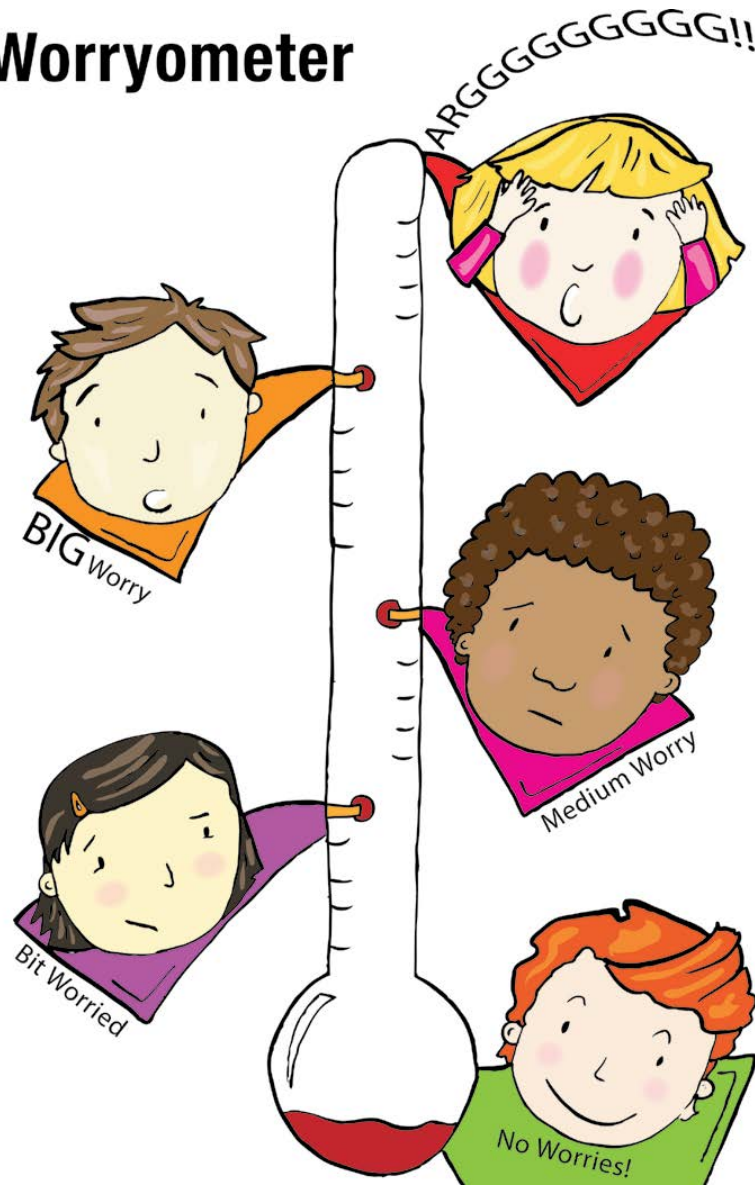




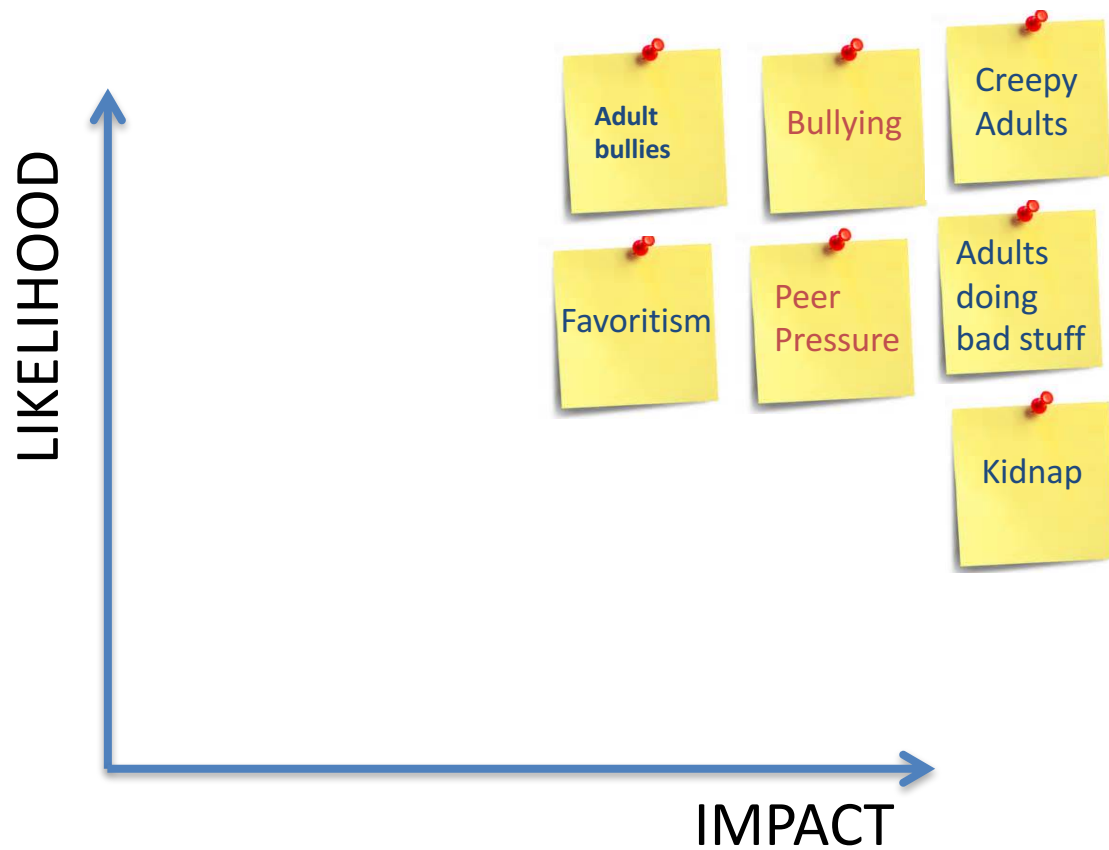
Image sourced from: <https://blog.dc4k.org/archives/category/emotions>



Worryometer



The
Worryometer
is available on
the ICPS
website or you
can click [here](#)



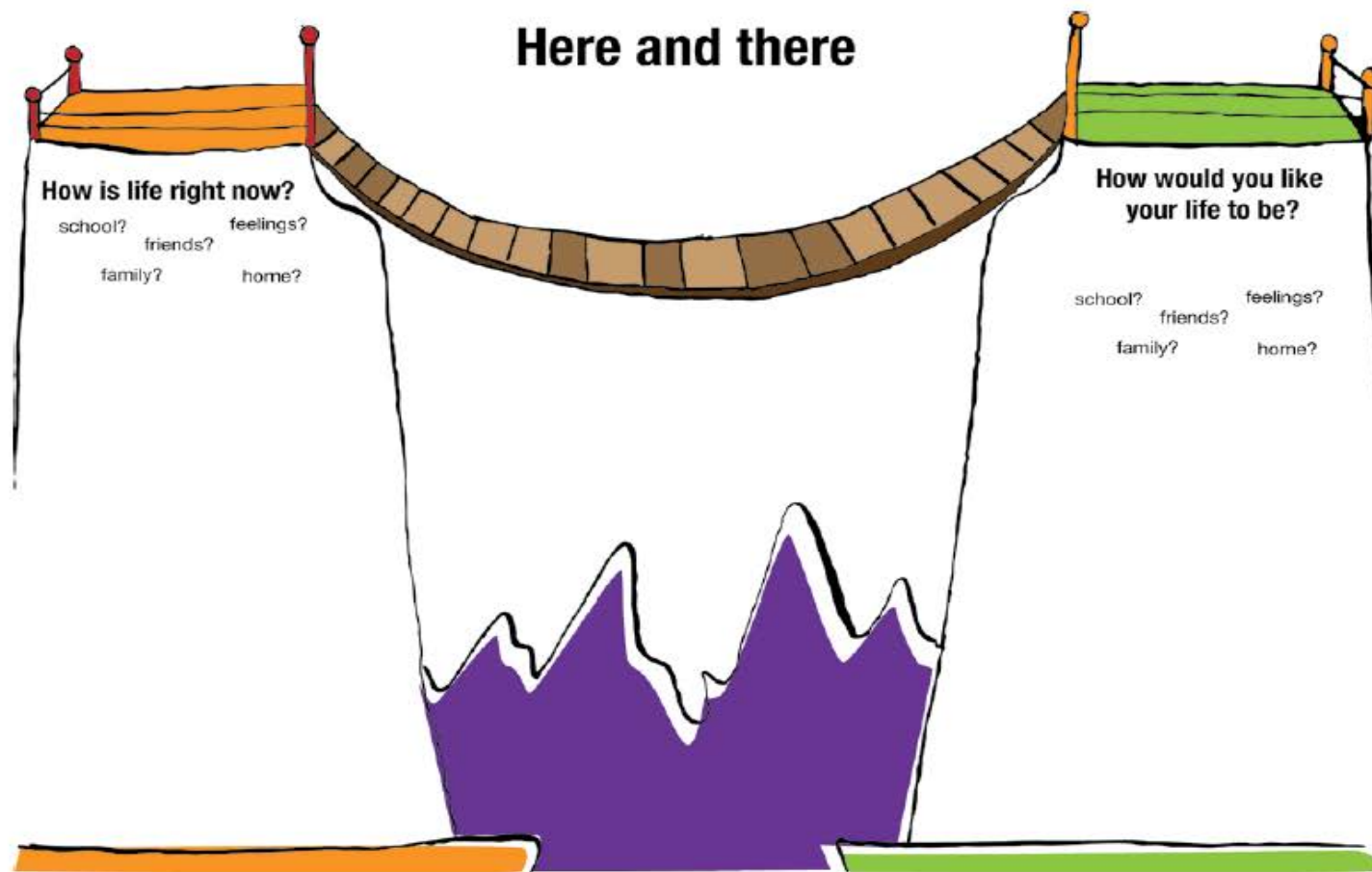
**Adult
bullies**

What kids need	What adults do (helpful)	Jellyfish (what keeps adults from doing)	What adults do (unhelpful)	Advice for adults
Support	Help make school safe	Don't want to be bullied by the adult	Say: "Just grow up", "walk away", "violence never helps"	Don't forget what it's like to be a kid, how kids feel and what's important to them
Advice	Pay attention	Don't think it's a big deal	Step in and try to fix: but make things worse	Spend time listening and try to appreciate feelings
Understanding	Understand the problem	Don't know how to fix	Do stuff without kids permission	Work with kids rather than doing for
Someone to protect them	Hear kids feelings	Don't like to hear about kids pain	Say "it's not a big deal"	Model good behaviour
	Talk to bully (with agreement from victim)	Want to fix rather than listen		Don't always lecture
		No time		Kids advisory group help to find solutions
		Other things they need to get done that they think are more important		Training for adults on how to listen`
		No skills		Better strategies worked out with kids



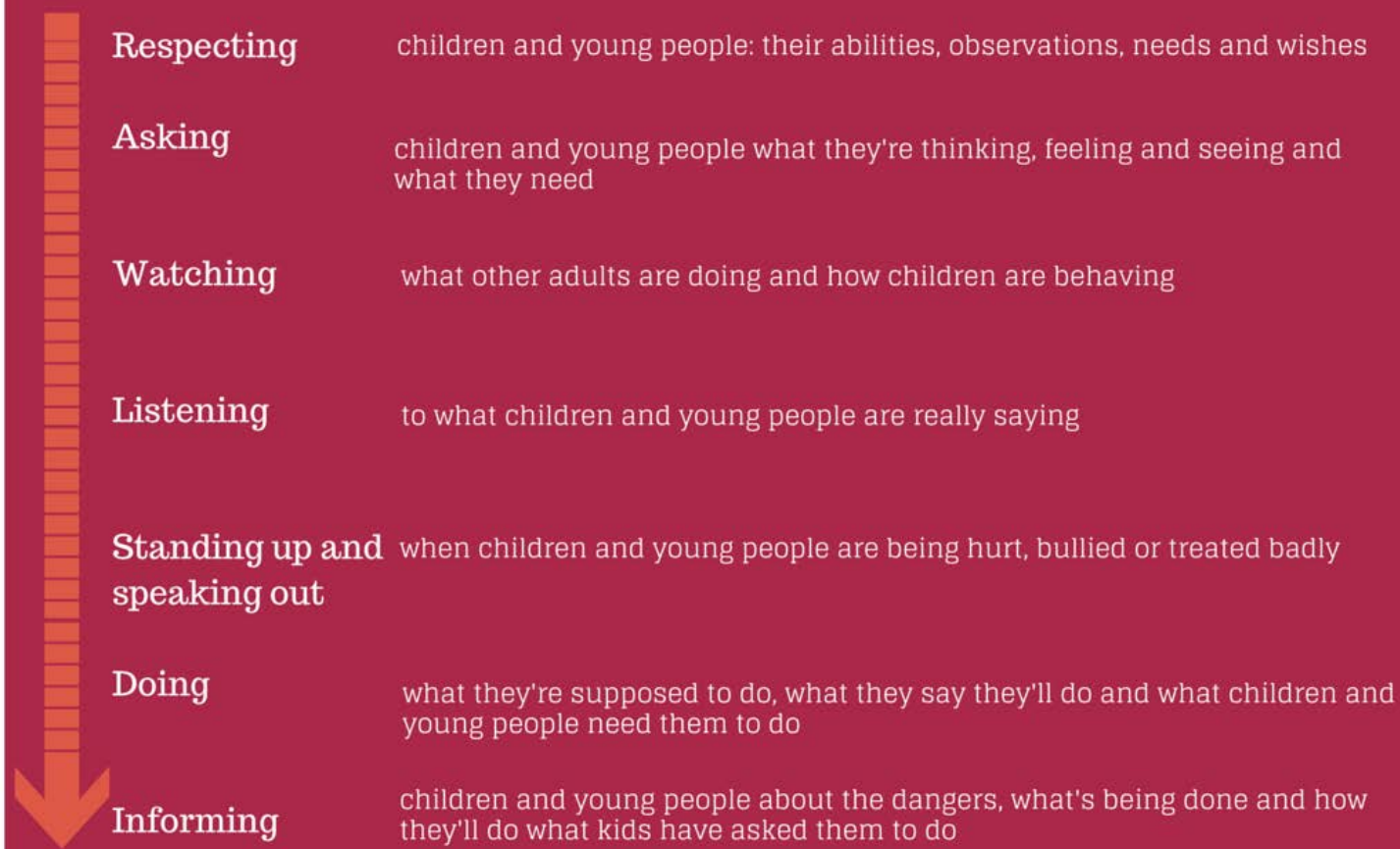
Activity:

Here and there



Here and There can be downloaded [here](#)

You told us that adults can keep children and young people safe by:

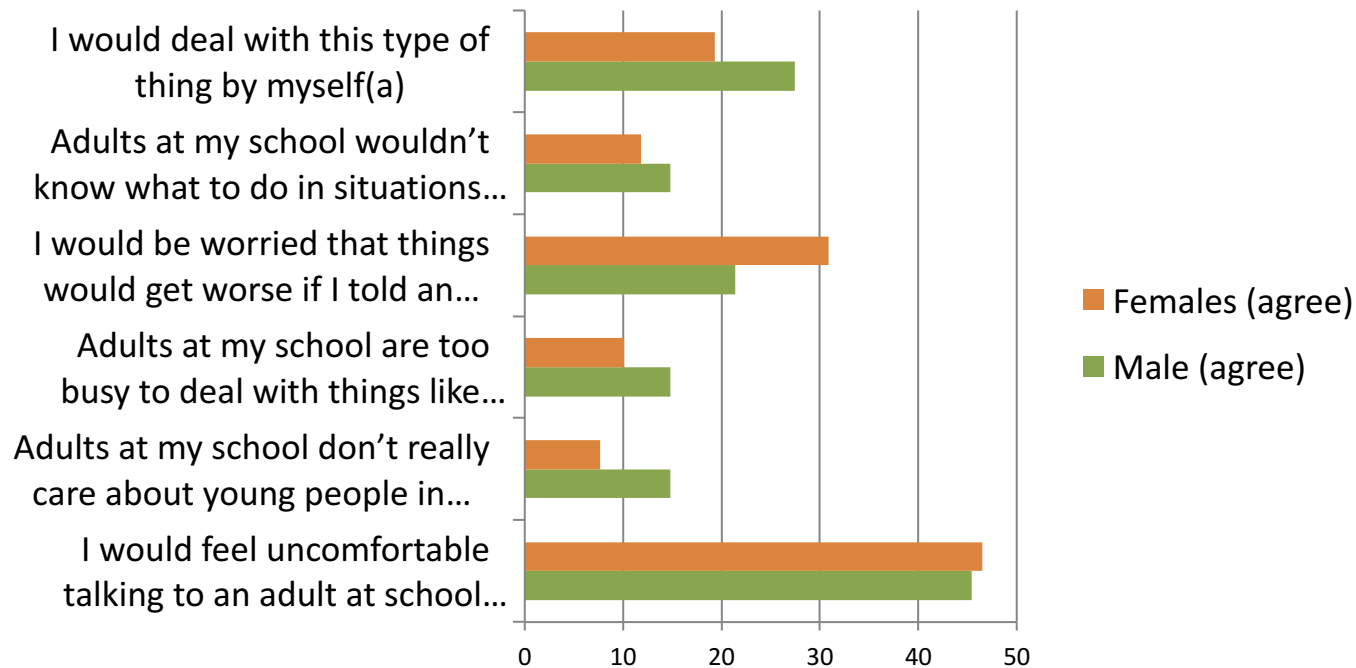


Participation helps children and young people inform and understand what is being done to protect them

- *Knowledge – knowing what is being done if something dangerous has happened. Like if there are strangers in the area knowing what your teachers and adults are doing makes you feel more safe rather than just knowing something bad is happening and worrying that you're in danger.' 'But adults don't always understand this.' 'They think they should hide that stuff from kids to keep them safe but you feel more scared if you don't know what's happening.' (YP-2)*



Participation recognises the barriers

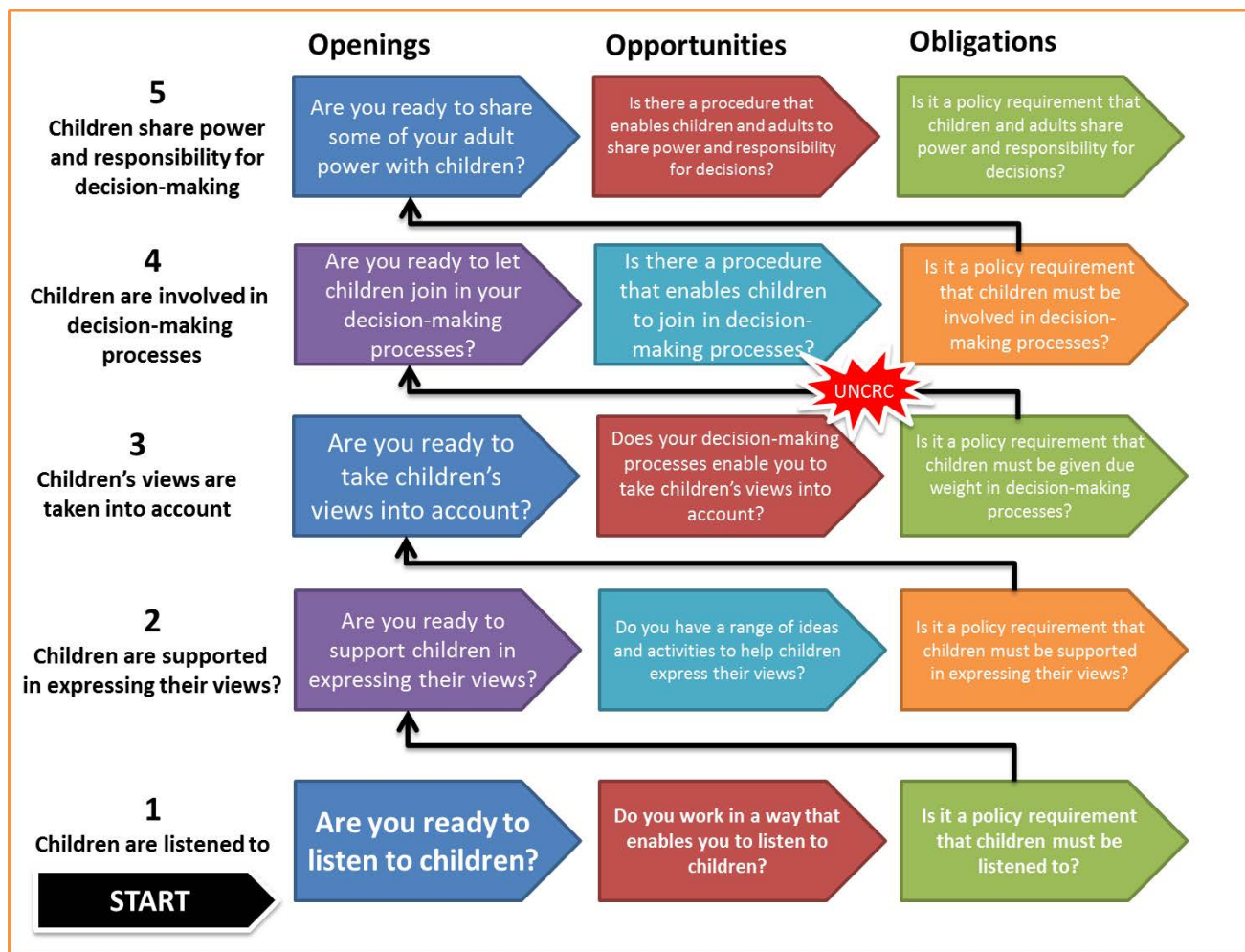




Protective Participation

- Is embedded in organisational practice





More about
the model
can be found
[here](#)

Protective participation is child-friendly and approaches are shaped by children and young people

- Children and young people want to have their say and appreciate the opportunities to do so
- Talking about safety can be difficult or uncomfortable but this doesn't warrant not being asked
- Children and young people think about safety differently to adults (and differently to how adults think kids think)
- It takes a while to get used to talking about these issues
- Its important to start by 'sussing out' what children and young people already know
- It is important to be guided by children and young people about what and how things are discussed
- Choice and control are paramount
- Children feel more empowered when they have opportunities to talk

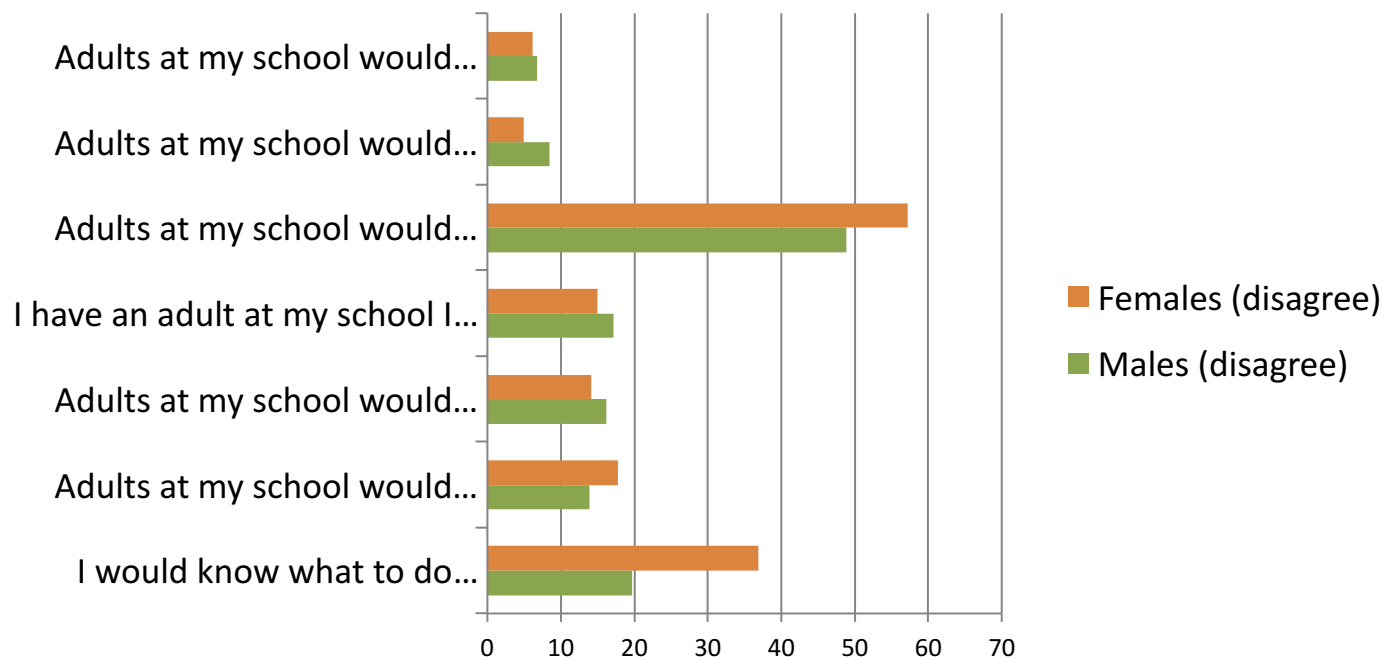


Protective participation is preventative

- *‘Adults and youth think about different things when they’re trying to work out what’s going on. I think adults make a quick judgment while we watch, look out for things more. Adults probably have more experience so they can decide quicker but that doesn’t mean they don’t make mistakes. Maybe because we’re watching we see things they don’t see.’ (YP-4)*



Protective participation does not require adults to initiate, but may benefit when they do





Protective participation understands, responds to and redresses power imbalances

Relational and intergenerational vulnerability

Because they're adults and we're kids we're always going to be in a worse off position. Everyone thinks that adults can treat kids how they want, that kids should be respectful of adults no matter what and that children should just do what adults say because their kids and adults are adults (YP-3)

They stand over you and make you feel really small. They want to remind you that you are weak and you have to do exactly what they say. There's nothing you can do because you're just a kid and you can't fight back.... That's why kids are unsafe because they can't stand up and protect themselves. If no one is around anything could happen.



Safety & Power

Organisational powerlessness

- *Adults protect each other and the institution*

'Adults won't usually stand up against an adult bully. Maybe it's because they don't see it as a problem or maybe because they don't want to get caught in the middle of it. I think people think it's OK to intimidate a kid, particularly if it's so they do something that people think is good for the kid. But that doesn't mean that it's OK.' (MX-1)



Protective participation is skill-building



<http://texasplaytherapy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/play-therapy-e1443739543603.jpg>



Protective participation leads to change

- *The world is unsafe for most kids, well that's how they feel anyway. So if you're going to make it safe you've got to make them feel OK... You have to ask them what worries them and fix that.*



Protective participation fosters evaluation and complaints handling

The WA Commissioner for Children and Young People recommends that complaints systems:

- Focus on children and young people as service users
- Are highly visible and children and young people are informed about how to use them
- Are accessible to children and young people and respond to their specific needs
- Are responsive and timely: concerns are acted on quickly
- Foster confidentiality
- Are driven by accountability and continuous improvement

It can be accessed [here](#)

When I'm not happy



What happened?



What I wish had happened



Why I think it happened



How did it make me feel?



What I'd like to happen now





Protective participation focuses on children's needs and wishes as well as organisational responsibilities



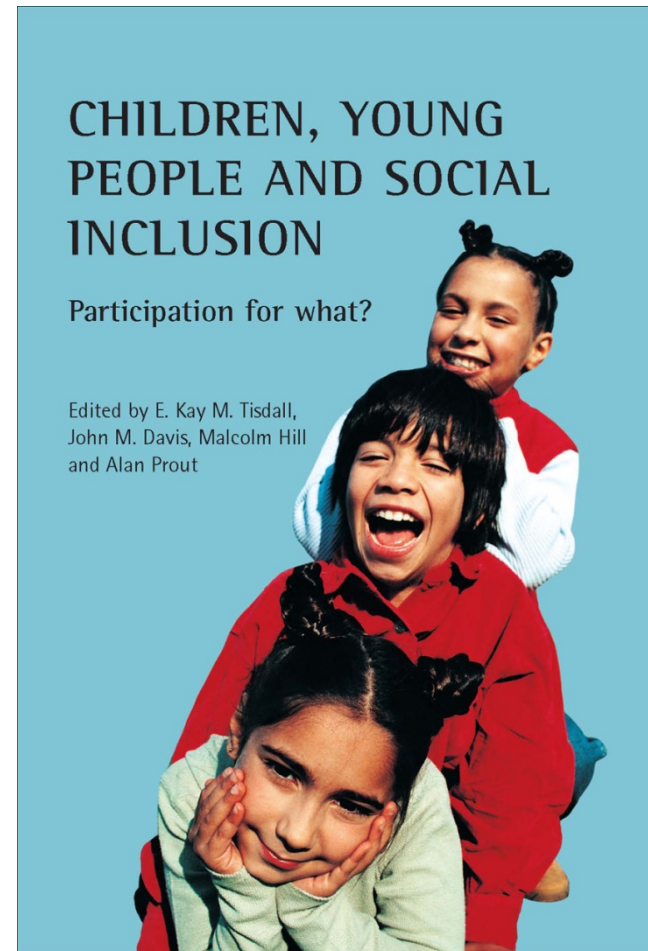
<http://blog.heartland.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/child-lost-in-crowd.jpg>



The lesson to be learned is that effective protection of children can only be achieved by listening to and taking them seriously.

The conventional view of protection has been a one-way process, with adults as agents and children as recipients.

What is now needed is a more sophisticated approach, in which it is understood as a dynamic process in which adults take responsibility for keeping children safe by listening to and respecting their perspectives, while empowering them to contribute to their own protection (Tisdall, p149)



Implications for child-safe organisations

- Child safe strategies are great but many do not appear to have afforded children and young people to shape or critique their design or implementation
- Participation should be preventative
- Child safe strategies should keep kids safe and help them feel safe
- Participation can help inform strategies related to “child voice” but others too!



SOURCE: <http://languagedelaynetwork.com/a-family-centred-approach-to-speech-therapy/>



Resources

The Children's Safety Study Reports are available on the Royal Commission website <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/policy-and-research/our-research>

- Moore, T., M. McArthur, J. Heerde, S. Roche and P. O'Leary (2016). Our safety counts: Children and young people's perceptions of safety and institutional responses to their safety concerns. Melbourne, Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University.
- Moore, T., M. McArthur, D. Noble-Carr and D. Harcourt (2015). Taking us seriously: children and young people talk about safety and institutional responses to their safety concerns. Melbourne, Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University.

A YouTube clip for children and young people can be accessed at:

http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/faculties_institutes_and_centres/centres/institute_of_child_protection_studies/our_work/current_previous_work/completed_in_2016/safety_of_children_in_institutions

The Kids Central Toolkit is available online at

http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/faculties_institutes_and_centres/centres/institute_of_child_protection_studies/kids_central_toolkit/kids_central_tools

Other references:

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- Bijleveld, G. G., C. W. Dedding and J. F. Bunders-Aelen (2015). "Children's and young people's participation within child welfare and child protection services: a state-of-the-art review." Child & Family Social Work **20**(2): 129-138.
- Fern, E. (2014). "Child-directed social work practice: Findings from an action research study conducted in Iceland." British Journal of Social Work **44**(5): 1110-1128.
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- Tisdall, E. K. M. (2006). Children, young people and social inclusion: participation for what?, Policy Press.

Questions?

Join the conversation & access key resources

Continue the conversation started here today and access related resources on the CFCA website:

www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/news-discussion

