

Co-Designing Safety

Diverse Experiences of Family Violence among Young People with Disability

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Lands on which we are presenting today, the Wurundjeri peoples of the Kulin Nation.

We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and extend this respect to any First Nations people who are joining today.

We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. This always was, and always will be, First Nations Lands.



Content Note

Distressing content includes:

- Mentions of family and domestic violence
- Trauma, abuse, bullying and ableism

About CYDA

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) is the national representative organisation for children and young people with disability, aged 0–25 years.

Our vision is that children and young people with disability fully exercise their rights, realise their aspirations, and thrive in inclusive communities.

Our work centres on rights-based advocacy, lived experience, and evidence-informed policy.

Presentation Overview

- The Safety Beyond Barriers Project
 - Ecosystem Approach
 - Evidence Scan
 - Co-design Overview
 - Project Lessons
 - Messages for Policy, Practice and System Improvement
 - Future Research
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The Safety Beyond Barriers Project

- The SBB Project was a nine-month project funded by the National Disability Research Partnership
 - The project generated practical, evidence-based recommendations to improve family violence prevention and response systems
 - **Activities:** lived experience co-design, and active participation of an advisory group of disability and family violence experts
 - **Outputs:** evidence scan, safe disclosure protocols, and a research proposal for future research.
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SBB Project Overview

Aim: To better understand the experiences and needs of young people with disability from diverse backgrounds in FDV contexts in Australia.

Why this matters

1. Young people with disability experience the highest rates of FDV in their age cohort, yet remain overlooked in research, policy and practice
2. Systems operate separately, creating obstacles to accessing holistic care and appropriate support, especially for those with diverse backgrounds.

Without better research and coordination, these gaps will continue.

Ecosystem Approach

Research Partner: Australian Institute of Family Studies

- provided support, expertise and advice related to FDV research, evidence scan, ethics

Co-designers:

- Four people with lived experience of FDV, intersectional experiences and diverse backgrounds (culture, location, gender, age), and/or disability
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Project Ecosystem cont.

Cross-Sector Advisory Group

FDV and disability experts from eight organisations

- Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
 - Australian Institute of Family Studies
 - First Peoples Disability Network
 - National Ethnic Disability Alliance
 - Women With Disabilities Australia
 - Inclusive Rainbow Voices
 - Regional Disability Advocacy Service, and
 - CYDA
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Evidence Scan

39 current policy and academic sources were analysed by AIFS to glean insights and identify gaps.

Findings:

- confirmed that children and young people with disability experience higher rates of FDV
 - revealed a clear gap in research that centres children and young people with disability as victim-survivors in their own right
 - highlighted service and systems siloes, leading to families falling in between services and not getting the tailored support they need.
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Co-design Overview

- Co-designers participated in a preparatory information session, and three co-design sessions over six months
 - They shaped a research proposal for future study, informed by the Evidence Scan and Advisory Group guidance
 - This approach ensured the proposed research reflects what matters most to people with lived experience and is grounded in real-world perspectives.
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Project Lessons

- **What worked:** Early and ongoing involvement of co-designers, preparatory information, clear roles, accessible materials, lived expertise facilitators and safety/wellbeing officers, and co-design decision making power.
 - **Challenges:** Timeframe and focus, fully representing diversity of experiences. Future research will need more time and resources to broaden participation and continue strengthening safe, inclusive approaches.
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Messages for System Improvement

- **Treat young people as victim-survivors in their own right**, centring them in research, policy, and services
 - **Lived experience input** is essential to creating solutions that work in practice
 - **Invest in system coordination** across FDV, disability and other service settings (e.g. education, health)
 - Build capability to deliver **flexible, accessible, tailored, disability and culturally affirming supports**
 - Diverse experiences require **trusted supports** through **multiple and intersectional entry points**.
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Future Research

The SBB project is a step towards meaningful change in how systems respond to young people with disability.

Future research could...

- 1. Use creative, healing research approaches,** such as crafting, yarning and drawing
 - 2. Strengthen evidence based on lived experience,** improving understanding and challenging harmful assumptions and stereotypes
 - 3. Inform more inclusive, accessible, and responsive services,** leading to more trusted, tailored support and better coordination.
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Want to know more about the SBB project?

Check out our website where you can find the Evidence Scan and other project resources:

<https://cyda.org.au/advocacy/safety-beyond-barriers/>



References

Altman, T., Hunter, S. and Gay, M. (2026). From Tokenism to Transformation: Relational Guiding Principles for Genuine Co-Design with Young People with Disability. *Youth*. 6(2):57.

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<https://cyda.org.au/advocacy/safety-beyond-barriers/>.



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