Consultations with children and young people on creating child safe organisations

2019

We wish to pay our respects to Aboriginal elders – past, present and emerging – and acknowledge the important role of Aboriginal people and culture within the NSW community. ACYP advises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers this report may contain images of people who may have passed away.

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contents

about ACYP

The Advocate for Children and Young People (ACYP) is an independent statutory appointment overseen by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Children and Young People. ACYP advocates for and promotes the safety, welfare, wellbeing and voice of all children and young people aged 0-24 years, with a focus on the needs of those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged.

Under the *Advocate for Children and Young People Act 2014*, the functions of ACYP include:

- making recommendations to Parliament, government and non-government agencies on legislation, policies, practices and services that affect children and young people;

- promoting children and young people's participation in activities and decision-making about issues that affect their lives;

- conducting research into children's issues and monitoring children's wellbeing;

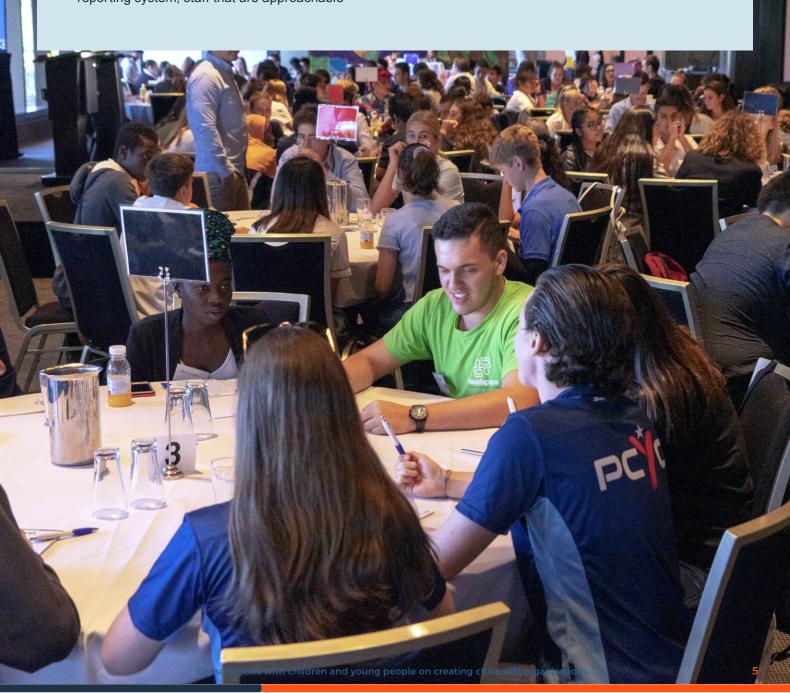- holding inquiries into important issues relating to children and young people;

- providing information to help children and young people; and

- preparing, in consultation with the Minister responsible for youth, a three-year, Strategic Plan for Children and Young People (Plan). The inaugural Plan was launched in July 2016.

- Further information about ACYP's work can be found at: www.acyp.nsw.gov.au.

key findings

Children and young people feel safe in organisations that make them feel welcome; demonstrate a commitment to child safety; employ friendly and helpful staff and provide regular opportunities for children and young people to voice their opinions.

In order to feel comfortable to make a report or recommendation about their safety, children and young people would like a simple and anonymous reporting system; staff that are approachable and trustworthy; supportive networks to help them through the process and to know that the organisation will take them seriously.

Children and young people want organisations to provide feedback to them in a timely and efficient manner; to be open and honest in their feedback and to take action and implement change when they raise concerns.

recommendations for creating child safe organisations

Children and young people's recommendations for involving them in organisational decision making and broader cultural issues

Children and young people reported that safe organisations fundamentally engage children and young people in decision making processes in meaningful ways. They further emphasised that they would be unlikely to make a report in relation to their safety when organisations do not provide ongoing mechanisms to include their voices in decision making or do not take their opinions seriously.

In addition to providing opportunities for contributing to organisational decision making, children and young people further reported that they feel safe in organisations that demonstrate inclusiveness and a concern for their mental health and wellbeing.

Children and young people's specific recommendations for involving them in organisational decision making and broader cultural issues were:

- That organisations provide regular opportunities for children and young people to give their views on what makes them feel comfortable and safe

- That organisations develop their safety guidelines and procedures in consultation with children and young people

- That children and young people are explained all of their rights in a way that is appropriate to their age and developmental stage

- That a website is created dedicated to informing children and young people of their rights

- That all children and young people are provided with a copy of their rights

- That organisations working with children and young people have child rights posters and information displayed in areas occupied by children and young people

- That organisations work to create environments that are inclusive and free from racism and discrimination

- That organisations have a range of workers for children and young people to report to – genders, cultures and ages to cater for all children and young people

- That organisations have at least one young person employed so there is a supportive youth presence

- Organisational staff should regularly check in with children and young people to see how they are

Children and young people's recommendations for reporting safety concerns and receiving feedback

Children and young people also provided several recommendations for how they would like to make a report to an organisation if they had a safety concern and how they would like to receive feedback about their report. These recommendations centred on respectful service provision, supportive workers, safe spaces and most importantly being able to make reports anonymously. Specific recommendations were:

- That organisations create simple mechanisms for children and young people to make a report anonymously

- That organisations make it clear to children and young people that it is okay for them to speak up if they feel unsafe

- That organisational staff demonstrate to children and young people they are approachable and trustworthy so they feel comfortable to make a report if they feel unsafe

- That organisations take reports made by children and young people seriously and follow up with appropriate action

- That organisations set aside specific days where children and young people can sit with workers to have discussions about safety and other concerns

- That organisations provide children and young people with a scale for them to understand the severity of their safety issue or concern

- That organisations create designated safe spaces for children and young people to make a report in relation to their safety

- That organisations provide a quick response to children and young people when they make a report in relation to their safety

- That organisations provide regular updates to children and young people if the investigation process is lengthy

- That organisations provide one to one feedback to children and young people in a private setting when they have made a report in relation to their safety

- That organisations keep information provided to them by children and young people private and confidential

- That organisational staff receive training in child rights to promote respectful service provision

methodology

ACYP adopted a two-staged approach to gather children and young people's views on creating child safe organisations:

Stage 1: Focus groups

ACYP conducted 96 focus group style consultations with 608 children and young people to gather their views on creating child safe organisations. Children and young people were aged between 10 and 24 years of age. 45.6% identified as male, 52.8% as female and 1.6% as a gender other than male or female. Of the 608 children and young people, 7.7% were Aboriginal[1] and 17.8%[2] were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. 45.2% of the children and young people consulted with resided in Sydney and 54.8% in rural and regional NSW.

Focus group consultations were conducted in three settings. One hundred and fifty children and young people took part in the consultation as part of the ACYP Youth Week Forum at NSW Parliament House in April 2019. A further 448 children and young people participated in the consultations in their schools. ACYP staff visited 12 schools; 5 were located in Sydney and 7 in regional areas. Six of the 12 schools were Government; 4 Catholic and 2 were Independent. A focus group consultation was also conducted with 10 of the 12, 2019 NSW Youth Advisory Council (YAC) members.

The Youth Week Forum participants answered three key questions:

1. What are the things that organisations need to do to create safe environments for all children and young people?

2. If you, or other children and young people, felt unsafe in an organisation what would make you feel comfortable to speak up and make a report or recommendation to the organisation?

3. How should the organisation provide feedback to you when you raise an issue or provide a recommendation to them?

The YAC members and children and young people who participated in their schools also answered a fourth question:

4. What rights do you know that children and young people have and how would you like to be informed of your rights?

Stage 2: Online poll

In Stage 2, ACYP conducted a poll of approximately 1,000 children and young people aged 12-24 years across NSW. The questionnaire included the same four questions as asked in the face to face consultations and some additional questions related to creating child safe organisations.

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1   4.97% of the NSW population of children and young people aged 0-24 years are Aboriginal (ABS, 2016)

2   The number of culturally and linguistically diverse children and young people is an underestimate of the actual number consulted with. This is because the question asked for the school based consultations was "Do you speak a language other than English at home?" which does not take into account children and young people that identify as culturally and linguistically diverse but speak English at home.

detailed findings

Stage 1: Focus groups

What are the things that organisations need to do to create safe environments for all children and young people?

Children and young people's responses could be grouped into the following themes: enabling children and young people to have voice in the organisation; things that can be done to the physical environment of organisations to help children and young people feel safe; demonstrating a commitment to child safety; qualities that organisational staff should have and actions they can take; and training that organisational staff should be provided with to ensure that safe environments are created for children and young people.

Providing a voice to children and young people

There was wide agreement among children and young people that they feel safe in organisations that ask children and young people for their opinions. They reported that asking young people directly "what makes them feel safe" shows that the organisation values them and that their experiences and opinions are important:

"Ask us what issues we feel affect us to make us feel safe"

"Ask children and young people for their opinions"

"Getting rid of the stigma against being too young to have opinions"

Children and young people said that embedding opportunities for children and young people to be involved in ongoing decision-making processes of the organisation creates an environment where they feel more comfortable and confident to

speak up about a range of issues, including safety concerns. This also acknowledges that children and young people have a different and unique perspective to adults about what makes them feel safe:

"In decision making young people need to have their voices heard and actioned on"

"Make sure the youth's contribution is acknowledged and reflected in the outcome"

"The rules and regulations in place in organisations need to be developed both by the governing bodies, but also children do need to be involved in that process"

Anonymous surveys were the most frequently mentioned mechanism for young people's voices to be heard:

"They could have surveys online that you could fill out with the choice of being anonymous or not because maybe they have something they can fix that might make you feel more safe"

"Do a survey before and after involvement with the organisation on how comfortable they were to access the service"

Other mechanisms suggested for young people to have a voice in organisational decision-making included youth committees or reference groups; holding regular feedback meetings for service users; peer-support programs where children and young people could raise concerns with trained peers who would feedback to management and using young people as "mystery shoppers" to

assess children and young people's experiences within organisations:

> *"Train children to suss out and report on the organisation as a 'mystery shopper'"*

> *"Have student representatives to go to voice opinions and be supported in the process"*

> *"Feedback forms with ratings and written advice"*

> *"Set days when youth can speak to managers"*

Physical environment of organisations

Children and young people reported that organisations can create physical environments that assist them to feel safe. This included aspects related to their physical safety as well as creating a child and youth friendly atmosphere in the organisation.

Specific suggestions related to physical safety included having set rules and regulations in the organisation; keeping equipment, facilities and resources up to date; good lighting; high fences and locked gates; pedestrian crossings and bike paths outside the organisation; maps and signs so that young people can find their way around; staff to wear ID tags; lockdown procedures; regular safety drills; installing CCTV and security cameras and having safe houses for children and young people that are in danger.

Children and young people also discussed that they are more likely to feel safe in environments that make them feel welcome and are child and youth friendly. They reported that organisations should promote respect; equality; fairness; inclusiveness and democracy. Children and young people like happy environments that are welcoming of children and young people from all nationalities and backgrounds; and that prevent bullying, exclusion, racism and discrimination:

> *"Have culturally safe areas e.g. prayer area"*

> *"Make sure all kids of different nationalities and backgrounds are accepted"*

> *"Foster a positive atmosphere around children, have mutual respect"*

> *"Prevent bullying and exclusion"*

> *"Create a sense of belonging"*

> *"Fairness and equality for everyone"*

Child and youth friendly environments were also seen as those that offer a relaxed atmosphere with special spaces for children and young people, including spaces where they could talk privately with staff. Children and young people suggested that these spaces could also provide games, food and drinks.

Also frequently mentioned was the desire for organisations to be visually appealing to children and young people. Ideas included: colourful environments; games; beanbags and pillows and stuffed toys.

Some groups recommended involving children and young people in the design of spaces to ensure they feel safe and welcome.

Interestingly, some children and young people raised they were more likely to feel safe in organisations that have a website. This created a sense of legitimacy.

Show commitment to child safety

Children and young people raised a number of ways in which organisations could demonstrate that they are committed to keeping children in their care safe. They reported that organisations should have a clear statement, visible to everyone, that they are committed to protecting and keeping children and young people in their care safe. Linked to this, they want to be provided with information when they first come to an organisation about what they can expect from that organisation, what their rights are and what mechanisms exist if they wish to make a complaint.

"From the beginning, it should be made explicitly clear that the organisation will protect and keep the youth safe and explain how this is done"

"Organisations should teach young people their rights"

"Have accessible information in the organisation about safety and available supports"

"There needs to be clear and evident pathways for children to take recourse if they feel there is an imbalance of power between them and higher up in the organisation"

Children and young people also offered suggestions that were specific to creating a sense of safety in schools:

"Having two adults in a classroom"

"When public events or parent days at school happen there should be proper security"

"Do not show favouritism, acknowledge and listen to everyone"

"Have workshops to build teacher-student relationships"

"Teach children and young people how to deal with real life problems"

"Mental health checks on teachers"

Others also discussed safety aspects specifically relevant to sporting organisations:

"Have young referees supported by adults"

"Have people at gates to ensure people are there for the right reasons"

Qualities and actions of organisational staff

The quality of the relationship between children and young people and organisational staff was repeatedly mentioned as one of the most important factors affecting how safe children and young people feel.

First and foremost, children and young people agreed that friendly staff foster a sense of safety in organisations. Other qualities that children and young people reported as assisting them to feel safe included staff members that are trustworthy; encouraging; approachable; non-judgmental; supportive: listen to young people's opinions and take action. While Working with Children and police checks were seen as important safety

mechanisms, young people reported that the quality of workers was just as important:

> *"Physical features aren't as important as the people who work inside"*

> *"Honest and trustworthy staff"*

> *"They need to care, offer advice and be able to listen as well, they need to be there to support and encourage"*

Children and young people also discussed specific actions of staff members that enable them to feel safe. These included regularly checking in with children and young people to see how they are; having set rules in place that must be followed when children require help from a staff member; providing adult supervision of children and young people while they are in the organisation; preventing bullying; providing safe transport to and from the organisation; keeping good records and making sure that personal information is used correctly and kept confidential:

> *"You can check up on kids and see how they're going"*

> *"Check in on all children's wellbeing"*

> *"Constant supervision of kids"*

> *"Prevent bullying in the organisation"*

> *"Limit social media time to reduce cyberbullying"*

Training for organisational staff

It was widely agreed that organisations should provide training in a wide range of areas for staff that work with children and young people:

> *"Adults should have a license or do a test to work with children"*

> *"You need to be qualified to work with kids"*

Children and young people raised specific knowledge that organisational staff working with them should have. This included training in how to deal with emergencies; a detailed understanding of issues faced by children and young people; awareness of different religions and backgrounds; and knowledge about bullying and cyber safety, including knowing how to block inappropriate websites from children and young people:

> *"Teach staff how to respond in dangerous situations – first aid, trauma, violence"*

> *"Staff need an understanding of the issues young people experience like mental health, racism, bullying, exposure to drugs and peer pressure"*

> *"Understanding of young people's problems or issues"*

> *"Knowing about multiculturalism and how religious needs affect children"*

If you, or other children and young people, felt unsafe in an organisation what would make you feel comfortable to speak up and make a report or recommendation to the organisation?

Children and young people reported that the most important things that would help them to make a report or recommendation to an organisation were: approachable and trusted staff; having support people to speak to first and come with them to make the report; having a designated safe space in the organisation for children to make reports; a simple and anonymous method of reporting; and knowing that the report will be taken seriously and acted upon.

Approachable and trustworthy staff

Above all, children and young people discussed the need for organisations to employ staff members that are approachable and trustworthy. They want staff to treat them with respect, make them feel comfortable, respect their privacy and not judge them when they raise a concern with them:

"Treat children and young people with respect, make them feel accepted and comfortable to open up"

"Easy to talk to, friendly staff members"

"Easily accessible communication lines"

"We should be able to talk to someone that we trust and that is reliable"

"Someone that will respect our privacy so that our feelings don't get shoved into the world"

"We're afraid to tell someone how we feel because of that judgment, we feel like that will affect us in the future"

Children and young people discussed the importance of staff not being "intimidating or fierce". When making a report or

recommendation, children and young people had the following suggestions for adult staff they report to:

"Use "encouraging words""

"Kind, caring and gentle words"

"Don't force them to speak up"

"Give them some space"

"Not yelling and not getting annoyed"

"Be patient"

"Don't be rude"

Children and young people also discussed that different children and young people would look for different characteristics in staff when deciding that they were approachable and trustworthy. They therefore agreed that it was important for organisations to have staff that spanned a wide age group; different genders; cultures and backgrounds:

"It depends who you connect with – young people, old people"

"Multiple people in an organisation to report problems to"

"Having a variety of ages, genders and cultures on staff"

Some groups felt that having young people employed or placed in the organisation would assist them to feel more comfortable to raise their concerns:

"There should be a young person present in the organisation that youth can comfortably approach if they do have a problem that they don't feel comfortable talking about with an older person"

"Even if it's not a big thing, if it matters to you, should be able to say it"

"Children need to be aware of their rights so that if they are in a vulnerable situation they need to know the things they can do to avoid being in those situations"

"A younger presence there so that they are approachable to us"

Children and young people also raised the importance of organisations having designated staff to handle concerns and complaints. They stressed that young people should have strong relationships with this person or people so that they would feel comfortable to approach them if needed:

"Having someone whose job is purely to address concerns"

"You feel more comfortable talking to someone who you know rather than someone you haven't met yet, you can open up more to them"

Finally, children and young people raised that approachable and trusted staff were those that told them from the outset that it is okay for them to make reports and recommendations and created an open and honest culture:

"Organisations should make children aware that it is okay to speak up"

"Normalise reporting so that it's seen as okay"

"Campaigns that encourage people to speak up"

"Organisations need to making reporting acceptable so that children don't get bullied or feel like they can't go to anyone"

Support networks

It was widely agreed that having support networks was extremely important both for discussing the issue first and seeking advice and to be physically present with them when making the report or recommendation:

"Kids need a support network to talk to"

"Having continuous reassurance from trustworthy adults"

First, having a friend, family member or other trusted adult was raised as important to be able to talk to about the issue before making a report or recommendation to an organisation. Children and young people would first discuss the issue with their support person to make it easier to then approach the organisation. They also felt that support people would be encouraging and give them good advice:

"Youth feel that they are going to get judged or be wrong, so they can speak to someone they are comfortable with first so they can get experience and not be afraid"

"Talking to a trusted adult for advice or help with the situation"

"Talk to your parents or a family member so they can help you address the issue to the organisation so you don't feel scared anymore"

Some children and young people also discussed that it could be helpful to speak with other children and young people in the organisation before making a report to see if their concern has also been experienced by others. They reported wanting to be able to have these conversations without organisational staff listening to them:

"Having people who have been through what you are going through"

"Knowing that others feel it too"

"Talk to friends in the organisation first to see if they feel the same"

"Have the opportunity for kids to talk to other kids without a supervisor listening"

Children and young people also discussed the desire for support people, such as parents, other family members and friends, to be present if they were to make a report to an organisation, or to speak on behalf of them:

"I would like someone there to support me and help me get through it"

"Have people there you know so you are more comfortable to speak freely"

"Bringing a close friend, family member or trusted adult as support when making the report"

"Having a young representative with you or speaking for you"

"Having a protective presence with us, we would like someone to be there with us so we're not going through it alone…like a friend"

Children and young people also highlighted the importance of counsellors in their support networks when raising their concerns to an organisation. Many felt that organisations should provide children and young people with access to free counselling to assist them to feel comfortable to make a report or recommendation and to support them through the process:

"Having counselling that is free and accessible"

"Have options for counsellors both inside and outside of the organisation"

Have a designated safe space in the organisation to make reports

Children and young people frequently raised the need for organisations to have a space where they felt safe and comfortable to discuss their concerns and experiences. They wanted the space to feel private, informal and supportive:

"Young people are often deterred by formalities, hence need a comfortable space to report issues"

"Casual settings to make young people feel more comfortable"

"Informal, not scary"

"Have a safe place, a proper office, known to everyone, no need for any appointment, just to be able to go and speak to someone about anything going on"

Have a simple and anonymous method of reporting

Having the option to make a report or recommendation anonymously was raised by every focus group. Ideas included suggestion boxes; websites; online reporting and easily accessible helplines. If the child or young person was required to identify themselves, they emphasised the importance of maintaining their privacy and confidentiality:

"Being able to report any complaints or concerns anonymously"

"Immediate access to be able to report serious incidents privately"

"Respect confidentiality of children and include option of anonymous reporting"

"Making the report not face-to-face e.g. email"

"Having a website with a place to express issues you are having"

"Have a feedback box so you don't have to talk to anyone directly"

There were also some concerns expressed that children and young people could be harassed or bullied for making complaints when not allowed to remain anonymous:

"There should be a way to be anonymous when reporting if you are uncomfortable just because it takes away that feeling of being judged or having that problem being associated with you"

"We don't want the report to be held against us"

"If you aren't comfortable with everyone knowing about your report, we want to see that your report is kept confidential"

Linked to anonymous reporting was the desire of many children and young people for the reporting process to not be face to face or in person:

Children and young people also highlighted the importance of making reporting mechanisms simple and accessible. They discussed that children do not always know how to raise a concern or make a report. One idea was to have "how-to guides" and fact sheets with simple, jargon-free explanations. These could be advertised on social media. They also suggested making the reporting process online or via a helpline:

"We may not know how to report in an organisation. Make reporting accessible for our generation"

"Easy process and guidelines for how to make a report"

"Online reporting like websites …. really simple websites to remember"

"Report helplines"

"Have the reporting system within an organisation really accessible with fact sheets to guide you the right way about things"

"Make it clear to young people how they can voice their concerns"

Knowing that the report will be taken seriously and acted upon

Children and young people stressed that they would only feel comfortable to make a report or recommendation if they knew that the organisation would take them seriously and do something in response to their concerns:

"Listen to feedback and value/take action on the feedback"

"Knowing that your report will be heard, acknowledged and acted on"

"Be open and accepting to suggestions and recommendations"

"Take action over words"

They also want to know that staff will be held accountable if they do anything to make children and young people feel unsafe:

"Knowing that the organisation has consequences for certain actions"

Children and young people discussed that they would feel comfortable to make a report only if it was to someone in the organisation that had the authority to act on it:

"Having someone to talk to with authority, someone that we know can do something about it and it's not like we are wasting our time saying something, we know that person is capable of doing something"

Finally, some groups highlighted the importance of knowing that they will have some input into any changes made or action taken. They want to be asked what they would like to happen as a result of their report or recommendation:

"Knowing that you will be involved in the changes or improvements"

"Solving the issue with the people involved helps as they know what's going to benefit them"

"Involve young people in the improvements"

Other factors influencing children and young people's comfort to make a report or recommendation

Other factors less frequently mentioned as influencing whether or not children and young people would feel comfortable to make a report or recommendation to an organisation included:

- Making sure you can choose who reads the report and that you are not told what to say/write in the report

- Having a scale to show children how serious the problem is

- In a school environment, having teachers that are trained in basic counselling

- Having someone to report to that is separate from the organisation to eliminate bias.

How should the organisation provide feedback to you when you raise an issue or provide a recommendation to them?

Children and young people raised several points when discussing how they would like to receive feedback from organisations. These included the need for organisations to respond to young people's reports quickly; the need for organisations to take action in response to young people's concerns and also to provide open and honest feedback in a private and supportive setting.

Provide a quick response

Children and young people agreed that they want organisations to respond to them in a timely and efficient manner when they make a report or recommendation about their safety:

"Feedback should be provided as soon as possible or within a short period, such as two weeks"

"Act immediately and provide an immediate solution"

"We want to see a quick response"

"Immediate acknowledgement that the report has been received and provide a quick and efficient response to the report"

If it is likely to take some time for the matter to be investigated and reviewed, children and young people spoke about the importance of being kept up to date with the process through receiving regular progress updates:

"Provide regular updates about the process and progress made"

"Have regular meetings/check ins to let you know exactly what is happening"

"Give an estimated time of response"

"Ongoing feedback so that the person is aware it's still being dealt with and not just been forgotten"

Take action in response to reports and recommendations

Children and young people across all focus groups stressed the importance of the organisation actually acting on the reports or recommendations they make. They want organisations to make it clear to them what actions are being taken as a result of their concerns raised and to offer strategies and provide solutions. This could be in relation to informing an individual about the outcome resulting from a complaint; or it could be providing feedback to children and young people within the organisation about systemic changes that have come about from their input:

"Show you what they have changed to make the environment safer"

"Take action, make change, offer suggestions, solve the issue with the persons involved"

"You want to see a change"

"Seeing that actions accompany their words"

"Offer strategies to deal with the issue"

"Remove you from the dangerous or uncomfortable situation as quickly as possible"

Provide open and honest feedback in a private and supportive setting

Children and young people frequently discussed the importance of organisations providing them with open and honest feedback in response to their concerns. They want to be told exactly what was done in relation to their concern, regardless of the final outcome:

"Honesty is the best policy – provide proper feedback, no lies"

"Have a transparent process, clear communication, not kept in the dark"

Children and young people varied somewhat with regards to the format in which they would like to receive feedback from organisations. On the one hand, some reported they would like to receive feedback in a face to face setting:

"To be approached in person to make sure they have taken time to think of a response"

"In person is more effective than a phone call"

"A staff member arranges a face to face meeting"

"Be formally/personally addressed about the situation because it is more effective than a phone call"

Other children and young people said they would find a face to face meeting too confronting and intimidating and would prefer to receive feedback in a written format or over the phone:

"In an email so we have a copy of what they said"

"In a letter sent in the mail"

"Not having a face to face conversation because it's scary"

Regardless of the method of feedback, children and young people were in agreement that feedback should be provided privately and confidentially:

"Speak one on one privately"

"An email directed to you that doesn't involve anyone else"

"Would like to be notified discreetly, like a student email to organise a confidential meeting"

"School or home visit that is private"

"Private phone call"

"Private interviews"

"Have a one to one conversation with no intimidation"

However, when the concern raised affected many children and young people, it was agreed that the method of feedback should be wide-reaching, such as providing information to all children and young people in the organisation on social media, the organisation's website, in a newsletter, in a large group meeting or by creating a video:

"spread awareness of the issue"

"people what changes have been made and what impacts young people have had"

Linked to this, some children and young people discussed the importance of letting young people have a say in providing solutions to issues raised:

"Organisations should gather views from other people involved in the issue"

"Maybe talking to the majority to get other opinions"

"Dealing with it with a supportive person that understands"

"Meet with other young people in the organisation to discuss the issue at hand so that everyone has a say in how the issue should be resolved"

"Be kind and understanding when providing feedback"

Children and young people frequently mentioned wanting to receive feedback in a supportive environment. For some, this meant being able to bring a support person with them to the feedback meeting. For others, they simply wanted organisational staff to be caring and empathetic when they provide feedback to them about concerns they have raised:

"Provide feedback while the young person is with a trusted adult"

"Confidentially, like in a calm and kind way"

"In a caring and reasonable way"

Finally, some children and young people gave suggestions specific to schools when providing feedback to young people in response to concerns they have raised about their safety. Again these related to maintaining their privacy and confidentiality and actually acting on students' concerns:

"Do not drag students out of class (to provide feedback)"

"Do not involve their parents without asking them first, unless it's a life or death situation"

"Take action (e.g. expulsion if the issue concerns another student)."

Consultations with children and young people on creating child safe organisations

What rights do you know that children and young people have and how would you like to be informed of your rights?

The level of knowledge about their rights varied across schools. A limited number had begun to learn about the Human Rights Declaration and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in classes.

All focus groups reported that children and young people have the following rights:

- Education
- Safety
- Food, water and shelter
- Have a say/voice/share their opinions/ freedom of speech

> "I know I have the right to feel safe wherever I go"

> "I have the right to speak up when I feel uncomfortable about something"

> "By law we have a right to freedom of speech but that doesn't really get followed through"

Other rights raised by most groups were:

- No discrimination / equality
- Health care

Rights that were raised by just a few of the focus groups were:

- Respect
- Play, have fun and enjoy childhood
- Culture, beliefs, traditions and language
- Family / parents
- Privacy
- Life / survival
- Being able to choose which parent to live with

When asked how they would like to be told about their rights, the majority of groups agreed that school was the ideal place to learn about them. Ideas included:

- Embedding child rights education into the curriculum (e.g. PE/HSIE lessons, pastoral care) and revisiting them frequently; not just a one-off lesson in a given year

- Teaching child rights with other life skills education, such as paying taxes and insurance

- Having special assemblies with a guest speaker/incursions and engaging workshops/Ted Talks

- Placing flyers and posters about child rights around the school

Some children and young people thought that they should learn about child rights in their lessons but not be assessed on it. Others reported that there should be assessments so that students actually take the time to learn their rights. One group suggested introducing ATAR adjustments so that students get bonus points for knowing their rights.

Some focus groups also raised that children and young people should be taught about their rights at school from a young age and that it should be reinforced throughout their school lives:

> "From a young age, should be reinforced through life e.g. taught like the alphabet"

Many children and young people suggested a website and an App that lists all their rights; one group named it "myrights.com". Also frequently mentioned was to inform children and young people of their rights through advertising, social media, billboards, pamphlets and to display their rights in places that children and young people occupy (e.g. sports clubs, playgrounds). Some groups also suggested that children and young people could learn about their rights through their parents and family discussion.

Most focus groups reported that they would like to receive a written copy of their rights. Some creative ideas suggested by children and young people were:

- Producing a fun video that explains child rights

- Asking a singer to write a song about child rights

- Listing children's rights on birth certificates and other official documents.
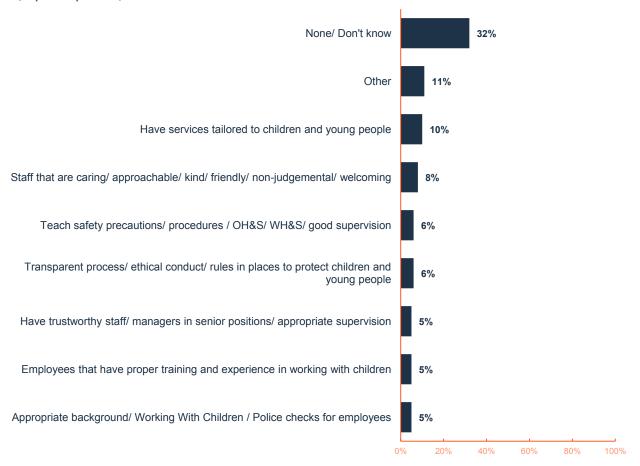
detailed findings

Stage 2: Polling

What children and young people think are the key elements to make an organisation safer for them

Children and young people listed several elements that make an organisation safer for them. Those most commonly mentioned include: to have services tailored to children and young people/dedicated areas of websites/information easily accessible/clear communication (10%), staff that are caring/approachable/kind/ friendly/non-judgmental/welcoming (8%) and transparent processes/ethical conduct/rules in place to protect children and young people from discrimination/bullying (6%).

Other elements children and young people think make an organisation safer for them include: teaching safety precautions/procedures/OH&S/ good supervision/reducing hazards/ fire safety checks and good emergency procedures (6%), appropriate background/working with children police checks for employees (5%) and having trustworthy staff/managers in senior positions/ appropriate supervision (5%).

What do you think are the key elements to make an organisation safer for children and young people? (Top 9 responses)

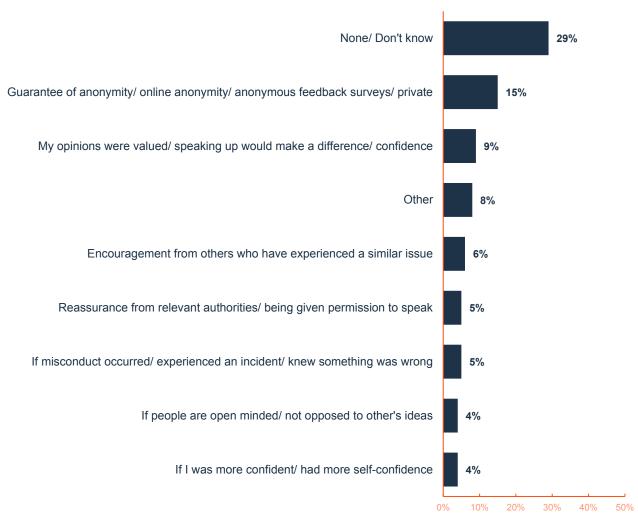| Response	Percentage
None/ Don't know	32%
Other	11%
Have services tailored to children and young people	10%
Staff that are caring/ approachable/ kind/ friendly/ non-judgemental/ welcoming	8%
Teach safety precautions/ procedures / OH&S/ WH&S/ good supervision	6%
Transparent process/ ethical conduct/ rules in places to protect children and young people	6%
Have trustworthy staff/ managers in senior positions/ appropriate supervision	5%
Employees that have proper training and experience in working with children	5%
Appropriate background/ Working With Children / Police checks for employees	5%

Base: total n=1,007

What would make children and young people comfortable to speak up and share their opinions and/or report misconduct?

Consistent with the stage one face to face focus groups, children and young people think the key things that would make them comfortable to speak up and share their opinions and/or report misconduct are a guarantee of anonymity/ online anonymity/anonymous feedback surveys (15%), if they thought their opinions were valued and that speaking up would make a difference

(9%), encouragement from others who have experienced a similar issue/acknowledgement of difficulty of speaking up (6%), if misconduct had occurred/they experienced an incident/ know something wrong was happening (5%) and reassurance from relevant authorities/ being given permission to speak up/assurances of no retaliation/consequences of speaking up (5%).

What would make you comfortable to speak up and share your opinion and/or report misconduct? (Top 9 responses)

Response	%
None/ Don't know	29%
Guarantee of anonymity/ online anonymity/ anonymous feedback surveys/ private	15%
My opinions were valued/ speaking up would make a difference/ confidence	9%
Other	8%
Encouragement from others who have experienced a similar issue	6%
Reassurance from relevant authorities/ being given permission to speak	5%
If misconduct occurred/ experienced an incident/ knew something was wrong	5%
If people are open minded/ not opposed to other's ideas	4%
If I was more confident/ had more self-confidence	4%

Base: total n=1,007

Consultations with children and young people on creating child safe organisations

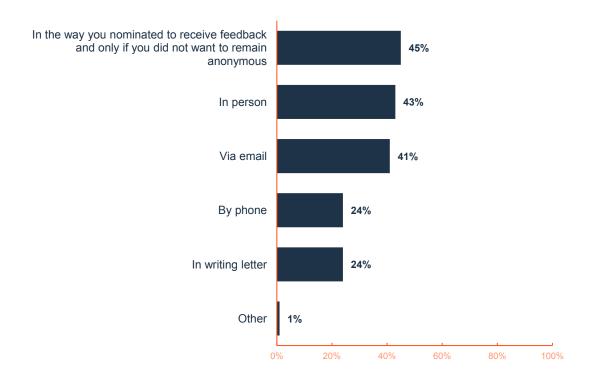# Preferred methods of feedback from organisations

Children and young people living in NSW would most prefer to receive feedback in the way in which they selected to receive feedback (45%). The other most preferred channels are in person (43%) and via email (41%), followed by a written letter (24%) and by phone (24%).

Female children and young people (50%) are more likely than their male counterparts (41%) to prefer to receive feedback in the way in which they nominated to receive feedback and only if they did not choose to remain anonymous, as are young people aged 19-24 years (50%) compared with those aged 12-18 years (41%).

Children and young people living in Sydney (46%) are more likely than those living in rural or regional NSW (32%) to prefer to receive feedback via email.

Those that speak a language other than English at home are more likely than those that only speak English at home to prefer to receive feedback via email (56% compared with 38%), in person (53% compared with 41%) and via written letter (31% compared with 23%).

How should the organisation provide feedback when you raise an issue or provide a recommendation?

Method	Percentage
In the way you nominated to receive feedback and only if you did not want to remain anonymous	45%
In person	43%
Via email	41%
By phone	24%
In writing letter	24%
Other	1%

Knowledge of the rights of children and young people

More than one quarter of children and young people report not knowing their rights. Children and young people are most likely to say they know they have the right to be safe/free from harm/to be protected (21%), the right to education (11%) and the right to freedom of speech (10%).

Females are more likely than males to say they know they have the right to be safe/free from harm/to be protected (24% compared with 18%), the right to healthy food and clean water (8% compared with 4%), the right to shelter (7% compared with 3%).
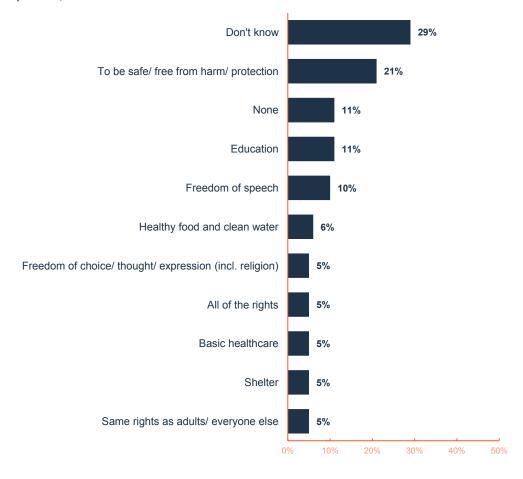
Children and young people 12-18 years (24%) are more likely than those 19-24 years (18%) to say

they know they have the right to be safe/free from harm/have protection.

Children and young people who speak a language other than English at home are more likely than those who speak only English at home to say they know they have the right to education (22% compared with 9%), to healthy food and clean water (10% compared with 5%) and basic healthcare (8% compared with 4%).

Children and young people who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (32%) are more likely than those who do not (20%) to say they know they have the right to be safe/free from harm/have protection.

What rights do you know about that children and young people have?
(Top 11 responses)

Response	%
Don't know	29%
To be safe/ free from harm/ protection	21%
None	11%
Education	11%
Freedom of speech	10%
Healthy food and clean water	6%
Freedom of choice/ thought/ expression (incl. religion)	5%
All of the rights	5%
Basic healthcare	5%
Shelter	5%
Same rights as adults/ everyone else	5%

Base: total n=1,081

How children and young people would prefer to be informed of their rights

Children and young people living in NSW would most prefer to be informed of their rights at school/ TAFE/University (69%) and through their parents/guardians (59%), followed by advertising campaigns on social medial/other online channels (46%) and their GP/information at their doctor's surgery (28%).

Female children and young people are more likely than their male counterparts to prefer to be informed through advertising campaigns on social media/other online channels (50% compared with 42%) and through their GP/information at their doctor's surgery (33% compared with 23%).
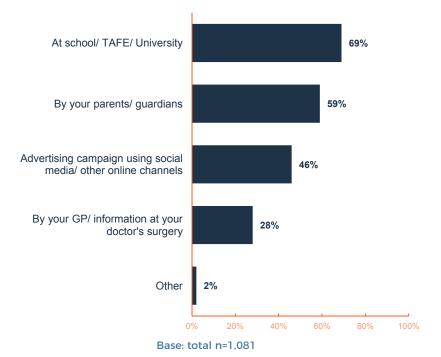
Children aged 12-18 years (63%) are more likely than those 19-24 years (54%) to prefer to be informed of their rights through their parents/ guardians. However, young people aged 19-24 years are more likely than children aged 12-18 years to prefer to be informed through advertising campaigns on social media/other online channels (51% compared with 41%) and their GP/information at their doctor's surgery (33% compared with 23%).

Those living in Sydney (73%) are more likely than those living in rural or regional NSW (63%) to prefer to be informed of their rights at school/ TAFE/University, while those living in rural or regional NSW (65%) are more likely than those living in Sydney (56%) to prefer being informed by their parents/guardians.

Children and young people who speak a language in addition to English at home are more likely than those that only speak English at home to prefer to be informed of their rights at school/ TAFE/University (79% compared with 67%) and advertising campaigns on social media/other online channels (55% compared with 44%).

Children and young people who have a disability (39%) are more likely than those who do not (27%) to prefer to be informed of their rights through their GP/information at their doctor's surgery.

How would you like to be informed about your rights?
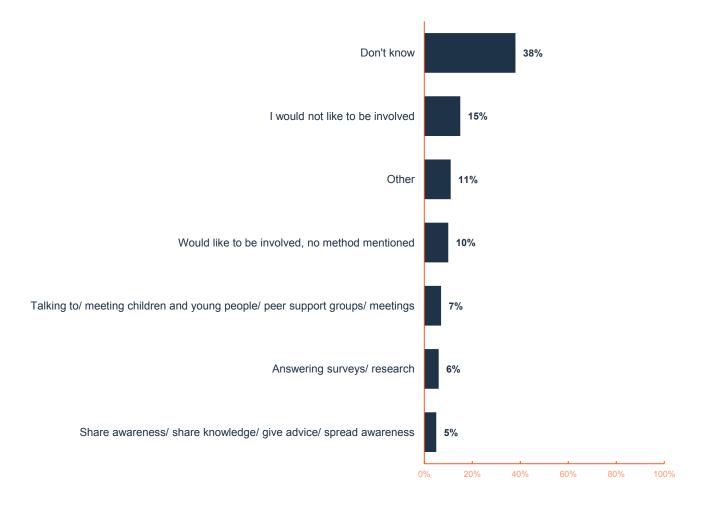

Base: total n=1,081

How children and young people would like to be involved in monitoring and making organisations safe for them?

While more than one third of young people don't know how they would like to be involved in monitoring and making organisations safe for them, the three most commonly mentioned ways they would like to be involved are talking to/meeting children and young people/peer support groups/meetings (7%), answering surveys/research (6%) and share awareness/knowledge/give advice (5%).

How would you like to be involved in monitoring and making organisations safe for children and young people?
(Top 7 responses)

Response	%
Don't know	38%
I would not like to be involved	15%
Other	11%
Would like to be involved, no method mentioned	10%
Talking to/ meeting children and young people/ peer support groups/ meetings	7%
Answering surveys/ research	6%
Share awareness/ share knowledge/ give advice/ spread awareness	5%

Base: total n=1,007

Where children and young people would go for information about their rights

Children and young people are most likely to do a Google search (71%) or to go to their parents or carers (57%) for information about their rights.
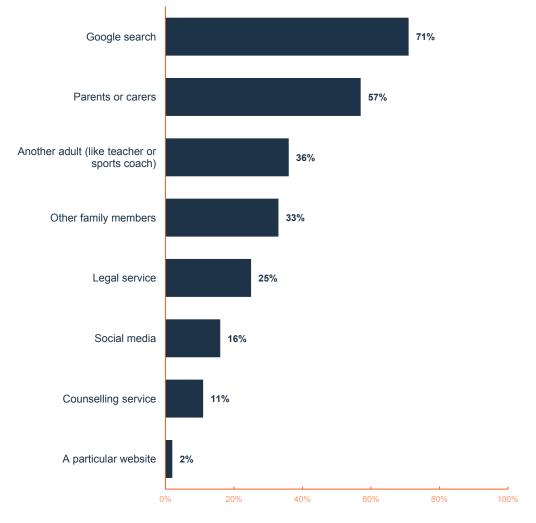
Females are more likely than males to go to parents or carers (64% compared with 50%) and other family members (36% compared with 30%) while males are more likely to go to a counselling service (14% compared with 9%) for information about their rights.

Young people aged 12-18 years are more likely than those 19-24 years to go to their parents or carers (63% compared with 50%), other family members (38% compared with 26%) and another adult (like a teacher or sports coach) (42% compared with 29%) for information about their rights while young people aged 19-24 years are more likely to do a Google search (76% compared with 66%).

Young people who speak a language other than English at home are more likely than those who speak English at home to do a Google search (76% compared with 69%), go to another adult (like a teacher or sports coach) (43% compared with 33%), go to other family members (39% compared with 31%) or to go to social media (22% compared with 14%) for information about their rights.

Where would you go for information about these rights?

Base: total n=1,000