



# Children and Young People's Rights and Participation

**Child Safe Standard 2**



## Introduction

Children and young people thrive when they are empowered through meaningful opportunities to participate in decisions that affect them, have inclusive and supportive peer relationships, and have adults who take their views seriously and uphold their rights.

## Risks when voices are silenced

Risk of harm increases when children and young people are not listened to or believed. Harm can occur and continue in environments where secrets are encouraged, views are silenced, or the opinions of adults are given preference over the views of children and young people.

Risk is also increased for children and young people with additional vulnerabilities due to their age, stage of development, physical, cognitive and emotional capabilities, processing skills, language capacity, and level of dependence on adults.

## Practical actions to promote participation

Participation and empowerment are not just asking children and young people what they think.

To help empower children and young people and encourage their participation, it is important to:

- Ensure information is provided in ways that are easily understood by children and young people
- Communicate in age-appropriate ways
- Show children and young people that you will be a safe and trusted adult.



**Talk about the ways that that safe adults challenge their assumptions about who causes harm to children and young people, remain alert to signs that children and young people are at risk, and create opportunities to encourage help seeking.**



There is no single set of prescriptive actions that mean you are being child safe. Every organisation is different, and staff and volunteers have varied roles and responsibilities. It is therefore important for you to consider actions you can take within your organisation that contribute to empowering children and young people to participate fully.



## What staff and volunteers can do

- Use simple, clear language, graphics or audio bites that children and young people can understand. This can be done for any document (for example, policies, complaints processes, and information on child rights).
- Make printed information visually appealing and in a variety of different formats.
- Ask children and young people to tell you what they think about how information is provided to them, and how this can be improved.
- Use picture or symbols to help those with limited communication skills to understand what you are communicating.



**Click here to learn more about understanding children and young people's rights.**

## The role of peers and social connections

Peer relationships are important for helping children and young people thrive. They will often trust their peers with their concerns before they turn to an adult, so it is important that your organisation encourages and supports inclusion and healthy social connections.

However, children and young people can also be at risk from the actions of their peers or older/younger children through bullying, discrimination, racism and abuse. Peer abuse can become all-encompassing when it occurs in settings where children and young people spend much of their time (such as school) and then continues outside those settings via digital media.



## **What staff and volunteers can do**

- Have buddy systems for children and young people who may need extra support to join in
- Have clear verbal and visual messages that promote respect, teamwork, and caring for one another
- Know your organisation's simple messages about bullying and exclusion and the clear actions you can take when you see this happening
- Know your own biases and assumptions about the nature of harm
- Get to know the children and young people in your service and notice if there are changes in their emotions, behaviour, or appearance
- Raise issues with your supervisor if you are not sure how you should respond to a situation

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