

Beyond Compliance: Embedding Safety Culture



Trigger warning



Please be aware the following content contains reference to accounts of child sexual abuse which may be distressing for some people.

For support, please contact

Emergency 000

Blueknot Foundation 1300 657 380

Lifeline 13 11 14

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

13YARN

What are we talking about



- “Institutional safety” – safe from abuse/sexual abuse, violence, neglect, exploitation
- Any organisation working with children or other vulnerable people – NFPs, health, sports and recreation, child care, schools, extracurricular activities, churches, youth groups, businesses

Purpose of webinar

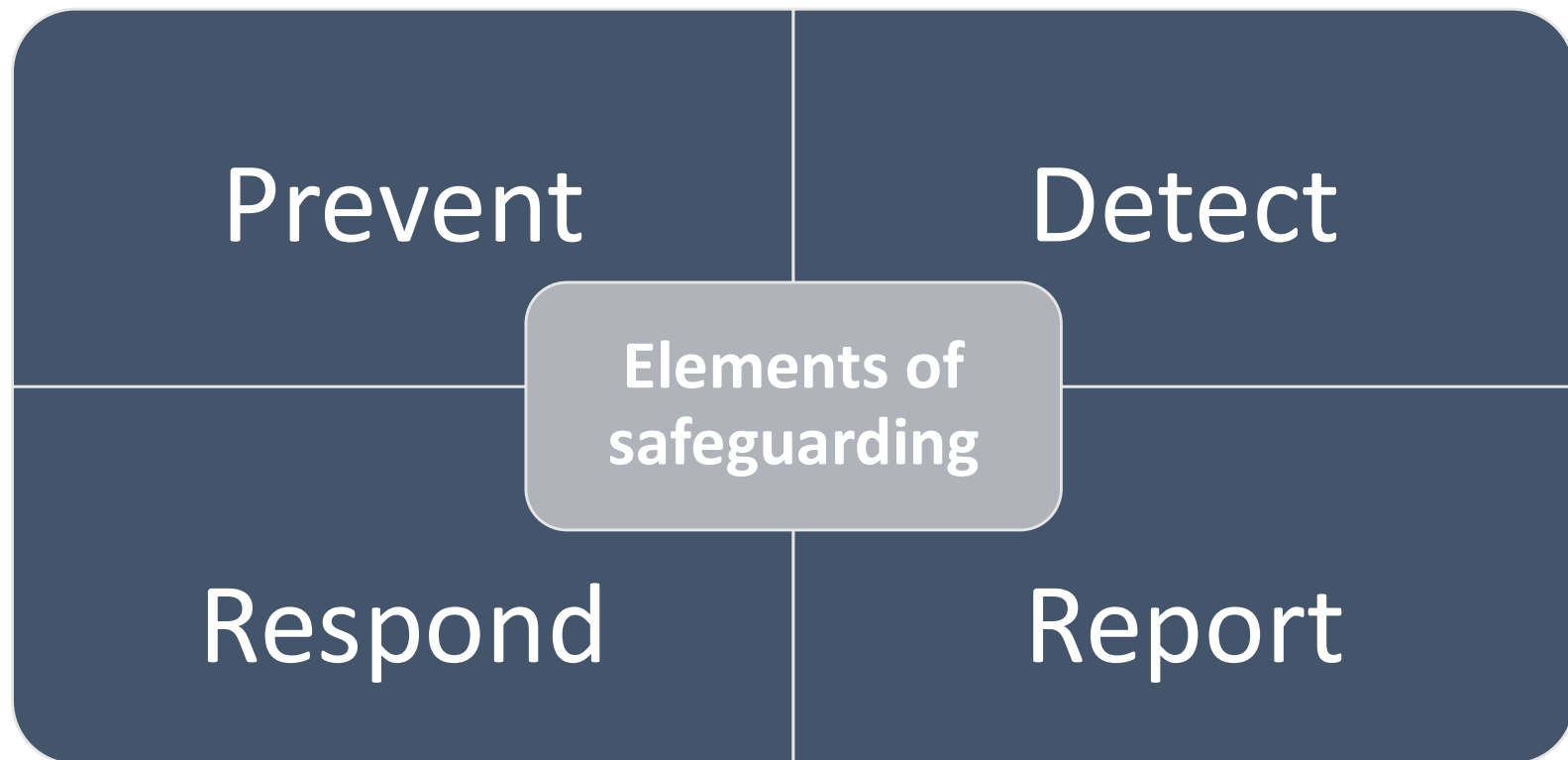


- To provide an overview of safeguarding culture
- To get you thinking about a “beyond compliance” culture
- To give you tools to think about where your organisation is on its safeguarding journey
- To help you to think about what else is needed to make your organisation as safe as it can be
- What this session is not...

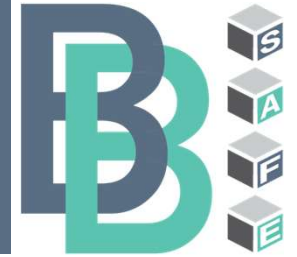


But first – a story...

The elements of safeguarding... more than reporting



The requirements of safeguarding



Child
protection
legislation

Working with
children
legislation

Criminal law

Civil law

Health/mental
health
standards

NDIS Safety
and Quality
Standards

- Child Protection Risk Management Strategies/Client Protection Policies
- Code of Conduct
- Reporting policies and procedures
- Also – HR, complaints, incidents

National Child Safe Principles

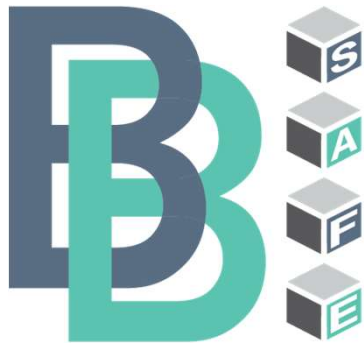
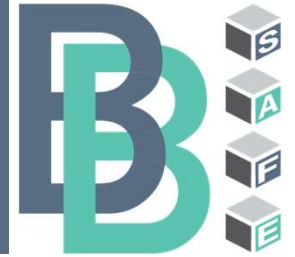


A different approach...



- Culture led safety framework developed to address context specific risk factors
 - Aimed at building capability, understanding, commitment and safe practice
- Beyond compliance
 - Address culture, then compliance takes care of itself
- Back to basics
 - Simple structure
 - Words that everyone can understand
 - Remove the tangle of policies and procedures

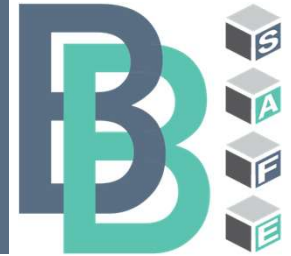
The four Building Blocks



**Building Blocks
of Safeguarding
Culture**



BBSafe – Building Blocks framework for safeguarding



BB1: LEADERSHIP



We are committed to keeping our clients safe and here is how we will show it:

- We commit to and demonstrate that the safety of our clients is our priority
- Our board, managers, staff and volunteers regularly talk about the safety of our clients and what it means for us and the clients we work with
- You will see evidence of our commitment in our service sites, on our website, in our policies and procedures
- We focus on creating psychological safety
- We celebrate and respect our participants, their cultures and their individual identities

BB2: PEOPLE



Our people are great at working safely with our clients and here is how we make sure of that:

- The people joining our organisation know that the safety of our clients is our priority
- When we recruit people (staff and volunteers) we ask them why they want to work with us and our clients and check their full employment history. Everyone working with clients will have valid screening and background checks
- People who work with us sign up to a Code of Conduct so everyone knows what's in and what's out and where our professional boundaries sit
- People who work with us will get training, support and supervision to be great at their jobs and work with our clients in a safe way
- Our team know the signs of grooming, abuse, neglect and exploitation and will speak up and act on concerns

BB3: ENVIRONMENTS



Our environments are safe and welcoming for our clients and here is how we go about that:

- We know what the safety risks are in the environments we work in and for the clients we work with and we will eliminate these risks as much as possible
- We make our physical spaces safe
- We make our online spaces safe
- We make our spaces warm and welcoming for our clients and their supporters

BB4: RESPONSE



If something does go wrong, we all know what to do about it because:

- We listen to our staff, clients and their supporters if they tell us something is concerning them or something is wrong
- We have a clear process for people to come forward to talk about any concerns
- We will meet our reporting obligations and work with authorities to protect anyone being harmed or at risk of harm
- We want to learn from reports, concerns and incidents to keep getting better at safety
- We will respond compassionately to anyone who has experienced harm in our services

Questions for you and your teams



How is our safety culture now?

Where do we want to be?

How are we going to get there?

Would my most junior staff member know the signs to look for and am I confident that they would feel safe and supported to come forward?



- i. Understanding the signs of grooming and abuse
- ii. Understanding context specific risk
- iii. Responding well

Understanding grooming and abuse



What is grooming?

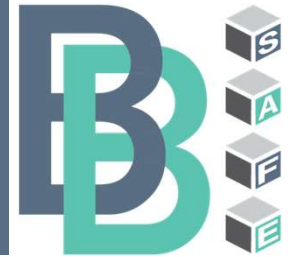
- Actions by a person to create opportunities to sexually offend against children or vulnerable adults
- Can include grooming the child/person, protective adults around the child/person, entire communities
- Establish trust to enable opportunities to be alone with child/client
- Behaviour which starts as friendly and escalates to sexualised then abuse
- No victim profile – but lonely or vulnerable children and adults can be targeted

What does grooming look like?



- It is hard to recognise – eg a great volunteer looks very similar to a grooming volunteer
- Developing trusting relationships with a person and those around the person
- Creating opportunities to be alone with a person
- Can be multiple children in a family being abused

Specific grooming behaviours



Relationships of trust

- Establishing relationships of trust within the organisational context
- Spending time with the person's family and friends outside of the organisational context
- Giving treats, gifts and special privileges
- Spending time with a person away from protective adults
- Sharing secrets and allowing or encouraging rule breaking (even 'minor' rule breaking) – intimacy, leverage for secret keeping
- Giving time and attention to individuals, including on social media

Specific grooming behaviours



Escalation:

- Interrupting a person bathing or changing
- Talking about relationships and sex with a child/person, exposure to sexual jokes and material
- Touching such as hugging or tickling, escalating to sexual touching
- Threats/rewards to the person to prevent disclosure

Signs of grooming and abuse



Perpetrator behaviour

- Overly friendly or familiar behaviour – offering lifts, babysitting, tutoring
- Frequent non-sexual touching of children or a particular child/person
- Inappropriate/out of context contact (including online)

Victim behaviour

- fearful
- doesn't want to spend time with a particular person
- drop in organisation or other performance
- sexualised or aggressive behaviour
- self-harm, bed-wetting, sleeping problems

What can we do about it?



- Have clear expectations of behaviour (Code of Conduct) and call out behaviour which is inconsistent with expectations/outside professional boundaries
- Cultivate a culture of safety – it is everyone’s responsibility, let’s talk about safety, let’s look after our children and vulnerable adults – psychological safety to support reporting of and action on low level concerns
- Always act on a gut feeling, sense that something isn’t right

What can we do about it?



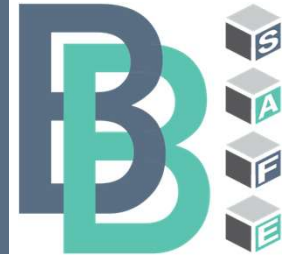
- Grooming may not look like “criminal” behaviour – act on any “red flags”
- You do not need to make a judgement about what you are seeing
- You do not need ‘proof’ of abuse
- Clear reporting processes – single point of reporting to establish patterns of behaviour
- Make clear to children, clients and families that we take this stuff seriously

Reflection questions



- Am I confident that my organisation is doing all it can to recognise grooming?
 - Am I confident that the team would know what to do about it?
- How should we be discussing this in our teams?

Context specific abuse risks



BB3: ENVIRONMENTS



Our school environments are safe and welcoming for children and young people and here is how we go about that:

- we know what the safety risks are in the environments we work in and for the children and young people we work with and we will eliminate and manage risk as much as possible
- we make all our physical spaces safe for children and young people
- we make our online spaces safe for children and young people
- we make our spaces warm and welcoming for children and young people and families from all different backgrounds

1. Where are there relationships of trust?
2. What are the vulnerabilities of the client?
3. What are your physical environment risks?
4. What are your online environment risks?

Why is it important?



- Understanding what is 'reasonable'
- Understanding key risks and mitigation
 - Organisation, service, site specific risks
 - Tailored mitigation strategies
 - Systematic and methodical risk assessment
 - Understand and prioritise risks and mitigation
 - Link into existing risk management processes
- Significant controls for an organisation – understanding and implementation of environmental risk can make it less likely that abuse can occur

Situational risk



- Instead of focusing on type of offender – situational theory focuses on the situation – environments/conditions/practices/norms
- The conditions, situations, norms, environments can impact make offending more likely
- Behaviours and opportunities
- Therefore there is a lot that can be controlled
- Helps to make an assessment of what is reasonable
- Consider ‘broken windows theory’

Situational risk/prevention



How can we make it harder for people to get access and have opportunities to abuse?

How can we make it more likely that they will get caught or be reported, preferably before it escalates?

How will we show that we take it seriously and people can't get away with boundary violations or unacceptable behaviour?

Situational risk/prevention



Increase difficulty – harder to get access

Increase risk – risk of detection; risk that clients and staff will speak up – deterrent

Increase impact – holding people to account for lower levels of concerning behaviour; reporting to authorities

Relationships of trust



Is a relationship of trust required to deliver the activity?

Is the activity required to be delivered 1:1?

Is the activity providing personal or physical care?

Is the person in a position of dependency on a staff member?

What relationships do children have with each other?

Are there relationships with mentors, coaches, teachers, spiritual leaders, etc?

Are there close community relationships?

Vulnerabilities



Is the person a child?

Does the person have disabilities?

Is the person from a CALD background?

Is the person a First Nations person?

Are there pre-existing relationships between staff and the person?

Does the person have physical or mental health needs?

Is there a power imbalance?

Is there an “institutional” type setting?

Is the person experiencing social isolation, marginalisation, or difficult and complex life circumstances?

Is the person at risk in relation to the gender identity or sexuality?

Physical environments



Is the activity required to be provided away from other people?

Is there good natural surveillance where the activity is provided?

What is the toilet/change room access like?

What arrangements are in place for transport to external activities?

Are there strangers in and around the activity?

Are there other adults in and around the activity?

Are parents/carers kept out of the space?

Are there other children in and around the activity?

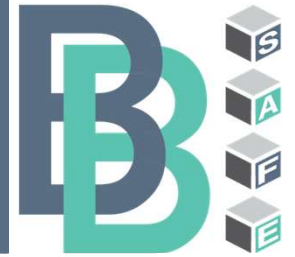
Are the spaces warm and welcoming and recognising diversity?

Online environments



- Is 1:1 online communication required as part of the activity context?
- Is 1:1 online communication required with a child?
- Are photographs taken of children/clients?
- What restrictions are there on staff/volunteer connections to clients on social media?
- Who has access to information about clients?

iii. BB4 Response



BB4: RESPONSE

If something does go wrong, we all know what to do about it because:

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The three components of response



Reporting



Investigations



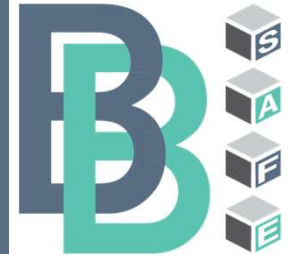
Response and
reflection

Reporting – making and receiving reports



- Encourage and welcome complaints and feedback
- Having clear, transparent, accessible, widely known complaints processes with multiple channels and 'no wrong door'
- Dealing with disclosures, suspicions and reports
- Escalation – CEO/Board
- Follow processes
- Roles and responsibilities
- Therapeutic interventions required
- External reporting
- Psychological safety for staff, volunteers, children and families

Psychological safety in organisations



the fearless organization

Creating **Psychological Safety** in the
Workplace for Learning,
Innovation, and Growth

Amy C. Edmondson
HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL

WILEY

Culture of fear v culture of
openness and continuous
improvement

“Silences leads to harm that
could have been prevented”

What gets in the way of robust reporting?



Difficult and sensitive issues

Communication barriers

Community relationships and pressures

Often behaviours seem ambiguous...

Lack of recognition of concerning behaviours

Lack of understanding about who to report to and in what circumstances

Lack of confidence and psychological safety

Hierarchies/closed cultures

Power imbalances

Perception that nothing will be done

Perception that allegations are frequently made up

Culture which focuses on reputation or blame and retribution – zero tolerance

Threats of harm

Requiring people to put things into writing/put their name to it

Unspoken and unwritten rules

Messages



If you have concerns that a child or participant is being harmed or at risk of harm

DO SOMETHING!

If you have concerns that someone is breaching a code of conduct or professional boundaries, are grooming, abusing or sexually abusing a child

DO SOMETHING!

External reporting thresholds may not always be met, so it is important to ensure that internal processes are robust and support and encourage reporting of low level concerns by staff, clients and families

Creating safe spaces to report



A culture which:

- Prioritises the safety of children/participants over the interests of anyone else or the organisation
- Demonstrates commitment to openness and transparency
- Demonstrates commitment to continuous improvement and learning – welcomes all feedback as an opportunity to do better for clients
- Is active and vocal about safeguarding
- Talks about psychological safety
- Supports staff to feel like they are backed up by management
- Makes reporting processes known and accessible
- Always follows up if concerns are raised

Dealing with reports



- Supportive, compassionate, responsive
- Prioritise safety
- Consider others at risk
- Privacy/confidentiality
- Preservation of forensic information
- Child/participant focused
- Clear roles/responsibilities
- Consider immediate responses including HR
- Ensuring regulator reporting undertaken and cooperate with authorities
- Notification to insurers
- Clear protocols for escalation to CEO and board
- Communications within and outside of organisation

Investigations



- Thorough, appropriate, child/participant focused, trauma informed
- “Independent” and appropriate investigation at the appropriate time
- Principles of natural justice
- Training of investigator – cultural, communication, child
- Investigation = findings of fact
- Separate to decision maker
- Decision maker must critically assess investigation findings and take other relevant advice eg HR
- There could be conflict between priorities
- Close out reportable conduct requirements

Respond and reflect



Action any findings/decision from investigation

Ensure appropriate information about outcomes made to all parties

Redress/apology offered

Root cause analysis undertaken, learnings disseminated, changes made

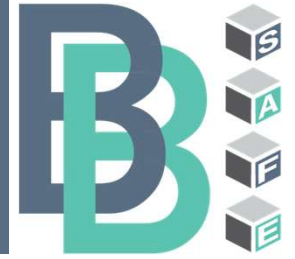
Manage vicarious trauma

Reflection question



- What is our culture around raising concerns – what messages are we sending?
 - Are we creating safe spaces for reporting?
- How are we supporting each other to feel confident in raising concerns?
- Are we capturing low level concerns in a systematic way?

If you or someone you know
needs support...



Blueknot Foundation 1300 657 380

Lifeline 13 11 14

Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800

13YARN

Contact details



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