

Governing for safety: what boards should be asking about institutional safeguarding

CheckUP
September 2024

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

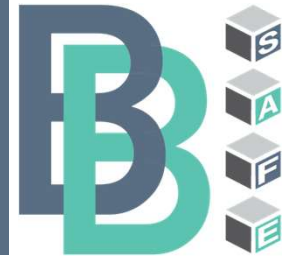
13YARN

Purpose of webinar



- To provide an overview of safeguarding culture aimed at board directors
- To help you understand the board's role in safeguarding
- 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
- To do some deep dives on some of the complexities and unpack the role of the board
- What this session is not...

Structure of session



- 1. What is safeguarding?**
- 2. Board member responsibilities for safeguarding**
- 3. Beyond compliance – doing safeguarding well**
- 4. What should safeguarding look like at the Board table?**
- 5. Awareness of grooming – what is it and would it be recognised?**
- 6. Understanding context specific risk in our organisation – what is “reasonable” for this organisation?**



What keeps you awake at
night?
(or should...?)



But (I'm pretty sure) we are compliant -

Isn't that enough...?



1. What is safeguarding?

Defining safeguarding



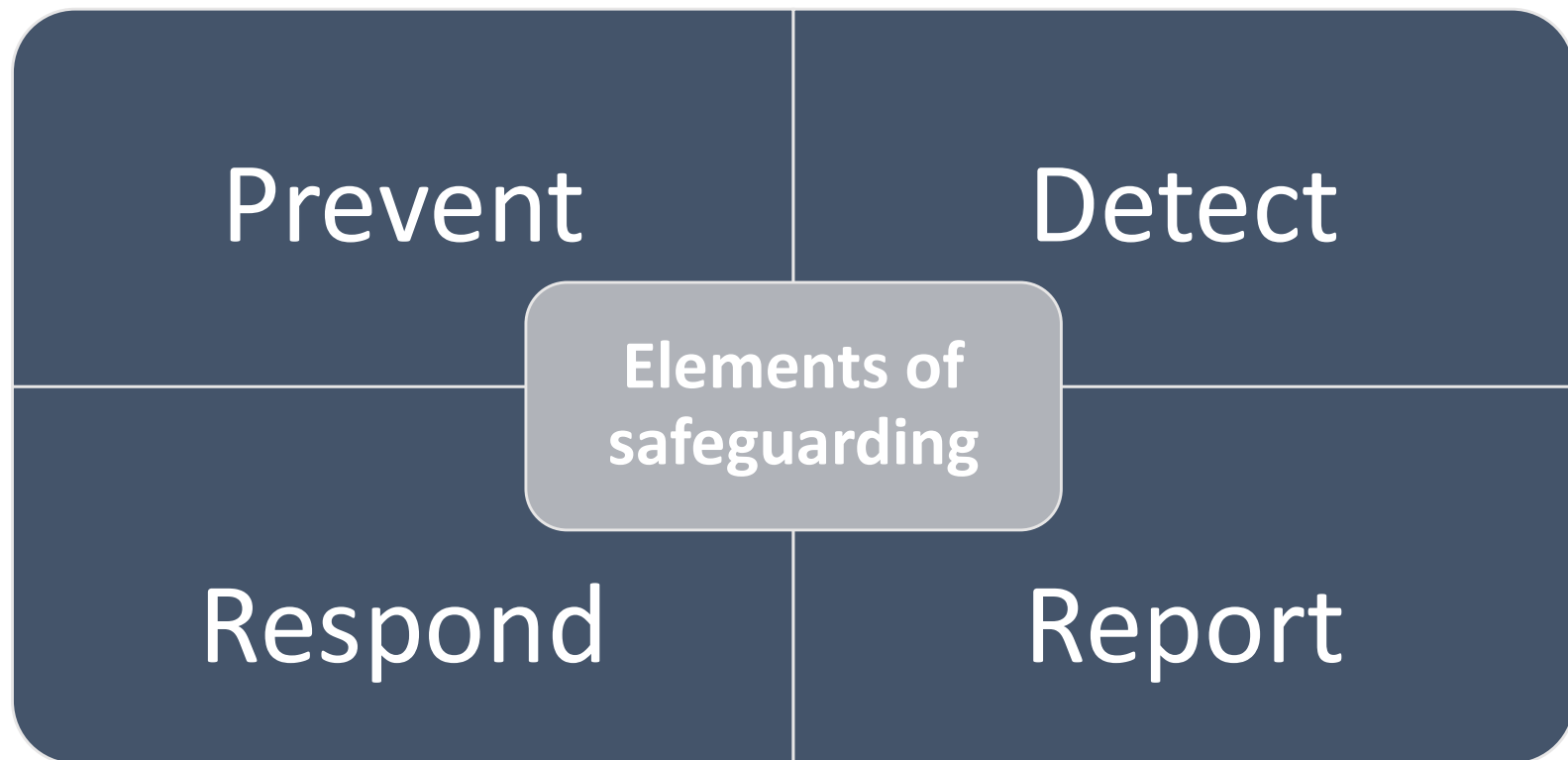
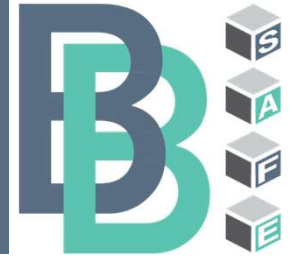
Protecting children (and vulnerable adults) from the risk of abuse and sexual abuse

For organisations – internal risk (within the organisation context) + external risk (familial or extracurricular)

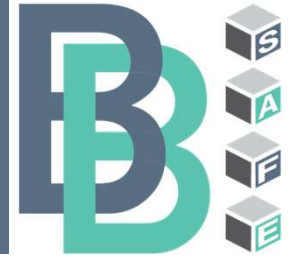
Every member of staff/volunteer/board member has a role in preventing, recognising and reporting abuse

Includes physical, sexual, emotional abuse and neglect, exploitation

The elements of safeguarding



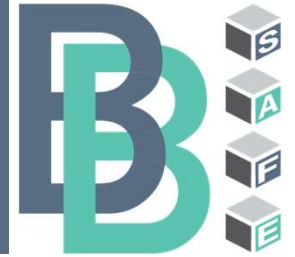
The requirements of safeguarding



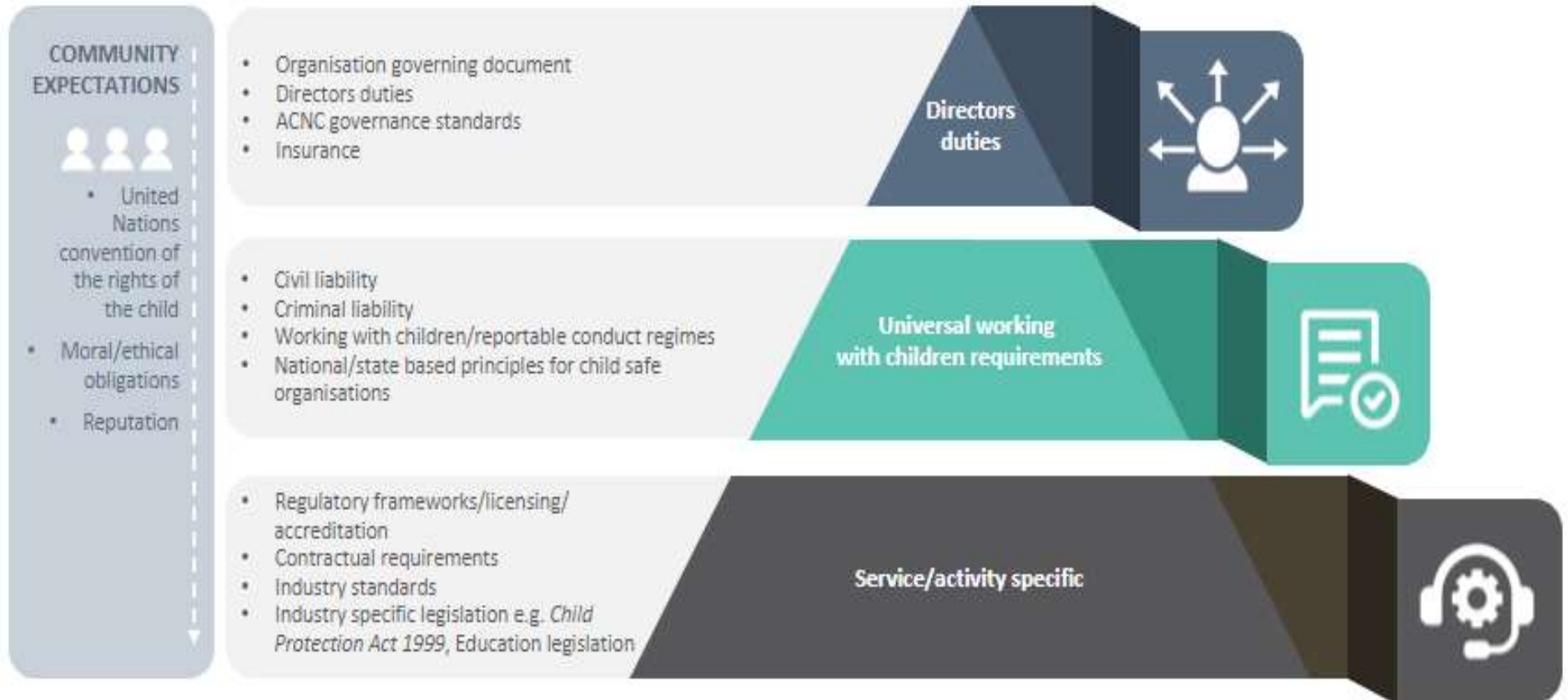


2. Board member responsibilities for safeguarding

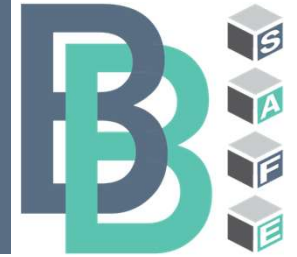
Board member responsibilities



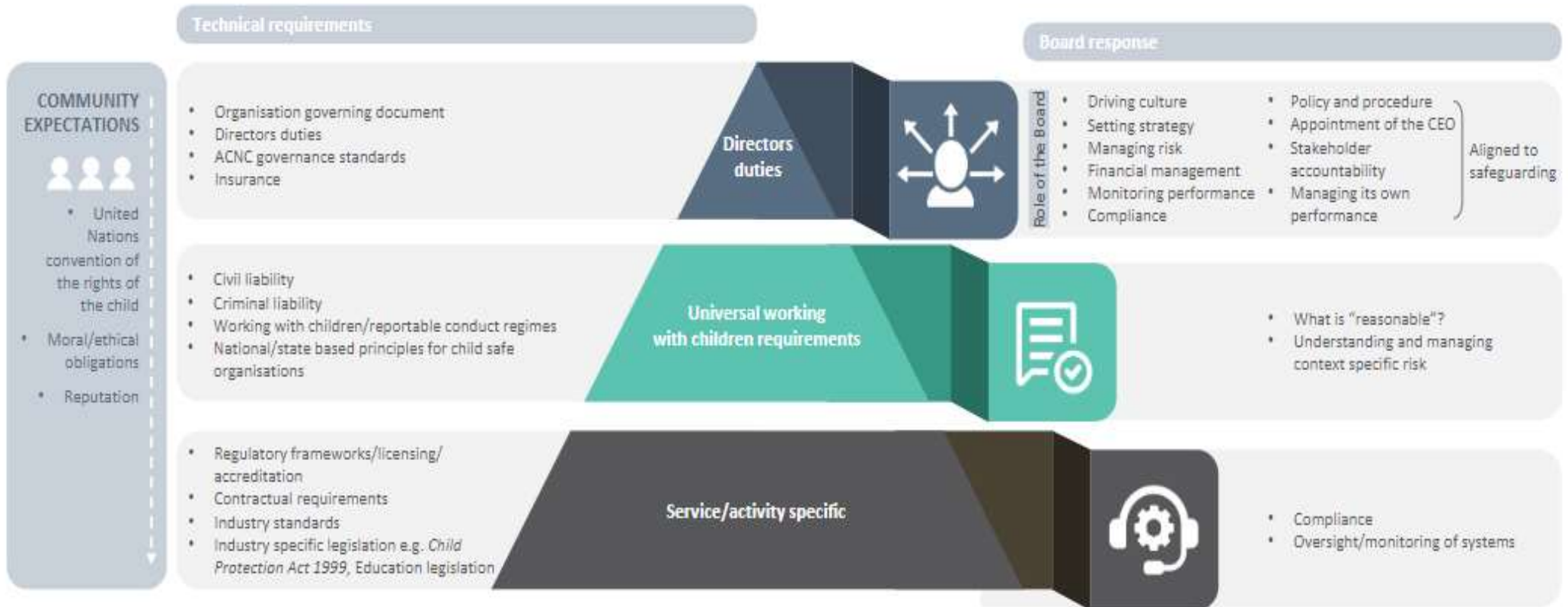
Safeguarding responsibilities of organisations working with children



Board response...



Safeguarding responsibilities of boards and management committees working with children



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



Reflection questions



- Does the board discuss our safeguarding policies and procedures on a regular basis?
- Does the board really understand the things we need to know about safeguarding children and vulnerable adults?



3. Beyond compliance – doing safeguarding well

How do we do safeguarding well?



- It's complex
- It's hard to talk about
- We are close communities
- Default - let's just make sure we are compliant!
- Focus is often on reporting rather than prevention and detection

How do we do safeguarding well?

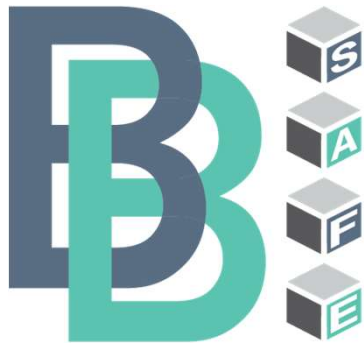


But there is another way –
culture led safeguarding

“This is the way we do things here”

And by taking care of our culture,
compliance takes care of itself

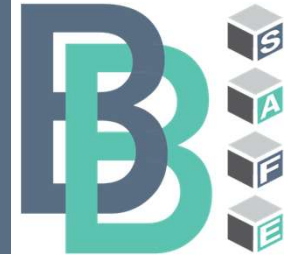
The four Building Blocks



**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

Reflection questions



- Are we as a Board demonstrating leadership in safeguarding?
 - What are we doing well in safeguarding?
 - Where do we need to improve our safeguarding?
- Are we strong in each of the building blocks?
 - What could we do this week that will improve safeguarding in our organisation?



4. What should safeguarding look like at the Board table?

The Board's leadership of safeguarding



Board role	Safeguarding implication and action for boards
Driving culture	Establishing and maintaining a culture of safeguarding
Setting strategy	Enabling and supporting a robust, well understood, culture led system of safeguarding across the organisation
Managing risk	Setting the framework for understanding and managing context specific risk
Financial management	Ensuring safeguarding is properly resourced and funded
Monitoring performance	Setting performance expectations for safeguarding and knowing what questions to ask
Compliance	Monitoring and overseeing compliance requirements and taking action on non-compliance.
Policy and procedure	Ensuring systems for establishing and maintaining policies and procedures are up to date and regularly reviewed
Appointment of the CEO	Ensuring the CEO is committed to a culture of safeguarding and lives out the values required for successful safeguarding practice
Stakeholder accountability	Ensuring the organisation lives out its commitment to safeguarding for the sake of the people it serves and the organisation's role in the broader community
Managing its own performance	<p>The Board living out its own commitment to safeguarding through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aligning board decision making to safeguarding • providing strong governance oversight of safeguarding activity including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ considering allocating a board subcommittee with responsibility ○ standing board agenda item on safeguarding – especially during the early phases ○ board oversight of safeguarding incident reviews ○ regular review of safeguarding system • fostering a culture of psychological safety so people feel safe to come forward with both low level and high level concerns • driving an agenda of continuous improvement in safeguarding by ensuring appropriate oversight of complaints and feedback, reports and incidents • regular training for board directors on safeguarding • board members undertaking a regular program of site visits including for the purpose of observing the presence of safeguarding related material (posters etc) and casual discussion with staff and participants about safeguarding awareness • board level trauma informed process for responding to incidents of harm and adopting model litigant principles • commit organisation to active participation in the National Redress Scheme.

How does the Board know...



BB1: LEADERSHIP



- Culture surveys
- Site visits
- Board self assessment
- Participation in events

BB2: PEOPLE



- KPIs
- Compliance
- Code of Conduct breaches
- P&P review

BB3: ENVIRONMENTS



- Risk assessment reporting
- Understanding and continuous learning
- Accreditation
- Meaningful monitoring low level complaints and feedback

BB4: RESPONSE



- Board review of reports and incidents
- Monitor trends
- Post implementation then annual review of safeguarding system
- Engage critical friend/external review

Example safeguarding board reporting dashboard



BBSafe Board Reporting Dashboard		Building Block 1: LEADERSHIP			Building Block 2: PEOPLE			
Measure	Result	Target	Hide	Measure	Result	Target	Hide	
BB1	1.1 Culture survey	12 months	<i>held annually; % positive; % answered</i>	2.1 Clearances completed		100%	<i>Hide</i> monthly register check 100% monthly register check 100% monthly register check 100% %completed %completed %completed ??	
	1.2 New board membership induction	100%	<i>% completed</i>	Blue card - valid		100%		
	Board training - annual	100%	<i>%completed</i>	Yellow card - valid		100%		
	Board discussion - each meeting	100%	<i>%discussed</i>	Criminal history check - annual		100%		
	1.3 P&P reviewed annually	100%	<i>%reviewed</i>	2.2 Code of conduct signed		100%		
	Induction within x days			2.3 & 2.4 Annual client safety training		100%		
Committee established		4 p.a.	<i>%meetings</i>	supervision?				
celebration events with safety			<i>%events</i>					
Building Block 3: ENVIRONMENTS				Building Block 4: RESPONSE				
Measure	Result	Target	Hide	Measure	Result	Target	Hide	
BB3	3.1 Risk assessment - new site/program	100%	<i>%completed</i>	4.1 & 4.2 Safety Related Reports		#	<i>Hide</i> No. No. % within timeframe %reported meeting t'hold %reported meeting t'hold %completed, timeliness review timeline? Mtgs with reviews?	
	3.2 OR annually	100%	<i>%completed</i>	Staff Reports		#		
	- could do risk profile approach			Client Reports		#		
auditing implementation of risk mgmt			Resolution Timeliness		#			
Safety related op risks exceed tolerance?		0	<i>No.</i>	Reports to Board		#		
				Reports to authorities		#		
				4.3 Reviews of reports		#/%		
				Learnings review		Qual		
				4.4 Board oversight of restorative process		Qual		
BB4								

Questions for you and your board



Do we understand what is
“reasonable” for our organisation?

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
supported to come forward?



5. Awareness of grooming – what is it and would it be recognised?

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 the child, 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 school 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 at the Board?



6. Understanding context specific risk in our organisation – what is “reasonable” for this organisation?

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?

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?

Reflection questions



- As a board that will be held accountable for doing what is “reasonable”, do we understand and manage our context specific risks?
 - Have we covered off all our risks?

Support



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Contact details



Sarah Lim
CO-FOUNDER

BBSafe
Building Blocks of
Safeguarding Culture

Phone: 0433 051 282
Email: sarah.lim@bbsafe.com.au