



Topic 4

Elements of a safe and supportive environment



The National Child Safety Training aims to enhance safety for children and strengthen child-safe culture across the education and care sector by introducing shared language, responsibilities, and understanding. The training was developed in partnership between Australian Centre for Child Protection (ACCP) and the Queensland Government on behalf of Australian governments.

The first level of training, Foundations of Child Safety, includes two eLearning courses:

- **Course 1:** Understanding Child Safety
- **Course 2:** Understanding and Identifying Child Abuse and Neglect

To complement the mandatory eLearning courses, a suite of non-mandatory Community of Practice resources has been developed to extend learning and support the application of knowledge in education and care settings. Whilst the Community of Practice are a voluntary component of the National Child Safety Training, they provide structured opportunities for discussion, reflection, and shared learning over time, helping staff build confidence and consistency in practice.

These resources contain prompts and suggested activities aligned with each course topic. They are designed to be flexible and may be selected, adapted, shortened, or revisited to suit different service types, team sizes, and meeting formats. The intention is to support practical conversations, not to prescribe a fixed program. There is no expectation that all topics and activities will be used and it is at your discretion how you use these resources.

Child safety is everyone's responsibility in places where children learn and grow. Harm can affect a child's wellbeing, learning, and development throughout childhood, and its impacts can continue into adulthood. When child safe practices are not in place, children are more at risk of harm.

By completing the mandatory eLearning training alongside some non-mandatory Community of Practice activities, you can strengthen your understanding of your role in protecting children, responding to concerns, and supporting a child safe environment in your service.



Australian
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Child Protection



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Elements of a safe and supportive environment

A safe and supportive environment is created through everyday actions, relationships, and decisions, it's more than just policies or procedures. Children are more likely to feel safe, speak up, and thrive when the adults around them consistently build trust, respect boundaries, include diverse identities, and respond to wellbeing needs.

This topic explores the key elements that help child safe environments come to life in education and care services:

- Safety and trust
- Inclusion and belonging
- Positive relationships
- Clear boundaries and safe practice
- Voice and participation
- Wellbeing and care
- Leadership and accountability




Reminder

You **do not** need to run all three activities.

Select, adapt, shorten, or spread activities across sessions to suit your group and available time.

Activities can also be adapted for one-on-one supervision, mentoring conversations, or team meetings. You may choose to use a single scenario, question, or reflective prompt to guide discussion.

These activities are designed to be flexible and responsive to your service context.

Activity 1: Spot the element	
Objective	To help participants recognise how the elements of a safe and supportive environment show up in everyday practice and understand that small moments contribute to a strong child safe culture.
Time	15-20 minutes
Format	 <p>Whole Group Activity</p>
Materials needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The seven elements of a safe and supportive environment headings displayed clearly: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Safety and Trust ○ Inclusion and Belonging ○ Positive Relationships ○ Clear Boundaries and Safe Practice ○ Voice and Participation ○ Wellbeing and Care ○ Leadership and Accountability. • Short scenario prompts. • Sets of printed element cards (one full set per group or participant) for interactive selection and placement.



Activity plan

Facilitator preamble

“Safe and supportive environments are built through small, everyday actions, not just policies. This activity helps us notice how safety, trust, belonging, boundaries, participation and wellbeing are enhanced through everyday moments.”

Remind participants

- There may be more than one correct answer.
- Elements of safe and supportive environments often overlap.
- This is about reflection and discussion not testing knowledge.



Facilitator tip

Preparing ready-to-print element cards alongside scenario cards allows facilitators to vary delivery methods across topics and supports visual and hands on learners.

Step 1: Set up the elements (3 minutes)

- Begin by briefly introducing each element using one clear, practical sentence. Keep language simple and grounded in everyday practice.
- You might say:
 - **Safety and Trust** – Children, families and staff feel physically, emotionally, and culturally safe, and trust that adults will act in their best interests.
 - **Inclusion and Belonging** – Every child and family feels seen, respected and valued for who they are.
 - **Positive Relationships** – Warm, respectful interactions build connection, confidence and security.

- **Clear Boundaries and Safe Practice** – Expectations are clear, interactions are professional and visible, and policies guide safe behaviour.
 - **Voice and Participation** – Children and families are listened to, taken seriously, and involved in decisions that affect them.
 - **Wellbeing and Care** – Physical, emotional, social and cultural needs are recognised and supported.
 - **Leadership and Accountability** – Leaders model child safe behaviour, respond to concerns, and ensure systems support safety.
- Briefly acknowledge that these elements may be understood or experienced differently across cultural contexts. Encourage participants to reflect on what these elements mean to them personally, how they show up in their workplace, and how they might be experienced or interpreted differently by children, families, and colleagues from diverse cultural backgrounds.
 - After naming each element, ask:
 - *“Which of these elements feels most visible or strongest in our setting right now?”*
 - *“Which of these elements do we talk about the least in our team or service and why might that be?”*
 - *“Are there elements that may be experienced differently by some children or families in our service or community?”*



Facilitator tip

For a quick respond, consider using a show of hands, coloured cards, or a quick online poll to identify patterns in responses. This can provide useful insight into how staff currently perceive strengths and gaps in practice.

Step 2: Read, reflect and identify (15 minutes)

- Read one short scenario at a time. After each scenario:
 - Ask participants to pause and reflect quietly:
 - *“If you were a child in this moment, what do you think you would notice or feel?”*
 - *“What is enhancing safety here, or what might be missing?”*
- Element Identification (2-3 minutes per scenario)
- Invite participants to identify:
 - *Which element of a safe and supportive environment is most visible?*
 - *Is there another element that supports or strengthens safety and wellbeing in this moment?*
- Encourage participants to briefly explain their reasoning:
 - *“What tells you that?”*
 - *“What behaviour, action or system makes that element visible?”*
- Follow up with:
 - *“What would enhance child safety and wellbeing even more?”*
 - *“If this element was missing, what risk might increase?”*
- Participants can:
 - Call out responses
 - Move toward the heading in the room
 - Hold up a printed element card
 - Place the scenario under the element heading they believe is most visible
- As discussion unfolds, remain aware that cultural norms around authority, hierarchy, and conflict can influence how comfortable people feel speaking up, disagreeing, or questioning ideas. Encourage respectful dialogue and acknowledge that there may be more than one valid interpretation of a scenario.

Step 3: Brief reflection (5 minutes)

- Ask participants:
 - *Which elements appeared were most visible?*
 - *Which elements were harder to spot?*
 - *What does that tell us about our daily practice?*
- If using wall headings or element cards, invite participants to look at where scenarios have clustered. Ask: *“What do you notice when you see these grouped together?”*

Step 4: Closing reflection

- Invite participants to complete: *“One element I want to pay more attention to in my daily practice is...”*





Online adaptation (MS Teams or Zoom)

This activity can be delivered online using polls, chat reflections, breakout discussion, and shared slides. The purpose remains the same: to help participants recognise how elements of a safe and supportive environment show up in everyday practice.

Platform preparation (before the session)

- Create one slide listing the seven elements in simple language.
- Prepare 1-2 quick polls asking which element feels strongest and which is talked about least.
- Have each scenario ready on a separate slide.
- If possible, prepare a live poll for each scenario, listing the seven elements as response options.
- Ensure breakout rooms are set up in advance if you plan to use them.

Step 1: Create psychological safety

- Begin with a brief facilitator preamble.
- Provide a wellbeing reminder.
- Remind participants that there are no right or wrong answers.
- Encourage reflection and discussion rather than critique.
- Remind participants support pathways are available (e.g., EAP, supervision etc.).

Step 2: Introduce the elements

- Share your screen and briefly introduce each element using one clear, practical sentence. Keep language simple and grounded in everyday practice.
- After introducing the elements, launch a quick poll asking:

- *Which element feels most visible or strongest in your setting right now?*
- Share results without commentary.
- Launch a second poll asking:
 - *Which element do we talk about the least in our team and service?*
- Briefly acknowledge patterns. Avoid debate at this stage. The goal is reflection.

Step 3: Read, reflect and identify

- Share the first scenario on screen.
- Read it slowly.
- Invite participants to pause quietly for 20-30 seconds and reflect.
- Ask them to consider:
 - *If you were a child in this moment, what would you notice or feel?*
 - *What is helping to enhance safety or wellbeing here, or what might be missing?*
- Launch a poll listing the seven elements.
- Ask participants to select which element is most visible in the scenario or what elements are missing
- Share the poll results.
- Invite 2-3 volunteers to briefly explain their choice.
- Prompt with:
 - What behaviour, action or system makes that element visible?
 - Is there another element that strengthens this moment?
- Follow up with:
 - What would enhance child safety or wellbeing in this scenario?
 - If this element was missing, what risk might increase?
- Repeat this process for each scenario.

Step 4: Brief whole-group reflection

- Ask participants to reflect in chat:
 - *Which elements was visible most often in the scenarios?*
 - *Which elements were harder to spot?*
 - *What does that tell us about our daily practice?*
- Highlight patterns you notice across responses.

Step 5: Closing reflection

- Invite participants to complete the sentence in the chat or privately: *One element I want to pay more attention to in my daily practice is...*
- Close by reinforcing that safe environments are built through many small, visible actions across roles and systems.



Scenario cards: Spot the element

These scenario cards are intentionally brief to promote discussion and reflection. Participants are not determining wrongdoing, they are identifying which element(s) of a safe and supportive environment are visible, missing, or could be strengthened.

Facilitators are also encouraged to adapt these scenarios or develop their own to reflect their service, context, or community, while ensuring all examples remain de-identified.

Scenario Card 1

A child refuses to join group time and sits alone near the fence. An educator notices and quietly sits nearby without forcing participation. She explains to the child that they can talk to her about anything, no matter what it is. She sits quietly with the child without asking too many direct questions.

Scenario Card 2

A parent emails to ask why their child came home upset. The educator replies two days later with a short response and no invitation for further discussion.

Scenario Card 3

A new casual staff member asks where to find the child safe environment policy. Another educator says, "It's somewhere in the office, I think."

Scenario Card 4

During nappy change, an educator talks softly to the baby, explains what they are doing, and ensures the space is visible to others.

Scenario Card 5

A child says, "I don't like when he pushes me." The educator responds, "You'll be fine, just ignore it."

Scenario Card 6

The service displays posters reflecting different cultures, family structures, and abilities. Children see their languages and identities represented in books and play materials.

Scenario Card 7

An educator notices another staff member repeatedly taking children into a closed room for one-on-one activities. They feel unsure but say nothing.

Scenario Card 8

At team meetings, leadership includes child safety as a standing agenda item and invite staff to raise concerns or ideas for improvement.

Scenario Card 9

A child with additional needs is excluded from outdoor play because staff feel it is "too difficult to manage safely."

Scenario Card 10

During a busy transition, supervision becomes inconsistent and a blind spot form near the bathroom area.

Scenario Card 11

A family raises a complaint about how a staff member spoke to their child. The service documents the concern and schedules a follow-up meeting with the family.

Scenario Card 12

An educator notices a child has been unusually withdrawn for several days. They document their observations and check in gently with the child during play.

Scenario Card 13

At an outside school hours care service, a group of older children gather in a corner of the playground that is partially hidden from supervision. Staff are busy preparing afternoon tea and assume the children are “old enough to manage themselves.”

Scenario Card 14


A child in the service uses a personal device to show peers online content that includes violent or sexualised material. Staff are unsure whether this is a behaviour issue, a wellbeing concern, or something that may require further reporting, so they delay and do nothing

Scenario Card 15

A family day care educator works alone and receives a disclosure from a child during rest time. The educator listens calmly but feels unsure about the next step and whether to contact their coordination unit immediately or wait until the end of the day. She delays before seeking advice or acting.

Scenario Card 16

A tradesperson is completing repairs at a family day care residence while children are present. The educator assumes the person has been appropriately checked but has not confirmed this with the coordination service.

Activity 2: Through the child’s eye	
Objective	<p>This activity helps participants step into a child’s perspective and consider how safe and supportive environments are experienced emotionally, socially, and physically. It supports participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on safety from a child’s point of view. • Recognise how adult actions shape children’s sense of belonging and participation. • Strengthen everyday practices that support wellbeing.
Time	20-25 minutes
Format	 <p>The 'Format' section contains three circular icons. The first, 'Individual Work', shows a person sitting at a desk writing. The second, 'Pair Work', shows two people sitting at a table with speech bubbles above them. The third, 'Whole Group Activity', shows a group of five diverse people sitting in a circle with speech bubbles above them.</p>
Materials needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paper • Pens or markers



Activity plan

Facilitator preamble

“Children experience safety and wellbeing through feelings, relationships, routines, boundaries and small everyday moments. This activity invites us to slow down and imagine the day through a child’s eyes. When children feel safe, valued, and heard, it changes how they learn, connect, and grow.”

Remind participants

- There are no right or wrong responses
- This is about reflection, not perfection
- Focus on everyday practice, not policy language

Step 1: Individual reflection or drawing (10 minutes)

- Invite participants to choose one element of a safe and supportive environment (for example: safety and trust, inclusion and belonging, voice and participation, positive relationships, clear boundaries, wellbeing and care, leadership and accountability).
- Once participants have selected their element, ask: *“If a child strongly felt this element in our service, what would their day look like? What would it sound like? What would it feel like?”*
- Ask participants to respond by either:
 - Writing a short paragraph
 - Creating a list of words or feelings
 - Drawing a simple scene
 - Describing a “day in the life” moment
- Encourage them to think about:
 - What the child notices
 - What adults say or do
 - How the child behaves when they feel safe

Step 2: Pair sharing (10 minutes)

- In pairs, participants share their reflections.
- Guide discussion with two simple questions:
 - *What would the child notice or feel first?*
 - *What adult action or behaviour makes that possible?*
- Encourage participants to listen for common themes (e.g., calm tone, visibility, predictability, choice, respect, follow-through, inclusion).

Step 3: Whole-group connection (5 minutes)

- Bring the group back together and ask:
 - *What patterns did you hear across the reflections?*
 - *What small adult actions made the biggest difference?*
- As participants respond, capture key words, phrases, or recurring themes on a board or large sheet of paper. Focus particularly on language and visible everyday behaviours.
- Highlight statements that reflect what children should consistently see, hear, and feel in the service.
- Invite the group to identify 3-5 phrases or actions that feel most important to carry forward in their practice.
- Discuss where these could be displayed or revisited (for example, in the staffroom, meeting spaces, or supervision templates) as a reminder of the child-safety intent behind everyday practice.



Online adaptation (MS Teams or Zoom)

This activity can be delivered online using quiet reflection time, breakout rooms, chat sharing, and optional collaborative tools. The purpose remains the same: to help participants imagine what a safe and supportive environment feels like from a child's perspective.

Platform preparation (before the session)

- Prepare one slide listing the elements of a safe and supportive environment.
- Ensure breakout rooms are set up for pairs.
- Have a shared document or whiteboard available if you want to capture themes.
- Optional: prepare a collaborative board (e.g., Whiteboard or Mentimeter word cloud) for the whole-group reflection.

How to run it online

Step 1: Create psychological safety

- Begin with a brief preamble.
- Provide a wellbeing reminder.
- Remind participants that sharing is optional.
- Encourage cameras on or off based on comfort.

Step 2: Individual reflection

- Share the slide listing the elements of a safe and supportive environment.
- Invite participants to choose one element that stands out to them.
- Ask: *"If a child strongly felt this element in our service, what would their day look like? What would it sound like? What would it feel like?"*
- Participants can respond in whichever way feels comfortable:

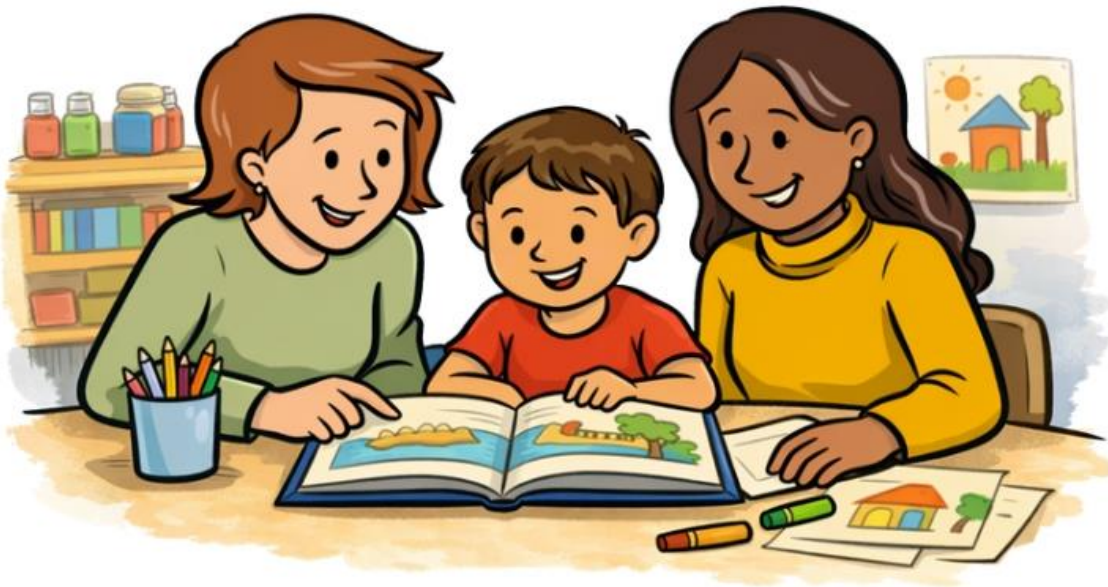
- Write a short paragraph privately.
- Create a short list of words or feelings.
- Sketch on paper.
- Write a brief “day in the life” moment. Encourage participants to think about:
 - What the child notices.
 - What the child feels
 - What adults say or do.
 - How the child behaves when they feel safe.
- Keep microphones muted during this time.
- Let participants know they do not need to share everything they write.


Pair sharing in breakout rooms

- Place participants into breakout rooms in pairs.
- Before opening rooms, give clear instructions:
 - Each person shares for 3-4 minutes.
 - Reflect on the child’s experience focussing on everyday moments.
 - Listen for patterns and themes.
- Provide guiding questions in the chat before sending them out:
 - *What would the child notice or feel first?*
 - *What adult action or behaviour makes that possible?*
- Send a one-minute warning before closing breakout rooms.

Step 3: Whole-group connection

- Bring participants back to the main room.
- Invite them to share one word, theme or short phrase in the chat that stood out from their discussion. Ask:
 - *What patterns did you hear across reflections?*
 - *What small adult actions made the biggest difference?*
- If helpful, capture key words on a shared whiteboard or slide, such as calm tone, predictability, inclusion, follow-through, or listening.
- Close by reinforcing that child safe culture is experienced in small, consistent actions that children notice every day.



Activity 3: Strengthen one piece	
Objective	<p>This activity supports participants to move from reflection to action by identifying realistic, everyday ways to strengthen a safe and supportive environment. It helps participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise existing strengths. • Identify small, achievable improvements. • Reinforce that child safety is everyone’s responsibility.
Time	20-30 minutes
Format	
Materials needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elements of a safe and supportive environment headings displayed (e.g., Safety and Trust, Inclusion and Belonging, Positive Relationships, Clear Boundaries and Safe Practice, Voice and Participation, Wellbeing and Care, Leadership and Accountability). • Sticky notes or paper. • Pens.



Activity plan

Facilitator preamble

“Safe and supportive environments are built through everyday actions, not just big policy changes. This activity is about noticing what is already working, and identifying one small, realistic way to strengthen our practice in the future.”

Remind participants

- The goal is progress, not perfection
- Small changes can have a meaningful impact
- Focus on practical actions within your influence

Step 1: Choose an element (5 minutes)

- Ask participants to form small groups of 3-4.
- In small groups, ask participants to select one element that:
 - Is already visible in their service but could be strengthened, or
 - Feels challenging or inconsistent in their setting right now
- Encourage groups to briefly discuss why they chose this element.

Step 2: One strength, one strengthens (10 minutes)

- Ask each group to record two responses for their chosen element:
 - One existing strength
 - *What is already happening within the service or within our practice that supports this element?*
 - *What do children, families, or staff already experience that reflects this?*
 - One small, realistic action to strengthen it

- *What is one everyday practice that could be adjusted or improved to strengthen an element?*
 - *This might relate to language, routines, supervision, communication, visibility, documentation, or team conversations.*
- Encourage groups to keep actions specific and achievable (for example: “Add a 5-minute safety check-in at team meetings” rather than “Improve communication”).

Step 3: Share and reinforce (5 minutes)

- Invite each group to share one practical strengthening action only.
- As groups share, briefly reinforce common themes.
- Capture common themes on a board if helpful.

Step 4: Closing reflection (2 minutes)

- Invite participants to complete silently or aloud: *“One small action I can take to strengthen an element of a safe and supportive environment is...”*
- Allow a moment of pause before closing the session.



Online adaptation (MS Teams or Zoom)

This activity can be delivered online using breakout rooms, shared documents, chat reflections, and optional polls. The purpose remains the same: to move from reflection to practical, achievable action.

Platform preparation (before the session)

- Prepare a slide listing the elements of a safe and supportive environment.
- Set up breakout rooms for groups of 3-4 participants.
- Create a shared document or whiteboard where groups can record one strengthening action.
- Optional: prepare a quick poll asking which element feels most inconsistent across the service.

Step 1: Create psychological safety

- Begin with a short preamble.
- Provide a wellbeing reminder.
- Remind participants that this is about reflection and discussion, not an audit or compliance check.
- Reinforce that the focus is on small, realistic improvements.
- Encourage de-identified examples and practical thinking.

Step 2: Choose an element

- Share the slide listing the elements.
- Place participants into breakout rooms of 3-4 people.
- Before opening the rooms, give clear instructions:
- Each group selects one element of a safe and supportive environment that is either already present and visible in their service but could be strengthened or feels challenging or inconsistent right now.

- Spend a few minutes discussing why this element feels important.
- Optional: Before breakout rooms, run a quick poll asking which element feels hardest to sustain in daily practice. Use the results to spark interest before group selection.
- Send a one-minute warning before closing breakout rooms.

Step 3: One strength, one strengthens

- Keep participants in breakout rooms.
- Ask each group to identify and record:
 - One existing strength in their service or individual practice related to their chosen element.
 - One small, realistic action to strengthen this element
- Provide guiding prompts in the chat before reopening rooms:
 - *What is already happening in your service or your practice that supports this element?*
 - *What do children, families, or staff already experience that reflects this?*
 - *What is one everyday practice that could be adjusted or improved to strengthen this element?*
- Encourage specificity.
- For example, suggest actions such as adding a five-minute safety check-in at team meetings rather than broad statements like “improve communication.”
- Ask groups to record their one strengthening action in the shared document or prepare to share it verbally.

Step 4: Share and reinforce

- Bring participants back to the main room.
- Invite each group to share only their strengthening action.
- Capture actions on a shared screen or whiteboard.
- Briefly name common themes.
- Reinforce those small adjustments, applied consistently, build stronger systems over time.

Step 5: Closing reflection

- Invite participants to complete the sentence in the chat or privately: *“One small action I can take to support a safe and supportive environment is...”*

