

Topic 6

How values and beliefs influence practice



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.



How values and beliefs influence practice

We all bring our own values, beliefs, and life experiences into the work we do. These influence how we understand behaviour, interpret risk, respond to families, and make decisions about children's safety and wellbeing.

Our identities are shaped by many factors, including age, gender, lived experience, culture, language, religion, ability, socioeconomic background, and our own childhood experiences. These influences can shape what we see as "normal," "appropriate" or "best."

Personal values guide what we believe is right or wrong. Personal beliefs are ideas we hold to be true, though they may not always be based on evidence. Implicit bias refers to automatic assumptions that can influence our decisions, even when we are trying to be fair. Without reflection, these influences can affect professional judgement, shaping how behaviour is interpreted, who receives attention, how families are viewed, and what is considered in a child's "best interests."

Recognising and reflecting on these influences strengthens child safety. It supports fair, inclusive, and culturally responsive practice, ensuring decisions are guided by children's rights, safety, and wellbeing. As such, this topic provides space for respectful reflection and shared learning to support thoughtful, child-centred practice.







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: How our values and beliefs shape practice	
Objective	To help participants recognise how their values, beliefs and early life experiences shape how they interpret and respond to children’s behaviour and family practices.
Time	40-50 minutes
Format	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><i>Individual Work</i></p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><i>Small Group Activity</i></p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><i>Whole Group Activity</i></p>  </div> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 20px;"> <p><i>Individual Reflection</i></p>  </div>
Materials needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflection worksheet • Pens



Activity plan

Facilitator preamble

"We all look at situations through a lens shaped by our own experiences. This activity is about being aware of and noticing that lens. It's not about blame, it's about awareness and reflection. Awareness strengthens fair and safe decision-making."

Remind participants

- Reflection is a professional strength.
- You are not required to share personal stories, values or beliefs.
- Keep examples general and de-identified.
- Differences in perspective are expected.

Step 1 – Individual reflection – Exploring your lens (10 minutes)

- Set a calm and reflective tone. You might say:
 - *"We all carry beliefs and messages about children, behaviour, and discipline from our own childhood and culture. This reflection is about noticing those influences, not judging them."*
- Invite participants to reflect silently on the prompts below.
- Encourage honesty and depth Participants can jot down short notes or key words.
- Reflection prompts:
 - *What messages did I receive growing up about children's behaviour?*
 - *What did "good behaviour" look like in my childhood?*
 - *How were adults expected to respond when children misbehaved?*
 - *What parenting or discipline practices feel "normal" or "right" to me?*
 - *What behaviours tend to frustrate or trigger me most in children?*
 - *When I feel frustrated, what thoughts usually come first?*

- Encourage participants to think about tone of voice, consequences, expectations about respect, independence, obedience, emotional expression, or physical affection.
- Reassure participants:
 - They will not be asked to share anything personal unless they choose to.
 - The purpose is awareness, not self-criticism.

Step 2: Small group discussion – Connecting beliefs to practice (15 minutes)

- In groups of 3-4, invite participants to explore how early messages may show up in everyday practice.
- Encourage them to move beyond theory and discuss real situations, such as:
 - Group time expectations
 - Mealtimes
 - Transitions
 - Conflict between children
 - Emotional outbursts
 - Family interactions
- Discussion prompts:
 - *How might these early messages influence how we respond to children today?*
 - *Are there behaviours we might interpret differently depending on culture, gender, disability, or personality?*
 - *When might our expectations be based on personal beliefs rather than child development knowledge?*
 - *How might frustration or stress increase the influence of bias in our practice?*
 - *What helps us pause and reflect before reacting?*
- Encourage respectful listening. Remind groups to focus on patterns and insights, not personal stories about colleagues.

Step 3: Whole group reflection – Strengthening child-centred practice (15 minutes)

- Bring the group back together.
- Invite volunteers to share:
 - One insight they gained
 - One belief they are now more aware of
 - One way awareness might change practice
- Then ask:
 - *What surprised you?*
 - *How can awareness of our “lens” strengthen child safety?*
 - *How does this connect to children’s rights and dignity?*
- Reinforce: Awareness does not mean removing values and beliefs. It means ensuring our values and beliefs do not override children’s safety, rights, and wellbeing.

Step 4: Closing reflection (2 minutes)

- Invite participants to complete silently: *“One assumption I will be more mindful of in my practice is...”*



Facilitator tips

- This activity may surface vulnerability or defensiveness. Normalise that everyone has values and biases, this is part of being human.
- Maintain a non-judgemental tone.
- Avoid correcting participants publicly. Instead, guide thinking with reflective questions.



Online adaptation (MS Teams or Zoom)

This activity can be delivered in a reflective and psychologically safe way using breakout rooms, chat features, and optional anonymous tools. The focus is on building awareness of personal values and beliefs and how these can impact practice.

Platform preparation (before the session)

- Prepare a slide with the reflection prompts.
- Set up breakout rooms for groups of 3-4 participants.
- Have a shared whiteboard or slide ready to capture themes.
- Optionally prepare an anonymous word cloud tool for the final reflection.

Step 1: Create psychological safety

- Begin with the facilitator preamble.
- Provide a wellbeing reminder.
- Remind participants that sharing is optional.
- Cameras may be on or off based on comfort.
- Discussion should remain professional and de-identified.
- Participants may step away briefly if needed.

Step 2: Individual reflection – Exploring your lens

- Share the reflection prompts on screen.
- Invite participants to turn cameras off if helpful and spend a few quiet minutes reflecting.
- Encourage them to jot notes privately on paper or in their own document.
- Reflection prompts:

- *What messages did I receive growing up about children's behaviour?*
 - *What did "good behaviour" look like in my childhood?*
 - *How were adults expected to respond when children misbehaved?*
 - *What parenting or discipline practices feel "normal" or "right" to me?*
 - *What behaviours tend to trigger or frustrate me most in children?*
 - *When I feel triggered, what thoughts, feelings or reactions usually come first?*
- Encourage participants to think about tone of voice, consequences, expectations about respect, independence, obedience, emotional expression, or physical affection.
 - Reassure participants that they will not be required to share personal details. The purpose is awareness and reflection, not self-criticism.

Step 3: Breakout room discussion – Connecting values and beliefs to practice

- Move participants into breakout rooms of 3-4 people.
- Invite them to explore how our values and beliefs may show up in everyday practice.
- Encourage discussion of real service contexts such as group time, mealtimes, transitions, conflict between children, emotional outbursts, behaviour guidance and family interactions.
- Provide these prompts in the chat before sending participants to rooms:
 - *How might our values and beliefs influence how we respond to children today?*
 - *Are there behaviours we might interpret differently depending on culture, gender, disability, or personality?*
 - *When might our expectations be based on personal beliefs rather than child development knowledge?*
 - *How might frustration or stress increase the influence of bias showing up in our practice?*
 - *What helps us pause before reacting?*

- Encourage respectful listening and focus on insights rather than personal stories about colleagues.

Step 4: Whole group reflection – Strengthening child-centred practice

- Bring participants back to the main room.
- Invite volunteers to share in chat or verbally:
 - One insight they gained.
 - One belief they are now more aware of.
 - One way awareness might influence their practice.
- You may capture key themes on a shared screen under headings such as Awareness, Bias, Pause, and Child-Centred Practice.
- Guide reflection with questions such as:
 - What surprised you?
 - How can awareness of our “lens” strengthen child safety?
 - How does this connect to children’s rights and dignity?
- Reinforce that awareness does not mean removing personal values and beliefs. It means ensuring those values and beliefs do not override children’s safety, rights, and wellbeing.

Step 5: Closing reflection

- Invite participants to type privately in chat to themselves, write down, or contribute anonymously: *“One assumption I will be more mindful of in my practice is...”*
- Pause briefly before closing.

End by reinforcing that reflective awareness is a professional strength and an essential part of maintaining child-centred, rights-based practice.



Worksheet: How values and beliefs shape practice

How values and beliefs shape practice

- This worksheet is for your personal reflection.
- You do not need to share what you write unless you choose to.
- There are no right or wrong answers. The purpose is awareness and reflection not judgement.

Gentle Reminder

Becoming aware of our values and beliefs does not mean they are wrong. Reflective practice helps ensure that children's rights, safety, dignity, and wellbeing remain the paramount consideration in our work.

Section 1

Early messages about children

Take a few moments to reflect on the messages you received growing up.

1. What messages did I receive about children's behaviour?

2. What did “good behaviour” look like in my childhood?

3. How were adults expected to respond when children misbehaved?

4. What parenting or discipline practices feel “normal” or “right” to me?

5. What behaviours tend to frustrate or trigger me most in children?

6. When I feel triggered, what thoughts, feelings or reactions tend to come first?

Section 2

Connecting reflection to practice

7. How might these early messages influence how I respond to children today?

8. Are there behaviours I might interpret differently depending on culture, gender, disability, personality, or family context?

9. Could any of my expectations be based on personal beliefs rather than what we know about child development?"


Section 3

Strengthening reflective practice

10. What helps me pause and respond thoughtfully rather than react automatically?

11. One assumption I will be more mindful of in my practice is:

12. One way I can check my lens before responding to a child is:

Activity 2: Building culturally responsive practice	
Objective	<p>This activity supports participants to move from cultural humility to cultural responsiveness by identifying practical ways to adapt everyday practice. It encourages participants to recognise and respect different cultures and ways of being, respond to the needs of children and families, and speak up when they notice unfairness or exclusion.</p> <p>It helps participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise where bias or assumptions may unintentionally shape practice. • Strengthen inclusive and culturally safe environments. • Identify realistic adjustments that increase belonging and voice. • Connect reflection to child safety and wellbeing.
Time	20-30 minutes
Format	
Materials needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Butcher’s paper (one sheet per group) • Markers • Optional: headings written on paper for each focus area



Activity plan

Facilitator preamble

“Cultural humility is about recognising and reflecting on how our own culture, experiences, and assumptions shape how we see children and families, and being open to learning from others. Cultural responsiveness is about putting that reflection into action. It means adapting everyday practice to respect different cultures and ways of being. This activity gives us space to notice where bias might show up in everyday practice and to think about small, practical ways to strengthen inclusion and belonging for all children and families.”

Remind participants

- This is not about blaming or criticising current practice.
- All services have strengths and areas to strengthen.
- Cultural humility and cultural responsiveness are ongoing, not something we ‘complete’.
- Small changes can have a meaningful impact on children’s safety and sense of belonging.

Step 1: Choose a focus area (5 minutes)

- Divide participants into small groups of 3-4.
- Ask each group to choose one focus area from the list below:
 - Transitions
 - Group time
 - Family communication
 - Behaviour guidance
 - Physical environment
- Ask groups to write their chosen focus area clearly at the top of their butcher’s paper.

- Briefly explain: *“We are going to look at one everyday area of practice and explore how cultural humility and cultural responsiveness could be strengthened there.”*

Step 2: Reflect and redesign (15 minutes)

- Ask groups to divide their page into two columns:
 - Column 1: Where bias or exclusion might appear
 - Column 2: Strengthening inclusion and belonging
- Guide groups through the following discussion prompts:
 - Where might assumptions unintentionally shape expectations in this area? (e.g., expectations about independence, eye contact, behaviour, communication styles)
 - Whose voice may be less heard here? (e.g., quieter children, children learning English, children with disability, families from collectivist cultures)
 - What might feel “normal” to us but not to every family?
 - How might age, gender, culture, language, trauma history, or disability influence how children or families experience this?
- Then ask groups to identify:
 - One current strength in their practice relating to cultural responsiveness
 - One realistic, practical improvement they could make
- Encourage specific, everyday actions rather than policy statements.
- Examples might include:
 - Using diverse books, music, and visuals throughout the year, not just on special days
 - Checking in equally with all families at drop-off and pick-up
 - Adjusting expectations for participation (e.g., not requiring verbal answers in group time)
 - Providing multiple ways for children to express themselves (drawing, movement, storytelling, visuals)

- Offering translated information or visual supports for communication
- Remind groups to keep actions realistic and achievable within their current context.
- Try not to share too many examples too quickly, to allow participants to think for themselves.

Step 3: Share one action (10 minutes)

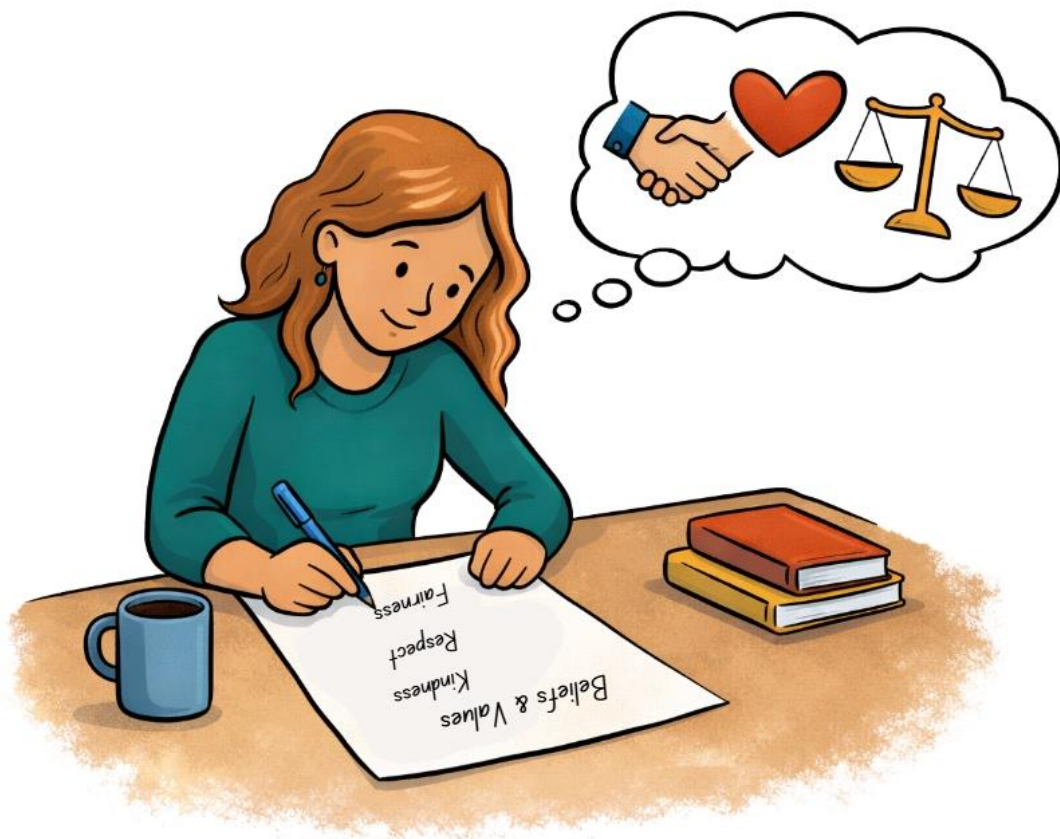
- Bring the whole group back together.
- Invite each group to share:
 - Their focus area
 - One small, practical action they identified to strengthen cultural responsiveness
- As groups share, highlight themes such as:
 - Curiosity over assumption
 - Flexibility in expectations
 - Listening before deciding
 - Partnering with families
 - Adjusting environments rather than expecting children to adjust themselves
- Reinforce:
 - Cultural humility involves ongoing reflection and learning
 - Cultural responsiveness is visible in everyday choices and actions
 - Inclusive practice strengthens child safety and belonging

Step 4: Closing reflection (2 minutes)

- Invite participants to complete silently or aloud: *“To stay open, curious, and fair in my practice, I will...”*

**Facilitator tips**

- Keep the focus on growth. Awareness of our own personal beliefs and bias can feel uncomfortable. Normalise that everyone has assumptions and that reflection is a professional strength.
- Connect back to safety. Emphasise that cultural responsiveness is not separate from child safety. Children are more likely to feel safe, speak up, and seek help when they feel understood and included.





Online adaptation (MS Teams or Zoom)

This activity can be delivered online using breakout rooms, shared documents, chat reflections, and optional polls or whiteboards. The purpose remains the same: to explore how cultural humility and responsiveness can be strengthened in everyday areas of practice.

Platform preparation (before the session)

- Prepare a slide listing the five focus areas.
- Set up breakout rooms for groups of 3-4 participants.
- Create a shared document or whiteboard template with two columns titled:
 - “Where bias or exclusion might appear”
 - “Strengthening inclusion and belonging”
- Optional: prepare a quick poll listing the five focus areas.

Have all links ready before the session begins.

Step 1: Create psychological safety

- Begin with a brief facilitator preamble.
- Provide a wellbeing reminder and acknowledge that conversations about bias and culture can feel personal or uncomfortable.
- Remind participants that sharing is voluntary and examples should remain de-identified.
- Encourage cameras on or off based on comfort.
- Remind participants that they may step away if needed.

Step 2: Choose a focus area

- Display the five focus areas on screen:
 - Transitions

- Group time
- Family communication
- Behaviour guidance
- Physical environment
- You may use a quick poll to see which areas participants are most interested in or assign different areas evenly across breakout rooms.
- Explain: *"We are going to look at one everyday area of practice and explore how cultural humility and cultural responsiveness could be strengthened there."*
- Place participants into breakout rooms and assign each group one focus area.
- Ask each group to clearly write their chosen focus area at the top of their shared document or whiteboard space.

Step 3: Reflect and redesign

- In breakout rooms, ask groups to divide their shared page into two columns:
 - Column 1: Where bias or exclusion might appear
 - Column 2: Strengthening inclusion and belonging
- Provide the following prompts in the chat before sending them to breakout rooms:
 - *Where might assumptions unintentionally shape expectations in this area?*
 - *Whose voice may be less heard here?*
 - *What might feel "normal" to us but not to every family?*
 - *How might age, gender, culture, language, trauma history, or disability influence how children or families experience this part of the day?*
- Encourage groups to identify:
 - One current strength in their practice
 - One realistic, practical improvement




- Remind them to focus on specific, everyday actions rather than policy statements.
- Remind groups to keep actions realistic and achievable within their context.

Step 4: Share one action

- Bring everyone back to the main room.
- Invite each group to briefly share:
 - Their focus area
 - One small, practical action they identified
- You may capture key words or themes on a shared slide or whiteboard.
- As groups share, highlight themes.
- Reinforce that cultural humility is ongoing reflection and that cultural responsiveness becomes visible in everyday decisions and interactions.

Step 5: Closing reflection

- Invite participants to type in the chat, reflect privately, or respond via an anonymous word cloud: *"To stay open, curious, and fair in my practice, I will..."*
- Pause briefly before closing.
- End by reinforcing that inclusive and culturally responsive practice strengthens child safety, belonging, and trust for all children and families.

Activity 3: Spot the bias	
Objective	<p>This activity supports participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practise identifying where implicit bias may be impacting practice. • Explore how assumptions influence interpretation and response. • Consider the impact of bias on children’s safety, belonging, and identity. • Develop more inclusive, culturally responsive practice. • Strengthen fair, child-centred decision-making.
Time	50-60 minutes
Format	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><i>Small Group Activity</i></p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><i>Whole Group Activity</i></p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><i>Individual Reflection</i></p>  </div> </div>
Materials needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printed scenario cards (1-2 per group) • Participant worksheet • Pens or markers



Activity plan

Facilitator preamble

“Implicit bias can influence how we interpret the same behaviour differently depending on who the child is. Sometimes this happens quickly and without conscious intent. This activity helps us practise slowing down, spotting possible bias, and choosing responses that are fair, culturally responsive, and child centred.”

Remind participants

- There is no “perfect answer”
- The goal is reflection and learning, not criticism.
- Focus on impact rather than intent.
- We are examining systems and patterns, not judging individuals

Step 1: Scenario analysis (30 minutes)

- Divide participants into small groups of 3-4.
- Provide each group with one or two scenario cards, and a participant worksheet.
- Ask groups to read the scenario carefully and discuss the following prompts:
 - What bias might be influencing the interpretation here? (e.g., gender bias, cultural bias, disability bias, affinity bias)
 - What assumptions are being made?
 - About behaviour?
 - About ability?
 - About family context?
 - What impact could this interpretation have on the child?
 - On their confidence?

- On their sense of belonging?
 - On how adults respond to them over time?
 - How might this effect opportunities or expectations for the child?
 - What would an appropriate, child-centred response look like instead?
- Encourage groups to rewrite the scenario response in a fair and inclusive way.
 - For example:
 - Replace judgemental labels with descriptive observations
 - Consider alternative explanations
 - Suggest supportive strategies
 - Include family consultation where appropriate
- Remind groups to focus on practical actions

Step 2: Share alternative responses (15-20 minutes)

- Bring the whole group back together.
- Invite each group to share:
 - The bias they identified
 - One assumption they challenged
 - A more inclusive or culturally responsive approach
- As groups share, link discussion back to:
 - Equity and fairness
 - Cultural humility
 - Avoiding stereotypes
 - Children's dignity and rights
 - Child safety and belonging

- Highlight patterns that emerge, such as:
 - Differences in how behaviour is labelled
 - Who receives positive attention
 - How quickly adults jump to conclusions
 - The importance of slowing down before reacting
 - Reinforce that bias often shows up subtly in language and interpretation.

Step 3: Closing reflection (2 minutes)

- Invite participants to complete silently or aloud: *“What question can I ask myself before making a judgement about a child or family?”*
- You may suggest examples such as:
 - *“What else could be happening here?”*
 - *“Is this based on evidence or assumption?”*
 - *“Would I interpret this the same way if it were a different child?”*
 - *“How does this response support the child’s dignity and safety?”*
- Close by reinforcing that awareness of bias strengthens child safety. When we slow down, reflect, and respond with curiosity and fairness, children are more likely to feel respected, included, and safe.



Facilitator tip

Encourage specific language. If groups say, “be more respectful,” ask: *“What would that look like or sound like in practice?”*



Online adaptation (MS Teams or Zoom)

This activity can be delivered online using breakout rooms, shared documents, chat reflections, and optional anonymous tools. The purpose remains the same: to strengthen awareness of bias and support fair, child-centred responses in everyday practice.

Platform preparation (before the session)

- Upload scenario cards and the participant worksheet to a shared folder or display them on slides.
- Prepare breakout rooms for groups of 3-4 participants.
- Create a shared document or whiteboard template for each group or ask one person per group to take notes.
- Optional: prepare an anonymous poll or word cloud for the closing reflection.

Have all links ready before the session begins.

Step 1: Create psychological safety

- Begin with a brief facilitator preamble.
- Provide a wellbeing reminder.
- Acknowledge that discussing bias can feel uncomfortable or confronting.
- Reinforce that the focus is on systems and interpretation, not on judging individuals.
- Remind participants to keep examples de-identified.
- Encourage curiosity, reflection, and respect.

Step 2: Scenario analysis in breakout rooms

- Place participants into breakout rooms of 3-4 people.
- Provide each group with one or two scenario cards and access to the worksheet prompts via chat or shared document.
- Ask groups to read the scenario carefully and discuss the following:
 - *What bias might be influencing the interpretation?*
 - *What assumptions are being made about behaviour, ability, or family context?*
 - *What impact could this interpretation have on the child's confidence, sense of belonging, or how adults respond over time?*
 - *How might this effect opportunities or expectations for the child?*
 - *What would a more appropriate, child-centred response look like instead?*
- Encourage groups to rewrite the response in a fair and inclusive way.
- They might replace judgemental labels with descriptive observations, consider alternative explanations, suggest supportive strategies, and include family consultation where appropriate.
- Remind participants to focus on practical actions and everyday language.
- Let groups know you may visit breakout rooms briefly to answer questions or support discussion.

Step 3: Share alternative responses

- Bring everyone back to the main room.
- Invite each group to share:
 - The bias they identified
 - One assumption they challenged
 - One more inclusive response
- You may capture key phrases or themes on a shared screen or whiteboard.
- Reinforce that bias often appears subtly in language and actions.

Step 4: Closing reflection

- Invite participants to type in the chat, reflect privately, or respond anonymously to the prompt: *“What question can I ask myself before making a judgement about a child or family?”*
- You may offer examples such as:
 - *“What else could be happening here?”*
 - *“Is this based on evidence or assumption?”*
 - *“Would I interpret this the same way if it were a different child?”*
 - *“How does this response support the child’s dignity and safety?”*
- Close by reinforcing that awareness of bias strengthens child safety. When educators slow down, reflect, and respond with curiosity and fairness, children are more likely to feel respected, included, and safe.



Scenario cards: Spot the bias

These scenario cards are designed to prompt reflection and discussion about how personal values, beliefs, and implicit bias may influence professional judgement. The scenarios are intentionally brief and incomplete to prompt discussion. Participants are not expected to determine exactly what is happening. The focus is on noticing assumptions or implicit bias, exploring alternative interpretations, and practising fair, thoughtful and inclusive responses.

These cards are not an exhaustive list. Facilitators are encouraged to adapt, edit, or develop additional scenarios to reflect their own service context, community, cultural diversity, and professional roles. Local examples often create richer and more meaningful discussion.

Participants may identify different biases or interpretations than those anticipated. These should be welcomed and explored respectfully, as diverse perspectives strengthen reflective practice and support child safety.

Scenario Card 1:

During group time, Liam frequently calls out answers and moves around on the mat. Staff describe him as “energetic” and say he has strong leadership qualities.

Later in the week, Mia calls out during group time and leaves the mat without permission. Staff describe her behaviour as “disruptive” and say she needs firmer boundaries. Both children are four years old and display similar behaviours.

Scenario Card 2:

Amir has a speech delay and takes longer to respond during group discussions. When asked a question, he often pauses before answering. One educator begins directing questions to other children instead, assuming Amir “doesn’t understand yet.”

Amir rarely volunteers answers now and participates less during large group discussions.

Scenario Card 3:

A family arrives late for pick-up several times over two weeks. Staff begin describing the family as “disorganised” and “not prioritising routines.” The child often appears tired in the afternoon but is engaged and happy during the day. No one has yet spoken to the family about what may be happening, but staff are aware the family are experiencing some financial difficulties.

Scenario Card 4:

A new child, Sora, avoids eye contact with educators and speaks softly. One staff member comments that Sora seems “withdrawn” and possibly anxious. Sora recently moved to Australia. At home, her family speaks a different language and comes from a culture where avoiding direct eye contact with adults is considered respectful.

Scenario Card 5:

Jackson is often monitored more closely than other children because he has previously had aggressive outbursts. Staff anticipate that he may escalate during transitions. On one occasion, Jackson raises his voice when frustrated, and the response is immediate removal from the activity. Other children displaying similar frustration are given verbal reminders and remain involved.

Scenario Card 6:

A child becomes upset when another child takes a toy without asking. An educator responds by saying, "You're too sensitive, you need to toughen up." Later, staff describe the child as "overly emotional" and "dramatic" in documentation.

The child has recently experienced significant changes at home, though staff are unaware of the details.

Scenario Card 7:

A child who uses a wheelchair waits quietly while other children line up for outdoor play. Educators assume the child prefers to wait and do not offer assistance immediately. The outdoor space has a small step at the entrance that requires support to navigate.

Scenario Card 8:

A child who speaks English as an additional language often plays alone or with one familiar peer. Staff begin to describe the child as "not mixing well" and suggest the child needs to be encouraged to join larger group play. No one has yet asked the child or family about preferred play styles or communication comfort.

Scenario Card 9:

During outdoor play, two children push each other while running. One child has a history of being labelled "rough" and is immediately spoken to firmly. The other child is reminded gently to "be careful."

Scenario Card 10:

During group time, several children find it difficult to sit still for 20 minutes. An educator comments that children "should be able to manage this at their age."



Worksheet: Spot the bias

Spot the bias

Scenario Title: _____

1. What is the behaviour or situation being described?

2. How is the child/ children or family being described?

Identify Possible Bias

3. What assumptions might be influencing this interpretation?

4. What type of bias might be present? (Tick or note all that could apply)

- Gender bias
- Racial or cultural bias
- Disability bias
- Behavioural or developmental expectations
- Socioeconomic bias
- Other: _____

Considering Impact

5. If this interpretation or response continues, what impact could it have on the child/ children's:

Sense of safety?

Sense of belonging?

Confidence or identity?

Opportunities to participate or be heard?

Assess to learning?

6. How might this interpretation or response impact the family's trust in the service?

Challenging Assumptions

7. What other explanations could there be for the child's/children's behaviour or the family's actions?

8. What additional information might we need before forming a judgement?

9. Where might our own experiences, upbringing, or beliefs be shaping our interpretation?

Choosing a Child-Centred Response

10. What would an inclusive response look like in this situation?

11. What practical action could support fairness, dignity, and inclusion?

12. If we rewrote the response in an inclusive and child-centred way, it might sound like:

Instead of saying/doing

We could say/do

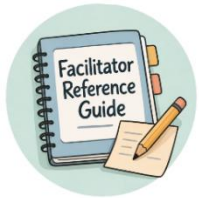
Rewrite the Response

13. Rewrite the original interpretation in a way that is:

- Fair
- Respectful
- Based on observation and curiosity rather than assumption
- Focused on supporting the child

Reflection

14. Before making professional judgements, I can ask myself:



Facilitator reference guide: spot the bias

This reference guide is provided to support facilitator preparation and confidence. It outlines possible themes, biases, impacts, and inclusive responses that may emerge during discussion. It is not intended to be a definitive or exhaustive set of answers.

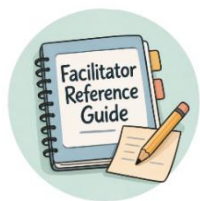
Participants may identify additional insights, alternative interpretations, or different practical responses based on their experience, context, and professional knowledge. These contributions should be welcomed and explored, as shared reflection strengthens collective learning. The goal of this activity is not to arrive at a single “correct” answer, but to deepen awareness, encourage thoughtful discussion, and strengthen fair, inclusive, and child-centred practice.

Scenario	Possible Bias Identified	Assumptions Being Made	Potential Impact on Child	Impact on Family Trust	Alternative Explanations	Culturally Responsive / Inclusive Response	Example Rewrite
1.	Gender bias	Boys are leaders; girls need compliance	Mia may internalise being “difficult;” reduced confidence; unequal discipline	Family may perceive unfair treatment	Both children may need movement breaks; personality differences	Focus on behaviour not gender; reflect on language used in documentation	Instead of “Mia is disruptive,” “Mia appears to need movement during group time.”

2.	Disability bias	Speech delay = lack of understanding Disability=lack of understanding	Reduced participation; loss of confidence; exclusion from learning	Family may feel child is underestimated	Processing time; communication differences; anxiety	Allow wait time; use visuals; check understanding gently	Instead of “He doesn’t understand,” “Amir may need extra time to respond.”
3.	Socioeconomic bias	Lateness = lack of care or responsibility	Child may feel shame; stress during pickup	Family may withdraw or feel judged	Work schedules; transport challenges; caring responsibilities	Curious conversation; supportive partnership	Instead of “They don’t prioritise routines,” “Let’s check if afternoons are challenging for them.”
4.	Cultural bias	Eye contact = engagement Lack of eye contact=rudeness, anxiety or lack of engagement	Child labelled anxious; misinterpreted behaviour	Family feels misunderstood	Cultural norm of respect; language adjustment; settling-in phase	Learn about cultural norms; respect communication styles	Instead of “She’s withdrawn,” “Sora communicates respectfully in her own way.”
5.	Cultural bias Gender bias Behavioural Expectations	Past behaviour predicts future behaviour	Escalation; identity as “problem child;” unequal discipline	Family distrust; perception of unfair treatment	Transition anxiety; emotional regulation skills developing	Reset daily expectations; respond proportionally; equitable support	Instead of immediate removal, “Let’s support Jackson to regulate and stay involved.”

6.	Emotional minimisation; trauma unawareness; gender bias possible	Emotional expression is weakness	Shame; suppression of emotions; unsafe attachment	Family may feel child's needs dismissed	Home changes; stress; attachment needs	Validate feelings; teach coping; respond with empathy	Instead of "You're too sensitive", "It seems that felt upsetting, let's work through it."
7.	Disability bias	Waiting quietly = preference	Reduced access to play; learned helplessness; exclusion	Family questions inclusion commitment	Physical barrier (step); child waiting for support	Proactively remove barriers; offer assistance respectfully	Instead of assuming preference, "Let me support you so you can join in."
8.	Cultural bias; language bias; personality bias	Playing alone = social problem	Child may feel pressured; identity as "antisocial"	Family feels child is misunderstood	Language comfort; temperament; cultural play style	Ask family about preferences; scaffold peer interactions gently	Instead of "He doesn't mix well," "He prefers familiar play partners right now."
9.	Potential racial/cultural bias	History defines behaviour	Unequal consequences; internalised label; reduced belonging	Family perceives discrimination	Shared responsibility; peer dynamics; context of play	Apply consistent responses; reflect on patterns	Instead of firm tone for one child, "Both children need reminders about safe play."
10.	Developmental expectations	Children "should" sit still at age four	Disengagement ; shame;	Families may feel child blamed	Developmentally typical movement;	Shorten group time; add	Instead of "They should manage," "How

			avoidance of learning		need for varied formats	movement; adapt format	can we adjust group time to suit their needs?"
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Facilitator reference guide: Spot the bias worksheet

This reference guide can be used to help guide discussion as participants work through the worksheet.

Worksheet section	Facilitator guidance
Behaviour & Description (Q1-2)	Encourage separation of observable facts from interpretation. Ask: "What did we actually see?"
Identify Bias (Q3-4)	Multiple biases may apply. Bias may be subtle, systemic, or unconscious. Encourage participants to consider language patterns. What additional information may we need to know?
Impact on Child (Q5)	Explore emotional safety, belonging, identity development, confidence, participation, and access to learning.
Impact on Family (Q6)	Link to trust, partnership, cultural safety, and willingness to communicate concerns.
Challenging Assumptions (Q7-9)	Encourage slowing judgement. Ask: "What information are we missing?" "How might our upbringing influence this?"
Child-Centred Response (Q10-11)	Look for curiosity, dignity, flexibility, inclusive adjustments, and collaboration with families.
Rewrite Response (Q12-13)	Language should be objective, neutral, strength-based, supportive, not labelling.
Reflection (Q14)	Encourage a self-check question such as: "Am I responding to behaviour or to my assumptions?"