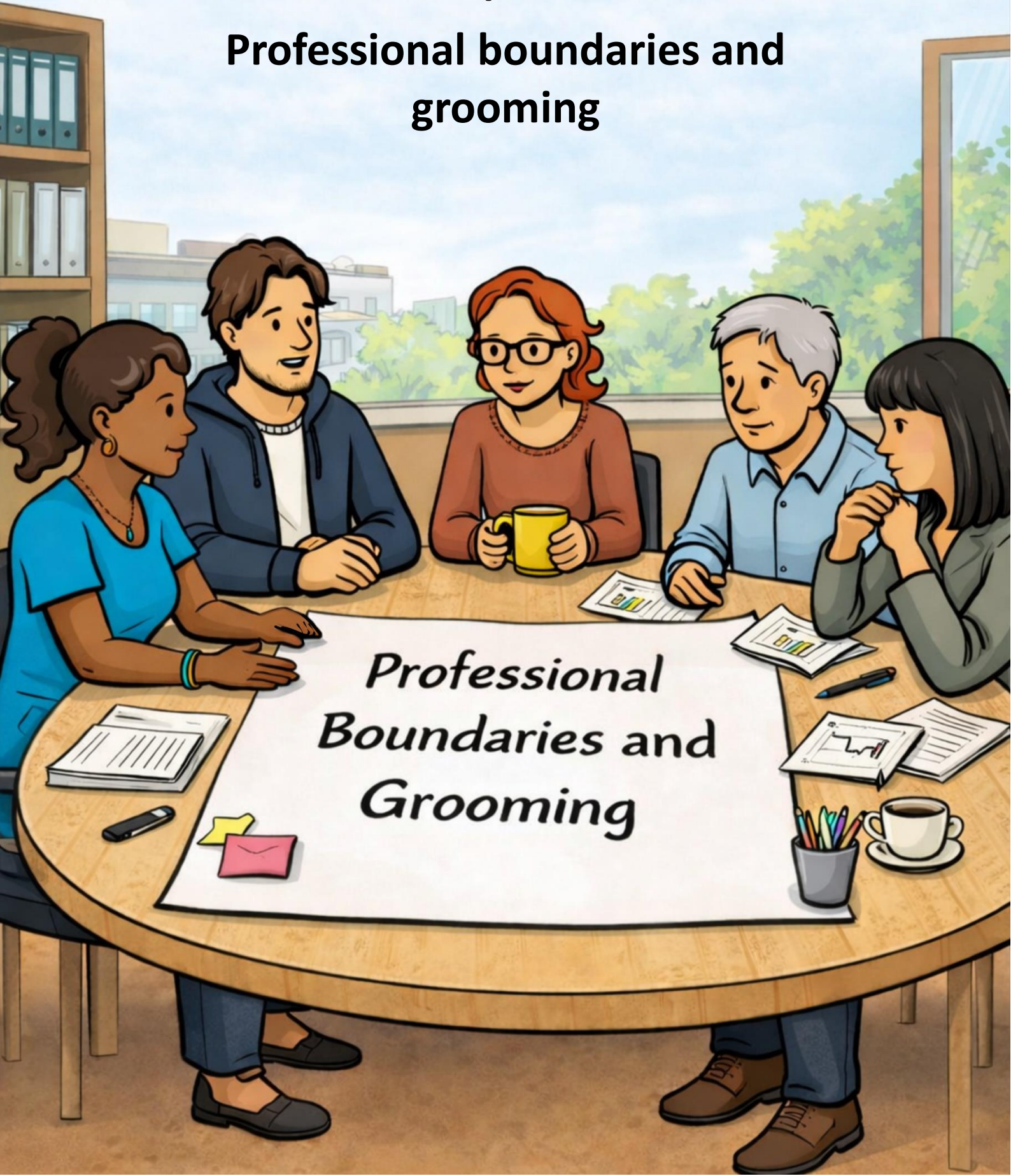


# Topic 7

## Professional boundaries and grooming



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.



## Professional boundaries and grooming

Topic 7 focuses on how clear professional boundaries and safe practice help prevent child abuse and neglect in education and care settings. Boundaries set shared expectations for behaviour and reduce opportunities for harm.

Educators and other staff work in positions of trust and authority with children, which creates a power imbalance. Being aware of how everyday interactions, relationships, and decisions affect safety is a core professional responsibility.

This topic highlights that grooming and boundary violations usually develop gradually, beginning with small behaviours that may seem harmless on their own. Understanding these patterns helps staff notice concerns early and take protective action.

This topic supports participants to:

- Recognise the importance of clear professional boundaries in everyday practice.
- Understand the difference between boundary crossings and boundary violations.
- Identify common grooming behaviours and patterns over time.
- Reflect on power, trust, and vulnerability in education and care settings.
- Strengthen confidence to notice concerns and speak up early.







### Reminder

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

Select, adapt, shorten, or spread activities across sessions or contexts 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.

<b>Activity 1: Small moments, big boundaries</b>	
<b>Objective</b>	<p>This activity supports participants to reflect on how professional boundaries show up in everyday practice and how small decisions can either strengthen safety or increase risk.</p> <p>It helps participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise how professional boundaries are maintained in daily interactions.</li> <li>• Understand how boundary crossings can begin subtly.</li> <li>• Reflect on power, trust, and responsibility in education and care roles.</li> <li>• Practise thinking in terms of patterns, not single actions.</li> </ul>
<b>Time</b>	30-60 minutes
<b>Format</b>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><i>Pair 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>
<b>Materials needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boundary scenario cards</li> <li>• Butcher's paper or whiteboard</li> <li>• Markers</li> </ul>



## Activity plan

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### Facilitator preamble

*“Clear professional boundaries help everyone know what is appropriate and what’s not. They set expectations for professional behaviour and make sure interactions with children are safe and respectful. Clear boundaries and behaviour expectations help protect children, families, and staff, by reducing opportunities for unsafe behaviour before it occurs.”*

### Remind participants:

- Examples should stay general and de-identified
- This is not about accusing or judging individuals
- There may be more than one reasonable perspective
- Noticing early is protective, not overreacting

### Step 1: Small group discussion – “Is this a boundary crossing or violation?” (15-20 minutes)

- Divide participants into small groups of 3-4
- Give each group 2-3 boundary scenario cards (for example: extra one-on-one time, gift giving, social media contact, sharing personal information, staying late alone with a child)
- Ask groups to discuss each scenario using prompts such as:
  - *Does this scenario involve a boundary crossing or boundary violation?*
  - *What boundary is being tested or blurred here?*
  - *Does this scenario feel appropriate, unclear, or concerning?*
  - *How might power, privacy, or isolation be playing a role?*
  - *What would help keep this interaction public, purposeful, and professional?*
  - *How could this be discussed or supported within a team?*
- Encourage groups to focus on context and accumulation, not intent.

### Step 2: Boundary line reflection (10-15 minutes)

- On butcher's paper or a whiteboard, draw a simple line with: "Professional conduct" at one end and "Boundary Violation" at the other
- Invite groups to place their scenarios somewhere along the line
- Emphasise that placement differences are expected and useful

### Step 3: Whole-group reflection (10 minutes)

- Facilitate discussion using questions such as:
  - *Which scenarios generated the most discussion or uncertainty?*
  - *What helps keep boundaries clear in busy or complex settings?*
  - *How does talking openly about boundaries reduce the risk of grooming?*

### Step 4: Closing reflection (5 minutes)

- Invite participants to silently complete this sentence (written or thought): "One boundary I want to be more mindful of in my role is..."
- Optionally invite a few volunteers to share.



#### Facilitator tips

- Reinforce that professional boundaries protect everyone
- Normalise uncertainty and the need for consultation
- Redirect if discussion becomes personal or accusatory
- Emphasise that grooming is about patterns over time, not single acts



## Online adaptation (MS Teams or Zoom)

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This activity can be delivered online using breakout rooms, shared slides or documents, and whole-group discussion. The purpose remains the same: to help participants reflect on how professional boundaries show up in everyday practice and how small decisions can either strengthen safety or increase risk.

### Platform Preparation (before the session)

- Prepare 5–10 boundary scenario cards on slides or in a shared document.
- Prepare a visual “Boundary Line” slide showing a continuum from:
  - Professional Conduct
  - Boundary Crossing
  - Boundary Violation

### Step 1: Create psychological safety

- Begin with the facilitator preamble and a brief wellbeing reminder.
- Reinforce that this is a reflective activity, not an audit or judgement of individuals.
- Emphasise that uncertainty and disagreement are expected and useful.
- Remind participants that observing, listening, or reflecting silently are valid ways to participate.
- Encourage cameras on or off based on comfort.
- Advise that examples must remain de-identified and focused on practice, not individuals.
- Remind participants they may step away briefly if needed.

**Step 2: Breakout room discussion – “Is this a boundary crossing or violation?”**

- Place participants into breakout rooms of 3-4 people.
- Before opening rooms, display and paste instructions in the chat:
  - Discuss each scenario by considering:
    - What professional boundary is involved?
    - What feels clear? What feels blurred or unclear?
    - How might power, privacy, or isolation influence the situation?
    - Does this feel like a one-off moment, or something that could build over time?
    - What would help keep the interaction public, purposeful, and professional?
    - How could this be raised or supported within a team?
- Encourage participants to focus on patterns and context, rather than intent.
- Facilitators move between breakout rooms to listen and gently prompt:
  - *“What makes this feel like a crossing rather than a violation?”*
  - *“What would strengthen transparency here?”*
  - *“How might this be experienced by a child or family?”*

**Step 3: Boundary line reflection**

- Bring participants back into the main room.
- Share a simple Boundary Line visual on screen.
- Invite each group to place their scenarios along this line using:
  - annotation tools
  - Drag and Drop on a shared slide
  - Verbal explanation while the facilitator moves items
- Emphasise that differences in placement are expected and valuable, and that the learning comes from hearing different perspectives.

**Step 4: Whole-group reflection**

- Facilitate a whole-group discussion by drawing on themes from the breakout rooms. Prompts may include:
  - *Which scenarios created the most uncertainty?*
  - *What makes boundaries harder to maintain in busy or stretched settings?*
  - *How can teams support each other to notice boundary crossings early?*
  - *How do open conversations about boundaries reduce the risk of grooming?*
  - *How might cultural norms around authority or hierarchy influence willingness to speak up?*
- Capture key themes live on a shared slide or whiteboard.

**Step 5: Closing reflection**

- Invite participants to quietly complete the sentence, either by typing privately or reflecting silently: *“One boundary I want to be more mindful of in my role is...”*
- If appropriate, invite a few volunteers to share in the chat or verbally.
- Close by reinforcing that noticing and talking about boundaries early is a protective practice, not an overreaction.



## Scenario cards: Boundaries

For printing. Cut out each square individually.

An educator consistently chooses the same child to sit next to them during group time.	A staff member gives one child extra hugs compared to others.
An adult often praises one child as being “more mature” or “special.”	A child is regularly given small treats or rewards that others don’t receive.
A child is upset at arrival. An educator kneels beside them in the room, speaks calmly, and offers reassurance while staying visible to other staff and children.	A child prefers one educator. The educator intentionally supports the child to build comfort with other staff by involving colleagues in care routines and transitions.
An educator spends longer than expected one-on-one with the same child.	A child is encouraged to keep small “secrets” like surprise gifts or games.
A staff member positions themselves as a child’s “favourite” adult.	An adult allows a child to break rules that apply to others.
A child prefers one educator. The educator intentionally supports the child to build comfort with other staff by involving colleagues in care routines and transitions.	When a child needs support with big feelings, an educator moves to a quiet but visible area with an open door, staying within sight of others.

A staff member often volunteers to help with personal care tasks for the same child.	An educator frequently takes a child to quieter or less visible spaces.
A staff member offers to babysit or transport a child outside of work hours.	An adult sends messages or photos directly to a child's family outside normal channels.
A staff member stays back alone with a child after others have left.	A child seeks out one particular adult for comfort every time they are upset. The adult allows the child to sit on their lap for extended periods of time, even when the child is no longer upset.
When a child needs support with big feelings, an educator moves to a quiet but visible area with an open door, staying within sight of others.	A child asks personal questions about the educator's life. The educator responds briefly and redirects the conversation back to the child's experience and feelings.
A staff member regularly gives one child special jobs and privileges because "they need extra encouragement." Other children have begun to comment on it.	An educator notices one child often seeks them out for hugs and reassurance. Over time, the educator begins spending more one-on-one time with this child than others, especially during rest time.
A staff member is described as "so dedicated" and "always willing to help."	An educator builds very strong relationships with families very quickly.

<p>A staff member dismisses concerns as “overthinking” or “being too sensitive.”</p>	<p>Colleagues hesitate to question someone because they are popular or experienced.</p>
<p>A colleague discourages raising concerns to avoid “causing trouble.”</p>	<p>An adult is given extra flexibility because they are seen as reliable or trusted.</p>
<p>An educator shares details about their own family stress and relationships with a child during quiet moments, saying it helps the child feel understood.</p>	<p>An educator who knows a family socially informs their supervisor and follows agreed boundaries for communication and decision-making at the service.</p>
<p>A staff member takes photos of children on their personal phone “just in case the service device isn’t nearby,” planning to upload them later.</p>	<p>In a small community, an educator also coaches a child’s sports team and regularly sees the family socially. Boundaries at the service feel harder to maintain.</p>
<p>A child who struggles with transitions is supported through consistent routines and shared strategies agreed upon by the whole team.</p>	<p>Conversations with families happen in shared spaces or scheduled meetings, with clear documentation and communication through approved channels.</p>
<p>A staff member regularly takes one child into a quieter space to talk about their feelings, closing the door for privacy.</p>	<p>A staff member regularly takes one child into a quieter space to talk about their feelings, closing the door for privacy.</p>



## Extension - Linking to the National Quality Standard and Child Safe Standards

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### Facilitator guidance (optional extension)

This section can be used to deepen reflection or briefly connect learning to professional frameworks. It is not essential to cover in detail.

You may choose to:

- Weave links into discussion naturally
- Offer a short summary at the end
- Skip this section if the group is already deeply engaged

### How this activity aligns with the National Quality Standard (NQS)

#### Quality Area 2: Children's Health and Safety

Professional boundaries help keep children physically and emotionally safe. When interactions are open, visible, and purposeful, the risk of harm is reduced and children are better protected.

This activity supports educators to reflect on how everyday decisions about comfort, privacy, and attention can either strengthen or weaken safety.

#### Quality Area 4: Staffing Arrangements

Clear boundaries are a shared responsibility across teams. Talking openly about small boundary moments supports professional accountability, supervision, and consistent practice.

This activity reinforces that safe practice is not about mistrust, but about teamwork and support.

### Quality Area 5: Relationships with Children

Strong relationships are essential, but they must remain professional. This activity helps educators balance warmth and care with clear limits that protect children and adults.




It supports relationships that are respectful, predictable, and safe.

### Quality Area 7: Governance and Leadership

Services with strong child-safe cultures encourage reflection, discussion, and early action. Using boundary scenarios supports a learning culture where concerns can be raised without fear or blame.

This activity helps translate policies and codes of conduct into everyday practice.



<b>Activity 2: Expanding the lens</b>	
<b>Objective</b>	<p>This activity supports participants to recognise that grooming does not only target children. It often involves building trust with adults, teams, and whole organisations. The activity helps participants think beyond individual behaviour and reflect on how organisational culture, systems, and power dynamics can either increase or reduce risk.</p> <p>It supports participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognise how trust is built with families, staff, leaders, and services.</li> <li>• Identify key features of institutional grooming, including trust, opportunity, anonymity, secrecy, and power.</li> <li>• Reflect on how organisational culture and everyday practice influence safety.</li> <li>• Strengthen a shared understanding of collective responsibility for child safety.</li> </ul>
<b>Time</b>	40–55 minutes
<b>Format</b>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p><i>Pair 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>
<b>Materials needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scenario cards with reflection questions</li> </ul>



## Activity plan

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### Facilitator preamble

*“Grooming doesn’t usually start with obvious harm. It often begins by building trust with adults and organisations. This activity helps us widen our lens and think about how systems, culture, and everyday practices can either protect children or increase risk.”*

### Remind participants

- Keep discussion focused on systems, roles, and culture, not individuals
- All scenarios are fictional and de-identified
- There are no right or wrong answers, the learning is in the discussion

### Step 1: Scenario review (20 minutes)

- Invite participants to work in pairs or small groups.
- Give each group one scenario card.
- Ask groups to read the scenario slowly and then discuss the reflection questions provided on the card.
- Remind groups that uncertainty is expected and useful. The aim is not to decide what is “wrong,” but to practise noticing how grooming can operate at an organisational level.



### Facilitator tip

If participants from family day care settings express concern that scenarios feel centre-based, acknowledge this openly and invite them to adapt the discussion to their context/

**Step 2: Group discussion (10-15 minutes)**

- Bring the group back together and invite each group to share one insight from their discussion.
- Use the following prompts to guide reflection:
  - *Which organisational features felt most familiar or recognisable?*
  - *What makes these features difficult to notice or challenge in real settings?*
  - *What practices, structures, or cultural norms help protect organisations from being groomed?*

**Facilitator tips**

- Keep the conversation grounded in culture, systems, and everyday practice rather than individual behaviour.
- Reinforce that even strong, well-intentioned organisations can be vulnerable.
- Where appropriate, link discussion back to child-safe culture, shared accountability, and the importance of early noticing and open conversation.



## Online adaptation (MS Teams or Zoom)

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This activity can be delivered online using breakout rooms and shared discussion. The purpose remains the same: to help participants recognise that grooming can operate at an organisational level, by building trust with adults, teams, and systems, not just children.

### Platform Preparation (before the session)

- Prepare each organisational grooming scenario on a separate slide or in a shared document.
- Prepare reflection questions on a slide or shared document so they remain visible in breakout rooms (via copy/paste into chat if needed).
- Set up breakout rooms in advance (3-4 participants per group).

### Step1: Create psychological safety

- Begin by reading the facilitator preamble aloud.
- Provide a brief wellbeing reminder.
- Reinforce that the activity focuses on systems, roles, and culture rather than judging individuals.
- Remind participants that all scenarios are fictional and de-identified.
- Encourage cameras on or off based on comfort.
- Remind participants they may step away briefly if needed.

### Step2: Scenario review in breakout rooms

- Place participants into breakout rooms of 2-4 people.
- Before opening rooms, display and paste into the chat:
  - Discuss the scenario by exploring:
    - *Where is trust being built, and with whom?*
    - *How might power, access, or opportunity be operating?*

- *What makes this situation feel normal or hard to question?*
- *What systems, processes, or cultural norms may be missing or unclear?*
- *How could this situation evolve over time if unchallenged?*
- Share one scenario with each group via:
  - A shared slide
  - Posting in the chat
  - A shared document
- Ask groups to read the scenario slowly and then discuss the reflection questions provided.
- Encourage groups to focus on noticing how trust, power, opportunity, secrecy, or organisational culture may be operating.
- Remind participants that the aim is not to decide whether something is “wrong,” but to practise widening their lens and noticing how grooming can take place within systems.



### Facilitator tip

If helpful, facilitators can visit breakout rooms briefly to listen and gently prompt discussion using questions such as:

- *Who is being trusted here?*
- *What makes this situation feel normal or hard to question?*
- *What systems or practices are missing or unclear?*

### Step 3: Whole group sharing and reflection

- Bring participants back to the main room.
- Invite each group to share one key insight or question that emerged from their discussion.
- Emphasise that groups may have noticed different things, and that this diversity of perspectives strengthens collective understanding.
- Guide the discussion using prompts such as:
  - *Which organisational features felt most familiar or recognisable?*

- *What makes these features difficult to notice or challenge in real settings?*
- *What practices, structures, or cultural norms help protect organisations from being groomed?*
- *How does collective responsibility reduce reliance on individual judgement?*
- Capture key words or themes in the chat or on a shared screen if useful.

#### **Step 4: Closing reflection**

- Invite participants to complete in the chat or privately: *“One organisational practice that helps prevent grooming is...”*
- Close by reinforcing that noticing organisational risk is protective, not accusatory, and that child safety is strengthened when teams reflect together rather than relying on individuals to “get it right” alone.



## Scenario cards: Expanding the lens

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These scenarios and reflection questions have been developed for use in this activity. Facilitators are also encouraged to create their own scenarios, which may be based on everyday practice, case examples, or common situations in their service. If developing your own scenarios, ensure they remain fully de-identified.

### Scenario 1: “Everyone Loves Them”

An educator is widely described as “the heart of the service.” They are always positive, volunteer for extra shifts, and regularly help families outside their role. Parents often ask for their advice and praise them to management.

Other staff notice that this educator spends a lot of one-on-one time with certain children, but no one has raised concerns because they are so trusted and well-liked.

#### Discussion focus:

- Who is being positioned as trustworthy in this scenario, and why?
- Who else might be being groomed here besides the child (for example, families, colleagues, leadership, or the service as a whole)?
- How can popularity and goodwill make it harder to notice or question boundary concerns?
- What risks arise when trust is based on reputation rather than shared, observable practice?
- What systems or team practices could help ensure that trust does not replace supervision or accountability?

**Scenario 2: “The Helpful Volunteer”**

A volunteer has been part of the service for several years. They know most families by name and are often asked to help during busy times. Because staffing is tight, they are sometimes left alone supervising small groups of children or helping with transitions, even though their role description is vague.

Staff feel uncomfortable questioning this because “they’ve always helped out” and management is grateful for the support.

- **Discussion focus:**  
What assumptions are being made about this person’s role and responsibilities?
- Which organisational weaknesses are present being relied on (for example, unclear role descriptions, staffing pressure, informal decision-making)?
- How does gratitude or relief during busy times affect boundary-setting?
- Who might feel least able to question what is happening, and why?
- What clear structures or processes would reduce reliance on informal trust in this situation?

**Scenario 3: “Let’s Not Make a Big Deal”**

A staff member quietly raises a concern about a colleague’s boundaries with children. Their room leader responds by saying, “I’m sure it’s nothing - let’s just keep an eye on it and not escalate.” No documentation is made, and the issue isn’t discussed again. The colleague continues their usual practice.

**Discussion focus:**

- Who is being protected by this response, and who is not?
- How might this response affect the organisations culture over time?
- What message does this send about raising concerns or speaking up?
- How might silence or lack of documentation increase risk, even if intentions are good?
- What would a child-safe response look like at the organisational level?

**Scenario 4: “A Great Relationship with Families”**

An educator has particularly strong relationships with several families. They message parents directly, offer advice about behaviour at home, and sometimes provide support outside work hours. Families say they feel very lucky to have such a caring educator and trust them completely.

Other staff are unsure whether this level of contact is appropriate, but there are no clear guidelines about communication with families.

**Discussion focus:**

- How is trust being built with families in this scenario, and through what means?
- What risks arise when professional boundaries are unclear or inconsistent across a service?
- How might cultural expectations about educator–family relationships influence how this level of contact is viewed?
- How might risk increase for a child of families be unintentionally groomed to rely on one individual rather than the organisation?
- How does the lack of clear guidelines increase vulnerability for both staff, and families and children?
- How can services balance culturally responsive relationship-building with clear, transparent, and shared professional boundaries?
- What systems could help keep relationships professional, transparent, and shared?
- How might this scenario look different in a family day care context, where direct communication and close family relationships are expected? What additional transparency or documentation would help maintain safety?

**Scenario 5: “We Can Handle This Internally”**

A complaint is made by a parent about a staff member’s behaviour. Leadership decides to manage the issue quietly to avoid upsetting families or attracting attention from the regulator. Staff are told the issue has been “sorted,” but no one is clear what action was taken or what has changed.

**Discussion focus:**

- What messages does this response send to staff about speaking up?
- How might families interpret a lack of transparency or follow-up?
- What does this teach children, indirectly, about safety and accountability?
- How can secrecy or image protection contribute to institutional grooming?
- What balance is needed between managing concerns sensitively and maintaining openness and child safety?

**Facilitator tips**

- Some scenarios may feel different depending on context (e.g., centre-based, family day care).
- Encourage participants to consider how supervision structures, staffing patterns, and service type influence risk and protection.

### **Scenario 6: “Just Between You and Me”**

During rest time, one child often struggles to settle. An educator regularly invites the child to sit beside them on a chair rather than on their mat, stroking their back until they fall asleep. Other educators notice this happens most days and usually with the same child. The educator explains, “They just need extra comfort. It works better this way.” No concerns have been raised, and the practice has become routine.

Note: In many settings, particularly with younger children or in family day care, providing comfort and physical reassurance during rest can be appropriate. The focus here is on patterns, exclusivity, and visibility over time, rather than on comfort itself.

### **Reflection and focus questions**

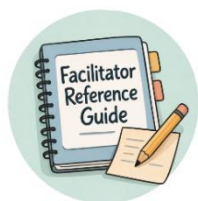
- Does this scenario involve a boundary crossing? If yes, why? Or does it represent a pattern that may require clearer team discussion and shared practice?
- How might power, dependency, or exclusivity be developing over time?
- How does repetition change how this interaction should be viewed?
- What alternative, child-safe ways could comfort be provided while keeping boundaries clear?
- How could this be discussed within a team without blaming or accusing?

**Scenario 7: “They Prefer Me”**

A child regularly seeks out one educator during free play and asks to talk privately. The educator often moves with the child to a quiet corner or separate space so they can “have a proper chat.” The child refers to these moments as “our special talks” and becomes upset when another staff member joins them. The educator says the child trusts them and opens up more when no one else is around.

**Discussion focus:**

- What boundary moments are present in this scenario?
- Does this scenario involve a boundary crossing? If yes, why?
- How might privacy and secrecy be increasing risk, even if intentions feel caring?
- What signals suggest a shift from supportive interaction to potential concern?
- How could this situation be adjusted to remain public, purposeful, and protective?
- What team or organisational practices would help support safer interactions?
- How might this scenario be experienced differently in a setting where educators work alone (such as family day care), and what additional protective strategies might be needed in those contexts?



## Facilitator reference guide: Expanding the lens





This table is provided as a facilitation support tool, not a set of correct answers. It highlights common themes, patterns, and discussion points that may emerge when exploring how grooming can target adults, teams, and organisations, not just children.

The guidance is intended to help you draw out learning about systems, culture, power, and trust, rather than individual behaviour or intent. Participants may identify additional insights or interpret scenarios differently based on their roles, experiences, or service context. These perspectives should be welcomed and explored, as the learning comes from shared reflection and discussion.

You are encouraged to adapt this table, add your own notes, or develop additional examples that reflect your service, community, or regulatory environment. Use it as a reference to support conversation, not as a script or checklist.

Scenario	Facilitator guidance / key points to draw out
Scenario 1: "Everyone loves them"	Families may be groomed through trust and perceived dedication, making questioning less likely. Colleagues may feel unable to raise concerns because the educator is popular and well-liked. The organisation may assume the educator poses no risk due to their good reputation. Trust and social power reduce scrutiny and normalise one-on-one access.
Scenario 2: "The helpful volunteer"	Vague role boundaries, staffing pressure, and gratitude create opportunity and anonymity. The organisation may overlook supervision policies because the help is convenient. Staff may feel indebted or reluctant to question behaviour. Clear role descriptions and supervision are missing protective factors.
Scenario 3: "Let's not make a big deal"	Leaders and staff may minimise concerns. A culture of silence is reinforced, teaching staff that raising issues is uncomfortable or unwelcome. The organisation prioritises harmony and reputation over safety, which increases long-term risk and discourages early reporting.
Scenario 4: "A great relationship"	Families may be groomed into trusting one individual rather than the service. Private communication reduces visibility and oversight. Organisational boundaries become blurred, increasing

with families”	reliance on personal relationships instead of shared systems and agreed communication practices.
Scenario 5: “They know what they’re doing”	Power and seniority are central in this scenario. Experience and confidence are used to shut down questioning, which can result in newer or less confident staff feeling unable to speak up. The organisation may rely too heavily on reputation rather than accountability. This creates a hierarchy where concerns feel unsafe to raise, reducing collective responsibility and oversight.
Scenario 6: “We can handle this internally”	Staff receive the message that transparency is risky and that concerns will be managed quietly rather than openly. Families may be excluded from meaningful information, and children’s safety becomes secondary to image and reputation of the service. Secrecy and lack of follow-up weaken a child-safe culture.
Scenario 7: “You can sit with me”	The child may be groomed through secrecy and special attention, while staff may be groomed into overlooking concerns because the interaction appears caring or minor. Privacy and isolation increase risk. The organisation may lack clear guidance on one-on-one interactions, allowing boundary crossings to go unnoticed.
Scenario 8: “They prefer me”	The child may be groomed into dependency on one adult, while colleagues may ignore or minimise boundary crossings because the child appears settled or attached. The educator’s role becomes centralised rather than shared. This reduces supervision, limits transparency, and increases risk by normalising exclusive relationships instead of team-based care.

<b>Activity 3: From noticing to action</b>	
<b>Objective</b>	<p>This activity supports participants to practise what happens after something concerning is noticed. The focus is on role-appropriate action rather than investigation or decision-making about harm.</p> <p>It helps participants to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build confidence moving from concern to action without needing certainty</li> <li>• Practise using calm, objective, child-safe language</li> <li>• Reinforce the importance of documentation, consultation, and following service processes</li> </ul>
<b>Time</b>	35–50 minutes
<b>Format</b>	<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>Pair Work</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>
<b>Materials needed</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ‘What would you do next?’ scenario and prompt worksheet</li> <li>• Pens</li> </ul>



## Activity plan

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### Facilitator preamble

*“Noticing potential grooming or boundary violations is only part of the work. What matters just as much is knowing what to do next, calmly, professionally, and within our role. This activity is about practising that step.”*

### Remind participants

- You do not need certainty to act.
- This activity is not about proving harm or making judgements.
- Early action and consultation are protective.
- Always follow your service and jurisdictional procedures.

### Step 1: Individual work (15 minutes)

- Provide each participant with the ‘What would you do next?’ worksheet.
- Ask participants to work independently through the scenario and prompts.
- Explain that the worksheet is a thinking tool, not an assessment. Participants do not need to complete every question in detail. Brief notes or dot points are enough.

### Step 2: Pair sharing – reflecting on responses (10-15 minutes)

- Invite participants to pair up.
- In pairs, ask participants to share only what they feel comfortable sharing, focusing on the *process* rather than the scenario details. Prompt pairs to discuss:
  - What felt clear or straightforward
  - What felt uncertain or uncomfortable
  - How role, experience, or workplace culture influenced their thinking

- Encourage listening rather than problem-solving. Differences in responses are expected and useful.

### Step 3: Whole-group consolidation (10-15 minutes)

- Bring the group back together and facilitate a whole-group discussion that draws out shared themes rather than individual decisions.
- Use prompts such as:
  - What helped people move from noticing to taking action?
  - What makes acting early easier or harder in real settings?
- As facilitator, reflect and name shared principles, including:
  - The importance of noticing patterns over time
  - Documenting observations objectively and promptly
  - Consulting early rather than carrying concerns alone
  - Following service policies and escalation pathways
  - Understanding role boundaries and responsibilities

### Step 4: Closing reflection (2-5 minutes)

- Invite participants to quietly complete the sentence, either in writing or reflection: *“One thing that helps me notice and act early when something feels off is...”*
- Optionally invite a few volunteers to share.



#### Facilitator tips

- Keep focus on role-appropriate action
- Reinforce early action as protective
- Avoid hypotheticals that escalate into investigation



## Online adaptation (MS Teams or Zoom)

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This activity can be delivered online using individual reflection, breakout rooms, and whole-group discussion. The purpose remains the same: to support participants to practise what happens *after* something concerning is noticed, with a focus on calm, role-appropriate action rather than investigation or judgement.

### Platform Preparation (before the session)

- Prepare the “What would you do next?” scenario on a slide or shared document.
- Prepare the reflection prompts in a clearly structured format so they can be easily read on screen or pasted into chat.
- Set up breakout rooms in advance.
- Prepare a shared slide or whiteboard to capture key themes during whole-group reflection.

### Step 1: Create psychological safety

- Begin by reading the facilitator preamble aloud.
- Provide a brief wellbeing reminder.
- Reinforce that the activity focuses on what to do next after noticing a concern, not on proving harm or having certainty.
- Remind participants that early action and consultation are protective.
- Emphasise that they must always follow their service and jurisdictional procedures.
- Encourage cameras on or off based on comfort.
- Reinforce that examples and discussion must remain de-identified and practice focused.
- Remind participants they can step away from their computer if needed.

### Step 2: Individual reflection (quiet work)

- Share the **'What would you do next?'** scenario and reflection prompt via:
  - Share screen
  - Posting in chat
  - Shared document
- Invite participants to work independently through the scenario and prompts.
- Let them know they can:
  - Write brief notes
  - Use keywords or dot points
  - Reflect silently
  - Computer only the question most relevant to them
- Remind participants that the worksheet is a thinking tool, not an assessment.

### Step 3: Breakout room reflection

- Place participants into breakout rooms in pairs.
- Before opening rooms, display and paste into chat:
  - Discuss:
    - *What was your first instinct after noticing the concern?*
    - *What helped you move from noticing to deciding what to do next?*
    - *What role boundaries were important to keep in mind?*
    - *Where would consultation or escalation occur?*
- Invite pairs to share only what they feel comfortable sharing, focusing on how they approached the situation rather than the details of the scenario.
- Remind participants that listening is as important as speaking, and that differences in responses are expected and useful. The aim is reflection, not problem-solving.
- Facilitator should briefly visit the breakout rooms to gently prompt:

- *“What helped clarify your next steps?”*
- *“How would you document this objectively?”*

#### **Step 4: Whole group sharing and reflection**

- Bring participants back to the main room.
- Invite each pair to share one key insight, question, or take away from their discussion, rather than individual decisions or actions.
- Guide the discussion using prompts such as:
  - *“What helped people move from noticing to action?”*
  - *“What makes early action easier or harder in real settings?”*
- As facilitator, reflect and name shared principles that emerge, such as:
  - Noticing patterns over time
  - Documenting observations objectively and promptly
  - Consulting early rather than carrying concerns alone
  - Following service policies and escalation pathways
  - Understanding role boundaries and responsibilities
- You may capture key words or themes in the chat or on a shared screen if helpful.

#### **Step 5: Closing message**

- Close by reinforcing that acting early is protective, not overreacting, and that child safety is strengthened when educators rely on shared processes, consultation, and teamwork rather than individual judgement alone.
- You may invite participants to quietly reflect on the sentence:  
*“One thing that helps me notice and act early when something feels off is...”*



## Worksheet: From noticing to action

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For printing. Provide one worksheet to each participant.

The scenario and questions can be adapted to suit your service, role, or context. Facilitators may also choose to develop their own scenarios or reflection questions, provided all examples remain de-identified.

### From Noticing to Action

This worksheet supports you to think through what to do after noticing a concern, focusing on your role and responsibilities rather than certainty or investigation.

Select one of the scenarios below, read it carefully, and use it to guide your reflections as you work through the questions. The purpose is to support thinking, discussion, and confidence in next steps.

#### Scenario Option 2

Two-family day-care educators regularly meet at a local park with the children in their care. During these visits, one educator often takes one particular child aside to play in a quieter area of the park, slightly out of view of the other educator.

The educator gives the child small treats from their bag and says things like, "This can be our little secret, you're my special helper today."

When the other educator suggests staying closer together for supervision, the educator responds, "It's fine, I've been doing this for years. I know what I'm doing."

The child has started asking to go to the park only when that educator will be there. The second educator feels uneasy but is unsure whether they are overreacting. They also worry about damaging the professional relationship.

**Individual reflection: What would you do next?**

Take a few minutes to reflect quietly. Write as much or as little as you like.

**1. Pause and notice** - What behaviours or patterns stand out to you?

**2. Put it into words** - What would you document if you were concerned? (Stick to what was seen or heard, not assumptions.)

**3. Consult, don't carry it alone** - Who would you talk to next in your role, and why?

**4. Boundaries and practice** - Are there any immediate practice or boundary issues that could be addressed to reduce risk?

**5. The child's experience** - How might this situation feel from the child's point of view?

**6. Team and culture** - What does this scenario raise about roles, supervision, or speaking up in the service?

**7. Following process** - What policies, procedures, or expectations would guide next steps in your service?

**8. If you're unsure** - If you were still unsure, what would be the safest next step?