

How kaimahi and organisations can help keep children safe

Whether you work in education, health, social services, sport and recreation, faith communities, or the wider community, the environments you create and the relationships you build can make a real difference to a child's wellbeing and safety.

Every organisation, professional and kaimahi (worker or staff member) working with children, young people, and whānau has a duty of care to keep children safe. This means having the tools and knowledge to identify, respond to, and prevent harm to children and young people.

By creating safe, inclusive and culturally responsive spaces, you can help children feel safe, seen, heard, and protected – and make it easier for tamariki and rangatahi to speak up when something is wrong.

Create safe and welcoming spaces

Make sure the environments you create are welcoming, child-friendly, and designed with children's safety and wellbeing in mind.

Ensure your spaces work for all children, including disabled children, rainbow children and young people, and children from different cultural backgrounds.

Build your understanding of the cultures, experiences, and needs of the children and families you work alongside.

Listen to children and young people and build trusted relationships

Children and young people are safer, more confident, and better supported when they feel heard and connected to trusted adults.

Organisations and professionals can support this by:

- involving children and young people in decisions and planning
- making it easier for them to raise concerns and ask for help
- putting children's best interests at the centre of decision-making
- being approachable, respectful and reliable
- modelling safe, and inclusive behaviour
- recognising and encouraging their strengths and efforts.

Strong, trusting relationships help children and young people feel confident to speak up and seek support when needed.

Have clear safeguarding policies

Every organisation working with children should have clear child safeguarding policies and processes.

These help staff and volunteers understand what safe practice looks like – e.g. safe social and physical interaction, appropriate ways to comfort a tamaiti if they are distressed, transport guidance and ensuring that staff are not alone with children – as well as how to prevent harm, how to recognise concerns and what to do if staff feel a child may be unsafe.

Safeguarding includes:

- safe recruitment and safety checking
- regular safeguarding training
- clear reporting procedures
- responding to disclosures and managing allegations against staff
- leadership that promotes child safety.

Know the signs and respond early

Children may not always speak directly about harm. Kaimahi need to know the signs that may indicate abuse, neglect, family violence, or other concerns, and act early when something doesn't feel right. This may include raising a concern, reporting unsafe behaviour, or making sure a child gets support.

A strong safeguarding culture is one where adults speak up and act in the best interests of the child..

Keep your safeguarding and protection policies updated

Talk regularly with hoamahi (colleagues) about mokopuna safety and protection. Induct new staff through your child safeguarding and protection policy, share knowledge, and encourage reflection on why these policies matter.

Building shared understanding across your office helps normalise conversations about child abuse and strengthens a commitment to prevention.

Show your organisation's commitment to mokopuna safety by communicating it clearly to mokopuna, whānau, and your wider community.

Display your policy in public places, on your website, and consider child-friendly versions to make your commitment easy to understand.

“It’s helpful when you [support worker] actually get stuff done and you take me seriously.”¹

Mokopuna

Work together to protect children

Keeping children safe often means working together. When concerns arise, organisations may need to work with other services to support the child and whānau.

This includes:

- knowing when information can be shared to protect a child
- connecting families with support services
- working with other agencies when needed.

Sharing information safely and appropriately can help children get support sooner.

Find out more:

[Office of the Privacy Commissioner: Sharing information to protect the wellbeing and safety of children and young people.](#)

Resources and information

Child safeguarding and protection training providers

[Child matters](#)

[Holistic safeguarding](#)

[Safeguarding children](#)

[See the signs](#)

Directories for training, webinars, conferences and other learning opportunities:

[KidsHealth New Zealand – listing of information, support and resources on child abuse](#)

[Sport Integrity Commission – child safeguarding](#)

[Violence Information Aotearoa - Vine calendar | training, webinars, conferences, and professional development](#)

[Whāraurau - Training and events calendar](#)

Resources, information and examples for your organisation:

[Child Matters – creating a safe organisation](#)

[Creating a safeguarding culture](#)

[New Zealand Rugby – child safeguarding and protection](#)

[Responding to disclosures](#)

[Sport Integrity Commission Te Kahu Raunui – Safeguarding and protecting children and young people](#)

[The barriers to safety and what we think needs to change: Mana Mokopuna position paper](#)

Mokopuna voices about this kaupapa

[A place to talk peacefully - Mana Mokopuna \(2024\):](#)

Children and young people shared with us what helped and what hindered when accessing support after experiencing family violence and sexual violence.

This report has important insights and suggestions to learn from.

¹ [“A place to talk peacefully”: Mokopuna voices on healing from family violence and sexual violence in Aotearoa](#)