Risk assessment and management templates

To develop effective prevention and mitigation strategies, organisations need to identify risks of child abuse and harm within their operations. This involves looking at where and how the organisation engages with children (whether in a physical or online environment) and focusing on risks to children, rather than risks to the organisation.

These templates use research commissioned for the Royal Commission[[1]](#footnote-1) and are designed to help organisations in identifying, assessing, and managing the risk of child abuse and harm.

An organisational risk assessment template, activity risk assessment template and risk management plan template are provided. The templates can be used to identify, analyse and plan to control risks and to regularly review and monitor risk. They can also be used to conduct a risk assessment of a new program, activity or event.

Organisational risk assessment template

This template asks you to identify and assess the situational, vulnerability, propensity and institutional risks to children that may be present in your organisation (see Standard 9 in [A guide for creating a Child Safe Organisation](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/resources/child-safe-standards/#CSS_Guide) for an explanation of these types of risks). List all the different types of risks to children that you can think of, the strategies you already have in place to reduce these risks and then identify any gaps and what needs to be implemented to address these gaps. You should think about your organisation as a whole, including all the different activities, locations, children, staff, volunteers and settings that make up your organisation. Some example questions are provided to start you thinking.

After filling out this template and gaining an understanding of the risks in your organisation, use the risk management plan template to record your plan to address gaps.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Date reviewed** | [insert date] |
| **Next review due** | [insert review date, no longer than one year from date reviewed] |

| **Risk factor** | **Analysis** | **Existing risk controls** | **Is this enough to keep children and young people safe?** | **New controls required** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Where does risk arise in your organisation? | What is in place now that reduces the risk? | Considering the risk assessment what are the gaps in the existing controls? | What can be put in place to manage the gaps? |
| Your organisation’s activities (situational risk) | Some things to consider about the activities your organisation conducts:   * What are the different types of activities? * Where are they held? * How often do activities occur and how long do they run for (for example, a few hours, overnight)? * Is there physical contact between children and adults? * Could activities result in an emotional dependence by children on adults? * What sort of supervision of adults and children is involved? * Is there travel to a venue or activity and how does this happen? * Does the activity take place at another organisation’s facility (for example, a rented hall, public sports facility, camp site)? |  |  |  |
| Your organisation’s physical environment (situational risk) | Consider whether there are any aspects of your organisation’s physical environment that may make it easier for child abuse or harm to occur or to go undetected.  Does it have:   * isolated areas * poorly supervised areas * facilities that might increase the risk of abuse (for example, pools where children must get changed) * shared spaces where children attend with adults that are not from the organisation? |  |  |  |
| Your organisation’s online environment (situational risk) | Consider whether there are any aspects of your organisation’s online environment that may make it easier for child abuse or harm to occur or to go undetected.   * What platforms, software or other services do you use? * How do people in your organisation engage with children and young people online? * Have you set clear expectations for behaviour by adults and children online? * Has your organisation shared information with children on how to stay safe online? * What policies and procedures are in place to protect privacy? * Do you have clear processes in place to report online abuse? * Is activity by adults and children online supervised? |  |  |  |
| The children involved in your organisation (vulnerability risks) | What are the characteristics of the children in your organisation? Are there children who may be at increased risk of abuse or harm, including:   * from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds * with disability * from culturally and language diverse backgrounds * who identify as LGBTIQ or are questioning their sexuality or gender * with a history of trauma, abuse or neglect * unable to live at home including being homeless or living in foster, residential or kinship care * with a history of drug or alcohol dependence * with mental or physical health issues?   Refer to Standard 5 in [A guide for creating a Child Safe Organisation](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/resources/child-safe-standards/#CSS_Guide) for more information.  Are there other factors that may make some children involved in your organisation more vulnerable to abuse or harm? |  |  |  |
| Your organisation’s people (propensity risk) | Who are the staff, volunteers and/or members of your organisation?   * What sort of attitudes are held by people in your organisation about children? * How do you manage inappropriate behaviour? * Are there any people with a history of harmful behaviour towards children? * How do you recruit staff and volunteers? * Were all adults properly screened for appropriateness to engage with children before joining the organisation? * Is there a typical profile of the people attracted to a position in your organisation? Are there any challenges to child safety with this profile that need to be managed? * Do you engage third-party contractors? Have they been screened for appropriateness to engage with children? |  |  |  |
| Your organisation’s structures (institutional risk) | Consider how your organisation is set up and operates. Some organisational structures can increase the risk[[2]](#footnote-2) of abuse and harm such as:   * having a strong hierarchical structure * encouraging deference to authority or unquestioning trust of leaders * having a close-knit community, where people have known each other for years or are family members * services or facilities for children are not seen as a key part of the organisation’s business * containing people whose attitudes towards children are that they should be seen and not heard. |  |  |  |
| Your organisation’s culture (institutional risk) | Consider whether attitudes and culture in your organisation increase or decrease the risk that child abuse and harm will be prevented, detected and/or stopped.  Does your organisation have a culture that makes sure child safety is a priority?  Consider if people in your organisation:[[3]](#footnote-3)   * understand child abuse and harm and are aware of the signs * see the prevention of child abuse and harm as a everyone’s responsibility * prioritise the safety of children over the reputation of the organisation * listen to and empower children * educate children about what is appropriate behaviour by adults * understand how discrimination can cause harm to children and take action if it occurs * take short cuts without thinking about the risks. |  |  |  |
| Your organisation’s policies and procedures (institutional risk) | Effective policies and procedures can greatly reduce the risk of child abuse and harm occurring. However, for policies and procedures to be effective they must be properly implemented, up to date and communicated to everyone.  Consider if your organisation has:   * appropriate recruitment policies (including Working with Children Checks and/or other screening) for staff and volunteers * a Code of Conduct that clearly establishes what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour towards children with consequences for breaches * an easily understood Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and Complaints Handling Policy * clear processes for reporting and responding to allegations of child abuse or harm and child safety concerns that are understood by staff, volunteers, children and families * appropriate induction, training and communication with staff and volunteers so they are aware of policies and procedures, and understand their role and responsibility to protect children from abuse and harm * third-party procurement policies and practices that prioritise child safety when using contractors. |  |  |  |

Activity risk assessment template

This template asks you to identify and assess the situational, vulnerability, propensity and institutional risks in an individual activity (see Standard 9 in [A guide for creating a Child Safe Organisation](https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/resources/child-safe-standards/#CSS_Guide) for an explanation of these types of risks). You should list all of the different risks that you can think of, the strategies you already have in place to mitigate these risks and then identify any gaps and what needs to be implemented to address these gaps. We have provided examples for illustration purposes only. The risks for your organisation will be specific to your activities and setting.

After filling out this template and gaining an understanding of the risks in your activity, use the risk management plan template to record your plan to address gaps.

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| --- | --- |
| **Date reviewed** | [insert date] |
| **Next review due** | [insert review date, no longer than one year from date reviewed] |
| **Activity** | [What activity are you applying this to?] Example – Youth Drama Group: Thursday evening sessions between 6.00–7.30pm at the local community hall. |

| **Types of risk** | **Types of harm** | **Existing risk controls** | **Is this enough to keep children and young people safe?** | **New controls required** | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Identify the situational, propensity, vulnerability, and institutional risks of this activity. | What type of harm may arise from the risk? | What is in place now that reduces the risk? | What are the gaps in the existing controls? | What can be put in place to manage the gaps? | |
| **Situational risk: Physical** | | | | |
| Entrance to hall set back from the street with poor lighting.  Short walk to public transport.  Limited visibility of children and young people arriving at/leaving the venue.  Toilet facilities have external door that opens to the carpark.  Hall rented out to adult book club at 8.00pm. | Children and young people not feeling safe arriving and leaving the venue.  Children and young people being harmed by outsiders after they are dropped off by their parents/carers or when they walk from public transport to the venue.  General public may access the toilet facilities and harm children and young people.  Adults attending the book club can interact with the children and young people as they arrive. They may harm children and young people. | None | No:  Lack of supervision and oversight over children and young people | Request property owner install night lighting along the driveway.  Lock external door to toilets as part of staff responsibilities setting up for Youth Drama Group  Extend the rostered hours of two staff members to commence at 5.30pm and finish at 8.30pm so they can supervise children and young people arriving at and leaving the venue.  Create a poster of the organisation’s commitment to child safety, ways to make a complaint with contact number of child safety person. Request permission from property owner to display poster in the toilets, foyer and kitchen. | |
| **Situational risk: Online** | | | | | |
| Children and young people attend with mobile phones.  Staff send updates/class cancellation notices to children and young people directly as well as to parents/carers.  Drama Group Facebook page. | Online bullying or anti-social behaviour.  Opportunity for staff to have unsupervised contact with children and young people online/by phone. Creates an opportunity for grooming. | Code of Conduct  Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy | Somewhat, but improvements identified | Code of Conduct and Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy to be revised to include specific content about behaviour online/by phone. Share with children, young people and parents/carers.  Tell children, young people and parents/carers what sort of communication they can expect from staff online/by phone, so they know if contact from staff is not authorised.  Hold a special staff meeting at the start of each year to discuss the Code of Conduct including appropriate behaviour online/by phone.  Share resources with children and young people about online bullying from the eSafety Commissioner and tell them how they can raise concerns. | |
| **Vulnerability risk** | | | | | |
| Mixed ages of children and young people attending (12–18). | Bullying  Older young people may act inappropriately with/around younger children.  Peer pressure could create barriers for some children and young people to stop them making a complaint or raise concerns.  Organisation does not know much about the characteristics of the children that could make them more vulnerable to abuse/harm. | Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy | No:  Organisation’s Code of Conduct is for staff conduct only  Complaint handling policy not written in accessible language and not given to children, young people and parents/carers  No information is collected on characteristics of children and young people that may make them more vulnerable to harm. | First Drama Group session each year will include workshop where children and young people create Code of Conduct about how to behave with each other  Staff to hold information session/consultation with children, young people and parents/carers on the Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and complaint handling policy. Discuss whether children and young people understand how to make a complaint and seek feedback on what else to include. Policies to be updated.  Develop a child safety and complaints information sheet for children, young people and parents/carers with all the information they need. Provide information sheet as part of induction pack, display on the organisation’s website and include in the next newsletter. Use accessible language so children can understand.  Display the organisation’s child safety poster at the venue.  Enrolment form updated to give the option of sharing information about children and young people’s characteristics. Conduct survey (participants remain anonymous) seeking feedback about the organisation and asking about characteristics of children and young people.  Survey results to be shared at upcoming staff meeting with a discussion about factors that may increase vulnerability to abuse and what staff should do to reduce vulnerability. | |
| **Propensity risk** | | | | | |
| Staff are former students of the Drama Group. | Professional boundaries not maintained. Staff may be friends with some of the students and not act professionally with them.  Staff may socialise with students outside of the Drama Group sessions. | Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy  Code of Conduct  Recruitment process | Yes:  Policies already address this, requiring staff who are former students to always remain professional and prioritise child safety.  Code of Conduct prohibits intimate relationships between staff and students  In recruitment process, potential staff are asked what they would do if one of their students was a friend who was bullying another student.  Staff training also covers friendships between staff and students | No further action needed. | |
| **Institutional risk** | | | | | |
| Close knit community where staff are former students.  Most of the Drama Group students have been associated with the organisation for many years.  Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy developed in 2018 and never reviewed. | Grooming behaviour or other harmful behaviour not identified or reported because of ongoing connection with the organisation. | Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy  Code of Conduct | Somewhat, but improvements identified | All child safety and wellbeing policies to be reviewed and updated. Consultation with children, young people, parents/carers and staff to inform the review of the policies.  Child safety and complaints information sheet and Code of Conduct to be provided to all children, young people and parents/carers on enrolment.  Regular reminders to children, young people and parents/carers that the organisation encourages them to raise concerns or complaints.  Organisation takes action and responds when complaints are raised. There are consequences for staff who breach the Code of Conduct.  Child safety and complaints information sheet and Code of Conduct to be provided to all children, young people and parents/carers on enrolment. | |

Risk management plan template

After assessing the risks, use this template to make a plan of action to manage any organisational or activity risks to child safety and wellbeing.

Example: Drama Academy that runs classes for children (aged 13–18), The Academy has paid human resources staff and teachers and is overseen by a Board of Management.

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| --- | --- |
| **Date reviewed** | [insert date] |
| **Next review due** | [insert review date, no longer than one year from date reviewed] |

| **Risk** | **Risk controls** | **Who is responsible?** | **By when?** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Risks identified in your organisation or in the activity | Actions you will take to manage the identified risks | Who will take these actions and make sure they are effective? | When will the actions be taken and reviewed? |
| For example: Children aren’t sure how to let someone know if they have child safety concerns or want to make a complaint. | Develop, in consultation with children and young people, a process for making complaints or raising concerns.  Put up posters with the complaints process around the venue.  Put the complaints process on the website.  Hold regular discussions with each class on the process for making complaints or raising concerns. | The HR Manager will create a children’s reference group, consult with them and develop the organisation’s complaint process for children.  The HR Manager will develop a new Complaint Handling Guide that will incorporate the process.  The complaint process and Complaint Handling Guide are to be approved by the Board.  The Senior HR Adviser will create a poster and a brochure on how to make a complaint, update the website with information on making a complaint.  The Youth Program Manager will include the complaints brochure in the enrolment pack for all students.  The teachers will make sure each class has a discussion on how to make a complaint.  The Board will check the effectiveness of the complaints process and Guide through a survey of students and parents/carers. | Develop process and Guide by end of February.  Brochure and poster by end of March.  Discussions held at the start of each term.  Board survey in October.  Review and make any changes to process and Guide by December. |

1. Parkinson, P & Cashmore, J, [Assessing the different dimensions and degrees of risk of child sexual abuse in institutions](https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/media-releases/research-identifies-four-dimensions-risk-child-sexual-abuse-institutional-settings), Report to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, 2017. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Commonwealth of Australia, Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, [Final Report: Volume 2, Nature and cause](https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/nature-and-cause), 2017, p.16. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Adapted from Royal Commission, [Final Report: Volume 2, Nature and cause](https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/nature-and-cause), p.159. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)