Child safety

There has been a considerable amount of work in the area of child safety in recent years. To what extent is your service a child safe organisation? Explore some of the resources designed to enhance child safety in your context all year round. Find both awareness-raising activities and comprehensive strategies amongst these resources.

Case studies: Day for Daniel

The Daniel Morcombe Foundation’s Day for Daniel was on Friday 26 October 2018. Resources this year were particularly focused on the early childhood sector. If you missed the date, it’s not too late to do something about this topic. You will find a lesson plan, and information for educators, parents and carers here.

Two years ago, Stephanie Wee posted an account of how the Amare Child Care Centre chose to participate in Day for Daniel. The service’s staff wanted to support the development of protective behaviours in the children at the service and to show respect to the Morcombe family.

‘We all wore red as that was Daniel’s favorite colour and we were sent an amazing educational pack from the Day for Daniel Foundation that had lots of activities for the children to do.

We spoke in groups and during the activities about stranger danger, when it is okay to talk to someone you don’t know (when they are a police officer in uniform and when mummy and daddy introduce you to someone, eg like a new friend or a teacher).

We also talked about how it feels to feel safe and how it feels to feel unsafe (butterflies in our tummies, uneasy or jelly legs) and how it is important to trust our feelings. The kindy children really came to the plate with this activity and we had long, meaningful discussions that they even continued when talking among themselves.’

Over the past two years, the service had continued to focus on child safety though everyday activities. Stephanie says:

‘Our focus is on building children’s confidence and communication skills to enable them to discuss their feelings and potential fears with our educators or their families. Having great relationships with our families helps too, in working with parents to build their child’s skills, and allowing us to obtain ideas from parents around safety for their children.’

Like many services, the Amare Child Care Centre posts much of what it is doing with the children on its family app. Regular excursions to the local park and other locations create opportunities for discussion about road safety and stranger danger. Mat sessions are also a good time to discuss these topics.
Child Protection Week

Many services and organisations around Australia made child protection a focus last month. Here's a sample of activity from the New Farm Playgroup in Queensland. Working with Hands on Art, they participated in a lantern-making activity called ‘Shine a Light for Children’. The aim was to make paper lanterns (2018) and recycled bottle lanterns (2017).

Parent participant Fiona Rendalls described the impact:

‘Why I personally love this event so much? When you come to the stage of having babies your focus is very much on your little family and often you live in a bit of a bubble. Minor family issues become quite consuming. Being part of the 2017 event had a big impact on me as a parent – it made me reflect on my children being brought into a home where all the necessary basic items are provided and start thinking a little more about how I could assist other families in even a small way.’

Once the lanterns are made, participants are encouraged to light them during Child Protection Week and to think about ways of strengthening this focus all year around. This activity was supported by Playgroup Queensland.
Resources

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations
Download the draft National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, current as of 15 May 2018.

As part of an associated project, the Australian Human Rights Commission is developing practical tools and resources to help organisations implement the National Principles. These will be available in late 2018.

Children's Commissioners
Each of the state and territory Children's Commissioners and Guardians have resources on child safe organisations. The links to all Commissioners here will lead you to many resources on each jurisdiction's website.

Keeping children safe: A toolkit for child protection
The Keeping Children Safe Coalition (KCS) toolkit is a complete package for people working in child protection across the world. It will help you develop effective measures to prevent and respond to violence. The toolkit includes awareness-raising strategies, safeguarding measures and professional learning resources.

Wellbeing practice guide
This guide aims to strengthen children's dispositions for wellbeing learning, to guide assessment practice decisions and to highlight the importance of the birth to three-years period in establishing a strong foundation for wellbeing.

Road safety
The Starting out safely: Road safety educator resource has been developed to support early childhood educators to embed road safety education into their early learning curriculum. Smart Steps: Making safer choices – Taking smarter steps program supports children to develop skills, behaviours and attitudes so that they can stay safe when travelling as passengers, pedestrians and users of bikes and wheeled toys. The Kids and Traffic NSW Early Childhood Road Safety Education Program contains short videos and other resources that can be used with children.

The internet
What to teach your preschooler about internet safety addresses three main risks faced by children online: contact, conduct and content risks. This article in The Conversation explores five strategies that parents can use to safeguard their children while using YouTube.

Professional support
The Australian Childhood Foundation facilitates workshops for ECEC professionals on dealing with children who have experienced trauma. Child Wise offers training and free downloadable resources suitable for early years contexts.

Helping children experiencing mental health difficulties
Some children are at greater risk of developing mental health difficulties, but early identification and intervention can make a difference. These KidsMatter Professional Learning topics focus on how early childhood educators can recognise and respond when children experience mental health difficulties.