

**Understanding
the social impact
of safeguarding
services for children
and young people**

Australian Childhood Foundation

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Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation, the Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia acknowledges that their operations are situated on Noongar land, and that the Noongar people remain the spiritual and cultural custodians of their land, and continue to practise their values, languages, beliefs and knowledge. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Centre for Social Impact

The Centre for Social Impact at the University of Western Australia (CSI) is a national research and education centre dedicated to catalysing social change for a better world. CSI is built on the foundation of three of Australia's leading universities: UNSW Sydney, The University of Western Australia, and Swinburne University of Technology. Our research develops and brings together knowledge to understand current social challenges and opportunities; our postgraduate and undergraduate education develops social impact leaders; and we aim to catalyse change by drawing on these foundations and translating knowledge, creating leaders, developing usable resources, and reaching across traditional divides to facilitate collaborations.

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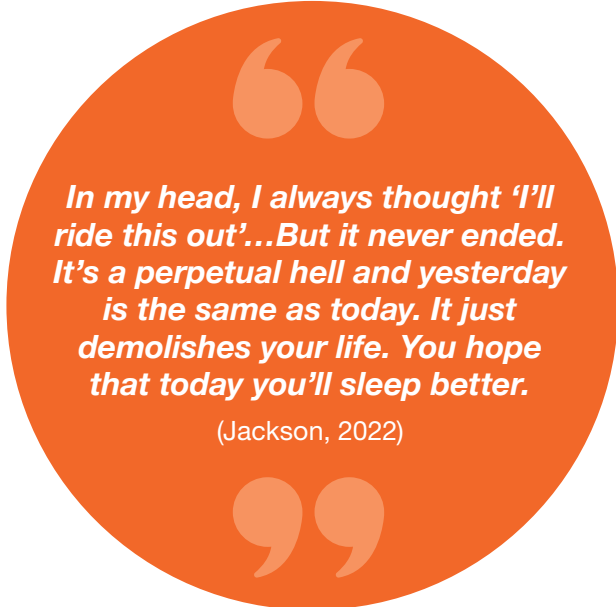
Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
1.1 Project overview	5
2. Safeguarding definitions and approaches	6
2.1 Definitions and approaches to child safeguarding	6
2.2 Accreditation schemes	9
2.3 Organisational development and change management.....	10
3. Australian Childhood Foundation and Safeguarding Services overview and development.....	14
3.1 Overview of the Foundation	14
3.2 The Foundation’s Safeguarding Services.....	15
4. Safeguarding Services structure and components	17
4.1 Conceptual change model of Safeguarding Services	17
4.2 Operational program model of Safeguarding Services.....	18
5. Data collection approach and methodology.....	20
6. Findings – process insights.....	21
6.1 Motivators for client organisations seeking Safeguarding Services.....	21
6.2 Delivery of Safeguarding Services.....	25
7. Findings – the impact story	28
7.1 Impact of Safeguarding Services on the client organisation staff	28
7.2 Impact of Safeguarding Services on the overall client organisation	30
7.3 Impact of Safeguarding Services on the children & the wider community	34
8. Findings – facilitators and barriers to impact	36
8.1 Quality of the relationship	36
8.2 The degree of organisational buy-in	36
8.3 Understanding the expectations of involvement	37
9. Conclusion.....	38
References.....	44

List of Figures

Figure 1. Conceptual model of organisational change.....	12
Figure 2. Adkar model for change management.	13
Figure 3. The foundation’s national office outreach.....	16
Figure 4. Conceptual model of safeguarding services.....	17
Figure 5. Operational program model of safeguarding services.....	19
Figure 6. Key elements for establishing a child safe culture with client organisations.	38

1. Introduction



In my head, I always thought ‘I’ll ride this out’...But it never ended. It’s a perpetual hell and yesterday is the same as today. It just demolishes your life. You hope that today you’ll sleep better.


(Jackson, 2022)

It has taken Adam 38 years to speak of his experiences as a victim of child sexual abuse which occurred in a well-known Melbourne football club during the 1980s. His story, recently reported by ABC news, tells of the continuing trauma he endures as a result of the perpetual abuse he experienced in his youth (Jackson, 2022). Adam’s story is just one of thousands and highlights the devastating impact child abuse can have on victims across their lives. It emphasises the importance of having systems in place to protect children across society.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2018; hereafter Royal Commission) ran for almost four years, hearing cases from 7,981 survivors of child sexual abuse. More than 4,000 different institutions were reported as places where abuse took place, including schools, sporting, and religious institutions. The findings revealed that 41% of all sexual abuse occurred in institutions with the duty to provide formal

care to children who had been removed from their biological families because of abuse and neglect. Almost 32% has been sexually abused in schools. Almost 15% has been abused whilst they were involved in institutions which provided religious activities. Another 6% were assaulted when they were involved in sport or recreation pursuit.

The final report was published as seventeen volumes and made 85 detailed recommendations for reform, which resulted in systemic responses across Australia. Most notably of these was a set of National Principles for Child Safe Organisations (National Principles), endorsed by all members of the Council of Australian Governments, including the Prime Minister and the state and territory ministers in February 2019. Although it is a significant reform, it remains non-legislated, and each state and territory has established their own approach to safeguarding. This has resulted in a complex regulatory environment for organisations to navigate with its resulting consequences¹:



“Many (issues) remain unaddressed still being repeated at the expense of children. Some (lessons) have slowly started to take hold and are re-shaping the cultures of institutions who have been willing to accept responsibility and committed to change – real change.”

(Tucci & Blom, 2019 p. 375)

This is a pivotal moment in history, for the children of our nation, and those who continue to live with the trauma of past abuse. Survivors of child abuse are speaking truth to power – and they’re being heard. Their voices are shining a light on the darkest recesses of our society, galvanising social pressure - led by the bravery of victims, and advocates, to speak of their suffering, and defend the rights of children - to transform our collective culture. Now, with a spotlight increasingly on the issue, we can move towards change. The bestowing of the 2021 Australian of the Year award to Grace Tame, survivor of child sexual grooming and abuse and powerful advocate for “gag-law” legislative reform, is testament to this changing social landscape.

1. Adapted from Carter, J. (2021, February). *Safeguarding Children and Young People – Preliminary Literature Review*, Australian Childhood Foundation Safeguarding Services.

Leaders are rising to the challenge, taking responsibility, and enacting change, but there is much work to be done. Institutions must address past wrongdoings, lean into change, and become “child-serving” organisations, who value the human rights and the welfare of children as their priority:



“Institutions change to become child serving when they live up to values and beliefs that enshrine the inherent right of all children to safety, nurture and care. They achieve it by embedding the principles of children’s rights into their core purpose.” (Tucci & Blom, 2019 p.376)

The evidence from the Royal Commission (2018) helped to emphasise the responsibilities of organisations rather than individuals to provide and maintain safe environments for the children and young people in their care (Smallbone, 2020). However, there remains a lack of research into how we support youth-serving organisations to recognise and address risks, expand organisational safety policies and practices, and develop a strong, positive organisational safety culture (Erooga et al., 2020). This research adds to this growing knowledge base by examining how Australian Childhood Foundation’s (the Foundation) Safeguarding Services engages and supports youth-serving organisations to develop a culture of safeguarding and ensure child safe client experiences.

Safeguarding Services is a suite of support services offered to organisations who deliver services to children and young people. Using a set of Child Safe Standards, and drawing upon a number of resources, Safeguarding Services helps organisations to build capacity and a culture of child safeguarding to protect children and young people from abuse and exploitation. The importance of Safeguarding Services to sectors and programs that have a duty of care to children is evident not only in the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) endorsement of the Accreditation Scheme (the sole endorsement of such a scheme in Australia), but also the size and nature of the sectors with services that seek to enhance the wellbeing of children. A significant amount of government budget is allocated to these services, who in turn often work with the most vulnerable children, sometimes in new and untested ways, employing and engaging an array of different individuals to provide services in jurisdictions with varying regulatory requirements. The sheer complexity and array of different risk vectors of meeting the service needs of children illustrates the value of a program such as Safeguarding Services to navigate this complexity and, ultimately, better serve the children that these organisations work with.

1.1 Project overview

The Centre for Social Impact University at the Western Australia (CSI UWA) has been engaged by the Foundation to examine and document the social impact story of Safeguarding Services. The research has built on the prior work of Dr Meg Montague’s evaluation of the training components of Safeguarding Services and Professor Ben Matthews’s logic model and evaluative framework for the Accreditation Scheme.

Employing qualitative research methods, desktop research was carried out alongside interviews with key stakeholders (Foundation staff and staff from client organisations who have engaged Safeguarding Services) in order to explore the following broad research questions:

- 1. In what ways does Safeguarding Services engage with client organisations to create a child safe culture?**
- 2. What is the impact of the Safeguarding Services engagement on client organisations?**
- 3. What are the facilitators and barriers to achieving social impact?**

2. Safeguarding definitions and approaches

The safeguarding landscape has changed significantly in recent years, in large part due to the findings of the Royal Commission (2018). Over the past decade a growing body of research – much of it focused on the Australian context – has been published to support a deepened understanding of the problem and the adoption of safeguarding practices in institutional settings.

This section presents an overview of definitions and approaches relating to child safeguarding and presents the context from an organisational development and change management lens, the perspective in which the Foundation's Safeguarding Services operate.

2.1 Definitions and approaches to child safeguarding

All businesses have a legal and moral obligation and duty of care to protect and safeguard children from abuse and harm. Good safeguarding policies and procedures protect children and families from harm and mitigate the risks of abuse occurring due to direct or indirect contact with an organisation. Sound policies, processes and procedures also protect the organisation, its staff, and reputation from damage and harm. Child protection is a key component of safeguarding, but it doesn't cover all aspects of

child-centred care, actions, and measures that organisations are required to have in place. However, rigorous safeguarding systems, embedded within all levels of an organisation, from the Board and Executives through to on-the-ground staff, help protect the organisation from litigation and breaches through reducing the instances and likelihood of situations where children are exposed to risk (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2018).

2.1.1 Definitions and prevalence²

Child abuse is defined by the World Health Organization ([WHO], 2006, p. 9) as:



“All forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.”

Definitions of child abuse and neglect can include adults, young people and older children as the perpetrators. The term 'child abuse and neglect' refers to behaviours and treatment that result in the actual and/or likelihood of harm to the child or young person and such behaviours may be intentional or unintentional. They can include acts of omission (i.e., neglect) and commission (i.e., abuse; Bromfield, 2005; Child Family Community Australia [CFCA], 2016).

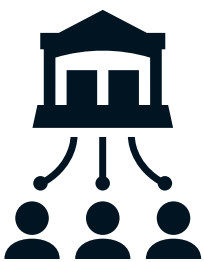
2. Information in this section is sourced and adapted from Carter, J. (2021, February) *Safeguarding Children and Young People – Preliminary Literature Review*. Australian Childhood Foundation Safeguarding Services

Child safeguarding: The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF, 2018) utilise the following definition in their Child Safeguarding Toolkit for Businesses:



“For companies, ‘child safeguarding’ refers to the actions that address how business operations and work practice impact children’s welfare. At its most basic, safeguarding entails the prevention of physical, sexual and emotional abuse and maltreatment by employees and other persons whom the company is responsible for, such as partners, visitors to corporate premises or volunteers.” (UNICEF, 2018, p. 4)

The prevalence of child abuse in Australia was comprehensively examined in the Royal Commission (2018). Key findings were summarised by Tucci and Blom (2019) and illustrate that Australia is currently experiencing an epidemic of child abuse and mistreatment:



41% of all sexual abuse

occurred in institutions where there was a duty to provide formal care to children who had been removed from their biological families because of abuse and neglect.



Almost **32%**

of cases had been sexually abused in schools and almost **15%** had been abused whilst they were involved in institutions which provided religious activities. Another **6%** were abused when they were involved in sport or a recreation pursuit.



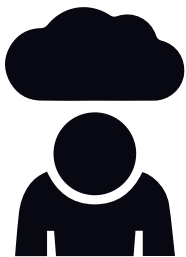
Almost **32%**

said they were abused by an adult in a religious ministry and **20%** were abused by a teacher. A further **13%** were abused by a residential care worker and **11%** abused by foster carer. Others stated they were victimised by custodial staff, house masters, medical practitioners, nurses, volunteers, youth group leaders and sporting coaches.



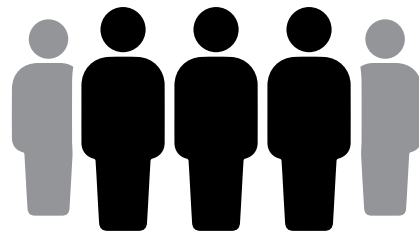
10.4 years old

was the average age of victims when they were first abused.



Almost **78%**

of the survivors said they experienced sexual abuse in a single institution, while **21%** had been abused in multiple institutions. The vast majority (**85%**) suffered multiple episodes of sexual assault.



Almost **3 in 5**

survivors also experienced multiple forms of abuse in addition to the sexual abuse, including emotional abuse, physical abuse, neglect, being forced to work and being forced to witness the abuse of others.



2.1.2 Approaches to prevention and safeguarding³

Research concerning the methods for preventing child abuse are mostly situated in disciplines of criminology and legal studies, with a small portion examining prevention through a public health lens.

Findings around risk factors

Organisational and local culture are crucial to any prevention efforts, particularly where culture is hierarchical or secretive (Darling & Hackett, 2020). For example, research by Harper et al. (2020) found that religious institutions where abuse had occurred tended to reflect cultural characteristics of authority and secrecy. Place and setting are also significant factors in sexual crimes (Smallbone, 2020; Krone et al., 2020; McHugh et al., 2015). Darling and Hackett (2020, p. 5) found that most abuse occurs in “unsupervised areas, outside of operating hours and often during mentoring/tutoring or extracurricular activities”.

Findings around prevention strategies

Effective child protection and prevention strategies have been found to include policy, legislation, and behaviour education. Safeguarding policies can have an impact on reducing the risk of abuse in organisations, by establishing a standard of practice across an organisation (Tucci et al., 2015). Additionally, legislation affecting recruitment, such as Working With Children Checks (WWCC), and compliance, such as child safeguarding Standards, at a state-level can ensure greater safeguarding measures are implemented in organisations. However, it is important to note that while the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations have been adopted across the country, they are not legislated, and there has been limited evaluation of current recruitment legislation, such as the WWCC (Kaufman et al., 2019). Though some findings from the NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian ([OCG], 2020) indicate its role as an effective deterrent to potential perpetrators of abuse through compliance checks, risk assessments and automatic disqualification for people convicted of sex offences or possessing child exploitation material. Additionally, the NSW WWCC was acknowledged in Royal Commission as one of the most comprehensive compliance mechanisms in the country (OCG, 2020). More comprehensive, state-driven legislation, such as the Victorian Child Safe Standards (Commission for Children and Young People [CCYP], n.d.), can play an important role in embedding safeguarding culture in institutional settings where it enforces a “multiple layered evidence-based prevention approach” (Kaufman et al., 2019). In addition to these prevention measures, research has explored the role of behaviour education, supporting children and the wider community in protective behaviours and identification of abuse (Kaufman et al., 2019).

Child participation and voice in approaches to safeguarding

A growing body of literature, rooted in rights-based and community development approaches, explores the essential role of child ‘voice’ as a tool and yardstick of child-centric organisations committed to upholding a safeguarding culture (Moore, 2017). Lundy (2007) argues that this voice is a “legal and moral imperative” that encompasses increased involvement of children and young people in decision making, from a citizenship perspective, an educational perspective and a rights-based perspective. However, there is limited evidence on its application in a sustained manner. This may be in part because of the tension that can exist between protection and participation. For example, a study in Norway examined social workers application of child participation and voice but found that participation was considered harmful where individual staff were not supported to enable participation appropriately (Vis et al., 2012).

In Australia, research into children and young people’s responses to the Royal Commission by Moore et al. (2016) found that there is a need:

- for more age-appropriate education on child abuse and prevention;
- for adjacent education for parents to help them better respond to their children’s concerns; and
- to provide young people with more ways to shape the prevention and protection strategies used to support them.

³ Information in this section is sourced and adapted from Carter, J. (February 2021) *Safeguarding Children and Young People – Preliminary Literature Review*, Australian Childhood Foundation Safeguarding Services.

Impact and evaluation of safeguarding approaches

Very little research exists measuring the effectiveness of prevention approaches over time. Kaufman's (2015) Organizational Safety Climate Survey was created for youth-servicing institutional settings in the US and evaluated by McKillop et al. (2020) for an Australian context. McKillop et al. (2020) validated the evaluation framework, which focuses on psychometric properties among staff and considers four aspects of organisational safety, including safety climate, safety responsibility, safety communication and safety empowerment. However, the measure is yet to be tested and applied to youth-servicing organisations more broadly in Australia. Kaufman et al. (2019) identified the need for evaluation frameworks of child abuse prevention that incorporate a "safety patchwork", in other words, a model that considers multiple layers, both inside and outside an organisational setting, that influence prevention.

2.2 Accreditation schemes

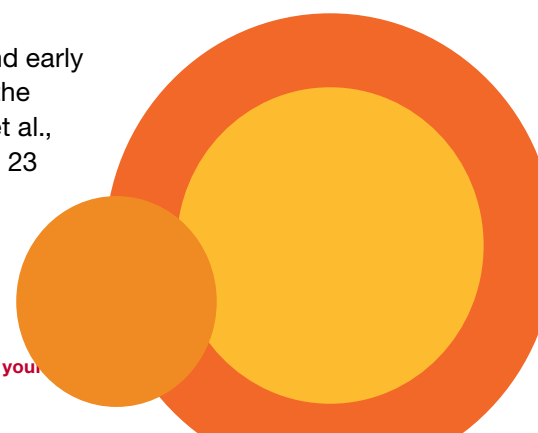
Limited research has been undertaken on the effectiveness and impact of safeguarding accreditation schemes in Australia and internationally. This may be because of the limited number of safeguarding schemes and potential resource constraints of organisations who offer safeguarding schemes. This section, therefore, presents evidence on the effectiveness and impact of accreditation schemes, more broadly, with a specific focus on accreditation schemes relating to health, social care and childhood organisations. The overview provided here underpins and informs the research undertaken by CSI UWA for Safeguarding Services (and its Safeguarding Children Accreditation and Certification Scheme).

Accreditation schemes have steadily developed in Australia over the 15 years as part of a process of continuous quality improvement in health and social care settings (McKauge et al., 2011; Shortell et al., 1998). Receiving accreditation or certification provides a signal to the market that a benchmark has been attained regarding the quality of a product or service (Walker & Johnson, 2009). Accreditation has been found to enhance the perception of trust that clients and the wider community have in relation to an organisation or service; and it acts as a "screening" tool for clients and service users to ascertain an organisation's value (Hinchcliff et al., 2016). Thus, accreditation has the potential to enhance the reputation, standing, and quality of an organisation, and influence an organisation's position in the market.

Accreditation schemes are employed in over 70 countries around the world, and primarily in healthcare settings, with varying degrees of impact (Alashami et al., 2020; Greenfield et al., 2019; Nicklin et al., 2017). Certain industries, such as medicine, education, health and social work fields, also require professional registration and accreditation for individual practitioners, in the view of improving practice by fostering continual learning and development (McKauge et al., 2011). Lifelong learning and building critical thinking and reflective skills are increasingly valued in the health and social care profession, and both individuals and organisations are adopting these new approaches in their practice and operations to meet the ongoing needs of clients (McKauge et al., 2011).

In an external process of validation, accreditation, which is often voluntary, provides a system of balances and checks, and allows organisations to be inspected and measured against a set of defined regulations and standards, and ensure compliance (Alashami et al., 2020; Alkhenizan & Shaw, 2011). Walker & Johnson (2009) found that the process of accreditation "forced a critical review" of an organisation's operations, and increased awareness of risk, including ways to prevent risk. Further to this, accreditation motivated organisations to develop detailed policies, procedures, and systems to enhance consistency of standards (Walker & Johnson, 2009). Systemic improvements that result from accreditation have thus been found to improve clinical and quality care outcomes for patients and clients, and improve quality assurance systems, compared to non-accredited organisations (Alkhenizan & Shaw, 2011; Shaw et al., 2010).

Accreditation schemes have also been found to improve child development and early academic outcomes in education settings and are particularly effective when the program meets, or exceeds, licencing and regulatory requirements (Dienhart et al., 2012). A study by Whitebook et al. (1997), concerning 92 childcare centres (n = 23 accredited, n = 32 participated but not accredited, n = 37 neither accredited or participated) found that accredited organisations had better classroom



quality and showed the greatest improvement in overall quality. Accredited centres were also more likely to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse children. Predictors of higher quality centres included factors such as higher wages, retention of skilled teachers, and operating as a non-profit entity, combined with maintaining accreditation (Whitebook et al., 1997). This suggests that the underlying culture of an organisation, including staff incentivisation, improves individual motivational factors, and can enhance the effectiveness of accreditation programs.

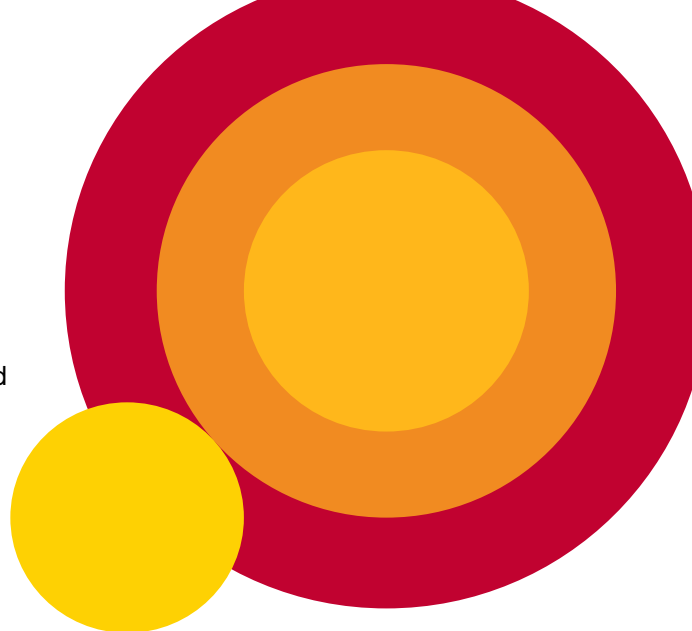
One study concerning the evaluation of six foster care services, accredited (n = 3) and non-accredited (n = 3), found that accredited agencies demonstrated more effective implementation of risk management, performance evaluation, and correction action process. However, there was no difference between the accredited and non-accredited organisations in relation to internal quality, monitoring, stakeholder participation, case record review, outcomes measurement, feedback mechanisms, consumer satisfaction, personnel satisfaction or service specific processes (Hazard et al., 2002). Consistent with these findings, Mazmanian et al. (1993) reported no significant differences between accredited and non-accredited services providing cognitive rehabilitation therapy services, other than the kind of approach that was employed in the delivery the therapeutic intervention. These findings could indicate that improvements to the design, content, and implementation of accreditation programs may be required in order to consider the holistic needs of an organisation, including the consideration of an organisation's clients, staff, and the organisation itself.

Managers and clients or stakeholders may view accreditation as an appealing, and worthwhile undertaking, however accreditation programs have been found impact staff wellbeing, motivation and performance – both positively and negatively (Elkins et al., 2010; Touati & Pomey, 2009). Positive factors include higher staff morale and pride (Zellman et al., 1994), greater staff retention (Centre for Substance Abuse Treatment [CSAT], 2004), greater clarity and having an opportunity to be heard and developing shared values to create an environment that is conducive to better outcomes for staff and clients (Desveaux et al., 2017; Pomey et al., 2004). However, Alshami et al. (2020), found that workforce psychosocial needs must be addressed during accreditation to reduce negative impacts. Increased work demands relating to learning new information and processes, longer hours, and increasing the perception of time and performance pressure produced greater stress for employees. Thus, implementing accreditation programs in organisations, and working with organisations as an independent accreditation body, requires a detailed approach, and ensuring shared workload and responsibility for accreditation, to increase engagement, support and effectiveness of the accreditation program.

2.3 Organisational development and change management

In a complex and dynamic operational and regulatory environment, and particularly in the context of health, safety and risk management and mitigation relating to child welfare and protection in Australia, organisations are constantly responding to change. This means that organisations are increasingly investing in change initiatives to ensure they meet national and state-based compliance requirements for safeguarding children. The Foundation's Safeguarding Services have, by-and-large, been developed within the framework of community development and social work practices, and legislative or regulatory requirements. At its core, Safeguarding Services provides capacity building services to client organisations in a business-to-business service model, and this, therefore, positions Safeguarding Services in the arena of organisational development and change management.

Organisational 'change' and 'change management' are terms that are often used interchangeably, but understanding the difference between them, the nature of change, and how to effectively manage change in organisations, is critical to the successful implementation of change initiatives. Organisational change is a process of transformation whereby individuals, teams and organisations move from one state and way of operating, through a period of transition, into an intended future state (Creasey, n.d).



Change management, on the other hand, provides a structured approach to change, and can be best defined by Moran and Brightman (2001, p. 111) as:



“the process of continually renewing an organization’s direction, structure, and capabilities to serve the ever-changing needs of external and internal customers.”

It incorporates both human behaviour or people-focused change, and structural or systemic reform, such as organisational restructuring, governance reform or implementation of technological solutions, for example. However, change management is about more than just planning and implementing new processes, procedures, policies, or technology. Change initiatives must address the human element of transformation within organisations and understand “resistance to change”, where individuals push back against implementing new approaches or modifying behaviours in line with the change initiative, which influences the effectiveness, efficiency, and outcomes of strategic and operational change management programs (Cosh & French, 1948; Dent & Goldberg, 1999). For example, in the context of Safeguarding Services this may mean that individuals may not adhere to policies, or report certain kinds of incidents and breaches, which may reduce the openness and transparency required to maintain a child safe culture and increase the risk of child abuse.

Several studies investigating the success of change initiatives across diverse industries and operational environments have found that approximately 60-70% fail (Burnes, 2011; Jones et al., 2018). Factors that influence the failure of change initiatives include lack of urgency and sustained momentum, inadequate planning and strategy (Kotter, 1995), poor buy-in by senior leaders and/or staff, lack of skills in change management, unclear and/or infrequent communication about the change (Boddy & Buchanan, 1992; Kotter, 1996; Stanleigh, 2008), and insufficient support and resources (Burnes, 2011). Though, Burnes and Jackson (2011) argued that the most significant reason why change initiatives fail is due to a misalignment between the value systems of the change intervention, and those of the individuals and teams undergoing the change. Therefore, the ‘shared values and social norms’ (Kotter 1995), attitudes and behaviours, must be embedded in an organisation’s culture for organisational change to be successful.

Organisational culture can be described as the ‘personality’ of an organisation (McHale, 2020). It is based on the shared values, beliefs and perceptions people hold, and is demonstrated in the organisation’s practices and how the organisation operates (Van der Berg & Wilderom, 2004); and it impacts both the internal environment for staff, and the way the organisation engages externally with its clients and stakeholders (Robbins & Cotter, 2018). An organisation’s culture has a significant influence on strategy and results tend to follow if an organisation’s culture is taken care of (McHale, 2020). A ‘culture of health’ places the wellbeing of people, staff and clients at the heart of its business (Kent et al., 2016). Child safety must be embedded in a company’s broader culture of health and wellbeing; and concern for people’s welfare and wellbeing must be infused into all aspects of an organisation, through the attitudes and behaviour of staff, operating systems, and its brand or corporate identity (Goetzel et al., 2007; Kent et al., 2006; McCrindle & Fell, 2020).

When working with in an advisory or intermediary capacity, as Safeguarding Services does, or internally within an organisation to steer culture change, awareness of evidence-based organisational change management approaches is beneficial, and can help people overcome challenges, and achieve greater results and longer-term outcomes. Numerous theories and methodologies have arisen over the past 50 years, led by researchers and consultants, and it’s important to understand that no single approach will capture the needs of every organisational change initiative (Burnes, 1996; Burnes & Jackson, 2011).

Most models speak to narrow and specific aspects of change management, and many models fail to provide a holistic systems-based approach. However, effective change management programs require methodologies that address both humanistic and systemic elements of transformation in organisations. Selecting the most suitable change management models requires an understanding of the nature of the change intervention, its intended goal and outcomes, and the operational context and environment specific to an organisation and/or industry, and hybrid approaches may also be warranted (Calder, 2013; Cosh & French, 1948).

A leading international change management methodology, the Prosci method is highlighted below to illustrate how such an approach may be applied in the delivery of Safeguarding Services, to assist clients through the process of organisational change management for safeguarding children.

2.3.1 Prosci and the ADKAR model of change management

Founded in 1994, Prosci Inc. is a research and learning company, specialising in building change management capabilities within organisations. Their methodology incorporates three models, known as ADKAR, PCT and Prosci 3-Phase Process. The models can be used as stand-alone frameworks and provide an applied humanist approach to organisational change, whilst also focusing on the technical aspects of change management (Creasy, n.d.). Given this, the Prosci model is a compatible framework that can be nested within the Safeguarding Services project delivery approach to organisational change (see Figure 1).

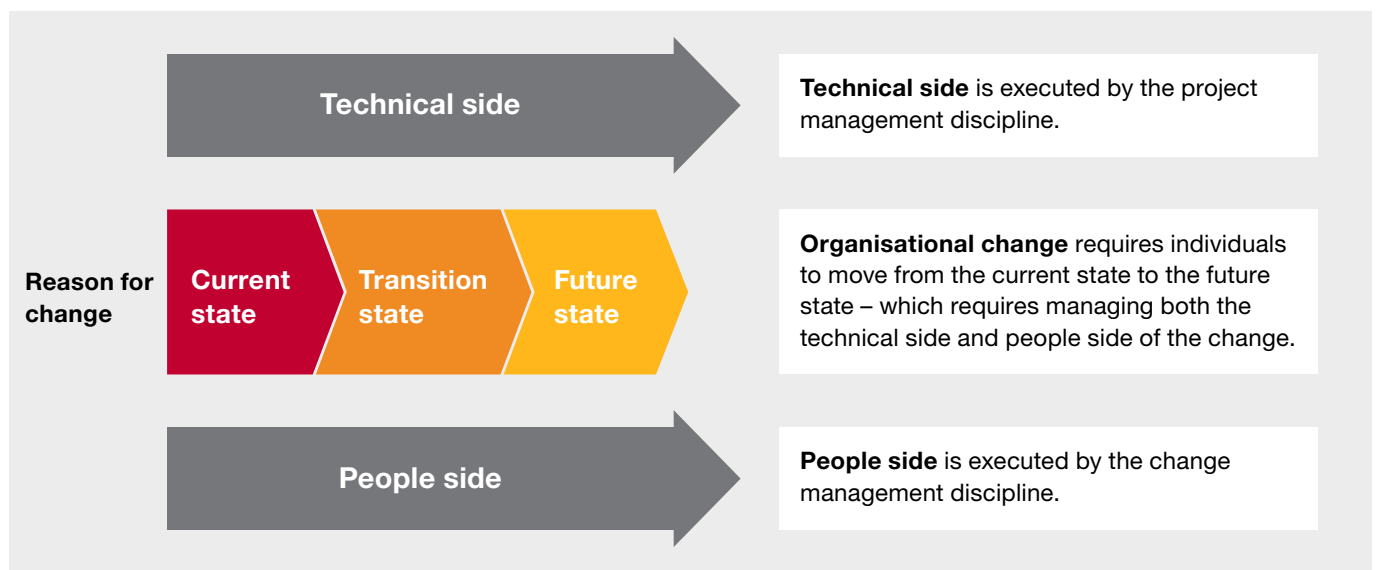
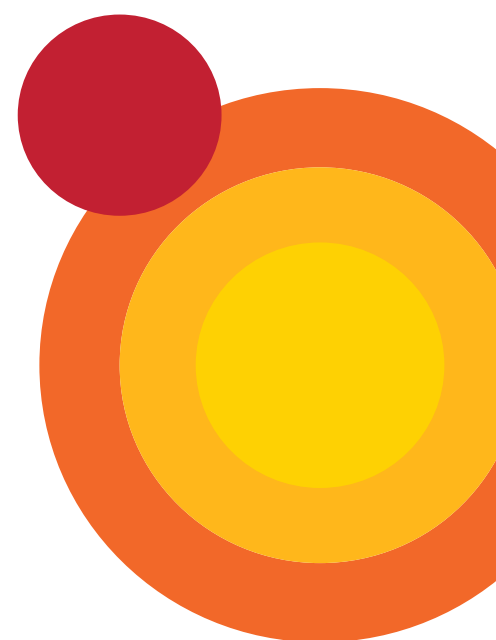


Figure 1 | Conceptual model of organisational change (Prosci, n.d.).

The ADKAR model

The ADKAR model was developed in 2006 by Prosci’s founder, Jeff Hiatt who studied the patterns of change in over 700 organisations across the globe (Hiatt, 2006). The word “ADKAR” is an acronym for the five outcomes which Prosci Inc. believes an individual needs for change to be successful.

- These include:
- **Awareness:** of the need for change;
 - **Desire:** to participate and support the change;
 - **Knowledge:** on how to change;
 - **Ability:** to implement desired skills and knowledge; and
 - **Reinforcement:** to sustain the change.



The ADKAR model hinges on the philosophy that change at an organisational level can only be sustained when individuals change. The framework guides people on the process of behaviour change in the context of their role, through a series of stages (see Figure 2). It can be applied to diverse contexts, including in small and large organisations, and across complex operational structures, at a team or whole-organisational level (Creasy, n.d; Hiatt, 2016). The ADKAR model incorporates critical approaches for working with individuals and teams including communication, coaching, and training, and builds in processes for managing motivational resistance and barriers to change which, as we discussed in Section 2.3, can arise during the process of organisational change.

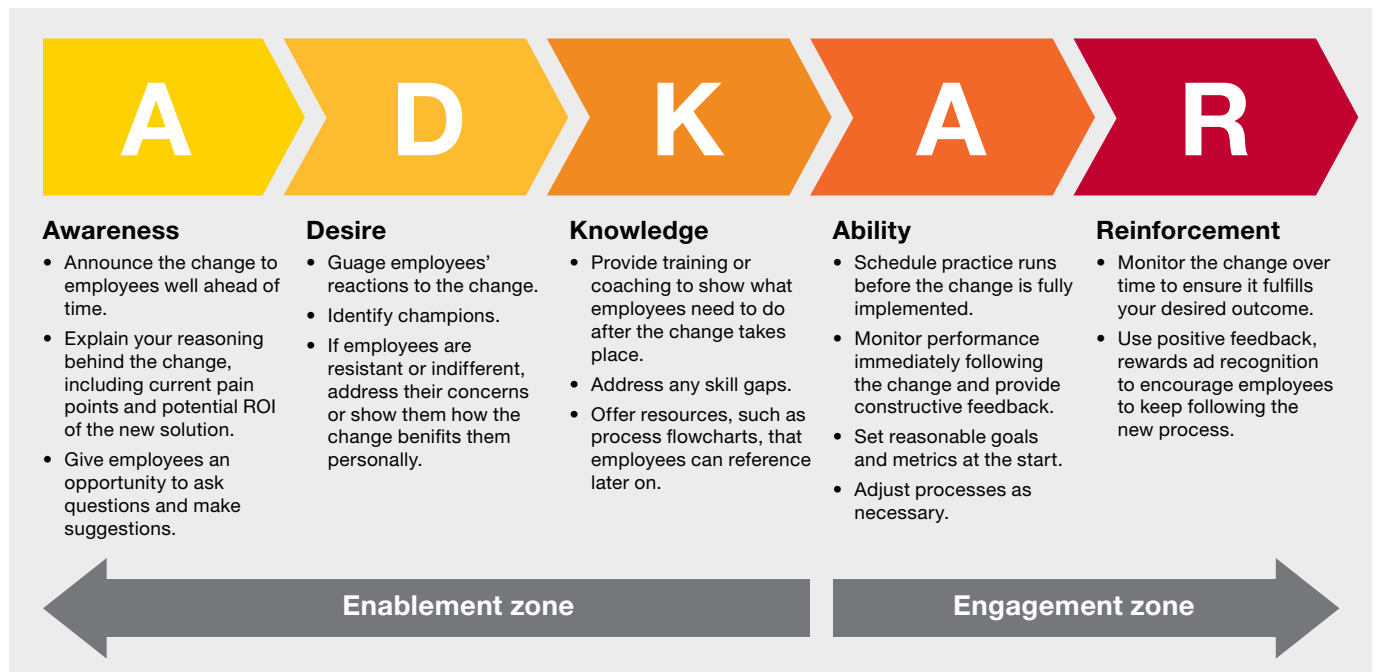
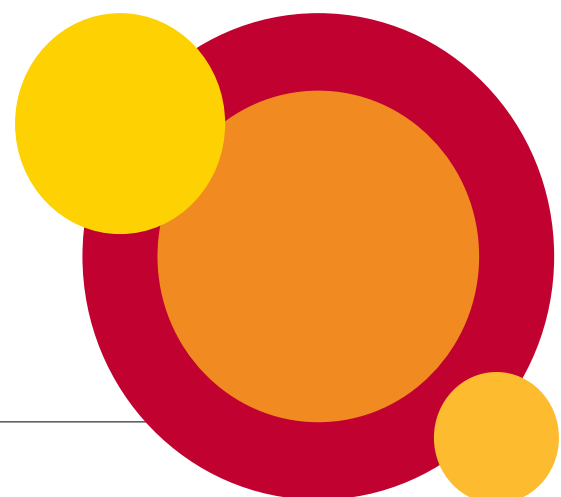


Figure 2 | ADKAR Model for Change Management.⁴

The ADKAR model has been employed in health contexts, including transitioning over 1,000 clinical staff to a new facility, with changes to care delivery in the US (Wong et al., 2019), modified clinical screening practices in Australia (Lawrence & Frater, 2017), and managing changes in clinical health technology practices (Leyland et al., 2009). The model has also been applied in the context of planning, project management and evaluation in a paediatric healthcare setting (Glegg et al., 2009), as well as for improving safety behaviour (Al-Qahtani, 2010). No research could be sourced for the application of a model such as ADKAR in the delivery mechanism for accreditation and certification programs.

However, as Prosci and the Safeguarding Services both operate as intermediary organisations working in the field of organisational development and change management, applying a behaviour method, such as the ADKAR model presents a new opportunity for increasing the effectiveness and efficacy of Safeguarding Services. The ADKAR approach allows organisations to focus on the human dimension of organisational change, beyond the mechanical or structural aspects of change covered through project management, such as the documented policies and procedures, and technical systems. It allows for diverse needs of individuals to be met and managed, and offers an approach to readiness assessment, communication, engagement, and facilitates greater individual and organisational buy-in.



4. Infographic sourced from Lucidchart.com, Using the ADKAR Model for Change Management.



3. The Foundation and Safeguarding Services overview and development

This section presents an overview of the Foundation and Safeguarding Services.

3.1 Overview of the Foundation⁵

Australian Childhood Foundation is a national not-for-profit organisation committed to preventing child abuse and reducing the associated burden of enduring trauma that impacts children, families, and the broader community. The organisation was started in 1986 by a group of passionate professionals and advocates who wanted to fix what they saw as major problems and gaps in child protection throughout Australia. It was established to give children, whose pain was unacknowledged, a voice to ensure that their safety and care became a priority within the community. Today, as a national organisation with numerous partnerships, the Foundation's focus has not wavered.

The counsellors, educators, and professional advocates at the Foundation work to ensure children and families impacted by abuse, neglect and family violence can receive support to heal. The Foundation is committed to helping the community to defend children, and ensure they feel loved and safe within their homes, and while in the care of organisations.

The Foundation provides a suite of services grounded in evidence, cultural knowledge, and best practice and is informed by the lived experiences of children, young people and families. These include specialist trauma counselling for children and young people who have experienced abuse; therapeutic out of home care programs; professional education and training; community-based abuse prevention activities; and parenting education and resource programs. The programs focus on: prevention of violence against children and young people; programmatic responses for ensuring the protection and safety of children and young people; capacity building for individual practitioners and organisations; and direct therapeutic interventions that are trauma informed and culturally relevant.

Program streams include:

- **SAFEGUARDING SERVICES:** a suite of professional services to transform and enhance safeguarding practice in organisations which work with children in Australia and New Zealand, including the ACCC endorsed Safeguarding Children Accreditation Program.
- **THERAPEUTIC SERVICES:** specialist therapeutic support for children and young people who have experienced sexual abuse or violence, and are living with their family, or in foster care, kinship care or residential care.
- **CENTRE FOR TRAUMA AWARE AND RESPONSIVE EDUCATION:** a tailored and flexible trauma-aware and responsive education framework for schools and education systems that integrates with their core principles and values.
- **CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE IN THERAPEUTIC CARE:** an Australian-first Intermediary Organisation providing research, knowledge translation, training and capacity building activities, to address the needs of traumatised children and young people living in out of home care.

5. Information in this section is sourced from <https://www.childhood.org.au/>

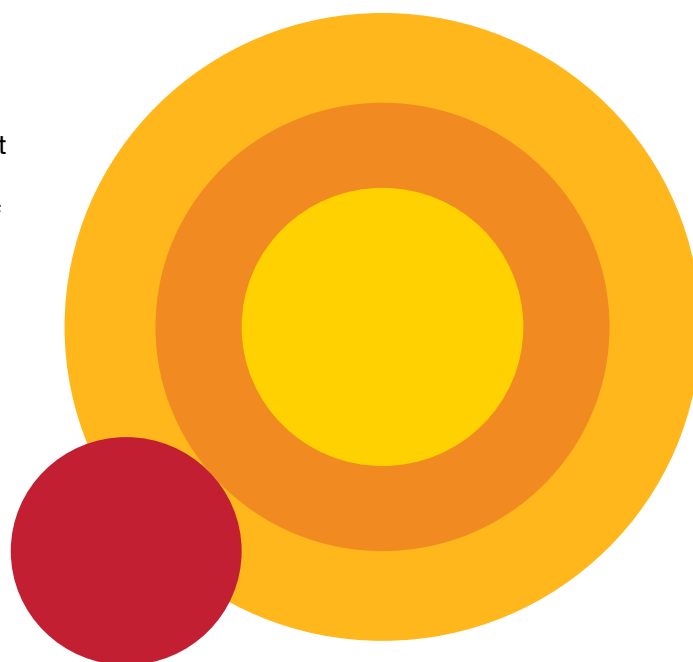
- **PARENTING AND EARLY YEARS SERVICES:** a suite of parenting programs for professionals to implement with parents and carers of children at different ages.
- **PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION SERVICES AND ACCREDITED TRAINING COURSES:** professional development training and education, including short courses for people working with children. The Foundation is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) offering four nationally accredited qualifications in youth justice, child, youth and family intervention, and developmental trauma.

3.2 The Foundation’s Safeguarding Services⁶

Safeguarding Services is a core program of the Foundation and has been operating as a social enterprise since its establishment in 2009. Using a set of Child Safe Standards, and the National Child Safeguarding Principles, the Safeguarding Services helps organisations to build their capacity to protect children and young people from abuse and exploitation by staff, volunteers, or other relevant individuals. Organisations can engage the Safeguarding Services to undertake tailored consultancy services, provide training, education and resources in child safeguarding and professional practice, or to participate in an ACCC endorsed Safeguarding Children Accreditation Program (since 2015), or Certification Program (since 2018).

Safeguarding Services has worked with over 300 organisations who provide programs and activities for children and young people across Australia and New Zealand, to make children safer and less vulnerable to exploitation. This includes engagements with businesses, charities, not-for-profit organisations and institutions, across industries including education, social services, children and youth care, religious fellowship, aged care, sport and recreation, and local government. The Foundation informally estimates that more than 1 million children benefit from improved safeguarding practices within the organisations that Safeguarding Services has partnered with.

As seen in Figure 3, the Foundation national office outreach spans Australia and Safeguarding Services are offered nationally, in all states and territories. Organisations cover metropolitan, remote and rural locations, and include working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and culturally and linguistically diverse (CaLD) communities. Client organisations range in size and maturity. Some organisations are in their formative years, both operationally, and in the child safeguarding arena, whilst others are more established, with robust safeguarding systems in place. For example, the smallest organisation employs approximately 25 staff who work in a local, place-based welfare service, whilst the largest organisation is a national, federated child and youth organisation, that manages over 16,500 staff and volunteers.



6. Information in this section is sourced from <https://www.childhood.org.au/> and conversations with Foundation staff.

Figure 3 | The Foundation's national office outreach with safeguarding clients spanning every state and territory in Australia.⁷



The safety and wellbeing of children is at the heart of Safeguarding Services, and the purpose of the program is to prevent child abuse, harm, and exploitation from occurring in organisations which have a duty of care to children and young people. To do this, Safeguarding Services provides a suite of professional services, to improve staff literacy and awareness of child abuse, reduce risk and help build organisational capacity to prevent abuse and harm of children.

7. <https://www.childhood.org.au/>



4. Safeguarding Services structure and components

This section focuses on the structure and operation of Safeguarding Services. It presents a conceptual change model of Safeguarding Services, illustrating how it engages with client organisations to effect change and create child safe culture. Next, the operational program model is presented, showing the various components of the Safeguarding Services. This discussion explains the journey safeguarding client organisations have as they interact with the Foundation to deliver safeguarding children services in order to achieve their desired outcomes of becoming a child safe organisation. The various services options around strengthening capability and validation are then described.

4.1 Conceptual change model of Safeguarding Services

Figure 4 presents a conceptual model of Safeguarding Services showing how it operates within client organisations to help them create a child safe culture.

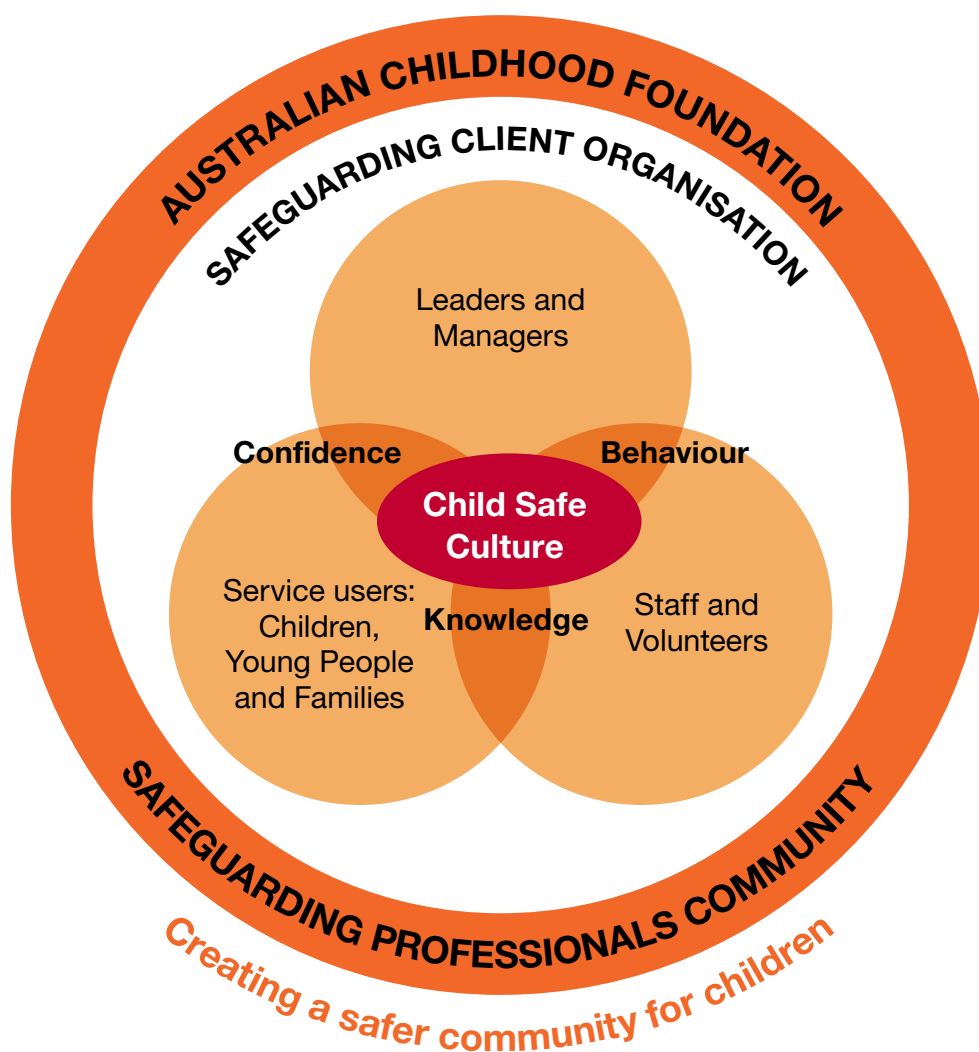


Figure 4 | Conceptual model of Safeguarding Services (developed with Foundation staff).

The outer circle reflects the suite of services and programs offered by Safeguarding Services to their client organisations. The Venn diagram, with three overlapping circles, depicts the intersecting relationships between three key stakeholders within Safeguarding Services client organisations: leaders and managers; staff and volunteers and service users (children, young people and families).

Leaders and managers steer companies and define company culture and are instrumental in its transformation to become more child safe. They shape the values, standards, and behaviours – both strategically and practically – by which an organisation, and the staff within it, operate. They are tasked to lead by example, maintain an attitude of child safety and model appropriate behaviours. Doing so, demonstrates the written and unwritten ‘rules’ of working, to staff and volunteers, whose increasing knowledge and awareness of child safe practices, influences the way they work with service users, including children, young people and families.

Staff then have a greater awareness of what they should, and should not, be doing in their roles. They have greater understanding of what best practice is, and what the potential risks are both to children and to themselves and have greater awareness of how to protect themselves in their professional roles. This then has a direct relationship with the experience service users have, whilst participating in the services and activities provided by the organisation. User experiences where children, young people and families, feel and are safe, enhance the confidence and trust they place in the organisation. This, in turn, gives the organisation’s leaders and managers confidence that the service users are being safeguarded.

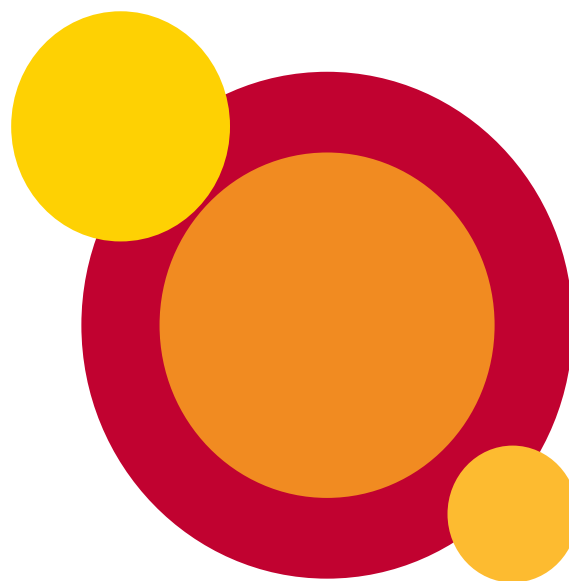
The Safeguarding Services community is made of multiple organisations. Through the process of client engagement and relationship building across organisations, a safeguarding community is created, which ripples beyond the Foundation and the partnering organisations to create a safer community for children overall.

4.2 Operational program model of Safeguarding Services

Turning our focus towards the operation of Safeguarding Services, Figure 5, presents the operational program model. This visual model depicts, in a quasi-linear way, the journey Safeguarding Services client organisations have as they interact with the Foundation to deliver the safeguarding children services in order to achieve their desired outcomes.

The Foundation is represented in the model working across all engagement and delivery activities. They bring to the relationship professional expertise and experience in child protection and safeguarding. They also have a strong reputation in child trauma, healing and safeguarding, as well as research and knowledge translation capabilities. Alongside this, they have ACCC recognition for their Accreditation Program that demonstrates quality, validity and trust to their clients. All of these attributes are underpinned by the National Principles.

Safeguarding Services operates as a social enterprise and works with a broad spectrum of organisations, of varying size and maturity, and across different industries and sectors. Clients come into the program through a variety of channels, which may include, through an existing relationship with the Foundation in another business division, via web research, word-of-mouth referrals, and/or through exposure at industry-related conferences.



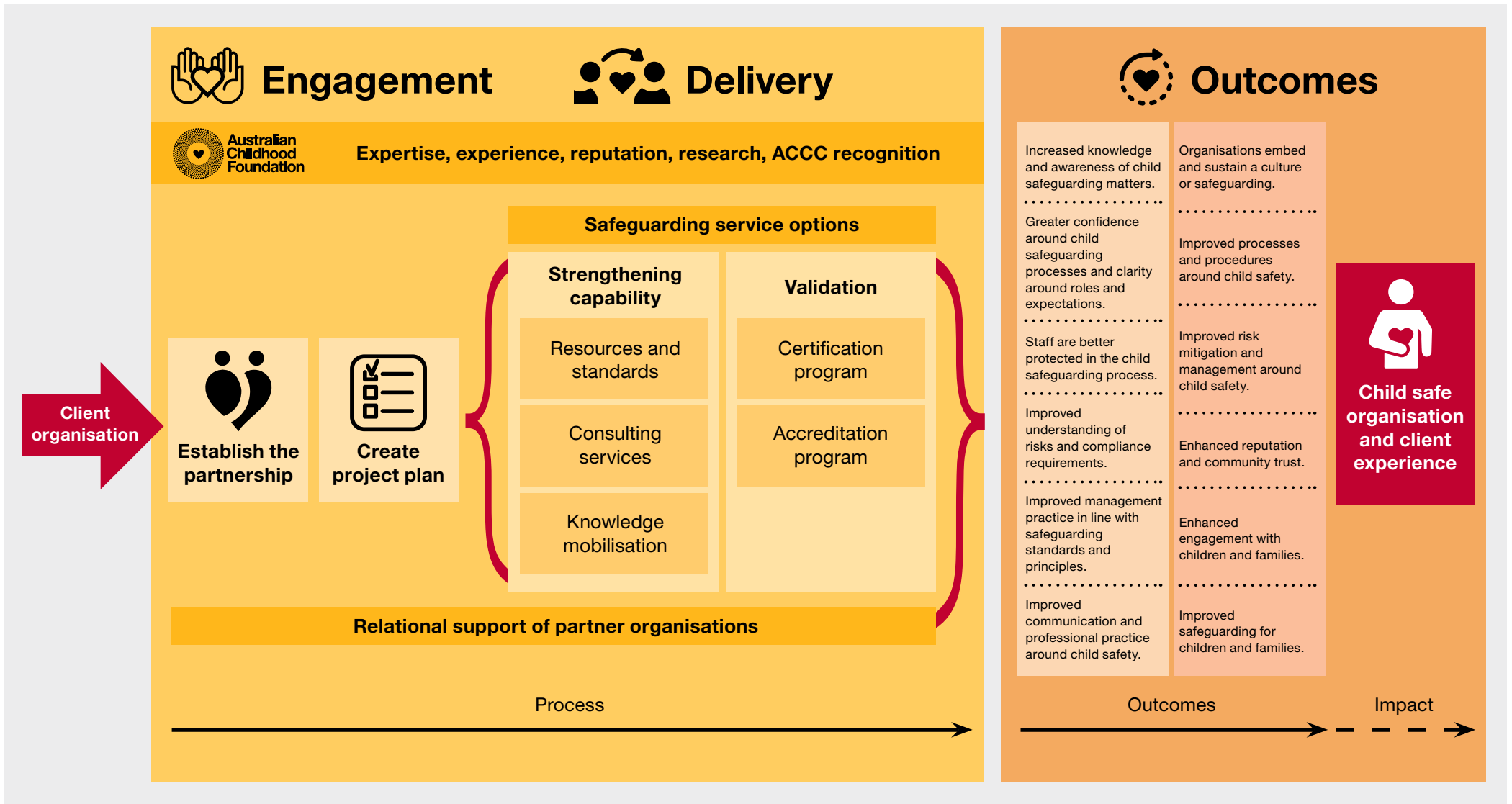



Figure 5 | Operational Program Model of Safeguarding Services.

5. Data collection approach and methodology



In order to examine the impact story of Safeguarding Services, primary data collection was undertaken with Foundation staff and selected staff from client organisations.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the research questions and capture additional insights and the nuances of the process of engaging (and delivering) Safeguarding Services, and the impact of this engagement. The interviews took place online between December 2021 and March 2022 and lasted approximately 30 minutes.

A semi-structured interview schedule was developed to examine perspectives of Safeguarding Services. Our sample of interviewees included staff in Safeguarding Services client organisations and Australian Childhood Foundation staff. Staff from a range of levels were interviewed to gain a range of perspectives across organisational levels, including those involved in frontline service delivery, as well as those in senior management. This helped to shed light on “on the ground” impacts as well as higher-level

strategic impacts. Additionally, the sample included client organisations who had engaged Safeguarding Services in various ways (i.e., Accreditation, Certification, training) to capture the impacts through different ‘streams’.

Given the dispersion of participants around Australia, and the COVID-19 restrictions, all interviews were conducted online, either over Zoom or Microsoft Teams. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed using Microsoft Teams (computer generated) or sent to Rev.com (to be transcribed by a person).

Approval to conduct this research was granted by the University of Western Australia (2021/GR000974), in accordance with its ethics review and approval procedures. All persons who considered participating in this project were provided with a Participant Information Letter and Participant Consent Form, which they were entitled to retain a copy of.

Transcribed interview data was thematically analysed. Emic and etic perspective were considered during data analysis (Pike, 1954). Data explored the perspectives of the participants, whilst also examining the context from which they were produced (i.e., staff perspectives or client organisations). The progression of analysis roughly followed the six phases of reflexive thematic analysis, developed by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2020) – a theoretically flexible approach that seeks to answer research questions around peoples’ experiences and perceptions. We sought to identify patterns across the data to tell the story about the process and impact of Safeguarding Services utilising the following phases of analysis.

Client organisation representation was broad, and the sample of Safeguarding Services client organisations included a wide range of variables, such as size, sector, location, length of engagement, etc. However, the sample was biased towards clients undertaking the Child Safeguarding Accreditation and/or the Certification Program.

Qualitative research methods allow us to explore rich, in-depth experiences and insights, however this approach can produce subjectivity that is influenced by researchers’ personal interpretations, points of view, or judgements. Although we attempted to reduce the likelihood of bias (by validating findings across researchers within the Project Team) we could not completely eliminate this subjectivity.



6. Findings – process insights

An important component of this research is to understand the ways in which client organisations engage with Safeguarding Services to influence organisational change around creating a child safe culture. This section presents the findings relating to the process of engaging and delivering the Safeguarding Services. Key insights are presented around motivators for clients seeking Safeguarding Services, and the approach to delivering these.

6.1 Motivators for client organisations seeking Safeguarding Services

6.1.1 Ensuring integrity through independent advice

Client organisation participants described the importance of having an independent body to ensure integrity of their organisational practices – and that this was a primary motivator for seeking out the services of the Foundation. They felt that Safeguarding Services could provide expertise around safeguarding practices and processes that could not otherwise be achieved.



“The big tipping point for me was the independence that the Foundation offered, being external to the church and not affiliated with any religious organisation. They can act like a critical friend and come and accredit us.”
(Client organisation staff)

6.1.2 Reputation and value for money

Some staff in client organisations stated that engaging with the Foundation increased their status and the credibility of their safeguarding activities, in comparison to developing their own standards and approach to Accreditation.



“... we knew their processes and procedures and their teams and felt that based on their reputation and our experience with them that they were still a good fit for us as a school.” (Client organisation staff)

Client organisations described how the external regulation offered by the Safeguarding Services communicated to their clients and service users that they were accountable and respectable.



“At that time, the Catholic church was looking at developing their own set of standards for organisations and my thoughts around it were ‘it’s the police policing the police’ - publicly, it’s not a great look. I knew of the Foundation and their standards and approach to accrediting organisations and felt that that was probably a better look given that they are independent and external to us.” (Client organisation staff)

Additionally, participants also felt that the Foundation had a reputation as being good value for money, and this was an additional motivator for engaging with Safeguarding Services.



“We were looking at other organisations that offer the same kind of service, to be really honest in terms of price, and in terms of what their process was. We made the decision to pursue reaccreditation with the Foundation rather than another organisation... The price was comparable ... for us it would have ended up being more expensive because we would have had to start from scratch.” (Client organisation staff)

6.1.3 Safer delivery of services

Implementing consistent standards

Having standards that apply across varied services, demographics, and geographical locations was important to the client organisations. Participants described the benefit of being able to draw upon a formal process rather than having to develop the process themselves, which was an advantage because they viewed creating safeguarding processes as a significant task.



“It’s very helpful not to have to reinvent the wheel. So, it is good to have an industry standard that we can call on, because otherwise.... I’d be doing it myself, which would be impossible.” (Client organisation staff)

This was particularly important for organisations that operated nationally:



“At the end of the day, corporately, the organisation is responsible for all work and for every school in Australia... We wanted a consistent approach to safeguarding and when I started, I found one school might have their own code of conduct that was very basic, and another school might have a very good one. We wanted to move to a consistent model across the whole of Australia.” (Client organisation staff)

Ensuring best practice

Client organisations discussed the importance of applying best practice principles and how this was an instrumental motivator for partnering with the Foundation. There was a strong desire to ensure that organisations were delivering safe services to their clients – from both a business and compliance perspective.



“I thought that they would be able to provide us with guidance and support to ensure that we are following best practice when it comes to safeguarding in all aspects ... from legislation through to practice. They would provide guidance and ensure that we are continuing ... in that evolution, as well as having guidance around governance and legislation matters.” (Client organisation staff)

Creating new processes to ensure safeguarding

Some client organisations were motivated to approach the Foundation for help with creating new processes under the guidance of Safeguarding Services. Participants discussed how they felt they lacked the structures, skills, resources, frameworks, confidence, and knowledge to safeguard children and they felt that the Foundation could provide the relevant resources to address these gaps.



“We didn’t have a lot of structure on how we were safeguarding children. There was general awareness, but not one that was necessarily standardised or formalised.” (Client organisation staff)

“The organisation didn’t really have the skills nor the resources ... to really bridge those gaps and make the improvements that were required across the departments. They approached the Foundation, because of their expertise in the child safeguarding area to help the organisation from a confidence, competency, and skills [perspective]. When I entered into this role, I knew very little about the standards and the safeguarding requirements.” (Client organisation staff)

Updating processes to build on existing safeguarding efforts

Other client organisations described having a good foundation for safeguarding clients, however, they had approached the Foundation with the intention of updating their current processes to build upon their structures and progress a stronger safeguarding culture within their organisation.



“We already had significant criminal history checks happening and we have strong supervision structures within the organisation, but it was about creating a culture of safeguarding rather than just having a compliance [focus]. That’s what we were looking for from the Foundation.” (Client organisation staff)

Educating staff

Remaining participants discussed how educating staff was another important motivator for engaging with the Foundation. They felt Safeguarding Services could assist with capacity building, providing clear information about the safeguarding standards, provide general awareness about harm to children (both internal and external to the organisation), explain how safeguarding could be applied to operations, and how safeguarding practices might impact the organisation.



“There was a lack of knowledge in relation to the standards. It’s just not on many people’s radar. There’s a general lack of awareness and there’s a lack of skills and expertise. Even when staff are aware of the standards, there’s hesitancy. On a number of occasions there has also been a lot of resistance about fully taking them on and owning them, and saying, ‘What does this look like within our department?’ or, ‘What do we need to do?’ Part of that is the fear of not knowing, that we actually don’t know enough about this, so can we handle it? Should we get a report? From a management level, if they are not confident in this piece, how do they then support their staff or volunteers?” (Client organisation staff)

6.1.4 Responsibility to safeguard children

Many client organisations felt they had an obligation to show their commitment to protecting children, and they felt this could best be achieved by partnering with the Foundation. Their motivations for seeking out the Safeguarding Services was a sense of responsibility to keep children safe. It was acknowledged by the participants that many of the children they had contact with are in a vulnerable position, and therefore, a proactive approach to safeguarding was required.



“I have quite detailed knowledge of what can happen in this space and just how damaging it is, which is horrible. That was a really important learning for me to then understand how to drive this work and why we needed to get action at the organisational level, but more broadly from a societal point of view.” (Client organisation staff)

Encouraged by findings from the Royal Commission

Some organisations were moved by the findings of the Royal Commission (2018), and this motivated them to seek guidance from the Foundation to prevent harm caused by child abuse. In particular, those affiliated with similar organisations identified in the Report discussed their ongoing duty to protect children and avoid repeating mistakes that had been made within similar institutions.



“The Royal Commission into Institutionalised Child Abuse identified that there is child abuse in religious organisations. As a Catholic organisation, although we weren’t named in the Royal Commission, we realised we have responsibility to address this. The managers and the Executive formed a group to address this ... so we can ensure any young person accessing our services is safe and supported’.” (Client organisation staff)

“Our engagement with the Foundation was prompted by the expansion of our program delivery within the children and parenting space, and in response to the findings of the Royal Commission into Institutionalised Child Sexual Abuse. Being affiliated with the Catholic church, it was important to be really clear that we are a social service and that we hold ourselves to...a very high standard in terms of providing a safe environment for children and their caregivers to come and receive services.” (Client organisation staff)

Influenced by historical incidents

Other client organisations had disclosed that there had been historical incidents within their organisation, and this had prompted their seeking out the services of the Foundation as there was a strong desire to avoid similar events reoccurring in the future. These client organisations described a moral obligation to do what was possible to keep children safe.



“The whole school feels this way to make sure that we are above reproach in regard to our child safety processes and procedures, so we can say in really good faith to our community that we have all of these things in place to ensure that that would never happen again, or that we would swing into action very, very quickly if there were any suggestions of anything like that happening again.” (Client organisation staff)

6.2 Delivery of Safeguarding Services

As a whole, client organisation participants reported positive engagement experiences with the Foundation. In many cases participants felt that the Foundation had exceeded their expectations:



“We are getting a lot more than what we paid for; we are getting huge value for what we paid for [in] the agreement...”

And another client organisation described the ease of working with the Foundation:



“[The Foundation] were really easy to work with. The amount of information that was available once we had access to their portal was really good. And obviously anything else that we needed leading up to self-assessment and the gap analysis process.”

6.3.1 Creating a meaningful partnership based on trust

One important indicator of process which resulted from connecting with the Foundation was the strong, reciprocal relationship that was developed between the client organisation and the Safeguarding Consultants. One participant from a client organisation described this relationship as being akin to ‘peer support’ and others discussed how they felt that they were working together with Safeguarding Services staff, side by side, to deliver safeguarding services to children.



“What I noticed when I started was that there was a really strong reciprocal relationship with the Foundation so that we weren’t just calling them whenever we had questions. It was very much a guided kind of experience; working side by side rather than, ‘here’s the tools, figure it out yourself’.” (Client organisation staff)

Consistent with what was found in the client organisation interviews, the Foundation staff likewise discussed the importance of creating a significant partnership with their clients. Cultivating a strong partnership involved developing a trusting relationship. One participant described how this was built around consultants demonstrating their investment and commitment to the client organisation. The Foundation staff reported that trust allowed the client organisations to feel confident about the decisions made and created the perception that the consultant and the client organisation were ‘on the same page’.



“There’s a trust built that we have invested in their organisation. We’re on the same page, we want the same things, so trust is very important. I don’t think it could be done without it. The responsiveness, the trust, the credibility.” (Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

Trust, according to Australian Childhood Foundation staff, facilitated open communication, and was said to be the ‘foundation that everything else was built on’. Trust was particularly helpful when it enabled client organisations to be open to new ideas or suggestions.



“...they’re willing to trust us to go on that journey. When there’s open communication, when there’s trust, it makes the work easy. I have seen even very difficult clients go on a really positive journey of change in their practices and their thinking and their mindset and so the easy part is whether the relationship works because that’s the foundation that everything else gets built on.” (Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

A strong partnership between the Foundation and the client organisation was discussed by both the Foundation staff and the staff of client organisations in relation to the overall delivery of the services. However, maintaining this connection was reportedly an important element of preparing client organisations for the safeguarding audit, according to the Foundation staff. This comprised ongoing coaching and support, and the delivery of fair and constructive feedback.



“We get a lot of feedback on this, about how our feedback is fair. We hold organisations to account, but we are really mindful to work alongside them, to understand their uniqueness and their context and their situation and what’s happening for them and to support them in that, rather than the big stick approach. Which is why for some organisations, it’ll take them five years because we’ve got to work with them and we don’t allow them to not do what they need to do, but we support them in the best way for them.” (Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

6.3.2 Being a supportive and critical friend

The Australian Childhood Foundation staff discussed the usefulness of the audit in relation to prompting greater communication between the client organisation and the Safeguarding Consultants. It appears that the discussions had during the audit were transparent, evocative, and productive. For instance, participants spoke about the prospect of having more ‘difficult’ conversations where they had more of an opportunity to ‘push’ clients further or suggest things that may be perceived as more challenging to implement within the organisation. Ultimately, the goal is to set up organisations to succeed after obtaining Accreditation.



“You need to have difficult conversations, to push them further, to put things on the table that you know are uncomfortable. But you’re hoping there will be something you can work on this time because you have a chip on the table, which is their potential. In that sense, the audit provides a great space for improvement. It is not just about the audit testing retrospectively, but its about setting themselves up for the next three-year period. That’s how I frame the audit: what are the things I really want to focus on in this space so that I can write an audit report with recommendations that sets them up to succeed for the next three years.” (Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

Other Australian Childhood Foundation staff felt that the audit process helped to identify potential strengths and challenges that the client organisation might be up against when attempting to deliver safeguarding procedures. This was also a chance for client organisations to ask questions, seek advice or additional support, or reflect on their safeguarding journey with the Foundation.



“The idea of that critical friend is valuable for organisations. We are a sounding Board for them. They have the opportunity to ask questions that they may not be able to ask anybody else and they might have initiatives or ideas that they want to start implementing ... They know that we’re available most of the time, that we’re responsive to those questions. The conversations that we have with them opens up further conversations that they have within the organisation. More revelations start coming up, or more topical things start happening and they can come to us for advice on how this might impact them.” (Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

6.3.3 Developing a tailored approach

Developing tailored support was another significant finding related to the process of delivering the Safeguarding Services. Some participants from the client organisations discussed how working with the Foundation felt individualised to their organisation, and this was due to the Foundation staff taking the time to understand the inner workings of an organisation, asking questions about the services that organisation offered, and attempting to identify how children were currently engaged and kept safe. Anecdotally, client organisations felt heard and validated; it communicated that the Foundation was invested and interested.



“With the Foundation, it really felt like they were interested in exactly how we engage clients, what services we offer, how we deliver them, how we keep people safe but also how we therapeutically work with people.”

(Client organisation staff)

The Foundation staff correspondingly discussed the importance of understanding the individuality of each organisation and felt that providing a tailored approach assisted them in developing rapport with their clients. One participant described how adapting safeguarding to the client organisation communicated that the client organisation’s needs were being prioritised and there was a desire to provide useful, relevant resources to the client. Another Australian Childhood Foundation staff member stated that this showed the client that there was an understanding and willingness to adjust their approach to meet their outcomes.



“The strength is in us demonstrating that we understand their organisation and we are tailoring the safeguarding risk and mitigation for their specific organisation... We sit and unpack the work with them and apply the safeguarding principles tailored to their organisation - really showing that we understand.” (Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

6.3.4 Providing effective support

Participants from the client organisations described the support that they had received from the Foundation as effective. What was understood as effective support differed across organisations: for most, this meant being responsive; Australian Childhood Foundation staff were able to provide timely responses to the organisation and the help given was useful because it was relevant. Others discussed how effective support was related to the overall process of engaging with the Foundation – which included regularity of contact and efficiently working through concerns.



“We found them [the Foundation] really easy to engage with and really responsive to any questions we have, or issues that have been raised by us.” (Client organisation staff)

“My ACF contact has been really easy to reach, really responsive over email. I’ve had some phone meetings to discuss things when there’s potentially areas that we’ve identified we can improve on.”

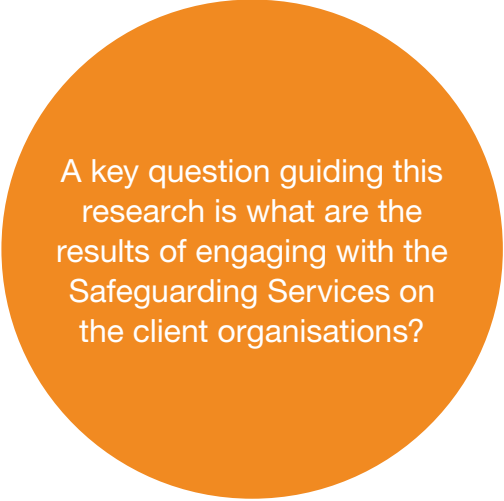
(Client organisation staff)

Consistent with these findings, Australian Childhood Foundation staff raised the importance of responsiveness in their approach to working with clients. One participant discussed how, at a practical level, being responsive was important as it demonstrated to the client that the consultants value the connection. Responsivity was defined by the Foundation staff as effectively answering the client’s queries in a timely manner and, anecdotally, responsiveness demonstrated professionalism:



“We are a very professional team and I think that assists our relationships, particularly when we have to have some of the more challenging conversations.” (Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

7. Findings – the impact story



A key question guiding this research is what are the results of engaging with the Safeguarding Services on the client organisations?


This section presents the ‘impact story’ through several lenses: the effects of the Safeguarding Services on the client organisation staff, the effects on the organisation as a whole; and the effects on the organisation’s clients (children and the wider community).

7.1 Impact of Safeguarding Services on the client organisation staff

7.1.1 Increased awareness of child safeguarding issues


Most client organisations discussed how working with the Foundation cultivated much more awareness around child safeguarding. Increased awareness meant identifying potential risk to children (or clients within that particular organisation); identifying how staff can prevent harm and increase child safety; greater clarity around the process of responding to harm; and understanding how systemic safeguarding within the organisation protects children.

Organisations reported increased awareness among staff around child safeguarding issues, including understanding what constitutes abuse in the context of children, and how this abuse can be identified. This extended to the practice of grooming, and the more indirect ways that children can be harmed in an organisational context. One participant noted that since engaging with the Foundation, staff had more education around child abuse and as a result greater awareness around the issue.



“...it certainly seems that they have far more education [about child safety] than they had before.” (Client organisation staff)

Client organisations reported more awareness around the prevention of risk and protecting the children they service. This included how to formally report abuse (or potential abuse), identify indirect threats to child safety, such as grooming behaviours (which could include transporting children and buying children gifts), and the specific ways in which employees may encounter abuse within their own organisation.



“When we started to talk with staff about the issues with transporting children alone and the issues with buying children gifts and those sorts of things - grooming behaviours - and about what children could say, that really threw up some questions for the practitioners working in that area.” (Client organisation staff)

Among the client organisation staff there was consensus about peoples’ increased confidence in being able to deal with, and respond to, safeguarding concerns – including disclosures or concerns about harm to children. One participant discussed how they felt this was due to staff having greater understanding about their role in safeguarding, what constituted appropriate boundaries, and feeling more empowered to enact safeguarding principles within their organisation:



“There is a level of confidence that wasn’t there before.” (Client organisation staff)

Two client organisations noted that since their engagement with the Foundation, they felt better able to identify governance issues within their organisation and appreciate the importance of policies in the context of safeguarding.



“It’s identified a lot of governance issues we have as an organisation. That’s been both a positive and a negative. It’s a positive that we’ve identified it, it’s a negative from the workload perspective to try and fix it.”
(Client organisation staff)

7.1.2 Improved confidence to address safeguarding issues

Participants from client organisations reported that engaging with the Foundation increased their confidence to effectively manage concerns, feel protected, and understand their role within the safeguarding progression.

Anecdotally, staff reported greater awareness of what was expected of them regarding working with children. One participant said:



“It has helped staff with clarification around boundaries of roles and what is, and is not, appropriate.”
(Client organisation staff)

This was consistent with the reflections provided by the Foundation staff. Participants spoke about the increased confidence they had witnessed in the staff of client organisations, and felt this change was an outcome of better understanding their role in the context of safeguarding. One participant noted that confidence in this context drives staff to ‘do the right thing’.



“I’ll come back to the word - confidence. If the staff in organisations are confident and feel supported in this, they’re more likely to do something about it rather than when they’re not confident and when they’re not clear about their roles and responsibilities. 99.9% of the time, people are very driven to do the right thing because they know what’s expected of them.”
(Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

Other participants from client organisations reported that since engaging with the Foundation, their organisation had increased their efforts to protect staff within the safeguarding process by building models and processes that better support staff. The safeguarding of staff creates a sense of safety and empowerment for employees working within these organisations.



“If a child displays adult sexual behaviours as a young person, we do a two staff model to protect them both. This protects the staff from allegations as well. These are processes that we hadn’t built in prior to safeguarding. And it made the staff think of safeguarding in terms of not just protecting children and young people, but also protecting themselves.”
(Client organisation staff)

7.2 Impact of Safeguarding Services on the overall client organisation

7.2.1 Changing culture

Engagement with the Foundation had a whole-of-organisation impact for the client organisations. All staff were willing to take part in safeguarding efforts and the whole organisation felt a responsibility to protect children and contribute to a positive workplace culture.



“...The process of getting everyone involved helps to highlight how important it is and how it’s a part of everything that we do.”

(Client organisation staff)

Organisations reported that many of their staff were involved in the safeguarding processes, which highlighted the desire from all levels to embed child protection into the organisational structure. This was reiterated by one organisation participant, who spoke about safeguarding as being important to all staff, rather than the sole responsibility of the child safety team:



“That’s something that has changed, but probably needs more of a shift to being a whole of organisation focus, rather than something that sits with the wellbeing of staff or with the child safety team. This is positive and it is happening, but I think that that it is something we need to continue to work on. And having the Foundation on board helps with this.”

(Client organisation staff)

Consistent with findings from the client organisation interviews, the Foundation staff discussed how Safeguarding Services lead to the development of stronger safeguarding responses. More specifically, they perceived greater emphasis of governance efforts and an increased understanding of safeguarding across the whole of the organisation. One Australian Childhood Foundation staff member noted that they often work with clients who believe they are well-versed in safeguarding, only to later realise there are improvements that they need to make. This increase in knowledge is important, as it instils understanding within the organisation, which eventually translates into meaningful change to safeguarding principles.



“The knowledge increase is probably where I’d start because often we work with organisations and they think they are already well-versed in safeguarding. However, when we start working with them and start unpacking the work, although they may actually be in a really good position, there are improvements that they still need to make. And so, you really see the increase in knowledge of the individuals. And then what that does is it facilitates a confidence in this space, and then that confidence translates into change.” (Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

Engagement with the Foundation assisted in effecting change within the organisations’ culture. The culture of safeguarding children comprises feeling comfortable when reporting possible breaches of child safety, or the ability to access information to help support staff in the process they need to undertake. Client organisation participants spoke about how their organisations have embedded safeguarding into their workplace. For some, this meant completely transforming the pre-existing organisational culture. All client organisation staff interviewed discussed, at length, the critical need to embed safeguarding culture across the whole of the organisation. An organisations’ ability (and desire) to implement real culture-change, was therefore, a strong theme that emerged from the data.



“The shift over the years has been quite dramatic from an organisational point of view. In the early days it was the HR team kind of muddling their way through, and then by the time I’d left, we had a couple of full-time staff who were dedicated to working in this space. This shows how we raised the importance of it from an organisational point of view. And it was always a topic of conversation, always on the agenda and people really understood the importance of it.” (Client organisation staff)

“Having this relationship with the Foundation has completely transformed the organisation in terms of our cultural and our compliance-based approach to keeping kids safe.” (Client organisation staff)

Akin to the client organisations, one of the most important themes to emerge from the perspective of the Foundation staff was the shift from compliance to culture change. Participants spoke about how certain organisations might initially partner with the Foundation regarding compliance, however they generally leave with a culture of safeguarding across all levels of the organisation having created a collective ownership of, and commitment to, safeguarding.



“Sometimes we need to help organisations understand that they might come to us with a compliance focus, but they generally leave with a culture of safeguarding and that’s the value-add that we can bring - to move them from compliance to culture change. I think it’s more integrated in organisations now, whereas once it was one person who had it in their portfolio, and they had to do it. Now it could be at all levels of the organisation. There are champions at Board level, there are sponsors at Executive levels, there are safeguarding specific committees. And then there might be champions at volunteer level, for example. So now there’s a broader or more collective ownership of safeguarding.”
(Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

“That cultural change that we talk about is when everybody starts to understand what it means to be a child safe organisation, when everybody understands what role they play. Then the organisation invests in supporting staff and volunteers and invests in its systems and invests in continuous improvement in this space. Then you see significant practice change.” (Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

The client organisation staff discussed how their organisations had a strong desire and responsibility to protect children. One participant noted that this responsibility was to be consistently upheld in their organisation, regardless of whether staff were in the workplace or not:



“Our policy is essentially about ensuring that wherever children and young people are participating in any activities - programs, events, or direct services within council - that they are safe, supported, and have a voice. But also, our policies and the work that we do with the Foundation, is about what we expect of our staff and volunteers, and contractors within a work environment and what we expect of them within the community. So, it doesn’t just stop at their nine-to-five job, it is actually what we expect of them always.” (Client organisation staff)

A sustained culture of safeguarding was described by another participant from a client organisation as a shift from a more sceptical position (i.e., not feeling so sure about the changes) to an appreciation of a new way of working which is embedded with safeguarding principles; where no employees have any concerns about alterations to process or procedure if they are consistent with protecting the safety of children. In other words, staff within client organisations assume that if they are working in the safeguarding space, that's the way of working. It is seen as standard practice across the organisation and is reinforced and upheld by all staff.

The Foundation staff also discussed the importance of sustaining culture change, and similarly, this was from the perspective of a shifting mindset. Participants felt that when a holistic, deep-rooted commitment to safeguarding develops within an organisation, this mentality implicitly influences an organisations' values towards child safety.



“The mindset shift for me is the impact on the community, because that’s something that has ripples in the way that people approach valuing the rights of children and young people in the first place. And that has really positive benefits from a safeguarding perspective.”

(Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

7.2.2 Risk mitigation

Increased reporting and self-monitoring among staff

Since engaging with the Foundation, most participants from client organisations stated that reporting had increased, including those deemed as more ‘lower-level concerns’. One participant felt that increased reporting provided staff with the opportunity for reflection, and another described how staff felt empowered by the reporting procedures. Others spoke about how self-monitoring and reporting are more openly discussed among staff, and this had also created more responsivity in the context of reporting procedures. Increased self-monitoring and reporting among staff created a cultural shift towards prioritising the safeguarding of children. Importantly, increased reporting was not reflective of increased incidents. Instead, increased reporting reflected attempts to mitigate risk within the organisation to prioritise children’s safety. The client organisation staff discussed how working with the Foundation increased their understanding of the importance of reporting, how and when to report. They also spoke about how discussions about reporting are more likely to occur between staff, and there was a collective preparation for various situations that may put children at risk of harm – including those that may be less obvious.



“People are now more likely to report and discuss child safety issues amongst themselves and then to report it through the appropriate channels, even when they are lower level issues. Everybody feels that they’re prepared for that stereotypical scenario of a child coming to you with bruises everywhere and they make a disclosure and you report it to child protection. But there is growing knowledge around grooming and how slowly that happens and what that might look like. This is shaping people’s willingness to come forward and to say, ‘oh, I’ve noticed this’ or ‘I’ve seen this’ and that might be just a staff member using their own mobile phone to take photos of children. But it’s created an openness around those conversations and those reports that’s only growing, which is really good.” (Client organisation staff)

Safer recruitment processes

Client organisations discussed how their engagement with the Foundation had resulted in the growth of more child-safe processes relating specifically to recruitment. For some organisations, this has led to more sophisticated governance and risk-based systems and processes; for others, this has meant more basic procedures have been regulated, such as ensuring WWCC were valid and up-to-date, and utilising overseas police checks and criminal history checks.



“In terms of making sure that everyone has a Working With Children Check those basic things I know that they are covered by our regular regulatory checks but they are also an obligation to be accredited under the Foundation.” (Client organisation staff)

7.2.3 Enhanced engagement with children and families

Client organisations identified the importance of engaging with children to deliver safe and relevant services. Communication with children meant engaging the community and listening to a diverse range of children and young people. The consensus was that by listening to children they feel empowered which, in turn, creates a safer organisational culture where children’s voices are embedded within the organisation’s structures and processes. Participants expressed that as a result of their work with the Foundation, they had become more engaged with their clients.



“...the biggest differences for us is the fact that we are communicating more with the children themselves now than what we were before. We still have some improvement to make in that area regarding engaging children in the service, co-designing and delivering the services. But we’re doing much more of that communication now.” (Client organisation staff)

“... this year is about engagement with community. That’s our big piece, so we’ll be proactively going out to groups for disability or LGBTIQ, or certain Indigenous groups and really focussing on engaging with them about what it means to be safe within our program and services.”
(Client organisation staff)

7.2.4 Improved reputation

Client organisations discussed the value of engaging with the Foundation relative to their reputation. Reputation was said to be a by-product of adhering to best practice. This was articulated by one participant who stated that updating organisational standards to meet best practice had a positive flow on effect to their organisation’s status. Many participants discussed reputation in the context of the wider community’s perception of their organisation and there was an overarching desire from the client organisations to appear trustworthy and reputable.



“It’s a bit like our Rainbow ticket accreditation - it adds that extra sort of flavour.” (Client organisation staff)

“The accreditation gives that stamp of trust... It’s like any tick: even when you go shopping and you pick a chicken that’s got the tick you know it comes from quality. That is a knowledge that people have: that we have gone through a due process and that someone else has deemed us as compliant.” (Client organisation staff)

One participant from an educational institution described the importance of Safeguarding Accreditation in signaling to parents that their organisation had made the extra effort to keep students safe. Anecdotally, achieving Accreditation could increase a school status and therefore, potentially influence whether the parents decide to enroll their children in that institution or not.



“Perhaps if someone was on the fence about considering another school over our school, this might tip them to say ‘Well they’ve gone that extra mile in relation to safety’ and then choose our school.”
(Client organisation staff)

Another participant spoke of reputation in the context of publicised, historical incidents of abuse. In this case, attaining Accreditation (or Certification) communicated to the community that they were making amends and actively trying to better protect children.



“We are trying to make amends and say, ‘Well, sure, we’re owning our past, but we are trying not to repeat it and we’re trying to do better’. A big thing is to try and show the wider world that we’re trying to do better.”
(Client organisation staff)

7.3 Impact of Safeguarding Services on the children & the wider community

7.3.1 Increased awareness of child abuse and the necessity for safeguarding

The Foundation’s staff identified that a significant impact of Safeguarding Services was around increased community awareness around child abuse. Participants discussed that there had been a gradual shift from underestimating the extent of child abuse within organisations – and not knowing how to start conversations around this – towards a more solid understanding of safeguarding concerns and acknowledgement that conversations around child abuse are difficult but necessary. As the broader community becomes more aware of safeguarding, people are now able to reflect on the organisations they interact with and consider not only the commitment these institutions have to keep children safe, but the specific process and procedures in place to attain safeguarding.



“Some of the broader community recognise and understand safeguarding and understand that when they want to put their children into children’s services or they want to pick a swimming club that they’ll actually think about, ‘Well, what does this organisation do to keep my child safe?’.”

(Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

Another participant spoke about the responsibility that client organisations have in initiating dialogue with their clients about the issues of safeguarding – and how real, meaningful culture change only happens when the community have an appreciation for how significant it is.



“The culture change around safeguarding cannot happen until you have a broader community understanding of what it is and how significant it is. And in that sense, I think our clients play a really, really, really important role in opening a conversation with their clients in the first place.”

(Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

7.3.2 Improved reassurance and trust in organisations

A flow on effect of increased understanding about safeguarding is a feeling of reassurance and trust of organisations that adhere to child safe procedures. Safeguarding Services therefore becomes a powerful tool in helping communities to develop confidence in organisations – that they can be trusted to keep children safe.



“For those who have the awareness it’s actually really powerful because it makes it easy for them to then be able to say, ‘Okay, I trust this organisation. I trust that they will look after my child when they’re in their care’. But I still think there are many people out there who don’t even understand where to start with safeguarding or what to look for in an organisation. I think we’ve still got a long way to go around community awareness and attitudes about child abuse.”

(Australian Childhood Foundation staff)



8. Findings – facilitators and barriers to impact

Alongside the importance of understanding the process factors and the impact of engagement with Safeguarding Services, it is important to understand the facilitators and barriers to impact. The following section presents some of the key findings emerging from the data.

8.1 Quality of the relationship

The discussions had with both client organisations and the Foundation staff highlighted the importance of having a good relationship. Having a transparent and authentic connection between the client organisations and the consultants was crucial for successful delivery of Safeguarding Services.



“Our hope is that the client forms a relationship with one of our consultants and that relationship helps them to keep safeguarding on the agenda, as well as examine new parts of the journey. It’s the support and the advice that we give, having worked with hundreds of organisations, there’s a lot we’ve learned, a lot of lessons that we carry with us.”

(Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

The client organisations likewise stressed the importance of the relationship and how valuable it was for effective delivery of services. Indeed, the majority of interviews stated that they had good relationships and that this helped significantly.

8.2 The degree of organisational buy-in

Australian Childhood Foundation staff highlighted the importance of organisational buy-in, specifically at the Board and Executive level, to translate into sustainable change for the organisation. It was observed that when change is led from the top, and the commitment is shared across the organisation, then the modifications made are more likely to have significant impact over time.



“...some of the greatest change and impact is at that Board and governance level. If we can get really good buy-in at the Board and Executive level, then that commitment and understanding really does translate into sustainable change in the organisation, because obviously it’s been led by the top. Anything that’s led from the top is more likely to have significant impact. Where we see it working even better is if it’s also supported at the grassroots level giving feedback from the ground up.”

(Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

Another participant felt that greater awareness is generally linked to more genuine buy-in across the organisation, and this was an additional factor that assisted them to work most effectively with organisations:



“Organisations have genuine buy-in, when they’ve signed up to engage with safeguarding children services through self-awareness as an organisation that they have work to do in that space and an understanding that it’s important work.” (Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

8.2.1 Identification of safeguarding leaders

There was consensus among the Foundation staff that the identification of safeguarding leaders within an organisation's structure can influence more positive outcomes. The Foundation staff stated that the ideal arrangement was when a new role is created in the client organisation with a focus on safeguarding matters.

Participants also discussed the potential challenges of having safeguarding leads who are assigned these responsibilities on top pre-existing duties. However, this could be managed if the organisation staff are willing and motivated to work together to implement processes and procedures.



“One person can’t do it all, especially when it’s not their main role. Sometimes you might get a safeguarding lead in an organisation, which is incredible because that’s their full role and they can fully dedicate their time to it. But if it’s just a part of someone’s role it gets very challenging...”
(Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

8.2.2 Motivations for engagement

Motivations for why a client organisation decides to engage with the Foundation can have implications for impact and outcomes as it influences organisational buy-in.



“Where we have clients who are motivated by compliance-based standards and legislation, as opposed to the true culture change that we know actually underpins a proper safeguarding approach, it can create resistance.” (Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

“The culture change that is required for safeguarding has to be embedded, and I think if it’s seen in any way as a checklist or a compliance-based activity, it will fail.” (Australian Childhood Foundation staff)

8.3 Understanding the expectations of involvement

Client organisations felt it was essential that they have a clear understanding of what is expected from working with the Foundation. Client organisation staff stated that participation could be resource-intensive and that this needs to be clearly understood by all clients.



“I think it’s a great program. I think they are standouts in the sector compared to their competitors. However, the resourcing piece needs attention: organisations need to understand from the start what they’re getting into.” (Client organisation staff)

Australian Childhood Foundation staff also acknowledged the importance of setting clear expectations and communication around resource needs.

9. Conclusion

The findings presented in this report demonstrate the progression of Safeguarding Services from both the staff and client organisations' perspective. The interviews provided rich insight which helped to identify the narrative of engaging with Safeguarding Services, including how the expertise, commitment, and knowledge of the Foundation's staff interacts with the investment and willingness of the client organisations to create tangible, meaningful impacts that ultimately contribute to a child safe ethos.

The interview process sought to explore the following questions:

1. In what ways does Safeguarding Services engage with client organisations to create a child safe culture?
2. What is the impact of Safeguarding Services engagement on client organisations?
3. What are the facilitators and barriers to achieving social impact?

Figure 8 summarises the path that staff and client organisations take to produce a child safeguarding culture and child safe outcomes, based on the experiences of the interviewees.

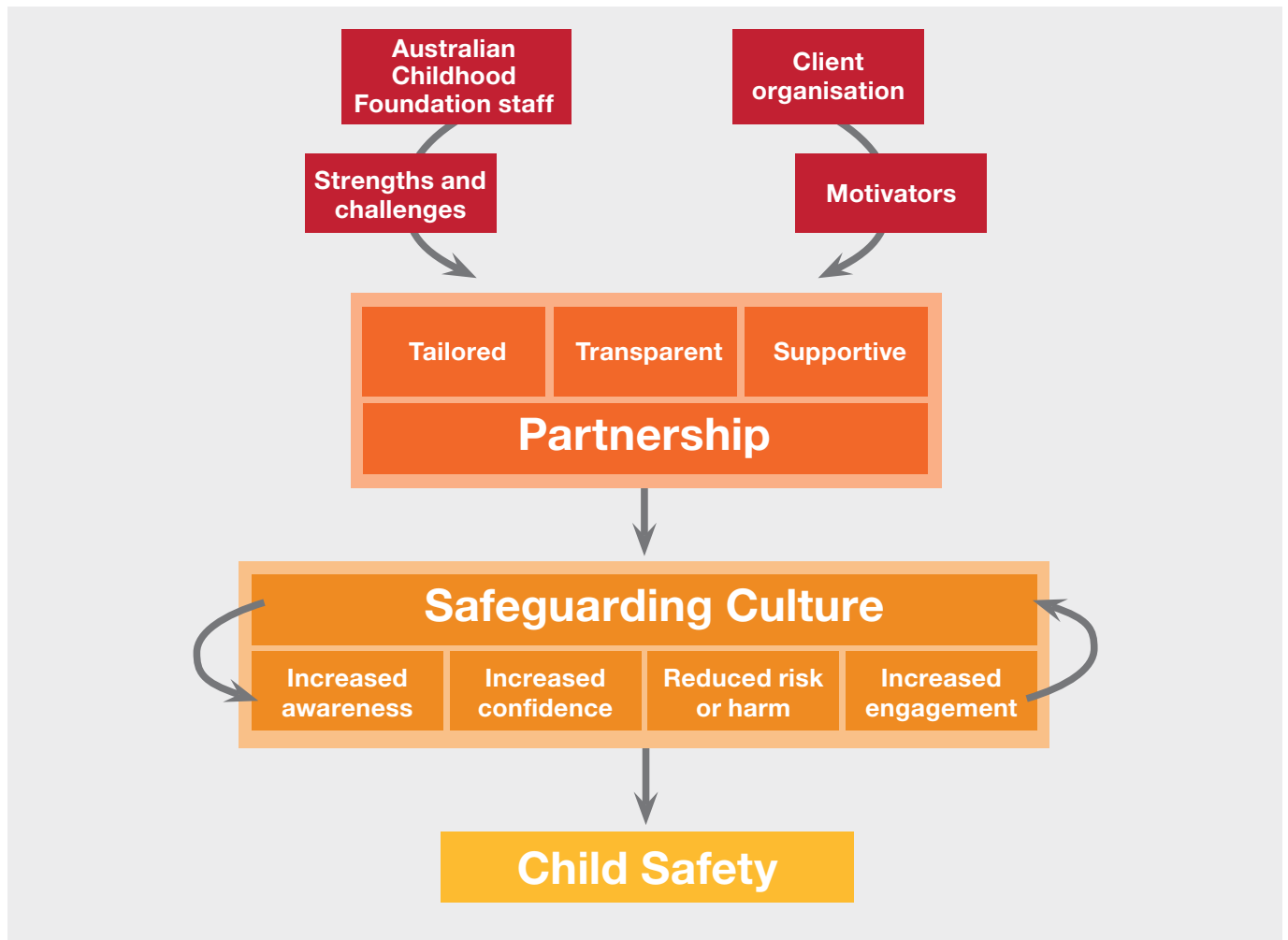


Figure 6 | Key elements for establishing a child safe culture with client organisations.

This diagram speaks to the importance of connection and teamwork in achieving desired outcomes. The degree to which the staff and client organisations are compatible can sway impact of the program and all interviewees spoke of the importance of creating and maintaining this relationship. The key ingredient to creating a working relationship is trust; the foundation of which everything else is eventually built upon. This relationship is maintained by transparency and reciprocal communication between both parties throughout the engagement process. Developing a tailored approach refers to developing individualised support to each organisation and this has a positive effect on the engagement process by building rapport and communicating that the Foundation is interested and invested in the uniqueness of each organisation they work with. Lastly, effective support – namely, responsiveness, regularity of contact, and user-friendly applications – aids client organisations to feel better supported and understood in the process of engaging with Safeguarding Services.

The effects of Safeguarding Services are not only limited to the client organisation. The individual staff within these organisations develop increased understanding of safeguarding and improved confidence in their ability to address safeguarding issues. Additionally, staff of the client organisations feel a sense of protection that comes from engaging with Safeguarding Services; they feel that they, as staff, are also being safeguarded in this process. This is because roles and expectations around safeguarding are clear – staff are provided with a roadmap of how to behave, and respond – which in turn, creates a sense of structure and safety.

Although our research did not allow us to seek the experience of children or their families directly, the interviewees reported that impacts of Safeguarding Services stretched further than merely the client organisations and their staff. Upskilling, educating, and implementing safeguarding elicits increased confidence within the community, as people can identify those organisations who are Certified or Accredited by the Foundation and they can be trusted to be child-safe and regulated. This also reinforces the necessity of safeguarding to the wider community and ultimately communicates the importance of understanding and implementing safeguarding programs more generally.

9.1.1 Identified impacts of Safeguarding Services

Although outcomes of Safeguarding Services can be individually identified across staff, client organisations, and the community, we found that some of the benefits were consistent. These included:

1. Safeguarding culture among staff and across the organisation

For staff within client organisations, culture change is defined as both an individual and a collective willingness and obligation to consider all actions and behaviours in the context of keeping children safe. This extends to behaviours outside of the workplace – staff feel a responsibility to consistently uphold safeguarding values and ways of working. For some, there was a shift from a more sceptical position of feeling unsure about policy and process change, to an appreciation for a better, safer way of working which adheres to safeguarding principles. Employee concerns about alterations to process, or procedure, decreases if they feel that changes are consistent with the overall aim of keeping children safe. Staff feel that accountability is required across all members of staff, and not merely those who are in the safeguarding team.

A culture of safeguarding across the organisation is attained by embedding safeguarding principles within all levels of an organisational structure. Tangible outcomes include a normalcy around reporting possible breaches of child safety and supporting staff to undertake the process of reporting. For some client organisations, creating a strong culture of safeguarding meant building upon pre-existing work and further exploring values and aims, ultimately strategising how to move forward and better implement safeguarding within their whole organisation. For others, a more deep-seated change was necessary; it was essential to cultivate a change in mentality towards safeguarding and start the process of creating a collective ownership, and commitment to, child safety. Many participants described this as a shift from compliance to culture change.





Developing a culture of safeguarding was the primary impact of Safeguarding Services that we identified. However, safeguarding culture forms part of an organisation's overall culture of wellbeing, and culture change comprises many facets and is more complex than simply a desire to protect children. As Figure 8 demonstrates, feedback loops exist where risk mitigation, engagement, increased awareness, and confidence influence the uptake of a safeguarding culture – but, by the same token, a shift towards a safeguarding culture also reinforces these outcomes. Therefore, these impacts coexist and influence one another, and ultimately, it is the relationship between these variables that creates a safer space for children.

2. Reduced risk of harm resulting from risk mitigation measures

Safeguarding Services supports reducing risk of harm to children by increasing reporting and self-monitoring among employees. The majority of interviewees from the client organisations reported a spike in reporting within their organisation. Notably, the incidence of increased reporting was not reflective of more incidents, instead, it echoed greater responsiveness to possible threats of harm. Most reports recorded within client organisations were of much 'lower-level' concern, and these were associated with staff engaging in more open discussions about their commitment to protect children – and acknowledgement that, in some instances, harm may even be entirely unintentional.

Safeguarding Services had also provided more practical support relative to risk mitigation, such as an understanding of the importance of reporting, when to report, and how to do so. Increased self-monitoring also reflected this understanding, as staff became more aware of the range of situations that could pose a risk to children – including those that may, at face value, be less obvious.

From an operations perspective, risk mitigation for organisations referred to the development of more child-safe processes relative to the recruitment process. Safer recruitment, therefore, was an action taken by client organisations to reduce the potential risk of harm to children, following engagement with the Safeguarding Services.

3. Increased engagement with children and their families

Client organisations were better able to identify the value of engaging with their service users, and communicate more effectively. All the participants we spoke to had acknowledged that there was an obvious benefit in seeking feedback to improve service delivery, however, what was perhaps initially less apparent was the way in which consultation could empower children and young people. Where there was engagement with service users, this ensured that children's voices were embedded within the organisation's structures and processes, therefore increasing safety and relevance.

4. Increased awareness of child abuse, safeguarding, and responding

Awareness of safeguarding was an important outcome of Safeguarding Services, particularly for client organisation staff and the wider community. Staff learn not only what constitutes child abuse, but also how it can be identified within their own organisation. This comprised direct and indirect threats to child safety (such as gift giving), and the distinction between obvious and less obvious harm (i.e., grooming). Not only do staff learn about identifying abuse (or the behaviours leading to abuse), but they are also provided with information that helps them effectively respond to these threats, essentially providing an understanding of their role in safeguarding. Evidently, increased awareness was accompanied by greater education about safeguarding for staff of client organisations – and this was important as it provided staff with the surety to be able to effectively respond. Many of the participants described the degree of empowerment staff felt because of this increased knowledge and awareness.

Awareness in the context of the community was identified as being a shift from underestimating the extent of child abuse within organisations, towards a more educated grasp of the necessity for child protection and safeguarding programs. As the broader community becomes more aware of safeguarding, people are better informed about the organisations in which they are associated with – including the commitment that organisations possess to keep service users safe.

5. Increased confidence of staff and the organisation in the safeguarding process, and the wider community in identifying safe organisations

Confidence is a consequence of the client organisation staff developing a clear understanding of their role within safeguarding – what is expected of them, how they should behave, how they need to respond – which positively influences their confidence in protecting children. However, staff also felt protected within these structures, as it creates a sense of safety that if they do the ‘right thing’ they will likewise be protected under the safeguarding framework.

Achieving Accreditation or Certification has a flow-on effect on the reputation of a client organisation, which creates a sense of confidence across the whole organisation. Many participants discussed the desire of service users (and society more broadly) to engage with organisations that are perceived as trustworthy and reputable.

Association with the Foundation signals to the community that an organisation has ‘gone the extra mile’ to keep children safe, which therefore instils confidence in child-safe organisations for those who need to decide which institutions or establishments to engage with. Therefore, Safeguarding Services creates confidence by offering reassurance and trust that organisations who work with the Foundation will keep children safe.

It is hypothesised that the combination of these identified outcomes (culture, risk mitigation, engagement, awareness, and confidence) is the recipe for producing a child safe organisation – and in due time, a more child safe society. The way an organisation operates has a direct influence on the experience of service users. A child safe culture ripples beyond that of the client organisation (and the Foundation) to create a much safer community for children. Additionally, a growth in the number of client organisations who undertake safeguarding programs would, theoretically, increase the likelihood of creating this safer society.



9.1.2 Influencers of impact

Through the process of developing a process and impact story, we also identified some variables that influence the likelihood of the Safeguarding Services achieving impact. When Safeguarding Services staff and client organisations feel that these key variables are well developed, they facilitate outcomes, however, when these elements are weak (or absent) they become barriers to achieving positive outcomes. We identified several key elements across both Foundation staff and the client organisations that influence impact, including:

1. The quality of the relationship between the staff and the client organisation

As our diagram (Figure 8) illustrates, the relationship between Foundation staff and client organisations is a crucial component. Reciprocity within the relationship, between Safeguarding Consultants and the client organisation, is fundamental for successful delivery of Safeguarding Services.

2. The degree of organisational buy-in across the client organisation

Organisational buy-in is imperative, without it, Safeguarding Services risk being less effective. Organisational buy-in is most effective when it trickles down from the Board and Executive levels. This is where sustainable change can be observed within the organisations undertaking Safeguarding

Services. The majority of the Foundation's staff reported that several organisations they had worked with had significant buy-in and this enhanced the trajectory of safeguarding over time. Therefore, when led from the top, change and modifications to an organisations' procedure and processes are likely to have greater impact. However, when this is missing, a common theme that emerged from our findings was that clients were usually motivated to approach the Foundation from a compliance-based perspective, rather than a desire to create a culture of safeguarding. Additionally, challenges could also arise when national organisations engaged with the Foundation and the federated organisations underneath these structures were not always on board. Evidently, the degree of buy-in across a client organisation is likely to be influenced by the reasons for initially seeking guidance from the Foundation.

Additionally, organisational buy-in can also be mediated by the identification of *safeguarding leaders* – people who are assigned the sole responsibility of delivering child safeguarding in an organisation.

3. The degree of understanding a client organisation has about what is expected of their involvement

Having a clear understanding of what is involved and expected when engaging with Safeguarding Services is important; it assists client organisations to make informed decisions about which support options are best suited for them and provides a roadmap for what engagement will look like.

9.2 Looking forward

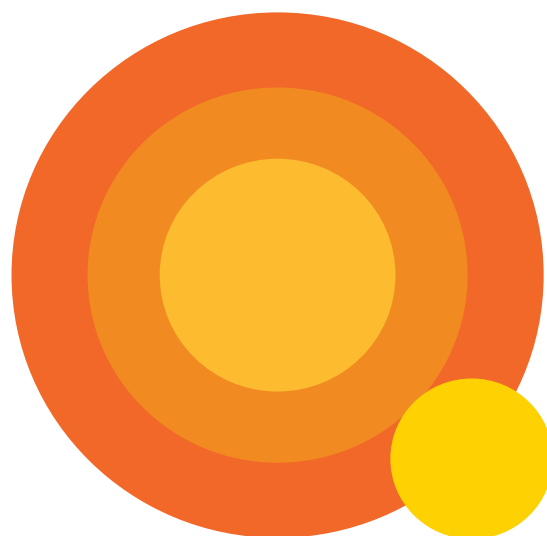


“How institutions respond to child sexual abuse – including their reactions to disclosure, action taken following abuse, and broader prevention and protection measures – can have a profound effect on victims... [organisations] have the potential to either significantly compound, or help alleviate, the impacts of the abuse.” (Royal Commission, 2017, p. 11)

This is a pivotal moment in history, for the children of our nation, and for those who continue to live with enduring trauma resulting from child abuse. Survivors and advocates are bravely speaking up and demanding change to address past failings and better protect children from the horrors of abuse. The Royal Commission (2018) opened the lid on some of the darkest parts of our society, and in doing so, ushered in new era of safeguarding in Australia. With greater attention on the issue of institutional child abuse, as a society we can move towards healing and reform. There is still much work to do to address the historical legacy of institutional child abuse and to ensure that every effort is made in organisations to keep children safe and prevent child abuse from occurring now and in the future.

For over 30 years, the Foundation has been defending and protecting the rights of children in Australia, and since establishing Safeguarding Services as a social enterprise in 2009, have been championing child safe organisational culture; working with over 300 organisations who have a duty of care to children. Safeguarding Services is critical to ensure that the conditions in which abuse takes place in organisations are eliminated, child safe standards are adopted, and measures are implemented to minimise risks and protect children from abuse.

This research investigated the ways the Foundation's Safeguarding Services engaged with client organisations to effect organisational change to create a child safe culture. Through this project, we uncovered rich insights that demonstrate the important work of Safeguarding Services as an intermediary –



to help organisations navigate a complex and dynamic operational and regulatory environment relating to child welfare and protection – and to create a child safe organisational culture.

By employing exploratory, qualitative methods, we were able to capture nuanced findings and extrapolate both the client organisations' and the Foundation staff's insights regarding Safeguarding Services. The findings illustrate the various components which support the uptake of safer organisations for children and young people. Some of these findings were perhaps more anticipated than others, such as increased awareness, knowledge and staff motivation. However, what also emerged were less obvious, more subtle variables that could either facilitate or deter impact in client organisations, including the clarity of information sharing, staff engagement and the perceptions of pressure relating to knowledge of safeguarding, increased workload and modifying behaviours in practice.

Interestingly, one of the key findings emerging from the data related to staff safety, and how the measures adopted and implemented by the client organisation can provide a greater sense of personal safety to the staff. This highlights the central importance of individual staff, and their attitudes, confidence, and behaviours in creating a child safe culture, and indicates how child safeguarding fits, more broadly, into a culture of health, where organisations' value the health and wellbeing of staff, clients, and stakeholders.



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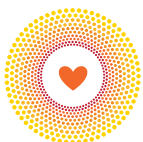
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