

Freedom from exploitation, violence and abuse

- How can research help to sharpen our focus on what is most important?
- How can research inform policy and practice – mainstream and disability?
- Importance of promoting the voices of people with disability – in research and research translation to policy, and in practice.
- How can we strike a balance in the attention that goes to preventing harm, responding to harm, and helping people recover from harm?

Setting the scene

- High rates of violence, abuse & neglect
- Low rates of response
- The NDIS won't make a difference to lots of people
- Violence prevention organisations need to build capacity to work with people with disabilities.
- For some groups, the situation is worse:
 - Children and young people
 - People who receive a lot of paid support
 - Women and kids who experience family and domestic violence
 - People whose experience of disability challenges service responses
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability

In this session: looking through 3 windows

- What is important to children and young people with intellectual disability about safety and harm? (Sally Robinson)
- How can we bring ideas of people with disability about abuse into policy and practice? (James Bannister)
- How can the voices of women with disabilities be included in research to improve domestic violence services? (Patsie Frawley)

FEELING SAFE, BEING SAFE

What is important to children and young people with intellectual disability about personal safety in institutional settings?

Dr Sally Robinson

Project team and acknowledgements

- Ms Lel D'Aegher (CCYP) fieldwork
- Professor Anne Graham (CCYP) project advisor, literature review
- Professor Judy Cashmore project advisor, literature review
- Mr Matthew Bowden (PWDA) project advisor
- Dr Jess Cadwallader (PWDA) project advisor

Thanks to the children, young people and families who worked with us to share their perspectives on safety and harm.

Thanks are also due to the people who supported us all in the project through assisting children and young people.

Background

- Abuse research has paid particularly scant attention to
 - the perspectives of children and young people with disability;
 - to preventative and safeguarding approaches; or
 - to factors that promote personal safety for children with disability.
- This research context intersects with a policy environment in which the needs of children and young people with disability are not well considered

Aim of the research

This study explored what helps children and young people with disability and high support needs to feel and be safe in institutional settings.

Research questions

- What does 'being safe' mean to children and young people with disability and high support needs?
- What helps and hinders children and young people with disability and high support needs in feeling and being safe in institutional settings?
- How do people who provide support perceive and respond to children's and young people's concerns about their own safety?

Participants

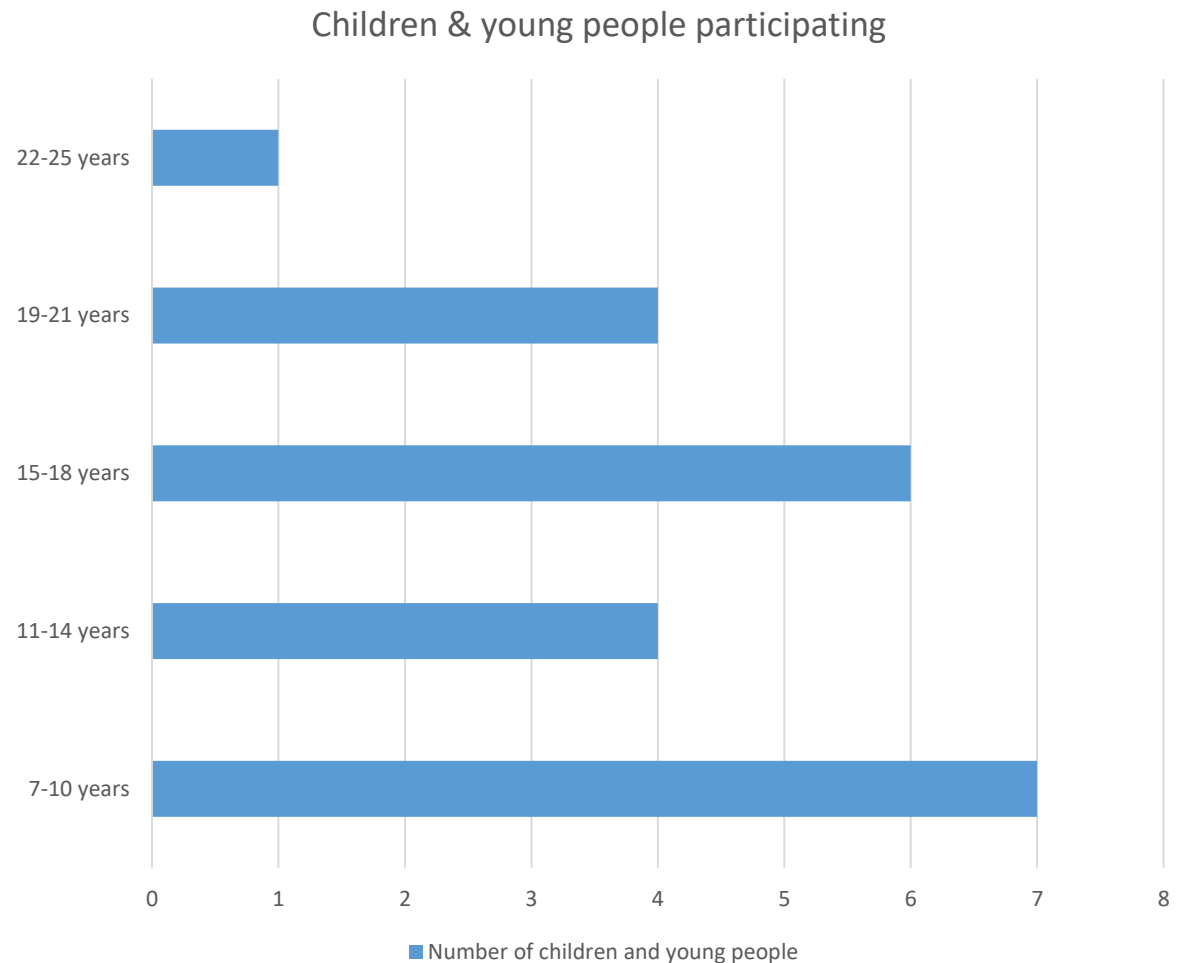
22 children &
young people

16 supporters

- 6 families
- 10 professionals

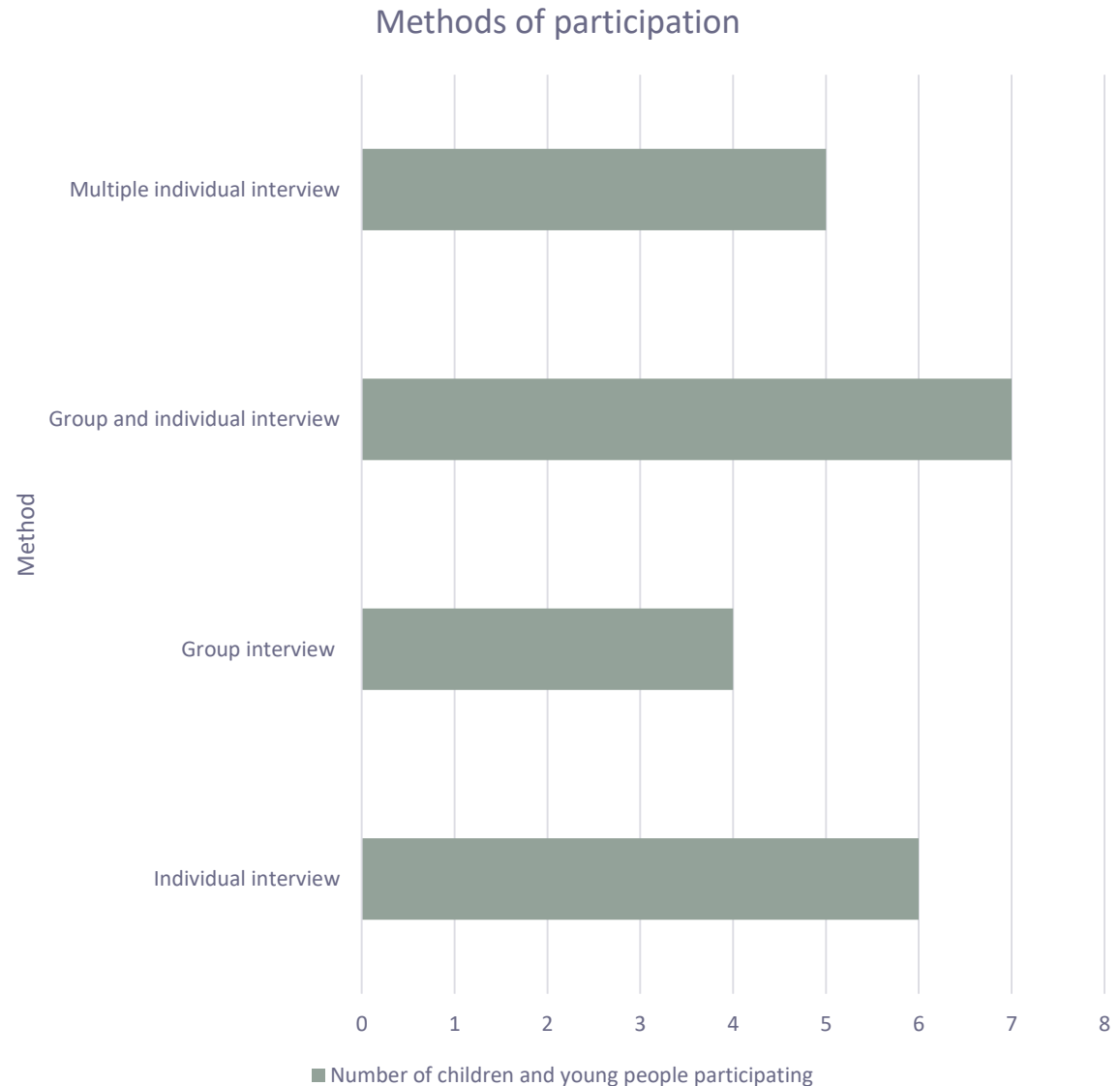
Ethical issues

- Disclosure of harm
- Support perspectives
- Confidentiality



Methodology and methods

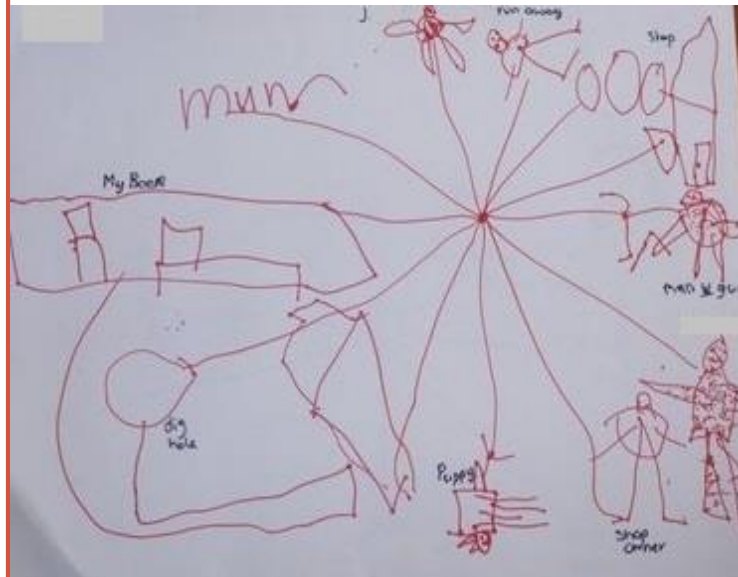
- Multiple interviews with children, in particular
- Most interviews with people with highest support needs
- Scaffolded activity plans in group interviews
- Separate interviews with supporters



Methods with children and young people

- Pictorial mapping
- Storyboards
- Domain ranking activities
- Photo diaries
- Photo elicitation
- Walk-along interviews
- Talking mats

My safe places and My safe people activity



Eric's map, aged 9



'Having a cuddle with Bella' by [child], aged 11

Results – what does ‘being safe’ mean to children and young people?

- feeling safe and secure
- Having a ‘go-to’ person
- being protected
- not being hurt
- not trusting strangers
- following rules – written and unwritten
- having strategies
- having some control of the situation.



F, the support worker – detail from Grace's 'safe people' map, aged 14

*Don't look at people in the street who are in your face.
- Rachel, aged 25*

Tensions in understanding safety

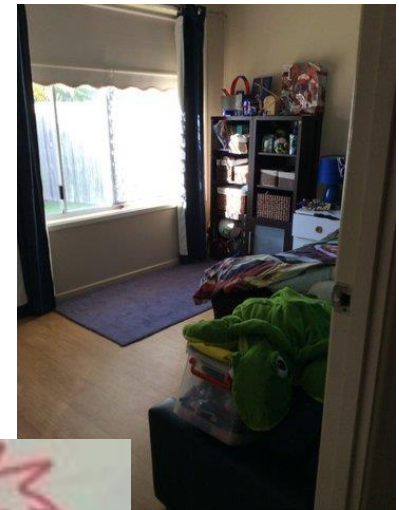
- Understanding an abstract concept is difficult
- People can be trustworthy on some occasions, but not others
- Few remembered learning about safety
- Limited language for safety concepts, or communication tools or programs to support developing this over time

Well, one of the main things, you might have heard this a lot, is stranger danger. Keep away from strangers, and if they ask you to take a lift, just don't get into the car.

Francis, aged 19

What do children and young people say helps them feel and be safe?

- Home as a foundation
- Friendship
- Feeling known and valued
- Avoiding contact with strangers
- Telling someone
- Learning from experience
- Being educated about safety



What do children and young people say hinders safety?

- Fears and worries
- Feeling out of control
- The impact of abuse
- Peer pressure
- Under-supported transitions
- Complexity in family life

I felt safe, comfortable in [OOHC placement]. I worried when I had to move out, that I mightn't be safe anymore.

Trevor, aged 18

Systemic impacts

- **Systemic impacts on children's and young people's lives need to be addressed.**
- The effects of systemic limitations and failures, segregation, lack of choice and discrimination were evident in the research findings.
- Children and young people with cognitive disability had very different living patterns to their peers without disability.
- They were vulnerable due to the multiple ways in which institutional practices acted to isolate them from local communities and long-term support relationships.

Relative risk of harm

- **Work is needed to assist children and young people and their supporters to recognise and assess the relative risk of harm.**
- In most cases, the emphasis placed on 'stranger danger' did not take into account the difficulty of calculating risk when meeting new people or acknowledge that a high proportion of children and young people with cognitive disability are abused by people they already know.
- The implications of this are twofold:
 - Many children and young people lack the skills and support to identify and act on feelings and instincts that could keep them safer from potential abuse in institutional settings.
 - A diminution of the social life of children and young people as they grow and develop, as a number indicated that they generally feared people they did not know (for example, people standing at the bus stop).

Nature and quality of support relationships

- **The nature and quality of support relationships need to be monitored in a strategic and concerted way.**
- Needed at individual and systemic levels, because relationships feature centrally in current and forthcoming large-scale policy developments (e.g. NDIS)
- Tensions between needing to trust people in support relationships and risk
- Systemic level risks in lack of training, skill in workers & managers; casualization; turnover

Education and capacity building

- **Evidence-based educational resources and strategies are needed to improve children's and young people's capacity to identify and respond to potential harm.**
 - For children and young people
 - For families
 - For professionals in a range of contexts
 - Informed by evidence and lived experience

Building active participation

- **Active participation of children and young people with disability needs to be supported so they are better involved in decisions across in a number of domains, including their education, health and disability support services.**

More information:

Report:

- <http://ccyp.scu.edu.au/index.php/129>

Video for children and young people

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jaxjSu4UGIw>



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