



# DCP Practice Approach

## Conducting interviews with children and young people to assess their safety Practice Paper

### 1. Introduction

Interviewing children and young people has a critical role in informing case conceptualisation, assessment and decision making. Conducting interviews with children and young people has a role in gathering information that may assist in determining whether a child or young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm and determining their safety. This often occurs as part of a child protection assessments or a response to a care concern. Note, this practice paper refers to conducting interviews, but the Interagency Code of Practice refers to these interactions between DCP practitioners and children or young people as “discussions”. Refer to the [Interagency Code of Practice](#) for further information.

The role of DCP staff in conducting an interview with children and young people is to assess safety, explore the child protection concerns and at times gather information that assists in determining whether a prescribed (forensic) interview is required. It is important that DCP staff gather only enough information from children and young people to establish a reasonable suspicion that the child or young person has been, or is at risk of harm, and make assessments about their safety. Excessive and repeated interviews with children and young people can be distressing and can compromise the quality of information obtained and their willingness to engage in future interviews or interventions. Where a prescribed/forensic interview is required (for example, where there is a need to gather evidence for the purpose of criminal proceedings) a strategy discussion must be held between DCP, Child Protection Services (CPS)/Child Safety and Wellbeing Health Service (CSWHS)/Paediatric Forensic Medical Service (PFMS) and/or SAPOL. The strategy discussion will determine the necessity and purpose of interviews of the child or young person and the agency responsible for conducting the interviews (refer to ‘Plan an investigation’ key step in the [Intake, investigation and assessment chapter of the Manual of Practice](#) for further guidance.

This practice paper provides advice to DCP staff how to conduct effective interviews with children and young people that support them to feel safe and supported during the process. This practice paper should be read in conjunction with [the Conduct the investigation: Engage with and assess the child or young person](#) key step of [the Intake, investigation and assessment chapter of the Manual of Practice](#). For general information about engaging children and young people refer to the [Relationship based practice – Practice Paper, Supporting the participation of children and young people in decision making Practice Paper](#) and [Seek the views of the child or young person in the Supporting children and young people in care chapter of the Manual of Practice](#).





# DCP Practice Approach

When interviewing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants, children and young people, cultural consideration should be understood. Cultural consideration is not just about being culturally aware it means creating environments where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people feel safe, respected, and empowered to express their cultural identity. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, consultation with a Principal Aboriginal Consultant and/or Aboriginal practitioner is to occur prior to interviewing the child or/and young person.

When interviewing children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, it is essential to approach with cultural sensitivity and respect. Practitioners should be aware of potential language barriers, using interpreters when necessary to ensure accurate understanding. Non-verbal communication, cultural norms, and family dynamics must be considered, as these may influence responses. Creating a safe, inclusive environment helps build trust. Avoiding stereotypes and demonstrating cultural awareness ensures the child or young person's voice is heard authentically and respectfully.

## 2. Considerations when interviewing children and young people

A child or young person's capacity and willingness to participate in an interview can be influenced by many factors including:


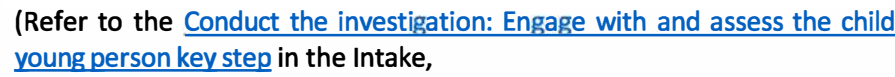
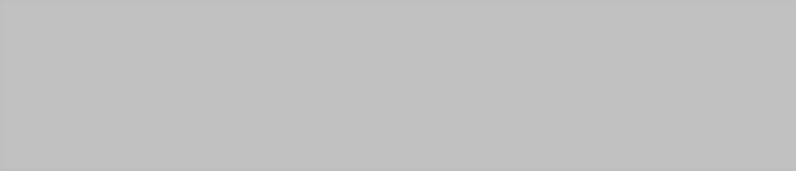
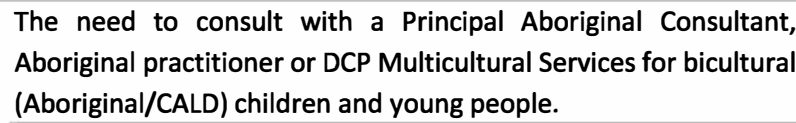
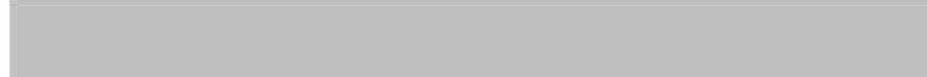







# DCP Practice Approach



Specific considerations for each stage of the interview process are outlined below.

Prior to the interview	
Location	<p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> </ul> <p>(Refer to the <a href="#">Conduct the investigation: Engage with and assess the child or young person key step</a> in the Intake, investigation and assessment chapter of the Manual of Practice for further guidance.)</p>
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants, children and young people	<p>Consider</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> <li>• The need to consult with a Principal Aboriginal Consultant, Aboriginal practitioner or DCP Multicultural Services for bicultural (Aboriginal/CALD) children and young people.</li> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> </ul>





# DCP Practice Approach

<p>Children and young people from a CALD background</p>	<p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The need to consult with DCP Multicultural Services about cultural background, norms, and possible sensitivities.</li> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> </ul>
<p>Understand the developmental and emotional functioning of the child or young person</p>	<p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> <li>• </li> </ul>







# DCP Practice Approach

	meaningful, age appropriate <sup>1</sup>
Topics of discussion and suggested questions	<p>What is discussed should be tailored to the child protection concerns and may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• [Redacted]</li><li>• [Redacted]</li><li>• [Redacted]</li><li>• [Redacted]</li><li>• any topics/areas of discussion as agreed in the strategy discussion and/or investigation plan.</li></ul> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p>

<sup>1</sup> Practice Tools: <https://cspm.csyw.qld.gov.au/practice-kits/care-arrangements/working-with-children-1/responding/practice-tools>





# DCP Practice Approach

	<p>Examples of inappropriate questions and leading statements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dad hit you, didn't he?</li> <li>• Can you tell me if you were touched on a private place?</li> <li>• Where did mum's boyfriend hurt you?</li> <li>• So, I hear mum has hurt you – is that right?</li> </ul> <p><b>Make only enough enquiries to establish a reasonable suspicion of harm.</b> A prescribed/forensic interview with CPS/CSWHS/PFMS or SAPOL can be pursued at a later stage if required.</p>
<p>Managing disclosures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If a child or young person begins to provide information about the allegation or other concerns, [REDACTED]</li> <li>• Where a prescribed/forensic interview is indicated, further information will be gathered from the child or young person in that interview. In these circumstances:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ ensure the child or young person is aware that you have heard them but do not ask further, probing questions,</li> <li>○ if a disclosure is made, inform the child or young person that they may need to speak to someone else, and that they can provide this information and any additional information to that person as well.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>End of the interview</b></p>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advise the child or young person to ask someone they trust to contact the DCP worker if they want to talk further or ask additional questions. DCP workers should provide their contact details to older children and young people.</li> <li>• Reassure the child or young person they have done the right thing in speaking with the DCP worker.</li> <li>• Advise the child or young person that the DCP worker will also be talking to their parent or caregiver.</li> <li>• Ensure the child or young person receives appropriate support from a support person (including a cultural significant/support person) to assist them in ending the interview/returning to their activity as required.</li> </ul>
<p><b>After the interview</b></p>	





# DCP Practice Approach

- Contact the supervisor to discuss the case direction as required.
- Carefully document any disclosures made or information provided or review notes taken immediately after the interview.
- If a strategy discussion has already been held, ensure that CPS/CSWHS/PFMS and SAPOL are informed of the outcome of the interview (where they are involved). If any disclosures are made, a follow up strategy discussion should be considered where necessary.
- If a strategy discussion has not been held and the child or young person makes a disclosure during the interview that indicates a strategy discussion is required (for example, information suggesting a criminal offence may have been committed), a strategy discussion should be convened as soon as practicable.
- Ensure any follow up activities that were agreed or discussed with the child or young person are undertaken.
- Consider the need for and engage additional supports for the child or young person.
- Complete and document an assessment of the child or young person's safety and risk of future harm refer to the [Intake, investigation and assessment chapter](#) of the Manual of Practice for information on safety and risk assessment and the [DCP Assessment Framework](#)).

## 3. Considerations for interviewing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants, children and young people

There are important considerations related to promoting cultural safety when engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants, children and young people in interviews. Cultural safety identifies the strength of Culture in assisting children and young people to develop a positive identity and promote their health, wellbeing, self-esteem and development. It is important for the interviewer to find out what cultural safety means for that individual child or young person. Given the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, consultation should occur with Principal Aboriginal Consultants or Aboriginal practitioners to ensure a culturally safe approach that provides the child or young person with the best possible experience. For further information refer to the [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle Practice Paper](#).

It is important to recognise that English may not be a first language for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants, children and young people and that an interpreter may be required.

The following are some examples of factors that may be important to consider when conducting interviews with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people:





# DCP Practice Approach

Child or/ young person communication style:	Considerations for the interview:
<p>Presenting as reserved, staying silent and making minimal eye contact</p>	
<p>Preferring to engage in a non-confrontational manner (such as standing side-by-side or sitting together, rather than facing each other directly).</p>	
<p>Only revealing part of the problem or story until trust has been gained.</p>	
<p>Saying 'yes' could mean many things, including not understanding the question.</p>	
<p>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language and words</p>	





# DCP Practice Approach

Adapted from [Engaging with Aboriginal Children and Young People Toolkit - Commissioner for Children and Young People Western Australia 2018.](#)

## 4. Considerations for interviewing children and young people from CALD backgrounds

When engaging children and young people from CALD backgrounds there are various considerations to navigate in an effort to promote cultural safety. Consultation with DCP Multicultural Services should be considered before the interview to inform your planning, case conceptualisation and engagement approach. This ensures consideration of the child or young person’s cultural context, migration journey, and family background, community expectations and possible stigma attached to disclosure and any linguistic or interpreter requirements.

Child or young person communication style:	Considerations for the interview:

Refer to the [Practice Principles – cultural safety](#) and [Working with cultural diversity Practice Paper](#) for further information.





# DCP Practice Approach

## Document control

<b>Reference No./ File No.</b>			
<b>Document Owner</b>		<b>Lead Writer (name, position)</b>	
Directorate/Unit: Office of Professional Practice		Practice Lead	
Accountable Director: Office of Professional Practice			
<b>Commencement date</b>	18 November 2025	<b>Review date</b>	3 October 2028
<b>Risk rating</b> <a href="#">Risk Assessment Matrix</a>	<b>Consequence Rating</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Risk Rating</b>
	Moderate	Unlikely	Moderate

REVISION RECORD		
Approval Date	Version	Revision description
3 June 2022	1.0	Replaces Interviewing Children Practice Paper.
3 October 2025	2.0	Review as per policy review cycle: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inclusion of CSWHS</li> <li>- Changes to reflect contemporary best practice considerations</li> </ul>

