

From listening to acting: Collaborating with CYP to foster change

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Australian Centre
for Child Protection





That won't work!



“You’ll never last!”



Collaborating for change



TAKING US SERIOUSLY:

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE TALK ABOUT SAFETY AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO THEIR SAFETY CONCERNS

A Report for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse



Finding their way home:
Children's experiences of homelessness



Me, Myself and I:

Identity and meaning in the lives of vulnerable young people

Institute of Child Protection Studies,
Australian Catholic University

Ms Debbie Noble-Carr
Dr Justin Barker



Studies

How far are you?



Children as allies and collaborators

Children seen AND heard

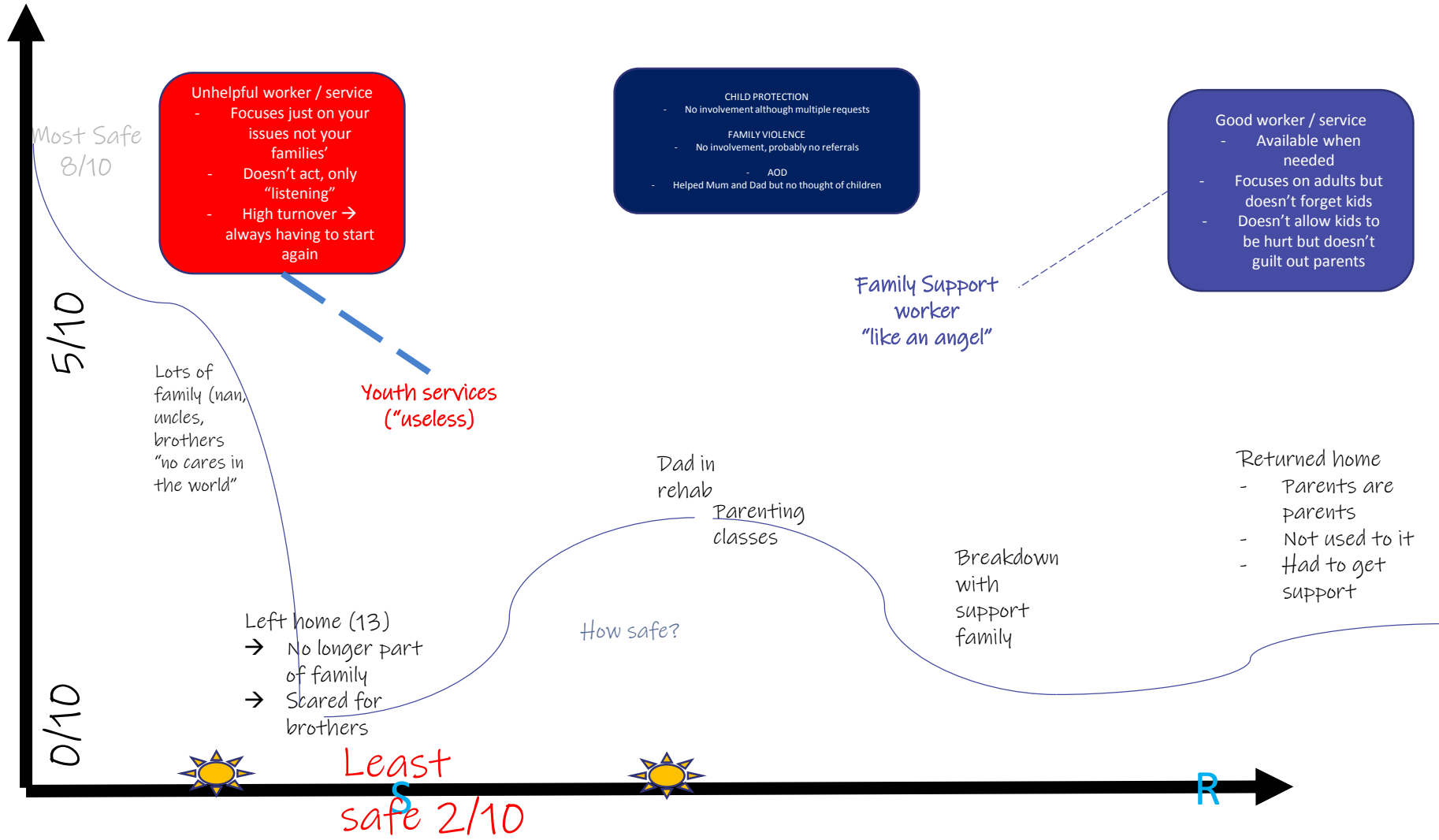
Children seen but not heard

Children not seen & not heard



Why children want to collaborate

How safe do you feel?



When I was 12

← Separation →

Now that I'm 15

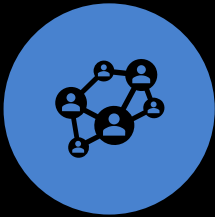


Why children want to collaborate

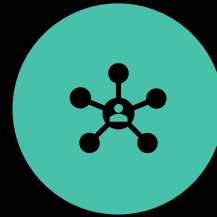


Assumption: children and young people are passive and naive witnesses to their family experiences

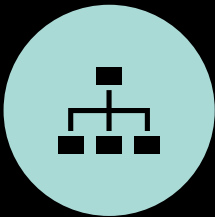
Standpoint Theory



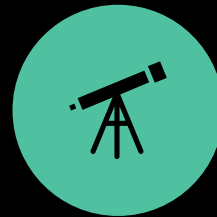
“The social groups within which we are located powerfully shape what we experience and know as well as how we understand and communicate with ourselves, others, and the world.”



Standpoint Theorists emphasize the importance of social location because they are convinced that people at the top of the societal hierarchy are the ones privileged to define what it means to be something in a given cultures



People who are at the bottom of the hierarchy can reflect not only on what its like to be under-privileged but also what its like to not be privileged



“One of the best ways to discover how the world works is to start from the standpoint of the margins.”



Watching Children



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Benefits of Participation (Geri Lansdown)



Lansdown (2013)



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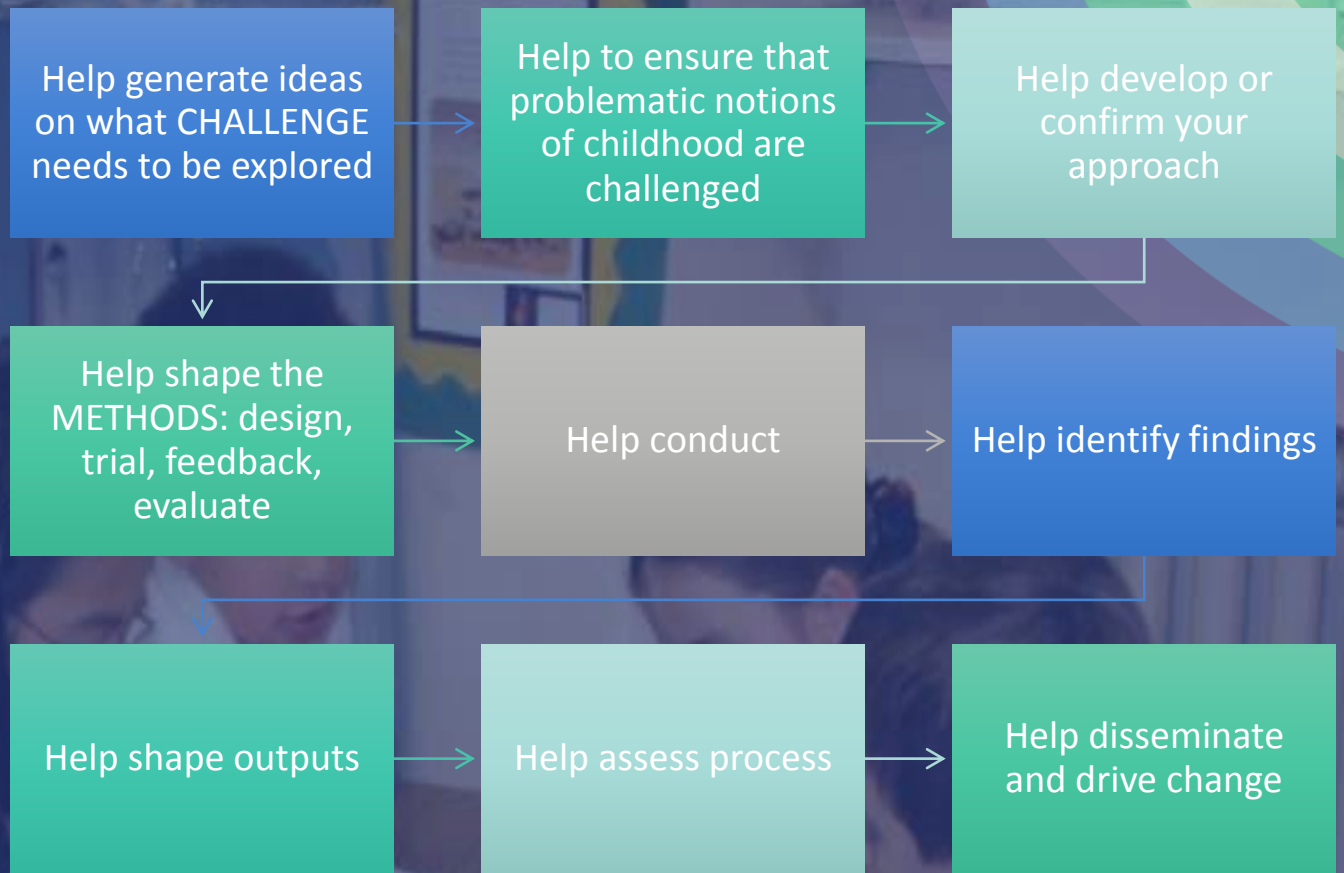
What can we gain through children's participation?

- Fresh insights
- Responsive strategies
- Engagement of children and young people
- Stronger alliances
- Generativity
- Compliance

https://www.sbs.com.au/news/dateline/running-out-of-children-a-south-korea-school-enrols-illiterate-grandmothers?fbclid=IwAR28jyfraAKFq_U2nBGcmEqmM1c6Ny9eRA9fwM6nR-VoiTI42fWtwljF8a8



Children and young people's reference groups



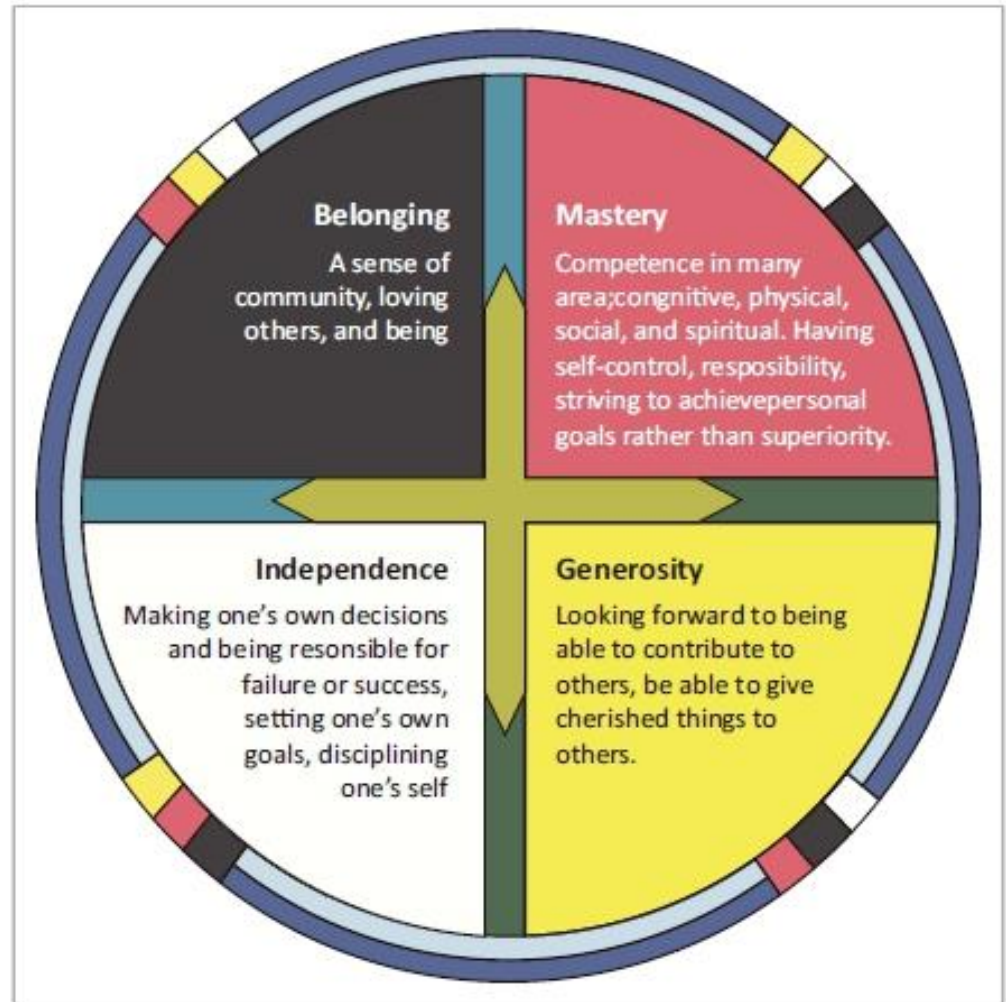
Moore, T., Noble-Carr, D., & McArthur, M. (2016). Changing things for the better: the use of children and young people's reference groups in social research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 19(2), 241-256.

A group of children, including a girl on the left and several boys on the right, are sitting around a table. They appear to be engaged in a collaborative activity, possibly reading or working on a project together. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the children.

**BEYOND VOICE,
MORE THAN
PARTICIPATION,
WORKING
TOGETHER**

- It meant that they could spend time with their peers and with trustworthy adults, they could have input, they could learn from each other and they could feel as though they were part of something special.
- They have a chance to be part of something where they are valued as partners.
- They can help identify the problems, research the issues, help to come up with solutions, where possible deliver the solution and have a part in arguing the case..

1. They get to work with and build relationships with peers and allies.



Source: Brendtro, L.K., Brokenleg, M. & Von Bockern, S., 2002, *Reclaiming youth at risk. Our hope for the future*, Rev. edn., Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA

FIGURE 2: Universal growth needs according to the Circle of Courage.

Building Kids Up

- **Belonging:** claiming kids
- **Mastery:** building skills and affirming youth
- **Independence:** enabling agency through support
- **Generosity:** building kids up for their contributions



WHAT YP WANT FROM ALLIES

- Safe and trusted adults see it as their responsibility to keep children safe and demonstrate this through their actions. They:
 - care about children and young people
 - See the best in children and young people
 - act like adults (but “in a good way”)
 - have authority
 - are available
 - are able to talk about sensitive issues
 - prioritise children’s needs and concerns
 - do what they say they will do





As adults you've got a choice to connect or reject—
I suppose so do we!



Breaking the legacy of distrust

- They need to hang in. You know it hurts to keep getting let down. So you kinda put up a wall and its too scary to let them in and break it down. So we lash out.
- Between us and them there's a whole line of adults who've let us down. Tell em it takes time to trust again. Don't rush us but don't leave us either.

ASK

- Learn from children
- Benefit from their unique perspectives
- Develop more responsive approaches

INFORM

- Help children and young people understand nature of risks and what is being done
- Inspire confidence in adults & institutions
- Encourage CYP to seek help and engage

If my life was made into a movie

My Favourite
Pizza is...

The best
holiday I ever
went on was...

If my life was
made into a
movie I'd be
played by...

When I was
little I was
freaked out
by...

I feel most
safe when
I'm...

If my life was made into a movie I wouldn't be allowed to watch it. There'd be drugs, alcohol, adult themes, violence, language ... Most people think we can't cope talking about this stuff but they need to hear it and we need to say it.
(16 year old male)





Sitting with discomfort

- *Cos just talking to people takes a big load off your chest, like a huge weight is lifted off you. So there does need to be more people. Because its hard to talk to people, you've got to trust them a lot ... there are not many people that I can trust, that I can tell. (MARK)*

But what are you doing?

They want information that:

- *Is responsive to what they already know as well as what they want and need to know*
- *Helps them understand risks but also about what is being done*
- *Empower rather than paralyse them*
- *Affirm your relationship*



Kids may need adults to help them communicate

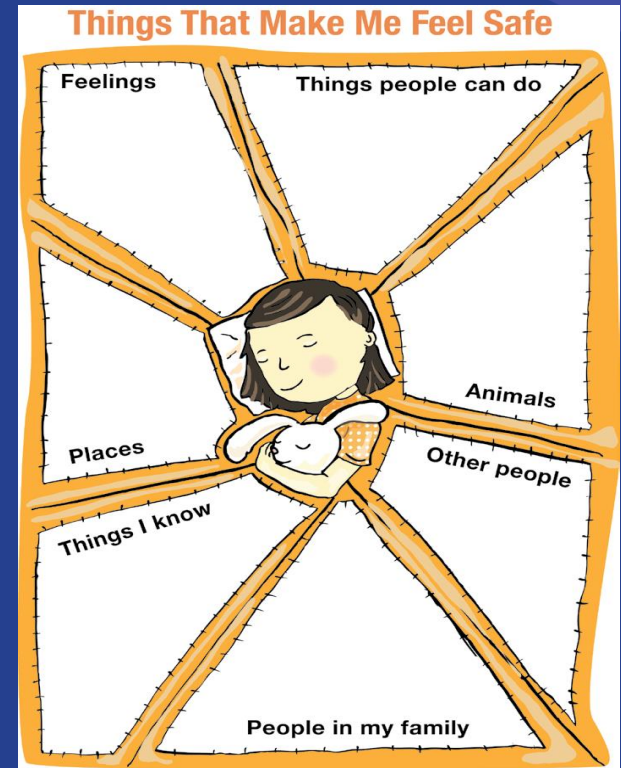
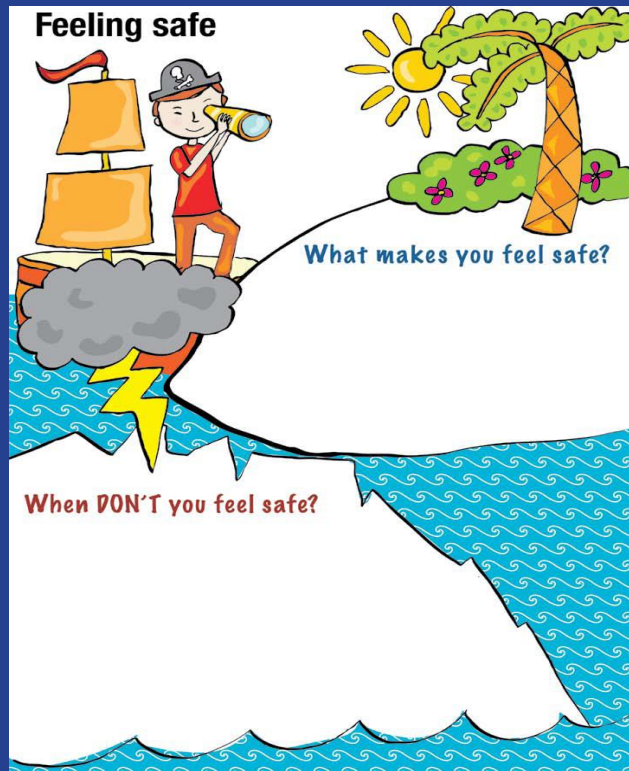


“[This is] Monkey. He is special... Sometimes when [I’m] sad [I] cuddle him” (Boy, aged 10, Finding their way home)





Finding out what concerns kids



WHAT ARE THE NO-GO ZONES?

- Secrets
- Things that would get you, your friends or your family into trouble
- Stuff about your body
- Things that would be upsetting
- Things that would be embarrassing
- Things that you don't know enough about
- Things you've been told not to talk about

- FOR MORE SEE: Mary Ann Powell, Morag McArthur, Jenny Chalmers, Anne Graham, Tim Moore, Merle Spriggs & Stephanie Taplin (2018) Sensitive topics in social research involving children, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 21:6, 647-660,


You might get in trouble ... You don't know what's going to happen ... People might laugh at you ... It's a bit inappropriate, rude ... Make you upset ... Silly to talk about things you're not old enough for. (CYP.4, aged 10–12 years)

Maybe start by asking. Yeah, ask them what they are happy to talk about or not. It will be different for everyone. Like I want to talk about this stuff because I've been through it and want to get it off my chest but others [for] it will be too hard (Male, aged 16, Safe & Sound Study)


Working ethically

my name is _____

something I'd like to talk about is _____

If I can't talk to my mum or dad I'm most likely to talk to... 

If an adult wants to talk to me they should...

I don't want to talk about... 

Something that I'd like to talk about is...

A place I like to be is...

- Adults should check in to see if a kid is happy to talk about something or not. Sometimes being forced to talk about something makes it worse (Boy, CYPRG, Children's Homelessness Study)

What I can expect

At this service you can expect...

<p>To be asked about what you want</p> 	<p>To get told about what's happening</p> 	<p>To have fun and to play</p> 	<p>For you and your family to be treated kindly, fairly and with respect</p> 	
<p>To be and feel safe</p> 	<p>To get what you need (food, a place to live, love and warmth, being able to go to school and to be protected)</p> 	<p>To be listened to if you're not happy and for workers to try hard to make things better</p> 	<p>For your story to be treated respectfully/ as precious and for it to be treated with care</p> 	<p>To be given some choices about how things are done</p> 

If you're not happy or believe that you haven't got what was promised you can:

Me and the other workers will do what we can to make sure these things happen.
Signed _____
I've had these things explained and I understand.
Signed _____

How we can help empower kids



- See kids as partners
- Involve them in meaningful ways
- Allow lots of choice and control
- Be open to criticism – reinforce the fact that children and young people can unsettle and problematise your work or approach
- Share power

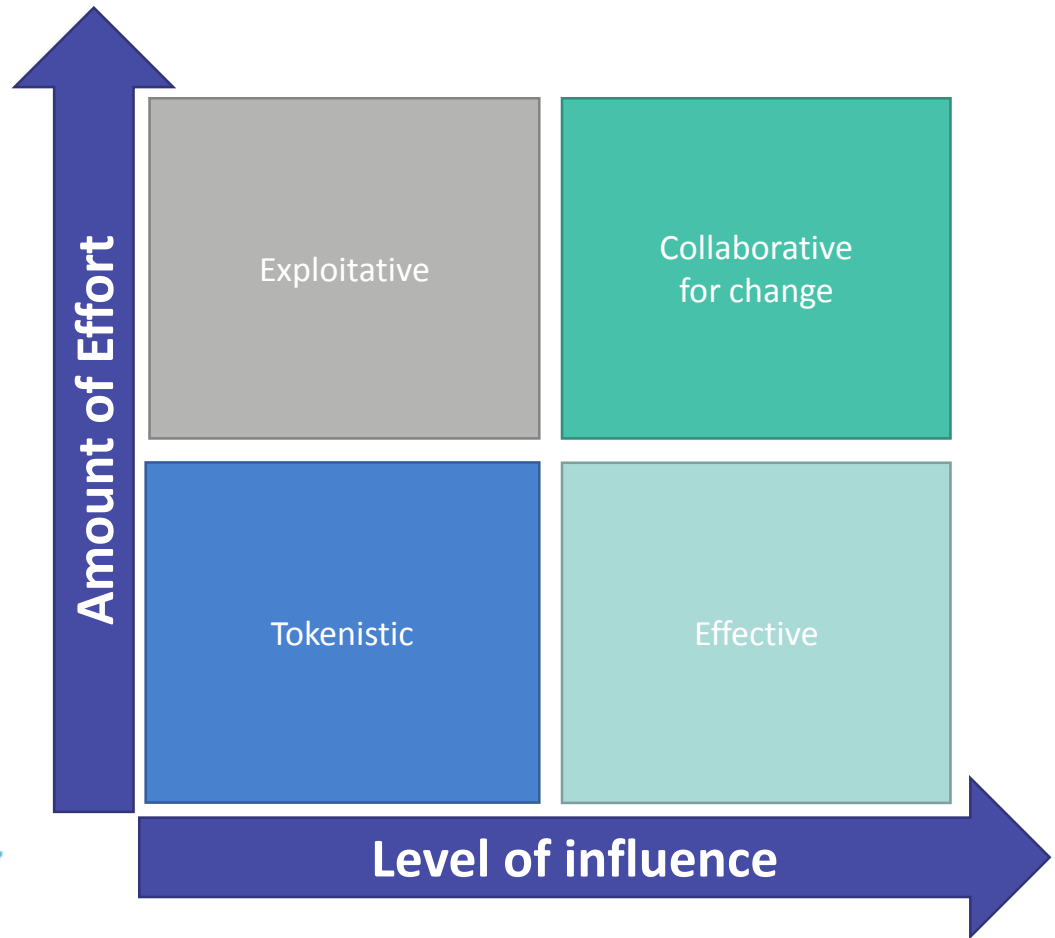
4. Changing things for the better



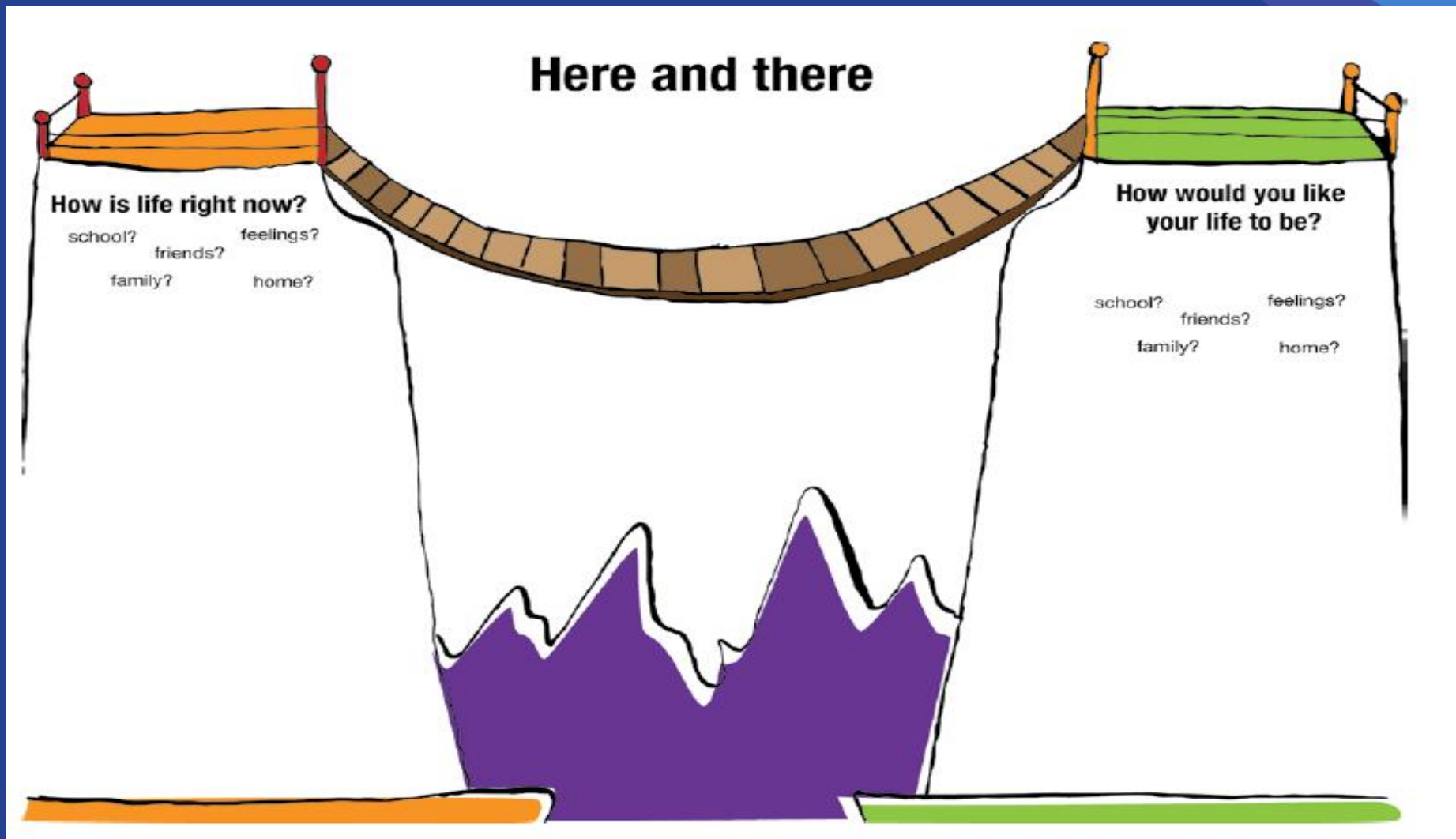
They should tell us what they've done or we'll think they haven't done anything.



'The worst thing they can do is say they're going to do something and then not do it. Because we watch them and if they let us down we're not going to go and ask them again.'



What should we be doing?





If I was in charge for a day

- [I would] make it compulsory that young adults get a say in how this stuff is dealt with. We know what's happening and like what should happen and they should talk to us about it when it's happening.' (YP-2)
- I'd make sure that adults were doing this stuff right'... If you do the wrong thing you can really affect the kid. Make it worse. Like they don't trust anyone anymore ...
- I'd make sure that the people talking to kids know how hard it is to talk about some of this
- Tell them that most adults are doing pretty well but some have to change.
- I'd make sure that if you're going to ask kids about this stuff that there's a point and that you're going to fight to make sure things get better. I'm sick of being let down.
- I'd give everyone who works with kids a bonus cos they're lifesavers and they kick ass! Thank them for us

Let's keep talking!

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Check out @timbomoore on twitter: I'll post a few resources and tip-sheets and encourage you to do the same using the #protectiveparticipation or #involvekids

Previous work can be found at:

<http://safeguardingchildren.acu.edu.au>

unisa.edu.au/accp

**Improving the lives
of vulnerable children.**



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