

## 1.3 Keeping Safe

Young children are **vulnerable**. They develop **resilience** when their **physical** and **psychological well-being** is **protected** by adults.



### Being safe and protected

- Babies and children are vulnerable as they have little sense of danger and only learn to assess risks with help from adults.
- Reading stories and poems about everyday events is a good way of helping children to focus on who they can trust and how to keep safe.
- However, being overprotected can prevent children from learning about possible dangers and about how to protect themselves from harm.
- Learning when to say “No” and anticipating when others will do so is part of learning to keep safe.

### Discovering boundaries

- Explaining boundaries, rules and limits to children helps them to understand why rules exist.
- When children are clear about the limits on what they may and may not do they learn to distinguish right from wrong.
- Having consistent boundaries for behaviour at home and in the setting helps children feel confident because they know what is and is not acceptable in either place.
- When children receive warm, responsive care they are more likely to feel secure and valued and to want to contribute to making the rules which make things ‘fair’ for everybody.

### Making choices

- Giving children choices helps them to learn that while there are several different options they can only choose one at a time.
- Children who are supported to make choices learn that sometimes they can have, or do, something now, while at other times they may have to wait longer for a particular choice.
- Making choices about things such as what they will do or what they will wear helps children feel some sense of control over their day.
- Remember that choices sometimes include choosing not to do something, such as choosing not to join in when everybody else is moving to music!



## Effective practice

- Allow babies and children to do the things they can, help them with the things they cannot quite manage and do things for them they cannot do for themselves.
- Demonstrate clear and consistent boundaries and be reasonable with expectations.
- Talk with parents about taking a consistent approach to challenging behaviour such as biting or scratching.
- Listen to what children tell you, and act on non-verbal signals from them, especially from children who are unable to voice their anxieties. Always take action to follow up any concerns, even if these prove to be groundless.



## Challenges and dilemmas

- Maintaining a respectful dialogue with parents or other professionals whose views about behaviour or child rearing differ radically from your own.
- Providing sufficient opportunities and experiences for babies and children to interest and involve them without compromising their safety at any time.
- Giving children time to think about what they want and to express their wishes, rather than stepping in to help by making decisions for them.
- Being flexible about applying important rules while remaining consistent so that children do not become confused.



## Reflecting on practice

What activities or experiences in the setting help children to think about:

- the things that make them feel good about themselves?
- the people who help them?
- how to keep themselves safe?
- how to recognise and avoid possible danger?
- reasons for making particular choices?
- the reason they are allowed to do or to have some things and not other things?

## What do I do next?

- **Welfare requirements** are explained in full in the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet.
- **Areas of Learning and Development** including effective practice, planning and resourcing at different stages are detailed in the *Practice Guidance for the Early Years Foundation Stage* booklet and on the CD-ROM.
- **Early Support** information is available on the CD-ROM under areas of Learning and Development.
- **Research and resources** are available on the CD-ROM.

