

# Psychological Safety for Children with 'Behaviours of Concern'

## Listening, understanding and supporting children through trauma-informed, co-designed research

Children's behaviour is communication. When that communication is misunderstood or unsupported, children with disability can experience stigma, exclusion and harm. This project is working with families and communities to reframe behaviour through a psychological safety lens.

### Why psychological safety matters:

Children with disability who are described as having "behaviours of concern" are often misunderstood. Their behaviour is frequently treated as a problem to manage, rather than communication that needs to be understood. This can lead to exclusion, distress and long-term harm.

### What this project is doing:

This project brings together young people, families, researchers and community organisations to co-design research that centres psychological safety. Using trauma-informed and affirming approaches, the team is exploring how systems such as schools and services can respond in ways that support regulation, connection and wellbeing, rather than punishment or exclusion.

### Why this matters for people with disability:

By co-designing with young people and families, this work aims to change how behaviour is understood and responded to, helping create safer, more inclusive environments where children can thrive.

- Project lead: Associate Professor Sarah Knight
- Lead organisation: University of Melbourne
- Partners: Heads Together for Brain Injury; Yellow Ladybugs

This project is part of NDRP's Safety of People with Disability research funding, supporting research led by and with people with disability.

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