

# CREATING A CHILD SAFE ENVIRONMENT IS CLIMATE JUSTICE

Many organisations are interested in supporting young people to make change. This intention, which CJU shares, should however, be cautious of overburdening and extracting from young people for the organisation or movement's own gain. Many active young people are already committed to multiple causes and actions, susceptible to burnout and anxiety, and/or have specific needs. These need to be understood by organisers as we have a duty of care whether we have a direct responsibility for them (i.e. in a physical or online training program) or are indirectly accountable (i.e. to what happens outside a program).

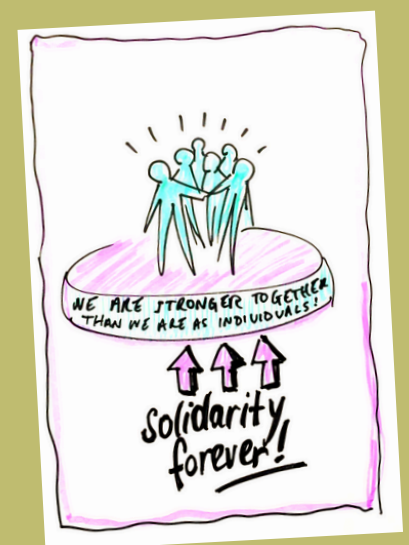
The boundaries of responsibility, accountability and duty of care are complex. Some organisations (including schools and government agencies) are highly risk averse and avoid situations in which they may become accountable and/or liable as a result of young people having autonomy or involvement in climate justice action and advocacy. Other organisations (including informal groups and youth-led movements) may overcorrect for paternalistic attitudes, that wish to shelter young people, by treating young people too much like autonomous adults and overlooking the moral and legal obligations to young people.

Given this complexity, CJU has identified three practices for working with young people around climate justice. During the program these practices were welcomed by young people and their parents who recognised the distinction from paternalisms and lack of care elsewhere

## 1) CHILD SAFEGUARDING PROCESSES

Organisers have a moral and legal responsibility to create a safe environment free from abuse, harassment and discrimination. [See the national principles for child safe organisations here.](#) We manage power dynamics between over and under 18s to prevent and eliminate harm that may arise from, for example, predatory behaviour, and illegal relationships. In practice this means:

*"I'm not the first person to do any of this and I carry the baton of the elders before me. I'm part of a community, I'm part of the history and a legacy. And this work is just a continuation of the work of the people who've come before me, and then it'll be continued by the people after me as well." Charlotte*



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Over 18 and under 18 should not be alone in a closed space (physical or online) together. Another person over 18 should be present or be aware of communication/contact taking place.

It is always made known when there are mixed ages in meetings or communication platforms and language, content and breakout groups are managed accordingly.

Organisers have working with children checks, mental health first aid training and training about receiving disclosures of sexual misconduct. Child safeguarding processes are explained as necessary for creating safe environments where everyone is respected and accountable to each other

## 2) RESPONDING TO INTERSECTIONALITY

Young people have unique and intersectional needs, for example their gender, class, cultural and access needs. Having organisers who understand this, are young and diverse enables responsiveness to intersectionality and the creation of a safe and thriving movement.

## 3) COMMUNITY SUPPORT STRUCTURES

Young change makers are more likely to be sustained and thrive if adults in their life, for example teachers and parents, co-consent and support the persons advocacy. Organisers can foster this by making connection with those adults to ensure there is adequate support for the individual outside of the program and beyond the limits of the organisers responsibility. The young person should always inform which adults an organiser can contact and what information is sensitive, for example if they use different pronouns at home or school. It is also critical that young people understand that if there is a risk of harm, organisers have an obligation to act.

*"It's not sustainable and not helping your movement if you're all burnt out,. You just sometimes need to take a break and that's okay." Emma*



*"I think it's really important that we figure out where we sit in these spaces and who needs to be in them. More importantly, for me, it's been a journey of figuring out where I do need to sit and when I do need to step back." Bella*



# YOUTH SYSTEMIC ADVOCACY + COLLECTIVE CARE

CJU looks at care and action from a collective perspective. It's not our individual responsibility to deal with this burden on our own. It's a collective challenge that needs collective solutions and ways of looking after each other and Country. By being connected to community we can receive support. This can mean connection to Country or a place, and it can be connection to your ancestors and your culture. Connection with people, groups and organisations engaged in activism, advocacy and connection to regenerative places or experiences. Climate justice and care needs to be collective and connected.



*"Young people from a migrant or refugee background do not speak on behalf of each other. How we can effectively create a table that is so big enough for all of us to contribute to that discussion of reform? The harsh reality is, that you need money to [create change], you need resources. I'm fortunately on a paid position at the moment. It is very hard for me to do a lot of the work that I do on a voluntary basis. So that monetary remuneration is very vital for me to continue my work" Zahra*

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The information in this document builds on work from the Systemic Advocacy And Collective Care Youth Program Report which can be found here: [climatejusticeunion.org/youth-advocacy-care](https://climatejusticeunion.org/youth-advocacy-care)

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This document is part of broader body of work and came from series of discussions and conversations that have taken place online and in person, using mouth words, pictures, text and stories. This work isn't complete and is ongoing, it is a summary of some of our shared stories and ideas. Yarned and created during 2022 - 2024.

