Establishing the need to teach “keeping safe” messages in primary schools in Northern Ireland: what do children currently know and understand?

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Keeping safe
Establishing the need to teach “keeping safe” messages in primary schools in Northern Ireland: what do children currently know and understand?

Glossary of general terms

**ARK: Access Research Knowledge**
A resource that provides access to social and political material on Northern Ireland. The material informs social and political debate in the region and raises the profile of social science research on Northern Ireland.

**Appropriate and inappropriate touch**
Taken from the Children’s Knowledge of Abuse Questionnaire (Tutty, 1995):

> Sometimes you feel good when someone touches you – those are good touches – like hugs and gentle pats on the back. Some touches feel bad – like pinches or bites. They hurt or feel uncomfortable. Even kisses from someone you don’t like can be bad touches. Sometimes touches are confusing – that’s when it’s hard to decide if they are good or bad. For example, someone you like might give you a hug, but they might squeeze too hard. You are the one to decide if a touch is good or bad, because you know how it feels for you.

**Bullying**
Defined by Olweus (1994) as “aggressive behaviour or intentional ‘harm doing’ that is carried out repeatedly and over time in an interpersonal relationship characterised by an imbalance of power.”

**Child**
Defined by the Children (NI) Order 1995 as being a child or young person up to 18 years of age.

**Code of practice**
Defined by the Education (NI) Order 1996 as referring to the formal process of assessing special educational needs.

**Controlled school**
Under the management of the school’s board of governors, with the employing authority being the education and library board for the school’s region in Northern Ireland.

**DCSF**
Department for Children, Schools and Families.

**DHSSPS (NI)**
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (Northern Ireland).

**Domestic abuse**
Violence that occurs within families or in the home.

**Integrated school**
A school that brings pupils, governors and staff together in roughly equal numbers from Protestant, Catholic, other faith and no faith backgrounds. These schools are developed, supported and promoted by the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education.

**Key Stage 2**
In Northern Ireland, this covers Primary school years 5, 6 and 7, with children aged 8 to 11.

**Mainstream school**
Any school not designated as a special school.

**Maintained school**
In this report, this term refers to Catholic Maintained schools, which are owned by the Catholic Church through a system of trustees and managed by a board of governors. Recurrent costs are met by the education and library boards, who also employ non-teaching staff. Teachers are employed by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS).

**NSPCC**

**Ofsted**
Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills.

**Preventative education**
In this report, this term refers to teaching “keeping safe” messages about bullying, child abuse and domestic abuse to children in primary schools in Northern Ireland.

**SEN**
Special educational needs.

**Special school**
Article 3(5) of the Education (NI) Order 1996 defines a special school as “a controlled or voluntary school which is specially organised to make special educational provision for pupils with special educational needs and is recognised by the Department as a special school.”

**Statement of SEN**
According to the Education (NI) Order 1996, following formal assessment of special educational needs, the education and library board makes and maintains a formal statement of need and of the provision required to meet those needs.

**WAG**
Welsh Assembly Government.
Glossary of research and statistical terms

**CKAQ**
Children’s Knowledge of Abuse Questionnaire.

**Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)**
A procedure used to capture the homogeneity among a set of observed questionnaire items.

**Covariates**
Variables that are hypothesised to be associated with an outcome.

**Differential item functioning**
Used to assess how groups may evaluate questionnaire items differently.

**Item characteristic curves**
Display the relationship between a latent variable and performance on a questionnaire item.

**Latent profile analysis**
A procedure used to classify individuals to groups on the basis of responses to a set of continuous variables.

**Latent variable**
A variable that is not directly observed/measured, but one derived from or based on directly observed/measured variables.

**NVivo**
A qualitative data analysis computer software package.

**Odds ratio**
The odds of an event occurring in a particular group relative to another group.
1 Introduction

The primary aim of this research was to engage children attending primary school in Northern Ireland in exploring the meaning of “keeping safe”, using a mixed-method approach that incorporated a participatory photography project and a self-report questionnaire.

**Key recommendations from the research**

- Children approaching Key Stage 2 in their primary school education should be taught “keeping safe” messages through effective preventative education.
- The Department of Education (NI) and schools should embrace the opportunity that exists to teach “keeping safe” messages through preventative education, in conjunction with parents and other stakeholders as part of a wider public health approach.
- Children should be taught “keeping safe” messages that incorporate all areas of maltreatment, including bullying and child abuse, and in particular the sensitive issues of domestic abuse and child sexual abuse. This teaching should aim to impart knowledge, promote understanding and foster skills to enable children to keep themselves safe in these situations.
- Schools and the education system must be appropriately supported and resourced in order to enable the whole-school community, including teachers, support staff and parents, to engage effectively in teaching “keeping safe” messages to children.
- Programme implementation should take account of variation that exists across the primary school sector. It should be tailored to meet the varying needs across schools of different management types, and within both the mainstream and special school sector.
- Programme development should be tailored to the needs of children; in particular those children with special educational needs. A discrete programme may be required to meet the varied needs of children attending schools in the special school sector.

NSPCC services in Northern Ireland focus on the most acute forms of abuse and the most vulnerable children at highest risk. The services provided include treatment for children who have experienced abuse, as well as support for those who have been exposed to domestic violence. The NSPCC also provides support for looked after children, young people in schools, and help for young witnesses who have to go through the trauma of giving evidence in criminal trials. The new ChildLine Schools Service provides information to children in primary schools about how to protect themselves from bullying and child abuse.

The NSPCC Strategy 2009–2016 focuses on the following priorities:

- neglect
- physical abuse in high-risk families (violent adults, alcohol and drug abuse, and mental health issues)
- sexual abuse
- children under one
- children with disabilities
- children from certain black and minority ethnic (BME) communities
- looked after children.
**Background**

Child maltreatment incidence and prevalence data confirms that many children living in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, Great Britain and further afield experience bullying (including cyberbullying) and domestic abuse, as well as physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect in their daily lives (Asmussen, 2010; James, 2010; Pereda et al, 2009; Scott, 2009).

There have been a number of national studies on bullying, including the Department of Education report, *The nature and extent of bullying in schools in the North of Ireland* (Livesey et al, 2007), the *Kids’ Life and Times* survey (ARK, 2009), the *Staying Safe Survey 2009: young people and parents’ attitudes around accidents, bullying and safety* across the UK (DCSF, 2009) and the *All-Wales survey of bullying in schools* (WAG, 2009). Recent reports from these studies indicate that approximately 40 per cent of children experience bullying, with some variation according to age, child characteristics and type of bullying (Fekkes et al, 2005; James, 2010). Children perceived by their peers as being “different”, for example in terms of their sexuality (ChildLine, 2006; Hunt and Jensen, 2007) or having a special educational need or disability (Mencap, 2007), are more vulnerable to bullying and are more likely to be victimised.

A recent Northern Ireland survey of children with special educational needs documented that 58 per cent of Key Stage 2 pupils had been bullied (Staff Commission for Education and Library Boards Northern Ireland, 2009), while Mencap (2007) documented that eight out of 10 children with a learning disability (n=507) were bullied. These children are also more vulnerable to physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect (DCSF, 2009; Morris, 2003; Oosterhoorn and Kendrick, 2001). Those particularly vulnerable include children with communication impairments, behavioural disorders, learning disabilities and sensory impairments.

Seminal research by Sullivan and Knutson (2000) reported that, from a survey of over 50,000 children aged 0–21 years in Nebraska, children with impairments were 3.4 times more likely to be maltreated than those without. They were 3.8 times more likely to be neglected, 3.8 times more likely to be physically abused, 3.1 times more likely to be sexually abused and 3.9 times more likely to be emotionally abused.

However, international data also indicates that many children who do not have special educational needs or a disability also suffer child abuse in these forms (Asmussen, 2010). In conducting the NSPCC *Child Maltreatment in the United Kingdom* prevalence study (n=2,869), Cawson et al (2000) documented that 7 per cent of those surveyed experienced serious physical abuse at the hands of parents or carers. Six per cent experienced frequent and severe emotional maltreatment, 6 per cent experienced serious absence of care, while 5 per cent reported a serious absence of supervision. Furthermore, 1 per cent of children under 16 experienced sexual abuse by a parent and a further 3 per cent experienced sexual abuse by another relative during childhood. Eleven per cent of children experienced sexual abuse by people known but unrelated to them, while 5 per cent experienced sexual abuse by an adult stranger or someone they had just met.
Cawson (2002) later reported from a secondary analysis of the study data that 26 per cent had witnessed violence between their parents at least once and 5 per cent reported this violence as frequent and ongoing. Other research estimated the prevalence of children witnessing domestic abuse at 25 per cent in Australia (Indermaur, 2001, cited in Humphreys and Houghton, 2008, p1) and at 33 per cent in America (Edelson, 1999, cited in Alexander et al, 2005, p188). Furthermore, UNICEF (2005) estimated that 275 million children worldwide experienced violence in the home. In Northern Ireland, the most recent prevalence research reported suggested that 11,000 children were living with domestic abuse (DHSSPS, 2005).

While this body of prevalence data highlights the maltreatment experiences of many children, it is important to note that the actual prevalence may be four to six times higher than what is documented in available research and official statistics (Everson et al, 2008; Humphreys and Mullender, 2000). Moreover, research indicates that many children experience multiple forms of maltreatment throughout their childhood (Asmussen, 2010; Holt et al, 2008).

**Impact**

All of these maltreatment experiences have been shown to have a negative and detrimental impact on children’s health, wellbeing and development, both in the short and longer term (English et al, 2005; Finkelhor, 1986; Holt et al, 2007; Humphreys et al, 2008; Lazenbatt, 2010; Rees et al, 2010; Scott, 2009). These experiences can impact on all areas of children’s lives and have been shown to be associated with poorer mental health and wellbeing outcomes, including low self-esteem, anxiety, aggression, depression, suicide ideation and psychosis (Evans et al, 2008; Goddard and Bedi, 2010; Hawker and Boulton, 2000; Humphreys and Mullender, 2000; Kitzmann et al, 2003; Shevlin et al, 2007; Turner et al, 2006).

They have also been associated with poorer educational outcomes, through children experiencing feelings of not belonging at school and obtaining lower achievement scores (Glew et al, 2005; Kolko et al, 2002), as well as poorer physical health outcomes, including a range of specific medical diagnoses in middle adulthood (Springer et al, 2007).

**Children do not tell: maltreatment remains hidden**

The negative consequences of childhood maltreatment experiences are often further exacerbated by children’s reticence to tell of their experience and seek support (Allnock, 2010; Featherstone and Evans, 2004). Many children wait a long time before disclosing such experiences – if they ever do so at all (Allnock, 2010; Jensen et al, 2005). Cawson et al (2000) found that almost one-third of their sample had never told anyone about their sexual abuse. Consequently, maltreatment experiences can remain hidden for many years while children continue to suffer in silence and other children continue to be at risk from perpetrators (Briggs and Hawkins, 1997; Goddard and Bedi, 2010).
International research evidence based both on reviews (Featherstone and Evans, 2004, Kitzmann et al, 2003; Rothi and Leavew, 2006) and primary research with children who have experienced maltreatment (Humphreys et al, 2008; Jensen et al, 2005; Oliver and Candappa, 2003; Rees et al, 2010; Smith et al, 2008) highlighted a range of psychological barriers, including concerns about being believed, about the consequences of telling and about the stigma that prevented children from telling.

Moreover, it is highly significant that some children do not tell because they fail to recognise their experience as inappropriate or abusive. In reporting on the Clywch Inquiry into allegations of sexual abuse by a drama teacher, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales documented how children’s lack of knowledge and understanding of abuse contributed to their vulnerability and victimisation. He stated: “I have heard evidence from a number of former pupils that…they were unclear which elements were abusive” and cited the following pupil testimonies: “I didn’t really think of it as abuse”, “I didn’t know whether it was right or wrong…but I did it. I went along with it anyway because he was my mentor” and “he used to refer to me as special and I believed I was special to him. I am still finding it hard to accept that it was abuse” (Children’s Commissioner for Wales, 2004, p179).

Cawson et al (2000, p12 of executive summary) also noted that respondents were uncertain as to what constituted abusive experiences: “In all, 4 per cent of the sample said that they had not been well cared for, but only 2 per cent considered their treatment amounted to neglect. This was in spite of them giving as examples of absence of care that they had not been fed properly, had been abandoned or deserted, had dangerous or unclean homes, had been left alone too much, or were not properly supervised or watched out for. It raises questions as to what had to happen to them before they could make a judgement of neglect!” Berger et al (1988) reported similar findings in relation to physical abuse: only 27 per cent of children whose self-report experiences met stringent criteria for child physical abuse actually identified themselves as having been abused.

International research and practice literature also confirmed that many children were not taught the appropriate knowledge or skills necessary to protect themselves, either in the home or the school environment (NSPCC, 2007; Wurtele, 2009; Wurtele and Owens, 1997).

Ofsted (2010, p10) noted in a recent report on the provision of personal, social, health and economic education in English schools that “pupils seen had good knowledge and understanding about bullying, including racist and cyber-bullying. Although all the pupils spoken to knew about ‘stranger danger’, many of these pupils, when inspectors probed their knowledge further, did not know about protective behaviours, such as what to do or say if someone they knew touched them in a way they did not like.”

Kenny et al (2008) noted that only about 50 per cent of parents talked to their children about abuse. Furthermore, others, including Wurtele and Kenny (2010), reported that while parents may attempt to teach their children, the messages conveyed to their children are often inaccurate. Deblinger et al (2010, p91) found that “parents continue to disproportionately focus on strangers as potential offenders and provide limited information particularly in terms of the nature of sexual abuse and the secrecy associated with it”.

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School-based preventative education

Personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE), personal development (PD) and citizenship curricula, cross-curricular themes and whole-school approaches provide the education system and schools with the opportunity to equip children with the necessary knowledge and skills to protect themselves (Astbury, 2006; Barron and Topping, 2009; Ellis, 2008; Finkelhor, 2007). Through preventative education, children can learn to recognise inappropriate and abusive behaviour, understand that it is never right or acceptable, challenge inappropriate behaviour and access appropriate help and support (Ellis, 2004; Harries, 2006; Vreeman and Carroll, 2007). In recent decades, such education has been developed in countries including Canada, America, Australia, New Zealand and the Republic of Ireland (Briggs and Hawkins, 1994; Ellis, 2004; Kenny et al, 2008; MacIntyre and Carr, 1999). Despite many methodological limitations, a number of high-quality research studies and reviews have documented effectiveness with regard to decreasing the rate of bullying by 20–23 per cent (Farrington and Ttofi, 2009), enhancing awareness, attitudes and knowledge of gender violence and harassment prevention (Taylor et al, 2010), and improving knowledge and protective behaviours in simulated at-risk situations of child sexual abuse (Zwi et al, 2007). Barron and Topping (2009, p28) concluded from a review of 22 efficacy studies that school-based child sexual abuse prevention programmes “had a measure of effectiveness in increasing children’s awareness and possibly skills”.

Finkelhor et al (1995) reported from a national telephone survey (n=2,000) of children aged 10–16 in America that those children who participated in comprehensive prevention programmes (not specifically school-based) performed significantly better in relation to their knowledge of child sexual abuse. These children were also significantly more likely to use self-protection strategies when threatened or victimised and to report abuse when it occurred, compared to children with no experience of prevention programmes or those who had experienced a less comprehensive programme. Moreover, preventative education has also been found to be a cost-effective use of public resources in the longer term when the direct and indirect costs associated with the impact and consequences of child abuse are considered (Watters et al, 2007). Caldwell (1992) reported, from research carried out in Michigan, a cost advantage of 19:1 in favour of preventative child abuse education.

2 Consulting with key stakeholders

Despite growing evidence of effectiveness, children presently attending primary school in many parts of the UK and Northern Ireland are not formally taught how to protect themselves from maltreatment experiences through preventative education. In 2008, the NSPCC engaged the Department of Education in Northern Ireland in exploring the development of preventative education within primary schools by carrying out an in-depth consultation with key stakeholders. This consultation represents a necessary first stage in the development of an evidence-informed programme attuned to the cultural sensitivities and specificity of Northern Ireland. It is imperative that the consultation engaged children as key stakeholders (Goddard and Bedi, 2010; Humphreys, 2008; McDonald, 2009; Shevlin and Rose, 2008; United Nations, 1989) to explore the need to develop a programme in Northern Ireland and, in particular, to ascertain children’s need for knowledge and skills.

Keeping safe: Establishing the need to teach “keeping safe” messages in primary schools in Northern Ireland: what do children currently know and understand?
This consultation will inform programme content and will establish how a programme should best be tailored and targeted to meet the varying needs of children within the Northern Ireland primary school population.

Design

**Figure 1: Study design**

This research study comprised two sequential phases: phase 1 (Nov 2008–June 2009) employed an instrumental case study involving primary and special schools located within the geographical area of Ballymena District Council within the North Eastern Education and Library Board; phase 2 (Oct 2009–June 2010) extended the research study into the remaining four education and library board areas across Northern Ireland. A range of research methods were employed across both phases of the research study. This summary report presents data and findings that emerged from engaging and consulting with children as a key stakeholder group within phase 1 of the research study. A mixed-method approach was employed, incorporating a photography project and a questionnaire. The objectives and methodology adopted are described first, followed by the significant findings.

**Objectives**

- To describe what the concept of “keeping safe” means to primary school children by engaging them in a participatory photography project.
- To assess (using a self-report questionnaire) the current knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy of primary school children and to identify gaps with regard to the “keeping safe” constructs of bullying, domestic abuse, and appropriate and inappropriate touch.
- To identify and describe variation in the current knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy of participating primary school children with regard to the “keeping safe” constructs of bullying, domestic abuse, and appropriate and inappropriate touch.
3 Overview of phase 1: photography project

Methods

Children were engaged in a photography project whereby they were provided with a disposable camera for a period of seven days to take photographs of what “keeping safe” meant to them. This method, also called “photovoice” (Brunsden and Goatcher, 2009) has been successfully used as a data collection method in exploratory research with children elsewhere, including by Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith (2006) in exploring children’s concepts of wellbeing in the Republic of Ireland and by Berman et al (2001) in exploring the experiences of Bosnian refugee children in Canada. Participative methods of this nature promote children’s active participation and engagement as key stakeholders (Hall et al, 2007; Thomas and O’Kane, 1998). It empowers them by providing a voice and a means of communicating their understanding and experience of abstract and sensitive concepts like “keeping safe” (Christensen, 2004; Hall et al, 2007; Hurworth, 2003). This often results in richer and more meaningful data, as it is generated by children themselves rather than by adult researchers and, as is the case with photography, children are afforded the opportunity to take cameras out into their environment to collect their data (Nic Gabhainn and Sixsmith, 2006). Visual methods like photography have been identified as promoting inclusion by facilitating the involvement of those less willing or able to express themselves in a written or verbal form (Moss et al, 2007; Prosser and Loxley, 2007). A number of studies (Carrington et al, 2007; Ryan, 2009) have successfully employed this method in seeking the views and perspectives of children with special educational needs and disabilities.

Participants

The total sample of children who took part in the photography project was 236. Of those children, 175 participated in collecting photographic data with a disposable camera. They were drawn from 15 grant-aided schools, with a stratified convenience sampling approach being employed to ensure representation across all sector and management types that exist within the case study area of Ballymena District Council (see table 1) and to include children from the Primary 5, Primary 6 and Primary 7 year groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School management type</th>
<th>School sector</th>
<th>Number of participating schools</th>
<th>Number of participating pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Controlled</td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintained</td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated</td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlled</td>
<td>Special</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subsequently, 61 young people from an older age group (Primary Year 9) were recruited from three post-primary schools within the case study area to conduct a first-level qualitative analysis of the photographic data collected by the children in the primary school sector. A convenience sampling approach was adopted to recruit the three schools: one maintained mixed-sex urban grammar, one controlled mixed-sex rural secondary and one controlled mixed-sex special school within the case study area.
Data collection and ethics
Photographic data was collected between March and May 2009, and the first-level content analysis of the data was carried out in June 2009 (see table 2). Ethical approval was granted by the NSPCC research ethics committee and informed written consent to participate (Morrow and Richards, 1996) was sought from school management, parents and children.

An NSPCC children’s services practitioner hosted an information session with the children, explaining what participation involved and how they could withdraw their consent at any stage, for example by not taking a disposable camera, by not taking any photographs or by not returning the camera to have the photographs developed (Thomas and O’Kane, 1998). The children were also made aware what would happen to their photographic data. This included the fact that the practitioner would look at all of the photographs and annotated descriptions and, should anything cause concern about the safety of the child or that of another child, the practitioner would talk to the child about it and discuss what further action might be needed to ensure the child was safe (Thomas and O’Kane, 1998).

The children involved were also provided with a set of “Be safe while taking your photographs” guidelines developed by other children and informed by best practice regarding the use of photography as a research method (see Turtle et al, 2010, for more detail). A number of additional steps were taken to protect the anonymity of the children involved and also of the individuals depicted in the photographs: these included blurring faces in the photographs using Adobe Photoshop and replacing children’s names with a code when the cameras were being prepared for development. Written consent (parental and adult) was sought to publish a small number of unblurred photographs depicting children or adults that were selected for inclusion in the published report. The children were also provided with information about help-seeking, including the contact details for ChildLine.

Written, informed consent was also sought from parents and young people regarding participating in the first-level content analysis of the data. These workshops were facilitated by NSPCC staff experienced in working with young people and well placed to support their engagement in a range of appropriate activities. These young people were provided with information about help-seeking, including the contact details for ChildLine, and were presented with an NSPCC certificate of participation upon completion of the workshop.
Table 2: Summary of photographic data collection process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>School visit</th>
<th>Timeframe</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preparatory stage</strong></td>
<td>By telephone and post/email</td>
<td>Nov 2008–Mar 2009</td>
<td>- Recruit schools, negotiate access and school consent for photography project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Introductory meeting with school senior management</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Distribute information on photography project and overall study to parents via schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Seek written, informed consent of parents for children to participate in photography project.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data collection stage: primary schools (n=14)</strong></td>
<td>School visit 1 – briefing session with children</td>
<td>Mar–May 2009 Day 1</td>
<td>- NSPCC practitioner briefs children on photography project; seeks informed written consent to participate; explains safeguarding framework; explores meaning of “keeping safe”; introduces and explains “Be safe while taking your photographs” guidelines; demonstrates use of disposable camera and supports children to take a test photograph.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between visits</td>
<td>Day 1–7</td>
<td>- Children take photographs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School visit 2</td>
<td>Day 8–10</td>
<td>- Cameras collected from school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between visits</td>
<td>Day 10–20</td>
<td>- Cameras prepared for development; codes replace children’s names.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Two sets of photographs developed; one hard copy and one on CD.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- NSPCC practitioner screens photographs for safeguarding concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Faces blurred using Adobe Photoshop to anonymise photographs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Children’s names replace codes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Sticky labels appended to back of photographs for children to annotate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School visit 3</td>
<td>Day 21</td>
<td>- Two sets of photographs returned to children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between visits</td>
<td>Day 21–28</td>
<td>- Class teacher supports children to annotate one set of photographs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School visit 4</td>
<td>Day 28</td>
<td>- Photographs for research project collected from schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- NSPCC practitioner screens annotated descriptions on back of photographs for safeguarding concerns.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Analysis and reporting**

The young people from an older age group (Primary Year 9) were split into 10 small groups to participate in the content analysis workshop. The workshop was facilitated by members of the research team within each of the three participating schools.

Each group was provided with bundles of photographic data, which included both the photographs themselves and the descriptions children had annotated on the back of the photographs once developed. Each bundle comprised equal amounts of data generated by children across the range of schools of different size, location, sector, management type and ethos. Each group was directed to examine and explore this data by:

- looking at the photographs and reading the annotated descriptions;
- comparing and contrasting the photographs and annotated descriptions, and identifying similarities and differences;
- grouping and organising this data into discrete groups and then repeating the process with successive bundles of additional data (comprising 50 photographs and annotated descriptions) until all the data was organised and categorised;
- selecting a name for each discrete group of data they had created; and
- writing a rationale to justify why they had organised the data within these groups (see table 3).

In total, the young people organised 1,775 annotated photographs into 90 groups. Two members of the research team then reduced the volume of this data by identifying a single photo that represented each of the 90 groups. The data was then imported into the NVivo qualitative data management package and 10 projects were created using the 90 data groups; one project to represent the data groups created by each of the 10 smaller groups of young people.

This approach retained the meaning and interpretation imposed by the young people on the data within the first-level analysis. Each of the 10 projects were merged to create a master project by identifying the similarities and differences across the 90 data groups created by the young people. Identical data groups were merged (eg six data groups entitled “road safety” and three entitled “car safety”).
Table 3: First-level content analysis of photographic data completed by a small group of young people attending a maintained grammar school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photographs</th>
<th>Descriptions annotated by children on the back of their photographs</th>
<th>Name of data group</th>
<th>Rationale provided for grouping data</th>
<th>Number of photos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Photograph" /></td>
<td>It helps me to cross the road safely. It's a safe place to cross to go to school. Traffic islands which keeps me safe when I'm crossing the road. Neighbourhood watch sign.</td>
<td>Safety signs</td>
<td>They are all signs of warning; they describe the place; they tell you what to do.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Photograph" /></td>
<td>Keeping myself safe by looking after myself. Jumping off the hill. Falling off a tree on the road. Falling off the hill. Falling onto the toy.</td>
<td>Keeping yourself safe</td>
<td>People are falling.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Photograph" /></td>
<td>This is an unsafe picture of my trampoline with no net and my brother pushing me off. People fighting in our school not very safe.</td>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>There is violence; people are getting hurt</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Photograph" /></td>
<td>My dad because he will help me if I'm in a fire. This picture makes me feel safe because I am playing with my friends. I feel safe when I am with my friend because she is always there.</td>
<td>Friends here for you</td>
<td>Everyone looks happy with their friends; they look like close friends.</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Photograph" /></td>
<td>My teddies – they make me feel safe when I cuddle them. Of keys in a door which you should always look at night to keep safe. Saucepan handles turned in. A bed, I feel safe in it because I am on my own and just because I feel safe.</td>
<td>Safety in the home</td>
<td>They show protection, they show safety.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Photograph" /></td>
<td>A gate. A gate is safe because it can keep the cows in. About a robber comes in. Mobiles are safe because if you are in trouble you can ring somebody. The parental lock keeps me safe from watching scary movies.</td>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Safety of gates, to keep you off the road or keep cattle in; it is mostly security everywhere you go.</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Photograph" /></td>
<td>Mrs XXXX – she keeps me safe in school.</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Teachers keep you safe.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Photograph" /></td>
<td>A reflective jacket is safe because if you are out on a bike – cars can see you. About this part of estate is which children run about on the road. About the road and how it is not safe. Of our lollypop lady and she keeps me safe. A booster seat.</td>
<td>Road safety</td>
<td>On roads you wear a seatbelt; safety of the road; protection on the road.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Photograph" /></td>
<td>My mum she makes me feel safe because she looks after me. Of my wee brother he makes me feel safe. My parents. I feel safe because they feed me and look after me. My guinea pig I feel safe when she eats out of my hand.</td>
<td>Family security</td>
<td>Your family are always there; for you if you are in danger.</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image" alt="Photograph" /></td>
<td>Broken glass – stay away. Be careful using sharp knives. The river Bann and I feel scared if I fall in. The helmet has a bulletproof material inside.</td>
<td>Physical injury</td>
<td>If you cut yourself by a knife or glass you could get seriously hurt.</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This analysis gave rise to a total of 77 discrete data groups within the master project, representing children’s concept and understanding of “keeping safe”. The second-level analysis was completed by an adult member of the research team. They examined and explored the photographs, annotated descriptions, names of the 77 data groups and the rationale provided by the young people for creating each data group. Relationships across the 77 data groups were identified and similar groups were merged to create 13 sub-themes and, finally, four key themes that represented children’s photographic conceptualisation and understanding of “keeping safe”.

**Keeping safe** Establishing the need to teach “keeping safe” messages in primary schools in Northern Ireland: what do children currently know and understand?
4 Findings and summary of phase 1: photography project

What does the concept of “keeping safe” mean to primary school children in Northern Ireland?

**Key findings from the photography project**

- Children’s understanding of “keeping safe” comprises four key elements: physical safety and preventing accidents; places; feeling secure; and people.
- For the majority of the children involved, physical safety and accident prevention are core to their understanding of “keeping safe”.
- Keeping safe from bullying, child abuse and domestic abuse comprises a small element of most children’s understanding of “keeping safe”. Children’s references include bullying and stranger danger, as well as good and bad people.
- Some children are tuned into “feeling secure” and a small minority indicate they have a role to play in keeping themselves safe.

Four key themes were identified within the photographic data as representing children’s concept and understanding of “keeping safe”: physical safety and preventing accidents; places; feeling secure; and people. These key themes emerged from 13 sub-themes and 77 data groups. It is important to note that some overlap exists across the key themes and sub-themes to reflect the inter-relationships that exist in this data.

**Table 4: Summary of key themes, sub-themes and data groups emerging from analysis of the photographic data**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Four key themes</th>
<th>13 sub-themes</th>
<th>77 data groups (n)</th>
<th>Percentage (number) of total photographs categorised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical safety and preventing accidents</td>
<td>Traffic and transport</td>
<td>Outside safety;</td>
<td>11.6% (n=242)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>road car safety;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>road safety;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>keeping safe in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cars; car safety;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>bikes; roads;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cars; bike and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>car safety;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>traffic safety</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>and forms of</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>transport;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>security; and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>keeping the law</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety signs and equipment</td>
<td>Head safety; fire; outdoor safety;</td>
<td>11.1% (n=231)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>playing safety; safe clothes; safe stuff; safety equipment;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>safety in the back garden; safety signs; signs;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sport safety; things that keep us safe; first aid;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>health; keeping safe in heights; inside home safety;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>fences and radiators; and security</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home and house safety</td>
<td>Home safety; safety within buildings; house safety;</td>
<td>8.3% (n=172)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>home dangers; inside home safety; kitchen safety;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>safety in the house; and family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dangers</td>
<td>Stranger safety; bad friends and family; fighting;</td>
<td>6.8% (n=142)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>keeping yourself safe; good and bad pets; health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and safety; school safety; physical injury; keep safe with machines;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>general safety; home dangers;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kitchen safety; fire; fire safety; dangers; dangerous things;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dangerous; and accidents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places</td>
<td>Home – a place to be safe</td>
<td>19.5% (n=407)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outside general safety; safety equipment; safety in the house;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kitchen safety; inside home safety; home safety;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>home dangers; house safety; family; accidents;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dangerous; fences and radiators; fire safety; fire; safety within buildings;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>safe stuff; things that keep us safe; outdoor safety;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>safety in the back garden; bikes; houses; fighting;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and places where I feel safe</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Keeping safe
Establishing the need to teach “keeping safe” messages in primary schools in Northern Ireland: what do children currently know and understand?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Four key themes cont.</th>
<th>13 sub-themes</th>
<th>77 data groups (n)</th>
<th>Percentage (number) of total photographs categorised</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Places cont.</td>
<td>School – a place to be safe</td>
<td>Places to keep safe; school safety; road safety; and people who keep us safe (n=5)</td>
<td>3% (n=63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Safety around the place</td>
<td>Signs; road safety; traffic safety and forms of transport; security; safety signs; playing safe; stranger safety; safety equipment; roads; keeping yourself safe; environment; safety in our environment; and outdoor safety (n=13)</td>
<td>10.1% (n=226)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Places to be safe</td>
<td>Home safety; places where I feel safe; houses; God and religion; school safety; feelings; things that make me safe; and strangers safety (n=8)</td>
<td>4.8% (n=100)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling secure</td>
<td>Feeling physically secure</td>
<td>Self safety; house safety; safety within buildings; security; things that keep us safe; good and bad pets; stranger safety; outside general safety; home safety; school safety; road safety; and feelings (n=12)</td>
<td>5.5% (n=115)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feeling emotionally secure</td>
<td>Family keep me safe; keeping the law; stranger safety; fighting; school safety; things that make me safe; people; people who keep us safe; friends; family and supervisors; teachers; teacher; other people; friends keep me safe; family; good friends; family and helpers; feelings; bad friends and family; friends here for you; family security; company; home safety; self safety; school safety, God and religion; houses; places where I feel safe; people what keeps us safe; people who keep us safe; people who keep me safe; and security (n=29)</td>
<td>18.3% (n=380)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People</td>
<td>Good people</td>
<td>School safety; family; friends and supervisors; teachers; road safety; other people; friends keep me safe; family keep me safe; people who keep us safe; family; services; people who keep me safe; good friends; family and helpers; teacher; friends here for you; family security; school safety; company; and people what keeps us safe (n=20)</td>
<td>16.1% (n=335)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bad people</td>
<td>Stranger safety; school safety; feelings; bad friends and family; and fighting (n=5)</td>
<td>0.7% (n=15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Myself</td>
<td>Home safety; outdoor safety; bikes; cars; outside safety; road car safety; keeping yourself safe; and self safety (n=8)</td>
<td>6.4% (n=132)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key theme 1: Physical safety and preventing accidents**

The analysis identified “physical safety and preventing accidents” as significant and central in the majority of children’s understanding of “keeping safe”. This was evidenced by 787 (37.8 per cent) of the total photographs organised across all four themes being identified as relating to physical safety and preventing accidents. The majority of the 10 small groups of young people conducting the first-level analysis identified and created data groups relating to this key theme (58 data groups in total). Subsequently, during the second-level analysis, the adult researcher also identified and created the following four sub-themes relating to physical safety and preventing accidents:

- Traffic and transport
- Safety signs and equipment
- Home and house safety
- Dangers
Traffic and transport

Figure 2: Photomontage

Figure 2 presents a selection of the 242 photographs (11.6 per cent of total) that were identified as relating to “traffic and transport”. These included bicycles, safety helmets, seatbelts and the “lollipop lady” (school crossing patrol officer). The annotated descriptions also referred to and described keeping safe on the road or in travel, for example: “the lollipop lady and she keeps me safe” and “I took this picture because zebra crossings keep you safe”.

During the first-level analysis, this data was organised into 12 data groups and labelled by the young people (see table 4), who provided the following rationale to justify their categorisation of the data in this way: “There are crossings, a whole pile of traffic, not busy roads, roads where school is”.

Safety signs and equipment

Figure 3: Photomontage

In total, 231 photographs (11.1 per cent of total), some of which are presented in figure 3, were identified as relating to “safety signs and equipment”. These included fire extinguishers, knee pads, trampoline nets and sun cream, while the annotated descriptions included: “my Granda with his safety gear on that he wears when he uses his angle grinder” and “mobile phones to keep your family up to date with your movements”.

These were organised into 20 data groups and labelled during the first-level analysis (see table 4). The young people justified this categorisation and labelling of the data as follows: “they were all equipment that help you to be safe”.

Keeping safe Establishing the need to teach “keeping safe” messages in primary schools in Northern Ireland: what do children currently know and understand?
**Home and house safety**

**Figure 4: Photomontage**

Figure 4 presents some of the 172 photographs (8.3 per cent of total) identified as relating broadly to “home and house safety”. Many depicted houses, while others focused in on specific elements of the house, such as the kitchen, a smoke alarm or a family pet. The annotated descriptions included: “the picture is unsafe because you can fall down stairs” and “the fireguard so I don’t get burned from the sparks”.

During the first-level analysis, this data was organised into seven data groups and was labelled by the young people (see table 4), who presented the following as a rationale for their categorisation of the data: “They were all to do with houses – all common ways of keeping your house safe”. It is interesting to note that some of the data suggests “home” as distinct from “house”; this was particularly evident in the data group named “family” and in the following annotated descriptions: “inside of homes where children feel happy” and “my house and it keeps me safe because no one can get in but only my family”.

**Dangers**

**Figure 5: Photomontage**

Figure 5 presents a selection of the 142 photographs (6.8 per cent of total) identified as relating to “dangers”. These included photographs that suggested danger to the physical body, such as broken glass and scissors, as well as photographs that suggested implications for emotional wellbeing, for example, stranger danger and children fighting. The annotated descriptions included: “You shouldn’t go into a stranger’s car”, “a stranger would not make me feel safe” and “don’t play with sharp knives”.

This data was organised into 19 data groups and labelled by the young people during the first-level analysis (see table 4). The rationale they provided to justify their categorisation of the data included: “They could hurt you. They are bad. They are uncontrollable. They are sharp. They can be harmful”.

**Keeping safe** Establishing the need to teach “keeping safe” messages in primary schools in Northern Ireland: what do children currently know and understand?
Key theme 2: Places

Analysis of the data also highlighted “places” as a significant and central element in the majority of children’s understanding of “keeping safe”. This was evidenced by 796 (38.3 per cent) of the total photographs organised across all themes being identified as relating to “places”. The majority of the 10 small groups of young people completing the first-level analysis identified and created data groups relating to this theme – 50 data groups in total. Subsequently, during the second-level analysis, the adult researcher identified and created the following four sub-themes relating to “places”:

- Home: a place to be safe
- School: a place to be safe
- “Safety around the place”
- Places to feel safe

Home: a place to be safe

Figure 6: Photomontage

Figure 6 presents a selection of the 407 photographs (19.5 per cent of total) that were identified as relating to “Home: a place to be safe”. These photographs and the annotated descriptions refer to safety either within different areas of the house or outside of the house. The annotated descriptions included: “being safe at my house” and “a dog keeps your house safe”. The data was organised and labelled into 24 data groups during the first-level analysis (see table 4). The young people provided the following rationale to justify their categorisation of the data in this way: “Generally your house is somewhere you can be safe”.

School: a place to be safe

Figure 7: Photomontage

Figure 7 presents a selection of the 63 photographs (3 per cent of total) that made reference to “people or elements of school life” that were identified with “keeping safe”. These included the school building, the “lollypop lady” (school crossing patrol officer) and school friends in the playground, while the annotated descriptions included: “about keeping gates closed so that children can’t run out on the road”, “of my teacher – he keeps all the children in the school safe and away from danger” and “people fighting in our school – not very safe”. During the first-level analysis, this data was organised into five data groups and labelled by the young people (see table 4). The young people provided the following rationale for categorising the data in this way: “It’s all about school in these pictures. Teachers are there for safety. School is not always safe – changing classes is scary”.

Keeping safe: Establishing the need to teach “keeping safe” messages in primary schools in Northern Ireland: what do children currently know and understand?
“Safety around the place”

In total, 226 photographs (10.1 per cent of total), some of which are presented in figure 8, were identified as broadly relating to “safety around the place”. These photographs incorporated being safe in the environment, on the estate, on busy roads in towns/villages and at play outside. The annotated descriptions included: “a coastguard that makes me feel safe because if I got into difficulty when at the beach or sea, they can help me”. This data was organised into 13 data groups and labelled by the young people completing the first-level content analysis. The young people provided the following rationale for categorising the data in this way: “It’s mostly security everywhere you go”, “they describe the place – they tell you what to do”.

Places to feel safe

“Places to feel safe” featured in a minority of the children’s understanding of “keeping safe”, with 100 photographs (4.8 per cent of total), some of which are presented in figure 9, being identified as relating to “places to feel safe”. The annotated descriptions included: “of my room – it’s safe and comfy”, “my teddies make me feel safe when I cuddle them” and “you will be safe in the church because nobody will come to harm you”. It is also important to note that a small element of the data referred to places where children did not feel safe, such as strangers’ cars or changing classes at school.

The data was organised and labelled into eight data groups during the first-level analysis (see table 4). The young people who completed this analysis justified their organisation of the data as follows: “It’s all about places you feel safe, places that you feel protected.”
Key theme 3: Feeling secure

Analysis of the data highlighted “feeling secure” as significant and central to the majority of children’s understanding of “keeping safe”. Of the photographs, 495 (23.8 per cent of total) were identified as relating to “feeling secure” from across all themes. The young people conducting the first-level analysis identified and labelled 34 data groups relating to feeling secure, while the following two sub-themes relating to “feeling secure” were identified by the adult researcher completing the second-level analysis:

- Feeling physically secure
- Feeling emotionally secure

Feeling physically secure

Figure 10: Photomontage

A minority of children featured “feeling physically secure” in their understanding of “keeping safe”. In total, 115 photographs (5.5 per cent of total) were identified as relating broadly to this sub-theme (see figure 10). The annotated descriptions included: “because no one can get in unless they know the code”, “the parental lock keeps me safe from watching scary movies”, “my phone makes me feel safe because when I’m out I can always let my mum know I’m safe” and “you shouldn’t get into strangers’ cars”.

This data was organised and labelled into 12 data groups during the first-level analysis (see table 4). The young people justified their organisation of the data in this way as follows: “It is mostly safety everywhere you go.”

Feeling emotionally secure

Figure 11: Photomontage

Figure 11 presents a selection of the 380 photographs (18.3 per cent of total) identified as relating to “feeling emotionally secure”. These referred to people, places and things that children identified as making them feel either safe or unsafe. The annotated descriptions included: “my room – it’s safe and comfy”, “my mum makes me feel safe because she is there for me” and “the bible – it keeps me safe by what it says”.

Keeping safe Establishing the need to teach “keeping safe” messages in primary schools in Northern Ireland: what do children currently know and understand?
During the first-level analysis, the data was organised and labelled into 29 data groups by the young people (see table 4). They provided the following as a rationale for their organisation of the data: “They all made people feel safe, objects that make me feel safe, animals that make me feel safe, toys that make me feel safe”.

**Key theme 4: People**

Analysis of the data identified “people” as significant and central to the majority of children’s concept and understanding of “keeping safe”. This was evidenced by 482 photographs (23.1 per cent of total) being identified as relating to “people”. During the first-level analysis, the young people identified 29 data groups relating to “people”, while the following three sub-themes were identified by the adult researcher during the second-level analysis:

- Good people
- Bad people
- Myself

**Good people**

*Figure 12: Photomontage*

Figure 12 presents a selection of the 335 photographs (16.1 per cent of total) identified as relating to “good people”. The annotated descriptions included: “Mum and Dad keep me safe”, “my friend – he makes me happy because he plays with me”, “my teacher keeps me safe by not letting people call us names” and “you are safe with the priest when you are in mass”.

When completing the first-level analysis, all of the 10 groups of young people identified and labelled 20 data groups relating to “good people” (see table 4). They justified their organisation of the data in this way with: “These people make you feel safe. They look after you and care for you. They respect you.”
**Bad people**

**Figure 13: Photomontage**

A very small minority of children featured “bad people” in their concept and understanding of “keeping safe”, with 15 photographs (0.7 per cent of total) being identified. These photographs depicted the school, a randomly parked car, and boys pushing and fighting on a trampoline. Annotated descriptions included: “people fighting in our school – not very safe”, “of a police car to stop bad people”, “about not to run about with bad people because look what they can do to property” and “you shouldn’t go into strangers’ cars”.

During the first-level analysis, four of the 10 groups of young people identified and labelled data groups relating to “bad people” – five data groups in total (see table 4). The following rationale was provided to support the young people’s organisation of the data in this way: “People who [you] think are your friends may not be”, “Child abuse from parents”.

**Myself**

**Figure 14: Photomontage**

A minority of children featured “myself” in their concept and understanding of “keeping safe”. While this was evident in some of the photographs and annotated descriptions, it did not emerge in the first-level analysis carried out by the 10 small groups of young people – it emerged primarily within the second-level analysis carried out by the adult researcher. In total, 132 photographs (6.4 per cent of total) were identified as relating broadly to this sub-theme. The photographs included a child practising self-defence skills.

All of the annotated descriptions adopted personal pronouns and all suggested each individual’s role and responsibility in “keeping safe”. Examples of annotations included: “you should always press this button and wait until the green man”, “If there is a fire, I can always use this”, “I’m good at keeping myself safe because I do a martial art called jujitsu” and “about me, I am safe to me”. This data was organised into eight data groups during the first-level analysis, labelled “home safety”, “outdoor safety”, “bikes”, “cars”, “outside safety”, “road car safety”, “keeping yourself safe” and “self safety”. The latter two data groups were the only ones created by the young people that directly referenced the role children have to play in keeping themselves safe.
Summary of photography project

This photography project facilitated an in-depth exploration of children’s knowledge and understanding of the broad concept of “keeping safe”. The mixed-methods approach employed in this element of the research study with children also made use of a self-report questionnaire alongside the photography project.

The questionnaire aimed to provide a more specific and detailed assessment of children’s knowledge, understanding and perceived self-efficacy across the “keeping safe” constructs of bullying, domestic abuse, and appropriate and inappropriate touch. It also aimed to identify and describe variation in children’s knowledge, understanding and perceived self-efficacy across these constructs. The methods, analysis and significant results are presented in sections 5 and 6 of this report.

5 Overview of phase 1: self-report questionnaire

Methods and questionnaire

A review of the research literature highlighted that no robust questionnaire measuring children’s knowledge and understanding across the range of “keeping safe” constructs of bullying, domestic abuse, appropriate and inappropriate touch, and self-efficacy exists (Barron and Topping, 2009; Farrington and Ttofi, 2009; Zwi et al, 2007). Therefore, a composite self-report questionnaire was created by merging elements of those that do exist: the Children’s Knowledge of Abuse Questionnaire (CKAQ) (Tutty, 1995); the Efficacy Expectations subscale (Dake et al, 2003); and the Knowledge and Attitudes to Abuse subscale of the Child/Teen Witness to Woman Abuse Questionnaire (Sudermann et al, 2000). These have been developed and used with other populations of children in other countries, and have been found to be valid and reliable measures of children’s knowledge and understanding of these “keeping safe” constructs. Additional questions related to bullying were added to the self-report questionnaire following consultation with experts in the field of bullying research (Professor Helen Cowie, personal email communication, 18/02/09; Professor Peter Smith, personal email communication, 24/02/09). Similarly, questions related to children’s socio-demographic profile and their sources of “keeping safe” information were also added.

Children (n=19) from participating schools contributed to the development of the final questionnaire, shaping its presentation, format and content. This enhanced its child-friendliness, accessibility and overall content validity (see Turtle et al, 2010, for more detail).

Data collection and ethics

Ethical approval for this research was granted by the NSPCC research ethics committee. Informed written consent to participate was sought from school management and parents, who in some cases were provided with a copy of the questionnaire to aid their decision-making (Morrow and Richards, 1996).
An NSPCC children’s services practitioner hosted an information session with the children whereby the process of written informed consent to participate was sought. The practitioner explained to the children that they did not have to complete any or all of the questions and were free not to take part or stop taking part at any stage: they were also informed how they could communicate this decision to the practitioner (Thomas and O’Kane, 1998).

The children were also made aware what would happen to their data and how it might be used by the NSPCC and the Department of Education (NI) in the future. This included the fact that the practitioner would read their completed questionnaires and, should they have written anything to cause concern about their safety or that of another child, the practitioner would talk to them about what they had written and what further action might be needed to ensure children were safe (Thomas and O’Kane, 1998). Children completed the questionnaire under classroom test conditions. The practitioner read out the instructions and questions, and supported the children throughout the process. Children were then provided with information about help-seeking, including the contact details for ChildLine. Further information and posters were provided for the school staff.

Sample and school characteristics

In total, 532 children across 16 participating schools completed the questionnaire (see table 5). All were attending primary schools, with the exception of six children attending a post-primary special school. Approximately 58 per cent (308 children) were attending controlled schools, 27.3 per cent (145 children) maintained, 13.7 per cent (73 children) integrated and 1.1 per cent (six children) a special school.

Follow-up with schools where respondents reported having a special need in relation to their behaviour or learning confirmed that 5.3 per cent (n=10) of the children possessed a statement of special educational need, while a further 5.3 per cent (n=10) were on the code of practice.

Table 5: Children’s profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Class year group</th>
<th>Family living arrangements</th>
<th>Self-reported special need in relation to behaviour or learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male = 49.9%</td>
<td>8 years = 3% (16)</td>
<td>Primary 4 = 0.6% (3)</td>
<td>Mum and Dad = 76.6% (407)</td>
<td>Yes = 11.1% (59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female = 50.2%</td>
<td>9 years = 26.5%</td>
<td>Primary 5 = 21.4% (114)</td>
<td>Mum = 20.2% (107)</td>
<td>No = 81.4% (432)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(265)</td>
<td>(141)</td>
<td>Primary 6 = 35.5% (189)</td>
<td>Dad = 1.1% (6)</td>
<td>Unsure = 7.5% (40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 years = 31.6%</td>
<td>Primary 7 = 41.4% (220)</td>
<td>Grandparents = 0.6% (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(188)</td>
<td>Post-Primary Year 8 and 9 = 1.1% (6)</td>
<td>Foster parents = 0.9% (5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 years = 38%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Someone else = 0.4% (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(202)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 years = 0.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 years = 0.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Keeping safe Establishing the need to teach "keeping safe” messages in primary schools in Northern Ireland: what do children currently know and understand?
Analysis and reporting

A range of high-level analyses techniques (e.g., confirmatory factor analysis, item characteristic curves, differential item functioning and latent profile analysis) were used to:

- assess the robustness of the questionnaire as a measure of children’s knowledge and understanding of the “keeping safe” constructs of bullying, domestic abuse, appropriate and inappropriate touch, and self-efficacy to keep safe in these situations;
- measure children’s knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy (accuracy of their answers to individual questions) across each of the “keeping safe” constructs;
- identify variation in children’s knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy across the “keeping safe” constructs, on particular questions within each of the constructs, and also where variations arose across different groups of children; and
- classify children into different groups according to their level of knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy.

6 Findings and summary of phase 1: self-report questionnaire

What do children currently know and understand in relation to “keeping safe” constructs, and how do they perceive their ability to keep safe in these situations?

**Key findings from the self-report questionnaire**

- Children fell into one of four groups in terms of their knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy to keep safe in relation to bullying, domestic abuse, and appropriate and inappropriate touch.
- The low knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy group (5 per cent of children) contained those who were younger, had special educational needs and had access to fewer sources of “keeping safe” information.
- The high knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy group (55 per cent of children) contained those who were older, had no special educational needs and had access to more sources of “keeping safe” information.
- Overall, children demonstrated higher knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy to keep safe in relation to bullying compared to domestic abuse, and appropriate and inappropriate touch.
- Significant gaps were evident in children’s knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy to keep safe in relation to their role in domestic abuse, inappropriate sexual touching from someone known to the child and stranger danger.
- Children’s knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy to keep safe varied significantly with age, self-reported special educational needs and number of “keeping safe” information sources accessible to them. Less significant variations existed in relation to school management type and gender.
In total, 52 questions in the questionnaire were used to measure children’s knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy across the “keeping safe” constructs of bullying, domestic abuse, appropriate and inappropriate touch, and self-efficacy to keep safe. Tables 6–9 present the results from the item characteristic curve analysis of this data. See also figures 15–18.

### Interpreting item characteristic curves

Item characteristic curves display the relationship between the “keeping safe” construct and children’s performance on individual questions on the questionnaire. The “x” axis presents standardised scores representing the range in children’s ability to accurately answer the questions collectively, ie at the overall “keeping safe” construct level; high negative values denoting low ability and high positive values denoting high ability. Values around 0 are characteristic of average ability. The “y” axis presents the probability of accurately answering a question for a given ability level. In this instance, probability values of 0.5 and above indicate that 50 per cent or more of the children are likely to accurately answer that question at the corresponding ability level.

### Bullying

Overall, children answered the questions relating to bullying accurately, although the question “Bullying happens when children keep on telling others to leave someone out of the game on purpose” was answered less accurately than the others (see figure 15 and table 6). In total, 62 per cent of average ability children answered this question accurately. Furthermore, children of less than average ability were less likely to accurately answer these questions. Further analyses highlighted the following:

- Children who had not identified themselves as having a special need in relation to their learning or behaviour were more likely to answer the questions accurately.
- Children attending controlled schools as opposed to maintained schools were less likely to accurately answer these questions.
- Females were more likely than males to accurately answer the question: “Being pushed and shoved by other children on the way home from school every day is bullying”. Older children were also more likely to answer this question accurately.
Domestic abuse

Overall, children answered the majority of the questions relating to domestic abuse (some relating to beliefs, some relating to behaviours) accurately. However, only a small minority of children answered the following two questions accurately: “Children should try to stop parents from fighting” (only 17 per cent answered accurately) and “Sometimes children are the cause of their parents’ abusive behaviours/fights” (only 16 per cent answered accurately). Moreover, children of less than average ability were less likely to answer the following questions accurately: “Sometimes, mums do things they deserve to be hit for” and “Children are to blame if Dad hits Mum”.

Further analyses highlighted the following:

- Older children were more likely to answer the questions accurately.
- Children with more sources of “keeping safe” information were more likely to answer the questions accurately, in particular the question “Alcohol and drugs cause domestic abuse”.
- Children who had identified themselves as having a special need in relation to their behaviour or learning were less likely to answer accurately, particularly the questions dealing with domestic abuse behaviours.
- Children attending “integrated” schools compared to maintained schools were less likely to accurately answer the question “Children should try to stop parents from fighting”.
- Children from families other than “two-parent” families were more likely to accurately answer the question “Alcohol and drugs cause domestic violence”.

Keeping safe Establishing the need to teach “keeping safe” messages in primary schools in Northern Ireland: what do children currently know and understand?
Table 6: Results of item characteristic curve analysis for bullying and domestic abuse constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keeping safe construct</th>
<th>Questions to measure children’s knowledge and understanding</th>
<th>Probability of average ability child answering accurately*</th>
<th>Percentage of average ability children who answered accurately</th>
<th>Gaps in children’s knowledge and understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bullying</td>
<td>Bullying happens when children keep on telling others to leave someone out of the game on purpose.</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>Bullying happens when children keep on telling others to leave someone out of the game on purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is bullying when children are called names like “sissy” and “woose” all the time by other children in their class.</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Being pushed and shoved by other children on the way home from school every day is bullying.</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic abuse</td>
<td>Domestic abuse is more than hitting and slapping. It is also calling names, threatening to hurt the other person or break their things or kissing them even if they say no.</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>Sometimes children are the cause of their parents’ abusive behaviour/fights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alcohol or drugs cause domestic abuse.</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Domestic abuse happens in a lot of families.</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes children are the cause of their parents’ abusive behaviour/fights.</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>Children should try to stop parents from fighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children should try to stop parents from fighting.</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some fighting and hitting between a dad and a mum is OK.</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes, mums do things they deserve to be hit for.</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Children are to blame if Dad hits Mum.</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A fight can clear the air and settle things.</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is OK to hit another person.</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: probability ratings range between 0 (low probability) and 1.0 (complete probability)

**Appropriate and inappropriate touch**

Table 7 highlights that the questions measuring inappropriate touch were in the main answered accurately, but that there were some exceptions. These included: “Someone you know, even a relative, might want to touch your private parts in a way that feels confusing” (only 27 per cent answered accurately) and “If a friend’s dad asks you to help him find their lost cat, you should go right away with him and help” (52 per cent answered accurately). It is important to note that, in particular, children of less than average ability were less likely to answer these questions accurately.
### Table 7: Results of item characteristic curve analysis for inappropriate touch construct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keeping safe construct</th>
<th>Questions to measure children’s knowledge and understanding</th>
<th>Probability of average ability child answering accurately*</th>
<th>Percentage of average ability children who answered accurately</th>
<th>Gaps in children’s knowledge and understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inappropriate touch</td>
<td>You always have to keep secrets.</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>• Someone you know, even a relative, might want to touch your private parts in a way that feels confusing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You can always tell who’s a stranger – they look mean.</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>• If a friend’s dad asks you to help him find their lost cat, you should go right away with him and help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes it’s OK to say “no” to a grown-up.</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>• Some touches start out feeling good, then turn confusing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It’s OK to say “no” and move away if someone touches you in a way you don’t like.</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>• You can always tell who’s a stranger – they look mean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Even if someone says that they know you, if you don’t know them, they’re a stranger.</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>• Even hugs and tickles can turn into bad touches if they go on too long.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Even hugs and tickles can turn into bad touches if they go on too long.</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>• If someone touches you in a way you don’t like, you should tell someone you trust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If someone touches you in a way you don’t like, you should tell someone you trust.</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>• If someone walks in while you are having a bath, and you feel uncomfortable, you should just keep quiet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If your friend says he won’t be your friend anymore if you don’t give him your last sweet, then you should give it to him.</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>• If your babysitter tells you to take off all your clothes but it’s not time to get undressed for bed, you have to do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If someone touches you in a way you don’t like, it’s your own fault.</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>• If a friend’s dad asks you to help him find their lost cat, you should go right away with him and help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you don’t like how someone is touching you, it’s OK to say “no”.</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>• If your babysitter tells you to take off all your clothes but it’s not time to get undressed for bed, you have to do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strangers look like ordinary people.</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>• If someone touches you in a way you don’t like, you should tell someone you trust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If a grown-up tells you to do something, you always have to do it.</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>• Someone you know, even a relative, might want to touch your private parts in a way that feels confusing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some touches start out feeling good, then turn confusing.</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>• If a mean child at school orders you to do something, you had better do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You can trust your feelings about whether a touch is good or bad.</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>• Even someone you like could touch you in a way that feels bad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If a mean child at school orders you to do something, you had better do it.</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td>• If someone touches you in a way that does not feel good, you should keep on telling until someone believes you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Even someone you like could touch you in a way that feels bad.</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>• Sometimes someone in your family might touch you in a way you don’t like.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>You have to let grown-ups touch you whether you like it or not.</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>• Boys don’t have to worry about someone touching their private parts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If someone touches you in a way that does not feel good, you should keep on telling until someone believes you.</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>• Someone you know, even a relative, might want to touch your private parts in a way that feels confusing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sometimes someone in your family might touch you in a way you don’t like.</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>• Someone you know, even a relative, might want to touch your private parts in a way that feels confusing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys don’t have to worry about someone touching their private parts.</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>• If your babysitter tells you to take off all your clothes but it’s not time to get undressed for bed, you have to do it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Someone you know, even a relative, might want to touch your private parts in a way that feels confusing.</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>• If someone walks in while you are having a bath, and you feel uncomfortable, you should just keep quiet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If your babysitter tells you to take off all your clothes but it’s not time to get undressed for bed, you have to do it.</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>• If a friend’s dad asks you to help him find their lost cat, you should go right away with him and help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If a friend’s dad asks you to help him find their lost cat, you should go right away with him and help.</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>• If someone walks in while you are having a bath, and you feel uncomfortable, you should just keep quiet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If someone walks in while you are having a bath, and you feel uncomfortable, you should just keep quiet.</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>• If someone walks in while you are having a bath, and you feel uncomfortable, you should just keep quiet.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: probability ratings range between 0 (low probability) and 1.0 (complete probability)
A small number of other questions concerned with touches were also answered less well: “Some touches start out feeling good, then turn confusing” (65 per cent answered accurately), “Even hugs and tickles can turn into bad touches if they go on too long” (67 per cent answered accurately) and “If someone touches you in a way you don’t like, you should tell someone you trust” (69 per cent answered accurately). The following question was also answered accurately by only 67 per cent of the children: “You can always tell who’s a stranger – they look mean”.

Children answered the majority of questions relating to appropriate touch accurately (see table 8 and figure 16). However, the majority answered the following two questions inaccurately: “Most people are strangers and most strangers are nice” (only 16 per cent answered accurately) and “If you fell off your bike and hurt your private parts, it would be OK for a doctor or nurse to look under your clothes” (only 57 per cent answered accurately). It is also important to note that children of less than average ability were less likely to answer these questions accurately.

Further analyses highlighted the following:

- Older children and children who had not identified themselves as having a special need in relation to their behaviour or learning were more likely to accurately answer the questions relating to inappropriate touch.
- Children attending maintained schools compared to controlled schools were more likely to accurately answer the questions relating to both inappropriate and appropriate touch.
- Children with more sources of “keeping safe” information were more likely to accurately answer the questions relating to inappropriate touch.
- Children attending maintained schools compared to controlled schools were more likely to accurately answer the question “If your babysitter tells you to take off all your clothes but it’s not time to get undressed for bed, you have to do it”.
- Males compared to females were more likely to accurately answer the question “If you fell off your bike and hurt your private parts, it would be OK for a doctor or nurse to look under your clothes.

### Table 8: Results of item characteristic curve analysis for appropriate touch construct

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keeping safe construct</th>
<th>Questions to measure children’s knowledge and understanding</th>
<th>Probability of average ability child answering accurately*</th>
<th>Percentage of average ability children who answered accurately</th>
<th>Gaps in children’s knowledge and understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate touch</td>
<td>It’s OK for someone you like to hug you.</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>Most people are strangers and most strangers are nice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most children like to get a kiss from their parents before they go to bed at night so, for them, that would be a good touch.</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you fell off your bike and hurt your private parts, it would be OK for a doctor or nurse to look under your clothes.</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>If you fell off your bike and hurt your private parts, it would be OK for a doctor or nurse to look under your clothes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It’s OK to have a hug from a grown-up you like.</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A pat on the back from a teacher you like after you’ve done a good job at school is a good touch.</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>96%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Keeping safe construct cont.

### Questions to measure children's knowledge and understanding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Probability of average ability child answering accurately*</th>
<th>Percentage of average ability children who answered accurately</th>
<th>Gaps in children's knowledge and understanding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate touch cont.</td>
<td>If you're walking down the street with your mother and she starts talking to a neighbour you have not met before, it's OK to talk with them too.</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you won a competition for drawing the best picture in your school and a neighbour you liked gave you a quick hug to congratulate you, then that would be a good touch.</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most people are strangers and most strangers are nice.</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you get separated from your parents in a shopping centre, it's OK to ask a sales person or a security guard for help, even if they are strangers.</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: probability ratings range between 0 (low probability) and 1.0 (complete probability)

### Figure 16: Item characteristic curves for the appropriate touch construct

![Item characteristic curves for the appropriate touch construct](image)

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**Keeping safe** Establishing the need to teach “keeping safe” messages in primary schools in Northern Ireland: what do children currently know and understand?
**Self-efficacy to keep safe**

Overall, children’s answers demonstrated moderate self-efficacy to keep safe in situations of bullying and domestic abuse, as well as appropriate and inappropriate touch (see table 9 and figure 17). However, the majority of children reported low self-efficacy and being unsure what to do in relation to the following two questions: “If adults in your home began pushing and hitting each other, how sure are you that you could tell a trusted adult who is not a member of your family?” (only 26 per cent reported being sure what to do to keep safe) and “If you told your mum or dad about someone touching your private parts and they did not believe you, how sure are you that you could find another adult to tell?” (only 30 per cent reported being sure what to do).

Further analyses highlighted the following:

- Older children and children who had not identified themselves as having a special need in relation to their behaviour or learning were more likely to report higher self-efficacy to keep safe.
- Children with more sources of “keeping safe” information were more likely to report higher self-efficacy about what they could do in order to keep safe.
- Males reported higher self-efficacy compared to females on the following two questions: “If adults in your home began pushing and hitting each other, how sure are you that you could find a safe place to hide?” and “If an adult you liked touched you in a way that made you feel confused or worried, how sure are you that you could tell that person ‘No, stop that!’”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keeping safe construct</th>
<th>Questions to measure children’s self-efficacy</th>
<th>Probability of average child reporting high self-efficacy</th>
<th>Percentage of average children who reported high self-efficacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-efficacy to keep safe in unsafe situations</td>
<td>If adults in your home began pushing and hitting each other, how sure are you that you could tell a trusted adult who is not a member of your family?</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you told your mum or dad about someone touching your private parts and they did not believe you, how sure are you that you could find another adult to tell?</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If adults in your home began pushing and hitting each other, how sure are you that you could find a safe place to hide?</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If a family member you liked touched your private parts and told you to keep it a secret, how sure are you that you could tell a trusted adult?</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If an adult you liked touched you in a way that made you feel confused or worried, how sure are you that you could tell that person “No, stop that!”?</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you’re chatting to someone new online and they ask you to send them a picture of yourself and to meet them in private, how sure are you that you could tell a trusted adult?</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If you see bullying, how sure are you that you can get help?</td>
<td>0.56</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If someone at school sends a nasty text message about you to others in your class, how sure are you that you could tell a trusted adult?</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: probability ratings range between 0 (low probability) and 1.0 (complete probability)*

**Keeping safe** Establishing the need to teach “keeping safe” messages in primary schools in Northern Ireland: what do children currently know and understand?
Can we summarise children’s current knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy across the “keeping safe” constructs?

Latent profile analysis was used to combine the results from the other analyses and allocate individual children to four classes or groups on the basis of their scores across the “keeping safe” constructs of bullying, domestic abuse, appropriate and inappropriate touch, and self-efficacy to keep safe (see figure 18).

**Interpreting latent profile analysis**
Figure 18 displays the average score for each of the latent class groups on each of the “keeping safe” constructs. The “x” axis presents the “keeping safe” constructs, while the “y” axis presents the standardised scores for the “keeping safe” constructs for each latent class group.
Latent class 4 contains 55 per cent of the children and is best described as a “high knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy” group, since children in this group tended to score well across all “keeping safe” constructs.

Latent classes 2 (8 per cent) and 3 (32 per cent) are characterised as the intermediate groups across the majority of the “keeping safe” constructs, but are distinguished by scores on the “bullying” construct. Latent class 3 tended to score high on bullying, while latent class 2 scored low.

Latent class 1 contains 5 per cent of the children and is best described as a “low knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy” group, since children in this group tended to score relatively low across all of the “keeping safe” constructs.

Further analyses highlighted age, self-reported special educational need, school management type and number of “keeping safe” information sources as significant variables in distinguishing the four groups:

- Children in the “low knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy” group (latent class 1) tended to be significantly younger (odds ratio [OR]=0.56) compared with the “high knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy” group (latent class 4).
• Children in the “low knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy” group (latent class 1) tended to report having a special need in relation to their behaviour or learning (OR=2.58) compared with the “high knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy” group (latent class 4).

• Children in the intermediate latent classes tended to be attending schools in the controlled sector (latent class 2 OR=5.54 and latent class 3 OR=1.75) compared with children in the “high knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy” group (latent class 4).

• Children in the “low knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy” group (latent class 1) tended to have fewer sources of “keeping safe” information (OR=0.70) as did the children in the intermediate group (latent class 3 OR=0.80).

7 Strengths and limitations

Strengths

• The mixed-methods approach of combining photography with a self-report questionnaire supports the robustness, validity and meaningfulness of the research process and findings.

• The research incorporated participative and inclusive methods whereby children were also helped to contribute to the development of research instruments and data collection processes. The photography project, in particular, enabled young children, including more vulnerable children within the special school setting, to communicate their understanding of this relatively abstract and sensitive concept of “keeping safe”.

• Innovative analysis techniques were used throughout including involving children in the first-level content analysis of the photographic data, and a range of complex, high-level analyses of the questionnaire data.

• This study generated new evidence in Northern Ireland with regard to children’s knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy in relation to “keeping safe” constructs of bullying, domestic abuse, and appropriate and inappropriate touch.

Limitations

• Children with moderate special educational needs and disabilities were under-represented in the study sample. Their peers with severe and complex special educational needs and disabilities were not represented.

• Children were not helped to complete the second-level content analysis of the photographic data as resources, including time, did not permit this level of involvement.

• The “keeping safe” constructs of physical abuse, neglect and emotional abuse were not adequately measured or assessed within the questionnaire used in this study.
Discussion and conclusions

Discussion

This summary report has presented some of the most significant results generated from an exploratory mixed-method research study, whereby children attending primary schools in Northern Ireland have been engaged and consulted as key stakeholders (McDonald, 2009; Thomas and O’Kane, 1998) with regard to teaching “keeping safe” messages through preventative education in primary schools.

Official data indicates that bullying, child abuse and domestic abuse are prevalent and significant issues in the lives of many of our children: Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) 2010 statistics indicate that, during 2009/10, 24,482 incidents with a domestic abuse motivation were recorded in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, 2,306 child protection investigations were carried out during 2007/08 (NSPCC, 2009).

This research has, for the first time in Northern Ireland, engaged children in assessing their knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy with regard to bullying, domestic abuse, and appropriate and inappropriate touch. Significantly, this research presents robust evidence of the need to develop preventative education that is attuned to the cultural sensitivity and specificity of a Northern Ireland context. Moreover, it provides significant information with regard to tailoring any such programme to meet the varying knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy needs of different groups of children within the primary school population in Northern Ireland. The mixed-methods approach of combining photography with a self-report questionnaire supports the robustness, validity and meaningfulness of the findings that provide a sound, evidence-based platform upon which to develop an effective programme (Goddard and Bedi, 2010).

First, the findings from the photography project – the key themes, sub-themes and data groups, as well as the existent overlap – indicate clearly that “keeping safe” is a multi-faceted concept permeating many areas of children’s lives and experiences. Physical safety and accident prevention are core to children’s concept and understanding of “keeping safe”, while keeping safe from bullying, child abuse and domestic abuse comprise a small element of this concept and understanding. Children’s references relate primarily to bullying and stranger danger. This is supported in the international practice and research literature with regard to what children are taught in school and in the home in relation to personal safety (Deblinger et al, 2010; NSPCC, 2007; Ofsted, 2010; Wurtele and Kenny, 2010).

However, it is interesting to note that “feeling secure” and “myself” emerged as two of the four key themes within the photographic data. Some children are attuned to the feelings associated with “keeping safe” – a significant platform upon which to build knowledge and skills with regard to protective behaviours (Protective Behaviours UK, 2010). A small minority of children indicated an understanding that they themselves have a role to play in keeping safe: this is also an important platform to begin to develop a comprehensive preventative education programme within the context of an overall cross-sector public health approach.
Finkelhor (2007) and Wurtele (2009) both expressed reservations in this regard, stating that such preventative education should not place an unfair burden on children to protect themselves. In a similar vein, Zwi et al (2007) concluded from conducting a Cochrane review of school-based sexual abuse preventative programmes: “It is important that this improved knowledge is not seen as a replacement for adult responsibility to ensure child safety. Nor should increased education replace the need for appropriate medical and legal handling of those affected by sexual assault.”

Second, the self-report questionnaire yielded a more specific and detailed assessment of children’s knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy in relation to bullying, domestic abuse, and appropriate and inappropriate touch. Results of the analyses suggest children can be organised into four groups in terms of their knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy.

Fifty-five per cent of the children fall within a “high knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy” group: these children are more likely to be older, not to self-report a special need in relation to their behaviour or their learning, and to have exposure to more sources of “keeping safe” information. Five per cent of the children fall within the “low knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy” group and are more likely to be younger, to self-report a special need in relation to their behaviour or their learning, and to have exposure to fewer sources of “keeping safe” information.

Overall, children demonstrated more knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy in relation to bullying than they did in relation to domestic abuse and to appropriate and inappropriate touch. More specifically, they demonstrated significant gaps with regard to their knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy in relation to children’s role, ie being to blame for or the cause of domestic abuse, inappropriate sexual touching from someone known to the child and stranger danger.

These results confirm that many children receive inaccurate information in relation to sexual abuse and the perceived threat posed by strangers. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) 2009 Staying Safe Survey of parents and young people’s attitudes, and the NSPCC/ACPC (2009) public attitudes survey both confirm that parents’ primary concerns regarding child safety relate to strangers and paedophiles. Deblinger et al (2010) documented how parents focus on these issues when teaching their children about personal safety. In this regard, Barron and Topping (2009) noted from reviewing school-based child sexual abuse prevention programmes that “Some studies found that some self-protection concepts were more difficult for all children to learn. One concept that occurred across a number of studies was that children found it difficult to understand that trusted adults, including family members, could abuse” (p29).

Yet, ChildLine documented from calls received during 2008/09 that, of the 12,268 children who called about sexual abuse, 59 per cent reported that their abusers were family members. A further 27 per cent were known to the child, while only 5 per cent were strangers (NSPCC, 2009).
Analysis of the self-report questionnaire data also highlighted that children’s knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy across the “keeping safe” constructs varied significantly with age, self-reported special educational needs and the number of “keeping safe” information sources. Less so, school management type and gender were also highlighted as significant. This evidence is significant in tailoring and targeting efficient and effective programme development and delivery to meet the varying needs of children across the primary school population, in particular those most vulnerable (Ellis, 2004).

Conclusions
This research study contributes new evidence in terms of what primary school children in Northern Ireland know and understand in relation to “keeping safe” and, in particular, bullying, child abuse and domestic abuse. The findings assert an unequivocal need for preventative education to teach “keeping safe” messages to children. They also highlight a significant opportunity to achieve this through the development of a school-based programme.

The significant variation in children’s knowledge, understanding and self-efficacy that has been identified and described in this study provides insight to those children most vulnerable, and most in need of appropriate knowledge and skills to help them protect themselves. Importantly, this evidence will assist policymakers in tailoring and targeting programme delivery to children approaching or entering Key Stage 2 and children who have special needs in relation to their behaviour or learning. Other evidence of variation across school management type, size and location will inform effective and efficient strategic implementation across the primary school sector.

Finally, while some children’s concept and understanding of “keeping safe” suggests a platform upon which to build an effective preventative education programme, it is imperative that we recognise and acknowledge common expectations and the limitations of focusing solely on developing school-based preventative education programmes in isolation. In developing children’s knowledge and self-protection skills, we must rise to the challenge of adopting a wider public health approach whereby our children are also provided with supportive environments where they will be enabled to tell of their experience of maltreatment, receive appropriate responses and effective support, and have their welfare safeguarded and their wellbeing promoted.
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