

## THE SAFETY CIRCLE AND NETWORK OF SUPPORT

This activity for Foundation (R) and Key Stage 1 children helps them to identify the people who they can turn to for help or reassurance if they have a worry or feel upset, frightened or unsure of something or just want to share some good news.

The Safety Circle is a circular sheet of paper which has the child's photograph, self portrait or name in the centre, surrounded by the names of people, chosen by the child, who they could approach to ask for help if they have a worry. For older children, The Network of Support (see example below) is recorded on an A4 sheet of paper. The adults chosen may include any members of the child's family, school staff, child minder, youth group, etc. Some children will want to include friends (which might be imaginary), peers or pets, all of which are acceptable as long as they are not the only names recorded on the circle. It should be made clear to all the children in school that if a friend confides in them something that they feel might hurt their friend or someone else, they have a duty to tell a trusted adult on their Safety Circle. At primary school age adults should be the main protective factor in all children's lives but friends can also be useful for sharing a small worry or help with a minor concern, e.g. help them to look for their PE kit in the cloakroom. This enables children to begin to understand that worries do not always have to be resolved in the same way. They can start to make decisions about who might be the most appropriate person to help them. For example, if they have lost their lunchbox they might decide that they do not necessarily need to approach the Head teacher, instead the most appropriate person to go to might be a Midday Supervisor. An older child who has searched for something on the internet and accidentally accessed a picture they feel uncomfortable about, might decide to speak with their parent or class teacher rather than their best friend.

A number of years ago we moved away from using the terminology 'stranger danger' when working with children. Most abuse is perpetrated by someone the child knows and rarely by 'strangers'. In all situations, children should be encouraged to listen to their sixth sense and ask themselves: Is this a trick? Why am I being asked to do this? Will it put me or someone else at risk? They then need to know who they can tell or seek advice from. Children need to learn the skill of looking beyond what they are presented with and assess the risk, rather than assuming that all 'strangers' are dangerous. In fact, there may be occasions when children may have to approach a 'stranger', or better described as an 'unknown adult', for help or support. Being fearful of all unknown adults and being unable to ask them for help could create additional risk and distress in an emergency situation.

It is important that children know, and can recite, their full name, home address and telephone number. They will need to be given clear guidance about when it might be appropriate to share this information and also need to be clear that it is not appropriate to share their personal details online.

Older children will have their own mobile phone and need to be clear about the acceptable use of them in school. It is important that they know their home contact details. They will need to be given clear guidance about when it might be appropriate to share this information and also need to be clear that it is not appropriate to share their personal details online.

## INTRODUCING THE CLASS SAFETY CIRCLE

1. It is recommended that this activity is introduced to the whole class using an interactive whiteboard to record and develop an example of a class Safety Circle. This will model the individual Safety Circle activity. This is

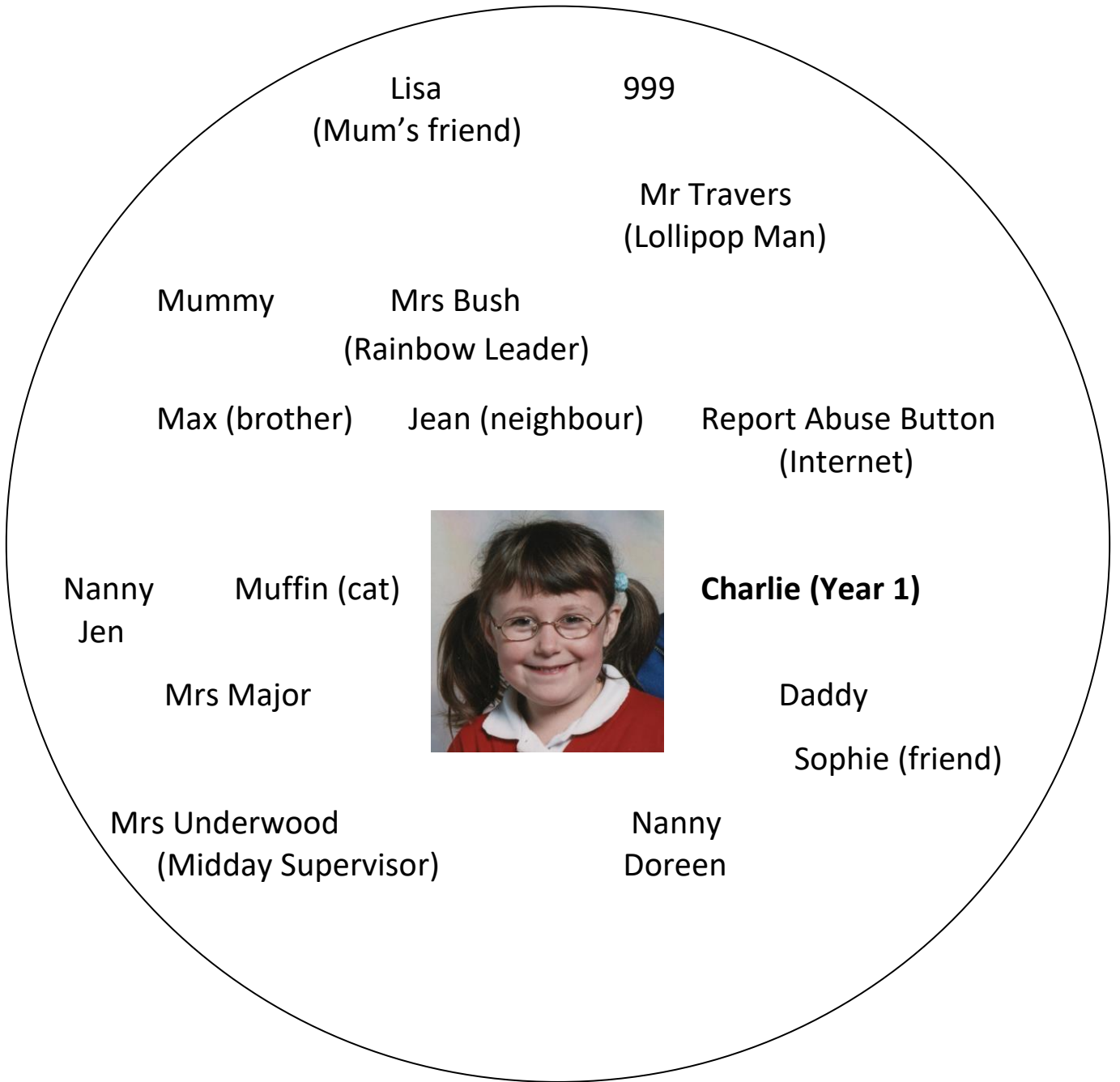
helpful for some children because class discussion can make them think more widely about who they might include.

2. Ask the children to think about adults and friends who they trust and can usually talk to when they are worried or upset and also when they want to share happy news. Talk with the children about the fact that, for everyone, there are times when we need to ask a trusted person or unknown adult for help, support or a listening ear. Each of us might also be the trusted person for someone else. Ask the children for examples of situations where they have sought or offered support, or might need to. Link this to the emotions they talked about previously about how someone might feel when they are in a new situation.
3. Next, ask the children to think about other people they could include who are not at home or in their closest friendship group. These might include school staff, neighbours, a friend's parent, a childminder, a club leader etc.
4. The children should then consider adding services and people that they do not know, e.g. Police. This would be a good time to introduce the role of ChildLine and the emergency services. Encourage the children to include these telephone numbers on their Safety Circle. Alongside this you could introduce the 'Report Abuse' button which is increasingly appearing on websites as well as raising children's awareness of the roles of moderators and supervisors in online environments.

## DEVELOPING INDIVIDUAL SAFETY CIRCLES

1. Children are given their own circle of paper to record their choices of people they would go to if they had a worry. The child's name, photograph or self-portrait should be placed in the centre of the circle. They must be given free choice about who and where they list people on their individual circle. Whilst it is acceptable for the teacher to suggest people they feel the child may have left off, they should not insist that parents/carers etc. are listed on the circle if the child does not want to put them on.
2. It is good practice to tape Safety Circles into the bottom of children's work trays. This will ensure that the Circles are stored safely for ease of reference. It is recommended that Safety Circles are **not** publically displayed or that they are sent home as it is important that children are allowed to make their own choices about who they include, which may not always include family members.
3. It should be explained to children that when they are using the internet, they should not provide the collection the information contained on their Safety Circle, for example, they would not include photographs which might indicate which school they attend, telephone numbers, etc. Please ensure that if you use photographs in this activity, that the school logo/name is not visible and also that the images are deleted, as appropriate, after use.
4. It is recommended that the Safety Circle is integrated into the whole school culture. This can be achieved by directing children to their Safety Circle for any situation where help might be needed.
5. You should explain to the children that they must always tell someone on their Safety Circle if they have a 'no' or 'I'm not sure' feeling
6. End the activity in a Circle Time round where each child shares one person they have included in their Safety Circle and the reason why.

EXAMPLE OF A SAFETY CIRCLE



EXAMPLE OF A NETWORK OF SUPPORT

Tom  
(School Bus Driver)

Nanny

Grandad

Mr. Warburton  
(Class Teacher)

Year 6  
Peer Mentors

Derek  
(Judo Instructor)

Mrs Watts  
(Learning Mentor)

**Max (Year 6)**



Dan  
(Neighbour)

Demi  
(Friend)

ChildLine 0800 1111

Report Abuse button  
(Internet)

999

Mrs Andrews  
(TA)