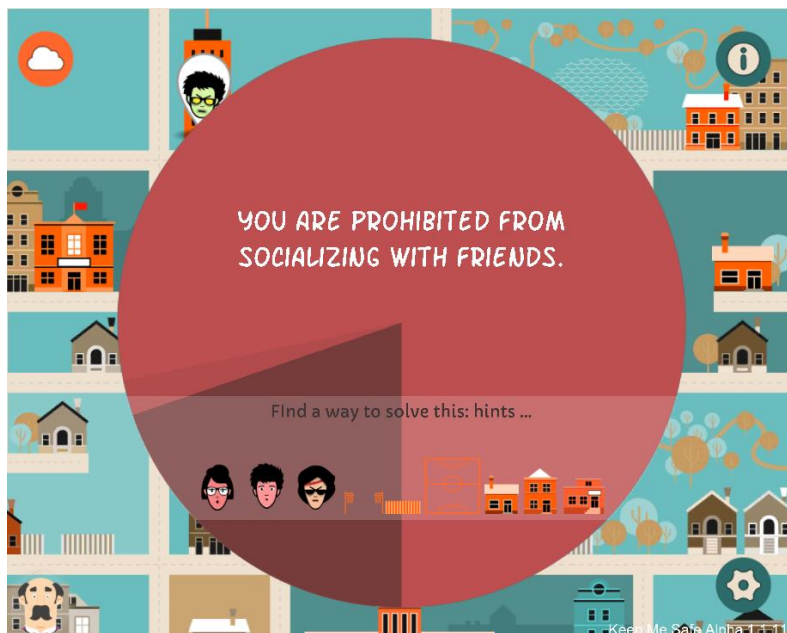




# HOW TO GUIDE: KEEP ME SAFE IN EUROPE





In this game player is “dropped” inside her / his current situation, in a town where she can move about, go to places and meet people. The game continually generates new life situations (generally, problematic) which the player has to respond to, by going places and meeting people.



The game basically generates problems that must be solved in as little time as possible. It can be seen as remotely inspired by the classic videogame, Pac Man.

## A game design experiment

This game is a **running experiment in applied game design**: it’s a process that has several outcomes, and that does not end at the game release of the 1st of June:

- Main outcome is an (experimental) game, that try to get attention even from casual and young players on the themes of neglect and abuse
- Second outcome is the game design and development process, in its novelty and cross field features is interesting in and by itself
- A third outcome is the gameplay statistical data collection (that will go on from the 1st of June for at least 6 months)

In the field of applied games this game tries to be noticeable for the quality of the game play experience (“game feel”) and in-game assets.

## How the game design has evolved

By testing the game in a running prototype, several corrections of the initial story model have been done.

The initial game design was more oriented towards simply telling stories, but in the first prototypes that resulted in boring games. We then added exploration, character meeting / avoiding (a bit like Pac Man), and the resulting game environment is way more “gameful” and stimulating. The second hurdle has been in getting in game structured stories, and this is getting dealt with in steps.

## The game world

The game stories take place in a town settings with certain locations and characters. These should be thought of as actors and stage elements that support different story compositions.

### Town inhabitants

POLICEMAN



He can help.  
But it is not  
the only way.

BULLY



This guy is  
searching for  
you, mostly.  
Why?

CINDY



Tom is one of  
your best  
friends.

DRUG DEALER



Providing  
seeked for  
substances to  
all generations.

CINDY



Cindy is one of  
your best  
friends.

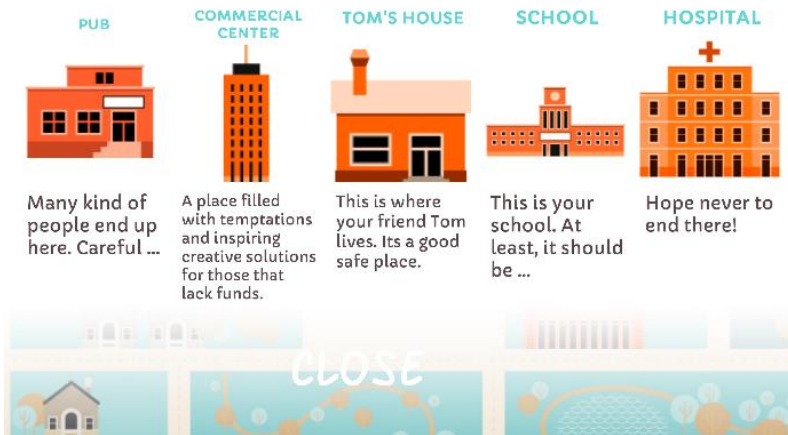
AUNT



Your mother  
says she is  
weird. But you  
like her.

The inhabitants (technically, non player characters, NPCs) follow programmable sequences. By meeting them at a certain time steps of the problem / stories are completed.

## Town locations



In town there is a list of places that are connected to the various stories / problems. By entering the different locations at different times steps of the problem / stories are completed.

## State of mind dimensions



Each of the stories, problem, choices, social interactions and town explorations influence positively or negatively your state of mind. If your state gets "too low", the game ends and the story of your choices is presented.

Personal space [coming soon]



# Why an e-learning tool for young people?

## **POLICY FRAMEWORKS, SOCIAL REALITIES AND A MOVE TOWARDS EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE TO MAKE DECISIONS THAT AFFECT THEIR LIVES**

This game infused e-learning tool was designed by young people for young people to promote early routes for help with neglect and abuse and to promote best practice among European professionals in understanding recognition, telling and help from a youth perspective. The primary aim of this tool is to support at risk and vulnerable young people on the move across Europe through an interactive, engaging and fun way which allows for an informal and non-threatening exploration of available options for prevention or intervention, help and support. Though this tool is one option and a professional will have to assess the circumstances of each case (including young people's abilities and preferences) before recommending its use, we envision that it will become an essential tool in practitioners' arsenal helping promote better health and wellbeing for young people as well as access to services and inter-cultural learning to keep young people safe.

Europe is about free movement of people and today more and more young people are on the move for education, volunteering and employment. This mobility necessitates that societies prepare adequately to handle the increased needs of young people for safeguarding. For instance, there is a clearly identified need to enhance children's and young people's inter-cultural knowledge of early routes to help for neglect and abuse in their host countries. Young people who are on the move will not, or cannot, readily access early help in their host countries due to not recognizing the problem or not knowing the formal and informal sources of help. Likewise, professionals might miss young people at risk because of language barriers or might misread behavior as cultural differences or symptoms of adjustment to a new country.

There is currently no uniformed child protection system in place within the EU to keep children and young people safe from harm. Although a key priority of the EU is focused on mobility (e.g., encouraging Erasmus students and adults of working age to move across Europe often with dependents) the lack of a uniform European-wide protection system creates a stumbling block to young people seeking access to services with neglect and abuse. This lack acquires significance in light of the existing evidence in favor of early help. On the one hand, there is longstanding and widespread international agreement that readily available early help for children and families can stop problems escalating and prevent maltreatment before it occurs (MacMillan 2010, Laming 2003, 2009). On the other hand, there is significant evidence that harm from maltreatment is common but often hidden and that most children and young people in need cannot easily access services (Harker et al 2013, Brandon et al 2012). For instance, an

international review of population-based surveys found an incidence of abuse and neglect in 4-16 per cent of children in high income countries (Gilbert et al, 2009). These arguments point to the importance of early help because it can reach out both to children and young people whose maltreatment has not been brought to the attention of services and to those whose situations do not meet the threshold for statutory intervention (Davies & Ward 2012:57). This e-learning tool allows children and young people from across the EU to learn more about the different child protections systems in place across Europe and to take a more active role in seeking help and support.

The youth-centered game builds on the findings from the Office of Children Commissioner in England study (Cossar, et al 2014) where members of the application team co-developed a framework to understand a young person's emotional journey in recognition, telling and help seeking. This framework forms the rationale behind this e-learning tool and helps to structure the game in ways that are useful to professional groups who seek to help and support young people. In that sense, the e-learning tool can be used as part of child/youth protection training but it can also be used in professionals' daily practice with vulnerable young people. Professionals and participating organizations will be better equipped with the game to support young, marginalized people and young migrants to and across Europe, educating them in fun ways on otherwise serious safeguarding issues.

In practical terms, the e-learning tool allows professionals to spot behavior of newly arrived young people who are at risk of neglect and abuse as well as to better understand the vulnerabilities of children and young people caught between two or more child/youth protection systems. In that sense, this tool is a response to the inconsistency and gaps in child and youth-led resources currently available to support the safeguarding of children and young people throughout the EU and online. It aims, in particular to help break down barriers to accessing services for vulnerable and at risk children and young people on the move. In doing so, it also seeks to raise the profile of vulnerable young people as European citizens capable of knowing, understanding and responding to their own risks. This youth-centered approach is supported by the EU Youth Strategy 2010-18 (e.g., the Health and Wellbeing priority to promote mental and physical health including sexual health as well as the prevention and treatment of injury and the Social Inclusion priority to promote access to services).

*Keep Me Safe* is an innovative e-learning tool based on the adaption of a youth-centric entertainment technology. Given the widespread popularity of digital technologies today, their widespread access among young people in Europe, and young people's familiarity with their use, this e-learning tool forms an ideal means for exploring an otherwise serious issue in an engaging and fun way. The use of the game not only bridges any potential gaps between the worlds of professionals and young people but it also turns young people from passive recipients of advice and services to active social agents of change in their own lives. Exploring their options through the use of the game also empowers young people to reflect, take initiative and act in ways that are informed and meaningful. It is this participatory characteristic of the e-learning tool which enables more ethical interventions by highlighting the voices, experiences, needs, and preferences of those who are directly affected. The fact that this tool was designed

by young people for young people provides an added layer of sensitivity which capitalizes on young people's own situated experience and knowledge of neglect and abuse.

## What safeguarding issues the game covers

The primary focus of the game is to engage children and young people through a gaming device which allows them to engage with a practitioner going through themes and issues which have impacting or are affecting their well being. The game is suitable for children and young people from the age of 9 years upwards and with the support of the guide and activity tools for engagement, can be used for children and young people that fall below the age threshold. The game covers a number of topics and allows the participant to pick a topic and play through the theme, giving the participant the opportunity to look at options in terms of actions to take to reduce risk factors.

The concept of the game is about provoking thought and helping the individual pose questions to the practitioner and for the practitioner to start to build up a picture of the player through actions and dialogue shared.

The themes identified in the game are a reflection of the research that has been undertaken by young people during the course of this research. Researchers have also taken into account some very generic topics which are reflective of themes across the world, for example the migration of children and young people from across the EU and some of the issues they may face during this transition period.

Young people during the course of the research identified that in order to ensure effective engagement, some basic foundations were needed to be set, what they referred to as Rules of Engagement. Such information was identified in Working Together to Safeguard Children 2015, which researchers felt were panicle to achieve the best outcomes. Whilst processes and practices vary across the countries, some of the basic engagement tools are transferable across the board and should be taken into account when engaging with vulnerable groups.

Consideration should be given to the below before you commence engagement:

- **Vigilance:** To notice when things are troubling them
- **Understanding and action:** to understand what is happening; to be heard and understood; and to have that understanding acted upon
- **Stability:** To be able to develop an on-going stable relationship of trust with those helping them
- **Respect:** To be treated with the expectation that they are competent rather than not
- **Information and engagement:** to be informed about and involved in procedures, decisions, concerns and plans



- Explanation: To be informed of the outcome of assessments and decisions and reasons when their views have not met with a positive response
- Support: To be provided with support in their own right as well as a member of their family
- Advocacy: To be provided with advocacy to assist them in putting forward their views

The game looks at the below theme through storytelling through the eyes of the child/young person, allowing for discussions and reflection as they make the journey through the game. The stories are a reflection of recent cases that have been in the media and information that has been drawn through the research.

Before commencing in the game it is important for the player to have some information on the different forms of abuse, which are identified below:

- Emotional Abuse - It may involve conveying to a child that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyber bullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. (Definition provided by Working Together)
- Physical Abuse - A form of abuse which may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child. (Definition provided by Working Together)
- Sexual Abuse - The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children. (Definition provided by Working Together)

Whilst the category of themes is reduced to three, there are other elements of safeguarding that come into action during the course of the game and depending on the circumstance of the player, other issues identified during the course of the game may be relevant and give the opportunity for further explanation/discussion for example; Child Sexual Exploitation, Forced Marriage and Domestic Abuse.

The child/young person playing the game, can play the game in isolation in as means of reflecting and helping them to take the next steps to share, this may be more suitable for young person that have the competencies and mind set to form responses on information presented.

The game allows the player to pick a topic and follow through issues and questions that are raised during the course of the game; it gives the player the opportunity to source information and also asks questions from practitioners who may be present during the course of the game, or during the one to one engagement which may follow. The game gives the player the opportunity to gain confidence and explore the issues which may be impacting on their life and consider choices. Whilst the game ultimately does not give solution to issues, it gives possible routes for identification of support and the opportunity to discuss information with professionals.

## **How to provide support following usage of the game**

The main aim of this e-tool game is to help young people recognize and talk about abuse and neglect and learn how to ask for help. The game itself will provide opportunities to the gamers to comment on the characters, the plots or the different options that are presented to them (for example, there may be a separate option asking them when they have to make a choice if there is something else that they would choose that is not offered as a built-in option by the game).

### **Support should be offered to young people:**

- When they start to play the game they will be informed that they may view something that disturbs and upsets them or makes them feel uncomfortable. At that point, they will have the option to quit the game and they will be informed about some available sources of support. This is to ensure that young people who are exposed to abuse and neglect and recognize it in their own lives are somehow prepared and protected from the shock.
- Playing the game will show them some ways to talk about their own experiences of abuse or neglect or the experiences of people they know (e.g., parents, siblings, friends, classmates). It is important to understand that they should help other voice similar experiences or report if for them in order to become active ambassadors against abuse and neglect.
- Through the game they will learn how to ask for help and the game will include various resources that they can access no matter which part of the country they live in.

### **Support to families/carers:**

- Parents and carers should be prepared to talk to their children/young people about scenarios of abuse and neglect that they are exposed to through the game. They can resort to the manual and the guidelines for some relevant information and there may also be links to other relevant sources of information.
- Since many families/carers may not be aware of the abuse or neglect that their children/young people have experienced, they may also experience shock and to process the overwhelming news and offer appropriate support to the young ones. This is

even more demanding in cases where a relative or family friend/acquaintance is involved in the abuse or neglect. In these cases they may also need to access information on where they could ask for help.

### **Social workers, teachers, therapists, mental health professionals:**

They need to play the game first, so that they can understand its rationale and how it can be used to introduce young people to the concepts of abuse and neglect, to empower them to talk about their own or others' experiences of abuse and neglect and where to look for help. Then, according to their own training, the context and the group of young people that they work with they can choose how and when to introduce it. They can ask young people to play it as a group talking about the choices that they would make and where they believe these choices could lead them and use the game as an interactive training platform. In other cases, they may opt for an individualistic approach that will enable them to 'protect' young people and give them the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences. Given that the game is built mainly around 3 types of abuse and there is no direct reference to neglect, they may want to discuss with young people examples of neglect and how they could lead to abuse.

The whole philosophy of the game and the how-to guide is to provide a framework of contact support to all interested parties in the form of training them to recognize and talk about abuse and neglect learning how to avoid it and where to ask for help.

## **Young person guide to the game**

### Young Persons Perspective on the How to Guide

The Keep Me Safe Game helps children and young people from the ages of 11 years upwards to raise awareness of everyday topics and issues which may affect them, through Safeguarding. The game helps the player to learn and develop thinking skills in terms of the decisions they make when faced with a particular problem or issues. The game can be played either alone or with the support of a worker.

The game can be played by young people with different abilities and encourages the player to think of the choices they make the possible consequences of decisions made, be in wrong or right. The player has the ability to gather stars as correct decisions are made and lose stars with the wrong decisions, allowing the player to compete with others and encouraging dialogue with other children/young people/adults

The topics of the game are following young people from the UK, Greece and Cyprus talking to children and young people to identify topics which affect their safety and well-being, whilst this is not an endless list, it does encourage the player to look at wider solutions and explore this area of personal safety further.

The game is an information tool and is a good opportunity for children and young people to share with parents/carers topics which they may come across during their teenage years or adult life.

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