



Safe Ministry Blueprint For Churches

**Safe Ministry with Children
and Other Vulnerable People**

Safe Ministry Blueprints

Office of the Director of Safe Ministry Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney

Introduction

Ministry to children and young people is vibrant and exciting work, and also greatly significant to the life of the church. Teaching children and youth about Jesus is kingdom work. It is a service to the children and youth, the church family, and to God himself that offers great opportunities, but also carries significant responsibilities for the wellbeing of the children and young people in our care. If we as a church take the teaching and leadership of children and young people seriously then we must do all we can to provide an environment that is safe from any form of harm.

The Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney wants its ministries to be characterised by grace and forgiveness, not rules and regulations; but the Bible is concerned that leaders have a particularly high standard in their personal life. Unfortunately, not all Christian workers have protected children and young people in the past. This policy has been developed so that as far as possible, such crimes will not be committed in future in the context of our church ministries.

Except where a particular age bracket is indicated, or a distinction is drawn between children and youth, references to children in this document are references to anyone under the age of 18.

Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
CHAPTER 1 : REQUIREMENTS FOR PARISHES	5
1.1. RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SENIOR MINISTER	6
1.2. THE SAFE MINISTRY REPRESENTATIVE	7
1.2.1. Appointment of the Safe Ministry Representative	8
1.2.2. The period of appointment	8
1.2.3. Duties of the Safe Ministry Representative	9
1.2.4. Support and resources for Safe Ministry Representatives	10
1.3. SELECTION AND SCREENING OF LEADERS	10
1.3.1. Legal requirements	11
1.3.2. Diocesan requirements	16
1.3.3. Summary of Requirements for Selection and Screening of Leaders.....	18
1.4. SAFE MINISTRY TRAINING	21
CHAPTER 2 : MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH	22
2.1. GENERAL PRINCIPLES	23
2.2. CHILD SAFE STANDARDS	23
2.3. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH MINISTRY	24
2.4. GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN'S AND YOUTH MINISTRY ACTIVITIES	26
2.4.1. Physical safety of children.....	26
2.4.2. Supervision of activities.....	28
2.4.3. Appropriateness of activities	28
2.4.4. Parental consent	29
2.4.5. Registration and permission forms.....	30
2.4.6. Transportation.....	30
2.4.7. Trips away.....	30
2.4.8. Communication	31
2.4.9. Online Environments.....	36
2.4.10. Photographs and videos	37
2.4.11. Meeting outside programmed events.....	38
2.5. AGE-SPECIFIC GUIDELINES FOR MINISTERING TO CHILDREN	38
CHAPTER 3 : REPORTING ABUSE	40

3.1. REPORTING OBLIGATIONS REGARDING CHILD ABUSE	41
3.1.1. Mandatory Reporting - Children and Young Person’s (Care and Protection) Act 1998.....	41
3.1.2. Reportable Conduct– Children’s Guardian Act 2019	43
3.2. HANDLING DISCLOSURES OF CHILD ABUSE	45
3.3. REPORTING ADULT ABUSE AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT	47
3.4. AFTER A REPORT IS MADE	49
CHAPTER 4 : GUIDELINES FOR PARISHES REGARDING PERSONS OF CONCERN.....	52
CHAPTER 5 : KEY DOCUMENTS AND CONTACT DETAILS.....	65
5.1. KEY DOCUMENTS	66
5.2. CONTACT DETAILS	67

This document was prepared in 2015 by the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry for the Safe Ministry Board with assistance from Anglican Youthworks. It was updated in 2021 to reflect current changes in the Diocese and in relevant NSW Legislation. This document outlines the requirements of the *Safe Ministry to Children Ordinance 2020* that are relevant to safe ministry.



Chapter 1: Requirements for parishes

1.1. Responsibilities of the senior minister

The senior minister is ultimately responsible for making sure ministry conducted throughout the parish is safe for children and young people. In order to faithfully execute his responsibilities with regard to safe ministry the senior minister needs to:

- a. **COMPLETE TRAINING** – The senior minister must complete Safe Ministry training at the required intervals.

The senior minister must have satisfactorily completed Safe Ministry training within the last three years before beginning his work and must complete the training every three years while the licence continues.

- b. **IMPLEMENT and APPOINT** – The senior minister must implement the Safe Ministry Policy and must also, with the agreement of the Parish Council, appoint a Safe Ministry Representative for the parish.

The Safe Ministry Policy passed by the Synod of the Diocese of Sydney in October 2004 states:

[Name of parish] is committed to the physical, emotional and spiritual welfare and safety of all people, particularly within its own community. To ensure the safety of children and vulnerable people in our communities, [name of parish], in conjunction with the Anglican Church of Australia, will –

- *Carefully recruit and train its clergy and church workers,*
- *Adopt and encourage safe ministry practices by its clergy and church workers,*
- *Respond promptly to each concern raised about the behaviour of its clergy and church workers,*
- *Offer pastoral support to any person who has suffered abuse, and*
- *Provide supervision of and pastoral accountability (within the context of the ministries, locations and activities of the parish) to any person (who is a member of a congregation and) who is known to have abused a child or another vulnerable person.*

It is recommended that all parishes and diocesan organisations adopt this policy.

- c. **COMPLY** – In conjunction with the wardens the senior minister must make sure the parish complies with its obligations under the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)*, as well as other relevant State legislation and the diocesan *Safe Ministry to Children Ordinance 2020* to ensure proper screening, reporting and training requirements are met. The Safe Ministry Representative’s job is to assist the senior minister with implementing such compliance.
- d. **MEET** – The senior minister must meet regularly with the Safe Ministry Representative to review the implementation of the safe ministry policies in the church.
- e. **MONITOR** – The senior minister (with the Safe Ministry Representative and Parish Council) must monitor all basic health and safety issues in order to avoid obvious hazards on church property, particularly in rooms used by children and vulnerable adults.
- f. **REPORT** – The senior minister has obligations as a mandatory reporter as well obligations under the NSW Reportable Conduct scheme to report certain suspicions and allegations to the relevant authorities. (see chapter 3 for details).
- g. **FULFIL** – The senior minister must fulfil such other responsibilities as required by Faithfulness in Service in relation to standards for personal behaviour, the practice of pastoral ministry and ensuring the safety of children and all vulnerable people in all areas of parish life. Faithfulness in Service is available at <https://safeministry.org.au>

1.2. The Safe Ministry Representative

The senior minister is required to appoint a Safe Ministry Representative (with the agreement of Parish Council – see Part 8 of the *Safe Ministry to Children Ordinance 2020*). Although the ultimate responsibility for safe ministry lies with the senior minister, he can delegate the day-to-day work of ensuring compliance with legal and diocesan requirements to the Safe Ministry Representative.

1.2.1. Appointment of the Safe Ministry Representative

A Safe Ministry Representative must:

- be 21 years or older,
- have completed Safe Ministry training within the last three years of the date of their appointment (and every three years after that),
- hold a Working With Children Check clearance which has been verified by the parish with the NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian,
- have completed a Safe Ministry Assessment
- have an email account (for administrative purposes),
- have good administrative skills, and
- be capable of maintaining a computer spreadsheet.

He or she must not be bankrupt or otherwise incapable of acting in the capacity of Safe Ministry Representative.

An added help is if the Safe Ministry Representative has professional training or expertise in child protection issues (such as a teacher, children’s worker, youth worker or a person with behavioural or social sciences qualifications and experience). It is recommended that the Representative is not a member of the parish staff or related to a member of the parish staff. Otherwise, a parishioner might feel uncomfortable speaking to the Safe Ministry Representative about concerns regarding a staff member. These are desirable, rather than required, things.

Upon the appointment of a Safe Ministry Representative, the parish must promptly notify the Sydney Diocesan Registry of their details.

More information can be found at <https://safeministry.org.au/safe-ministry-representatives/>

1.2.2. The period of appointment

A Safe Ministry Representative holds their position for the period (if any) specified by the senior minister in writing at the time of their appointment, until a successor is appointed or until they resign (whichever comes earlier).

The senior minister, with the agreement of the Parish Council, may revoke the appointment of the Safe Ministry Representative as he thinks fit, and may appoint someone else to the role.

The appointment of a Safe Ministry Representative may be revoked in circumstances where they have not completed Safe Ministry Training within the last three years.

Where a Safe Ministry Representative ceases to hold a WWCC clearance or holds a clearance that becomes subject to an interim bar, their appointment is revoked.

1.2.3. Duties of the Safe Ministry Representative

These are the areas of responsibility a Safe Ministry Representative has:

- i. **ASSIST THE SENIOR MINISTER** to comply with the child protection screening requirements,
- ii. **KEEP RECORDS** of Working With Children Checks, Safe Ministry Training, and Safe Ministry Assessments.
- iii. **MONITOR AND REPORT** on safe ministry systems and practices in the parish, and
- iv. **REPORT ANY ABUSE.**

i. **ASSIST THE SENIOR MINISTER**

The senior minister is responsible for making sure that the parish obeys the current laws concerning child protection reporting including the NSW Working With Children Check (WWCC) requirements and complies with diocesan screening and training requirements. The Safe Ministry Representative's role is to assist the senior minister in carrying this out. The legal and diocesan requirements are outlined further below.

ii. **KEEP RECORDS**

The Safe Ministry Representative must keep records of all WWCC clearances, Safe Ministry training and Safe Ministry Assessments that have been completed by people undertaking ministry to children in the parish. It is essential that the Safe Ministry Representative establish a reliable system or procedure to remind themselves of impending expiry dates of WWCC clearances and the dates Refresher training is required so that they can follow up on those matters with the leaders. For a comprehensive outline of the minimum requirements with regard to record keeping and recommended approaches to the storage of Safe Ministry Records a guide can be found at <https://safeministry.org.au/>.

iii. MONITOR AND REPORT

The Safe Ministry Representative must monitor and report on safe ministry systems and practices in the parish.

MONITOR

One of the ways that we can protect children in our churches is to make sure that they are meeting in a physical environment that is appropriate and safe for them.

Along with the senior minister and parish council, the Safe Ministry Representative must monitor all basic health and safety issues in order to avoid obvious hazards on church property, particularly in rooms used by children and vulnerable adults.

PROVIDE AN ANNUAL REPORT

The Safe Ministry Representative is to provide an annual report to the parish council that addresses current safe ministry policies and practices, and any suggested changes to improve the current practices in the parish. The aim of this is to ensure the safety of all children and vulnerable people involved in the activities of the parish. A template report can be found at <https://safeministry.org.au/safe-ministry-representatives/>

iv. REPORT ABUSE

The Safe Ministry Representative must ensure that any child abuse that they become aware of is reported to the relevant authorities. The Safe Ministry Representative may become aware of abuse because they have observed indicators of abuse, another person has informed them of their concerns for a child or a child has told them that they are being abused.

1.2.4. Support and resources for Safe Ministry Representatives

The Office of the Director of Safe Ministry Parish Consultant is available to provide support, assistance and training to Safe Ministry Representatives.

For more information concerning the role and function of the Safe Ministry Representative including information about record keeping systems and other resource documents go to www.safeministry.org.au/safe-ministry-representatives/

1.3. Selection and screening of leaders

Sadly, many children have been abused physically, sexually and emotionally by trusted members of their communities, including people in churches. As a result, there are requirements for people involved in any kind of work with children that leaders must comply with, both under NSW law and the Anglican Church's ordinances.

1.3.1. Legal requirements

Any person involved in **child-related work** (including all volunteers) must get a Working With Children Check clearance (subject to some exemptions). A child is defined as anyone under the age of 18 years and therefore child-related work includes ministry to youth. A church must verify the WWCC number with the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian prior to engaging a person in child-related work to determine whether the person has been cleared or barred.

Compliance with these legal requirements is the responsibility of the senior minister, although this task can be delegated to the Safe Ministry Representative.

A failure to undertake screening as required by law could lead to significant fines. It may also potentially form the basis of an action in negligence if a child is abused by a person in child-related work in the parish who does not have a WWCC, but has a record that would have resulted in a bar had the WWCC been undertaken.

Working With Children Checks

What is a Working With Children Check?

The NSW Working with Children Check (WWCC) is a government screening process overseen by the NSW Office of the Children's Guardian. Anyone intending to work with children in NSW, including volunteers, must get a WWCC. The WWCC involves a criminal history check (including convictions, charges and juvenile records) and a review of findings of misconduct. The result is either a clearance to work with children for five years or a bar against working with children.

Who needs a WWCC?

A Working With Children Check is a prerequisite for anyone in paid or voluntary **child-related work** in NSW.

“**Child-related work**” (including voluntary work) is:

- Providing services for under 18’s
- Where the work normally involves being face to face with children
- Where contact is more than incidental to the work

However the general meaning is subject to a number of exemptions (including workers who are under 18 years of age). For more about who is exempt from a WWCC see below.

The senior minister, any assistant ministers and lay ministers of a parish must have a WWCC clearance even if they do not have face to face contact with children personally, as they are deemed to be undertaking child-related work where there are children in a congregation of the parish.

Any and every person engaged in child-related work in a parish must either:

- hold a Working With Children Check clearance that has been verified with the NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian and is not subject to a bar,
- have a current Working With Children Check application before the NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian, or
- be subject to an exemption.

When must a person apply for a WWCC?

A person must apply for a WWCC and receive a clearance, or they must have a current application for a clearance with the NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian and have provided proof of identity before engaging in any child-related work.

What is the process for obtaining a WWCC?

There are two steps in the process:

1. **The worker** must apply for a WWCC clearance, and
2. **The parish** must verify that the worker has a WWCC clearance.

Step 1: Applying for a clearance

The worker (employee or volunteer) must:

- Fill out an online application at <https://ocg.nsw.gov.au>, or ring (02) 9286 7219 if internet access is not available.
- Receive their WWCC application number.
- Take the WWCC application number and proof of their identity to a Service NSW Centre or motor registry. There is no fee for volunteers, but if it is a paid position an application fee is payable.
- The applicant will then receive a WWCC clearance or bar by email (or post if there is no email address).

Most applications will be processed within 24 hours.

Step 2: Verification of the clearance

The parish must verify that the worker has a WWCC clearance before engaging the worker in child-related work by:

- logging into their employer account at: <https://ocg.nsw.gov.au>, and
- entering the following information:
 - » *the applicant's name,*
 - » *date of birth, and*
 - » *WWCC clearance number or application number.*

What is the result of a WWCC?

There are only two outcomes of a WWCC: a clearance or a bar. A clearance is valid for five years, and cleared applicants will be subject to ongoing monitoring. If an applicant is barred, it is an offence to engage the person in child-related work. If an applicant is barred, the Safe

Ministry Representative is to immediately advise the senior minister who must stop their involvement in all child-related work and notify the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry that they are barred.

What records must be kept?

For each worker in child-related work the parish must keep the following records (either electronic or hardcopy):

- Full name,
- Date of birth,
- WWCC number,
- Verification date (the date the parish verified them),
- Verification outcome (clearance or bar),
- Name of the person who did the verification,
- Expiry date (when the WWCC number expires), and
- Status of the worker (paid or volunteer).

Who is exempt from needing a WWCC?

A WWCC is not required where contact with children is not face-to-face or is only incidental to the work (such as serving morning tea to children after Sunday School, warden, parish councillor).

If a person is in child-related work but qualifies for one of the following exemptions, that person will not need a WWCC:

1. Workers under the age of 18,
A person's date of birth should be verified from a reliable source of data, such as a birth certificate. A process should be established to alert the Safe Ministry Representative when the person is approaching their 18th birthday. A WWCC can be obtained once the person reaches 17 years and 9 months.
2. Workers in administrative, clerical, maintenance or ancillary roles if the work does not ordinarily involve contact with children for extended periods. (such as a parish secretary or grounds-keeper),
3. Workers working for not more than a total of five working days in a calendar year if the

work involves minimal direct contact with children or where the work is supervised when children are present,

It is recommended that parishes do not rely on this exemption as a matter of course due to the difficulty of keeping accurate records and in demonstrating that the requirements of the exemption have been met.

4. A visiting speaker or performer for a one-off occasion who will be in the presence of one or more adults,
5. Short-term emergencies where the engagement of the worker is necessary in the circumstances to prevent an increased risk to the safety of children and the engagement is not for more than five consecutive working days,

This exemption could be relied upon in a situation where a regular volunteer gives late notice that they are unwell or otherwise unavailable, and it would jeopardise the safety of the children concerned to run the activity without having another leader or leaders present. The parish cannot rely on the same person on more than five occasions.

6. A parent or close relative of a child, when they volunteer in connection with an activity of which the child is a member or usually participates. A close relative means a sibling, grandparent, aunt or uncle, niece or nephew (or an equivalent step-relative). (Note: There are some exceptions to this for certain types of roles.

It is recommended that parishes do not rely on this exemption as a matter of course, as the risk of engaging in child abuse is not diminished by a person being a parent or close relative of a child in the group and because there are exceptions to this exemption which make it more complicated to ensure proper compliance.

Parishes may find that the administration involved in keeping track of exemptions is more burdensome than adopting a simple policy that every person involved in child-related work must obtain a WWCC.

There is also a risk that the grounds on which a person qualifies for an exemption may change over time. A parish could end up in a position where someone who is no longer entitled to an exemption is undertaking child-related work without a WWCC.

For more information about who is exempt from needing a WWCC you can refer to the Office of the Children's Guardian website. <https://ocg.nsw.gov.au>

Are WWCC clearances portable?

WWCC clearances are portable within the period that they are valid. Once a person has obtained a clearance they can quote the WWCC number to other parishes or organisations

with whom they undertake child-related work (such as CMS, KCC or beach missions). However, each organisation will still need to independently verify the WWCC number before engaging the worker in child-related work.

What if the applicant is from outside of NSW?

If someone is visiting from interstate and working with children for fewer than 30 days no WWCC is required provided they hold an equivalent clearance/check or exemption in the jurisdiction from which they have come. If someone has moved from interstate or overseas the person will require a WWCC and parishes should also consider obtaining a criminal record check from the state or country from which they have relocated. A parish will need the person's permission in order to do so.

1.3.2. Diocesan requirements

A person who wishes to undertake **ministry to children** must usually:

- Complete a Safe Ministry Check and submit this for assessment with the Senior Minister or his delegate (Safe Ministry Check forms can be downloaded from <https://safeministry.org.au/safe-ministry-check-information/> or parishes can register for the online system <https://safeministry.org.au/smc-church-registration/>),
- Obtain a WWCC clearance that must then be verified by the parish,
- Make a formal application for the children's ministry position, including producing proof of identity documents and providing references (A sample application form is available at <https://safeministry.org.au/resource-docs/>),
- Undertake Safe Ministry training prior to undertaking ministry to children, followed by a Refresher course every three years, and
- Read, understand, and comply with Faithfulness in Service (available at <https://safeministry.org.au/faithfulness-in-service-code-of-conduct/>).

It is recommended that all volunteers are a member of a parish for at least 6 months before undertaking ministry to children in that parish. This provides time for a person's character and suitability for such a role to be observed.

Ministry to children means a role that:

- Requires the person to hold a WWCC clearance; or
- Involves pastoral ministry which has direct, regular and not incidental contact with children; or
- Involves an overnight activity with children (eg. camps) or the provision of personal care to children (such as changing clothes, toileting, washing); or
- Involves the supervision of a person engaged in ministry to children.

Safe Ministry Assessments

What is a Safe Ministry Assessment?

The Safe Ministry Assessment is a diocesan requirement prescribed by the *Safe Ministry to Children Ordinance 2020* and is part of the diocesan response to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse. The Assessment involves the completion of a “Safe Ministry Check” form by the applicant followed by an assessment of the form by the Senior Minister or his nominee (authorised delegate). In particular cases, an accompanying interview may also be appropriate or necessary in order to clarify and explore responses given in the Safe Ministry Check before approval is given. For more information concerning the implementation of the Safe Ministry Assessment process in the parish please refer to the Safe Ministry [website](#).

Although an interview of the person applying is not required as part of the process it is encouraged as it creates an opportunity for the Senior Minister or his delegate to have a pastoral conversation with the applicant about godliness and holiness and to talk through any matters that the applicant may have found confronting when completing the form. Pastoral guidelines for the senior minister on how to assess the Safe Ministry Check are available on the Safe Ministry [website](#).

When must a person complete a Safe Ministry Assessment?

All volunteer church workers (aged 13 years and over) serving in ministry to children in the Diocese need to have undertaken a Safe Ministry Assessment and been cleared to work with children **before** they undertake ministry to children. This requirement is in addition to the requirements that such persons hold a current WWCC clearance (if they are over 18 years of age) and regularly complete Safe Ministry Training.

A **church worker** means a lay person undertaking any ministry to children –

- a. who is authorised by the Archbishop; or
- b. who is employed by a Church body; or
- c. who, for payment or not, holds a position or performs a function with the actual or apparent authority of a Church authority or Church body.

Who is exempt from needing a Safe Ministry Assessment?

The *Safe Ministry to Children Ordinance 2020* empowers the Standing Committee of the Sydney Synod to prescribe circumstances where a person is not required to complete the Safe Ministry Check. For a list of current exemptions please refer to clause 11(2) of the *Safe Ministry to Children Ordinance 2020*.

1.3.3. Summary of Requirements for Selection and Screening of Leaders

Because a child is defined as anyone under the age of 18, ministry to children includes youth ministry roles. Examples of roles involving ministry to children include crèche leaders, Sunday School leaders, SRE teachers and youth group leaders.

Screening and training may vary for different ministries based on the legislative and diocesan requirements. The following table sets out the requirements for screening and training for different ministry positions.

Ministry position	WWCC	Formal application	Safe Ministry training	Safe Ministry Check
Creche coordinator	✓	✓	✓	✓
Creche helper	✓	At the discretion of the senior minister	✓	✓ If regularly on the roster not helping as a one off
Sunday School coordinator or teacher	✓	✓	✓	✓
SRE teacher or helper	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mid-week kids club coordinator or leader	✓	✓	✓	✓
Holiday kids program coordinator or leader	✓	✓	✓	✓
Children's camp leader	✓	✓	✓	✓
Playgroup coordinator/leader	✓	✓	✓	✓
Playgroup helper (not formally appointed to a leadership position)	✓	✗	✗	✗
Junior Leader in children's ministry aged 13-17	✗ You can apply for a WWCC at age 17yr 9mths	At the discretion of the senior minister	✓ Safe Ministry Junior leaders Training (or Safe Ministry Essentials for leaders aged 16 or 17 – at the discretion of the Senior Minister)	✓ Safe Ministry Check for volunteers aged 13-17 years

Ministry position	WWCC	Formal application	Safe Ministry training	Safe Ministry Check
Youth group coordinator or leader	✓	✓	✓	✓
Holiday youth program coordinator or leader	✓	✓	✓	✓
Youth Camp leader	✓	✓	✓	✓
Casual helpers who do not fulfil a leadership or teaching role in a children's or youth program and simply assist from time to time	✓	At the discretion of the senior minister	✓	✗ Depending on frequency of assisting. See <i>Safe Ministry to Children Ord. 2020</i>
Volunteer assisting in an emergency (Eg. to prevent an increased risk to the safety of children on that occasion)	✗ if for not more than 5 consecutive working days	✗	✗	✗
Parent or close relative of a child or youth, volunteering in a ministry group that their child is a member of or usually participates in	✗ though it is preferable that they have a WWCC clearance	At the discretion of the senior minister	✓	✗ If they are a regularly rostered helper it is preferable to do one
A visiting speaker or performer for a one-off occasion in the presence of other adults, volunteers serving food, wardens, Parish Councillors, Synod representatives, building caretakers, cleaners, administrators and bookkeepers	✗	✗	✗	✗

1.4. Safe Ministry training

Every person undertaking **ministry to children** must have completed Safe Ministry training within three years **prior** to their appointment and the Safe Ministry Refresher must be completed every three years thereafter.

Ministry to children means a role that:

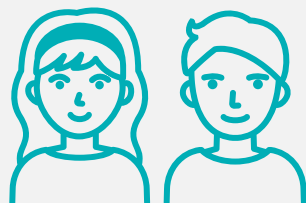
- Requires the person to hold a WWCC clearance; or
- Involves pastoral ministry which has direct, regular and not incidental contact with children; or
- Involves an overnight activity with children (eg. camps) or the provision of personal care to children (such as changing clothes, toileting, washing); or
- Involves the supervision of a person engaged in ministry to children.

Examples include Sunday School teachers, youth group leaders, crèche helpers, SRE teachers etc.

Safe Ministry training became the responsibility of the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry in 2017. It is available online or through face-to-face events at various locations throughout the year. For more information go to <https://safeministry.training/>

The Sydney Anglican Diocese is a Member and Training Provider for the National Council of Churches Australia (NCCA) Safe Church Program. For more information go to: <https://safeministry.training/>

The *Safe Ministry to Children Ordinance 2020* makes it a requirement that all church workers (undertaking ministry to children) complete Safe Ministry Training prior to their appointment. The only exemption from this requirement is if the Archbishop (or his delegate) is satisfied that exceptional circumstances exist and in such cases the training is to be completed within such other period specified by the Archbishop or his delegate, or if no period is specified, as soon as practicable.



Chapter 2: Ministry with children and youth

2.1. General principles

Children have rights

Children have the right to be safe and well looked after when they are in our care. They have the right to be protected, listened to and their particular needs addressed in all church activities, whether mixed age or child specific.

Leaders are responsible

All those exercising a pastoral ministry involving children in the church have responsibility for the safety and welfare of the children in their care.

Abuse is power misused

Leaders have authority over children because of their positional power and because of their greater age, maturity, physical size and life experience. Abuse arises from the misuse of authority or power. Any form of abuse is always wrong.

2.2. Child Safe Standards

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse recommended 10 child safe standards based on its findings, extensive research and consultation about what makes organisations child safe. The NSW Office of the Children's Guardian seeks to support organisations (including religious organisations) to implement these standards.

The standards work together to emphasise the importance of adopting multiple strategies to address child safety and avoiding an over-reliance on any one strategy. By implementing the standards in our church ministries we can create and maintain a child safe culture. The 10 Child Safe Standards in extract are as follows:

1. Child safety is embedded in organisational leadership, governance and culture
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously
3. Families and communities are informed and involved
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account
5. People working with children are suitable and supported

6. Processes to respond to complaints of child abuse are child focused
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur
9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved
10. Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe

The child safe standards inform our current safe ministry policies and practices and provide a framework for ongoing review and improvement. It is recommended that church leadership consider how the standards are being implemented specifically in their own parish and how to improve and develop child safe practices and culture. For more resources and information about the standards refer to the <https://safeministry.training/resources>.

2.3. Code of Conduct for Children’s and Youth Ministry

The Code of Conduct is written to protect both the children in our churches, and leaders from situations where their integrity or actions might be questioned.

Code of conduct for children’s and youth ministry

A children’s or youth ministry leader **must**:

- Never abuse people especially children or youth, nor cultivate relationships in order to initiate or hide abuse.
- Report to the appropriate authorities any behaviour that could be considered abusive. This includes speaking to the head ministry leader about behaviour by another leader.
- Never be alone with a child or young person in their ministry role where other adult leaders are not present.
- Never have children or young people to their home or visit children or young people in circumstances where no other adult is present, except with the permission of their parent or guardian.

- Never touch children or youth in a manner which is inappropriate given their age, gender, cultural background, context or personal circumstances.
- Never physically discipline a child or young person in the course of their ministry.
- Never make alcohol, cigarettes or illicit drugs available to children or youth.
- Never develop special relationships with particular children or youth that could be seen as involving favouritism or any form of special treatment.
- Never engage in any contact with children or youth that is secretive (whether physical or through electronic media or in any other way).
- Never use electronic communication with children and young people in a manner inconsistent with the guidelines for appropriate use as set out in this Blueprint document when communicating with people under their leadership.
- Never become romantically involved with any participant in the youth or children's ministry where they are a leader.
- Never take unauthorised photos, movies or recordings of anyone, especially of a child or young person on church property or at church activities without church authorisation and the consent of the child's parents or guardians.
- Never view, possess, produce or distribute restricted material containing sexual acts or nudity; and never view, possess, produce or distribute any form of child pornography or child exploitation material.

There are good reasons for this code of conduct. Those who seek to abuse children may use group-based activities in order to gain the trust of a young person. Having gained that trust, they may then engage in one-to-one activities that offer an opportunity for abuse to occur, including sexual abuse.

Sexual abuse of a child often starts with something relatively minor but can then gradually build up to more involved behaviours through a process of grooming. Grooming is often characterised by secrecy.

Those at greatest risk of child abuse in ministry are undoubtedly teenagers. This is because youth ministry more easily allows for the possibility of one-to-one unsupervised contact. This is why there should always be more than one adult leader present and efforts made to limit the opportunity for any leader to engage in one-to-one activity with a child away from the presence of other adults.

A breach of this Code of Conduct may raise issues concerning a person's fitness to continue

as a leader. Leaders are to inform the senior minister or the Safe Ministry Representative if they observe another leader acting in a way that may be contrary to this Code of Conduct.

2.4. Guidelines for Children’s and Youth Ministry activities

The guidelines that follow cover a wide array of issues for children’s and youth ministry activities, such as the supervision of activities and their appropriateness, the physical safety of those involved, the importance of parental consent, transportation and trips away, forms of communication with children and youth, as well the issue of meeting up with children or youth outside of programmed events. However, there are three golden rules that are relevant to all of the guidelines:

Two or More

There should always be two leaders aged 18 years or over present for all children’s and youth ministry events.

Never Alone

Leaders should not be alone with a child or young person during an activity, and should make sure, as far as possible, that other leaders are not left alone with a child or young person.

Stranger Danger

Leaders should be on the alert for people wandering around – a person unknown to the leaders or not part of the children’s and youth ministry should not be allowed access to children and youth.

2.4.1. Physical safety of children

One of the ways that we can protect children in our churches is to make sure that they are meeting in a physical environment that is appropriate and safe for them.

Consider particularly the suitability of the space, the safety of the space, and the safety measures in place.

Suitability of the space

- Are toilet facilities available?
- Is the space appropriate for activities such as games and craft activities?
- Is the equipment being used suitable and appropriate for the ages of those using it? (this is a particularly pertinent question to ask if there is any climbing equipment)
- Is the floor non-slip and splinter-free?
- In regard to areas used by toddlers and preschoolers: Is the area fenced off or contained in a room?
- Is there a designated area for strollers that is available to be used for that purpose?

Safety of the space

- Is the area to be used a safe distance from roads or traffic?
- Is the area far removed from places where people may engage in unsafe behaviour (such as smoking or drinking alcohol)?
- Is any glass installed at floor level safety glass?
- Are all child-height cupboards fitted with child-proof locks?
- Is the heating safe to use near children (i.e. is the source of heat removed away from small inquisitive fingers)?
- Are all electrical wiring, sockets and appliances regularly maintained and in a safe condition? Are all sockets child-proofed?
- In regard to areas that may be used for games and outside play, has the area been checked for items that may pose a potential hazard and such items safely removed (such as broken glass, or discarded needles)?
- Is all furniture in a safe condition and without risk of toppling onto a child (such as any stacks of chairs being at a low height)?

First aid and safety measures

- Is there a fire extinguisher or fire blanket available on-site?
- Is there a specific person in the church who is responsible for checking the first aid kit regularly and replenishing it? Is there a well-stocked first aid kit at the activity site?
- Is there a specific person on-site who is trained in first aid?
- Are all leaders aware of the fire safety and evacuation procedures?

2.4.2. Supervision of activities

An important part of providing a safe environment is making sure there are enough leaders present to adequately supervise the activities taking place.

The degree of supervision required will vary according to the nature and environment of the activity, the age and maturity of the children and the size of the group. In considering the number of leaders required, take into account:

- the age, number, ability and gender mix of the children, and
- the venue, time, duration and nature of the activity.

The suggested supervision ratios for low risk on-site church events would be: crèche and pre-schoolers 1:5 (one leader for every five children) and primary age 1:7 (one leader for every seven children), after the minimum requirement of 2 adult leaders is met. The suggested supervision ratio for low risk on-site events with youth would be 1:10 (one leader for every 10 youth) after the minimum requirement of 2 adult leaders is met.

Where the risks in the activity increase, the supervision should also increase. For example, if leaders were to take primary-aged children off-site to indoor rock climbing, it would be appropriate to reduce the ratio to 1:4 (one leader for every four children). Similarly, if leaders were to take the Year 7 and 8 youth off-site to do indoor rock climbing, it would be appropriate to reduce the ratio to 1:6 (one leader for every 6 youth). This is to account for the high-risk nature of the activity and the fact that it is off-site.

Please note that a junior leader (under the age of 18) does not count as a leader for the purposes of supervision.

The head leader should clearly distinguish the different levels of responsibility between them and other supervisors and ensure that these differences are understood.

In the case of camps and similar activities, there should be at least one adult present who has first aid training.

2.4.3. Appropriateness of activities

Leaders should thoughtfully consider what message children may learn from the way events are organised and conducted. Games or activities that could in any way emphasise gender,

physical, intellectual or ethnic differences should be assessed for their appropriateness.

To minimise the possibility of children being harmed, leaders should give careful consideration to any activities or games that require children to act alone or in pairs independent of leaders.

Leaders are to review in their entirety any DVDs, You Tube clips, computer games, graphics, photographs and lyrics that they intend to show to children. In assessing whether something is appropriate leaders are to be governed by the age of the youngest child present. Censorship ratings should be kept to G or PG for children up to Year 6, keeping in mind that some G or PG material may still not be appropriate due to the themes it contains. For youth, leaders should make sure that any elements containing violence, sexual activity, nudity, drug use, coarse language or questionable lifestyle are appropriate for the intended audience. Care is to be exercised if a TV show, film or computer game has been recommended by the Office of Film and Literature Classification as unsuitable for youth of a particular age (eg, PG, M or MA classifications). MA rated material will rarely be suitable, and material rated M may or may not be suitable with parental consent.

2.4.4. Parental consent

Children and youth must not be taken away from church premises without the written consent of a parent or guardian. Parents must be kept informed of the place and timing of the event and where possible provided with contact details for the head ministry leader. If possible, it is recommended to include parents or guardians in a leadership team which includes leaders of both genders.

Parents or guardians should be asked for information about any physical needs (such as allergies), mental health needs (such as depression) or safety needs of the children and youth attending children's and youth ministry activities. (see registration and permission forms below.)

Leaders should never administer medications to a child or young person without the written consent of a parent or guardian.

2.4.5. Registration and permission forms

Parents should complete a form in which they give details of:

- names, addresses and phone numbers of child and parents,
- name and phone number of a contact person in an emergency situation,
- important medical information, e.g. allergies, disabilities, special diets,
- names of people allowed to collect the child (carefully note if there is a non-custodial parent to whom the child should never be handed over),
- permission for leaders to obtain medical treatment in an emergency. A sample permission form is available at <https://safeministry.org.au>

2.4.6. Transportation

It is the responsibility of parents and guardians to arrange transportation to and from children's ministry events for their child, unless another specific arrangement is in place.

A child should not be driven anywhere by someone other than the parent for the purposes of a church activity without written permission from a parent or guardian.

When making transport arrangements, reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that:

- All drivers or operators are licensed (green Ps or above), responsible, experienced and are not impaired by alcohol or any other mind-altering or addictive substance, and
- All motor vehicles and other forms of transport used are registered, insured, safe and fitted with age appropriate child restraints or safety devices (e.g. seat belts, life jackets).

Leaders should avoid being alone with a child in a motor vehicle or driving a child home unaccompanied, even with parental permission. If such a situation is unavoidable, the leader should inform another leader of the trip and the reason for it.

2.4.7. Trips away

It is not usually appropriate to have children under the age of Year 5 sleeping over at events. When events involve children aged Year 5 and above sleeping over, ensure that the sleeping accommodation (where possible) is:

- segregated between males and females,
- supervised by more than one person, preferably including a parent or guardian, and ensure (where possible) that those supervising the sleeping accommodation:
 - are of the same gender as the children being supervised, and
 - do not sleep in close personal proximity to a child, unless they are a parent or guardian of the child.

Leaders should never share accommodation with only one child unless they are a parent or guardian of the child.

Venues should allow for the privacy of all parties to be respected, particularly when changing clothes, washing and toileting. If a leader needs to wash or toilet a child, they should tell another adult what they are doing.

2.4.8. Communication

Guidelines for those ministering to children (primary school age and below)

Leaders should take care that their communication with children is appropriate and above reproach. Be aware that those who wish to abuse children may use electronic communications to try to cultivate secretive or exclusive relationships.

Communication via mail, e.g., birthday cards or letters of encouragement, is acceptable when done with parental knowledge. Leaders should not contact children by email, social media, video calls, using chatrooms or by any other form of electronic communication. Leaders should not call or text a child on the child's mobile phone.

All electronic communication must be with the child's parent or guardian. On the rare occasions when a leader might need to speak to a child on the phone for ministry purposes, the leader is to call the child's parent to explain why he or she is calling. Only then, with the parent's permission, should the leader speak with the child. The leader should be conscious of keeping the conversation with the child short.

Guidelines for those ministering to youth (high school age)

Communication via mail, e.g., birthday cards or letters of encouragement, is acceptable when done with parental knowledge. However, for most young people in our society today, electronic communications are a part of daily life and a key way of engaging socially. New social media platforms and apps are being developed every day, and no one policy can hope

to keep up with the ever-changing landscape.

Rather than attempting to create a comprehensive policy for use in parishes, there are 10 key principles to guide leaders in their communication with young people.

TOP COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

1. ABOVE REPROACH

Communications should always be above reproach, both in terms of the content and the way it is communicated. Leaders should ask themselves: if this communication were to be made known to all of church, would they consider it to be appropriate? Leaders ought to be sensitive to the impact of the words and images used, to avoid offence or miscommunication. They must never use flirtatious, sexually suggestive, explicit or offensive language or images. Leaders ought also to be conscious of how things might look. They should be careful that the circumstances of their communication do not suggest that their relationship with a young person is inappropriate by, for example, communicating regularly or late at night. Even if a leader's motives are pure, misunderstandings can arise.

2. IN PERSON IS BEST

Face-to-face interactions are the best way to build relationships with youth. Leaders should not use electronic communications for matters that are pastorally sensitive, emotionally charged or that require a back-and-forth conversation. In those cases, it's much better to have a conversation in person. If a young person initiates a pastoral conversation with a leader using electronic communications, the leader should ask if they can talk about it with the young person the next time they see them.

3. BE TRANSPARENT

Be aware that those who wish to abuse young people may try to cultivate secretive or exclusive relationships through electronic communications. That is why it is so important for leaders to be transparent in all communications. Leaders should aim to keep communications public and brief. Long or intense conversations by electronic means should be avoided. If a young person initiates a conversation like that, leaders should consider how to redirect it to a more transparent forum or include other people in the conversation. That might mean talking face to face or including another leader in the communication with the young person's permission. At the very least, the leader should let their ministry leader know so that nothing is going on in secret. Leaders should also keep any emails, text messages or conversation threads with youth, in case an accusation is ever made or a misunderstanding arises.

TOP COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

4. DON'T INITIATE SOCIAL MEDIA FRIENDSHIPS

There is a power imbalance that exists between leaders and the youth they are ministering to. That power imbalance might make it difficult for a young person to say 'no' when a leader initiates a friendship on social media by, for example, sending a Facebook friend request or following them on Instagram. For that reason, it is best for a leader not to initiate, though a leader might choose to accept if the young person initiates a friendship.

5. SAFETY IN NUMBERS

Wherever possible, leaders should communicate electronically with groups rather than individuals. The best practice when sending emails or text messages is to include multiple youth or another leader in the message. When using social media for ministry purposes, closed groups should be used where possible (for example, Facebook) and youth should be directed to the group rather than to a leader's individual account if possible.

6. BUILD UP THE CHURCH

When posting on social media, leaders should think carefully about the impact of what is being communicated on the entire church community (including children, youth and the vulnerable). It is important to remember that leaders are often seen as representing the church. Leaders ought to consider how they can build up the church community, and avoid being divisive, showing favouritism or making others feel excluded or inferior.

7. RESPECT OTHERS

Leaders should be careful to observe confidentiality and privacy in electronic communications, for example, not publishing the names, contact details or other personal information of people online.

8. BE TRUTHFUL

A leader should never hide their identity or pretend to be someone else. Electronic communications that seek to hide the identity of the sender or represent the sender as someone else should not be used in ministry in any circumstances.

9. KNOW THE DIGITAL TERRAIN

When using social media, leaders should be aware of and comply with the terms of use, age restrictions, privacy options and controls for each site prior to using it in ministry.

TOP COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

10. REPORTING ONLINE ABUSE

Laws regarding mandatory reporting of suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of children and youth apply equally to the digital world.

AND FINALLY, USE COMMON SENSE!

There may be exceptional circumstances that arise from time to time, and common sense might dictate that a leader deviates from their usual practice when it comes to electronic communications. In those situations, leaders must be transparent and above reproach and, where possible, should seek advice from their ministry leader.

Recommendations about the sort of contact that is likely to be appropriate at different ages:

Type of contact	Primary school Students	Years 7–9 Students	Years 10–12 Students
Phone calls	Only after speaking to parent then, if the parent gives permission, with the child and only for ministry purposes.	To be avoided. Preferable to speak with the parent first and ask permission to speak with the young person.	Reasonable phone contact for ministry purposes permissible. Long conversations to be avoided.
Text messages	X	For logistical purposes only	For logistical purposes and encouragement
Email	X	For logistical purposes and encouragement	For logistical purposes and encouragement
Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, etc)	X	Use discretion and keep in mind the 10 key principles above.	Use discretion and keep in mind the 10 key principles above.
Video calls/conferencing	Only with parental permission and in a group setting, not one to one.	Only with parental knowledge and in a group setting not one to one.	Inform parents (where possible) and only meet online in a group setting, not one to one

2.4.9. Online Environments

Just as we do with physical gatherings we must ensure that online environments are safe and minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur (Standard 8 of the Child Safe Standards).

Many of the principles that govern how we conduct safe ministry face to face will apply to the online world as well, however there are some specific things to bear in mind.

Maximise transparency

- Only communicate with children online at the regularly programmed times e.g. Friday night youth group or Wednesday afternoon kid's club.
- Let parents and carers know when and how you will be interacting online with their children and what rules are in place. Get parental permission for primary aged children and ensure parents are fully informed for high school aged children.
- Communicate expectations and rules about online interactions and meetings to the children in the group, including how leaders are to interact with them. In particular, children should be aware that leaders should not be contacting them privately or arranging online gatherings other than the advertised usual times.

Social Media

- Youth group members, their friends and parents should be directed to the **church or youth group's official social media account** (not the individual leader's personal account).
- The official account should be administered by two or more leaders, ideally at least one of each gender, to ensure greater transparency in communication and to moderate the content.
- Do not use social media platforms in leader to youth interactions that delete posts, messages, images or comments or that allow for anonymity.

Video Conferencing

- **Video conferencing meetings should be run on church owned accounts (not the individual leader's personal account).**
- When meetings are run online through video conferencing platforms the same principles that apply to safe ministry in person will largely apply online. Two or more leaders should always be present during the meeting and where that is not possible the meeting should be recorded.

- As in the face to face gathering children and youth need to be supervised by responsible leaders during online meetings. Disabling private chat functions and ensuring a leader is regularly checking in on any small group breakout rooms (or the like) will ensure that participants are not able to engage in inappropriate communication or conduct during the gathering.

For more detailed [guidelines](#) and [permission note](#) templates go to <https://safeministry.org.au>

2.4.10. Photographs and videos

Leaders should not take photos of children or youth without parental consent and should only use photos in accordance with the purposes for which that consent was given.

Do not photograph any child or youth who has asked not to be photographed.

Photos of children and youth should focus on small groups rather than individuals:

- Do not identify in writing the people in the photograph, eg tagging on social media.
- All children must be appropriately dressed when photographed (e.g. not in swimsuits or pyjamas).

Embarrassing or offensive photos or videos must not be either taken or shared.

Parental permission must be sought before posting photographs or videos of children and youth online. Privacy is of utmost importance and care should be taken to protect children and youth from having their personal information being displayed on a social networking site or church website.

Generally, videos should only be used to showcase or advertise ministry-related events and activities.

When video of services or activities are distributed or streamed on the web or via other broadcast media, signs should be posted that indicate the service is being or will be broadcast.

If you engage a volunteer to take official photographs at a church event it should be clearly stated in writing the role and tasks of the photographer and that in undertaking these tasks the photographer assigns the rights of copyright in the photos to the wardens and minister to hold on behalf of the parish. This will prevent the photographs from being used in other publications and contexts without proper consent.

2.4.11. Meeting outside programmed events

Guidelines for ministering to Year 6 and under

It is not appropriate for leaders to meet up with children socially, unless it is in the context of socialising with the child's family or with parental permission.

Guidelines for ministering to Years 7-9

It is not appropriate for a youth leader to meet socially with youth in Years 7-9 without written or verbal permission from parents and without discussing it with the Head of the Youth Ministry (or ministry supervisor). This type of meeting is best done in groups rather than one-to-one, and should be with youth of the same gender.

Guidelines for ministering to Years 10-12

Leaders may choose to meet casually with mixed groups of youth in Years 10-12 or in one-to-one meetings with members of the same gender. Any meetings should be in a public place and parents and the supervisor of the ministry should be aware of this contact outside of programmed events, including the location, duration and reason for the meeting. If a leader is proposing to do this, they must obtain parental permission and discuss it with the Head of Youth Ministry (or ministry supervisor) first.

For more detailed information and age specific guidelines concerning the matters raised in (h)-(k) above you can refer to the Social Contact Policy at <https://safeministry.org.au/resource-docs/>.

2.5. Age-specific guidelines for ministering to children

In addition to the general principles and guidelines set out in 2.1-2.4 above, the Safe Ministry Guidelines document for specific age groups and ministry activities is available at <https://safeministry.org.au/resource-docs/>. It covers the following topics:

- Ministry with 0-5 year olds
- Playtime/toddler groups
- Kids Club
- Sunday Children's Ministry
- Camping
- Youth Group
- Offsite activities
- Holiday clubs and activities



Chapter 3: Reporting abuse

3.1. Reporting Obligations regarding Child Abuse

Since the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse the laws in NSW have been strengthened in a number of ways to ensure that child abuse is reported to the relevant authorities.

It is now a criminal offence for any adult in NSW who “*knows, believes or reasonably ought to know*” that a child has been physically or sexually abused to conceal such abuse by failing to report it to the authorities, subject to certain reasonable excuses (*Crimes Act 1900*). For more information concerning changes to the NSW Crimes Act please refer to the [parish circular](#) on the Safe Ministry website.

In addition to the criminal law there are two legislative schemes in NSW that also place obligations upon churches and/or church workers to report suspected child abuse or certain types of alleged conduct to the authorities - the mandatory reporting obligations under *Children and Young Person’s (Care and Protection) Act 1998* and the Reportable Conduct Scheme under the *Children’s Guardian Act 2019*.

These two schemes aim to keep children safe, and we have obligations under both. The Mandatory Reporter scheme has a focus on reporting current concerns for the safety and welfare of children. The Reportable Conduct scheme has a focus on ensuring the suitability of leaders to work with children by addressing any risks that a leader may pose on the basis of *current or past conduct*.

3.1.1. Mandatory Reporting - Children and Young Person’s (Care and Protection) Act 1998

Anyone who suspects, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is at risk of significant harm must report it to the relevant authorities.

Any child abuse that a minister or leader becomes aware of must be reported to the relevant authorities. A person may become aware of abuse because they have observed indicators of abuse, another person has informed them of their concerns for a child or a child has disclosed to them that they are being abused.

In NSW persons in religious ministry or persons providing religion based activities to children (0-18 yrs) are mandatory reporters, therefore any church worker (whether paid or voluntary) has a legal obligation to report, as soon as practicable, to the Department of Communities

and Justice (DCJ) the name of a child if there are reasonable grounds to suspect the child is at risk of significant harm.

A child or young person is “at risk of significant harm” if current concerns exist for the safety, welfare or well-being of the child or young person because of the presence, to a significant extent, of any one or more of the following circumstances:

- a. the child or young person’s basic physical or psychological needs are not being met (neglect) or are at risk of not being met,
- b. the parents or other caregivers have not arranged and are unable or unwilling to arrange for the child or young person to receive necessary medical care,
- c. in the case of a child or young person who is required to attend school in accordance with the *Education Act 1990*—the parents or other caregivers have not arranged and are unable or unwilling to arrange for the child or young person to receive an education in accordance with that Act,
- d. the child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill-treated,
- e. the child or young person is living in a household where there have been incidents of domestic violence and, as a consequence, the child or young person is at risk of serious physical or psychological harm, (domestic and family violence)
- f. a parent or other caregiver has behaved in such a way towards the child or young person that the child or young person has suffered or is at risk of suffering serious psychological harm, (emotional abuse)
- g. the child was the subject of a pre-natal report and the birth mother of the child did not engage successfully with support services to eliminate, or minimise to the lowest level reasonably practical, the risk factors that gave rise to the report.

It is mandatory to make a report if the child is 0 to 15 and at risk of significant harm. It’s not mandatory to make a report if it is an unborn child, or a young person aged 16 to 17.

Mandatory Reporter Guide

This guide can be used when you observe indicators of abuse or receive a disclosure of abuse to determine if a report should be made.

The Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) has an online tool known as the [Mandatory Reporter Guide](#) (MRG) that anyone can use to help them assess whether a child

is suspected to be at Risk of Significant Harm (ROSH) and to make a ROSH report. In any situation where you suspect a child may be at risk of significant harm and a report to DCJ may be required you are encouraged to use the MRG. The MRG leads the user through a series of questions and at the end generates a decision report outlining what to do next and can even assist the person to create an electronic report.

There are also a number of helpful articles and resources on the [DCJ website](#) that can assist mandatory reporters with topics such as:

- Deciding to make a report and using the MRG;
- Information needed to make a report; and
- Informing the family of a report.

3.1.2. Reportable Conduct- Children’s Guardian Act 2019

The Reportable Conduct Scheme requires religious bodies to report to the NSW Office of the Children’s Guardian (OCG):

- Certain criminal convictions; or
- Allegations of certain types of conduct concerning a person who holds, or is required to hold, a Working with Children Check clearance for the purpose of engagement with the religious body. This means any leaders or church workers who are engaged in ministry to children.

There are strict timeframes for reporting. Notice of an allegation must be reported to the NSW OCG by the “head” of the religious body within 7 days of it becoming known and an investigation report (or interim report, if the investigation is not complete) must be lodged with the NSW OCG after a further 30 calendar days.

Conduct that is Reportable.

According to section 20 of the *Children’s Guardian Act 2019*, “reportable conduct” means the following conduct, whether or not a criminal proceeding in relation to the conduct has been commenced or concluded:

- a. A sexual offence committed against or within the presence of a child;
- b. Sexual misconduct towards or in the presence of a child;
- c. Ill-treatment of a child;

- d. Neglect of a child;
- e. An assault against a child;
- f. An offence under section 43B or 316A of the *Crimes Act 1900* (Note: these sections refer to the criminal offences concerning failing to report abuse referenced above); or
- g. Behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

A “*reportable conviction*” is a criminal conviction or a finding of guilt from a court (even if it does not lead to conviction) of an offence involving reportable conduct.

Conduct that occurred outside the church context.

Religious bodies must report allegations of reportable conduct and convictions even if the conduct or conviction is not connected to the activities of the church or the exercise of the person’s role in the organisation. However the person must be a current church worker to trigger the reporting obligation. Further definitions and explanation of what constitutes reportable conduct can be found in the *Children’s Guardian Act 2019*.

Obligations under the Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Act imposes a legal obligation upon the head of the religious body to report relevant allegations and convictions to the NSW OCG within the stipulated timeframes. Employees (including volunteers) of the religious body also have a corresponding obligation to report their knowledge of any relevant allegations and convictions to the “head” of the religious body.

The Act defines “head” as being the chief executive officer or principal officer, however described. In our context this is the Rector (Parish) and the Archbishop (Diocese). While the identity of the head is important for determining who has reporting obligations under the Act, in practice all reportable allegations and convictions are investigated and dealt with by the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry (ODSM).

If you become aware of an allegation of conduct or a conviction that you think might be reportable you should report this to your senior minister, and then together contact the ODSM immediately for further advice and so that the matter can be dealt with as soon as possible.

Parishes should report relevant allegations and convictions to the ODSM who will deal with the NSW OCG on behalf of the head of the religious body and conduct an investigation when required.

3.2. Handling Disclosures of Child Abuse

If a child discloses abuse to someone, that person should:

- listen to their story,
- comfort the child if they are distressed,
- let the child know that they are glad they told them and that they did the right thing, and
- let the child know they are going to get help about what to do next and will get back to them.

Bear in mind that what may seem incredible could be true. Offenders may be cunning, secret and not immediately or obviously identifiable.

As soon as possible after the disclosure, the person to whom the disclosure was made must:

- a. write down the details of what was said, and
- b. report the information to the appropriate authorities.

a. **WRITE DOWN the details of what was said including details such as:**

- » *Who made the disclosure*
- » *Date, time and place of the disclosure*
- » *What the child said and any grounds for forming the belief that the abuse has occurred*
- » *What was said by the person to whom the disclosure was made*

The person to whom the disclosure was made should keep to the facts about what was said and refrain from expressing their opinion. This document must be signed and dated and kept in a secure place as it could be subpoenaed in court proceedings.

There is a sample reporting form available at <https://safeministry.org.au>.

For information about safe storage of documents go to <https://safeministry.org.au/safe->

[ministry-records/](#)

Confidentiality

Any suspicion, knowledge or disclosure of abuse must be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Apart from reporting it to the relevant authorities, the information must not ordinarily be shared with anyone else. However it is appropriate and advisable to share the disclosure with your senior minister (unless of course the allegations are made about the senior minister).

b. REPORT the information to the appropriate authorities

REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND DISCLOSURES

Issue or concern	Report to:
General Suspicions	<p>Head ministry leader – Church</p> <p>Principal – School</p>
Child or young person currently at risk of significant harm including where they are showing suicidal or self-harming behaviours.	<p>DCJ – Child Protection Helpline 132 111 If possible discuss with your head ministry leader or Senior Minister* first and use the Mandatory Reporter Guide.</p> <p>Police Contact the police first if the situation requires emergency assistance.</p> <p>Office of the Director of Safe Ministry Contact the ODSM where the alleged perpetrator is a church worker. **</p>
Knowledge of relevant criminal offences or possible allegations of reportable conduct	<p>Police</p> <p>Office of the Director of Safe Ministry (regarding a church worker)</p>
Child abuse by a church worker**	<p>Senior minister*/church worker’s employer</p> <p>Anglican Abuse Report line (ODSM) (1800 774 945)</p> <p>Police</p>

Contact the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry if you are unsure of what to do in any circumstance or if you are concerned that making a report would put a person's safety in jeopardy or where an allegation is regarding the senior minister.

In an emergency call 000.

**Do not report to the senior minister if the allegation is regarding the senior minister*

***A church worker includes a minister, any ministry volunteer or leader (e.g. Sunday School teacher, youth group leader, SRE teacher, organist, etc), warden, parish councillor, parish Synod representative.*

The person to whom a disclosure is made should not undertake an investigation and should not disclose the allegations to the alleged offender at this initial stage.

3.3. Reporting adult abuse and sexual misconduct

Anyone who suspects that a church worker is engaging in sexual misconduct, abusive behaviour towards another adult or conduct that constitutes a serious breach of Faithfulness in Service should report it to the appropriate authorities. Similarly, any criminal conduct or threat of harm should be reported.

Confidentiality

Any suspicion, knowledge or disclosure of abuse must be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Apart from reporting it to the relevant authorities, the information must not ordinarily be shared with anyone else.

REPORTING SUSPECTED ADULT ABUSE AND DISCLOSURES

Issue or concern	Report to:
Abuse of an adult by a church worker**	<p>Senior minister*</p> <p>Police – where a criminal offence has been committed (eg. sexual assault) If no criminal offence has been committed or the victim does not want it reported contact the Abuse Report Line for further assistance.</p> <p>Anglican Abuse Report line (ODSM) (1800 774 945)</p>
Criminal conduct	<p>Police</p> <p>Office of the Director of Safe Ministry (regarding a church worker)**</p>
Threat of harm to self or others	<p>Police, Ambulance (000)</p> <p>Mental health service (1800 011 511) (as required)</p>
Other unacceptable conduct by a church worker** (refer to the code of conduct)	<p>Ministry team leader</p> <p>Senior minister*</p>

Contact the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry if you are unsure of what to do in any circumstance or if you are concerned that making a report would put a person's safety in jeopardy or where an allegation is regarding the senior minister.

In an emergency call 000.

**Do not report to the senior minister if the allegation is regarding the senior minister*

***A church worker includes a minister, any ministry volunteer or leader (eg, Sunday School teacher, youth group leader, SRE teacher, organist, etc), warden, parish councillor, parish Synod representative.*

The person to whom a disclosure is made should not undertake an investigation and should not disclose the allegations to the alleged offender at this initial stage.

3.4. After a report is made

Confidentiality

Any suspicion, knowledge or disclosure of abuse must be treated with the utmost confidentiality. Apart from reporting it to the relevant authorities, the information must not ordinarily be shared with anyone else.

Investigations by the relevant authority

The church or the leader's responsibility is to report any suspicion, knowledge or disclosure of abuse to the relevant authority. It is the responsibility of the relevant authority to carry out any investigation that may be required.

In some cases, a report will lead to an investigation by the Police or the Department of Communities and Justice or the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry and the matter will be taken out of the hands of the parish. In other cases, there may be no action taken by the relevant authority (for example, because the complainant does not want to go through a criminal trial) and the parish will need to determine its response to the matter. In both cases, the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry should always be consulted on how to proceed. For example, to consider if and when to disclose the allegation/report to the alleged offender.

Pastoral care

A victim of abuse may require immediate specialist counselling or other support. When a report is made to the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry, the ODSM Chaplain can provide advice on care for victims and their families. Victims often need ongoing contact and support, and the senior minister should ensure that an appropriate person is appointed to follow up with them. Other members of the parish may also need specialist support. Trained Parish Support Teams are available to assist through the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry.

If a leader informs the senior minister that a child has disclosed abuse to them, the senior minister should make sure that the above steps are taken with respect to the handling of the disclosure and reporting the abuse. He should also ensure that the leader is appropriately cared for and supported. The leader may need to debrief about how the experience has affected them.

Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme

A person who has experienced sexual abuse from a leader in the parish context in the Sydney Diocese may be able to access assistance through the Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme.

The Diocese is committed to responding appropriately to allegations of child abuse or sexual misconduct by any church worker. Persons making allegations of child abuse or sexual misconduct are entitled to a compassionate and timely response. The Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme is designed to enable those who have suffered abuse in the church context to receive appropriate pastoral care and financial assistance.

Further information is provided in the [Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme booklets](#) available from the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry (<https://safeministry.org.au>). Alternatively, the person may contact the Anglican Abuse Report Line (1800 774 945).



Chapter 4: Guidelines for parishes regarding persons of concern

The Anglican Church in the Diocese of Sydney is committed to actively ensuring that every person attending the church is safe. As far as possible, all people should be welcome to be a part of the church, including any referred to as **persons of concern (POC)**. A POC is a person who has been convicted, accused, is reasonably suspected of child abuse or sexual abuse of an adult or some other violent or concerning conduct (including grooming).

When considering how to balance these concerns, a parish or church entity must have the protection of children and other vulnerable persons from abuse as its priority. The POC also needs protection from false allegations and from the opportunity to commit offences. The competing issues that this policy seeks to address can be summarised under the following headings:

- **Reconciliation**

The church should be a community of grace and forgiveness and our usual approach is not to exclude but to welcome. We should acknowledge that reconciliation with God is possible for those who have committed past offences and who are repentant and consider how they might be able to participate in the life of the church.

- **Protection**

A more significant concern however is to ensure that the church community protects the vulnerable. This policy seeks to ensure that the participation of a POC only occurs where it will not compromise the safety of people in the parish or lead to an increased risk of people being abused.

- **Responsibility**

It is not only the church that must take responsibility to provide proper safeguards but also the POC themselves. The POC must take responsibility for their past actions and recognise and take responsibility for the consequences. Even though there may be reconciliation and forgiveness with God for past sin, where that sin was of a serious sexual nature it will have ongoing consequences.

When a POC participates in the life of the parish, the balancing of these competing concerns raises complex issues which may not be appreciated by the POC, or the parish. It is essential that the Diocese, through the Director of Safe Ministry and the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry (ODSM), is involved in decisions regarding the participation of a POC in the life of the parish. This will help ensure that people in the parish are protected from risk of harm.

A POC may take some time to fully realise the implications of their actions or even to realise that their actions or past history means that they are a POC. This can be the case particularly

when the conduct occurred many years ago, and possibly during a time when child protection practices in the church and in the community were in their infancy. If hasty assurance of restoration or reconciliation is offered before the POC has come to fully understand the implications of their past conduct and take responsibility for it, there is the risk that proper boundaries will not be set around the POC.

When proper boundaries are not set it can leave the POC without accountability or protection from himself or herself. The consequences of an offence, (no matter how long ago it occurred) and the potential for ongoing risk and future offence must be borne in mind together with the need to give an all-encompassing protection to church members.

Given the priority of the protection of children and other vulnerable persons, it is a necessary safeguard to impose restrictions on a person accused or suspected of child abuse or sexual offences, despite the presumption of innocence at criminal law. If a level of certainty emerges that any accusation is false, vexatious or misconceived, the restrictions may be lifted, depending on the seriousness of the allegations and the advice of the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry. The NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, through the Working with Children Check (WWCC), will also give guidance and direction on the suitability of a person to work with children if it has the relevant information concerning the allegations or criminal charges.

A person who has been convicted of a child abuse offence or a sexual offence (and indeed any *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* Schedule 2 offence), will automatically be barred from obtaining a WWCC clearance. Those who are unable to obtain a WWCC clearance are prevented by law from being in any child-related position. However, these persons may still be members of a congregation. Processes must be put in place to ensure that children and vulnerable people are protected. These persons must have clear boundaries as to where they can go and what they can do in the church context and they must be supervised and held accountable.

Similarly, persons accused or suspected of child abuse, even if not convicted, need clear boundaries as to where they can go and what they can do in the church context. They too must be supervised and held accountable.

The accountability and protection tool used in the Sydney Diocese to facilitate a POC's participation in the life of a parish is called a "Safety Plan". A Safety Plan is a formal written agreement prepared by the parish in consultation with the ODSM that sets out the obligations of both the POC and the parish. For example it will specify which services or activities the POC is permitted to attend and which they are not, as well as establish a system for supervision and accountability. Each Safety Plan will be different depending on the individual POC and the specific circumstances in the Parish. Every Safety Plan must comply with the

requirements of this chapter and a standard Safety Plan has been prepared to assist parishes in consultation with the PSU (available on the [Safe Ministry website](#)). Once a Safety Plan is signed by the POC the Rector and the church wardens it must be submitted to the ODSM for inclusion on the Safety Plan register maintained by the ODSM and reviewed annually.

The seven step process for developing a safety plan

This seven step process must be undertaken in consultation with the Director of Safe Ministry, especially when it comes to steps 3, 4 and 5.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY POCs - Identifying persons who are potentially a risk

The first step is to identify any person/s who may pose a risk to the safety of children and vulnerable persons in the parish or ministry context. The ODSM should be contacted and consulted at the initial stages of identifying a POC so that advice, assistance and oversight can be provided throughout the process.

A Person of Concern includes:

- A person who has pleaded guilty to, has been convicted of, or has admitted to having committed, a sexual criminal offence; or
- A person who is currently charged with a sexual criminal offence; or
- A person who has been disciplined or had other action taken against them under a disciplinary or professional standards process of the church because of sexual misconduct, or who has been refused ordination, employment or appointment in the church because of an adverse risk assessment arising from sexual misconduct; or
- A person against whom allegations of sexual misconduct are currently being dealt with under a disciplinary or professional standards process of the church; or
- A person who, as a result of sexual misconduct, has received an adverse risk assessment from a professional with appropriate qualifications and experience in accordance with the requirements of the ODSM or another church or a statutory authority; or
- A person who has received or is receiving treatment for disordered sexual behaviour.

The sources of information that may identify someone as a POC can be:

- the person themselves,
- friends or relatives of the person,
- a victim or a person who makes an allegation,
- friends or relatives of a victim or person who makes an allegation,
- public sources such as newspapers, other media or court reports,
- Police, Parole Boards, Department of Communities and Justice or Department of Corrective Services,
- private information from third parties,
- records kept by the Office of the Director of Safe Ministry,
- previous parishes or “employers” of the offender or suspect,
- predecessor senior ministers or other members of church staff,
- Responses given in a Safe Ministry Check.

All sources of information regarding a possible POC need to be carefully checked and considered. No action should be based simply on rumour or innuendo. Inevitably, checking will require communication with the POC at some point in time. The ODSM has a database which contains information on many POCs. Upon enquiry being made by a parish and subject to the appropriate exercise of confidentiality and transparency, this information can be given to the parish. The POC will be informed that this information has been provided.

STEP 2: BE PROACTIVE – Take action where a possible POC has been identified

The responsibility for keeping children and vulnerable people safe in our Diocese is shared by various individuals, office holders and organisations, each with their own role or part to play in the process. It is important that appropriate communication is able to occur to ensure safe ministry compliance. Communication and cooperation needs to occur between the parish, the ODSM and the Regional Bishop.

At a diocesan level the Archbishop licenses clergy and authorises lay ministers. He is responsible for ensuring that they are suitable persons to be licensed. He can remove them only after due process and for specified and proved causes.

In the parish the senior minister has the power to appoint and remove almost all leaders and

office-holders in the congregation. The wardens and the parish council can consult with him as he carries out these responsibilities.

The senior minister is responsible at the parish level, in consultation with the wardens and the parish council, for ensuring that POCs are supervised and held accountable. He and his delegates must keep their eyes and ears open for any POCs. They must take responsibility for ensuring that enquiries are made of the ODSM and other sources if they have a concern.

The senior minister and wardens need to be familiar with this chapter of the Blueprint Document so that they can be alert to any possible POCs and know how to manage such persons appropriately.

For its part the ODSM will endeavour to ensure that information about a known POC is communicated to the relevant parish and in particular to a newly appointed senior minister. The ODSM is a resource to advise and support the senior minister, wardens and parish council in the discharge of their responsibilities. If a potential POC has been identified in a parish the next step is to notify and communicate with the ODSM so that a proper assessment of the POC can occur. In turn if the ODSM or the Regional Bishop have information about a POC they will be proactive in communicating with the parish if it becomes clear that such a person is attending a local church or has relocated to a new parish or region.

STEP 3: ASSESS RISK - The unacceptable risk test

No-one should be permitted to work with children or vulnerable people if there is an unacceptable risk that abuse may occur.

As noted above, those convicted of sex offences against children are prohibited by law from working with children. In addition to the legal requirements under the Working with Children legislation there are also criminal law considerations to be mindful of. In 2018 the NSW Government made changes to the *Crimes Act 1900* designed to strengthen child sexual abuse laws, which included the addition of a new offence (s 43B of the Act) for a “failure to reduce or remove the risk of a child becoming a victim of child abuse”. It is now an offence for a position holder, who works for an organisation that engages child related workers, to fail to reduce or remove the risk of child abuse occurring by failing to remove someone who poses a risk to children from a position within that organisation.

Although it is not possible to provide an exhaustive list of situations which may constitute an offence under s 43B one obvious example could include a situation where a church has

identified a POC and yet fails to take steps to properly manage the involvement of such a person in the parish so as to ensure the safety of children. It is crucial therefore that a proper risk assessment is undertaken at an early stage and appropriate steps are taken to protect all involved.

In cases where there is no criminal conviction there will ordinarily be an unacceptable risk in circumstances where, in relation to child sexual abuse or criminal sexual misconduct, there is a criminal charge which has yet to be dealt with, an accusation, allegation or complaint currently under consideration or an admission by the person concerned.

The situation is more complex when there have merely been allegations in the past which have not been the subject of findings or a determination, including situations where charges have been dropped or a person acquitted.

Allegations of physical or emotional abuse of children or vulnerable people in the past also need to be evaluated with awareness of the context. The assessment of risk in such a case will depend upon the source of the allegation, an evaluation of its seriousness, the level of investigation of the allegation and what the outcomes were. Where there has been more than one unrelated complaint, there is reason for extra caution.

The process of risk assessment should always be done in consultation with the ODSM. The ODSM must always be consulted before anyone about whom concerns have been raised is allowed to volunteer to help in a ministry involving children or youth. This also includes leading up front ministries in the church including service leading, bible reading, welcoming, leading prayers and leading a bible study or other small group.

A risk assessment may take into consideration a number of factors:

- whether there has been a finding about an allegation of abuse,
- the nature of any position (including non-child related position) in which the POC might be employed or engaged,
- the type of contact that any position has with children or vulnerable people,
- the supervision which will be available,
- the nature and frequency of the event or events from which the concerns initially arose,
- whether there have been any other allegations or concerns about the person's conduct in relation to children or vulnerable people,

- the circumstances in which an Apprehended Violence Order might have been taken out,
- requirements and conditions laid down in bail or parole orders,
- presence of victims in the congregation or parish and the effect that the presence of the POC may have on those victims including the possibility that the POC needs to be asked to attend a different parish or congregation,
- the level of understanding and willingness of the POC to cooperate regarding the requirement for the church to protect children and other vulnerable people, and
- any additional information which may be relevant in assessing risk.

A person who has either admitted to, or been found to have perpetrated, sexual or other abuse and who is repentant for what they have done in the past will understand the need for child protection or other safety measures. Caution is required where a person claims to be repentant yet fails to acknowledge the need for such requirements.

STEP 4: SET BOUNDARIES

If a POC has been identified and assessed by the ODSM and found to pose a risk the next step is to set appropriate boundaries to ensure that children and vulnerable people are safe and the risk of harm is minimised. Again this step in the process must be conducted in consultation with the ODSM.

A common characteristic of POCs is their failure to understand why their movements or activities in a church context should in any way be constrained. They will often minimise their past and tend to be overly optimistic about their future. Sometimes they will excuse the past behaviour as a youthful indiscretion or as arising from particular circumstances that are no longer present in their lives. A POC may refer to their “blameless” track record since the earlier conduct insisting that to impose boundaries or restrictions on their involvement in the life of the church is unforgiving and lacking in grace. Whatever the situation it is important to work with them pastorally to encourage them to take responsibility for the consequences of their past conduct and to see the mutual benefit in keeping them away from contact or potential contact with children or vulnerable people. Benefits include that children and vulnerable people will be safe, parents and the congregation will have confidence that children are protected and the POC will be protected from any opportunity to offend and the possibility of false allegations. Sometimes a person will require the assistance of a trained psychologist or other professional to help them to come to a proper understanding of the implications of their past conduct. It may be that this step is required prior to any further discussion or consideration of their level of involvement in the life of the church. In such

circumstances the POC may need to take time out from attending church altogether while they work through the issues.

Setting appropriate boundaries

If a POC represents an unacceptable risk to the safety of children or vulnerable people, he or she must not be involved in any positions of leadership or authority. He or she must not participate in any “up-front” activity including, but not limited to, greeting visitors at the door, taking up the collection, reading lessons, leading a bible study or other small group or leading prayers. To allow such activity can suggest apparent endorsement of the POC by the parish and creates a risk to children or other vulnerable people. Any variation to this can only be with the concurrence of the Director of Safe Ministry. Such cases are rare and would also involve a lengthy period of treatment, advice from a treating practitioner, professional advisors, and the diocesan insurer if necessary.

The setting of boundaries for the POC should include a clear written statement of:

- which services and activities he or she may and may not attend (in extreme cases of high risk, consideration should be given to complete exclusion from parish activities altogether),
- the buildings and rooms into which the POC may go,
- the times the POC can be on church premises,
- who the POC may associate with at church, and
- the supervision and accountability which has been put in place.

Once appropriate boundaries have been determined they are written into the Safety Plan. The Safety Plan should also include:

- acknowledgement of past conduct or allegations and consequent risk,
- acknowledgement of the need for others to be informed of the risk, such as key leaders or parents if necessary,
- undertaking to participate in treatment,
- definition of boundaries,
- undertaking to abide by boundaries,
- nomination of mentor/s,

- statement (if relevant) as to the relationship between this Safety Plan and any supervision by the Probation and Parole Service,
- agreement to meet regularly with mentors,
- acknowledgment of consequences of failure to comply i.e. exclusion,
- undertaking to notify of attendance at or move to another parish,
- permission from the POC for information to be passed on to the ODSM and to another parish in the case of transfer, and
- willingness to participate in reasonable restorative justice processes or counselling which may aid the healing of victims.

When preparing the Safety Plan it is important to note that the Safety Plan template available on the Safe Ministry website is not a “one size fits all” document. It is not intended to be printed out and the blanks filled in nor should a POC ever be presented with a blank copy of the template and asked to insert their information. Rather, the Senior Minister, in consultation with the ODSM needs to work on a draft of the document that reflects the individual circumstances of both the POC and the Parish prior to it being given to the POC. After this a process of dialogue with the POC can commence. Ultimately it is not up to the POC to determine the contents of the document, and the paramount consideration must always be the safety of children and vulnerable people. The process will involve careful consideration of appropriate conditions and boundaries based on all the relevant information.

In cases where the POC refuses to co-operate and sign a Safety Plan, the diocesan insurer will be informed and the person will still be subject to the conditions and boundaries of the Safety Plan and any breaches will result in exclusion from the parish. In some rare cases rather than exclusion from the parish it may be appropriate for the POC to be provided with a letter setting out boundaries, stating the consequences of a breach, identifying mentors and offering support in place of a signed Safety Plan. A copy of such a letter should also be provided to the ODSM. Again this course of action will need to be discussed in consultation with the ODSM and depending on the individual circumstances consideration given to whether it is appropriate for the POC to continue in the parish at all.

STEP 5: SUPERVISE/MENTOR

Once appropriate boundaries have been established and agreed to the POC must be regularly monitored and supervised. The parish will need to appoint mentors and/or form a Parish Accountability Group to assist with this process.

There should preferably be at least two people who undertake the task of being mentors. Whilst the senior minister can undertake the task, it is preferable to have other people involved with the senior minister acting as their supervisor.

Mentors need to:

- be recognised as appropriately gifted, experienced and respected congregation or parish leaders,
- understand the nature of offenders (refer Faithfulness in Service 5.17),
- understand the nature of the conduct for which the safety plan is required,
- understand the demanding and sometimes onerous nature of the task,
- be prepared and available to meet with the POC at least fortnightly,
- attend church services and activities at the same time as the person,
- be of an appropriate gender in relation to the POC, and
- report regularly to the senior minister on the progress of the POC.

It is important for each Parish to assess in consultation with the ODSM whether they have the necessary personnel to provide adequate and appropriate accountability and support structures for any POC wishing to attend the church before entering into a Safety Plan. If the parish cannot realistically commit to long term supervision and support of the POC it may be that such a person will need to worship elsewhere.

If the human resources are available to properly support and supervise the POC the Safety Plan will need to be signed and dated by the POC, the senior minister and the wardens. A copy of the Safety Plan must be provided to the ODSM as soon as possible for inclusion on the ODSM register of Safety Plans.

After the Safety Plan has been entered into it will be necessary to inform key leaders and (only if considered necessary) parents of any perceived risk. There should be sufficient information provided so that it is clear what potential risks are involved. This should be carried out sensitively.

Expressions such as “X is considered to pose a potential risk to children” or “X has agreed to associate only with adults” are preferable to “X is a paedophile”. If possible the consent of the POC should be obtained.

Mentors and other senior leaders, such as wardens, should be aware of the conditions and

boundaries that have been set. There should be a system in place to ensure that the POC is monitored at all times during church services and church activities.

STEP 6: REVIEW of supervision and support

The senior minister must ensure that at least every three months he meets with the POC the mentors and the key leaders to ensure that the boundaries are being adhered to and the POC is coping and continuing in treatment, if required, as well as to get feedback as to any change in the level of risk.

Any re-offending by the POC or failure to comply with the Safety Plan requires immediate action. Steps need to be taken to eliminate the risk posed by the POC, and depending on the circumstances, this may involve exclusion from the Parish and notification to the appropriate authorities (e.g. Police, Department of Communities and Justice and the ODSM). If the level of risk changes there needs to be a careful re-evaluation, re-negotiation and variation of the boundaries and this may require a new Safety Plan to be entered in to.

All Safety Plans are reviewed every 12 months by the Senior Minister in consultation with the wardens and the ODSM will send a reminder to the Parish to ensure the review is conducted.

STEP 7: BE RESPONSIBLE - Inter-parish, diocesan and inter-agency co-operation

Senior ministers must be committed to ensuring that they inform the ODSM of all situations where a POC is a risk. They also need to pass full details of the risk on to any other parish or congregation to which the POC transfers. Further, they are required to pass on to the ODSM information about any transfers or departures.

Ongoing communication with the ODSM needs to occur throughout the process and after boundaries have been set. If the POC leaves the parish this must be communicated to the ODSM and the Regional Bishop. If information is known about the POC's whereabouts or any new church they may be attending the ODSM must be informed.

Likewise, the ODSM will communicate with any new rector appointed to a parish and inform them of any POCs at that parish.

The police (and only the police) have the capacity to apply to the Local Court for orders prohibiting certain offenders who pose a risk to the lives or sexual safety of children from engaging in specified conduct (*Child Protection (Offenders Prohibition Orders) Act 2004*). This process should be considered where arrangements such as those set out above do not work. The Court has to be satisfied that there is reasonable cause to believe, having regard

to the nature and pattern of conduct of the person, that the person poses a risk to the lives or sexual safety of one or more children, or children generally, and that the making of the order will reduce that risk. They must consider a number of factors and hear from the person against whom the orders are proposed to be made.



Chapter 5: Key documents and contact details

5.1. Key documents

Safe Ministry Blueprint documents

- *Safe Ministry Blueprint for Churches*
- *Safe Ministry Blueprint for the Senior Minister*
- *Safe Ministry Blueprint for the Safe Ministry Representative*
- *Safe Ministry Blueprint for the Head of Youth Ministry*
- *Safe Ministry Blueprint for Youth Ministry Leaders*
- *Safe Ministry Blueprint for the Head of Children's Ministry*
- *Safe Ministry Blueprint for Children's Ministry Leaders*
- *Safe Ministry Blueprint for Parents and Church Members*

These documents are accessible from <https://safeministry.org.au/blueprints/>

Faithfulness in Service, 2022

This document is accessible from <https://safeministry.org.au/faithfulness-in-service-code-of-conduct/>

Other helpful resources and information can be found in the following locations:

- <https://safeministry.org.au/resource-docs/>
- <https://safeministry.org.au/pastoral-care-and-assistance-scheme/>
- <https://safeministry.org.au/safety-plans/>
- <https://safeministry.org.au/safe-ministry-representatives/>
- <https://safeministry.org.au/safe-ministry-check-information/>
- <https://safeministry.org.au/safe-ministry-training/>

5.2. Contact details

Office of the Director of Safe Ministry

Website: <https://safeministry.org.au>

Director of Safe Ministry

Phone: (02) 9265 1514

Email: admin@safeministry.org.au

Anglican Abuse Report Line

Phone: 1800 774 945

Email: abusereport@sydney.anglican.asn.au

Feedback

Our aim is to support parishes and church workers to provide care and protection for everyone by building a culture of safe ministry.

Any feedback to help us review and improve is welcome. Please email your feedback to the address below

feedback@safeministry.org.au