

Safe Ministry for the Safe Ministry Representative

Safe Ministry Pathways

Professional Standards Unit 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 church members and leaders take the teaching and leadership of children and young people seriously then we must provide an environment that is safe from any form of harm.

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1. The role of the Safe Ministry Representative

The ultimate responsibility for safe ministry lies with the senior minister (the “Minister”). However he can delegate the day-to-day work of ensuring safe ministry compliance by appointing (with the agreement of the Parish Council) a safe ministry representative. The representative helps the parish to comply with the safe ministry requirements of the Diocese.



2. Who can be a Safe Ministry Representative?

A Safe Ministry Representative must:

- be 21 years or older;
- have completed Safe Ministry training within the last 3 years or within 3 months after their appointment (and every 3 years after that);
- hold a Working With Children Check clearance which has been verified with the Office of the Children’s Guardian;
- 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 mentally ill, 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). And, it helps if 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.

3. Responsibilities of the Safe Ministry Representative

The responsibilities of the Safe Ministry Representative are to:

- a. **ASSIST THE MINISTER** to comply with the child protection screening requirements,
- b. **KEEP RECORDS** of Working With Children Checks and Safe Ministry training,
- c. **MONITOR AND REPORT** on safe ministry systems and practice in the parish, and
- d. **REPORT ANY ABUSE.**

a. ASSIST THE MINISTER

The Minister is responsible for making sure that your parish obeys the law in terms of NSW Working With Children Check (WWCC) requirements. Your role is to assist the Minister in carrying this out.



You must make sure that any and every person engaged in child-related work in your parish either:

- holds a Working With Children Check clearance that has been verified with the Office of the Children's Guardian and is not subject to a bar;
- has a current Working With Children Check application before the Office of the Children's Guardian; or
- is subject to an exemption.

Every person engaged in child-related work in the parish must have a WWCC clearance (subject to some exemptions). This applies to both paid workers and volunteers.

“Child-related work” generally means work involving activities primarily related to children (including - in the case of religious bodies - youth groups, youth camps, teaching children and child care) that involve physical or face-to-face contact with children. However the general meaning is subject to a number of exemptions (including workers who are under 18 years of age) and extensions (including the minister, an assistant minister and a lay minister of a parish as they are deemed to be undertaking child-related work where there are children in a congregation of the parish).

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 years and therefore “child-related work” includes youth ministry activities.

Before the applicant can begin child-related work, you must check that he or she has a WWCC clearance. To do this, you need to log into the parish's account with the Office of the Children's Guardian: <http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/>. You will need to enter the following:

- full name of applicant,
- applicant's date of birth,
- applicant's WWCC clearance number or application number.

If the person is barred, you must immediately advise the Minister who must stop their involvement in all child-related work and notify the Professional Standards Unit that they are barred.

If the person is from interstate or overseas, you should also consider obtaining a criminal record check from that state or country in addition to the WWCC.

See the Working With Children Check appendix at the end of this booklet for further information.

b. KEEP RECORDS

As the Safe Ministry Representative you must keep records of all Working With Children Check clearances and safe ministry training that has been completed by people engaged in child-related work in the parish.

For every person in child-related work, you must keep the following records in a secure location (with a backup copy):



Personal details	Full name	John William Smith
	Date of birth	20/09/1989
	Ministry position	Youth group leader
Working with Children Check	WWCC number	WWC000XXE
	Start date in ministry position	04/02/2013
	Verification date	14/10/2014
	Verification outcome	Cleared
	Expiry date*	01/09/2019
	Paid or volunteer work	Volunteer
Safe Ministry Training	Date Safe Ministry Training or Refresher completed (keep all dates)	10/03/2013
	Date Refresher required*	10/03/2016
	Location of training	Sutherland

* *It is essential that you establish a reliable procedure to remind yourself of impending expiry dates of WWCC clearances and the dates that Refresher training is required, so that you can follow up on those matters with the leaders.*

Each and every person involved in a children’s ministry position must have undertaken Safe Ministry training within the last 3 years, or within 3 months after their appointment. The Safe Ministry Refresher must be completed every three years thereafter. Junior leaders under the age of 16 should complete Safe Ministry Junior training (www.safeministry.org.au)

A “children’s ministry position” means any paid or unpaid position to which a person is appointed by or on behalf of the minister or the wardens that involves activities primarily related to, and physical or face-to-face contact with, children. Examples include Sunday School teachers, youth group leaders, crèche helpers, etc.

There is no need to insist on completion of Safe Ministry training for every person who helps out in a children’s ministry position from time to time. Examples of people who would not ordinarily be expected to undergo training include:

- A teenager who helps the adult leaders of a primary school-age children’s program for a week in the school holidays as a one-off;
- Casual helpers who assist from time to time and do not fulfil a leadership or teaching role in a children’s program;
- Other volunteers who help out with programs for infants and young children (such as playgroups) but who have no program responsibility or teaching role.

Anglican Youthworks runs Safe Ministry training events each year at set times, and will run training on request with a minimum of 10 participants. Alternatively a person can be trained by Youthworks as a Local Safe Ministry Trainer for your church, or a Local Safe Ministry Trainer at a neighbouring parish could be registered as a trainer for your church. That gives your parish the flexibility to do the training at a time that is convenient for you.

Moore Theological College provides safe ministry training to its students, and Ministry Training and Development provides safe ministry training for participants in its program (typically, graduates in their first three years out of College).

The screening and training requirements vary for particular ministry roles and circumstances, and depend on the different levels of risk. The following table sets out the WWCC and safe ministry training requirements for different ministry positions.

Ministry position	WWCC	Safe Ministry training
Creche coordinator	✓	✓
Creche helper	✓	✓
Sunday School coordinator or teacher	✓	✓
Mid-week kids club coordinator or leader	✓	✓
Holiday kids program coordinator or leader	✓	✓
Children's Camp leader	✓	✓
Playgroup coordinator or leader	✓	✓
Playgroup helper (not formally appointed to a leadership position)	✓	✗
Volunteer in children's ministry aged 16 or 17	✗	✓ Unless assisting as a one-off, eg week-long school holidays kids program
Volunteer in children's ministry under the age of 16	✗	✓ Safe Ministry Junior (unless assisting as a one-off, eg week-long school holidays kids program)
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	✓	✗
Volunteer assisting in an emergency	✗ Only if having them help is necessary to prevent an increased risk to the safety of the children and it's not for more than 5 consecutive working days	✗
Parent or close relative of a child, 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	✓
Other member of church staff ministry team	✓	✓
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	✗	✗

The Safe Ministry Representative for your parish must keep records for each leader with details of WWCC clearances and the completion of safe ministry training. And he or she needs to ensure that people are followed up when the time for their renewal is approaching. Unless the requirements are met and continue to be met, a person should not be permitted to continue in children's or youth ministry.

c. MONITOR AND REPORT

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



(i) 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 Minister and Parish Council, you must monitor all basic health and safety issues in order to avoid obvious hazards on church property, particularly in rooms used by infants, preschoolers and primary age children.

Consider particularly the suitability of the space, the safety of the space, and the safety measures in place by asking the following questions. Ideally it is preferable if you are objectively able to tick all the following boxes 'yes'.

CHECKLIST

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 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 to a room?
- Is there a designated area for strollers that are not in use?

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 stacks of chairs)?

First aid and safety measures

- Is there a fire extinguisher and fire blanket accessible and available on-site?
- Is there a well-stocked first aid kit at the activity 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 specific person on-site who is trained in first aid?
- Are all leaders aware of the fire safety and evacuation procedures?

(ii) PROVIDE AN ANNUAL REPORT

You are 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 involved in the activities of the parish. A template report can be found at www.safeministry.org.au.

d. REPORT ABUSE

It is your responsibility to ensure that any abuse that you become aware of is reported to the relevant authorities. You may become aware of abuse because you have observed indicators of abuse, another person has informed you of their concerns for someone or someone has told you they are being abused.



If a child or young person tells you about any abuse, you should –

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

As soon as possible after the disclosure you must

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

(i) WRITE DOWN the details of what was said including such details as:

- who you spoke to,
- date, time and place,
- what you said,
- what the child or young person said, and
- any grounds for forming the belief that abuse has occurred.

Keep to the facts about what was said and don't express your opinion. Be aware that this document must be signed and dated and could be subpoenaed in court proceedings.

(ii) REPORT the information to the appropriate authorities.

REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND DISCLOSURES

Issue or concern	Report to:
General Suspicions	Senior Minister*
Child or young person currently at risk of significant harm	<p>FaCS If possible discuss with your head ministry leader or Senior Minister* first and use the Mandatory Reporters Guide.</p> <p>Police Contact the police first if the situation requires emergency assistance.</p> <p>Professional Standards Unit Contact the PSU where the alleged perpetrator is a church worker.</p>
Knowledge of relevant criminal offences	<p>Police</p> <p>Professional Standards Unit (regarding a church worker)</p>
Child abuse by a church worker**	<p>Senior Minister*/church worker's employer</p> <p>Anglican Abuse Report line (1800 77 49 45)</p> <p>Police</p>

Contact the Professional Standards Unit if you are unsure of what to do in any circumstance or where an allegation is regarding the Senior Minister

* 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, organist, etc), warden, parish councillor, parish Synod representative.

REPORTING SUSPECTED ADULT ABUSE AND DISCLOSURES

Issue or concern	Report to:
Sexual abuse of an adult by a church worker	Senior Minister* Police Anglican Abuse Report line (1800 77 49 45)
Other abusive behaviour by a church worker e.g. physical violence, bullying	Senior Minister* Regional Bishop
Criminal conduct	Police Professional Standards Unit (regarding a church worker)
Threat of harm to self or others	Police, Ambulance, Mental health service (as required)
Other conduct by a church worker** (refer to the code of conduct)	Ministry team leader Senior Minister*

Contact the Professional Standards Unit if you are unsure of what to do in any circumstance or where an allegation is regarding the Senior Minister

* 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, organist, etc), warden, parish councillor, parish Synod representative.

Do not undertake an investigation, and do not disclose the allegations to the alleged offender at this initial stage.

Confidentiality

You must treat any suspicion, knowledge or disclosure of abuse with the utmost confidentiality. Apart from reporting it to the relevant authorities and to your Minister, you must not ordinarily share the information with anyone else.

Pastoral care

A victim of abuse may require immediate specialist counselling or other support. When a report is made to the Professional Standards Unit, the Professional Standards Unit Chaplain can provide advice on care for victims and their families. Victims often need ongoing contact and support and the Minister should ensure that an appropriate person is appointed to follow up with them.

If a leader informs you that a child or young person has disclosed abuse to them, you should make sure that the above steps are taken. You 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.

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4. 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 Professional Standards Unit (www.safeministry.org.au). Alternatively, the person may contact the Anglican Abuse Report Line.

5. What support and resources are available?

The Professional Standards Unit's Safe Ministry Representative Liaison Officer is available to provide support, assistance and training to Safe Ministry Representatives.

Resources including *Faithfulness in Service* and templates for record keeping and reports can be found on the PSU website: www.safeministry.org.au.

Further information regarding Working With Children Checks can be found on the Office of the Children's Guardian website:

<http://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/Working-with-children/working-with-children-check>

6. Contact details

Professional Standards Unit

Website: www.safeministry.org.au

Safe Ministry Representative Liaison Officer

Phone: (02) 9265 1547

Email: safeministry@sydney.anglican.asn.au

Director of the Professional Standards Unit

Phone: (02) 9265 1514

Email: psu@sydney.anglican.asn.au

Anglican Abuse Report Line

Phone: 1800 774 945

Email: abuserreport@sydney.anglican.asn.au



APPENDIX

NSW Working With Children Check

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 (OCG). Anyone intending to work with children in NSW 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" generally means work involving activities primarily related to children (including - in the case of religious bodies - youth groups, youth camps, teaching children and child care) that involve physical or face-to-face contact with children. However the general meaning is subject to a number of exemptions (including workers who are under 18 years of age) and extensions (including the minister, an assistant minister and a lay minister of a parish as they are deemed to be undertaking child-related work where there are children in a congregation of the parish).

A child is defined as a person under the age of 18 years and therefore "child-related work" includes youth ministry activities.

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 OCG 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 www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au, or ring 9286 7219 to apply if internet access is not available.
- Receive their WWCC application number.
- Take the WWCC application number and proof of their identity to a NSW motor registry. There is no fee for volunteers, but if it is a paid position, an \$80 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: www.kidsguardian.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 from the OCG. If an applicant is barred, it is an offence to engage the person in child-related work.

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 you verified them);
- Verification outcome (clearance or bar);
- Expiry date (when the WWCC number expires); and
- Status of the worker (paid or volunteer).

Who is exempt from needing a WWCC?

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 in administrative, clerical, maintenance or ancillary roles not ordinarily involving contact with children for extended periods (such as a parish secretary or grounds-keeper);
- (2) Workers under the age of 18;
- (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 is supervised when children are present;
- (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;
- (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: It is recommended that you do not place too much reliance on the exemptions, and that you do not rely on exemptions (3) and (6) as a matter of course.

You 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.

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 the person is from interstate or overseas, you should also consider obtaining a criminal record check from that state or country in addition to the WWCC. You will need the person's permission in order to do so.

For further information, factsheets and FAQs please visit www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au