

Safe Ministry Blueprint For Churches

Safe Ministry with Children and Other
Vulnerable People

Safe Ministry Blueprints

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 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.

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This document was prepared by the Professional Standards Unit for the Safe Ministry Board with assistance from Anglican Youthworks. This document outlines the requirements of the *Parish Administration Ordinance 2008* 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, or within three months of his licence being issued. He 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 appoint a Safe Ministry Representative.

The Safe Ministry Policy 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.*

The senior minister must, with the agreement of the Parish Council, appoint a Safe Ministry Representative for the parish.

- c. **COMPLY** – The senior minister must make sure the parish complies with its obligations under the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)*.

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)*, namely, the NSW Working With Children Check requirements. The Safe Ministry Representative's job is to assist the senior minister with implementing that compliance.

- d. MEET** – The senior minister must meet regularly with the Safe Ministry Representative on at least an annual basis 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 infants, pre-schoolers and primary age children.
- f. REPORT** – Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm, the senior minister must report his suspicions to the appropriate authorities.
- g. FULFIL** – The senior minister must fulfil such other responsibilities as are required by chapter 5 of *Faithfulness in Service* in relation to standards for personal behaviour, the practice of pastoral ministry and ensuring the safety of children in all areas of parish life. Faithfulness in Service is available at www.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). 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.

a. 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 or within three months after their appointment (and every three 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.

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 www.safeministry.org.au.

b. 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.

Where a Safe Ministry Representative has not, without just cause, satisfactorily completed Safe Ministry training within the last three years or within three months after their appointment, their appointment is revoked.

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.

c. Duties of the Safe Ministry Representative

The responsibilities of the Safe Ministry Representative are to:

- i. ASSIST THE SENIOR MINISTER** to comply with the child protection screening requirements,
- ii. KEEP RECORDS** of Working With Children Checks and Safe Ministry training,
- 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 law in terms of NSW Working With Children Check (WWCC) requirements. The Safe Ministry Representative's role is to assist the senior minister in carrying this out. The legal requirements are outlined further below.

ii. KEEP RECORDS

The Safe Ministry Representative must keep records of all WWCC 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, the Safe Ministry Representative 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	WWC000XXXE
	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 the Safe Ministry Representative establish a reliable procedure to remind themselves of impending expiry dates of WWCC clearances and the dates that Refresher training is required so that they can follow up on those matters with the leaders.

A template for record-keeping can be found at www.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 infants, pre-schoolers and primary age children.

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

iv. REPORT ANY 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.

d. Support and resources for Safe Ministry Representatives

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

a. 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 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 has had not undergone a WWCC, but has a record that would have resulted in a bar had the WWCC been undertaken.

b. Diocesan requirements

A person who wishes to volunteer or work in a **children's ministry position** must usually:

- 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 www.safeministry.org.au),
- Undertake Safe Ministry training within three months of starting the children's ministry position, followed by a Refresher course every three years, and
- Read, understand, and comply with Faithfulness in Service (available at www.safeministry.org.au).

In addition, it is recommended that all volunteers are a member of a parish for at least 6 months before entering into a children's ministry position in that parish. This provides time for a person's character and suitability for a children's ministry position to be observed.

A **children's ministry position** means any paid or unpaid position to which a person is appointed by or on behalf of the senior minister or the wardens that involves activities primarily related to, and physical or face-to-face contact with, children.

Because a child is defined as anyone under the age of 18, a children's ministry position includes youth ministry roles. Examples of children's ministry positions include crèche leaders, Sunday School leaders and youth group leaders.

In our parish system, the senior minister has the ultimate responsibility for appointing people to children's ministry positions, even though in practice that responsibility is often delegated to other leaders.

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 requirements for screening and training for different ministry positions.

Ministry position	WWCC	Formal application	Safe Ministry training
Creche coordinator	✓	✓	✓
Creche helper	✓	At the discretion of the senior minister	✓
Sunday School coordinator or teacher	✓	✓	✓
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)	✓	✗	✗
Volunteer in children's ministry aged 16 or 17	✗	At the discretion of the senior minister	✓ unless assisting as a one-off, eg week-long school holidays kids program
Volunteer in children's ministry under the age of 16	✗	At the discretion of the senior minister	✓ 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	✓	Only required if they have joined the church in the last three years or are not otherwise well known to the church leadership.	✗
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 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	✓
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 the parish must keep records for each leader with details of WWCC clearances and the completion of Safe Ministry training. He or she must also 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. 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 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 senior 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).

If the contact with children is not direct or face-to-face, or the role does not primarily relate to children it will not be child-related work (such as serving morning tea to children after Sunday School, warden, parish councillor).

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 Office of the Children's Guardian and is not subject to a bar,
- have a current Working With Children Check application before the 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 Commission 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 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. 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 Professional Standards Unit 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),
- 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,

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.

- (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,

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).

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.

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.

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, parishes should also consider obtaining a criminal record check from that state or country in addition to the WWCC. A parish will need the person's permission in order to do so.

Further information regarding Working With Children Checks can be found on the Office of the Children's Guardian website: www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au/Working-with-children/working-with-children-check

1.4 Safe Ministry training

Each and every person involved in a **children's ministry position** must have undertaken Safe Ministry training within the last three years, or within three months after their appointment. The Safe Ministry Refresher must be completed every three years thereafter.

In addition, the senior minister and any assistant minister licensed to the parish must have satisfactorily completed Safe Ministry training within the last three years or within three months after their licence is issued and every three years thereafter while their licence continues.

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 senior 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, and
- Other volunteers who help out with programs for infants and young children (such as playgroups) but who have no program responsibility or teaching role.

The table in "1.3 Selection and screening of leaders" gives guidance as to who is required to undertake Safe Ministry training.

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 the parish, or a Local Safe Ministry Trainer at a neighbouring parish could be registered as a trainer for the parish. This provides the flexibility to do the training at a time that is convenient. Further details can be found at www.youthworks.net/safeministry.

Recognition of other recent equivalent alternative training may be approved by the Director of the Professional Standards Unit who may refer the request to the Safe Ministry Board.

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).

If a person has not, without just cause, completed Safe Ministry training, their appointment is revoked.

Senior ministers should take into account the following matters in determining whether there is 'just cause' to waive the requirement to have undertaken the training within the specified timeframe:

- Difficulties that arise in immediately undertaking the training when a person is first appointed, and
- Temporary delays in undertaking training due to short-term unavailability of training, or personal short-term difficulties in attending training.

As the senior minister is the responsible person, specific decisions to waive Safe Ministry training will ultimately reflect on the senior minister.

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 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.

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

- Never abuse children or young people, or cultivate relationships in order to initiate or cloak abuse of children or young people.
- Never be alone with a child or young person away from the presence of other adults.
- Never have children or young people to his or her home or visit children or young people in their home when no other adult is present, and must never meet privately with a child or young person outside of church activities, except with the permission of a parent or guardian.
- Never touch a child or young person in a manner which is inappropriate given their age, gender or cultural background.
- Never help children in ways that involve intimate care if the child is capable of doing it on his or her own (such as, toileting or changing clothes).

- Never physically discipline a child or young person.
- Never make drugs, alcohol or cigarettes available to children or youth.
- Never develop inappropriate 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 a child or young person that is secretive (whether physical or through electronic media or in any other way).
- Never become romantically involved with any person under the age of 18 in the youth or children's ministry.

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 behaviors through a process of grooming. Grooming is often characterized 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 must always be more than one leader present, and that no opportunities present themselves for a 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.

2.3 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 as 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 must always be two leaders aged 18 years or over present for all children's and youth ministry events.

Never Alone

Leaders must 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.

a. 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 by asking the following questions. Ideally it is preferable to be able to tick all the following boxes.

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 in 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 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 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?

b. 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 events would be: crèche and preschoolers 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 16) 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.

c. 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, youtube 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.

d. 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. 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.

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

e. 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 www.safeministry.org.au.

f. 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.

g. 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.

h. 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.

Leaders should not contact children by email, mail, 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)

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.

THE TEN

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.

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.

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
Phonecalls	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 only	For logistical purposes and encouragement
Social networking (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/streaming and chat rooms	X	Never	Never

i. 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 Facebook.
- All children must be appropriately dressed when photographed (eg, 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 is 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.

j. 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.

Guidelines for ministering to Years 7-9

It is never appropriate for a youth leader to meet socially with youth in Years 7-9 without written or verbal permission from parents and 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.

2.4 Age-specific guidelines for ministering to children

a. Crèche (0-2 years)

Health and Safety

Children should never leave the crèche area unless accompanied by the adult responsible for them.

Be aware of issues of hygiene. If a child vomits or soils an area of the crèche, that area should be cleaned and disinfected as soon as possible. Toys and equipment should be cleaned regularly.

Ensure that no furniture or other items could topple or drop onto a child.

Parents

Where parents are readily accessible, they should be asked to change nappies and undertake toileting. If parents are not available, experienced female leaders should carry out these tasks, but always with another child or leader present.

Physical Contact

Very young children are highly dependent on touch for their proper development. This means that in dealing with them, we must be very aware of their needs at particular ages and stages.

Physical contact is primarily for the purpose of assisting or comforting a child for a short period of time. Leaders should not continue physical contact for longer than necessary to achieve this purpose. All physical contact should be in the open and able to be seen by others, for example, sitting on a leader's lap to be comforted should occur in view of others.

Appropriate physical contact for this age includes:

- hand-holding to reassure or to guide,
- offering open hugs (placing one arm around the child's shoulders) to welcome or comfort a child,
- short periods of carrying, sitting on one's lap, rocking, rubbing or patting backs to comfort a child who is distressed,
- sitting on one's lap to check discomfort or ill health,
- sitting beside a leader to read a book,
- necessary touching of genital areas while changing a nappy, and
- appropriate touch to administer first aid or assist with personal hygiene, for example, changing clothes or blowing noses.

Inappropriate physical conduct for this age includes:

- hitting or shaking,
- forceful grabbing or picking up, and
- unnecessary touching of the genital areas.

b. Preschoolers (3-5 years)

Health and Safety

Children should never leave the preschool area unless accompanied by the adult responsible for them.

Children of this age are generally toilet-trained. A leader should accompany a child to the toilet with another leader or child, but should assist the child only where necessary.

Physical Contact

Except in circumstances of physical danger or medical emergency, children have the right to refuse touch. In general, physical contact should be initiated by the child or occur with their permission.

Appropriate physical contact for this age includes:

- open hug (with space between you) with the child's permission,
- placing arm around shoulder and giving a gentle squeeze from the side,
- patting backs,
- hand-holding to reassure or guide,
- sitting beside a leader to read a book,
- sitting on a female leader's lap to check discomfort or ill health,
- carrying for a short period to reassure if hurt or facilitate separation from a parent (providing the child wants to be held), and
- holding firmly across the upper arms to restrain or prevent injury.

Inappropriate physical contact includes:

- hitting or shaking,
- forceful grabbing or picking up,
- kissing or coaxing a child to kiss you,
- extended hugging or tickling, and
- touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming costume.

c. Infants and primary age children (6-12 years)

Health and Safety

Procedures for the conclusion of the program must be clearly thought out and communicated to parents. Infants will generally need to be collected by parents. Will primary-aged children be dismissed or will they need to be supervised until parents collect them?

If Sunday School is held off-site, there should be clear guidelines and procedures to follow. The following issues need to be thought through:

- Are children taken there by parents or leaders?
- How are children collected?
- How is communication maintained between off-site groups and the main congregation?

Parents

Parents should be kept informed of details of the ministry, including the names of leaders, current and future curriculum, and upcoming special events, etc.

Be considerate of parents by being careful about children's clothing, eg, wearing paint shirts when painting and avoiding extra rough games.

Physical Contact

Appropriate physical contact for this age includes:

- open hug (with space between you) with the child's permission or placing arm around shoulder and giving a gentle squeeze from the side,
- high fives, and
- holding firmly across the upper arms to restrain or prevent injury.

Inappropriate physical contact includes:

- hitting or shaking,
- forceful grabbing,
- kissing or coaxing a child to kiss you,
- extended hugging or tickling,
- touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming costume, and
- sitting children on a leader's lap.

Chapter 3: Reporting abuse



3.1 Reporting child abuse

Anyone who suspects, on reasonable grounds, that a child or young person is at risk of neglect or physical, sexual or emotional abuse should 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 told them they are being abused.

Under NSW law, a paid church worker has a legal obligation to report, as soon as practicable, to Family and Community Services 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’s or young person’s basic physical or psychological needs are not being met 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,
- (b1) 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,
- (c) the child or young person has been, or is at risk of being, physically or sexually abused or ill-treated,
- (d) 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,
- (e) 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,
- (f) 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.

Note. Physical or sexual abuse may include an assault and can exist despite the fact that consent has been given.

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 they're 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 such details as:

- who made the disclosure,
- date, time and place,
- what was said by the person to whom the disclosure was made,
- what the child said, and
- any grounds for forming the belief that abuse has occurred.

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 could be subpoenaed in court proceedings.

There is a sample reporting form available at www.safeministry.org.au.

b. REPORT the information to the appropriate authorities

REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND DISCLOSURES

Issue or concern	Report to:
General Suspicions	Head ministry leader
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.

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.

3.2 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.

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.

3.3 Responding to abuse

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 Police or Family and Community Services

In some cases, a report will lead to an investigation by the Police or Family and Community Services and the matter will be taken out of the hands of the parish. In other cases, there may be no action taken by the civil authorities (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 Professional Standards Unit should always be consulted on how to proceed.

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 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 Recovery Teams are available to assist through the Professional Standards Unit.

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

Chapter 4: Guidelines for parishes regarding persons of interest



The Anglican Church in the Diocese of Sydney is committed to actively ensuring that every person attending the church feels safe. At the same time, generally speaking, all people should be welcome to be a part of the church, including any referred to as **persons of interest (POI)**. A POI is a person who has been convicted, accused, is reasonably suspected of or has admitted to child abuse or sexual offences.

While considering how to balance these two concerns, any parish or church entity must have as its priority the protection of children and other vulnerable persons from abuse. POIs also need protection from the opportunity to commit offences and from false allegations.

POIs may take some time to fully realise the implications of their actions. If hasty assurance of restoration is offered before such realisation, there is the risk that proper boundaries will not be set around the POI. This can leave the POI without accountability or protection from himself or herself. The consequences of an offence, 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 for all to impose restrictions on a person accused or suspected of child abuse, even though that person is innocent until proved guilty. If a level of certainty emerges that any accusation is false, vexatious or misconceived, the restrictions may be lifted. The NSW Office of the Children's Guardian, through the Working with Children Checks, 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 Working With Children Check. Those who are unable to obtain a Working With Children Check clearance are prevented by law from being in any child-related position. This is not negotiable; but these persons may still be members of a congregation. Processes must be put in place to ensure that children 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 seven step process for developing a safety plan

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

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

The sources of information as to who might pose a risk to children and therefore who might need to be supervised and held accountable can come from:

- 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, Community Services or Department of Corrective Services,
- private information from third parties,
- records kept by the Professional Standards Unit,
- previous parishes or “employers” of the offender or suspect,
- predecessor senior ministers or other members of church staff.

All sources need to be carefully checked. No action should be based on rumour or innuendo. Inevitably, checking will ultimately require communication with the POI concerned. The Professional Standards Unit (PSU) has a database which contains information on many POIs. 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 POI will be informed that this information has been provided.

STEP 2: BE PROACTIVE - Authority for dealing with cases where a risk is identified

At a Diocesan level the Archbishop licenses clergy and stipendiary or paid lay workers. 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. The PSU, on his behalf, is responsible for ensuring that relevant parishes are aware of previously licensed persons who may now pose a risk to children or other vulnerable persons.

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 his responsibilities.

Effectively the senior minister is locally responsible, in consultation with the wardens and the parish council, for ensuring that POIs are supervised and held accountable. He and his delegates must keep their eyes and ears open for any POIs. They must take responsibility for ensuring that enquiries are made of the PSU and any other source if they have a concern.

For its part the PSU will endeavour to ensure that information about POIs is communicated to the relevant parish and in particular to newly appointed senior ministers. The PSU is a resource to advise and support the senior minister, wardens and parish council in the discharge of their responsibilities.

STEP 3: ASSESS RISK - The unacceptable risk test

No-one should be permitted to work with children and young people if there is an unacceptable risk that children may be abused.

As noted above, those convicted of sex offences against children are prohibited by law from working with children. There will ordinarily be an unacceptable risk in other 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 difficult when there have merely been allegations in the past which have not been resolved, including situations where charges have been dropped or a person acquitted. Allegations of physical or emotional abuse of children in the past also need to be evaluated with awareness of the context. The assessment of risk in such a case will depend upon an evaluation of the seriousness of the allegation, the source of the allegation, the level of investigation of the allegation and what is known about how the complaint was resolved. Where there has been more than one unrelated complaint, there is reason for extra caution.

The PSU should always be consulted before anyone about whom concerns have been raised is allowed to volunteer to help in a ministry involving children or youth. If there is conflict about whether the person should be involved in ministry with children and young people, then a determination about whether there is an unacceptable risk should be made by qualified persons from outside of the parish.

Any such 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 POI might be employed or engaged,
- the type of contact that any position has with children,
- the supervision which will be available,
- the nature and frequency of the event or events from which the report arose,
- whether there have been any other allegations or concerns about the person's conduct in relation to children,
- the circumstances in which an Apprehended Violence Order (where the protected person was a child) was 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 POI may have on those victims including the possibility that the POI needs to be asked to attend a different parish or congregation,
- the level of understanding and willingness of the POI 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 abuse need not remain forever under a cloud in the ordinary life of the parish. However, someone who is repentant for what he has done in the past will understand the need for child protection measures. There are many other ways in which someone can volunteer in the life of the church other than by working with children and young people.

STEP 4: SET BOUNDARIES

A common characteristic of POIs is their failure to understand why their movements or activities in a church context should in any way be constrained. They will often minimize their past and be overly optimistic about their future. It is important to work with them pastorally to encourage them to see the mutual benefit in keeping them away from contact or potential contact with children. Children will be safe. Parents and the congregation will have confidence that children are protected. The POI will be protected from any opportunity to offend and the possibility of false allegations.

If a POI represents an unacceptable risk to the safety of children, 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 or leading prayers. To allow such activity can suggest apparent endorsement which might be used by the POI to the disadvantage of children or other vulnerable persons. Any variation to this would only be after a lengthy period of treatment and upon advice from the treating practitioner, confirmed by the Director of the PSU, appropriate professional advisors and the Diocesan insurer if necessary.

The setting of boundaries for the POI 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 POI may go,
- the times the POI can be on church premises,
- who the POI may associate with at church, and
- the supervision and accountability which has been put in place.

In the case of a POI who is subject to supervision, the senior minister should write or cause to be written a clear record of the arrangement that has been agreed, called a Safety Plan. This should be signed and dated by the POI, the senior minister, the wardens and the mentors, as applicable. A copy of the record should be provided to the PSU within 10 days and should 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 POI for information to be passed on to the PSU 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.

A Safety Plan template is available at www.safeministry.org.au

Complete and signed copies of all Safety Plans must be provided to the PSU for inclusion on the PSU register of Safety Plans.

In cases where the POI refuses to co-operate but remains a member of a congregation, a letter setting out boundaries, stating the consequences of a breach, identifying mentors and offering support should be provided to the POI in place of a signed Safety Plan. A copy of such a letter should also be provided to the PSU.

STEP 5: SUPERVISE/MENTOR

There should be at least two persons who undertake the task of being mentors. Whilst the senior minister can undertake the task, it is preferable to have other persons 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 demanding and onerous nature of the task,
- be prepared and available to meet with the POI at least fortnightly,
- attend church services and activities at the same time as the person,
- be of an appropriate gender in relation to the POI, and
- report regularly to the senior minister on the progress of the POI.

It will be necessary to inform preferably in writing or orally (with notes kept of the interview) key leaders and (if considered necessary) parents of any perceived risk. There should be sufficient information provided so that it is clear what risks are involved. This should be carried out sensitively. Expressions such as “X is considered a risk to children” or “X has agreed to remain away from children” are preferable to “X is a paedophile”. If possible the consent of the POI should be obtained.

Mentors and other senior leaders, such as wardens, should be aware of the boundaries that have been set and agreed upon. There should be a system in place to ensure that the POI 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 POI being supervised and held accountable, the mentors and key leaders to ensure that the boundaries are being adhered to, the POI is coping and continuing in treatment and to get feedback as to any change in the level of risk.

Where there is a change in the level of risk because of the POI's re-offending or failure to comply with the Safety Plan there needs to be a careful re-evaluation, re-negotiation and variation of the boundaries and, if necessary, the Safety Plan. Any additional risk may constitute a further reasonable suspicion that a child is currently at risk of harm and therefore may require further reporting to Community Services.

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

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

The Registrar will inform the PSU of all appointments of senior ministers. The PSU will ensure that the Archdeacon informs the incoming appointee of the POI and the level of risk.

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



a. Key documents

The following documents are available at www.safeministry.org.au:

Safe Ministry Journey documents

Safe Ministry Map

- *Safe Ministry with Children and Young People*

Safe Ministry Pathways

- *Safe Ministry for the Senior Minister*
- *Safe Ministry for the Safe Ministry Representative*
- *Safe Ministry for the Head of Children's Ministry*
- *Safe Ministry for Children's Ministry Leaders*
- *Safe Ministry for the Head of Youth Ministry*
- *Safe Ministry for Youth Ministry Leaders*

Safe Ministry Signposts

- *Safe Ministry for Parents and Church Members*

Other resources

- *Faithfulness in Service*
- *Application form for leaders template*
- *Permission form template*
- *Reporting Abuse template*
- *Checklist for dealing with abuse allegations*
- *Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme*
- *Safety Plan template*
- *Safe Ministry Representative Report to Parish Council template*

b. Contact details

Professional Standards Unit

Website: www.safeministry.org.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: abusereport@sydney.anglican.asn.au