



This document will set out the basics of keeping Safe Ministry Records in churches belonging to the Anglican Diocese of Sydney.

There is a more advanced paper dealing with the long term storage and retention of Safe Ministry data.

Background:

For many years now, our churches have been required to keep comprehensive records of people who work with children in our church.

While this is an entirely internal (to the Diocese) requirement, it was an area that was highlighted as being significantly *deficient* in our churches in the Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse.

As a result it is very important that we all ensure that we are compliant with the relevant recommendation that came out of that Royal Commission.

Reliable and comprehensive Safe Ministry Records will be an important part of building a case against an alleged abuser of children in our churches, so it is vital that the correct information is recorded in a manner that is able to be kept *indefinitely* – in other words no Safe Ministry Record information can *ever* be deleted or thrown away.

Two types of Safe Ministry Data:

Core Safe Ministry Records

This is the fluid, always-changing information on all the people in your church who work with children OR who are cleared to work with children.

The **minimum** information that must be kept in Core SM data for each person who is cleared to work with children in your church is:

- Full name
- Any other name they are known by
- Gender
- Email address
- Phone numbers – more than one preferred.
- Date of birth (DOB)
- WWCC number

- WWCC Expiry date
- WWCC Verification date
- WWCC Verification result
- WWCC Verification made by
- Safe Ministry Training – date of last training (date on certificate)
- Safe Ministry Training – expiry date
- Safe Ministry Training – course name
- Safe Ministry Training – certificate number
- Ministry position
- The date they started in their role in the church
- Safe Ministry Check – Date of clearance/non-clearance
- Safe Ministry Check – Result of SMC (Cleared or Not Cleared)
- Safe Ministry Check – Name of person processing the form (the minister involved, not an admin person)

More comprehensive Safe Ministry Records would include:

- Residential address

How to store this information

With all the information above, it is very important to understand that as information changes (eg: WWCC verification details, expiries, Safe Ministry Training information, etc) the old information is not overwritten, but is kept for historical purposes.

How that is achieved will depend on the method your parish uses to store data.

If your church uses an online database like Elvanto, CCB, or our own [SaMRO](#), these are relatively easy to configure to keep the old data, but to move it out of obvious sight so it doesn't get in the way of your day to day operations on the records.

Keeping your core Safe Ministry records on a spreadsheet is less and less viable unless you church is very small or has very few people working with children.

What happens to the record of people who leave our church or die?

Consistent with the key requirement to keep all data indefinitely, you should **never** delete a person's data. People who are no longer part of your church should be archived in your system to remove them from day to day operations, but accessible if needed in the future.

Ancillary Safe Ministry Record data

While the core data is what will occupy much of your data-related work, every church with children's and or youth ministries will also have to deal with large amounts of additional Safe Ministry-related information – all of which also has to be *kept indefinitely*.

Examples of this kind of material:

- Copies of Safe Ministry Training Certificates
- Documents relating to disclosure of abuse

- Risk of harm reports
- Incident reports
- Safe Ministry Rep. reports to Parish Council
- Permission slips and enduring permission documents
- Attendance data (sign in/sign out records) for all children's and youth ministry groups
- Safety Plans

That is only an example of the type of other information that you will need to manage, there can be many more other documents, and for many churches, much of this data will be on paper.

It is not hard to see that in an average size church in our diocese, you can be looking at quantities of data that can rapidly fill multiple filing cabinet drawers quite quickly.

So, aspects of this additional Safe Ministry data that need planning for:

- **An organised filing system** for these documents.
Because we have to keep these document indefinitely, it is very important that thought be given to a filing system that makes sense to someone using it into the future who may not have been present when it was set up.
At a minimum, information should be easily accessible by date, ministry type and type of document.
Whatever filing system is used, its use and functionality should be documented for future users.
- **A secure storage system.**
This will vary from church to church, but some documents have very high levels of sensitivity and access to them should be strictly limited.
Probably the most sensitive out of the partial list above would be [Safety Plans](#).
These would normally only be accessible to the Senior Minister and Wardens and no one else. But even sign in/out sheets can contain sensitive information – especially for families who have separated, and one parent may have restricted access to their children.
The security and privacy aspects need careful thinking through – both for additional Safe Ministry Records and the core data. Whatever system you use should be configured to only allow access on a strict need-to-know basis – something that can be a challenge to arrange in a typical church office.

Other considerations.

- As mentioned, much of the additional Safe Ministry Record data will be in the forms of paper documents.
It is a myth that paper is the most secure and 'reliable' format in which to store information. In the business world paper documents are an increasing rarity, with digitisation now rapidly taking over all aspects of our lives.
So it is important to plan for the digitisation of all Safe Ministry data. That is a topic

covered in [another article/paper](#) on the Safe Ministry website that deals with long term secure digital storage of Safe Ministry data.

For more information or questions on Safe Ministry Records, please contact the [Safe Ministry Parish Consultant](#).

