

Safe Ministry Blueprint for Senior Ministers

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

As the senior minister of a church, the responsibility for safe ministry in your church primarily lies with you. This booklet sets out those responsibilities and should be read alongside *Safe Ministry with Children and Young People*.

Contents

Introduction.....	1
A. Your safe ministry responsibilities	2
1. UNDERGO TRAINING.....	2
2. IMPLEMENT and APPOINT.....	3
3. COMPLY	4
4. MEET.....	5
5. MONITOR.....	6
6. REPORT	7
7. FULFIL.....	10
B. Key policies you need to know about	11
Contact details.....	12

A. Your safe ministry responsibilities

As senior minister, it is ultimately your legal and moral responsibility to make sure that ministry conducted throughout the parish is safe for children and young people. Your responsibilities are summarised below, and outlined in more detail in the remainder of the document. In order to faithfully execute your responsibilities with regard to safe ministry you need to:

1. **UNDERGO TRAINING** – You must complete safe ministry training at the required intervals;
2. **IMPLEMENT and APPOINT** – You must implement the Safe Ministry Policy and appoint a Safe Ministry Representative;
3. **COMPLY**– You must make sure the parish complies with its obligations under the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 (NSW)*;
4. **MEET** – You 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;
5. **MONITOR** – (with the Parish Council) 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;
6. **REPORT** – Where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that a child is at risk of significant harm, you must report your suspicions to the relevant authorities;
7. **FULFIL** – To fulfil such other responsibilities as are required by chapter 5 of Faithfulness in Service.

1. UNDERGO TRAINING

You must complete safe ministry training at the required intervals. You must have satisfactorily completed safe ministry training within the last three years before beginning your work, or within three months of your licence being issued. You must complete the training every three years while the licence continues.



2. IMPLEMENT and APPOINT

You must implement the Safe Ministry Policy in your parish and appoint a Safe Ministry Representative for the parish.

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.*



You must, with the agreement of the Parish Council, appoint a Safe Ministry Representative for the parish, who 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 person you choose as 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 Representative about concerns regarding a staff member. These are desirable, rather than required, things.

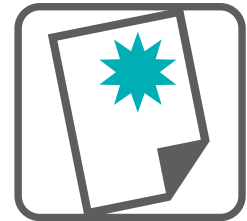
After you appoint a Safe Ministry Representative, you must promptly notify the Sydney Diocesan Registry of their details. More information can be found at www.safeministry.org.au.

If you think it necessary, you may revoke the appointment of the Safe Ministry Representative and appoint someone else to the role (with the agreement of the Parish Council).

3. COMPLY

In conjunction with the wardens, you must make sure the parish complies with its obligations under the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* (NSW).

You are responsible for making sure that your parish obeys the law in terms of NSW Working With Children Check (WWCC) requirements. The Safe Ministry Representative's job is to assist you with implementing that compliance.



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

- a. 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;**
- b. has a current Working With Children Check application before the Office of the Children's Guardian; or**
- c. is subject to an exemption.**

Ordinarily, every person engaged in child-related work in the parish must obtain a WWCC clearance. 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, the parish must check that he or she has a WWCC clearance. To do this, you or the Safe Ministry Representative need to log into the parish's account with the Office of the Children's Guardian at 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 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. You will usually only be able to do this with the involvement and consent of the person.

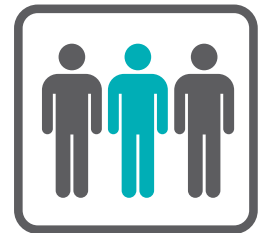
See the Working With Children Check appendix at the end of this document for further information.

4. MEET

You must meet regularly with the Safe Ministry Representative at least once a year to review the implementation of the safe ministry policies in the church;

It is the job of the Safe Ministry Representative to:

- monitor how children and young people are kept safe by the systems and practices used in your parish's activities;
- provide an annual report to your Parish Council that includes current safe ministry policies and practices and any suggested changes to ensure the safety of the children and young people involved in parish activities.



5. 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 Safe Ministry Representative 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'.



a. 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?

b. 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 there safety glass installed at floor level?
- 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)?

c. 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?

6. REPORT

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 adult tells you about any abuse or sexual misconduct, 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:

- 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 you spoke to,
- date, time and place,
- what you said,
- what the 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.

b. REPORT the information to the appropriate authorities.

REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND DISCLOSURES

Issue or concern	Report to:
Child or young person currently at risk of significant harm	<p>FaCS 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>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.

* *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.

Under NSW law, you have 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.

REPORTING SUSPECTED ADULT ABUSE AND DISCLOSURES

Issue or concern	Report to:
Sexual abuse of an adult by a church worker	Police Anglican Abuse Report line (1800 77 49 45)
Other abusive behaviour by a church worker e.g. physical violence, bullying	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)

Contact the Professional Standards Unit if you are unsure of what to do in any circumstance.

* 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.

Confidentiality

You must treat any suspicion, knowledge or disclosure of abuse with the utmost confidentiality. Apart from reporting it to the relevant authorities, 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 you 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.

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.

7. FULFIL

To 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



B. Key policies you need to know about

You should be aware of the following documents available on the Professional Standards Unit website (www.safeministry.org.au)

Policy documents directly relevant to your role

- *Safe Ministry with Children and Young People*
- *Faithfulness in Service*

Policy documents for church workers and volunteers

- *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 for Parents and Congregation Members*
- *Safe Ministry for Safe Ministry Representatives*

* If you are the person responsible for children's and/or youth ministry in your parish, you must read this too.

Other resources

- *Checklist for dealing with abuse allegations*
- *Pastoral Care and Assistance Scheme*

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

