

Safe Church FOUNDATIONS (MINISTRY AGENT) Facilitator Guide

RESOURCES

Required:

- **Equipment to play videos** (included in PowerPoint).
- **C2.1.5.1 Ministry Agent Statement of Commitment** (1pp if the intention is to sign that day).

Optional (location/trainer preferences):

- SC Foundations (Ministry Agent) **Activity** (for 'looks like, feels like, sounds like' activity. 1 per group & pens).
- SC Foundations (Ministry Agent) **Handout** (1pp or direct attendees to The Hub).
- SC Foundations (Ministry Agent) **Quiz** (1pp or digital quiz or complete in small groups using slides).
- SC Foundations (Ministry Agent) **Answers** (1 copy, if marking individually).
- C2.1.2.7.1 **List of Acceptable Behaviours**.
- C2.1.2.7.2 **List of Unacceptable Behaviours**.

Reference document (optional, but available on the Hub and referred to in Handout which is also on the Hub):

- C2.1.5.3 **Mandatory Reporting Process for Ministry Agents**
- C2.1.5.8 **Resource Reporting and Referral Guide**

WARNING – some information in this facilitator guide, and content to be covered in this session may be challenging, confronting or distressing, especially with the definitions of types of abuse or neglect. Please seek support if you need it, and please familiarise yourself with the content prior to delivering the training.



Welcome to Safe Church – Foundations (Ministry Agent) Training.



Video

This video is an Acknowledgement of Country.

[Press play, or use link: <https://vimeo.com/813041826>] [1:17]

WARNING

Information may be unsettling, challenging, confronting or distressing.

It is important you are safe and seek support from someone you trust.

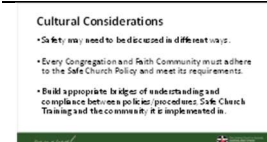
WARNING

- Information includes descriptions of **abuse, neglect and grooming**.
- It may be **unsettling, challenging, confronting or distressing**.
- It may **trigger memories, cause flashbacks** or remind you of events you or others have experienced.
- It is important you are **safe** and **seek support** from someone you trust.



The purpose of this training is to gain an understanding of:

- **Shared guardianship** and our Safe Church culture.
- Your **responsibilities** under the Working with Children Act and Regulation, including risk management and screening.
- **Identifying** abuse, neglect, harm and grooming (behaviours that prepare people for abuse).
- Strategies for **responding to disclosures**.
- **Mandatory Reporting** requirements.



- Many unique cultures in Australia.
- **Culture** is important part of who you are, flowing through all you do.
- Issues about safety may need to be discussed in different ways.

- This training aims to be culturally respectful and relevant.

[Continued over page]

- **No room for variation in the requirement that every Congregation and Faith Community must adhere to the Safe Church policy and meet its requirements.**
- Ensure the primary goal of safety is not compromised.
- Ask you to **build appropriate bridges of understanding and compliance** between policies and procedures, Safe Church Training and the community it is implemented in.

Module	Ministry Agents	Foundations	External Training	NDIS Worker Orientation
Safe Church Policy	✓	✓	✓	✓
Safe Church Culture	✓	✓	✓	✓
Safe Church Procedures	✓	✓	✓	✓
Safe Church Reporting	✓	✓	✓	✓
Safe Church Training	✓	✓	✓	✓
Safe Church Compliance	✓	✓	✓	✓

- One responsibility in serving others is completing required training.
- Assists in awareness of our Safe Church culture and processes.
- Ensures we meet legislative and insurance requirements.

Table provides a **snapshot of generalised roles and connection to the modules.**

- If unsure, ask Safe Church coordinator or review matrix.
- The light blue and dark blue courses cover the same content, however as Ministry Agents, Foundations also includes your additional responsibilities as Ministry Agents.
- The Mandatory Reporting module is the application of this Foundations module to real-life scenarios.
- **Modules completed every 2nd year**, except for Foundations and External training (annually).
- **External training** (added in September 2024 due to a change in requirements from insurer).
 - Optional in 2025 due to transition period and compulsory from 2026 onwards.
 - Topic related to **safeguarding vulnerable people**.
 - Suggestions on the Hub or in Uniting News.
- **NDIS Worker Orientation** for specific ministries with vulnerable people.



- Safe Church contains a suite of resources.
- Supports the Church's vision, mission and ministry.
- Ensures we comply with legislation.

It can be broken into four groups:

- **Safe People** focuses on our **volunteers**
- **Safe Behaviour** focuses on **actions** and **reporting**
- **Safe Programs** focuses on the **activities** and **guidelines**
- **Safe Participants** focuses on **attendees**



To find The Hub, find the Uniting Church in Queensland website by searching on the internet.

Step 1 - Scroll right to the bottom of the home page and you will find the link for The Hub. (light green) Or you can go directly to hub.ucaqld.com.au

Step 2 – On the left side of The Hub, click on or hover over 'Resources'. (light blue)

Step 3 – Click 'Safe Church'.

Alternatively, you can search the name or code of a resource using the search tool on the left side of The Hub. (orange)

Video

Here is a welcome message and blessing from the Moderator.
[Click play or use link: <https://vimeo.com/896403007>] [2:07]

Obligations of Ministry Agents



The Obligations of Ministry Agents, and retired Ministry Agents are outlined in respective documents on The Hub, which may update over time.

It is essential that you remain aware of your obligations related to:

- Policy compliance (the Safe Church Policy, Synod Wide Blue Card Policy and Person of Concern Policy).
- Training.
- Governance.
- Mandatory reporting of child abuse, neglect and grooming.

Legislative and Policy Frameworks

Child Safe Framework

Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000

Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020

Across **all aspects of Church life**, we need to meet legislative and policy standards, including:

- Queensland standards.
- National Standards.
- The Regulations of the Church.

The **Queensland Synod Safe Church policies** align with:

- National Child Safe Framework.
- Learnings from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

As a **Ministry Agent**:

- You are also impacted by two pieces of legislation which outline your legal obligations.
- The **Working with Children** (Risk Management and Screening):
 - 2000 Act
 - 2020 Regulation

QLD Legislation – 8 Minimum Requirements

1. Statement of Commitment	5. A plan for managing breaches of risk management strategy
2. Code of Conduct	6. Risk management plans for national activities & special events
3. Written procedures for screening, selecting, training, managing volunteers	7. Policies and procedures for managing Blue Card compliance
4. Policies and procedures on disclosures & reporting abuse etc.	8. Strategies for communication and support

The Act and Regulation:

- Provide detail and clarification around specific requirements.
- Dictate obligation for a Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy.
- Outline 8 key requirements to be fulfilled (listed on the slide)

- Our Safe Church policy and procedures match these requirements.
- This allows you to be compliant as you care for people in your Congregation or Faith Community.

These legislative requirements apply to:

- Agencies and schools who write and review their own policies.
- Congregations, Presbytery and Synod office activities which come under the Safe Church policy.
- Ministry Agents engaged in a covenantal relationship with the Church, who are covered under the Safe Church policy.

Child & Youth Risk Management Strategy

- Required for Ministry Agents with a stipend or available for supply.
- Achieved by signing the Ministry Agent Statement of Commitment, endorsing the Safe Church Policy.
- Send a copy to Presbytery & Church Council.



The Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy:

- Requirement for Ministry Agents with a stipend or available for supply due to your Covenantal Relationship.

[Continued over page]

- Achieved by signing the Ministry Agent Statement of Commitment.
- Indicates you endorse the Safe Church Policy, thus fulfilling obligation and meeting 8 key requirements of the Regulation.

Your Risk Management Strategy must be made public.

- Once signed, send to Presbytery and Church Council.
- Optional – send to other employing bodies (schools or agencies)

[Optional: Pause and give time to read and sign Statement of Commitment.]

[Note: Ministry Agents **don't** have to also sign Statement of *Personal* Commitment.]

Blue Cards – Ministry Agents	
	Signature Required
Card Type	No Stipend
Blue Card	Blue Card
Blue Card linked to	Blue Card
Apply where	Apply where
Contact Person	Contact Person
Additional	Additional

All Ministry Agents must have a **Blue Card** which is linked with **each** organization or congregation you work or volunteer for.

The differences are because Ministry Agents with a stipend have a Covenanted Relationship, therefore:

- are 'conducting own regulated business as a religious representative' and need a **BUSINESS** Blue Card.
- Card linked with Synod.
- Requested to complete 'Consent to discuss information' which gives permission for the General Secretary to be informed on matters relating to the suspension or cancellation of your Blue Card.

Take a moment to note details specific to your situation. It is also included in the handout

[Optional: If applying for a new Blue Card, for the 'Organisation Contact Person' list the respective Presbytery Chair or General Secretary.]



Let's explore creating a culture of shared guardianship.



Activity

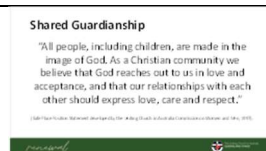
We want to hear from you – what does a safe Church:

- Look like?
- Feel like?
- Sound like?

[Whole group – people to shout out answers; Small group – people to work in groups of 2-4 to share ideas]

Hint:

- What would you notice?
- What is the atmosphere? What emotions would you experience?
- What would you love to hear?



At the heart of our motivation to minister with children, vulnerable people and their families, is our belief that:

[Continued over page]

“all people, including children, are made in the image of God. As a Christian community we believe that God reaches out to us in love and acceptance, and that our relationships with each other should express love, care and respect.”

- Welcoming and caring for young and vulnerable people is not just a family’s responsibility, but an opportunity for everyone in the Church.
- Through Shared Guardianship, we are expressing love, care and respect for **everyone** in our Congregation.



- The National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (NAPCAN) works to support and encourage changes in individual and community behaviour to stop child abuse and neglect.
- Video offers valuable insights into preventing child abuse in our communities.

[Press play to play video] [3:57]



A culture of **shared guardianship** is a positive, respectful and supportive culture in which **everyone** plays an important role.

- Look out for the physical, emotional, behavioural and spiritual safety of all.
- Support everyone to foster a safe and nurturing environment where everyone can flourish.

Safe Church includes processes and tools, ensuring:

1. Volunteers and workers are screened, appointed and supported in their roles.
2. Events are welcoming and safe.
3. Risks are managed.
4. Unacceptable behaviours are interrupted
5. Anything concerning is reported internally and addressed.
6. Knowledge and suspicion of abuse and grooming is reported externally.
7. Safety and wellbeing is prioritised, especially for those who are young or vulnerable.
8. Appropriate records are kept.



- Safe Church culture outlines acceptable and unacceptable behaviours.
- Full list on the Hub, examples on slide.

Acceptable Physical behaviour includes contact which is:

- Responsive to the person’s needs.
- initiated by the other person.
- In full view of others.
- Non-sexual.

Unacceptable Physical behaviour

- Unwanted, inappropriate or requests for physical contact.
- Photos of young or vulnerable people without consent.

Acceptable Emotional behaviour

- Respect the rights, dignity and worth of every person, regardless of their abilities, gender, religion or cultural background.

[Continued over page]

- Ask for help, guidance and support when needed.

Unacceptable **Emotional** behaviour

- Encouraging secrecy.
- Showing favouritism.
- Using derogatory language such as racial slurs, swearing or describing sexual acts.



Acceptable **Behavioural** behaviour

- Communicating respectfully.
- Model healthy relationships.
- Be mindful of the imbalance of power:
 - Adult - young/vulnerable
 - Leader - attendee

Unacceptable **behavioural** behaviour

- Fighting, aggressive or bullying behaviour.
- Any breach of the Statement of Personal Commitment.

Acceptable **Spiritual** behaviour

- Promoting a positive relationship with God as a God of grace, love, trust, acceptance and forgiveness.

Unacceptable **Spiritual** behaviour

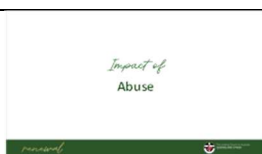
- Language and actions which create fear, ongoing guilt, self-loathing or self-blame in relation to God.



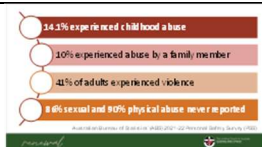
When responding to unacceptable behaviours, the following responses are encouraged in the Lay Introduction and Foundations modules.

- Stop! We don't do that here, please don't do it again.
- It's the policy of the Church.

People in your Congregation or Faith Community are encouraged to raise their concerns with yourself as a Ministry Agent.



There is a wide-reaching **impact of abuse**, not only for survivors but for their families and friends too.



Unfortunately, one of Australia's biggest and most mis-understood social problems is abuse and neglect, especially of children. Some of the statistics include:

- 14.1% of adults experienced **childhood abuse** before the age of 15.
- 10% experienced **abuse by a family member**. It is sad that children are most often harmed by someone they know and should be able to trust.
- 41% of adults (~8 million people) experienced **physical and/or sexual violence** after the age of 15.
- Approximately 86% **sexual** and 90% **physical abuse** occurrences were never reported to the police. This means thousands of cases go unreported.

As Ministry Agents, you are called to speak up against injustices and ensure anyone going through abuse or neglect can receive the support they need.



- Over time we become more aware of historical abuse in the Church.
- Unfortunately some Churches or individuals within the Church who were told about abuse did not act in the best interests of those being harmed.

At the appearance of the Uniting Church before the Royal Commission in 2017, former Assembly President Stuart McMillan shared the following.

On behalf of the Uniting Church in Australia I sincerely apologise to all children in our care who suffered sexual abuse, of any kind, in our church, whether it happened since union of 1977 or before that in our predecessor churches. We are, and I am, deeply sorry that we didn't protect and care in accordance with our Christian values for those children. I want to acknowledge the impact that it's had in the lives of those young people and to say I am truly sorry.

*Our commitment to you is that we will seek to make amends and to ensure that others don't suffer in the same way you have. As church leaders we pledge that we will continue to understand and to implement the lessons that we've learnt through this Royal Commission and remain open to the insights of survivors and professionals. **We pledge to continuously seek improvement, to regularly renew our policies and our practices in all parts of our church, and to ensure that they reflect the best quality for care, service and support of children. This is our commitment to you.***



As we delve deeper, let's look at a shared understanding.

What is Abuse and Harm?



Let's clarify the relationship between abuse and harm.

- **Abuse** is the **action** taking place.
- **Harm** is the resulting **impact** of that action.

The definition of abusive action is:

An incident of abuse (act or omission) which results in harm to a person, putting their health, welfare and safety at risk.

Survivors and perpetrators can be young people, vulnerable people and adults.



There are different **types of abuse and neglect**.

Physical abuse is the non-accidental use of physical force against another individual which results in harm.

Whether or not they intend to do harm doesn't matter, just their intention to use physical force. (e.g. deliberately pushing an individual who fell and got bruised would be considered physical abuse).

Emotional abuse refers to a pattern of behaviour that intentionally undermines, manipulates, or controls another person's emotions, thoughts, beliefs, or actions.

It involves a sustained and systematic use of tactics to diminish an individual's sense of self-worth, autonomy, and well-being, often causing significant emotional distress.

[Continued over page]

Neglect is the failure by a parent or caregiver to provide a young or vulnerable person with the conditions that are culturally accepted in a society as being essential for physical and emotional development and wellbeing.

Neglect includes the non-provision of therapeutic intervention; for example, speech therapy, occupational therapy or counselling.



Financial abuse refers to a form of domestic or interpersonal abuse where one individual exerts control over another person's financial resources, assets, debts, or financial decision-making to gain power and control over them.

Sexual abuse refers to any form of unwanted or non-consensual sexual activity or behaviour that is forced upon an individual against their will or without their consent.

In the case of children, Sexual abuse is:

"Any act which exposes a child to, or involves a child in, sexual processes beyond his or her understanding or contrary to accepted community standards. Sexually abusive behaviours can include the fondling of genitals, masturbation, oral sex, vaginal or anal penetration by a penis, finger or other object, fondling of breasts, exhibitionism, and exposing the child to pornography or involving the child in child sexual abuse material (child pornography). It includes child grooming, which refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a child to lower the child's inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity with a child." ³

In the circumstance where a young person is between 16 and 18, it remains sexually abusive for a person in a position of authority, such as a Ministry Agent or Church Council member to commence a sexual or romantic relationship with the young person due to the imbalance of power.

Social abuse refers to a deliberate act of isolating an individual or group of individuals from social interactions and relationships as a form of mistreatment or harm.

It involves intentionally cutting off someone's access to social support networks, limiting their opportunities for connection, and depriving them of meaningful human interaction.



Spiritual abuse refers to the misuse or manipulation of religious or spiritual beliefs, practices, or teachings to control, manipulate, or harm individuals or groups.

It occurs when someone in a position of power, such as a religious leader, uses their authority to exploit and exert control over others, often in the name of spirituality or religious doctrine. Examples are:

- Enforcing one theological position or interpretation of scripture and denying all others.
- Persistent debate or gagging debate and questions.
- Excessive labelling on sin and evil rather than the freedom and good news of Jesus Christ.
- Language or actions that create fear, guilt or self-loathing.
- Misuse of scripture or rituals in behaviour management or to justify abuse or neglect.

[Continued over page]

Domestic and family violence occurs when a family member, partner or ex-partner, or other household member attempts to physically or psychologically dominate the other.

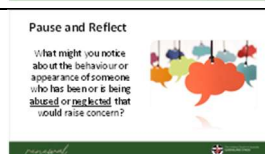
It often relates to physical and / or emotional abuse of children or partners.

Examples:

- Can be criminal and non-criminal.
- Patterns of behaviour that exercise power and control over another individual.
- Threats to harm pets or people.
- Coercive control
- Physical, sexual, emotional or psychological abuse.



By recognising **indicators of abuse, neglect and grooming**, we can look out for the safety of others.



Discussion

Let's pause and reflect.

What might you notice about the behaviour or appearance of someone who has been or is being abused or neglected that would raise concern?

Take 2 minutes in groups of 2-3 to discuss.

[Optional Prompts:

- What might be a sign of physical abuse?
- What might be a sign of neglect – in the young/vulnerable person, or in the parent/carer?
- What might be a sign of spiritual abuse?]



- People may not directly disclose abuse – either not understanding it is abuse or feeling confident to say something.
- For children especially, their behaviour, comments or actions may indicate exposure to sexual abuse.
- Research has shown in the overwhelming majority of cases; children do not lie or exaggerate about their experiences of sexual abuse. They are more likely to minimise abuse to protect the perpetrator, as this is often someone close to them.

Indicators of sexual abuse may include:

- Frequent, recurring nightmares, bedwetting or soiling clothing.
- Unexplained injury to sexual body parts.
- Hints about sexual activity or sexual knowledge beyond child's age or developmental stage.
- Overly sexualized behaviour / play / themes in artwork.
- Refusing to talk about 'secrets'.
- Unexplained gifts or money.
- Recurring themes of power / control in play.
- Sudden behavioural shifts.

Grooming

- Deliberate actions with aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection.
- Lower inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity.
- Criminal offence in Queensland.

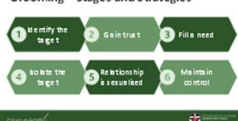


- Grooming is deliberate actions undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection.
- It lowers inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity.
- Grooming targets young and vulnerable people, however adults can also be groomed, especially so the perpetrator can gain access to the young or vulnerable person.
- **Grooming is a criminal offence in Queensland.**

Unacceptable behaviours may be due to:

- Errors in judgement.
- Becoming too familiar.
- Crossing boundaries without intending to do harm.
- Well-practiced behaviours in exploiting other people.

Grooming – Stages and Strategies



- Grooming typically occurs in six stages.
- These can take any amount of time to complete.
- They may occur incrementally over a long period or can be met in only a few minutes.

1. **Identify the Target.** Identifying the most vulnerable person and vulnerable or receptive families.
2. **Gain trust.** Become indispensable to significant adults in the young or vulnerable person's life.
3. **Fill a need.** Conferring a special status on the young or vulnerable person. This may be by using preferential treatment, sharing secrets, or giving gifts.
4. **Isolate the target.** Isolate the young or vulnerable person from their peers or their guardian to neutralise the risk of them disclosing abuse. This could include physical or emotional isolation.
5. **Relationship is sexualised.** The offender uses strategies to gradually desensitise the young or vulnerable person to sexual touch. This often happens in full view of other adults. At this point, criminal sexual abuse and exploitation are occurring.
6. **Maintain control.** Control is maintained by using blame, threats or bribes to compel or convince the young or vulnerable person not to disclose what is occurring.

Possible Indicators of Grooming

Can be difficult to detect or distinguish	Reluctance to be near a particular adult	Fear, dislike or discomfort towards a particular adult	Repeated unacceptable behaviours
Deceptive in nature	Frequent, vague or implausible health complaints	Unexplained gifts, particularly gifts of high value	Displaying harmful or problematic sexual behaviour

As you just heard, grooming can be difficult to discern as individual acts of grooming may not be illegal on their own.

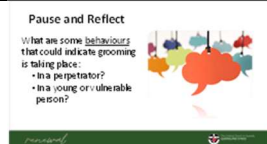
Possible indicators of Grooming:

- Reluctance of a child to be near a particular adult.
- Fear, dislike or discomfort towards a particular adult.
- Repeated unacceptable behaviours. Please report internally so repetitive behaviours can be identified and followed-up.
- Deceptive in nature.
- Frequent, vague or implausible health complaints such as headaches or tummy aches.
- Unexplained gifts, particularly gifts of high value.
- Displaying harmful or problematic sexual behaviour.

[Continued over page]

- While these are possible indicators of Grooming, it does not automatically mean abuse or grooming is occurring.
- There may be valid explanations for this such as a change in the home environment, moving to a new house, or the death of a family member.

If on three occasions unacceptable behaviour or boundary violations occur, grooming behaviour is suspected. You have a responsibility to be aware of and act upon any reports made.



Discussion

Let's pause and reflect.

What are some behaviours that could indicate grooming is taking place:

- **In a perpetrator?**
- **In a young or vulnerable person?**

[Possible answers:

- Persistent breaking of 'minor' rules about conduct and boundaries.
- Persistent and excessive physical contact with children.
- Encouraging others to breach acceptable behaviours.
- Having an obvious 'favourite' child who receives preferential treatment, gifts or rewards.]



Break

We will take a short break.

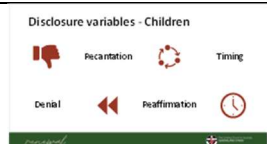
Consider:

- How are you feeling right now?
- Are there any physical sensations associated with your current emotions?
- Do you need to get up and move your body, get a drink or some food, or go to the bathroom?
- Do you need to go or look outside or take a deep breath?

[Take a 5 min break]



Covered so far – Abuse, harm and unacceptable behaviours.
Final section – Responding to disclosures.



Sometimes children will give reasonably clear indication that abuse is happening. This is referred to as disclosure.

Four variables occur when a disclosure is made:

- **Denial.** The child may later deny making the disclosure.
- **Recantation.** The child may say that the information is not true, or they were joking.
- **Reaffirmation.** The child may continue to restate the disclosure.
- **Timing.** Whether the disclosure is tentative or accidental, or active or purposeful.

[Continued over page]

- Children are less likely to purposefully disclose they are being abused, or it might be delayed.
- Disclosure is a process, not necessarily an event.
- Only a small piece of what is happening may be told.
- Children may develop unhealthy coping strategies and may exhibit warning signs as a way and means of accidentally disclosing abuse.

It is important to remember that a child has chosen who they will disclose to and what they will disclose to them.

Please remember that your body language and words chosen when responding will have a profound and lasting impact.



- The acronym RESPOND is helpful when responding to disclosures and following mandatory reporting requirements.
- Please note the order of the steps may vary.
- Remember that if someone has decided to disclose or talk to you, it is a sign they trust you.
- Always take any disclosures seriously.



R - Reassure

Reassure the person by saying

- "I'm glad you told me",
- "It's important for this to be addressed"
- "I believe you"

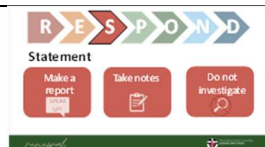
Or similar words that **welcome the information** and **reaffirm** they are doing the right thing by speaking up.

- Listen calmly, patiently, and supportively.
- Let the person or child use their own words.
- But not rushing or trying to finish their sentences, you show them respect and allow them to process what happened.



E - Ensure

- Ensure immediate danger is assessed.
- **Imminent danger** – call 000.
- Gently ask questions to assess if not mentioned outright, however do not investigate officially.
- **Address safety concerns**, including worries about the consequences of disclosing.
- Tell them what happened to them is not their own fault.
- **Manage expectations** by explaining the next steps.
- Explain your responsibilities in reporting child abuse concerns and allegations.



S - Statement

- **Make an internal report** using the Speak Up! QR code or link which notifies Synod Office Safe Church and your Presbytery Minister.
- **Take comprehensive notes.** Record to whom you have reported your concerns, both internally and externally.
- **Do not investigate the situation.** You may need to ask a few questions to get enough information to be able to determine immediate safety concerns.



P - Plan

- **Plan** your next actions.
- Complete the **reporting threshold tests** in *Mandatory Reporting for Ministry Agents* to plan the appropriate action.
- This guides you in identifying if **external** reporting is required.



O - Obligation

You have Mandatory obligations to report under state legislation and Church policy.

- **Must report internally** (through the QR code, link or phone)
- **May need to report externally:**
 - Queensland Police Services.
 - Queensland Child Protection Authorities.



N - Need

Respond to the individual's needs for assistance or referral.

- Ask the person what they need so they can feel safe and involved in the process.
- Offer a follow-up phone call or pastoral visit (from yourself or another person who will support them).
- Consider whether Pastoral Care is required for the accused person if they are also involved with the Church.

Offer resources for support and referrals specific to their needs, with the *Reporting and Referral Guide* containing options for supportive therapy and coping strategies.



D - Debrief

- Debrief with other leaders and volunteers that have been involved in the process.
- Make sure to prioritise self-care and debrief with your supervisor, trusted colleague or Presbytery Minister, ensuring to maintain confidentiality.



Remember to **RESPOND** to disclosures:

R – **Reassure** the person.

E – **Ensure** immediate danger is addressed.

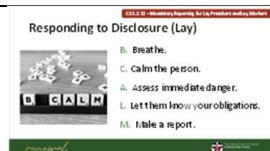
S – **Statement** taken.

P – **Plan** next steps.

O – **Obligation** to report (internally and externally).

N – **Need** for assistance or referral.

D – **Debrief**.



B.C.A.L.M is the recommended process for Lay people to use when responding to disclosures,
Included so you are aware of common language to discuss safety.

B - Breathe – use a quick calming technique and suggest the person ‘take a deep breath’.

C – Calm the Person – stay focused on them and their story. Use words like “You’ve done the right thing by telling me” and “I believe you”.

A – Assess immediate danger – If life-threatening, call 000. Gently ask questions to assess if they are in danger.

L – Let them know your obligations – Manage expectations by identifying the steps that will occur, including obligation to report.

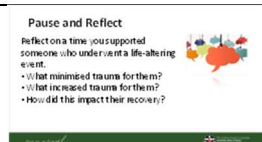
M – Make a report – Lay people are encouraged to report to their Ministry Agent or use internal reporting QR code/link.



- People reach out to the church in times of need and vulnerability.
- People should be greeted with support and acceptance – leaves a lasting impact on their lives.
- Do everything in our power to minimise trauma.
- Make appropriate referrals for supportive therapies to promote resilience.

The Royal Commission has found that:

“the prognosis for a good recovery is largely dependent upon the response the survivor receives from others. A survivor who discloses the abuse and is believed, supported and cared for will often recover well. Survivors whose stories aren’t believed, or who are dismissed, or even punished, don’t fare so well. In fact in some instances the response to the abuse ends up being a greater source of trauma than the abuse itself.”



Discussion

Let’s pause and reflect.

Reflect on a time you supported someone who underwent a life-altering event. This might have been abuse, neglect, violence, a serious car accident, the passing of a family member or friend.

- **What minimized trauma for them?**
- **What increased trauma for them**
- **How did this impact their recovery?**

Take 4 minutes in groups of 2-3 to discuss.

[Possible answers:

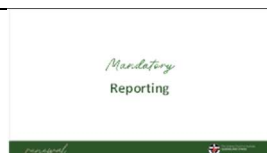
Minimise trauma

- Don’t try to fill the silence.
- Don’t try to press them to divulge details or relive the experience.
- Focus on non-judgmental, compassionate responses - helps reduce shame.
- Let them know that there is professional support available.

Increase trauma

- Insist on talking if they don’t want to.
- Minimizing their experience. [Continued over page]

- Immediately charting a plan of action.
- Making yourself the central character.]



The Mandatory Reporting process is different for Lay people and Ministry Agents.

Lay people will report concerns:

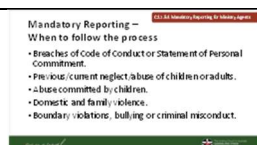
- To YOU as the Ministry Agent
- By the 'Speak Up' internal reporting process

Please assist in making external reports as needed – to police or child protection authorities.



- Internal reporting – Speak up! Fill in the short form via the QR code, link on the hub or phone call.
- Report:
 - Injury, Illness.
 - Abuse, neglect, boundary violations.
 - Hazards, near misses.
 - Property damage.
- Ministry Agents will be notified of relevant reports from your Church.
- **Critical** to respond to reports in an open, professional, confidential and accountable manner.

[Optional – click the 'live form' on the slide to view the form.
<https://tinyurl.com/rd3z9fpd>]



Mandatory External Reporting must be followed each time a Ministry Agent reasonably suspects that anyone has been abused, neglected or is being groomed for abuse.

This includes concerns relating to:

- Previous or current neglect and/or abuse of children or adults, including spiritual abuse.
- Abuse committed by children.
- Domestic and family violence.
- Boundary violations, bullying or criminal misconduct.
- For breaches of the Code of Conduct (Statement of Personal Commitment), depending on the situation, this **may only require internal reporting**.



Sometimes people, including Ministry Agents might be concerned about what happens if they report. Common concerns include:

- Maintaining a relationship with parents, carers and families.
- Understanding what information is required. What do you put into a report? What's relevant?
- Fear of consequences. How do I know it's true? What if I get it wrong?
- Not knowing how information will be acted on.
- Self-care during a stressful and emotional period.
- Cultural concerns.

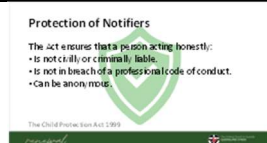
[Continued over page]

These concerns and reservations are valid and should be recognised.

- The National Child Safe Policy Framework requires us to **maintain the care and protection of the child** as our primary focus.
- Wondering “*What if I am wrong?*” is valid and possible.
- Let’s **reframe** the question and ask, “*What if I’m right?*” and you fail to make a report due to your reservations.
- Child protection agencies are only able to help children being subjected to abuse and maltreatment when they know the risks and dangers those children are facing.
- For this reason, it is essential to overcome our doubts and reservations and take action to protect children, allowing the agencies to investigate and decide if the child is or has been at unacceptable risk of being harmed.



- The failure of a group of witnesses to respond to an abuse is called the ‘**bystander effect**’.
- It has led to people asking themselves “how on earth did we just sit there, knowing full well that children were being abused, and do nothing?”
- We must take every report seriously.
- It is not our role to determine the validity or plausibility of the report.
- It is our role to implement the Safe Church processes and to hand the issues over to the authorities who have the expertise and mandate to handle it.



- It is important to maintain confidentiality, especially for anyone who completed an internal report.
- The Child Protection Act 1999 provides **protection for a person providing notification** about a child as long as that person is “acting honestly”.
- The Act ensures that a person acting honestly:
 - Is not civilly or criminally liable.
 - Is not in breach of a professional code of conduct.
 - Can be anonymous.



When people receive information about child abuse, they are most likely feeling unprepared and shocked. It is not uncommon to have many concerns such as:

- Feeling overwhelmed about the details of what you've just seen or heard.
- Concern for the wellbeing of the young or vulnerable person.
- Uncertainty about what to do next.
- Disbelief that this could happen.
- Confusion about what you have to do with this information.
- At the same time, you may experience emotions such as anger, disgust, sadness and frustration.
- This situation could be overwhelming, and your brain may trigger the fight, flight, or freeze responses.
- Unless these concerns are addressed, reluctance to report will remain.

Discussion

Let’s Pause and Reflect

What concerns or apprehensions do you have about reporting suspicions of abuse? [Continued over page]

Take 2 minutes to reflect or discuss in groups of 2-3

If you have further concerns, please reach out to your supervisor, Presbytery Minister or connections in Synod Office.

Quiz
Safe Church – Foundations
(Ministry Agents)

Quiz

Let's have a look at a few questions related to this module.

Q1: What is the relationship between abuse and harm?

- ☐ Abuse and harm mean the same thing – either word can describe the action or impact of the action.
- ☒ Abuse is the action taking place; harm is the impact of that action.
- ☐ Abuse is the action taking place; harm is only the emotional response to the action.

Q1: What is the relationship between abuse and harm?

- A. Abuse and harm mean the same thing – either word can describe the action or impact of the action.
- B. Abuse is the action taking place; harm is the impact of that action.
- C. Abuse is the action taking place; harm is only the emotional response to the action.

Q1: What is the relationship between abuse and harm?

- ☐ Abuse and harm mean the same thing – either word can describe the action or impact of the action.
- ☒ Abuse is the action taking place; harm is the impact of that action.
- ☐ Abuse is the action taking place; harm is only the emotional response to the action.

Answer:

- B: Abuse is the action taking place; harm is the impact of that action.

Q2: Ministry Agents (with a stipend) and those available for supply are required to have a Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy. What is the best way to comply with the legislation?

- ☐ Adopt the Safe Church framework as their own through signing a Statement of Commitment. A copy is sent to their Presbytery and Church Council.
- ☒ Adopt the Safe Church framework as their own through signing a Statement of Commitment. A copy is not shared with anyone.
- ☐ Create their own Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy. A copy is sent to their Presbytery and Church Council.

Q2: Ministry Agents (with a stipend) and those available for supply are required to have a Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy. What is the best way to comply with the legislation?

- A. Adopt the Safe Church framework as their own through signing a Statement of Commitment. A copy is sent to their Presbytery and Church Council.
- B. Adopt the Safe Church framework as their own through signing a Statement of Commitment. A copy is not shared with anyone.
- C. Create their own Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy. A copy is sent to their Presbytery and Church Council.

Q2: Ministry Agents (with a stipend) and those available for supply are required to have a Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy. What is the best way to comply with the legislation?

- ☒ Adopt the Safe Church framework as their own through signing a Statement of Commitment. A copy is sent to their Presbytery and Church Council.
- ☐ Adopt the Safe Church framework as their own through signing a Statement of Commitment. A copy is not shared with anyone.
- ☐ Create their own Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy. A copy is sent to their Presbytery and Church Council.

Answer:

- A: Adopt the Safe Church framework as their own through signing a Statement of Commitment. A copy is sent to their Presbytery and Church Council.

Q3: Grooming refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a young or vulnerable person, to lower their inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity. Would parents and other adults also be groomed?

- ☐ Yes – to create a situation where the perpetrator can sexually abuse the young or vulnerable person.
- ☒ No – Only young or vulnerable people are groomed.

Q3: Grooming refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a young or vulnerable person, to lower their inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity. Would parents and other adults also be groomed?

- A. Yes – to create a situation where the perpetrator can sexually abuse the young or vulnerable person.
- B. No – Only young or vulnerable people are groomed.

Q3: Grooming refers to actions deliberately undertaken with the aim of befriending and establishing an emotional connection with a young or vulnerable person, to lower their inhibitions in preparation for sexual activity. Would parents and other adults also be groomed?

- ☒ No – to create a situation where the perpetrator can sexually abuse the young or vulnerable person.
- ☐ No – Only young or vulnerable people are groomed.

Answer:

- A: Yes – to create a situation where the perpetrator can sexually abuse the young or vulnerable person.

Q4: Which of the following would be an example of acceptable behaviour?

- ☐ Using language and prayer to create ongoing guilt and self-blame.
- ☐ Showing favouritism.
- ☐ Asking for help and support.
- ☐ All of the above.

Q4: Which of the following would be an example of acceptable behaviour?

- A. Using language and prayer to create ongoing guilt and self-blame.
- B. Showing favouritism.
- C. Asking for help and support.
- D. All of the above.
-

Q4: Which of the following would be an example of acceptable behaviour?

- ☐ Using language and prayer to create ongoing guilt and self-blame.
- ☐ Showing favouritism.
- ☒ Asking for help and support.
- ☐ All of the above.

Answer:

C: Asking for help and support.

Q5: Which of the following is NOT a sign of possible sexual abuse?

- ☐ Unexplained injuries to sexual body parts.
- ☐ Refusing to talk about 'secrets'.
- ☐ Gifts that are easily explained, such as for a birthday.
- ☐ Overly sexualised themes in artwork.

Q5: Which of the following is NOT a sign of possible sexual abuse?

- A. Unexplained injuries to sexual body parts.
- B. Refusing to talk about 'secrets'.
- C. Gifts that are easily explained, such as for a birthday.
- D. Overly sexualised themes in artwork.

Q5: Which of the following is NOT a sign of possible sexual abuse?

- ☐ Unexplained injuries to sexual body parts.
- ☐ Refusing to talk about 'secrets'.
- ☒ Gifts that are easily explained, such as for a birthday.
- ☐ Overly sexualised themes in artwork.

Answer:

C: Gifts that are easily explained, such as for a birthday.

Q6: Which of the following is an appropriate way to respond to a person disclosing about abuse?

- ☐ Tell them you do not believe it happened.
- ☐ Take a statement and do not share with the Synod Office nor the Police.
- ☐ Listen supportively, letting them take their time and use their own words.
- ☐ Provide no follow-up conversation nor offer further support.

Q6: Which of the following is an appropriate way to respond to a person disclosing about abuse?

- A. Tell them you do not believe it happened.
- B. Take a statement and do not share with the Synod Office nor the Police.
- C. Listen supportively, letting them take their time and use their own words.
- D. Provide no follow-up conversation nor offer further support.

Q6: Which of the following is an appropriate way to respond to a person disclosing about abuse?

- ☐ Tell them you do not believe it happened.
- ☐ Take a statement and do not share with the Synod Office nor the Police.
- ☒ Listen supportively, letting them take their time and use their own words.
- ☐ Provide no follow-up conversation nor offer further support.

Answer:

C: Listen supportively, letting them take their time and use their own words.



- To aid with record keeping, all Ministry Agents need to:
 - Scan this QR code
 - Complete the form.
- This will be accessible by your Presbytery to prove you have completed this module.



- Thank you so much for your time and effort with the training.
- Safe Church resources can be found on The Hub.
- Connect with the Safe Church Unit if you have any questions.