



Obligations of Church Councils not offering child-related activities

C/2.1.10.5

Purpose

Outlines the specific obligations to comply with the Safe Church Policy and Synod Wide Blue Card Policy, for church councils (councils) and committees of the church where no child-related activities are occurring.

Scope

Applies to all workers (paid and volunteer) in congregations, faith communities, and presbyteries of the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod. For Church Councils conducting child-related activities please refer to the document: [Obligations of Church Councils and Presbytery Committees offering child-related activities](#).

Mandatory Reporting

1. The [Mandatory Reporting Process for Ministry Agents](#) and the [Mandatory Reporting Process for Lay Workers Lay Preachers and Volunteers](#) outlines the steps to take when reporting incidents of suspected abuse, grooming sexual abuse or neglect, and includes the requirement to report all boundary violations and breaches of behaviour. Use the [Template for Complaints and Allegations](#) and the [Guide for Reporting Child Safety Concerns](#) if applicable. This will ensure you are meeting your legal obligations and fulfilling your duty of care to the children and vulnerable people involved in your activities. A copy of each of these documents is available on the synod [website](#).

Mandatory screening

2. All lay workers **must** undergo [pre-appointment](#) screening and be appointed by the Church Council. All child-related roles **also** require a valid linked Blue Card or exemption card.
3. [Pre-appointment](#) screening is required for working with vulnerable people. All workers, are required to be deemed as suitable to apply for a Blue Card.
4. All persons with a negative notice or excluded or disqualified from requesting a Blue Card check from any state or territory of Australia **are not permitted** to work or volunteer with children and vulnerable people.

Obligations

5. **Annually adopt or re-affirm their commitment to the Safe Church Policy**
 - 5.1. All church councils are required to formally adopt or reaffirm their commitment to the Safe Church Policy on an annual basis, and to record a statement of commitment in church council meeting minutes. A [template](#) is available for congregations to use.
 - 5.2. Councils of congregation that do not have young families, children, or young people and as such, may not offer child-related activities or programs can formally resolve not to conduct child-related activities.



6. Resolution to not conduct child-related activities

- 6.1. Councils which make a formal resolution to **not** conduct child-related activities must formally minute this decision. The members of the council are **not** required to hold a blue card or exemption card **for the period** that the formal resolution is in place.
- 6.2. The formal resolution **cannot** be in place for longer than 12 months. It **must** be renewed annually if applicable. A [template](#) is available for congregations to use which covers these requirements.
- 6.3. A copy of the completed signed template, or a copy of the minutes must be provided annually to the presbytery in response to the Annual Safe Church Audit.

7. Blue cards and governance requirements

- 7.1. Council members **are not** required to hold a blue card or exemption card for the period that the formal resolution is in place.
- 7.2. All lay council members **must** annually sign a [Statement of Personal Commitment](#) which outlines the required code of conduct for all lay staff and volunteers.
- 7.3. All lay council members **must** annually sign a copy of the [Mandatory Reporting Process for Lay Preachers, Lay Workers and Volunteers](#) to demonstrate that they understand their reporting obligations as council members.

8. Training

- 8.1. All lay Church Council members must comply with the Safe Church Training Procedure. Church Council Chairpersons have additional training requirements.

Resuming or recommencing child-related activities

9. Rescind the formal resolution

- 9.1. Councils which wish to resume or recommence offering child-related activities or programs, **must first** formally rescind the resolution to not undertake child-related activities.
- 9.2. Once the resolution has been rescinded, the council **must** formally adopt or affirm their commitment to the Safe Church Policy and record a statement of commitment in church council meeting minutes that the Church plans to recommence or resume child-related activities. A [template](#) has been created for this process, for use by Church Councils.
- 9.3. Once the new statement of commitment is in place, the members of the council are now **required** to hold a blue card or exemption card noting that decisions **cannot** be made about child-related activities until **all** Church Council members hold a valid blue card or exemption card.
- 9.4. Recruitment, and appointment of volunteers or leaders for child-related roles **cannot** occur, until **all** the Church Council members hold valid blue card or exemption cards **and** have completed the additional Safe Church Training required.
- 9.5. Approval of child-related activities or programs **cannot** occur until **all** Church Council members hold valid blue card or exemption cards **and** have completed the additional Safe Church Training required.
- 9.6. For more information, refer to the document [Obligations of Church Councils and Presbytery Committees offering child-related activities](#).



Church Council Duties

10. Approving all activities, events, and programs

- 10.1. The process: [Planning Safe Programs](#) applies to all activities, events, programs, and activities, including programs and activities for vulnerable people. It is the Synod's system for planning and approving safe programs including high risk activities.
- 10.2. A [risk assessment](#) tool must be used on each occasion when planning activities, programs, or events. It is the responsibility of activity leaders to provide documentation of the planned activities to the Church Council, including completed risk assessment documents.

11. Visiting Preachers or speakers

- 11.1. Visiting preachers or speakers can enhance and support the life of a congregation and its people by upholding the beliefs and practices of the Uniting Church. Refer to [UCA requirements of visiting speakers and preachers](#) for the process to follow.

12. Pre-appointment screening for all lay workers

- 12.1. All workers within the Church must undergo the following screening:
 - 12.1.1. Application
 - 12.1.2. Interview
 - 12.1.3. Referee Checks
- 12.2. A copy of each document must be kept and recorded in the Register of Workers (RoW). Refer to [Selecting Leaders and Helpers](#).
- 12.3. Additional suitability checks are required for the following roles:
 - 12.3.1. Working or volunteering with anyone vulnerable

13. Appointing and approving all roles

- 13.1. Once all interviews, referee checks and suitability checks have been obtained, a determination must be made about the person's suitability for the role.
- 13.2. Once the person has been deemed suitable, formally appoint the person to the role, noting the appointment in the Church Council minutes, and record in the RoW.

14. Supporting workers

- 14.1. Care and oversight of lay workers is to be provided by the Church Council, their delegate or in the case of faith communities, the presbytery, or their delegate. The process [Supporting Leaders and Helpers](#) details the Church Councils obligations in supporting lay workers.

15. Responding to concerns

- 15.1. The process: [Responding to Concerns](#) is the Synod's system for responding to performance issues and complaints. This system includes ongoing training and support for all lay workers. All concerns and complaints must be recorded in a register.

16. Managing breaches of the Safe Church/ SMC Policy

- 16.1. The Safe Church Policy requires all lay workers to undergo pre-appointment screening and suitability checks and complete Safe Church Training relevant to their role. Breaches of the Safe Church Policy relate to a lack or failure to comply with these requirements. Refer to the [Breach Procedure](#).
- 16.2. All [breaches](#) must be recorded in a [register](#) and must be reported to the Safe Church Coordinator, Church Council or Presbytery Chair or their delegate.



17. Safe spaces

17.1. For people with behaviour that poses a risk to others, or for locations that may cause exposure to behaviour which may harm others, the [Responding to a Safety Concern](#) process must be implemented. This process implements safety guidelines through a [Safe Spaces Agreement](#). A Safe Spaces Agreement allows the Church to continue to offer support and minister to all people, whilst keeping children and anyone vulnerable safe.

18. Person of Concern

18.1. For people with behaviour or a criminal history that poses a risk to others, who wish to participate in Church or worship activities, the [Person of Concern](#) (POC) process is in place. The [POC process](#) implements safety guidelines through a Safety Agreement. A [Safety Agreement](#) allows all people to be safely included in Church activities.

19. Storage and sharing of records

19.1. All records must be collected, used, and stored in accordance with the [Synod Wide Blue Card Policy](#) and the Synod [Privacy Policy](#). Templates and tools are provided on the Safe Church website and the Workplace Health and Safety website to assist with this function.

Information and support

Information and support can be obtained from the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer on 07 3377 9833 or safechurch@ucaqld.com.au

Most training materials are now available online. For information or support to access online training, please contact the Learning and Development Team: 07 3377 9990 or learning@ucaqld.com.au

Definitions

Term	Meaning
Child-related role	<p>Under state legislation, child-related activities are those activities or programs which are provided only or mainly to children. All workers must comply with the Synod Wide Blue Card Policy, including workers that meet the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All First Aid Officers are required to hold a valid linked blue card or exemption card, in case emergency first aid treatment is required for anyone under 18 years of age. • All religious representatives, including persons studying to be a religious representative. • A worker that undertakes a child-related activity or task, on more than 7 calendar days per year. • A worker that is scheduled to undertake a child-related activity or task on a regular basis, ie is part of a roster for that volunteer task or activity. • Worship services and other activities aimed at only or mainly families, are not child-related activities, with the exception of some tasks that meet the threshold of a 'religious representative' defined below. <p>You will have additional responsibilities as part of your duty of care, if your role is not a child-related role, but you start supervising a volunteer under the age of 18. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You coordinate the property maintenance. You do not usually need a blue card in this role, as this is not a child-related activity. • However, this year you have a volunteer aged 16 that has



Term	Meaning
	<p>commenced volunteering, and whom you oversee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As part of your duty of care to children and anyone vulnerable, you are now required to hold a Valid linked Blue Card whilst you remain in a role supervising a junior worker.
<p>Threshold as a 'religious representative'</p>	<p>1. Under the Act, all persons considered to be a 'religious representative' must comply with the Synod Wide Blue Card Policy, and hold a valid linked Blue Card or Exemption Card. This includes a person who is training to become a religious representative. The roles of lay preacher and ministry agent both require a blue card, as under the Act these roles are defined as a 'religious representative'.</p> <p>2. Once the following threshold has been reached, the person is required to comply with the Synod Wide Blue Card Policy and must hold a Blue Card or Exemption Card as a religious representative and must complete additional Lay Training specific to this role. This requirement remains the same for congregations which do not offer child-related activities.</p> <p>3. The threshold - Once a volunteer performs the following ministerial functions on more than seven days in a calendar year:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preach and/or lead worship in their own congregation; or Preach and/or lead worship in any other worship services (including weddings and funerals); or Preside at the sacraments; or Perform any systematic pastoral care <p>For example: A person is not a lay preacher as defined under <i>The Uniting Church in Australia Regulation 2.2.3</i>. However, the person takes on one or more of the above tasks or roles (above in Section 3) on a regular or ongoing basis as there is no ministry agent in placement at their congregation. This person must comply with the additional requirements in Section 2, as they are now considered a 'religious representative'.</p>
<p>Worker</p>	<p>Section 7 of Work Health and Safety Act 2011 defines a person as a worker if they are carrying out work in any capacity for the organisation. It includes employees, employees in regulated employment, ministry agents, contractors and subcontractors, labour hire workers, work experience students and volunteers.</p> <p>A worker includes a person who is serving on a board or committee or is involved in running the activity, and/or directed to perform specific tasks.</p> <p>A person is a worker, if that person is aged over 18 years, and undertakes a paid or volunteer activity on a regular basis, including being scheduled on a roster to undertake a paid or volunteer activity.</p>
<p>Lay Worker</p>	<p>All workers, (see above) but specifically excludes ministry agents.</p>
<p>Junior workers</p>	<p>For more information about suitable roles and responsibilities, refer to the document '<i>Sample Role Descriptions</i>', noting the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A child or young person aged between 12 years and 18 years may undertake a volunteer activity as a junior worker after participating in a pre-appointment screening process suitable for their age, maturity, and ability. All workers aged between 15 years and (under) 18 years must sign



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	<p>and complete a Junior Statement of Personal Commitment (SOPC) and complete relevant Safe Church Training, if assessed as having the level of maturity and ability to do so.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note that Junior volunteers or junior leaders are not expected to follow the Mandatory Reporting Process for Lay Workers, Lay Preachers, and Volunteers, and are not responsible for reporting suspected abuse, neglect or grooming, as they are children themselves. Junior Leaders must report to the activity or team leader if they notice that something is not right.
Vulnerable	<p>The following descriptions have been provided to assist in forming a shared understanding of 'vulnerable'. Vulnerability may occur at a specific point in time due to personal crisis, noting that some people may identify themselves as not being vulnerable. The list is not exhaustive but includes people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In need of special care, support, or protection because of age, disability, or risk of abuse or neglect. Unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation. This includes all children and young people under 18. Belonging to a group within society that is either oppressed or more susceptible to harm. Aged 18 or older who have the functional, mental, or physical inability to care for themselves. <p>Some services may require a yellow card as part of employment. Currently congregations offering activities and programs for adults or children with disabilities do not require yellow cards. However, mandatory screening requirements must be met for all people working or volunteering in Church activities or programs for anyone vulnerable, including adults with disabilities.</p>
Register of Workers	Is a register that contains details of the workers screening, appointment, training and blue card requirements.
Blue Card check	<p>The blue card check is more than a police check. It looks for charges, convictions and any other information that may deem a person unsuitable to work with children and young people.</p> <p>All applicants and blue card holders are monitored daily by the Queensland Police Service with immediate notification if there is a change in a card holder's police information.</p>
Negative notice	A negative notice is issued when this assessment is concluded with the decision that it is not in the best interests of children for the applicant to hold a blue card.
Screening	All workers must undergo screening which includes an interview and referee checks with the information recorded in the register of workers.

Revisions

Document number	C/2.1.10.5				
Version	Approval date	Approved by	Effective date	Policy owner	Policy contact
2.0	17.01.2024	Strategic Risk Manager	17.01.2024	Strategic Risk Manager	Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer
Next scheduled review	17.01.2024 Retired				