



Child and youth risk management strategy: Annual Review procedure for congregations and presbyteries

C/2.1.13

Purpose

Provides guidance for the Annual Safe Church audit and outlines the mandatory minimum requirements to demonstrate compliance with the Safe Ministry with Children: Providing Safe Ministry [Policy](#) (SMC Policy), which is the Synod's child and youth risk management strategy.

Scope

Applies to all persons involved in the request, provision, collection and analysis of the information needed to determine compliance with the mandatory requirements that form part of a child and youth risk management strategy. For the responsibilities of regulated businesses see the [Child and youth risk management strategy: Annual review procedure for regulated businesses](#).

Legislative requirements

The Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Act 2000 (Qld) and the Working with Children (Risk Management and Screening) Regulation 2020 (Qld) require all regulated organisations to develop and implement a child and youth risk management strategy. This strategy needs to address eight (8) mandatory requirements and will help to create a safe and supportive environment for children. The SMC Policy is the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod's ('the Synod') child and youth risk management strategy. It complies with the *Criminal Code (Child Sexual Offences Reform) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2020*. It also aligns with the ten (10) National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, the *Uniting Church in Australia's (UCA) National Child Safe Policy Framework 2022*, the *UCA National Person of Concern Policy Framework 2020* and the *UCA Child Safe Screening National Policy Framework 2020*.

This strategy will help to create a safe and supportive environment for children and needs to address eight (8) mandatory requirements:

1. A statement of commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and the protection of children from harm
2. A code of conduct for interacting with children
3. Written procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing staff and volunteers
4. Policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines
5. A plan for managing breaches of your risk management strategy
6. Risk management plans for high-risk activities and special events
7. Policies and procedures for managing compliance with the blue card system
8. Strategies for communication and support

1. Obligations

- 1.1. As part of a child and youth risk management strategy, the organisation is required to establish and maintain an employee and volunteer register which is a written record or register of all business operators, paid employees and volunteers involved in child-related activities within the organisation.



- 1.2. Under the Act, Blue Card Services has the power to conduct an audit on an organisation to ensure an employee register is being maintained.
- 1.3. A child and youth risk management strategy must be reviewed at least annually and after any incidents to ensure that risks continue to be addressed and minimised throughout the organisation.
- 1.4. The review of the SMC Policy occurs via an Annual Safe Church audit to provide Synod Standing Committee and Audit and Risk Committee with assurance that all relevant regulated businesses, congregations and presbyteries can demonstrate compliance with the relevant legislation.

Mandatory Reporting

- 2. The [Mandatory Reporting Process for Ministry Agents](#) and the [Mandatory Reporting Process for Lay Workers Lay Preachers and Volunteers](#) outline the steps to take to when reporting incidents of suspected abuse or neglect. This will ensure you are meeting your reporting obligations and fulfilling your duty of care. These documents complement the Safe Ministry training. A copy of each of these documents is available on the synod [website](#).

Responsibilities

- 3. The Church Council is responsible for the oversight of all activities involving children and vulnerable adults within the congregation. They will oversee local arrangements which are appropriate for the congregation size, considering availability of suitable leaders, local need and demographics.
- 4. Synod and presbytery committees with oversight of activities and programs for children and vulnerable adults, have the same obligations as those described for church councils.

Child and youth risk management strategy

5. Safe Church Assessment

- 5.1. The information assessed for the Annual Safe Church audit has been categorised to align with the 8 mandatory requirements.

| Legislative Requirement | SMC Compliance Test | Evidence Reviewed |
|---|---|---|
| 1. A statement of commitment to the safety and wellbeing of children and the protection of children from harm | All church councils and presbytery committees are required each year to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • formally adopt or reaffirm the Safe Ministry with Children policy; and • to record a statement of commitment to the safety and protection of all people, including Children | Templates available for use; or Copy of Church council or presbytery committee minutes showing the resolution to adopt the policy |
| 2. A code of conduct for interacting with children | All lay workers, Lay Preachers, and volunteers sign a Statement of Personal Commitment (SOPC) annually All ministry agents sign a Statement of Commitment to Safe Ministry, annually. | Register of volunteers (RoV), records on <i>UCare</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Date the Statement of Personal Commitment was signed <input type="checkbox"/> |

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|---|---|---|
| 3. Written procedures for recruiting, selecting, training and managing staff and volunteers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All lay preachers, lay workers, and volunteers have evidence of pre-appointment screening All ministry agents, lay preachers, lay workers and volunteers have evidence of current training | <p>Register of volunteers (RoV), records on UCare, Training registers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Date of the initial interview Date of referee checks Date of the New Starter Check-In Date of appointment by the Church Council |
| 4. Policies and procedures for handling disclosures or suspicions of harm, including reporting guidelines | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All ministry agents, lay preachers, lay workers and volunteers have evidence of current training | <p>Central registers Policies and procedures</p> |
| 5. A plan for managing breaches of your risk management strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All ministry agents, lay preachers, lay workers and volunteers have evidence of current training | <p>Central registers Policies and procedures</p> |
| 7. Policies and procedures for managing compliance with the blue card system | <p>Screening has included the required working with children checks (blue card) for all child-related roles, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lay preachers Lay staff and Volunteers in child-related roles | <p>Use of the Blue Card Services Portal; or Validation and linking of all blue cards and exemption cards in the RoV, UCare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Date that the initial positive notice was received, or the date that the card was validated online Blue Card or Exemption Card expiry date Type of card The card is linked to the organisation A card is required for the role |
| 8. Strategies for communication and support | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All lay preachers, lay workers and volunteers have evidence of ongoing support | <p>Register of volunteers (RoV), records on UCare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Date of the Annual Well-Being Check-In |

5.2. To ensure we conduct child safe activities, each year the General Secretary requests information as part of a safe ministry with children assessment.

5.3. The General Secretary requires the following to demonstrate compliance:

5.3.1. Written evidence from all church councils and committees formally adopt or re-affirm their commitment to the Policy annually

5.3.2. A council resolution is to be minuted if the congregation determines not to conduct child-related activity.

5.3.3. Confirmation that all people working, or volunteering are screened, trained, sign a statement of personal commitment to child safety and must be approved by the church council before



commencing. This screening includes interviews, referee checks and for child-related roles linking of valid Blue Cards must occur.

- 5.4. Systems are in place for managing breaches of the strategy, responding to concerns, and planning safe programs including high risk activities. These systems include ongoing training and support for all volunteers, lay staff, and ministry agents, including the requirement of all adults to report all sexual abuse and grooming, or all suspected sexual abuse and grooming to police.
- 5.5. Resources are available, including templates to assist in recording, collating and reporting the information required to demonstrate compliance:
 - 5.5.1. [Blue Card Requirements for the Annual Safe Church audit](#)
 - 5.5.2. [Pre-screening requirements for the Annual Safe Church audit](#)
 - 5.5.3. [Information Required in a Register of Volunteers](#)
 - 5.5.4. [Guidelines for a Register of Volunteers](#).

Review Procedure

6. Initiation and timing

- 6.1. A 'Request from the General Secretary for information' initiates the Annual Review procedure of the Synod's child and youth risk management strategy.
 - 6.1.1. A copy of the Annual Safe Church Audit Survey tool, this Review Procedure and any template or resources to assist with the Annual Safe Church Audit will accompany the General Secretary's request.
- 6.2. The Annual review is for the past calendar year. Each review commences on or around the 31 January in reviewing the previous year.
- 6.3. The Annual Safe Church Audit Survey correspondence must include a clear return date. The return date must provide a minimum of six (6) weeks between the commencement date and the requested return date.

7. Responsibilities

- 7.1. Each presbytery is to communicate the 'Request from the General Secretary for information', and any templates or resources to assist with the Annual Safe Church Audit to each church council and faith community within their presbytery.
 - 7.1.1. Each church council to provide a response to the Annual Safe Church audit, demonstrating their compliance with the Synod's SMC Policy.
 - 7.1.2. Each presbytery is to ensure a response to the Annual Safe Church audit is provided for completion by each faith community, demonstrating their compliance with the Synod's SMC Policy.
- 7.2. The Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer is to collate all responses received from presbyteries, congregations and faith communities.

8. Reporting and feedback

- 8.1. The Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer will facilitate the compilation of an Annual Review Report to the General Secretary, after analysis of the data obtained from, presbyteries, congregations and faith communities.
- 8.2. The Annual Review Report will provide:
 - 8.2.1. An assessment of individual congregations and each presbytery's compliance with the child and youth risk management strategy; and
 - 8.2.2. An assessment of the effectiveness of the child and youth risk management strategy providing recommendations for any identified areas of improvement.



- 8.3. The Annual Review Report will be tabled at the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) and any comments, recommendations or feedback from ARC recorded.
 - 8.3.1. Following the Acceptance of the Annual Review Report by ARC, any comment, feedback or recommendations from ARC will be incorporated with the Annual Review Report, prior to summaries being supplied to each presbytery,
- 8.4. An individual Summary Report will be compiled for each presbytery, by the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer.
 - 8.4.1. This report will be provided to each presbytery within four (4) weeks of the Annual Review report being accepted at ARC.
 - 8.4.2. The Annual Review of the child and youth risk management strategy will be deemed to have been finalised once the individual Summary Reports have been provided.

Components requiring review

9. Statement of Commitment

- 9.1. All Presbytery committees and [church councils](#) must formally adopt or re-affirm their commitment to the SMC Policy annually, to meet the requirement of the Act and Regulation for a 'Child and Youth Risk Management Strategy':
 - 9.1.1. Each presbytery and each church council will annually adopt or re-affirm their commitment to the SMC Policy and will minute the decision.
 - 9.1.2. A [template](#) is available for this purpose.
 - 9.1.3. A copy of the minutes, or the completed template, must be kept as evidence of compliance with this requirement and provided to the Presbytery for inclusion in the Annual Safe Church audit response.
- 9.2. A copy of the minuted decision is to be provided annually to the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer for inclusion in the Annual Safe Church audit response.

10. Council resolution to not conduct child-related activities

- 10.1. Where a church council makes the decision to **not** conduct [activities with/for children](#), the decision will be minuted and reviewed annually. A [template](#) is available for use by congregations for this purpose.
 - 10.1.1. A copy of the minutes or the completed template must be kept as evidence of compliance with this requirement. It is to be provided to the presbytery for inclusion in the Annual Safe Church audit response.
 - 10.1.2. It is important to note that the church council is still required to adopt or re-affirm their commitment to the SMC Policy annually.

11. Code of Conduct: statement of personal commitment

- 11.1. The [Statement of Personal Commitment](#) contains a code of conduct detailing the range of acceptable behaviours required for all lay staff, lay preachers and volunteers working or volunteering within the Uniting Church.
 - 11.1.1. The statement of personal commitment document is to be signed upon appointment to a role within the congregation or presbytery, and then re-signed annually.
 - 11.1.2. A copy of the signed statement is to be kept on file by the church council. The date of signing and other personal information contained in this form must be recorded and maintained in the Register of Volunteers for inclusion in the Annual Safe Church audit.
- 11.2. The [Ministry Agent Statement of Commitment](#) to safe ministry is required to be signed by all ministry agents upon appointment and then annually.
 - 11.2.1. A copy of the signed statement is to be kept on file by the presbytery. The date of signing and other personal information contained in this form must be recorded and maintained in the Register of Volunteers for inclusion in the Annual Safe Church audit.



12. Register of Volunteers: Screening

- 12.1. The presbytery or church council is responsible for ensuring records of screening, blue cards, training and approval of risk assessments for all activities and programs are kept.
- 12.2. All people working or volunteering, including working or volunteering with children must be screened, trained, sign a statement of personal commitment and approved by the presbytery or church council before commencing in a role within the church or congregation.
 - 12.2.1. This screening includes interviews and referee checks for all lay preachers, lay staff and volunteers appointed since 2020
 - 12.2.2. Appointment by the Church Council and a new starter check-in for all lay preachers, lay staff and volunteers appointed since 2020;
 - 12.2.3. All lay staff and volunteers **appointed prior to 2020** must have the words 'pre-2020' placed against their name, in each of the columns for screening and appointment by the Church Council, in, the Register of Volunteers.
- 12.3. All people working or volunteering in child-related roles must have a valid linked Blue Card prior to commencing in the role.
 - 12.3.1. Compliance with Blue card screening requires evidence of an initial positive notice or evidence of initial online validation of all Blue Cards and Exemption Cards and that all Blue Cards and Exemption Cards are linked.
- 12.4. A copy of the Blue Card register, or evidence that all Blue Cards are kept in the Blue Card Services portal, must be provided by each congregation offering child-related activities, as part of the Annual Safe Church audit.

13. Register of Volunteers: Training

- 13.1. All training must be recorded, and a copy kept for inclusion in the Annual Safe Church audit.
- 13.2. All lay workers and volunteers in child-related roles must comply with the [Safe Church Training procedure](#), and complete the following training:
 - 13.2.1. Module 2 – Core SMC Training for Lay Workers Lay Preachers and Volunteers every 12 months
 - 13.2.2. Module 1 – Mandatory Training for Lay Workers Lay Preachers and Volunteers every 2 years
 - 13.2.3. Role specific training every 2 years
 - 13.2.4. All lay workers and volunteers in child-related roles should complete at least one hour of external training each year
- 13.3. All [lay workers and volunteers](#) **not** in child-related roles, must comply with the Safe Church Training procedure, and complete the following training:
 - 13.3.1. Module 1 – Mandatory Training for Lay Workers Lay Preachers and Volunteers every 2 years
 - 13.3.2. Role specific training every 2 years (check the Safe Church Training procedure for more information)
- 13.4. All ministry agents must comply with the Safe Church Training procedure and complete the following training:
 - 13.4.1. Module 2 – SMC Module 2 ministry agent face-to-face every 12 months
 - 13.4.2. Module 1 – SMC Module 1 ministry agent every 2 years
 - 13.4.3. Role specific training every 2 years (check the Safe Church Training procedure for more information).
 - 13.4.4. All ministry agents should complete at least one hour of external training each year.

14. Systems: Managing breaches

- 14.1. Systems are in place for managing breaches of the strategy (for example, expired Blue Cards). These systems include ongoing training and support for all volunteers, lay staff and ministry agents. All breaches must be recorded in a [register](#), and a copy of the register provided annually as part of the Annual SC Audit.



14.1.1. All breaches must be reported to the SMC Coordinator and the Church Council Chair or Presbytery Chair or their delegate. The Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer is available for support.

15. Systems: Responding to concerns

15.1. Systems are in place for responding to concerns. These systems include ongoing training and support for all volunteers, lay staff and ministry agents, including the requirement of all adults to report all suspected sexual abuse and grooming to police. All concerns and complaints must be recorded in a register.

15.1.1. The [Mandatory Reporting Process for Ministry Agents](#), and the [Mandatory Reporting Process for Volunteers, Lay Workers and Lay preachers](#) must be followed. The [Template for Complaints and Allegations](#) must be used to record and report all concerns and complaints.

16. Systems: Planning safe programs

16.1. Systems are in place for planning and approving safe programs including high risk activities. These systems include ongoing training and support for all volunteers, lay staff and ministry agents. A risk assessment [tool](#) must be used on each occasion when planning activities, programs or events.

16.1.1. All risk assessments must be approved by the Church Council or Presbytery Committee prior to the event program or activity commencing. Consultation with the Strategic Risk Manager must occur for all high-risk and extreme risk activities prior to approval by the Church Council or Presbytery Committee.

Information and support

Information and support can be obtained from the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer on 0491 491 227 or safeministrywithchildren@ucaqld.com.au

Most training materials are now available online, using the Synod’s Learning management System (LMS) [edUCate](#). For information or support to access online training, please contact the [Learning Team](#): 07 3377 9990 or learning@ucaqld.com.au

Revisions

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|-----------------------|---------------|------------------------|----------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Document number | | C/2.1.13 | | | |
| Version | Approval date | Approved by | Effective date | Policy owner | Policy contact |
| 4.0 | 26.07.2022 | Strategic Risk Manager | 26.07.2022 | ED Strategic Risk and Assurance | Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer |
| Next scheduled review | | 26.07.2027 | | | |