



Selecting Leaders and Helpers

C/2.1.2

Purpose

Guidance for Church Council members/delegates to undertake pre-appointment screening for all people who wish to volunteer within the Church, including roles volunteering with children and anyone vulnerable.

Scope

Applies to all persons working or volunteering in congregations, faith communities, and presbyteries of the Uniting Church in Australia, Queensland Synod ('the Synod').

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)*, *National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) 2013*, *Disability Services Act 2006* and *Disability Services Regulation 2017* have specific screening requirements for all persons working or volunteering with children and working or volunteering with disability services. All regulated businesses and regulated organisations must have a child and youth risk management strategy.

The Safe Ministry with Children (SMC) [Policy](#) is the Synod's child and youth risk management strategy and aligns with the ten (10) National Principles for Child Safe Organisations, the Uniting Church in Australia's (UCA) [National Child Safe Policy Framework 2022](#) and the UCA [Child Safe Screening National Policy Framework 2020](#).

Inclusion and support

Please let us know how we can work together better, to ensure everyone can connect, contribute, and belong. Contact: 07 3377 9983 or safechurch@ucaql.com.au

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, using 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 and volunteers **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. To offer safe activities and programs for vulnerable people, [pre-appointment](#) screening has been aligned with the screening requirements for people working or volunteering with disability services. As such, all people working and volunteering with anyone vulnerable, are required to meet the same screening standards, and **must** be deemed as suitable to apply for a Blue Card.
4. All persons excluded or disqualified from applying for a Working with Children Check; and persons with a negative Working with Children notice (a 'Negative Notice') from any state or territory of Australia **must also** be excluded from working or volunteering with vulnerable people, with the Church.



Definitions

5. Vulnerable

- 5.1. 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:
 - 5.1.1. 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.
 - 5.1.2. Belonging to a group within society that is either oppressed or more susceptible to harm.
 - 5.1.3. Aged 18 or older who have the functional, mental, or physical inability to care for themselves.
- 5.2. 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.

6. Child-related role

- 6.1. All lay workers or volunteers in child-related roles **must** hold a valid linked blue card. A person is considered to be 'working or volunteering with children' under state legislation if that person undertakes a paid or volunteer activity as defined below:
 - 6.1.1. The volunteer or lay worker is aged 18 years or over.
 - 6.1.2. 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.
 - 6.1.3. The activity is child related. Child-related activities are those activities or programs which are provided **only or mainly to** children.
 - 6.1.3.1. The volunteer or lay worker is deemed a "religious representative". 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.
- 6.2. If your role is not a child-related role, but you start supervising a volunteer under the age of 18. For example:
 - 6.2.1. You coordinate the property maintenance. You do not usually need a blue card in this role, as this is not a child-related activity.
 - 6.2.2. However, this year you have a volunteer aged 16 that has commenced volunteering, and whom you oversee.
 - 6.2.3. You are now undertaking a child-related role, as you are directly supervising this volunteer's work, and the volunteer is under 18.

7. Volunteer

- 7.1. A person is considered to be a volunteer, for child-related activities, if that person is aged over 18 years, and undertakes a volunteer activity on a regular basis, such that:
 - 7.1.1. The person undertakes a volunteer task, on more than 7 calendar days per year; or
 - 7.1.2. The person is scheduled to undertake a volunteer activity or task on a regular basis, ie is part of a roster for that volunteer task or activity

8. Junior Volunteer

- 8.1. A child or young person aged between 12 years and 18 years may undertake a volunteer activity as a junior volunteer after participating in a pre-appointment screening process suitable for their age, maturity, and ability.
- 8.2. All volunteers aged between 15 years and (under) 18 years must sign and complete a Junior Statement of Personal Commitment and complete Module 1 of the SMC Training, if assessed as having the level of maturity and ability to do so.



9. **Threshold as a 'religious representative'**

- 9.1. Under the Act, all persons considered to be a 'religious representative' must 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'.
- 9.2. Once the following threshold has been reached, the person is required to 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.
- 9.3. The threshold - Once a volunteer performs the following ministerial functions on **more than** seven days in a calendar year:
- 9.3.1. Preach and/or lead worship in their own congregation; or
 - 9.3.2. Preach and/or lead worship in any other worship services (including weddings and funerals); or
 - 9.3.3. Preside at the sacraments; or
 - 9.3.4. Perform any systematic pastoral care
- 9.4. For example:
- 9.4.1. A person is not a lay preacher as defined under *The Uniting Church in Australia Regulation 2.2.3*.
 - 9.4.2. However, the person takes on one or more of the above tasks or roles (*section 9.3 above*) on a regular or ongoing basis as there is no ministry agent in placement at their congregation.
 - 9.4.3. This person **must** comply with the additional requirements in *Section 9.2*, as they are now considered a 'religious representative'.

Increasing accessibility

10. **Promoting a shared understanding**

- 10.1. Any applicant may request to have a support person, or cultural or linguistic representative present for the application process. The discussion or interview should not proceed without this support person present.
- 10.2. For some persons with English as their second language, and persons from diverse cultural or linguistic backgrounds, a translator service or person may be required to ensure a shared understanding of the discussion. Ensure that the person able to translate is suitable and available.
- 10.3. Prior written approval of the full costs associated with the use of a Translator service, should be obtained from the Church Council prior to using a Translator service. If the use of a Translator Service is approved by the Church Council, ensure that the service is available at the requested time, as an appointment may be required, and failure to book a suitable appointment time may result in additional costs.
- 10.4. All junior applicants should have a parent, guardian or carer present during any discussions, and parental consent must be obtained prior to proceeding with any interview or discussion.
- 10.5. It is important to ensure that the application process itself, is not a barrier and does not exclude potential volunteers from volunteering. Throughout the application process, offer alternatives to written communication, such as a conversation in person, or via online services such as *zoom*.
- 10.6. Consider the appropriateness of gender and culture when planning an interview or discussion and ensure that any cultural considerations are observed e.g. a female may not feel comfortable being interviewed by a male, and if so, the interview should proceed with a female conducting the



interview process. Alternately the interview may proceed at a minimum with a female person present as a support, but only if the applicant/volunteer is comfortable to do so.

- 10.7. In all circumstances, ensure that consent is obtained for notes to be taken during the discussion. Be sure that a copy of the notes of the discussion signed by all parties present, is kept and placed on file.

Privacy and confidentiality

11. Protecting privacy

- 11.1. It is important to ensure that the application process is completed in an open and honest manner. Therefore, it is essential that confidentiality and privacy are observed throughout the recruitment process. This includes the applicant, referees and members of the Church Council and their delegates.
- 11.2. Confidentiality is observed when statements (written and oral) are made on the clear understanding that they will be shared only with those who have a legitimate reason to hold that knowledge in order to progress the application or where there is a legal obligation to share the information.
- 11.3. Where applicants choose not to provide any of the information requested, it is important to let them know that the Church may be unable to send information, fully process applications or properly consider the person for a volunteer role. Any information collected about applicants in the future will be used and disclosed in the same manner as described. Applicants may request access to personal information about them that is held by the Church. Refer to the [Privacy Policy](#).

Selection Process – new volunteer

12. Suitability

- 12.1. Each part of the application process is to be completed with prayerful consideration of the gifts and graces of the applicant, their suitability to work or volunteer in the role, and the needs of the Church. For roles requiring a blue card, the appointment of a successful applicant is subject to the receipt of a positive notice from Blue Card Services.
- 12.2. To offer safe activities and programs for vulnerable people, pre-appointment screening has been aligned with the screening requirements for people working or volunteering with disability services. As such, all people working and volunteering with anyone vulnerable, are required to meet the same screening standards, and must be deemed as suitable to apply for a Blue Card.
- 12.3. Before any person can work or volunteer, screening processes must occur, prior to appointment by the Church Council. This includes:
 - 12.3.1. Written or verbal application and declaration
 - 12.3.2. Interview/conversation
 - 12.3.3. Referee checks with two referees
 - 12.3.4. Linked blue card or exemption card (if working or volunteering with children)
 - 12.3.5. Suitability to apply for a blue card or exemption card (if working or volunteering with anyone vulnerable)
 - 12.3.6. Appointment to the role by the Church Council
 - 12.3.7. Complete and sign a Statement of Personal Commitment



Procedure

Steps for the applicant

13. Written application or expression of interest

- 13.1. Complete the [Application Form \(Volunteer\)](#). An [application form for junior helpers and leaders](#) is available for use by persons aged 12 to 18 years wishing to volunteer within the church.
- 13.2. Attach any required or relevant documents e.g. past training completed.
- 13.3. Email or hand the application form to the Safe Ministry with Children (SMC) Coordinator or the Church Council Chair or their delegate.

14. Verbal application or expression of interest

- 14.1. For some persons a verbal expression of interest may be more appropriate.

Steps for the church council representative/delegate

15. Assess the application

- 15.1. Receive the application, consider if other information is required from the applicant to clarify information provided on the application
- 15.2. If receiving a verbal application, obtain permission to take notes during the discussion. Use [Application Form \(Volunteer\)](#) as a guide to ask questions and facilitate the discussion to obtain the relevant information.
- 15.3. A verbal application or expression of interest is to be treated as a valid application to become a volunteer. An outcome in relation to the verbal application must be provided to the applicant.
- 15.4. For junior applicants ensure that the parent, guardian, or carer has given consent, and is available to participate in the interview process.
- 15.5. An outcome in relation to the application must be provided to the applicant.

16. Interview the applicant

- 16.1. A [template](#) to use for conducting an interview with a potential volunteer has been developed as a guide. Advise the applicant that you will be taking notes throughout the discussion.

17. Speak with referees

- 17.1. A [template](#) to use for conducting an interview with a referee has been developed as a guide. Follow the prompts in this guide when speaking with each referee. There is space in this document to write notes regarding your discussion with each referee.

18. Additional steps for roles working or volunteering with children

- 18.1. All persons excluded or disqualified from applying for a Working with Children Check; and persons with a negative Working with Children notice (a 'Negative Notice') from any state or territory of Australia **must also** be excluded from working or volunteering in child-related activities or roles, with the Church
- 18.2. Check the validity of existing blue cards or exemption cards by entering details on www.bluecard.qld.gov.au and record blue card details in the Register of Volunteers.
- 18.3. The person will not be approved to work or volunteer in a child-related role and appointed by the Church Council until they have received a positive notice.



- 18.4. Determine if the applicant is suitable to work with children and able to complete the tasks required. List any supportive measures to be put in place.
- 18.5. All lay workers and volunteers in child-related roles should comply with the [Safe Church Training Procedure](#) and complete at least one hour of external training each year
- 18.6. All lay workers and volunteers in child-related roles must complete Module 2 – Core SMC Training for Lay Workers Lay Preachers and Volunteers prior to/ upon appointment and then every 12 months

19. Additional steps for roles working or volunteering with anyone vulnerable

- 19.1. All persons excluded or disqualified from applying for a Working with Children Check; and persons with a negative Working with Children notice (a 'Negative Notice') from any state or territory of Australia **must also** be excluded from working or volunteering with vulnerable people, with the Church.
- 19.2. All persons seeking to volunteer with anyone vulnerable must complete and sign the '*Applicant Declaration*' in the [Volunteer Application Form](#), declaring that they are suitable to work with anyone vulnerable including children.
- 19.3. The person **must not** be approved to work or volunteer in a role with anyone vulnerable, and appointed by the Church Council unless they have completed and signed the '*Applicant Declaration*' in the [Volunteer Application Form](#), declaring that they are suitable to work with anyone vulnerable **including children**.
- 19.4. All people seeking to volunteer in roles, activities and programs supporting adults and young people with disabilities, should complete the free [Worker Orientation](#) training module available from the [NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission](#). Register for a free eLearning account and record all training in the Register of Volunteers.
- 19.5. Determine if the applicant is suitable to work with anyone vulnerable and able to complete the tasks required. List any supportive measures to be put in place.

20. Blue Card application process

- 20.1. If the role requires a blue card ask the volunteer to complete the appropriate blue card application form or linking form and lodge it with Blue Card Services, listing the church council chairperson as the organisational contact person.
- 20.2. The person must not be approved to work or volunteer in a child-related role and appointed by the Church Council until they have received a positive notice.
- 20.3. Ensure the details of the blue card or exemption card are listed in the register of workers as required by law. For more information, refer to [Guidance Notes: Blue card requirements for lay workers](#).
- 20.4. If the person receives a negative notice, follow the [Responding to a Person of Concern procedure](#). The person **will not** be approved to work or volunteer with children, **nor** with anyone vulnerable.

21. Determine the outcome of the application and interview process

- 21.1. Confirm your determination with the church council members who will formally include the approval or otherwise of the appointment in Church Council meeting minutes.
- 21.2. If an applicant has received a negative notice or declared reasons why they are not suitable to work or volunteer with children and anyone vulnerable, the Church Council must be provided with the information in order to make a determination whether further action is required. The Church Council may make a determination that:
 - 21.2.1. The person may be a [Person of Concern](#)



21.2.2. The person may be suitable to volunteer in other activities or programs where there are no children, or vulnerable persons

21.2.3. The person may not be suitable to work or volunteer for the Church

21.3. If an applicant is deemed unsuitable for the role, this should be communicated in a sensitive way (with pastoral follow-up) and other more suitable roles or ways to serve or use their gifts suggested, if appropriate.

21.4. Advise the applicant of the decision.

21.5. Arrange for approved volunteers to receive relevant Safe Ministry with Children training, and to sign the [Statement of Personal Commitment](#).

21.6. Give the original application and attachments to the church council secretary marked 'CONFIDENTIAL' for document storage.

22. Letter of appointment

22.1. Provide the applicant/new volunteer with a letter of appointment. A [sample letter](#) is available as a guide.

Steps for the new volunteer

23. Training

23.1. All lay workers and volunteers must comply with the [Safe Church Training](#) procedure, and complete the following training:

23.1.1. Module 1 – Mandatory Training for Lay Workers Lay Preachers and Volunteers prior to/ upon appointment and then every 2 years

23.1.2. Role specific training every 2 years

23.2. From the age of 15 years onwards, all junior volunteers deemed to have the appropriate level of maturity and ability may complete:

23.2.1. Module 1 – Mandatory Training for Lay Preachers, Lay Workers and Volunteers. This training must be completed every 2 years.

24. Code of conduct

24.1. All new volunteers must complete, read, and sign the [Statement of Personal Commitment](#). A Statement of Personal Commitment is required to be signed annually by each volunteer. This document details the code of conduct required by all volunteers when undertaking any volunteer role within the church, Synod wide.

24.2. All junior volunteers (aged 15 – 18 years) must annually complete and sign a [Statement of Personal Commitment \(junior\)](#).

24.3. For some new volunteers, it may be more appropriate to read the statement of personal commitment to the new volunteer. The new volunteer may then sign the document to show that they agree with the Statement of Personal Commitment.

Selection Process – nominated and appointed volunteer

25. Suitability

25.1. Sometimes people are nominated and then appointed then roles, for example, in the case of Church Council membership. This pathway to serving the Church and community is not the same as a person applying for employment.



- 25.2. Ensure that the person nominated and appointed to the role meets the requirements in *Sections 18, 19 and 20* if the role requires a Blue Card, as is the case for many Church Council positions.

Procedure

Steps for the church council representative/delegate

26. Complete the screening process

- 26.1. For roles requiring a blue card, the appointment of a successful applicant is subject to the receipt of a positive notice from Blue Card Services.
- 26.2. Whilst prayerful consideration of the gifts and graces of the applicant, their suitability to work or volunteer in the role, and the needs of the Church will have occurred during the nomination and appointment process, it is still a requirement that screening, and support occur. The following processes must occur:
- 26.2.1. Complete the New Starter Check-In process to record a discuss of the person's gifts, motivation to serve the Church and community, and their skills and past experience that they bring to the position, and their commitment to Safe Church.
- 26.2.2. Note the date of the discussion on the Register of Volunteers and keep a record of the discussion, using the New Starter Check-In document.
- 26.2.3. Provide a copy of the Statement of Personal Commitment (SOPC) for the person to complete and sign.

27. Letter of appointment

- 27.1. Provide the applicant/new volunteer with a letter of appointment. A [sample letter](#) is available as a guide.

Steps for the volunteer

28. Training

- 28.1. All lay workers and volunteers must comply with the [Safe Church Training](#) procedure, and complete the following training:
- 28.1.1. Module 1 – Mandatory Training for Lay Workers Lay Preachers and Volunteers prior to/ upon appointment and then every 2 years
- 28.1.2. Role specific training every 2 years

29. Code of conduct

- 29.1. All volunteers must complete, read, and sign the [Statement of Personal Commitment](#). A Statement of Personal Commitment is required to be signed annually by each volunteer. This document details the code of conduct required by all volunteers when undertaking any volunteer role within the church, Synod wide.

Selection Process – volunteer responding to a need

30. Suitability

- 30.1. Sometimes a prayerful request for support is communicated, and a person may then feel prayerfully compelled to respond to this request. This pathway to serving the Church and community is not the same as a person applying for employment.
- 30.2. Ensure that the person responding to the Church's need meets the requirements in *Sections 18, 19 and 20* if the role requires a Blue Card, if the role is child related.



Procedure

Steps for the church council representative/delegate

31. Complete the screening process

- 31.1. For roles requiring a blue card, the appointment of a successful applicant is subject to the receipt of a positive notice from Blue Card Services.
- 31.2. Whilst prayerful consideration has occurred in identifying a need within the Church, and a prayerful response has been received, it is still a requirement that screening, and support occur. The following processes must occur:
 - 31.2.1. Complete the New Starter Check-In process to record a discussion of the person's gifts, motivation to serve the Church and community, and their skills and past experience that they bring to the position, and their commitment to Safe Church.
 - 31.2.2. This discussion should also include any supports or assistance that the person may require in order to successfully fulfill this need in service to the Church and the community, in challenging their growth, and allowing them to grow their gifts and skills.
 - 31.2.3. Note the date of the discussion on the Register of Volunteers and keep a record of the discussion, using the New Starter Check-In document.
 - 31.2.4. Provide a copy of the Statement of Personal Commitment (SOPC) for the person to complete and sign.

32. Letter of appointment

- 32.1. Provide the applicant/new volunteer with a letter of appointment. A [sample letter](#) is available as a guide.

Steps for the volunteer

33. Training

- 33.1. All lay workers and volunteers must comply with the [Safe Church Training](#) procedure, and complete the following training:
 - 33.1.1. Module 1 – Mandatory Training for Lay Workers Lay Preachers and Volunteers prior to/ upon appointment and then every 2 years
 - 33.1.2. Role specific training every 2 years

34. Code of conduct

- 34.1. All volunteers must complete, read, and sign the [Statement of Personal Commitment](#). A Statement of Personal Commitment is required to be signed annually by each volunteer. This document details the code of conduct required by all volunteers when undertaking any volunteer role within the church, Synod wide.
 - 34.1.1. Complete and sign a Statement of Personal Commitment each year
 - 34.1.2. Participate in an Annual Well-Being Check-In each year.

Information and support

Information and support can be obtained from the Safe Church Assurance and Support Officer on 07 3377 9983 or safechurch@ucaqld.com.au

For all training enquiries please contact the Synod's [Learning and Development Team](#): 07 3377 9990 or learning@ucaqld.com.au. Most training materials are now available online, using the Synod's Learning Management System (LMS) [edUCate](#).



Revisions

Document number		C/2.1.2			
Version	Approval date	Approved by	Effective date	Policy owner	Policy contact
4.0	20.04.2023	Strategic Risk Manager	20.04.2023	ED Strategic Resources and Assurance	Safe Church, Assurance and Support Officer
Next scheduled review		20.04.2025			