

Guide for Church Councils for Implementing Keeping Children Safe Policy



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA

Keeping
Children
Safe



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<p>Keeping Children Safe is a continuous process, not something to be done once and forgotten. A Church Council (CC) should undertake these action steps to ensure the process occurs.</p> <p>Steps 1-7 apply to every congregation and are marked in green.</p> <p><i>Steps 8, 9 & 10 apply if you have children in your congregation and/or you are bringing people into new volunteer roles. These are marked in orange and are in italics.</i></p> <p>Every congregation must be Safe for Children.</p> <p>Regarding outside hirers of UCA property: Note that the Church Council is not responsible for the child safety policies of outside hirers. Use the correct wording found in the standard letting agreement that is available on the Information for Church Councils page.</p>	<p>Resources</p> <p>(All are listed in document CC3 and in Resources tab on website)</p> <p>CC9 CC9A</p>
<p>1. Prepare for action – Applies to every congregation</p>	
<p>1.1. Church Council chairperson (or person they designate) are to read this guide and entire Keeping Children Safe (KCS) policy and Working With Children Check/Registration policy in preparation for guiding implementation of the policy. (The designated person may be Culture of Safety (CoS) contact person if already in place.) Victoria based congregations must also read-Reportable Conduct Policy (Victoria)</p>	<p>KCS1, WWC1, CC1</p> <p>RCS1</p>
<p>1.2. People in specified ministries (including lay preachers), CC chairperson, their designate and CoS contact person are to be aware of resources regarding reporting abuse, and fostering diversity.</p>	<p>CC5, CSS1, CSS2, CSS3, CSS4, SPSP5</p>

2. Make a Statement of Commitment – Applies to every congregation	
2.1. Church Council (CC) is to read KCS Policy and Working with Children Check/Registration Policy.	KCS1, WWC1
2.2. CC is to adopt and sign Our Statement of Commitment. Do not delete any points.	KCS3
2.3. Publicise commitment within congregation and to appointed leaders (see suggestions in CC2).	CC2
2.4. Establish single place or person to securely hold all paper and electronic records related to KCS policy. If questions are raised by government audit, by a lawsuit, or by Synod, about adherence to Keeping Children Safe, good records are vital.	Refer KCS1, policy actions 2.4c and 2.5j,k
2.5. Ensure Our Statement of Commitment is annually renewed by CC and publicised.	KCS3

3. Appoint a CoS Contact Person – Applies to every congregation (Relates to policy actions 2.1g, 2.4, 2.6)	
3.1. CC is to appoint Culture of Safety Contact Person if not already in place. Use appropriate volunteer selection processes. (See 7.1) Designate another person to handle this role when CoS Contact Person is unavailable (perhaps CC chairperson).	SCT1, CC4
3.2. Introduce Contact Person to congregation, especially children, and publicise his/her availability.	SCT7
3.3. Send Contact Person's name and contact details and name of congregation to: cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au Advise Synod if Contact Person changes.	Refers to KCS1, policy actions 2.4c
3.4. Contact Person to familiarise self with Person of Concern Information and Guide for the prevention of sexual grooming.	POC1, CC10

4. Use a Code of Conduct – Applies to every congregation (Relates to policy actions 2.1, 2.2, 2.3)	
4.1. CC is to approve Code of Conduct (see KCS4) for all leaders, employees and volunteers of congregation. Distribute it to all leaders, employees and volunteers and ensure that it is read, understood and review annually.	KCS4/KCS4A

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4.2.	Minute approval of Code of Conduct and ensure all appointed leaders have read and understood it.	Refers to KCS1, policy actions 2.4c
4.3.	<i>CC is to ask committee/people responsible for work with children/youth to discuss ways to improve access and equity for diverse groups in light of Policy Action 2.2.</i>	<i>Refer KCS1, Policy action 2.2</i>
4.4.	<i>Consider asking children/young people in congregation to sign a Children's Code of Conduct, after gaining parental consent.</i>	<i>KCS7</i>

5. Ensure all existing personnel have Working With Children Checks/Registrations (Relates to policy actions 2.3, 2.4) – Applies to every congregation		
5.1.	CC to appoint a person to take responsibility for Working with Children Checks/Registrations. This person needs good administrative and computer skills. This person is to begin by reading Working With Children Check Policy and FAQs and by sending their details to Synod.	WWC1, WWC2 WWC5
5.2.	Ensure all existing employees, appointed leaders (see KCS Policy, Appendix Three, Definitions), and volunteers in child-related programs have a current Working With Children Check/Registration.	WWC1
5.3.	If anyone refuses to apply for a WWCC/R, consult flowchart for WWCC/R refusal. Such a person cannot be in leadership until gaining a WWCC/R.	WWC6
5.4.	Keep an up-to-date local record of all who hold a WWCC/R with expiry date. Report quarterly to CC on updated numbers.	Refers to KCS1, policy actions 2.4c
5.5.	Ensure that every new WWCC/R application includes both the congregation AND UCA Synod Vic/Tas as organisations to receive report. Add UCA Synod to existing WWCC/Rs.	WWC3, WWC4
5.6.	Any communication (by telephone, email, or post) from Department of Justice MUST be reported to the office of the Synod General Secretary at gensec@victas.uca.org.au	WWC2
5.7.	Any NEGATIVE NOTICE must be reported immediately to the Synod using the email above. Anyone with a negative notice must stand aside immediately from leadership.	WWC1

6. Support and train <u>existing</u> personnel – Applies to every congregation (Relates to policy actions 2.4, 2.5)		
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6.1. Ensure all existing personnel have signed Code of Conduct.	KCS4
6.2. Ensure all employed and voluntary staff attend Safe Church Training and understand their responsibilities for reporting concerns or abuse.	Dates to be advised SCT5, SCT6
6.3. Record attendance at Safe Church Training and plan renewal of Safe Church Training for all personnel every two years.	SCT2
6.4. CC is to approve the Statement of commitment to induction and training.	KCS5
6.5. If not already doing so, <i>consider</i> having a Volunteer Annual Review to ensure each volunteer worker has opportunity to express concerns, suggest improvements, etc. Keep brief records of these conversations. If there are concerns about any volunteer, consider a Volunteer Development Plan.	SSL6, SSL7
6.6. Follow appropriate steps if a person violates the Code of Conduct or for other reasons must be asked to step down. Document all steps taken and hold records confidentially.	CC8

7. Respond appropriately to any concerns – Applies to every congregation (Relates to policy action 2.5)	
7.1. CoS Contact Person to read and understand procedures for responding to and reporting breaches of Code of Conduct and suspected child abuse.	SCT3, CC5, CC6
7.2. Call 000 if a child is in immediate danger.	SCT3
7.3. Contact Synod Culture of Safety unit whenever you receive a child safety concern. Phone (03) 9251 5288 or email cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au	SCT3

8. Carefully select and induct <u>new</u> personnel – Applies if bringing employees or volunteers into new roles (Relates to policy action 2.4)	
8.1. <i>In choosing new employees or volunteers, use an appropriate process, which should include interview and reference checks.</i>	CC4, KCS5, SSL1, SSL2, SSL3, SSL4, SSL5
8.2. <i>All new personnel must agree to abide by the Code of Conduct as indicated in sample letter of appointment.</i>	KCS4, SSL5

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8.3.	<i>All new appointed leaders and people working with children must have or apply for a Working With Children Check/Registration. Ensure that any existing WWCC/R or any new application includes both the congregation AND UCA Synod Vic/Tas as organisations to receive report.</i>	WWC1, WWC3, WWC4
8.4.	<i>Add new personnel to the local record of all who hold a WWCC/R with expiry date. Also add UCA Synod to each person's record.</i>	WWC3, WWC4
8.5.	<i>Any communication (by telephone, email, or post) from Department of Justice MUST be reported to the office of the Synod General Secretary immediately. See 5.6 above.</i>	WWC2
8.6.	<i>Any NEGATIVE NOTICE must be reported to the Synod immediately. No one with a negative notice may serve in a leadership position. See 5.7 above.</i>	WWC1
8.7.	<i>Ensure all new personnel attend Safe Church Training as soon as possible and understand their responsibilities for reporting concerns or abuse.</i>	SCT dates to be advised.
8.8.	<i>Record attendance at Safe Church Training.</i>	SCT2

9.	<i>Ensure good planning practices for events involving children/youth (Relates to policy action 2.5) – Applies if any children/youth may attend any church-sponsored event</i>	
9.1.	<i>CoS Contact Person to be consulted about events involving children/youth.</i>	SCT1
9.2.	<i>Organisers to assess safety of any event (this is called a risk assessment). Consider physical safety, children's vulnerability to abuse, and community safety.</i>	CC7, SPSP1
9.3.	<i>If assessment shows up possible risks, CC and organisers to consider how likely and how serious they are. Consider whether activity should go ahead at all or whether and how it should be modified. Keep a record of assessment and any modifications (a dated paragraph is adequate).</i>	CC7
9.4.	<i>Ensure organisers are aware of and use relevant forms available (e.g., recording attendance, gaining permissions, providing feedback).</i>	SPSP2, SPSP3, SPSP4, SPSP6, SPSP8, SPSP9

10.	<i>Encourage participation of children and families – Applies especially to congregations with children involved (Relates to policy action 2.6)</i>	
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<p>10.1. <i>CoS Contact Person and everyone working with children to read and understand KCS Policy Action 2.6 and consider ways to apply these principles.</i></p>	<p><i>Refer KCS1, Policy action 2.6</i></p>
<p>10.2. <i>CC to ensure that children and youth, and their parents/guardians are given information about the Keeping Children Safe policy of the entity and of Synod.</i></p>	<p><i>SPSP7</i></p>
<p>10.3. <i>Children and youth to be given opportunities for feedback about programs and events.</i></p>	<p><i>SPSP8/9</i></p>
<p>10.4. <i>CoS Contact Person to maintain contact with children, youth, and parents/guardians who may raise safety concerns.</i></p>	<p><i>SCT1</i></p>

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