SAFE
Children's Ministry

A Guide for Children's Ministry Leaders

Uniting Church
SYNOD OF NSW & ACT

pulse

SAFE Children's Ministry

Contents

A GUIDE FOR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY LEADERS

A Guide for Children's Ministry Leaders

Introduction

The Uniting Church in Australia believes that all people, are made in the image of God. As a community of faith, we are committed to providing safe environments so that all people may flourish. The Uniting Church takes seriously our commitment to ensure all children in our care have a safe place in which to explore faith. This booklet sets out guidelines for all people, both paid and volunteer, who are involved in children's ministry in the Synod of NSW and the ACT.

For the purposes of this booklet, children's ministry refers to ministry involving children up to and including Year 6. There is a separate booklet for leaders engaged in ministry to youth (high school age or otherwise teenagers under the age of 18).

The role of Children's Ministry Leaders

Depending on the way congregations organise their Children's ministry, there will be a person or group who will have oversight of children's activities. This may be the Head/Co-ordinator of Children's ministry, a Children's ministry team or even the Church Council. Those in charge of Children's ministry will have specific responsibilities including but not limited to:

- Ensuring the right people are in the right role. Criteria for choosing who should be involved in children's ministry should be clearly outlined in church policies and procedures. This will include such things as not appointing people to work in children's ministry unless they have been in the congregation for at least 6 months, matching personality and attitude with role, and ensuring that the people who work in children's ministry have the appropriate physical, mental, emotional and spiritual capacity for the role.

- Ensuring there are written descriptions which clearly outline the expectations and detail the responsibilities of each role.

- Ensuring that a risk assessment is carried out for all child related activities. This will include identifying and mitigating risks associated with the physical environment as well as safeguards against physical, emotional, spiritual, and sexual abuse of children. Further information about conducting a risk assessment using the Synod template and WHS (Work Health and Safety) considerations is available in the _UCA - Our Toolkit for Congregations_ on the Synod website.

- Identifying the screening checks and Safe Church awareness training requirements for the various roles

- Ensuring that all people who work with children have a current and validated Working With Children's Check (NSW) or Working With Vulnerable People Card (ACT) and are current with their Safe Church Awareness training obligations.

- Ensuring all people who work with children have completed the Children's ministry screening questionnaire.

- Understanding of the legal and UCA requirements for child protection and reporting i.e. Mandatory Reporting and Reportable Conduct.

Screening, appointment, and training of Children's ministry leaders

Legal requirements

There are specific screening requirements under the legislation in NSW and in the ACT. Any person directly involved in children's ministry or responsible for children's activities, both paid or as a volunteer, must have a valid Working With Children Check (WWCC) clearance in NSW or a Working With Vulnerable People Check (WWVP check) in the ACT which has been validated by the Safe Church Liaison person. It is an offence to allow a person to work with children without the appropriate clearance. A person cannot work with children until the WWCC/WWVP is verified by the Safe Church Person, or the WWVP card is received. The card must be carried at all times while working with children in the ACT. Any declined WWCC/WWVP application must be reported to the Safe Church Unit.

It is important that all children's ministry leaders liaise with the Safe Church Contact person or whoever is responsible for Safe Church compliance in their congregation, to ensure that all people they appoint to work in children's ministry have the appropriate screening check in place.

The screening matrix on the next page outlines the appropriate screening for certain roles who work with children.

> > >

Appointment & On-Boarding

Some senior roles should require a written application outlining the suitability of the person for the role and their experience. Those appointed to a role in Children's Ministry, should be given an orientation of the site where the children's activity will take place, have their role description explained to them and be provided with a copy. All workers and helpers should know exactly who they should speak to if they have questions or need support.

Training

All people who work with children are required to complete Safe Church Awareness Training as soon as possible, ideally before they start working with children. All people who work with children are now Mandatory Reporters in NSW and/or Mandated Reporters in the ACT. They are also considered 'employees' under the Reportable Conduct legislation, regardless of whether they are paid or unpaid. Safe Church Awareness Training gives staff and volunteers the necessary information they require to ensure that they understand their responsibilities under the law and that child safety is paramount in all they do.
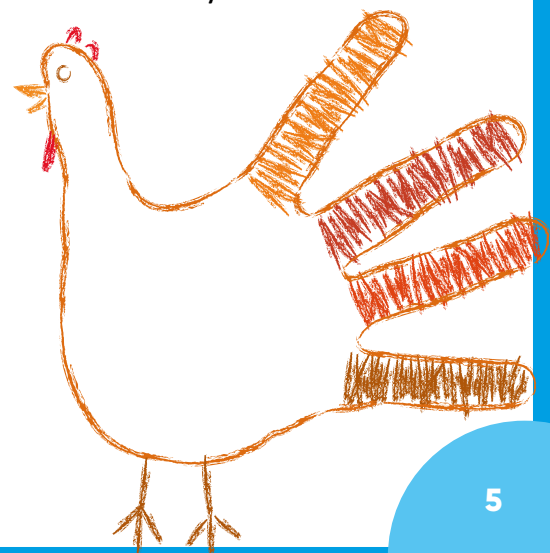
Screening and Training for Church Volunteers

Pre-Employment Checks for Volunteers

Title/type	Description	WWCC/ WWVPC (includes a Police Check)	Background Check/ Specific requirements*	Safe Church Awareness Training	References/ Endosement
High-trust volunteer roles					
Special Religious Education teachers	Volunteers who teach religious education in schools	✓	✓	✓	✓
Sunday School Teacher	Volunteer over the age of 18 who teaches Sunday School	✓	X	✓	✓
Church Council members	Elected lay leaders who serve on church council	✓	X	✓	✓
Safe Church Contact person	Appointed person to oversee Safe Church Administrative tasks in the congregation or presbytery	✓	X	✓	✓
Children's Ministry Leader/Playgroup leader	Person in charge of managing childens ministry (0-12 yrs) including appointing and overseeing helpers	✓	X	✓	✓
Youth Ministry Leader	Person in charge of managing youth activities (13-18 yrs) including appointing and supervising youth helpers. This person will be over the age of 18	✓	X	✓	✓
Music Team leader	Person who leads the music team in Sunday services and other times of worship and oversees the music team	✓	X	✓	✓
Other volunteer roles					
Children's Ministry Helper > 18 yrs (incl Playgroups)	Person over the age of 18 who assists in various children's ministry activities (children aged 0-12 yrs) who is supervised by the ministry leader. Includes helpers at playgroups where parents are present and people who prepare food in the kitchen	✓	X	✓	✓
Children's Ministry Helper < 18 yrs (incl Playgroups)	Person under the age of 18 who assists in various children's ministry activities (children aged 0-12 yrs) who is supervised by the ministry leader. Includes helpers at playgroups where parents are present	X	X	X	✓

Pre-Employment Checks for Volunteers

Title/type	Description	WWCC/ WWVPC (includes a Police Check)	Background Check/ Specific requirements *	Safe Church Awareness Training	References/ Endosement
Youth Ministry Helper >18 yrs	Person over the age of 18 who assists in various youth ministry activities (children aged 13-18) who is supervised by the ministry leader.	✓	X	✓	✓
Youth Ministry Helper <18 yrs	Person under the age of 18 who assists in youth ministry activities (children aged 13-15) who is supervised by the ministry leader. Includes helpers at playgroups where parents are present	X	X	X	✓
Volunteer working with vulnerable people (eg aged. Special needs, food and support services)	Person who volunteers with vulnerable adults or children with disabilities (excluding a helper in an aged care facilty)	✓	X	✓	✓
Bus driver transporting vulnerable people	Volunteer with appropriate experience who transports children or vulnerable adults	✓	✓	✓	✓
Music Team member	Person over the age of 18 who plays music or sings as part of a music team overseen by the music team leader	✓	X	✓	X
Church volunteer helping out at the local school with reading etc where this is a mission of the local church	Person from a congregation who volunteers in a school (e.g. reading support, ESL)	✓	X	✓	X
Participant/Helpers					
Parent or close relative of a child, volunteering in a childrens activity that the child participates in	A parent or close relative who helps out at a church activity or creche where their child is present. Includes people who are ministry helpers	X	X	X	X
Person assisting in an emergency	Person who assists in children's ministry on an emergency basis to reduce the risk for childrens activities for no more than 5 consecutive days	X	X	X	X

Notes:
Background check: includes verifying CV, licenses, qualifications, required training (eg SRE modules)
*** Endorsement/references from a previous minister, a church leader or elder regarding skills and ability to of the person to fulfil the requirements of a particular role*

Children's Ministry Safe Contact Practices

For many of us, current safe child contact practices are quite different now. In the past, adults were usually trusted and it was common for adults to hug, ring, visit or provide transport for a child. The findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse revealed children were not always safe with adults. It is of paramount importance to embed a child safe culture into all our contact with children.

Sexual abuse of a child often starts with something relatively minor that gradually leads to more involved behaviours through a process of grooming. It is often characterized by secrecy. The following practices must be observed at all times when working with children as measures to prevent the grooming process.

✖ Never abuse children or cultivate relationships in order to initiate or cloak of secrecy or abuse of children.

✖ Never be alone with a child away from the presence of other adults.

✖ Never invite a child to your home or visit a child in their home when no parent is present. Never meet privately with a child outside of church activities unless another church leader is present and only with the permission of a parent or guardian

✖ Never touch a child in a manner which is inappropriate given their age, gender, or cultural background.

✖ Never help children in ways that involve intimate care if the child can do it on his or her own (e.g., toileting or changing clothes).

✖ Never physically discipline a child or speak to them using a raised voice or aggressive tone.

✖ Never make drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes available to children.

✖ Never develop inappropriate special relationships with children that could be seen as involving favouritism or any form of preferential treatment.

✖ Never engage in any contact with a child that is secretive (whether physical or through electronic media or in any other way).

✖ Never take photographs or videos of children without written permission. Another adult should always be present when photographs or videos are being taken.

Safe Ministry Guidelines

Safe Ministry Guidelines address a wide array of issues relating to children's ministry activities, such as appropriate supervision, physical safety, parental consent, meeting with children, transportation, excursions, and appropriate forms of communication with children of various age groups.

Approve all Children's Activities

All children's activities must be approved by those authorised by the Church Council, after ensuring each activity is appropriate for the age group of the children involved. A risk assessment of that activity must be carried out and mitigating measures put in place to ensure safety. Authorised leaders should review all material in full, including video material, before it is shown to children, to ensure that any messages or graphics are appropriate for the relevant age group.

Physical safety

Providing a safe and appropriate environment for all child related activities is the responsibility of the Congregation. Consider the suitability and safety of the space and attend to any safety measures necessary by asking the following questions. You should be able to tick 'yes' or mitigate risk where the answer is 'no.'

Suitability of the space
- Are toilet facilities available and safely accessible?
- Is the space secure and appropriate for activities such as games or craft?
- Is equipment being used in good repair and appropriate for the ages using it?
- Is the floor non-slip and splinter-free?

Areas used by toddlers and pre-school children:
- Is the area fenced off or safely contained?
- Is there a designated area for strollers that will prevent a tripping hazard?
- Does the space have good visibility/line of sight to other adults?

Safety of the space
- Is the designated area a safe distance from roads or traffic?
- Is the area protected from places where people may engage in unsafe behaviour (such as smoking or drinking alcohol)?
- Is any glass installed at floor level? Is it safety glass?
- Are all accessible child-height cupboards fitted with child-proof locks?
- Is the heating safe to use near children (i.e., is the source of heat removed away from small inquisitive fingers)?
- Are all electrical wiring, sockets and appliances regularly maintained through the 'Test and Tag' process and/or in a safe condition? Are all sockets child-proofed?
- Has the designated area been checked for potential hazards (e.g., stacked chairs, unstable furniture, broken glass, discarded needles)?

First aid and safety measures
- Is a fire extinguisher or fire blanket available on-site?
- Is a well-stocked first aid kit at hand for all child related activities both onsite and offsite?
- Is a specified person replenishing the first aid kit regularly?
- Is there a specific person on-site with a current first-aid certificate?
- Are all leaders aware of the fire safety and evacuation procedures?

Safe Ministry Guidelines

Supervision of Children's activities

An important part of providing a safe environment is ensuring there are sufficient leaders present to adequately supervise the program.

The number of leaders required will vary, however the MINIMUM number of leaders will always be two. Helpers under the age of 16 are not considered leaders for the purposes of supervision. In considering the number of leaders required, take into account:

- the age, number, ability, and gender mix of the children; and
- the venue, time, duration, and nature of the activity.

Model example	Routine/Predictable		Non-Routine/Irregular	
	Church site activities and meetings	**Camping & Sleepover**	**Adventure-based Activities inc swimming**	**On water activities**
0-24 Months	1:4	NA	NA	NA
24 – 36 Months	1:5	NA	NA	NA
5 – 9	1:10 Minimum 2 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:5 Minimum 3 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:5 Minimum 2 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:4 Minimum 3 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader
9 – 14	1:10 Minimum 2 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:8 Minimum 3 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:8 Minimum 2 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:6 Minimum 3 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader
14-17	1:10 Minimum 2 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:8 Minimum 2 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:8 Minimum 2 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader	1:6 Minimum 2 adults including 1 Church Council approved Leader
Forms that may be required	Parent Sign in and sign out sheets	Activity Parent consent form Activity Risk Assessment and Plan Details of Activity and identified leaders for Church Council approval	Activity Parent consent form Activity Risk Assessment and Plan Details of Activity and identified leaders for Church Council approval	Activity Parent consent form Activity Risk Assessment and Plan Details of Activity and identified leaders for Church Council approval

All Leaders hold current WWCC, Emergency Contact details for each child, Child Special Needs /medical awareness Form, Incident and Accident reporting forms, Photography / image permission form

Safe Ministry Guidelines

Where the potential risks increase, so should the supervision. For example, if primary-aged children were engaging in a high-risk activity (e.g., rock climbing), the number of supervisors should increase. This is to account for the high-risk nature of the activity and the fact that it is off-site.

All supervisors must be aware of any medical or access requirement of children in their care and know what to do in the case of an emergency.

Communication

Communication should be managed in a safe and effective way. Communication should be well considered, age appropriate, and respectful. It should contain no swearing, improper slang, gestures, or blasphemy by supervisors.

Parents require detailed information about the proposed activity and must provide written consent. Appropriate records of approvals and correspondence should be kept. This consent should also record specific requirements relating to the child (e.g. allergies, dietary requirements, emergency contacts, and access support).

All contact should be made through the parent or carer and no leader should ever be alone with a child who is not their own. Forms of contact that do not include the parent or carer are unacceptable. For example, email, mail, social media, video calls, chatrooms or other form of electronic communication. Leaders should not call or text a child on the child's mobile phone. Leaders should not meet with children alone, either on the church premises or outside of church activities.

Type of contact	Primary Students (approx. ages 5 to 12)
Calls to child on parents land line or mobile or written mail to a child	Parental/carer consent required and only for ministry purposes.
Calls to a child on their own mobile phone	X
SMS	X
Email	X
Social networking (Facebook, Instagram, etc)	X
Video calls/streaming & Chat rooms	X

Safe Ministry Guidelines

Photography and Video material

Privacy considerations protect children from having their personal information displayed on a social networking site or Church website.

Churches may only use images or videos in accordance with the purposes for which parental/carer consent was given.

It is important that any photograph or video used be approved by the minister or authorised person prior to use. Records of written consents should be retained. The following points should be observed.

- Children have rights to privacy. Do not photograph any child without their consent.

- Parental/carer permission must be obtained before taking photographs or videos and before posting any approved photographs or videos of children online.

- Photos of children should focus on groups rather than individuals

- Children must not be identified in any way in the photograph when posting online, (e.g. tagging on Facebook).

- All children must be appropriately dressed when photographed (e.g. not in swimsuits or pyjamas).

- Embarrassing or offensive photos or videos must not be taken.

- Images of children taken with parental consent, should not be altered or photo-shopped before being used for approved purposes.

- Videos should only be used to promote ministry-related events and activities.

- When videos are distributed or streamed all broadcast media platforms, signs and/ or notifications should be posted that indicate the service is being or will be broadcast.

Safe Ministry Guidelines

E-Safety

Children may not always understand the risks of interacting online, so it is important that safeguarding measures be put in place for any online children's activity (e.g. Zoom church services, Zoom Sunday school). Churches will also need to consider the appropriateness of publishing Zoom services to social media pages and website, which showcase children.

The following points should be considered for children's activities which are held online:

Online Platform System Safeguards	Supervision of online activities	Online Code of Conduct
• Only use social media and collaboration platforms authorised by your congregation and use the congregation's account for that platform. Do not use your personal account • Restrict any links to online activities to invitees and ensure parents are aware of the activity and that they remain nearby during the activity. • If certain functions available within the platform are not wanted (e.g. video, audio recording, chat functionality) then activate system level controls to disable them. Recording any children's online activity should be carefully considered. Should an activity need to be recorded, parental/carer permission should be sought. The subsequent use of recordings on social media sites is discouraged. • Ensure all leaders know how to apply platform security and privacy settings to online activities. Leaders should know how to prevent uninvited attendees accessing online sessions, how to block video, audio, or chat functions, and how to avoid exposing personal information. Ensure appropriate privacy settings.	• Ensure at least two adult supervisors are online. All adult supervisors require current and validated working with children checks. This includes any IT specialists involved in the online ministry. • Do not use personal email or social media accounts. Personal mobile phones should be used only when necessary and in a responsible and transparent manner. • Communicate any variations in the schedule to the participants and parents. • Ensure all content and language is age appropriate. • Ensure privacy is maintained.	• Establish, communicate, and consistently apply clear rules for how adults and young people will interact online. For example, is live video and/or audio conferencing permitted? In what circumstances? Ensure that children are reminded of the online code of conduct you have established before each activity begins. • Ensure adult-to-adult and adult-to-young person interactions via all media always remains professional. It is a good idea to avoid using emojis due to the risk of misinterpretation. • Parents and church leaders should review the material on the e-safety commissioner's website. It includes detailed information on the various online platforms.

The Synod E-Safety Guideline is available in the Resources section of Safe Church for Church Council web page:
https://nswact.uca.org.au/safe-church-unit/safe-church-leadership-for-church-councils/

Safe Ministry Guidelines

Offsite and overnight activities

When considering offsite and/or overnight activities safety factors should be considered.

- A risk assessment of the activity is to be completed to mitigate risk and determine the appropriate level of adult supervision and expertise required. Parental permission must be obtained for any offsite church activity, and for the transport of a child by someone other than the parent or carer.

- If transport arrangements are required, reasonable steps must be taken to ensure that:
  - All drivers or operators are fully licensed and well experienced. Do not drive children after consuming alcohol or any other mind-altering or addictive substance; and
  - All motor vehicles and other forms of transport used are registered, insured, safe and fitted with age-appropriate child restraints or safety devices (e.g. seat belts, life jackets).
  - Cars or buses carry the appropriate number of children. No standing for any child or adult.
  - Leaders do not travel alone with a child in a motor vehicle even with parental/carer permission.

- Sleeping accommodation on for overnight events should be:
  - segregated between males and females.
  - supervised by more than one supervisor, preferably including a parent or guardian.

- ensure that those supervising the sleeping accommodation:
  - are of the same gender as the children being supervised; and
  - do not sleep in close personal proximity to a child unless they are a parent or guardian of the child.

- Leaders should never share accommodation with only one child unless they are a parent or guardian of the child.

- Venues should allow for the privacy of all parties to be respected, particularly when changing clothes, washing and toileting. If you need to wash or toilet a child, tell another adult what you are doing.

- Children should understand what behaviour is expected from them on an excursion. It is a good idea to outline expectations before the event (e.g. respectful behaviour, valuing their privacy and that of others, and kindness). Children should know who they can go to should they feel uncomfortable or upset for any reason.

Age Specific Guidelines

Babies and Toddlers (age 0–2)

Health and Safety

- Children should never leave the crèche area unless safely accompanied by the adult responsible for them.
- Be aware of issues of hygiene. Any soiled area should be cleaned and disinfected as soon as possible. Toys and equipment should be cleaned regularly. Ensure furniture or other items will not topple or drop onto a child.
- Where parents/carers are readily accessible, they should be asked to change nappies and undertake toileting. If parents are not available, experienced leaders should carry out these tasks, but always with another child or leader present.

Physical Contact

- Very young children are highly dependent on touch for their proper development. This means that in dealing with them, we must be very aware of their needs at particular ages and stages.
- Physical contact is primarily for the purpose of assisting or comforting a child for a short period of time. Leaders should not continue physical contact for longer than necessary to achieve this purpose. All physical contact should be in the open and able to be seen by others, for example, sitting on a leader's lap to be comforted should occur in view of others.

Appropriate physical contact for this age	✓ handholding to reassure or to guide ✓ offering open hugs (placing one arm around the child's shoulders) to welcome or comfort a child ✓ short periods of carrying, sitting on one's lap, rocking, rubbing or patting backs to comfort a child who is distressed ✓ sitting beside a leader to read a book ✓ necessary contact while changing a nappy ✓ appropriate contact to administer first aid or assist with personal hygiene, for example, changing clothes or blowing noses
Inappropriate physical contact for this age	✗ hitting or shaking ✗ forceful grabbing or picking up; and unnecessary touching

Age Specific Guidelines

Pre-schoolers (3-5 years)

Health and Safety

- Children should never leave the preschool area unless safely accompanied by an adult responsible for them.
- Children of this age are generally toilet-trained. A leader should accompany a child to the toilet with another leader or child but should assist the child only where necessary.

Physical Contact

- Except in circumstances of physical danger or medical emergency, children have the right to refuse touch. In general, physical contact should be initiated by the child or occur with their permission.

Appropriate physical contact for this age	✓ open hug (with space between you) at the child's instigation or with permission ✓ placing arm around shoulder and giving a gentle squeeze from the side ✓ patting backs ✓ handholding to reassure or guide ✓ sitting beside a leader to read a book ✓ carrying for a short period to reassure if hurt or facilitate separation from a parent (providing the child wants to be held); ✓ holding firmly across the upper arms to restrain or prevent injury
Inappropriate physical contact for this age	✗ hitting or shaking ✗ forceful grabbing or picking up ✗ kissing or coaxing a child to kiss you ✗ extended hugging or tickling; and ✗ touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming costume

Age Specific Guidelines

Infants and primary age children (6-12 years)

Health and Safety

- Identify clear procedures for the collection of children at the conclusion of the program. Ensure parents/carers are aware. Check for any custody concerns which might require extra attention.
- Parents/carers should be provided with details of the activity or excursion, including the names and contact details of leaders, current and future curriculum, and upcoming special events, etc.

Physical Contact

Appropriate physical contact for this age	✓ open hug (with space between you) with the child's permission or placing arm around shoulder and giving a gentle squeeze from the side ✓ high fives ✓ holding firmly across the upper arms to restrain or prevent injury
Inappropriate physical contact for this age	✗ hitting or shaking ✗ forceful grabbing ✗ kissing or coaxing a child to kiss you ✗ extended hugging or tickling ✗ touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming costume ✗ sitting children on your lap

Reporting Complaints and Concerns

It is important that appropriate person within the church is informed of any concerns or complaints that parents, caregivers, staff and volunteers have regarding any aspect of a children's program. All complaints or concerns raised are taken seriously.
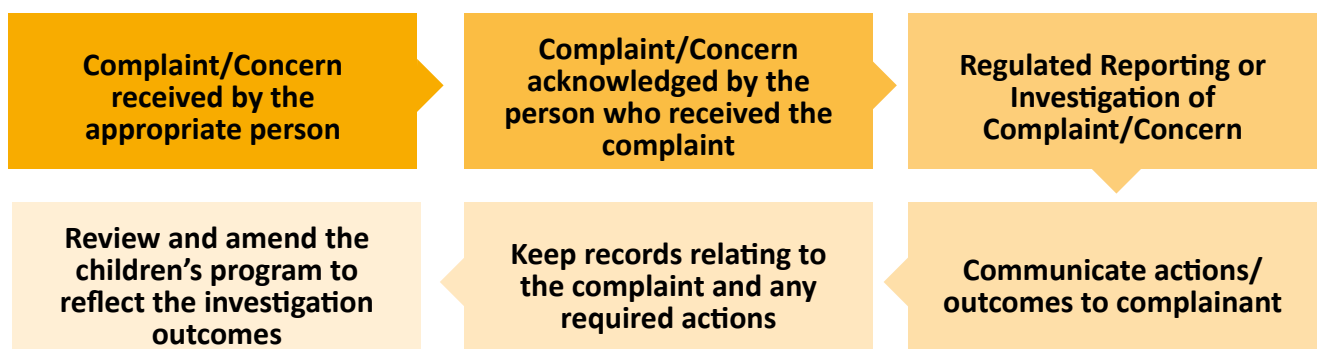
How do I make a complaint or report a concern?

Complaints and Concerns are managed in various ways depending on the nature of that complaint or concern. The following table indicates the initial contact for a variety of types of complaints. If in any doubt, please speak with your minister or contact the Safe Church Unit.

Concern or complaint	Who to contact	Way to contact
Complaint about the way a leader/volunteer has treated another adult	Minister or Church Council Chairperson	Call or email local church
Complaint about the way a leader/volunteer has treated my child	Synod Safe Church Unit	Potential Allegation Reportable Conduct or Mandatory Reporting Matter. Email : **safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au** or call **(02) 8267 4351**
Complaint about the minister or pastor	Synod Associate Secretary	Email: **associatesecretary@nswact.uca.org.au**
Complaint by a staff member or volunteer about any aspect of the children's ministry not relating to the minister	Minister or Church Council Chairperson	Call or email local church
Concern relating to the physical safety of the children's program	Minister or Church Council Chairperson	Call or email local church
Concern relating to the information received or not received about my child's program	Minister or Church Council Chairperson	Call or email local church
Making an anonymous concern/complaint	Speak Out	Make a complaint online: **speakout.uca.org.au** Call the Independent and Confidential Speak Out hotline **1800 951 145**.

What happens when I make a complaint or report a concern?

The flowchart indicates the process that is followed when a complaint or concern is raised.

Complaint/Concern received by the appropriate person → Complaint/Concern acknowledged by the person who received the complaint → Regulated Reporting or Investigation of Complaint/Concern

Review and amend the children's program to reflect the investigation outcomes ← Keep records relating to the complaint and any required actions ← Communicate actions/outcomes to complainant

Reporting Abuse

It is important to be able to recognise the signs of child abuse or neglect and to recognise reportable conduct in adults working in children's ministry. At times, the abuse of children and reportable conduct may be linked.

Types of Abuse

Abuse can be physical, sexual, emotional, or spiritual in nature. Neglect of a child's needs is also classed as abuse. Children may disclose abuse, or a person may become aware of behaviours which indicate abuse or neglect.

Mandatory Reporting

A person working in Children's ministry is a Mandatory Reporter in NSW and a Mandated Reporter in the ACT and is legally obligated to report any concerns for the safety of a child. Refer to the Mandatory Reporting policy and Guidelines for NSW and the Act for further information on child abuse and Mandatory Reporting obligations under the resources section at this link: https://nswact.uca.org.au/safe-church-unit/mandatory-reporting/

If a child tells you about any abuse, you should:

- listen to their story.
- comfort them if they are distressed.
- let them know you are glad they told you and that they did the right thing.
- let them know you are going to get help about what to do next and that you will get back to them.

As soon as possible after the disclosure you must

- write down the details of what was said including dates and times, and
- report the information to the appropriate authorities as indicated in the table on page 19.

Reportable Conduct

It is everyone's responsibility to ensure the safety of children. The Synod is required to report allegations of Reportable Conduct of its employees' to the relevant statutory body in NSW or the ACT. For the purposes of the Reportable Conduct Scheme 'employees' in NSW are those who are required to hold a WWCC, while in the ACT all ministers of religion, religious leaders, officers of a religious body, a person engaged under a contract of employment, or a person engaged to provide services other than under a contract of employment are considered employees whether paid or volunteers.

Any breach of the Safe Contact Practices or inappropriate contact or a breach of the listed in this document or a breach of the applicable Code of Conduct must be addressed. In most cases minor breaches may be addressed with counselling and training to increase awareness of safe practices (e.g. a person hugs a child closely to comfort or greet them). Where a breach is serious and relates to a sexual offence, sexual misconduct, ill treatment, psychological or emotional abuse or assault or neglect of a child or a failure to protect a child, the UCA will make a report to the relevant statutory body and an investigation will take place.

Refer to the UCA Policy and Guidelines for Reportable Conduct in NSW or the ACT for further details.

Issue or concern	Report to
General Suspicions	Minister or Safe Church Unit
Child or young person currently at risk of significant harm	• **DCJ** (Department Communities & Justice) (NSW) or **CYPS** (ACT) If possible discuss with your minister or the Safe Church Unit first and use the Mandatory Reporters Guide (if in NSW) • **Police 000** (if a child is in immediate danger) • **General Secretary or Safe Church Uni**t Contact the General Secretary or Safe Church Unit where the alleged perpetrator is a church worker or if support is needed to make a report
Knowledge of relevant criminal offences	• **Police 000** • **Safe Church Unit** Email: safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au (regarding a church worker or volunteer)
Knowledge of relevant criminal offences	• **General Secretary** Email: generalsecretary@nswact.uca.org.au • **Safe Church Unit** Email: safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au • **Speak Out With Confidence** • **Police 000** (if a child is in immediate danger)

Support for Reporters

The Synod EAP (Employee Assistance Program) is available to all reporters who require support. Contact your local minister or the Safe Church Unit for further information. Information is available on the Synod website. UCA - Employee Assistance Program

Contacts

For further information or advice on anything related to Safe Children's ministry please contact the Synod of NSW and the ACT Safe church Unit.

- **Safe Church Unit**

  E: *safechurch@nswact.uca.org.au*

  Ph: (02) 8267 4351

- **General Secretary**

  E: *generalsecretary@nswact.uca.org.au*

  Mail: marked 'Confidential' addressed to General Secretary, Uniting Church Synod of NSW & ACT, PO Box A2178, Sydney South NSW 1235.

Uniting Church SYNOD OF NSW & ACT

pulse

A SAFE Church for all people Where everyone has a part

nswact.uca.org.au/safe-church-unit