

GUNGAHLIN UNITING CHURCH SAFETY AND PROTECTION POLICY

Approved by Church Council

Date of Meeting	Chairperson	Secretary

Purpose

This policy document:

- forms part of the Uniting Church's national child safe policy framework. It has been developed by the Synod of NSW and ACT (Synod) for congregations to adopt to promote safe leadership and safe environments in leadership programs
- outlines how Gungahlin Uniting Church (GUC) will meet its responsibilities as part of the Uniting Church in Australia and under Australian legislation.

Background

Synod has developed the *National Child Safe Policy Framework* in response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse. This policy operationalises this framework at the congregational level.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse advises that to achieve a child safe organisation it is critical to have competent and committed leadership and governance which develops and maintains a child safe culture. For this Policy Framework to be effective it requires awareness and knowledge at all levels, from Boards through to volunteers and congregational members. It requires a commitment to shared personal responsibility to ensure children are protected.

Scope

This Safety and Protection Policy applies to all staff members, church councillors, program and other congregational leaders and helpers associated with the ministry in our church.

Policy

We affirm that all people have the right to be emotionally and physically safe, respected, and have their views and opinions valued at all times.

This policy aims to:

- minimise the risk of abuse, ministry misconduct and the misuse of power
- ensure that all cases of suspected abuse and ministry misconduct are handled thoroughly
- ensure that leaders and programs are safe
- ensure that all people are respected and valued.

WE COMMIT TO:	ACTION
<p>a) Safe recruitment of leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We require all church councillors, elders and program leaders to participate regularly in the communal life of the church. • We will screen all prospective church councillors, elders, program leaders and helpers in our ministries, before they are appointed, as appropriate (i.e. relevant working with children's check (NSW) / vulnerable people (ACT) / National police check). • - We require all prospective church councillors, elders and program leaders to have participated in the communal life of the church for at least 12 months prior to their appointment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will require Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) checks for the following leaders / volunteers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All Church Council (CC) members ○ Office and Food Pantry Admin worker ○ Pastoral care team members ○ All food pantry volunteers ○ All children/youth group leaders, helpers and mentors ○ Safe church coordinator ○ Food Pantry Management Committee chair and members ○ Worship team leader and members ○ Coordinators of all other programs, teams, groups or committees (including social groups, music group etc) ○ Volunteers who may be viewed as church leaders including volunteers who preach or lead worship; bible study leaders; volunteers who may not be a group coordinator or leader but whose engagement in church activities presents a profile which may be viewed by others as a church leader eg worship leaders, lay preachers • WWVP checks to be completed before assuming position • The Safe Church Coordinator will ensure the WWVP register is updated and people are followed up when checks are required/ need to be renewed • All church councillors and program leaders must have participated at GUC for at least 12 months prior to their appointment. A period of less than 12 months may be considered where the person has actively participated in another congregation for at least two years (Minister to confirm with previous congregational minister)

b) Adequate training of leaders

- We will ensure that all church councillors, elders, program leaders and helpers understand their responsibilities under this Safety and Protection Policy.
 - We require that all church councillors, elders and program leaders attend a Safe Ministry Induction (or Safe Church Training Agreement endorsed) workshop within their first year of ministry and attend a refresher workshop every 3 years.
 - We require all program leaders and helpers to attend additional ministry-specific training as required.
- We will require the following groups of people to undertake Safe Church Awareness training (Safe Church Training Agreement endorsed) within the last three years:
 - CC
 - Office and Food Pantry Administration worker
 - food pantry team leaders
 - pastoral care team members
 - all children/youth group leaders, helpers and mentors
 - coordinators or leaders of all other programs (including social groups or other teams, committees or groups)
 - volunteers who may be viewed as leaders within the church.
 - In line with the Safe Church Contact Person role description, the GUC Safe Church Coordinator will
 - liaise with above leaders to arrange and monitor attendance at training
 - liaise with Presbytery to identify training opportunities (where GUC has safe church trainers within the congregation, GUC will hold at least 2 workshops at the beginning of each year)
 - Provide a list of people completing training to Synod Safe Church Coordinator to ensure attendance is registered on data base.

<p>c) Continued supervision of leaders</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We commit to ongoing leadership training, supervision and support for church councillors, elders, program leaders and helpers as appropriate. • All church councillors, elders and program leaders will agree to follow our Leader’s Code of Conduct / Covenant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer agreements to be completed for those persons identified in (a) and (b) above as per Gungahlin Uniting Church’s <i>Volunteer Policy</i>, including an acknowledgement that they understand and agree to the GUC Safety and Protection Policy and the <i>Uniting Church in Australia Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders</i>. • In line with the Safe Church Contact Person role description, the GUC Safe Church Coordinator will ensure that a volunteer agreement and acknowledgement statement is completed for those persons identified in (a) and (b). • It is a GUC policy requirement that appointed leaders are not to be alone with a child or vulnerable person, in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Leaders. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ GUC will provide clear training on how to be private in a public space; how to deal with situations where can’t avoid being alone • Minister to attend Ethical Ministry training twice a year.
<p>d) Responding to allegations of risk of harm (abuse) or serious ministry misconduct</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We acknowledge that churches have not always dealt appropriately with allegations and instances of abuse, and have prioritised the concerns of institutions above the needs of victims. We commit ourselves to ensuring that this is not repeated. • All church councillors, elders, program leaders and helpers will report disclosures or suspicions of child abuse, according to our procedure. We will not hesitate to involve external agencies such as the police. • - Where a church councillor, elder, program leader or helper has an allegation of ministry misconduct made against them we will provide support to alleged victims and perpetrators and seek appropriate denominational help for a just and fair resolution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If someone makes or considers making a report about a child protection concern or one that relates to possible abuse of a vulnerable person that arises in the course of the Congregation’s activities, the Safe Church Coordinator will : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ support that person in making the report and/or thinking through the issue ○ put in place any actions to address any associated risks, and decide, on a need to know basis, who will be informed of the concern. • In the event of a complaint or concern regarding the behaviour of someone connected with the Congregation, the Safe Church Coordinator will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Contact the Synod Associate Secretary who will advise on appropriate action in accordance with UCA guidelines.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inform the Minister or Church Council Chairperson ○ If criminal activity is suspected, ensure the police have been contacted ○ File complaints and reports of investigations in a secure central file. ○ Liaise with Synod Safe Church Coordinator as necessary.
<p>e) Safe environments in our ministry programs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We will take steps to keep all those in our care safe, including from e.g. spiritual, physical, sexual, emotional abuse (including bullying) or neglect. ● As servants of Christ we will serve our people and the community, commit to the good news of Jesus and lead in spiritually non-abusive ways. ● We will afford participants, including children, a say in the programs and the activities in which they participate. ● We will obtain appropriate information relating to the program participants, including children’s health and family situation, to ensure as far as possible that we are able to care for their physical and emotional needs. ● All church councillors, elders and program leaders will discharge their duty of care through the use of forms, checklists and templates for establishment and maintenance of safe environments in our church. ● A Safe Church Team will be appointed to establish and maintain: this Safety and Protection Policy and supporting documentation and processes, workplace health and safety, fire safety, building safety, first aid, food safety, safe transport, incident and emergency procedures. ● Program leaders will complete a written ministry approval process, for approval by the church council, at the start of new ministry programs/activities which take place in the church’s name. These 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We will appoint a Safe Church Coordinator to maintain GUC’s safety and protection policy and procedures. If a suitable volunteer is not available within the congregation, the role will be undertaken by a Church Council member. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ As part of its governance responsibilities, Church Council will ensure appropriate workplace health and safety, fire safety, building safety, first aid, food safety, safe transport, and incident and emergency policies and procedures are in place. ● A <i>Program approval for ministry</i> will be completed/reviewed annually by the program coordinator and endorsed annually by Church Council ● Program leaders of children and youth programs will ensure parents complete a sign in sheet for children each time they attend. An exception to this is where parents are present during activities eg playgroup. ● Program leaders of children and youth programs will collect health and other relevant information ● The Safe Church Coordinator will encourage program leaders of GUC children and youth programs to obtain feedback from youth and children (or parents where appropriate).

programs/activities will be reviewed on an annual basis.

- Safe Church issues to be discussed as a standing agenda item at Church Council meetings
- GUC's Safety and Protection Policy and the *Uniting Church in Australia Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders* (and other relevant policies) will be placed on GUC website and links will be included as a regular item in bulletin.

Resources

The following Safe Church resources are available at <https://nswact.uca.org.au/about-us/safe-church-for-children-vulnerable-adults/safe-church-resources/>

- Policies:
 - National Child Safe Policy Framework
 - Background Check Policy and Procedures
 - Volunteer Policy
- Safe Church Guidelines
 - Congregation Health Check
 - Responding to and Reporting Child Abuse
 - Persons of Concern
 - Reportable Conduct NSW
 - Reportable Conduct ACT
 - New Laws Affecting Churches 2018
- Safe Church Templates
 - Anecdotal Record Form - To record safety issues/concerns and incidents/observations.
 - Approval for Ministry - To ensure appropriate risk management is conducted in preparation for a church program or event.
 - Children's and Youth Ministry Driver's Declaration Form - Driver declaration for vehicle use as part of a church program or event.
 - Safe Church Contact Person Role Description - To promote Safe Church awareness and assist with issues related to the protection of children and vulnerable people.
 - Volunteer Application Form - To be submitted with documentation before engaging a new volunteer.
 - Volunteer Agreement - Part of induction to recognise and authorise a volunteer.
 - Registration/Permission Form - For parent/guardian permission for a child to participate in program activities.
- How to report abuse or misconduct
- What is a Safe Church Contact Person

Uniting Church in Australia Code of Conduct for Lay Leaders

https://assembly.uca.org.au/images/resources/Regulations_Policies/UNITING_CHURCH_IN_AUSTRALIA_CODE_OF_CONDUCT_FOR_LAY_LEADERS.pdf

Attachment

Volunteer and safe church requirements

Version Tracking

Version #	Date	Author(s)
1	9 November 2019	Narelle Dodd, Darren Wright
2	15 November 2019	Narelle Dodd, Darren Wright
3	13 January 2019	Narelle Dodd, Darren Wright
Consultation	2 February 2020	Narelle Dodd

Volunteer and safe church requirements

Group/role/ position	WWVP card	Safe church awareness training	Volunteer agreement
Church Council	required	required	required
Food Pantry Management Committee	required	required	required
Safe Church coordinator	required	required	required
Creative Worship Team	required	required	required
Music & Singing (coordinator only)	required	required	required
Welcomers	not required	not required	not required
Preaching	required	required	required
Worship Leading	required	required	required
Bible Reading: English & 1st language	not required	not required	not required
Prayer for Others	not required	not required	not required
Tech: Computer & Sound	required	required	required
Morning Tea	not required	not required	not required
Communion Prep	not required	not required	not required
BBQ	not required	not required	not required
Offering Counting	not required	not required	not required
Singing Group & Male Trio	not required	not required	not required
Flowers	not required	not required	not required
Pastoral care team	required	required	required
Property & Maintenance (coordinator only)	required	required	required
TnT Team (coordinator only)	required	required	required
Spice Kids (coordinator only)	required	required	required
Hospitality- Funerals, Conferences	not required	not required	not required
Presbytery Representatives	not required	not required	not required
Community Food Garden	required	required	required
Playgroup	required	required	required
Oasis Leaders & Support	required	required	required
Billabong Leaders & Support/Mentors	required	required	required
Boys' Brigade	required	required	required
Girls' Brigade	required	required	required
Lead Bible/Faith Studies	required	required	required
			MS= Mustard Seed Volunteer Agreement
Pantry- Bread Pick Up	required	not required	MS required
Pantry- Wednesday Prep & Support	required	not required	MS required
Pantry- Thursday Team & Café	required	coordinator required	MS required
Shelf Stacking/Cleaning	required	not required	MS required