



Safe Leaders and Volunteers Commitment



Safe Church in the Northern Synod



Safe Leaders and Volunteers Commitment

Version 202206

Review frequency: Annual

Approved at Synod Meeting, June 2016



Purpose

This policy and commitment will help to protect children, young people and adults from abuse and inappropriate behaviour from people in leadership. It will also help managers, employees, people in specified ministries, leaders, and volunteers understand and maintain the standard of behaviour expected of them.

Mandatory Requirements

Managers, employees, people in specified ministries, leaders and volunteers **will**:

- Complete an application form as appropriate to their role and provide accompanying documents
- Undergo a National Police Check
- Provide a Working with Children Clearance
- Sign a Safe Leaders and Volunteers Commitment

These will be held with the appropriate Council of the Church.

When working with children, young people or vulnerable adults

Managers, employees, people in specified ministries, leaders and volunteers will:

- *consider the safety and needs of all others as paramount;*
- *treat all people with respect;*
- *read and abide by relevant policies and procedures for keeping all people safe;*
- *conduct themselves in a manner which is consistent with the values of the Uniting Church in Australia;*
- *encourage open communication between all children, young people, parents, staff, volunteers, leaders and people in specified ministries through the use of empowering and supportive language and ensure all people, especially children and young people, participate in the decisions that affect them;*
- *model appropriate behaviours and redirect unwanted behaviours of children, young people and adults at all times using appropriate behaviour management strategies;*
- *respect confidentiality;*
- *respond to any concerns or suspicions of abuse or bullying, particularly child abuse, and speak up when concerning behaviours of colleagues are observed;*
- *at all times, be transparent in their actions and whereabouts, and remain aware of all children and others including staff, volunteers, leaders and people in specified ministries whereabouts;*
- *seek advice, support and assistance for child protection matters where needed.*
- *report any breaches of this agreement to the manager or Synod Safe Admin Contact safechurch@ns.uca.org.au.*

Managers, employees, people in specified ministries, leaders and volunteers will not unless otherwise permitted:

- be alone with a child or young person;
- sleep in the same room as a child or young person or vulnerable adult;
- do things of a personal nature that a child or adult can do for themselves, such as assistance with toileting or changing clothes;



- without prior parental/guidance consent, seek to make contact and spend time alone with any child or young person outside program times, including social networking, face to face and phone contact;
- photograph or video a child without the consent of the child and his/her parents or guardians, including the unauthorised use of images.

Managers, employees, people in specified ministries, leaders and volunteers *will not* under any circumstances:

- come on to the site of or participate in any ministry activity under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other illegal substances;
- engage in behaviour that may be considered bullying or abusive. (see back page for definitions);
- engage in behaviour that is intended to shame, humiliate, belittle or degrade children or adults;
- use inappropriate, offensive or discriminatory language when speaking with a child, young person or adult;
- sleep in the same bed as a child or another adult unless it is a spouse;
- hold, kiss, cuddle or touch a child or adult in an inappropriate, unnecessary, uninvited, or culturally insensitive way in public or isolation;
- behave provocatively or inappropriately with a child or adult;
- develop sexual relationships with children or adults or relationships with children or adults that may be deemed exploitative or abusive;
- condone or participate in, behaviour of children or adults which is illegal, unsafe or abusive;
- act in a way that shows unfair and differential treatment of children or adults;
- smack, hit or physically assault children or adults. The entity's managers, employees, people in specified ministries, leaders or volunteers will not discipline children or adults unless their behaviours endanger themselves or others;
- have inappropriate conversations with a child or adult either in person or through social media;
- use the entity's computers, mobile phones, video and digital cameras inappropriately or for the purpose of exploiting or harassing children or adults;
- make a complaint that they know to be untrue, malicious, or improper.

Consequences for breach of Code of Conduct

- Managers, employees, people in specified ministries, leaders or volunteers, who Breach the Leaders and Volunteers Commitment, Code of Conduct or the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice of the Uniting Church in Australia will be subject to the discipline of the Uniting Church (which may include termination of employment, setting aside with or without remuneration and/or referral to relevant authorities) following appropriate investigations.



Safe Leaders and Volunteers Commitment

I, (name) _____ commit to fulfilling the requirements of the Safe Church in the Northern Synod Policy and the Safe Leader and Volunteer Commitment as set out above.

Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Witness Name: _____

Position: _____

Witness Signature: _____ Date: _____



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Who is a Leader

The Uniting Church in Australia National Safe Church Unit defines a leader as: -

A leadership position or role includes but is not limited to:

- Standing for or accepting nomination for any leadership position in the congregation, Presbytery or Synod including membership of Church Council, Presbytery Standing Committee, or Synod Standing Committee, any committees or task groups of the Congregation, Presbytery or Synod;
- Membership of any Congregation/faith community task groups/portfolio working groups;
- Leading worship in any capacity including but not limited to saying grace, prayers, singing as an individual or member of a band/group/choir, providing music as an individual or member of a band/group, bible reading, lighting candles, offering votes of thanks, carrying Communion elements or the Bible into the Church, serving Communion elements, addressing the congregation in any way, standing in the sanctuary space;
- Leader or helper role of any children or youth activities including but not limited to creche, Sunday School, Kids Group, youth group, days camps, fun days;
- Greeter, welcomer, pastoral care visitor;
- Key access to any Church property, afterhours access to any Church property, access to any Church computer equipment or technology;
- Leading bible studies, home/life/fellowship groups, organizing or hosting any Church events, activities or programs, involvement in religious education programs;
- Any other activity which a reasonable person might identify as acting in a leadership role/position with the Uniting Church.

Bullying

Bullying is repeated unreasonable behaviour to another person including offensive or abusive language or conduct, behaviour which belittles, threatens or intimidates another person.

- ***Direct bullying behaviour includes:***
 - verbal abuse;
 - putting someone down;
 - humiliating someone through sarcasm, criticism, or insults;
 - abusive, belittling or intimidating phone calls, emails or notes;
 - being humiliated, shouted at and/or threatened, sometimes, but not always, in front of others.
- ***Indirect bullying behaviours includes:***
 - unjustified criticism or complaints;
 - deliberately excluding someone from activities;
 - deliberately denying access to information or other resources;
 - withholding information that is vital for effective performance;
 - setting tasks that are unreasonably above or below a person's ability;



- deliberately changing arrangements, such as rosters and leave, to inconvenience a particular employee or employees;
- excluding or isolating others;
- psychological harassment;
- repeatedly assigning the worst jobs or impossible assignments to particular people;
- deliberately withholding from any person information or resources necessary to do;
- cyber-bullying, which includes the use of email, text messages, chat rooms or social media to humiliate and distress.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is an unwelcome sexual advance, unwelcome request for sexual favours or other unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated, where a reasonable person would anticipate that reaction in the circumstances. The Sex Discrimination Act 1984 (Commonwealth) defines the nature and circumstances in which sexual harassment is unlawful. It is also unlawful for a person to be victimised for making, or proposing to make, a complaint of sexual harassment to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

Examples of sexually harassing behaviour include:

- unwelcome touching;
- staring or leering;
- suggestive comments or jokes; general sexual banter, crude conversation or innuendo
- offensive jokes.
- sexually explicit pictures or posters; the display of obscene or pornographic materials,
- unwanted invitations to go out on dates;
- requests for sex;
- intrusive questions about a person's private life or body;
- unnecessary familiarity, such as deliberately brushing up against a person;
- insults or taunts based on sex;
- sexually explicit physical contact; and
- sexually explicit emails or SMS text messages.