

Riverlife Community Church Safe Church Strategy

Contents

PURPOSE	2
POLICY COMMITMENT AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES	2
SCOPE	3
SCREENING AND SELECTION	4
<i>Persons requiring a Blue Card</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Persons with an Exemption Card</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Maintaining a record of the holders of Blue Cards and Exemption Cards</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Changes in circumstances affecting a Blue Card</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Agreement to comply with policies and codes</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Application Process</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Church leaders' obligations re: The Application Process</i>	<i>4</i>
SUPPORT AND TRAINING	5
REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTACT WITH CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE PERSONS	6
RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING HARM OR MISCONDUCT	6
SCHEDULE 1 – CODE OF CONDUCT	8
SCHEDULE 2 – APPLICATION FOR WORKING WITH CHILDREN	10
SCHEDULE 3 – REFERENCES CHECK	13
SCHEDULE 4 – BLUE CARD / EXEMPTION CARD REGISTER	14
SCHEDULE 5 – INTERVIEW WITH APPLICANT	15
SCHEDULE 6 – RECORD OF A DISCLOSURE OF HARM OR MISCONDUCT	16
SCHEDULE 7 – A FACT SHEET ON SEXUAL GROOMING	17
SCHEDULE 8 – INDICATORS OF ABUSE	20
SCHEDULE 9 OPTION 1– GUIDELINES FOR USING ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION & SOCIAL MEDIA	22
SCHEDULE 9 OPTION 2 – DRAFT GUIDELINES FOR USING ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION IN CHILDREN AND YOUTH	
MINISTRIES DURING COVID – 19	23

PURPOSE

The purpose of our 'Safe Church Strategy' is to enable our church's leaders and workers to develop a safe church culture so that all people, involved in or attending our church's ministries and services, are safe from harm and able to grow in their relationship with God and others.

This document outlines our approach to the protection of people, particularly, children and vulnerable persons, so that we comply with relevant legislation, engage in best practices, and cultivate a safe church for spiritual growth and wellbeing.

Our Safe Church Strategy

- commits us to providing a safe environment for all people especially children and vulnerable persons
- authorises a Code of Conduct for all persons engaged by the church, whether staff or volunteers, who are in contact with children and vulnerable persons
- provides a process for screening and selecting persons who will attend or participate in ministries with children or vulnerable persons
- provides a process for responding to disclosures of harm or misconduct and for reporting to appropriate authorities
- sets out the training and supervision requirements for all who are engaged by the church, whether staff or volunteers, and who because of this engagement are in recurring contact with children and vulnerable persons attending the church

POLICY COMMITMENT AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

It is our policy to respect everyone as unique individuals created by God, and to give special attention to the care, protection and wellbeing of children and vulnerable persons. We will behave towards them in a manner that resembles and represents Christ's attitude and approach, providing an environment and ministry that promotes their spiritual, social and physical safety and personal growth and development.

To this end we will promote a "safe church" culture throughout our church, constantly communicating and reinforcing our commitment at all levels of our church's life and ministry.

Regarding the church's commitment to providing a safe environment for all, *especially children and vulnerable persons*, the church acknowledges that Australian Baptists have agreed to adopt **the 10 National Principles for Child Safe Organisations** and that these principles represent 'best practices'.

Therefore, the church will have regard to the following as guiding principles for cultivating a safe church environment and safe activities.

1. Embedding a "safe church" perspective, including child safety, in our church's culture, leadership and governance
2. Respecting children and vulnerable persons by giving them opportunities to participate and have a say in the decisions affecting them
3. Keeping families and communities informed and involved in the development of the church as a safe environment



4. Upholding equity and considering the diversity of needs and interests among children and vulnerable persons
5. Ensuring that people working with children and vulnerable persons are suitable and are properly supported
6. Keeping the processes for responding to complaints of sexual abuse focussed upon the needs and best interests of children and vulnerable persons
7. Equipping staff and volunteers with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children and vulnerable persons safe through continuing education, training and support
8. Managing physical and online environments to minimise the opportunity for abuse occurring
9. Reviewing and improving the implementation of these principles for creating and maintaining a safe church environment
10. Maintaining up to date policies, procedures and records that document how the church is implementing and managing its safe church strategy

SCOPE

The terms *children* or *child* in this strategy refer to individuals or an individual who is under 18 years of age.

The term ***vulnerable persons*** refers to individuals aged 18 years and above who is or may be unable to take care of themselves or is unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation by reason of age, illness, trauma or disability, or any other reason

The term ***church leaders*** refers to persons appointed by the church according to its constitution as responsible and accountable to the church members for the governance of the church.

The designation ***Safe Church Coordinator*** refers to the person appointed by the church leaders to manager the practical implementation of this strategy under the guidance and directions of the church leaders.

This Safe Church Strategy applies to the persons listed below, referred to in this document Safe Church Strategy as **staff and volunteers**.

Any church leader who is making decisions affecting children or vulnerable persons.

Any person engaged by the church to provide a service to the church, whether paid or voluntarily, and who while providing their service will be in contact with children or vulnerable persons.

Any students or trainees undertaking an internship or field placement at the church and who as part of that internship or field placement will be in contact with children or vulnerable persons.



SCREENING AND SELECTION

Persons requiring a Blue Card

All the church's *staff and volunteers* must hold valid and current Blue Cards to attend or participate in any church activities that will bring them into contact with children or vulnerable persons.

Persons with an Exemption Card

All *staff and volunteers* who are a police officer or registered teacher must hold a valid and current Exempt Card from the Blue Card Services of the Queensland Government to attend or participate in in any church activities that will bring them into contact with children or vulnerable persons.

Maintaining a record of the holders of Blue Cards and Exemption Cards

The church leaders are responsible for ensuring the timely and accurate recording of information relating to the issuing of Blue Cards and Exemption Cards - Schedule 4.

The Blue Card must be sighted to verify its authenticity before recording its information.

Changes in circumstances affecting a Blue Card

If for a staff member or volunteer there is a change in their circumstances that might or will affect their Blue Card status, then that person must:

- notify immediately the church's Safe Church Coordinator; and
- notify the Queensland Government's Blue Card Services

The Safe Church Coordinator, in consultation with the Church Leaders, can require the person to desist from attending or participating in in any activities that will bring them into contact with children or vulnerable persons.

Agreement to comply with policies and codes

All *staff and volunteers* must be provided with a copy of this Safe Church Strategy, including the Code of Conduct.

Application Process

All *staff and volunteers* must undergo the following application process to be engaged in any program or ministry with children or vulnerable persons.

1. Present a valid and current Blue Card or Exemption Card
2. Submit a written application as per Schedule 2
3. Provide the contact details of at least two referees
4. Attend an interview if deemed necessary by church leaders - Schedule 5
5. Sign an agreement to abide by the Code of Conduct - Schedule 1

Church leaders' obligations re: The Application Process

Where a person makes an application to work with children and/or vulnerable persons, the Church leaders must ensure the following criteria are met before accepting the application and allowing



the applicant to be involved in any church activities that will bring them into contact with children or vulnerable persons.

1. Churches the applicant has attended (or has been involved or connected with) in the past five (5) years are contacted to ascertain whether there have been any alleged or actual incidents of harm involving the applicant (Schedule 3).
2. If the church leaders determine that more detailed information is required from the application, interview the applicant using the questions in Schedule 5 as a guide to ascertain the suitability of the applicant.
3. In the case of a volunteer, the person has attended the church regularly for a minimum of **six (6) months** unless exceptional circumstances apply.
4. If the applicant has not obtained their Blue Card through the Church, the Church leaders must also arrange completion of a *“Link an Applicant/Cardholder to this Organisation”* form and submit to Blue Card Services; (available from www.bluecard.qld.gov.au)
5. Where certain roles require registration by the Baptist Union of Queensland (Queensland Baptists), the applicant must also successfully pass the application process under those Registration Guidelines.
6. Where a job or role description has stipulated additional educational, skill or other requirements, the applicant is also required to satisfy these criteria before commencement.

SUPPORT AND TRAINING

The Safe Church Coordinator is responsible for establishing an arrangement for the appropriate supervision, support and training of staff and volunteers in contact with children and vulnerable persons.

The coordinator must report to the church leaders and the annual church members' meeting about the supervision, support and training of staff and volunteers.

Where a person is appointed either as a staff member or as a volunteer who will have contact with children or vulnerable persons, the Safe Church Coordinator will ensure that the person's Blue Card or Exemption Card details are recorded in a register similar to the template provided by Schedule 4.

The Safe Church Coordinator will in consultation with the staff member or volunteer establish a training plan, setting out the type of training that will be provided, the regularity of the training and the expectations that the church has for the staff member's or volunteer's attendance and participation.

Staff and volunteers must receive training and development on an annual basis, but no staff member or volunteer can have an interval greater than three years between training sessions their training plan.



REQUIREMENTS FOR CONTACT WITH CHILDREN AND VULNERABLE PERSONS

All *staff and volunteers* must:

- comply with the Code of Conduct - Schedule 1 - while in contact with children or vulnerable persons;
- comply with the requirements of risk management plans that are required and in place for high risk activities or special events - see www.baptistinsurance.com.au for risk management resources;
- promote the participation and empowerment of children and vulnerable persons, recognising that attention needs to be given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and other vulnerable groups;
- listen carefully and consider respectfully the input from children and vulnerable persons concerning decisions affecting them and what makes them feel safe or unsafe;
- ensure children's personal information is treated appropriately and in line with the church's privacy / confidentiality policy for the collection, storage and use of information; and
- participate in safe church training provided by the church and for which the leadership requests their participation.

RESPONDING TO AND REPORTING HARM OR MISCONDUCT

The following guidelines are for responding to and reporting disclosures or evidence of harm or misconduct (a breach of the Code of Conduct).

1. When a person discloses harm or misconduct, whether it took place recently or a long time ago, we will respond with respect, compassion and appropriate action.
2. In all cases where harm is disclosed, the best interests of the child or vulnerable person will be paramount, and the church response will be clear and transparent to those affected.
3. The church's Safe Church Coordinator will assess and minimise any risks to a child, to children and to vulnerable persons, especially ensuring the safety and support of the child or adult who disclosed harm or misconduct. The coordinator will also respect the right of the child or adult disclosing harm or misconduct to confidentiality and will consult them before reporting their identity and information to others.
4. The coordinator will also consider restrictions imposed by Privacy legislation before passing on information to others.
5. The Safe Church Coordinator will connect the child or person disclosing harm or misconduct with church staff and/or professionals identified by the church as competent to provide care and support during and after the process.



6. The church's Safe Church Coordinator will complete a report to document the disclosure or evidence and the coordinator's and/or church leaders' response (Schedule 6). Care must be taken to record information and evidence in the words of the child or person to assist with the accurate presentation of the information or evidence, especially if the matter is referred to a government department or to the police to be investigated. The church's Safe Church Coordinator will ensure that these reports are properly stored either physically and/or electronically and accessible to the church leaders.
7. Where we have reason to suspect that a child is experiencing harm or is at risk of experiencing harm or being neglected, or receive a disclosure of harm or misconduct, we will contact Child Safety Services and seek information and advice about how to proceed.

During normal business hours – we will contact the Regional Intake Service.

After hours and on weekends – we will contact the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre on **1800 177 135** or (07) 3235 9999.

8. If the alleged misconduct or harm was perpetrated by a Registered Minister of Queensland Baptists, then the Safe Church Coordinator or church leaders will also inform either the QB Safe Church Officer or the Director of Pastoral Services for Queensland Baptists.
9. The person identified by the disclosure as harming and/or guilty of misconduct will be required to step aside from any activities that will bring them into contact with children or vulnerable persons while the matter is being investigated either by the church's Safe Church Coordinator, the church leaders, the police or a government department/agency, and until a determination about the matter has been made.
10. The church leaders in consultation with the Safe Church Coordinator would determine the parameters that will be put in place regarding the attendance and participation of the person identified by the disclosure, in other church meetings and activities during this process. This person will also relate to a person identified by the church leaders to liaise with the person and ensure they are kept informed about the process.
11. Where a staff member or volunteer has breached a legislative requirement pertaining to the protection and welfare of children, or an obligation stipulated by the Blue Card Services, then the authority responsible for issuing the Blue Card will be notified.
12. If the misconduct identified by a disclosure is outside the scope of government legislation and regulations but is covered by the Code of Conduct or the Church's constitution, then the provisions of this strategy and the church's constitution will be applied.



Schedule 1 – Code of Conduct

I WILL:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act in accordance with our church's constitution, policies and procedures, its safe church or child safety policy and procedures. • Comply with our church's policy and protocol for communicating with children, including the use of the internet and electronic communication devices and applications. • Comply with relevant legislation and our church's policies and procedures on record keeping and information sharing. • Perform my assigned role and responsibilities with integrity to maintain the church's reputation and uphold its beliefs and values. • Commit to loving others as Christ loves us, in particular, to behaving respectfully, courteously, righteously and justly towards all children and their families, vulnerable persons, ministry team members, leaders and church staff. • Listen and respond to the views and concerns of children, particularly if they communicate (verbally or non-verbally) that they do not feel safe or well. • Demonstrate adherence to appropriate personal and professional boundaries. • Consider and respect the diverse backgrounds and needs of children. • Contribute to creating and maintain an environment that promotes and enables children's participation and that is welcoming and safe for all vulnerable persons, children and their families. • Involve children and vulnerable persons in making decisions about activities, policies and processes that concern them wherever possible. • Contribute, where appropriate, to our church's policies, discussions, learning and reviews about developing a safe church community and ministries. • Identify and mitigate risks to the safety and wellbeing of children and vulnerable persons as required by our church's risk assessment and management policy or process. • Respond to any concerns or complaints of child harm or abuse promptly and in line with our church's policy and procedures for receiving and responding to complaints. • Report all suspected or disclosed child harm or abuse as required by relevant legislation and by our church's safe church policy and procedures.
I WILL NOT:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in any unlawful activity with or in relation to a child or vulnerable person.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in any speech or action, that is likely to physically, sexually or emotionally harm a child or a vulnerable person. • Make physical contact with any person in a way that is inappropriate to the situation, or would be uncomfortable, confusing or distressing for the recipient. • Unlawfully discriminate against any child or their family members. • Be alone with a child or children where they cannot be seen by other Church Workers • Arrange personal contact, including online contact, with children or vulnerable persons, for a purpose unrelated to our church's activities. • Disclose personal or sensitive information about a child, including images of a child, unless the child and their parent or legal guardian consent or unless I am required to do so by our church's policy and procedure on reporting. • Use inappropriate language in the presence of children or show or provide children with access to inappropriate images or material. • Work with children while under the influence of alcohol or prohibited drugs. • Ignore or disregard any suspected or disclosed harm or abuse affecting a child or vulnerable person.
<p>If I think this Code of Conduct has been breached by another person in [the organisation] I will:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act to prioritise the best interests of children and vulnerable persons. • Take actions promptly to ensure that children and vulnerable persons are safe. • Promptly report any concerns to my team leader, our church's Safe Church or Child Safety Coordinator, or the Lead Pastor. • Follow our church's policies and procedures for receiving and responding to complaints and concerns. • Comply with legislative requirements on reporting if relevant, and with our church's policy and procedures on internal and external reporting.
<p>I agree to abide by this Code of Conduct and understand that breaches of this Code may lead to disciplinary action</p>	<p>..... Signature</p> <p>..... Full Name</p> <p>..... Date</p>



Schedule 2 – Application for Working with Children

This application is to be completed by all applicants for any positions (voluntary and paid) involving the supervision of children.

1. Personal Information:		
Full name		DOB:
Address		
Email Address		
Phone Numbers	H:	M:
2. Activities:		
What types of activities are you interested in being involved in?		
Date available to begin?	/ /	
Minimum length of commitment?		
3. Church involvement:		
Length of attendance at church?		
Are you a member of the church?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Name all churches you have attended or been involved in during the past 5 years.		
List all previous involvement in the church involving children (identify which church next to the type of work).		
List any gifts, training, qualifications or any other facts that have prepared you for working with children.		
4. Overseas status:		
Have you lived or worked overseas for more than 12 months in the past 5 years?	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	Where?



Do you consent to a criminal history check in these countries?	Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Countries:	
5. Referees (2 required):		
Name (first referee)		
Address		
Phone	H:	M:
Name (second referee)		
Address		
Phone	H:	M:
6. Blue Card information:		
Do you have a current Blue Card?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Card No.	Date expires
Has your Blue Card ever been suspended for any reason?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Reason:	
Has any complaint ever been made against you alleging harm to a child? (provide details)		
7. Medical Information		
Medicare number		
Private health provider	(if applicable)	
Any medical condition which may impact your interaction with children?		
Any physical or other conditions/limitations affecting your interaction with children?		

8. Applicant's Statement		
<p>The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorise and churches listed in this application to give you any information they may have regarding my character and fitness for working with children. Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the Constitution and by-laws and policies of Queensland Baptists and my individual church and refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church.</p> <p>I have read and agree to abide by the following:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The Code of Conduct; and</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> This Safe Church Strategy.</p>		
Signed (applicant)		Date / / 20
Signed (witness)		Date / / 20

Office Use Only		
I confirm that I have completed the following in relation to the applicant:	<input type="checkbox"/> Contacted referees and churches and completed the 'References Check' form.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Sighted and recorded the details of the person's Blue Card.	
	Signed _____	Date / /
Full name _____		



Schedule 3 – References Check

1. Details of applicant:		
Full name		
2. First referee contacted:		
Full name		Date
Relationship with applicant		Contacted by:
Summary of remarks concerning suitability for working with children		
3. Second referee contacted:		
Full name		Date
Relationship with applicant		Contacted by:
Summary of remarks concerning suitability for working with children		
4. Church contacted:		
Full name		Date
Relationship with applicant		Contacted by:
Summary of remarks concerning suitability for working with children		
5. Church contacted:		
Full name		Date
Relationship with applicant		Contacted by:
Summary of remarks concerning suitability for working with children		

Details of person who conducted the check:

Signature _____ Date _____

Full Name _____

Please note the information collected above is highly confidential and sensitive and must be stored in a confidential place and only accessible to church leaders.

Schedule 5 – Interview with Applicant

Please note, these questions are simply a *guide*. Use your discretion to elaborate on any issues raised or ask for more details on issues raised in application.

Questions:

1. Why do you want to be a part of our church's ministry?
2. What involvement / experience in the past have you had with children?
3. Have you read the Code of Conduct and do you have any questions regarding the code?
4. Why do you think that our church's Safe Church Strategy is necessary? Are you willing to cooperate and comply with the standards and requirements of the policy that relate to or affect your participation in the church's ministries and activities?
5. Have you ever been known by any other name?
6. Have you ever been the subject of a:
 - a. complaint of harm to a child;
 - b. breach of a code of conduct or policy; or
 - c. decision to be precluded from attending or participating in a church/organisation' activities?
7. If so, what steps were taken (if any) by the church/organisation in response to the above, and what was the outcome?
8. Are you aware of any other matter which if known would call into question your suitability to work with children?
9. Do you have a Blue Card? If so, who did you obtain your Blue Card through?



Schedule 6 – Record of a disclosure of harm or misconduct

1. Details of person disclosing			
Full name:		DOB	
Address:			
Phone Numbers: H:		M :	
2. Details of other persons involved in incident including witnesses (attach additional pages if necessary)			
Full name		DOB	
Address			
Phone Numbers H:		M:	
Full name		DOB	
Address			
Phone Numbers H:		M:	
3. Incident			
Description what allegedly occurred (ask open ended questions). Use additional paper for full statement.		Advisable to attach a written statement from complainant to this report.	
Location it occurred		Time occurred:	
4. Reporting			
Has the Department of Child Safety been contacted and consulted?		Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Date and time contacted _____	
		Response: _____	
Has the church leadership been informed?		Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Date and time contacted _____	
		Response: _____	
Have the Police been contacted?		Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Date and time contacted _____	
		Response: _____	
Has the QB Safe Church Officer been contacted?		Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/> Date and time contacted _____	
		Response: _____	
5. Records			
A record of all conversations (with dates, times and names) has been kept.		Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	
File kept in a locked filing cabinet & marked "Do not destroy"		Y <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>	

Name of person completing report _____ Position _____

Signature person completing report _____ Signature designated person _____



Schedule 7 – A Fact Sheet on Sexual Grooming

A Training Resource

A lot of information exists about how to respond to sexual abuse once it has been discovered. But the best way of protecting children from harm is to be aware of the behaviours that can lead to sexual abuse before it occurs. These behaviours are called 'grooming'. Organisations with unclear boundaries around contact with children can be magnets to people who wish to 'groom' children for sexual abuse (1). By learning about the strategies used to 'groom' children and their families and recognising them as inappropriate behaviours in your service you create an environment that will deter infiltration by sexual abusers (2).

Sexual abuse thrives in secrecy and ignorance. By being alert to potential danger signs, we are better able to understand the steps we can take to keep children as safe as possible.

What is "Grooming?"

Sexual abusers are often people we know; more than 8 out of 10 children (3) who are sexually abused know their abuser. They may hold responsible positions in their local community and can be personable or charismatic. Abusers come from all classes, ethnic and religious backgrounds and may be heterosexual or homosexual. Whilst a high percentage of abusers are men, some are also women (4). You cannot pick an abuser out in a crowd; however, you can identify behaviour that precipitates abuse. This behaviour is known as 'grooming' and research shows us that it can occur for up to 12 months before the actual sexual abuse takes place (5).

Grooming is defined as communication with a child where there is an intention to meet and commit a sex offence (6). More generally it is the process by which an individual manipulates those around them – particularly, but not exclusively, the child – to provide opportunities to abuse and reduce the likelihood of being reported or discovered.

Research suggests that this process can be very deliberate, and while it can occur over a long period of time, sometimes this period is much shorter; there may not be any conscious motivation to sexually abuse a child until just before the abuse occurs. In both cases, there are often opportunities to observe and intervene, even before the would-be abuser is fully aware of what may become sexual intentions.

Unfortunately, identifying sexual grooming of children isn't always straightforward. Sometimes sexual abuse occurs as part of a pre-existing relationship in which there is genuine affection, which makes it a complex issue. But there are often clear signs that can be detected before the abuse occurs.

How Do People Groom Children for Sexual Abuse?

By getting close to children – child sex offenders will often seek out adults and groom them in order to get access to their children. The sex offender can create a relationship built on trust or dependency and gain access to the children through it. Some befriend parents or carers who are facing difficulties or who are vulnerable themselves.

By silencing children – people who want to sexually abuse children may:

- offer them gifts or treats, and sometimes combine these with threats about what will happen if the child says 'no' or tells someone
- threaten them with exclusion from their peer group or loss of favour if they do not comply
- make the child afraid of being hurt physically, or threaten what may happen to other people if the child tells
- play on the child's embarrassment or guilt about what is happening, perhaps convincing them that no one will believe them
- make the child believe he or she wanted it to happen.

Signs an Adult May Be Grooming a Child for Sexual Abuse:



There may be cause for concern about the behaviour of an adult or young person if they:

1. Exhibit frequent physical affection such as kissing, hugging, stroking hair or wrestling even when the child clearly does not want it, or it is not required.
2. Encourage child or children to sit on their lap and offer regular physical comfort or reassurance to a child without a recognised cause.
3. Seek out opportunities to be alone with a child with no interruptions.
4. Spend most of their spare time with children and have little interest in spending time with people their own age.
5. Solicit invitations to sports, events or parties where a child will be.
6. Frequently arrive uninvited to places where the child or their family will be in a series of 'coincidences'.
7. Spend a lot of time around places like arcades, playgrounds, parks and sports venues to get to know children so they are not seen as strangers.
8. Regularly offer support to the family members of the child such as offering to babysit children for free, transport children to events, and help at social occasions involving the child or take children on outings alone.
9. Offer to drive children home or collect children from events on a regular basis.
10. Frequently walk in on children in the bathroom or their bedrooms.
11. Treat a child or group of children as favoured, making them feel special compared with others in a group.
12. Find out as much as possible about the child and use that information to engage the child and drive a wedge between the child and any protective adults, e.g. parents, teachers or coaches.
13. Purchase gifts or collect items of interest regularly for a specific child or group of children.
14. Tell secrets to a child and encourage the keeping of secrets.
15. Display ambiguous sexual behaviour, e.g. showing the child pictures of other children wearing swimsuits or less.
16. Display clearly inappropriate sexual behaviour, e.g. showing the child pornographic pictures, using explicit sexual language around children.

What to do if Abuse is Suspected

Where grooming is suspected, please advise your Safe Church Coordinator who will then take the matter further.

KEY POINTS TO NOTE:

- Child sexual abuse thrives in secrecy.
- People who abuse children may spend up to 12 months 'grooming' a child before they commit a sexual act with them (7). However, the period spent grooming can also be short, with the impulse occurring not long before the abuse happens.
- People do not just 'groom' children, they also 'groom' the adults around them.
- Environments that have defined boundaries regarding appropriate behaviour are less likely to attract sexual abusers (8).
- Educators, volunteers and visitors to the service should follow defined protocols for appropriate behaviour or be excluded from the service.



- Identification of sexual grooming of children in care centres can be a complex issue. The challenge is to be vigilant without creating a siege mentality.

References

1 Understanding the Grooming or Entrapment Process, CPSU briefings

2 Wortley and Smallbone 2006

3 (ABS, 1996, 2004a)

4 Pritchard, 2004

5 Wortley and Smallbone 2000

6 Understanding the Grooming or Entrapment Process, CPSU briefings

7 Child Sexual Abuse in Queensland: Offender Characteristics and Modus Operandi

8 Understanding the Grooming or Entrapment Process, CPSU briefings

Source – Network of Community Activities publication



Schedule 8 – Indicators of Abuse

A Training Resource

What is child sexual abuse?

Child sexual abuse occurs when an adult, stronger child or adolescent uses their power or authority to involve a child in sexual activity. Child sexual abuse can cause physical and emotional harm to a child. Sexual abuse can be physical, verbal or emotional and can include:

- kissing or holding a child in a sexual manner
- exposing a sexual body part to a child
- having sexual relations with a child
- talking in a sexually explicit way that is not age or developmentally appropriate
- making obscene phone calls or remarks to a child
- sending obscene mobile text messages or emails to a child
- fondling a child in a sexual manner
- persistently intruding on a child's privacy
- penetrating the child's vagina or anus by either the penis, finger or any other object
- oral sex
- rape
- incest
- showing pornographic films, magazines or photographs to a child
- having a child pose or perform in a sexual manner
- forcing a child to watch a sexual act
- child prostitution

Indicators of sexual abuse

A child may say things, do things or exhibit physical signs that are clues to sexual abuse, even if they do not disclose clear information. Some indicators of child sexual abuse may include:

- displaying greater sexual knowledge than normally expected for their age or developmental level
- inappropriate sexual play and behaviour with themselves, other children or dolls and toys
- hints about sexual activity through actions or comments that are inappropriate to the child's age or developmental level
- excessive masturbation or masturbation in public after kindergarten age
- persistent bedwetting, urinating or soiling in clothes
- persistent sexual themes in their drawings or play time
- running away
- destroying property
- hurting or mutilating animals
- creating stories, poems or artwork about abuse
- difficulty concentrating or being withdrawn or overly obedient



- having unexpected redness, soreness or injury around the penis, vagina, mouth or anus
- having torn, stained or bloody clothing, especially underwear
- recurring themes of power or control in play.

Should any of the above be present, a child may need parents or other adults to take action to keep them safe from any further harm.

Indicators of Neglect

Some indicators of neglect include:

- malnutrition, begging, stealing or hoarding food
- poor hygiene, matted hair, dirty skin or body odour
- unattended physical or medical problems
- comments from a child that no one is home to provide care
- being constantly tired
- frequent lateness or absence from school
- inappropriate clothing, especially inadequate clothing in winter
- frequent illness, infections or sores
- being left unsupervised for long periods.

Information courtesy of Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services



Schedule 9 OPTION 1– Guidelines for using electronic communication & social media

A Training Resource

1. Interaction with children and vulnerable persons through electronic communication and social media will be kept to a minimum and usually in a team or group context that allows for transparency and accountability.
2. Where possible and practical, we will seek the permission of a parent or guardian before phoning or messaging a child.
3. When providing pastoral care and support we will do so face to face and in place that is visible and accessible to others.
4. All emails to children and vulnerable persons should have either a church email address cc'd into them or the email address of a supervising church staff member.
5. SMS communication will be restricted to providing general and publicly available information.
6. Emails and SMS messages that are sent or received should be kept and stored in an appropriate place.
7. Church workers will not be Facebook friends or Twitter followers with children. Instead, a specific Facebook page, Instagram account or any other similar social media outlet related to our church's ministry will be set up and used for communicating with children.
8. Church workers will not engage in video conversation with children without the permission of a parent or guardian, and only after explaining the purpose of the video conversation.
9. Any photographs of children's ministry activities will be taken by someone appointed by the church leaders and with parental consent.
10. Photographs of children will not be used for promotional purposes without the permission of a parent or guardian.



Schedule 9 OPTION 2 – DRAFT Guidelines for using Electronic Communication in Children and Youth Ministries during COVID – 19

Preface

As we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic with our church ministries, and work to stay connected through online platforms, it is important to consider best practice for online safety, particularly in relation to our children and youth ministries.

For the purpose of this guideline, where the term “young people” is used, it includes children, youth and vulnerable people.

For many of our young people, online platforms such as social media, text messaging, and video are a natural way for them to interact and express themselves. This affords an opportunity for the church to create safe places for young people to build community, explore faith and grow as disciples, and to receive care and support.

Caution must be taken however, when engaging with young people in the various forms of electronic communication and social media. Intentional boundaries are fundamental to keeping young people safe. As such, this template provides guidance for churches to assist their decision making in setting up different ways to deliver ministry in an online context.

It remains essential that church staff/volunteers continue to adhere to their church’s Code of Conduct for standards of behaviour when interacting with young people via online platforms.

Guiding Principles

1. Consent

Parental/Guardian consent must be in place before engaging online or via any form of electronic communication with young person. Verbal consent would be considered unacceptable as it does not meet the principle of traceability. No online engagement or electronic communications can occur where consent has not been given or where the parent/guardian has indicated that they do not want online communications to take place between their young person and church staff/volunteers.

Any online group involving children 12 years or younger must be set up using only a Parent/Guardian’s email and login, and login-in details must not disclose a child’s full name. Groups involving teenagers must ensure that Parental/ Guardian consent covers off young person’s email being used as a login.

Consent should also encompass the details of all platforms to be used, the purpose of the engagement/activities and how information will be managed (accessed/stored). Additionally, consent should identify specific timeframes for when church staff/volunteers are permitted to communicate online with young people. For example, not before 8am or after 8pm.

2. Traceability

Does the platform have a digital footprint, and can it be accessed if the need arises? Churches should consider what platforms they will use and how they will effectively achieve the principle of being able to review online activity/engagement.



3. Accountability

What current/in person practices in ministry can be replicated in an online environment to ensure accountability remains in place? For example, student/leader ratios, two leaders present during online engagement etc.

4. Transparency

How is church governance and oversight enacted in implementing new ways of doing ministry? For example, have policies/procedures relating to ministry activities been updated and endorsed by the church leadership? Additionally, the concept of transparency should be considered in the context of oversight, data protection and also privacy obligations. For example, considering the privacy requirements of gathering people's data to an online platform. How is this data stored and used by the platform? Who has access to this information now and in the long term?

5. Safety

Online platforms are ever changing, and churches need to consider how to remain up to date with changes to privacy settings/restrictions etc.

The following are recommended considerations for incorporating into online ministry activities for young people:

5.1 Live Stream

- When using live stream, no images of young people should be used if the church does not have permission for their image to be online, or if there is a custody issue that could endanger them if they were seen online.
- If a church is streaming in a way where members of the public can access the stream, chat functions should be disabled.
- If a church is streaming in a way where members of the public cannot access the stream (closed Facebook group for example) chat is permitted.

5.2 Online Groups

- Links to any online platform should not be available in the public domain, instead they should only be sent to those invited into the group.
- Disable private chat functions through these platforms.
- Maintain a minimum of 2 staff/volunteer leaders and a minimum of 2 participants
- Consider gender dynamics. For example, never have a group discussion where the group of participants are all of the opposite gender.
- Photographs/screenshots should not be permitted.

5.3 Social Media

- Comply with the terms of any social media platform. For example, Facebook and Instagram have a minimum age of 13 years for someone to have a personal account.
- Where possible use of social media with young people should be via church/ministry accounts rather than personal accounts.
- Establish systems to enable a minimum 2 staff/volunteer leaders able to see all communications with a young person. This includes direct messages, text, email, social media, video chats, clips, etc
- Retain chat history. The church and its staff/volunteers should not use social media platforms for ministry activities which cannot be traceable.



- Consider privacy settings which prevent personal contacts from seeing or interacting with the young people contacts connected to your ministry.
- Care must be taken with online communication, and consideration given to how an engagement may be perceived differently by those who view/receive it. For example, ensuring the text/image is beyond reproach and cannot be misconstrued.

5.4 Text Based Communications

- To assist with the principle of accountability, all emails to young people be cc'd to a church email address or the email address of a supervising church staff member.
- Where possible text/direct message communication should be restricted to providing general and publicly available information or must have another person added to the conversation.
- Emails, texts, and direct messages that are sent or received should be kept and stored in an appropriate place for the purposes of traceability.

Risk Assessments

Online events/activities should be risk managed as would be done for any in person event using a risk assessment tool.

When completing risk assessments, consideration needs to be given to how to communicate to parents/guardians the event/activity specific details (outside of the original consent) as would be done when hosting any in person event/activity.

Awareness and Training

Churches need to provide training and education to staff/volunteers around etiquette and expectations as well as protecting personal and private information during online activities/engagements.

Churches should already be providing regular intermittent training to staff/volunteers on responding to and reporting harm or misconduct and should consider ways of incorporating online safety specific training.

Churches can also encourage Parents/Guardians to educate themselves and their young people about online safety. The QLD Family and Child Commission has a variety of [online safety resources](#) useful in this area.

Conclusion

It should be noted that this is draft document, and the current pandemic is calling for new ways of doing church, and for ministries involving young people the element of safety is paramount. With technology always advancing and the online space being a constantly changing environment, churches need to establish systems for ensuring more frequent review and updates to this section of their Safe Church Strategy.