Safe Church Refresher Participant booklet



Scenario 1: Creating a Culture of Safety

Please make your own notes and reflections here:

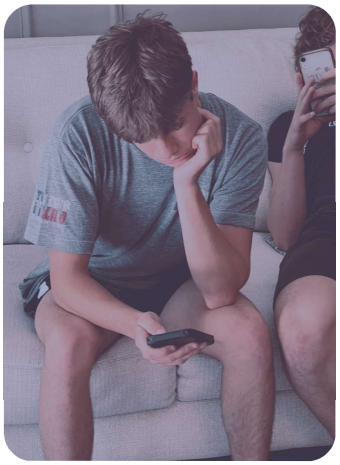
What would it look like for your congregation to take Safe Church culture seriously - not just in emergencies, but in everyday moments?

What kinds of things might you need to particularly pay attention to?

INFOSHEET

Creating a Culture of Safety

Understanding grooming behaviour is crucial for protecting children. Grooming is when someone builds trust with a child or family to gain access and test boundaries. Learn to recognize the warning signs.



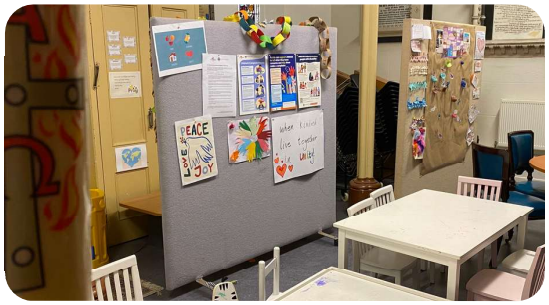
What is Grooming?

Grooming describes the preparatory (or 'lead up') stage of child sexual abuse that offenders use to gain the trust and compliance of the child or young person (and those around them) and to establish secrecy and silence to avoid disclosure. Grooming may occur in person (contact grooming) or online.

Source: "What is Grooming?" Bravehearts Foundation. 30 October 2025. https://bravehearts.org.au/about-child-sexual-abuse/what-is-grooming/

The Implementation Guide is a useful way to move through meeting the Child Safe Policy and therefore the National and State Child Safe Standards.

It includes questions for reflection, key documents and resources as well as actions.



Children and young people are made aware of and given a voice in safe church decision making

Giving children a voice can be as simple as getting feedback via feedback forms, inviting them to join working groups or making time to ask "what is it that makes you feel safe in church?"
We want to make sure children and young people know their rights and responsibilities. The safe church website has a children's code of conduct to assist with this conversation.

Leaders and volunteers regularly participate in safe church training

All training information can be found at: https://safechurch.ucavictas.org.au/safe-church-training/

Up to date visual indicators

Ensuring the Safe Church Contact details are up to date and easily visible to both children and adults.
The Safe Church website also has a range of posters available.

Regular verbal and written communication to the congregation with safe church contacts and values

We should be talking about Safe Church in all areas of congregational life: in newsletters, announcements, and at events. Everyone in our congregations should know we are a safe church.

Scenario 2: An Eager Volunteer

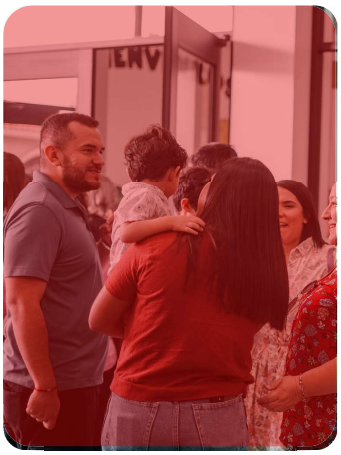
Please make your own notes and reflections here:

How do we balance being welcoming with being wise about safety?

INFOSHEET

An Eager Volunteer

Making sure we have the right people in the right roles is important across our congregations. It is no different when it comes to those who work with children and young people.



Reportable Conduct

The Reportable Conduct Scheme requires us to respond to ANY allegations of child abuse (and other child-related misconduct) made against our workers and volunteers, and to notify an external body of the allegation and the outcomes of the investigation.

This is the Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) in Victoria and the Office of the Independent Regulator in Tasmania (OIR).

The Implementation Guide is a useful way to move through meeting the Child Safe Policy and therefore the National and State Child Safe Standards.

It includes questions for reflection, key documents and resources as well as actions.



Supervision

Supervision for volunteers is a crucial part of our commitment to them. It is important to make regular time (monthly, quarterly) to check in and chat privately about their strengths and wins as well as areas they or you have recognised they need further support in.

Remember that recruitment is for volunteers as well as paid employees at a congregation.

It is vital we are doing mandatory checks for all our volunteers but especially for those who are working with vulnerable groups of people such as children.

Basic checks would include:

- Working With Children Check/Working With Vulnerable Persons; and,
- 2 referees.

Interviews

Asking a potential volunteer a few questions about their experience, why they want to engage in a particular role, and any supports they might need to complete a role is an excellent way of gauging if someone is a good fit and also ensure you are able to support them in their new role.

This doesn't need to be done as a formal interview. You could ask the potential volunteer to answer the questions in an email and then catch up for a coffee to discuss the answers.

Scenario 3: Cultural Safety

Please make your own notes and reflections here:

How can we be a place where First Nations families feel safe and respected?

INFOSHEET

Cultural Safety

There are a number of ways we can make our congregations safe for First Nations people, whether we have people who identify in our congregation or not.



How do we get it right?

Often people worry about 'getting it wrong' but genuine engagement means that we are open to trying and being corrected. Celebrate NAIDOC week, engage in deep listening and truth telling, engage with local groups and associations. Get to know the story of the land you are on.

I encourage you all to take the first steps we have spoken about today and see how your spaces can benefit from engaging with the oldest continual culture in the world.

The Assembly has some fantastic resources in relation to Covenanting:
Covenanting in the Uniting Church – Uniting Church Australia

For more information as you move deeper into your understanding and want to work further at creating a culturally safe space you can look at the Living the Covenant Locally website. This website covers how we can Listen and Learn, go deeper and move to action.

Acknowledgements both visual and verbal

There are plaques you can purchase to place in your entrance however you can also print your own. Take the time to research what land you are on to ensure you are recognising the correct First Nations people. This is a great opportunity to find out more about your local area.
A verbal acknowledgement of Country is a way of saying to your whole congregation that First Nations families are welcomed and safe in your space. The Assembly's guide to making an Acknowledgment of Country is a wonderful resource on how we can honour God and recognise the First Nations land we are meeting on. These are also available in a range of languages.

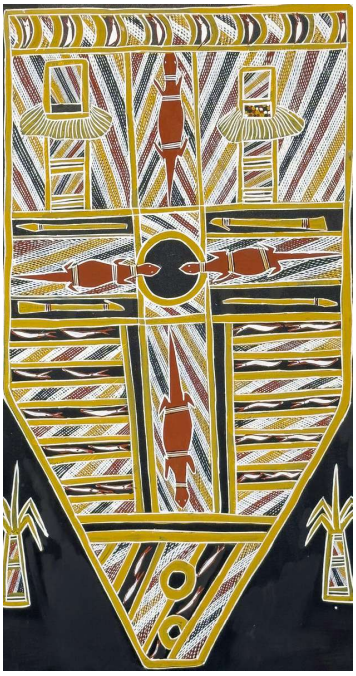
Racism is not welcome here

As well as looking safe our spaces need to continuously show that they are safe for First Nations children and families. Racism, whether loud and overt, or quiet and subtle, has no place in the Uniting Church. Any complaints need to be taken seriously and racist comments or behaviour need to be managed swiftly.

First Nations art in your spaces

When sourcing First Nations art, ensure that you are buying from a reputable place. This is to make sure the art is genuine and that the artist is being fairly compensated,.

Displaying posters from the UAICC



Scenario 4: Reporting

Please make your own notes and reflections here:

What would be the barriers to you making a report?

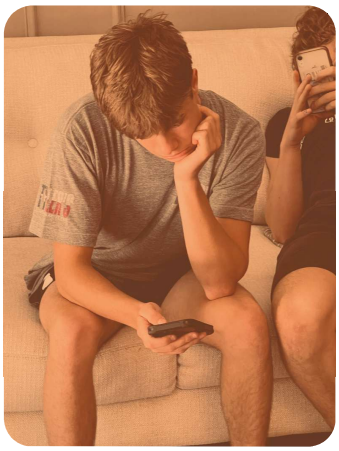
How can your congregation ensure that requirements to report are taken seriously?

How might you reduce any perceived barriers to report?

INFOSHEET

Reporting

Knowing when to offer supports and when to make a report to authorities can be a difficult decision. Here's an overview of reporting requirements



What do I do?

If you have any concerns about a child, please contact the Culture of Safety Unit on 03 9116 1400 or cultureofsafetycontact@victas.uca.org.au

We are always happy to discuss a specific circumstance and support you to direct the report to the right place

More information about both Reportable Conduct and Mandatory Reporting can be found on the Safe Church Website under the Reporting Tab.

It is always better to be cautious and contact the Culture of Safety team to discuss concerns rather than wait for more information or for a situation to escalate - early support will always have a better outcome!

Reportable Conduct

Concerns harm done to a person who at the time was under the age of 18 and relates to behaviour by any past or present volunteer or employee of the church.

- Concern may be present or historical
- Concern can be in within or outside their role at the church
- Relates to behaviour by any past or present volunteer or employee of the church
- Requires a report to Culture of Safety

Child Safety/ Mandatory Reporting:

Mandatory reports need to be forwarded to the following:

Victoria-
https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/child-protection-contacts
Tasmania-
https://strongfamiliessafekids.tas.gov.au/

Child Protection/Mandatory Reporting

When a child currently under 18 is experiencing or at risk of harm. Applies whether or not the incident has any relationship to the church or related organisation.

- Concern is present or very recent
- A child currently under 18 is being harmed or at risk of harm
- Relates to any person, inside or outside the church or its activities
- Requires a report to police or child protection and a report to Culture of Safety

Community Supports

Often offering supports early to families can help divert away from statutory services.
In victoria families can access support through:
https://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au/
In Tasmania families can access support through:
https://strongfamiliessafekids.tas.gov.au/

Additional Resources:

The Safe Church Website below has all the policies, procedures and documents.

https://safechurch.ucavictas.org.au/

The Brave Hearts website below has information about “What is child abuse?”

https://bravehearts.org.au/about-child-sexual-abuse/what-is-child-sexual-abuse/

The Brave Hearts website below has information about “Disclosures of child abuse.”

https://bravehearts.org.au/research-lobbying/stats-facts/disclosure-of-child-sexual-abuse/

The Brave Hearts website below has information about “Online child exploitation.”

https://bravehearts.org.au/about-child-sexual-abuse/online-child-expoitation/

The Safe Church website below has information on recruitment support.

https://safechurch.ucavictas.org.au/recruitment-support/

The Synod website below has further reading on Covenant and UAICC.

https://uniting.church/livingthecovenantlocally/

The AIATSIS website below has a map of Indigenous language groups.

https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia

The Strong Families Safe Kids website below has reporting information and family support for Tasmania

https://strongfamiliessafekids.tas.gov.au/

The Orange Door website below has reporting information and family support for Victoria

https://www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au

The SSR website below has information about Reportable Conduct in Victoria

https://www.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme

The OIR website below has information about Reportable Conduct Tasmania

https://oir.tas.gov.au/investigations/reportable-conduct-scheme