



Duty of Care Policy

It is the policy and practice of the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia that:
All appointed Leaders within the Church (whether paid or voluntary) who would have or could expect to have contact with children, youth and vulnerable people obtain the required Screening Checks as part of being authorised by Church Council¹ for the roles of responsibility which they hold.

Appointed Leaders are people who are in a position of trust, influence or authority because of their leadership role within the Church. This would include, but not be limited to, lay preachers, elders, church councillors, those who lead worship, anyone involved in children and youth events/programs/activities, music leaders, organists, Bible study leaders, and 'home group' or 'cell group' leaders and any other person commissioned by the Church Council to perform a leadership role

An integral part of this process is completing a Screening Application through the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia, (Uniting Church) with the Department of Human Services. As a minimum a South Australian Working with Children Check (WWCC) is required. In addition for some designated roles a General Employment Probity Check and/or Vulnerable Person Related Employment Check.

Church Councils are required to authorise and appoint an individual to be recognised in a leadership role in the Uniting Church. This is done by following the Safe Church Leadership Authorisation and Appointment process.

Safe Church Leadership Authorisation and Appointment process

Church Councils are required to apply this to leaders who are in a position of trust, influence or authority because of their leadership role within the Church.

Appointed Leaders are people who are in a position of trust, influence or authority because of their leadership role within the Church. This would include, but not be limited to, lay preachers, elders, church councillors, those who lead worship, anyone involved in children and youth events/programs/activities, music leaders, organists, Bible study leaders, and 'home group' or 'cell group' leaders and any other person commissioned by the Church Council to perform a leadership role

Before appointing leaders the Church Council must:

- consider the six month guideline for voluntary leadership roles (i.e. people are only considered for leadership after they have been part of the congregation for six months)
- confirm and record screening completion
- interview applicants
- request and check references.

It is important that leaders who care for children and young people are appropriately selected and adequately trained to work with the age groups for which they have responsibility.

¹ Church Council or the equivalent governing body

Screening Requirements:

1. All appointed leaders will need a Working with Children Check (WWCC)^{i*}
2. In addition to the WWCC, the following voluntary roles of responsibility will need a 'General Probity Check'
 - Office holders and members of church council
 - Anyone managing financial responsibilities
 - Driving a vehicle for a church sanctioned activity
 - Working in a Uniting Church Op Shop or café
3. In addition to the WWCC, Volunteers who provide any of the following on behalf of their congregation will need a 'Vulnerable Person Related Employment' check.
 - Being a Designated Pastoral Visitor from a Church.
 - Lead or assist with worship services in Aged Care facilities or Hospitals
 - Working with Refugees, migrants
 - Offering social support services (e.g. counselling/ financial support/ soup kitchen/Op Shop)
4. All Ministry Agents as defined in the Code of Ethics and Ministry Practice and who are deemed to be 'in active service' will require:
 - Working With Children's Check
 - General Employment Probity Check
 - Vulnerable Person Related Employment Check

Ministers who are retired and not deemed to be 'in active service', and Ministers 'on designated leave of absence' do not require a General Employment Probity or Vulnerable Person Related Employment Check.

 - Ministry Agents only need a NDIS check if employed by a Government funded disability organisation.
 - Ministry Agents only need an Aged Care Check if employed by a *Commonwealth Funded Aged Care* facility. (Commonwealth Aged Care Act 1997 and Aged Care Accountability Principles 2014)
5. Employees within Uniting Church Presbyteries and Congregations require:
 - Working With Children Check
 - General Probity Check.
 - A Vulnerable Person Related Employment Check will be required, if any responsibilities include a role as listed above (#3)
6. Employees of the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia, require upon employment a General Probity Check completed through UCSA. This is then to be renewed as required.
 - If the employee's role is deemed to fulfil the definition of Child Related Work^{*}, then a Working with Children Check will be required.
 - If the employee's role is deemed not to fulfil the definition of Child Related Work but the staff member is an Appointed Leader within a congregation, the WWCC is then submitted as a volunteer.
 - If the employee's role includes any responsibilities as listed in 3 above, then a Vulnerable Person Related Employment Check will be required.
 - If the employee's role does not include any responsibilities as listed in 3 above but the staff member is an Appointed Leader within a congregation, the Vulnerable Person Related check is then submitted as a volunteer.

Record Keeping

Records of an individual's completed screening checks will be kept securely by the Synod. It is expected that the individual will retain the records of completion and will supply details to the relevant Uniting Church entity with whom they are an appointed leader.

A Current Working with Children Check is required before the individual is appointed to a leadership role.

- WWCC are valid for 5 years.
- Vulnerable Persons Related Employment Check is valid for 3 years.
- General Employment Probity Check is not transferable as it is completed for each organisation. Where a check is conducted through the Uniting Church it is deemed to be valid for 3 years.

The Applicant is responsible to maintain the currency of their check and to produce evidence of same when requested by the church.

Application through the Uniting Church SA Synod.

Screening check requests are facilitated through the Synod Office.

Information collected from an online application via the Synod website will initiate a screening check request. The applicant is asked to provide information indicating a description of the roles and which additional screening checks are required. This will initiate the screening check process.

An Appointed leader may hold a WWCC and/or Vulnerable Persons Related Employment Check sourced through another organisation. The details of that check will need to be provided by the appointed leader to enable the WWCC to be associated with the Uniting Church and recorded appropriately.

Responsibility of notification and compliance with the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016.

The Uniting Church is required under the Act to advise the Department of Human Services Central Assessment Unit if they become aware of any behaviours or charges that would put into question the appointed leader's suitability to continue in their role.

The Uniting Church is also required to ensure that the applicant has a current check and that at least once in every 5 year period, verify, in accordance with the regulations, that

- a Working with Children Check has been conducted in relation to the person within the preceding 5 years; and
- the person is not a prohibited person. (Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 Part 4 18)

* As per the Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 (SA) when considering the definition of Child related work Part 3 6(1)(b) services or activities provided by religious organisations.

The Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Regulations (SA) 7:(7)(2) define 'child related work' as services or activities provided by a religious organisation where a person would have or could be expected to have contact with a child.

'Contact' means: "has close physical proximity or communications with the child (orally, written, electronic, etc.)." (Regs 7:(7)(6))

Child Safety (Prohibited Persons) Act 2016 (SA) Part 3 7: a reference to a person being employed will be taken to include a reference to a person who

- (c) carries out work as a minister of religion or as part of the duties of a religious or spiritual vocation; or
- (e) carries out work as a volunteer

Policy date: 30 July 2019 Approved by the Synod Safe Church Committee

2 August 2019 Approved by the Synod Standing Committee

Reviewed : 28 May 2020

Updated and approved: **20th August 2021** Synod Safe Church Committee

To be reviewed Annually