

Lugar Brae Uniting Church



Children and Youth Work Policy Outline 2017

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Purpose

Lugar Brae Uniting Church recognises and affirms the contribution children, youth and their families make to the life of the Church. We also recognise that children and young people are at a vulnerable stage in their development. It is therefore vital that we ensure our ministry activities are run in a safe and nurturing environment. Through the implementation of this policy we hope to create a Church that helps children and young people to grow in their faith and discipleship.

This policy statement has been drafted to succinctly state our policy framework for all children and youth activities. This document is supplemented by our procedure guide, which outlines in further detail the practical steps necessary to implement this policy.

Scope:

This policy applies to Lugar Brae Uniting Church members, paid employees and volunteers who work with or have involvement with youth and children. Youth are defined as anyone in the age range of 12-24. Children are classified as ages 11 and under.

Contents:

1. Programs and activities
2. Work, Health and Safety and Duty of Care
3. Working with Children Check, Mandatory Reporting and Child Protection
4. Grievance and Sexual Misconduct Reporting Process
5. References

1. Programs and activities

Lugar Brae Uniting Church's face-to-face children and youth programs include playgroup, scripture classes, youth evenings, school holiday programs and sunday school. For each of these the following guidelines are recommended;

- A minimum of two paid/volunteer workers will be present at each activity
- Children and youth will be supervised at all times
- Written permission from a parent will be required for any off-site activities
- Physical contact (i.e. hugs, a pat on the back etc.) should be used with discretion and in full view of the other adult present
- Doors to rooms in which activities are held should be kept open
- Any suspected misconduct should be appropriately reported (see grievance, sexual misconduct and mandatory reporting below)

Social media activity (including the official Lugar Brae website, Twitter account and Facebook page) are considered an extension of Lugar Brae's children and youth activities. Lugar Brae Uniting Church recognises both the opportunities social media can provide and the need for online activity to be conducted safely and in a transparent manner. With this in mind, the following general guidelines are recommended;

- That social media accounts are not used to communicate via private messaging with young people. All communication (i.e. promoting events) should be done publicly
- Each site is to have multiple users (i.e. paid employees, council members) who are able to access the site and investigate activity
- Site updates are relevant to the Church and its activities
- All updates and posts to page are reviewed regularly and any offending material deleted and reported if necessary
- No photos are to be posted without the written permission of young people and/or their parents/carers
- Parents are made aware of this policy
- In all other communications (i.e. email, phone calls) paid and voluntary employees should use discretion and remain professional

2. Work, Health and Safety and Duty of Care

All Lugar Brae Uniting Church employees and volunteers have a duty of care toward children and young people who access our activities and services, and will take reasonable steps to ensure safety and minimize the risk of harm. All Lugar Brae Uniting Church activities will adhere to the safe work principles outlined in the NSW Government's *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*. More information about this legislation can be found by visiting:

<http://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/act/2011/10>

As part of our commitment to a safe environment for children and young people we will;

- Identify and respond to potential and existing risks
- Undertake regular WHS planning
- Keep and manage accurate records
- Continually monitor and review our activities and programs

3. Working with Children Check, Mandatory Reporting and Child Protection

All paid and volunteer children and youth workers will require a working with children check clearance number. The responsibility for screening employees and ongoing record keeping belongs to the senior minister and council members. More information about how to obtain a WWCC number can be found by visiting:

<https://www.service.nsw.gov.au/transaction/apply-working-children-check>

In NSW anyone who works with or provides services to children and youth are mandatory reporters, whether these positions are paid or voluntary. If abuse or neglect is suspected or disclosed, a report should be made to the Department of Family and Community Services NSW. This can be done by phoning 133 627 or by using the Department's electronic reporting form. For further information about the requirements of mandatory reporting please visit:

<https://reporter.childstory.nsw.gov.au/s/>

4. Grievance and Sexual Misconduct Reporting Process

A grievance report can be made by anyone associated with Lugar Brae Uniting Church, and can include paid employees, volunteers, council members and regular Church attenders. In such cases the complaint should be referred to the Senior Minister. If the report involves the Senior Minister directly, the complaint should be forwarded to the Church council for further action.

Sexual misconduct is considered any form of unwelcome sexual advance or request for sexual favors to another person, as well as other forms of inappropriate sexual behaviour. If a report of sexual misconduct is disclosed to a Church leader, the matter will be immediately referred to the Church council. If the matter involves a child under the age of consent the report will also be forwarded to the Department of Family and Community Services (see: *Mandatory Reporting* above). Further details about the Church's response to allegations of sexual misconduct, as well as our grievance process, are to be found in the procedure manual.

5. References

This policy statement has been drafted with reference to the following resources:

- *Youth Action Policy Association Duty of Care Recommendations:*

http://www.youthaction.org.au/duty_of_care

- *NSW Office of the Children's Guardian*

<https://www.kidsguardian.nsw.gov.au>

- *The Uniting Church of NSW/ACT Resource Centre*

<http://nswact.uca.org.au/resource-centre/>