



POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Serving in children's and youth ministry

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1. Introduction

Lighthouse Church is committed to providing an open, welcoming and safe environment for all children and youth. Children are entitled to be safe and protected. They have the right to be respected, listened to, and to have their particular needs addressed in church activities. Ministry where children are involved requires absolute trustworthiness¹.

Lighthouse Church loves and values children as Jesus did. It is a privilege to teach and instruct our children and contribute to their understanding and love of God. The following information outlines procedures relating to children's/youth ministry to ensure the safety and welfare of children and youth in our care, and to minimise the risk of anything detracting from our mission of 'Building Christ's church by proclaiming God's word'.

Please familiarise yourself with this document, discuss any issues or questions the material might raise for you with your leader, and keep this document for future reference.

2. Safe ministry policy

Lighthouse Church is committed to the physical, emotional and spiritual welfare and safety of all people, particularly within our own community. To ensure the safety of children and vulnerable people in our communities, we will:

- carefully select and screen children's/youth ministry workers
- adopt and encourage safe ministry practices by our ministry workers
- provide appropriate safe ministry training for all children's/youth ministry workers
- ensure a clear reporting procedure is in place, and respond promptly to any concerns or complaints
- provide appropriate support for people in church who has experienced abuse
- provide supervision of, and pastoral accountability (within the context of ministries, locations and activities of the church) for any person (who is a member of a congregation and) who is known to have abused a child or another vulnerable person²
- regularly review safe ministry policies and procedures.

A copy of the full policy is available at: <http://www.lighthouse.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/NLEC-Safe-ministry-policy.pdf>

3. Children's and youth ministries

Children's/youth ministries at Lighthouse Church include:

- creche, kids church and youth church
- kids club and Lighthouse youth
- women's growth group crèche
- ministry in schools – scripture/special religious education (SRE) and lunch time groups
- Summerfest.

These ministries meet the definition of 'child related work' under the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 so ministry workers are subject to NSW Office of the Children's Guardian mandatory screening and training requirements (paid workers and volunteers).

¹ Faithfulness in Service 2007

² Based on Sydney Anglican Network's Safe Ministry Policy available at: <http://www.psu.anglican.asn.au/index.php/p2/policy>

4. Safe ministry responsibilities

a. Senior Pastor

The senior pastor has a legal responsibility to ensure compliance with screening under the legislation. The senior pastor is responsible for approving safe ministry policies and procedures, and managing (and external reporting where indicated) any child protection issues, concerns, or allegations.

b. Safe ministry representatives

Responsible for assisting the senior pastor to implement safe ministry procedures in church including:

- ensure policies and procedures relating to safe ministry are current and updated regularly
- maintain safe ministry register and liaising with leaders regarding screening and training of ministry workers
- providing/gaining advice regarding safe ministry queries, issues, policy changes.

c. Children's/youth ministry leaders

- Be familiar with, and provide leadership in line with, Lighthouse Church' safe ministry policies and procedures
- Maintain a current working with children clearance (every 5 years) and safe ministry training (every 3 years)
- Ensure children's/ youth ministry workers maintain a current working with children clearance
- Provide induction, training and supervision for children's/youth ministry workers
- Provide necessary resources eg teaching program resources.

d. Children's/youth workers

- Be familiar with, and serve in accordance with, our safe ministry policies and procedures
- Maintain a current working with children clearance (every 5 years) and safe ministry training (every 3 years)
- Participate in training to ensure a high standard of care for children and youth
- Prepare and deliver lessons in accordance with the teaching program provided, and the information in this document
- Report difficulties, concerns, or suggestions to the ministry leader.

5. Selecting, screening and training ministry workers



Lighthouse Church will ensure children's/youth ministry workers are screened in accordance with requirements in the *Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012* and *Child Protection (Working with Children) Regulation 2013* **BEFORE** commencing in any child related role whether in a paid or volunteer capacity³.

The screening and selection process for our children's/youth ministry workers is outlined in *LC03 Policy and Procedure - Screening and training children's/youth ministry workers*. In summary, a person must:

- be a church member - attending for at least 3 months before completing formal membership process
- display the desirable characteristics for a ministry worker⁴
- have a current working with children number which has been verified by Lighthouse Church
- be familiar with this document *LC04 Policy and Procedure – serving in children's/youth ministry*
- maintain current safe ministry training
- consent to and have sound referee checks
- participate in ongoing training and support.

³ A breach of this legislative requirements may involve a fine or imprisonment for two years, or both.

⁴ Desirable characteristics for a ministry worker include someone who has a growing, committed relationship with Christ, believes children and young people are important to God, respects and loves children and young people, models godliness, is teachable, reliable, a team player, wise and careful and open in their actions and behaviour.⁴

We utilise on line training provided through Safe Ministry Training: www.safeministrytraining.com.au
This process involves the provision of a current working with children number, online verification, online training and the completion of referee checks. The cost involved is \$10 per person which is paid online when you complete the training (if this cost presents a barrier or concern please speak with your ministry leader). A training refresher course must be undertaken every three years.

Children's/youth ministry leaders and safe ministry representatives complete the same on line training program, but may also undertake an extended version of training that is conducted in a face-to-face training setting every three years. If a person in these roles completes comprehensive child protection training through work (evidenced by completion certificate) this additional face to face training may not be necessary (considered on a case by case basis).

Ministry in schools

Lighthouse Church is an approved provider of Special Religious Education (SRE) or 'scripture' and runs lunch time groups in schools. The Department of Education requires annual assurance in writing that Lighthouse Church has 'a system of authorised initial and ongoing training for their teachers that includes training in classroom management and child protection issues'.

In addition to the screening and training process outlined above, Initial training for ministry workers in schools involves:


- initial meeting/training with the mission pastor to provide new teachers with an understanding of the regulations surrounding SRE, the cultural context in which we do SRE, basic skill training and orientation to the curriculum
- 'buddying' with experienced teacher
- classroom management training provided as formal or on the job training or a combination of both
- correspondence/meetings as required to share any difficulties and ideas amongst teachers and ensure ongoing support.

Teachers must wear a name badge with the Lighthouse Church while on site, and their names must be included on, or added to, the list provided by Lighthouse Church to the Principle of the school at the start of the year.

The document 'Religious Education Implementation Procedures' provides important information about teaching special religious education in schools including the responsibilities of all parties, and approval and reporting obligations: <http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/religion/assets/pdf/implementation.pdf>

6. Guidelines for serving in children's/youth ministry

The following information outlines procedures designed to ensure the safety and welfare of children and youth in our care, and our ministry workers. The primary strategy for achieving this is outlined below:

 **To ensure the safety of our children/youth and ministry workers, ministry workers should never be alone with a child or young person, except in an emergency situation that would warrant completion of an incident report.**

At a minimum there should be at least two children/youth with a children's/youth worker at all times, however it is preferable that at least two ministry workers are present.

This principle applies to all ministries, all activities, all venues, all the time. This principle underpins the following guidelines.

6.1 Supervision

The Department of Education and Communities recommendations regarding adult to children ratios for accredited early childhood education centres⁵ are used as a basis for supervision ratios at church as follows:

- Crèche (0-3 years) – Up to 24 months 1:4, 24-36 months 1:5
- Preschool (3 years - school aged) – 1:10, usually roster on 2-3 adults depending on numbers
- Infants (K-Year 2) – no fixed requirement, work on ratio of 1:10, a minimum of two adults rostered on
- Primary – no fixed requirement, two adults are rostered on.

Youth church has only one adult leader, however each leader is aware of the need to ensure they are never alone with youth, and that at least two youth are present at any given time.

The ratios above relate to minimum supervision provided by adults, that is, people 18 years or older. Youth may also serve in children's/youth ministries, however they are can not be counted in terms of minimum supervision ratios.

Supervision ratios may be higher than the minimum ratios outlined above depending on:

- venue, time, duration and nature of the activity
- age, maturity, ability and gender mix of the children
- size of the group (FIS⁶ 5.25).

To ensure the needs of children are met in ministry and church activities, children are often divided into groups based on age/school year. In discussion with the ministry leader or leader, where there is a need children may attend a younger age group. However younger children are not usually able to attend older age groups to ensure:

- the needs of the children involved are met
- children are participating in age appropriate activities to ensure their engagement and safety
- the provision of adequate supervision of other children.

Any queries or concerns that arise in relation to this matter should be directly to the relevant ministry leader.

6.2 Registration and permission forms

At church parents/carers complete registration forms which include relevant medical information. The forms should be reviewed / updated at the beginning of each year.

a. Crèche and preschool

Parents sign children in and out. Teachers confirm number of children present correlated with the sign in sheet.

Crèche and preschool children must be signed out by a parent or carer. This provides the opportunity for helpers to provide a handover or feedback to parents/carers, and to discuss any issues or concerns. This is particularly helpful for visitors and newcomers. Siblings under 18 years cannot sign children out of children's ministry events or activities. Parents can give permission in discussion with teachers for other parents to sign their children out where necessary.

⁵ <http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/what-we-offer/regulation-and-accreditation/early-childhood-education-care/faqs>

⁶ Faithfulness in Service 2007

b. Infants and primary

Children in the infants and primary rooms often walk up on their own. A roll is taken at the beginning of the lesson. If the children leave the room during the lesson everyone will walk down as a group, a head count is completed on arriving at the oval for example, and a head count is repeated on return to the class room.

At the end of church infants and primary children are able to walk down to church providing parents/carers have signed the list giving permission. Parents who have not provided written permission are to collect their children straight after church. Teachers in the older rooms will pass on any necessary feedback to parents/carers after church at morning tea. This provides a good opportunity to speak with newcomers, to provide information about kids church, and to get registration forms signed. Permission forms are completed for off site activities.

6.3 Personal care

Assisting and encouraging independence shows love and concern for the children in our care⁷. Avoid providing personal care, particularly where it is possible for the child to perform the task for themselves.

The following procedures have been designed to assist in this regard:

- Parents of pre-school children are encouraged to take children to the toilet before signing in at kids church.
- If a nappy change is required parents/carers are sent a text message and asked to come and change their child. If there is no response, a helper will go to church and ask the parent/carer to come and change their child.
- For crèche, preschool and infants children a female⁸ helper will take a minimum of two children (preferably of the same gender) to the toilet, and generally no more than five children at a time.
- If a young child needs to be lifted onto the toilet, the helper should do this with the door open then leave the cubicle. If assistance is requested with clothing, this should be provided outside the cubicle in the foyer area. In the occasional instance where assistance may be required with toileting disposable gloves are available in the kids church box.
- Primary children are to go with a friend of the same gender to the closest toilets. Leaders/helpers will monitor the time children are away from the classroom.
- If it is necessary for a helper to escort older children to the toilet, the helper will remain in the entry doorway. Helpers are not able to enter the toilet cubicle to assist older children with personal care. If there is an incident where this was unavoidable the helper should notify the ministry leader.
- In the case of children with special needs any special requirements will be identified in discussion with the parents before the child is left in care.

6.4 Unsettled / upset children

Parents are encouraged to support strategies designed to minimize the likelihood of children becoming upset in the process of separating from parents or carers. In crèche on Sundays for example, parents are asked to pack morning tea (snack and drink) for their children, which the children have on arrival.

If a child becomes upset in crèche helpers will aim to divert attention and engage the child in activities they enjoy. If however a child cries continuously and cannot be consoled for a period in excess of 5 minutes, a text message is sent asking the parent or carer to attend. If there is no response, a helper will return to church and ask the parent to attend. There may be times where parents and helpers negotiate a longer time period, however if the child cannot be consoled and is crying continuously, a helper will return to church and ask the parents or carers to return to crèche after a maximum period of 10 minutes.

⁷ Safe ministry (Youthworks) training manual

⁸ This does not prevent males being helpers in kids church - just from this one task. It is expected there will be at least one female helper rostered on younger classes.

6.5 Activities and games

It is important to consider the message children may learn from the way events are organised and conducted. Games or activities that emphasise gender, physical, intellectual or ethnic differences should be assessed for their appropriateness. Games involving physical contact especially with older children should also be considered to ensure the level and type of contact is appropriate, and is not likely to offend or embarrass more sensitive participants⁹.

Some other aspects of games and activities that should be considered include:

- how teams are selected - does the process make anyone feel uncomfortable?
- does the game or activity encourage cooperation, team work, and inclusion?
- will everyone understand the game and be able to participate?
- is the activity appropriate for all the ages represented in the group?
- how will you manage the situation if a child is unwilling to participate?
- is the environment safe? is the activity safe?
- will children who are visiting feel comfortable with this activity?
- have you got sufficient helpers to ensure safety, facilitate inclusion, and moderate behaviour appropriately?
- have you carefully previewed any visual materials you will be using to ensure suitability?

If you have any doubts about the suitability of the activity or game it is recommended that you do not proceed with the activity. It would also be useful to seek the opinion of your leader in this instance.

6.6 Administering medication

Generally ministry workers are not able to administer medication to children or young people in their care. Parents are encouraged to return at the required time to administer medication.

An exception is offsite or overnight activities where medication is essential and would otherwise prevent the child or young person attending. In this instance medication must be provided in original packaging, with the child's name and dosage instructions clearly marked. Administering medication for any child or young person must be covered explicitly in a written permission slip, with clear written instructions regarding the name of the medication, the dose and time. This includes any medication to be self administered by a young person.

6.7 First aid and emergencies

The following strategies are employed to ensure safety:

- A registration form is completed to identify allergies, special food requirements, other special needs.
- Parents of children in crèche are asked to provide morning tea for their children. Provision of high allergy foods (eg nut, egg) is discouraged. Children are only allowed to eat the food their parents have provided, however with parent's consent a plain biscuit may be offered if children arrive without something for morning tea.
- For children's/youth activities where the parents or carers are not on site, the list of emergency contact details will be retained in case of an emergency.
- For the wellbeing of other children, children who are unwell with contagious illnesses are unable to attend children's/youth ministry events. Where it becomes obvious children in care are unwell the child will be escorted back to their parents.
- The primary first aid kit is maintained at church in the storage room in the hall. Smaller first aid kits are maintained in the kids church boxes in each room.

⁹ Faithfulness in Service 5.27 (2007)

In the event of a minor incident, helpers will administer basic first aid eg apply band aid. Detailed information regarding first aid and emergencies procedures (including a list of trained first aiders) is outlined the summary of work health and safety procedures located in the teacher's folder in each kids church room.

If it is necessary to administer first aid and the child remains upset after a period in excess of 5 minutes the parents or carers will be advised. If the child settles, the teacher will advise the parents of the details of the incident when they collect the child. An incident report form should be completed may be required. A guide as to when an incident report form may required includes:

- first aid supplies other than a band aid were required
- there is sufficient blood to warrant a covering over the wound
- the child is upset about the incident or as a result of the incident for longer than 5-10 minutes
- you would expect a written record to be made in relation to the incident if it involved your child
- if any follow up action is or was required eg medical attention
- if circumstances resulting in the incident requires action to be taken to avoid a similar incident occurring again.

In the event of a significant injury, parents will be asked to attend immediately if they are onsite, or phoned if offsite. The decision making in relation to care will then rest with the parent, and helpers will provide whatever assistance they can. The teacher will complete an incident report form and notify the ministry leader as soon as possible.

In the event of an evacuation teachers are responsible for implementing the evacuation plan. A copy of the plan is included in the folder in each kid's church class room. In the event of an evacuation:

- a 'runner' will be sent from church to quietly notify teachers of the need to evacuate
- runners will stay to assist teachers to evacuate (crèche especially), and parents of children with additional needs will also be instructed to attend to ensure their children are evacuated safely
- teacher is to collect sign in sheet and/or attendance roll, and advise children they have to go outside as quickly as possible
- teacher to assemble children in one or two lines and complete a head count
- teacher then leads the way, with one helper at the end of the lines
- calmly leave the classroom, take closest stairs, proceed across the COLA to the assembly point on the grassed oval (see site evacuation map)
- all children must remain with the class (parents have been instructed they cannot collect children until roll call)
- on arrival at assembly point teachers confirm via head count that all children are present, and notify the emergency warden that all children are accounted for
- children can be collected from class lines at this point but must be marked off on the attendance roll by the teacher as they are collected by parents/carers
- teachers, helpers and runners are to remain available to provide information, and receive instruction from the warden.

6.8 Communication

Ministry workers should never be alone with a child or young person. This same principle applies to all forms of communication with children and young people. When considering other communication media (eg email, social networking or chat sites, phone, text messaging), it would not generally be considered necessary or appropriate for ministry workers to enter into closed one-on-one communication with a child or young person.

Use of communication media between ministry workers and children/youth should be:

- limited to administrative or logistical content eg reminder about event, change of event time
- open communication eg a group email to participants, or copying in ministry leader on emails
- with the approval of, or under the direction of, the ministry leader and relate to the activities of church.

Records of communication should be retained in keeping with legislative record keeping requirements.

a. Facebook

- Youth activities may have a public facebook page which ministry workers can utilize to engage with youth as this communication is open and allows parents to freely view all content.
- Ministry workers must not seek out and 'friend' youth with their personal facebook account. If a young person seeks out and 'friends' a ministry worker, they can accept the 'friend request' but must keep all communication open for all to see.
- No photos are to be posted on facebook unless parents have given written consent (in the case of Lighthouse Youth via a general permission form). Photos posted on facebook will be classed as 'advertising'. Security settings of any facebook page must be set to restrict non-administrators from posting photos.
- Content will be regularly reviewed by leader, and infrequently but (routinely) by pastor overseeing youth ministry and child protection rep for auditing / reporting/ training purposes.
- Ministry workers must ensure no bullying or inappropriate communication occurs between young people on the facebook site. Anything inappropriate will be removed and, if necessary a person can be 'blocked' from the page.

b. Informal meetings with youth

A youth leader is able to meet up with youth informally during the week if:

- Parents have signed the General Permission Slip which includes a section regarding informal meetings.
- Youth are dropped off and picked up by parents. This acts as an additional form of (implied) consent.
- Meetings are in a public place eg shops, cafe, movies.
- A minimum of two youth are present with the leader. Given the above risk control measures two leaders are not required, however there may be times when the leader determines this is necessary given the participants, group dynamics, or other relevant factors.

c. Email and Txt/SMS

- Emails should be restricted to administrative/logistical content only.
- Permission should be included on relevant registration forms.

d. Phone

- Contact should be limited to short calls for primarily administrative/logistical purposes
- Consider whether it may be more appropriate to convey information by phone directly to parents
- Consider using home phone in preference to mobile phone. If parents answer the phone advise of the purpose of your call. It may be appropriate to leave a message with the parent or carer.
- If a child or young person initiates a call for non administrative or logistical reasons, or the conversation is likely to be lengthy, it may be necessary to gently exit the conversation until a later date.

If you suspect a child or young person is developing or displaying an interest in communicating with you outside the group regarding non administrative or logistical matters promptly seek the advice of your ministry leader.

6.9 Photography

Photographs should:

- focus on the activity and groups of children, rather than one child or young person
- be taken only with consent
- not be displayed in a public forum without consent (of parent and the young person themselves if appropriate)
- not to be kept on youth leader phones unless for an administrative (ie future advertising) purposes¹⁰.

Anyone involved in taking photographs of children or youth at Lighthouse Church events for church purposes (eg promotional purposes) should refer to LC01 Policy and procedure - Privacy and Information Management.

¹⁰ Electronic communication policy http://www.psu.anglican.asn.au/index.php/p2/safe_ministry_resources

6.10 Discipline

Our aim in all children's and youth ministry the aim is to engage children in age appropriate activities where they can learn and enjoy themselves. To assist in achieving this we will:

- develop well prepared, structured lesson plans with lots of activities to accommodate different interests, and children who finish at different rates
- proactively anticipate and manage the needs of the group.

Children and young people are most secure when they know the limits or boundaries in which they can operate, and which behaviour will be acceptable to adults around them¹¹. It is out of love that we discipline children - like God does with us. Having rules and discipline helps to make the class a safe, fun and productive learning environment where kids can grow in their knowledge and love of God.

We recognise discipline strategies must be age appropriate.

For young children:

- Bend down to the child's eye level or sit on the floor and provide a clear, age appropriate explanation as to why the behaviour is undesirable. Speak clearly, calmly and kindly.
- If the behaviour is repeated, initiate directed play where the two children are separated for a time in different play groups or areas. Ensure the child is engaged in an activity they enjoy.
- If the behaviour continues it may be necessary to assign a helper to the child (where possible). This may involve play in a separate area of the room for a time.
- If the behaviour continues, or it is not possible to adequately meet the needs of the child and other children, it may be appropriate for a helper to seek advice from the leader or ask a parent/carer to attend.

For the infants and primary groups:

- Provide a clear, age appropriate explanation as to why the behaviour is undesirable.
- Speak clearly, calmly and kindly. Be mindful that for older children there may be times where it is appropriate to do this out of the hearing of peers (but still in view of others) to avoid unnecessary embarrassment.
- Outline clearly the process that will be followed if the behaviour is repeated.
- The process from this point on will depend on the exact behaviour or situation however if for example it was being disruptive or disrespectful during the lesson the following process may apply:
 - a. Instruct the child to move to a different spot in the group
 - b. Ask the child to sit next to the teacher
 - c. Ask the child to sit in an area of the room that is not with the main group for a set period of time
 - d. Repeat the process above if the behaviour continues on returning to the group
 - e. If necessary send a helper to ask the leader for assistance.

If you are have ongoing concerns or difficulties in relation to behaviour or discipline, it is helpful to raise this early with your leader to enable possible strategies to be considered and developed to address the situation. If you are having difficulties it is very likely other children's/youth ministry workers will be too.

¹¹ Safe ministry (Youthworks) training manual

In relation to your role as children's/youth ministry worker it is **NOT** acceptable to:

- raise your voice (unless it is to warn of immediate danger)
- berate, belittle, ridicule or humiliate a child
- use personal insults or references to personal traits ie 'you are a'
- physically restrain a child (unless to protect or avoid an accident)
- use any form of physical contact as a disciplinary measure eg smacking
- isolate a young child (crèche / preschool) as a form of punishment.

This applies equally to parent helpers' interactions with their own children who may be part of the group.

6.11 Physical contact

Our first option for affirming a child or young person should be verbal responses and appropriate attention. It is important to recognise the opportunity to teach children/youth appropriate levels of physical contact for the settings we are in, and that there is a greater need for formality in a group setting than they may be familiar with in a family context¹².

Appropriate physical contact should be brief and may include:

- high five
- handshake
- patting the child on the head, hand, back or shoulder in affirmation
- open hugs (side by side, not face to face)
- taking a younger child's hand to direct or redirect them to an activity
- holding a preschool child who is crying, providing they want to be held, until they can be redirected¹³.

Inappropriate contact includes:

- kissing a child, or encouraging a child to kiss you
- extended hugging or tickling
- touching any area of the body normally covered by a swimming costume
- carrying older children or having them sit on your lap
- any physical contact that may even potentially be interpreted or construed as being sexual in nature or overtone
- anything that could give the impression of favouritism or an inappropriate special relationship¹⁴.

In exceptional circumstances such as immediate physical danger or a medical emergency there may be a need for physical restraint of a child or young person. In this instance the ministry leader must be informed of the circumstances of the incident as soon as possible, and it may be necessary to complete an incident report form.

¹² Safe ministry (Youthworks) training manual

¹³ Safe ministry (Youthworks) training manual and Faithfulness in Service 2007

¹⁴ Faithfulness in Service 2007

6.12 Transportation and off site activities

When planning an offsite activity involving children or youth, a risk assessment will be completed following the process below:

- a. the leader/organiser will complete the Lighthouse Church Activity Planning template
- b. the form will be forwarded to the admin/pastoral team for review, this may include contacting our insurance company
- c. the information contained in the activity planning form will be used by the leader/organiser to draft and send out a permission form for the event (with input from the safe ministry representative if necessary)
- d. only children/youth with completed permission forms will be able to participate in the activity/event.

Supervision ratios will be met (see 6.1 Supervision) with reference to the risk assessment for the event. There may be instances where a higher level of supervision is required eg children with special or additional needs. Where outings include children/ youth of mixed gender, where possible ministry workers and parent/carers of mixed gender will accompany the group offsite.

The following should be taken on all offsite activities:

- an attendance list with emergency contact details for every child/young person
- at least one mobile phone (one per leader would be preferable)
- a small portable first aid kit.

Where possible it will be the responsibility of parents to arrange transportation for their children to and from church activities and events. Where it is necessary for children/youth to be transported in private vehicles by ministry workers, the permission form must specifically include this information. In this instance other requirements must be met:

- a. Child protection considerations

Ministry workers (adults who, in any given context, are performing child related 'work' on behalf of Lighthouse Church) must not be alone in a car with a child/young person even with parental consent, except where the child/young person is a family member.

Where possible each car will contain two ministry workers and a minimum of two children/youth, however a minimum requirement would be one ministry worker and two children/youth in each car with consideration of gender issues. If in a particular situation this is not possible (eg emergency, or refusal likely to place child or young person in danger) another adult must be informed of the trip and the reason for the trip being necessary. This would necessitate the completion of an incident report form as soon as practicable¹⁵. Where several cars are involved in transporting youth or children to/from to the same event/location, attempts should be made to travel together in convoy (ie leave at the same time, take same route).

Lighthouse Church has an obligation to ensure all people attending church events are safe, however personal arrangements made before and after church events by parents/carers/church members in relation to transporting children and young people are not subject to the requirements performed above. With the exclusion of situations where ministry workers transport children and young people, Lighthouse Church has little or no control over a situation until the child or young person arrives onsite.

¹⁵ Based on Sydney Anglican Network's Transport Policy Transport policy www.psu.anglican.asn.au/index.php/p2/youthworks

b. Safe driver considerations

Where transport in private vehicles (other than parents/carers vehicles) is necessary as part of a ministry activity the vehicles must be registered, safe and well maintained, and where possible should have comprehensive insurance (third party property at a minimum). Drivers must have a valid driver's licence, be on their black (full) licence experienced in all possible situations, have a good driving record, and agree to drive responsibly and courteously obeying all road rules including observing speed limits and ensuring seat belts are worn.

6.13 Overnight activities

Overnight stays with children or youth require additional planning to ensure safety. The following information provides a guide to assist planning such events:

1. An activity planning form (template) should be completed to identify risks ('what could go wrong') and mitigation strategies ('how could we prevent it')
2. Determine who will supervise the event, and who will be onsite overnight:
 - Supervision ratios must be met (see 6.1 Supervision)
 - Consider gender issues. Male and female leaders will be required for mixed gender events. Where possible sleeping accommodation will be segregated between males and females
 - Where possible supervisors will not sleep in close proximity to a child or young person
 - Any adult who will be on site overnight must have completed Lighthouse Church's screening process
 - Leaders should be recently familiar with the information in *LC04 Policy and Procedure – Serving in children's/youth ministry* (this document).
3. Determine in consultation with pastoral team if Lighthouse Church's insurer needs to be notified of the event.
4. Need signed permission slips including provision of emergency contact details and any relevant medical information such as allergies or dietary requirements. This information should be available on the premises of the overnight event.
5. Ensure basic first aid supplies are available, or take one of the smaller first aid kits. Determine from the permission form if anyone will need to bring or take medication during the event and make necessary provisions. Any medication on site must be in original packaging, and have information included on the permission slip.
6. Ensure the 'rules' are clearly explained at the commencement of the event.

7. Addressing concerns and complaints (non reportable)

The best protection against any issues in children's/youth ministry is **prevention** and **communication**. Lighthouse Church has implemented strategies aimed at preventing situations that may compromise the care of our children or young people or give rise to concerns or complaints relating to care provision. These strategies include:

- screening processes for every person prior to commencing in children's/youth ministry
- defined roles, responsibilities, and accountabilities for everyone involved in child related work
- comprehensive written procedures relating to all aspects of children's/youth ministry
- established pathways for parents and members to raise concerns or make suggestions (see below)
- regular review and refinement of safe ministry policy and procedures.

On occasions parents, carers, or other people involved in church may raise a concern relating to a matter involving their child, the content of the teaching program, or some other point of concern that does **not** relate to a 'risk of harm' situation. In this instance it is important to:

- listen carefully
- receive the information willingly - do not dismiss the person's concerns or be defensive
- be sure you are clear about what aspect of the situation has caused concern
- confirm you will advise the relevant ministry leader.

In some instances it may be necessary to defer the conversation until after children have been collected and/or until the ministry leader can be part of the conversation. You should advise the relevant leader of any issue or complaint arising, even if you feel the matter was minor or does not require any further action.

The ministry leader may:

- ask the ministry worker to document the relevant information, or make their own record
- seek advice from, or escalate the matter to, the safe ministry representative and/or pastoral team if necessary
- report back to the parent or guardian as part of addressing the issue
- facilitate changes to safe ministry procedures if indicated.

8. Child abuse or risk of harm

Church workers whether paid or voluntary have authority over children because of their position, greater age, maturity, physical size and life experience. Abuse arises from a misuse of authority or power. Due to this inherent imbalance of power children are incapable of giving valid consent to abuse.

Child abuse is any act of omission or commission that endangers or impairs a child's physical or emotional health and development. Abuse may be physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, bullying, spiritual, or neglect. It is important that every person involved in ministry is aware of the definitions of child abuse and the indicators of abuse (see Appendix 1), and when and how to report these concerns. At Lighthouse Church this information is provided via safe ministry training, provision of written procedures (LC03 and LC04) and ongoing supervision and support.

There may be times where a child or young person discloses information directly to you in your role as a ministry worker that raises concerns about their safety, welfare or wellbeing. It is important you are aware of how to manage this situation before it occurs. The following information provides a helpful guide:

- DO listen and stay calm (avoid displaying strong reactions)
- DON'T ask more questions than are necessary to be clear about what the child is telling you
- DO reassure the child, let them know you are glad they told you, and that you are going to get help about what to do next
- DON'T make promises (eg not to tell - you will need to inform your ministry leader)
- DO report to your ministry leader as soon as possible
- DO write a record of what the child or young person said and what you said as soon as possible
- DON'T discuss the matter with anyone other than your ministry leader (or safe ministry representative or senior pastor)
- DON'T notify or raise the matter with parents or caregivers - this is not your role¹⁶.

¹⁶ Disclosure of risk by a child/young person guidelines <http://www.psu.anglican.asn.au/index.php/p2/youthworks>
Safe ministry (Youthworks) training manual www.psu.anglican.asn.au/index.php/p2/links_anglican

Confidentiality is an important aspect of relationships with children and young people, however it is important that we make it clear that there are limitations. There are times when you will have a responsibility to report information that has been disclosed to you, even though this may breach confidentiality. This includes:

- when a person is in danger
- when a person threatens to harm themselves or others
- if you become aware that a criminal offence may have been committed.

As a children's/youth ministry worker your role is to notify and discuss your concerns with your ministry leader as soon as possible, especially where you have current and immediate concerns for the safety, welfare and wellbeing of a child. It is **not** possible to withhold the identity of those involved when the person perpetrating the alleged or suspected abuse is involved in church, or the incident of concern occurred at a church related activity or event.

If you have not already documented the information disclosed by the child, or your concerns/observations, depending on the urgency of the situation your ministry leader may ask you to do this **before** speaking with you to gain further information. This is an attempt to protect the integrity of the information disclosed to you.

Your role in reporting abuse or risk of harm generally ceases once you have provided all necessary information (written then verbal) to your ministry leader. At Lighthouse Church the process of evaluating the information and risk to the child and determining an appropriate course of action is undertaken by the ministry leader, safe ministry representative and senior pastor for the following reasons:

- The senior pastor has the statutory responsibility for compliance with child protection requirements including reporting, documenting, and managing child protection issues and risk.
- The process allows another person to evaluate the information to determine if they come to the same conclusion
- The process allows people with detailed knowledge about child protection reporting to collaboratively determine the necessary course of action including whether to initiate external reporting based on the definitions of 'reasonable grounds', 'abuse' and/or risk of 'significant harm' with the assistance of external professional advice if necessary
- This process ensures the person who is reporting externally (usually paid employee) is appropriately supported throughout the process, and provides our volunteer ministry workers with some protection from what could be a difficult process.

The document *LC03 Policy and Procedure - safe children's/youth ministry* outlines the reporting process that will be followed by your ministry leader and senior pastor. The online interactive NSW Government Premier and Cabinet Mandatory Reporting Guide tool forms the basis of decisions regarding external reporting to the relevant authority. When it is determined external reporting is required it is likely external professional advice will be sought.

9. Related policy and procedures

LC01 Policy and procedure – Privacy and information management
 LC03 Policy and procedure - safe children's/youth ministry.

Appendix 1 - Definitions and indicators of child abuse

<p>Child or children</p> <p>The <i>Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012</i> defines children as persons under the age of 18 years. A person who is 16 or 17 years of age may be referred to as a young person or youth.</p>
<p>Child abuse</p> <p>Any act of omission or commission that endangers or impairs a child's physical or emotional health and development. This includes conduct in relation to a child which is bullying, emotional abuse, harassment, neglect, physical abuse, spiritual abuse or any sexual behaviour with or in the presence of a child including sexual communications and gestures, showing sexually explicit or suggestive material and sexual physical contact.</p>
<p>Child related work</p> <p>Under the Child Protection (Working with Children) Act 2012 a worker [employee or volunteer] is engaged in child related work if the work involves direct contact with children or is in a child related role which under the Act includes work for, or in connection with, religious services by any religious organisation. Under the Act direct contact with children means physical contact, or face to face contact in the line of work (ie church attendees are not performing work, ministry workers are performing 'work' on behalf of Lighthouse Church).</p>
<p>Conviction</p> <p>Under the Act a conviction includes a finding that the charge for an offence is proven, or that a person is guilty of an offence, even though the court does not proceed to a conviction.</p> <p>Those offences included on a person's criminal record which, because of the passage of time and legislative preconditions having been met, are no longer to be considered in any administrative decision making. Sexual offences and child-related personal violence offences can never be "spent" for the purposes of the Working With Children Check.</p>
<p>Child neglect</p> <p>Child neglect occurs where a child is harmed by failure to provide the basic physical and emotional necessities of life such as adequate and proper food, nursing, clothing, medical aid or lodging. Neglect can be ongoing or a single significant incident. However, neglect typically develops as a pattern of behaviour that results in harm to a child over a period of time. When considering whether a child is being, or has been, neglected, it may be useful to focus on the effect on the child. Incidents that do not suggest any impact on the long-term physical, emotional or intellectual well-being of the child are unlikely to constitute neglect.</p> <p>Indicators can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hunger, begging or stealing food, gorging when food is available • consistently poor hygiene and/or inappropriately dressed for weather conditions • unattended health problems and lack of routine medical care eg gum disease, untreated sores • tired, listless, falling asleep in class • behaviours such as tiredness, irritability, inability to concentrate • evasive in discussions about home, address, when parents are home • withdrawn, alienation from peers, poor socialising habits • poor or irregular school attendance or staying at school long hours.
<p>Domestic violence</p> <p>Domestic violence is violent, abusive and intimidatory behaviour by one person against another in a personal, intimate relationship. Domestic violence occurs between two people where one has power over the other causing fear and physical and/or psychological harm.</p>

Emotional abuse

Encompasses a range of behaviours by a parent or caregiver which can destroy the confidence of a child, resulting in significant emotional deprivation or trauma. It involves impairment of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and intellectual development and/or disturbance of a child's behaviour. Indicators can include:

- low self-esteem
- Fear of failure, overly high standards, excessive neatness or cleanliness, anxiety
- behavioural problems – unexplained mood swings, unusually demanding or overly passive behaviour, behaviours that are not age appropriate ie overly infantile or parenting behaviours, attention seeking behaviour
- delays in emotional and/or physical development
- unconcerned parents and/or very limiting in terms of contact with other children.

Person of interest (POI)

A person who has been convicted, accused, is reasonably suspected of, or has admitted to child abuse or sexual offences.

Physical abuse

Physical abuse refers to non-accidental injury to a child by a parent, caregiver or another person responsible for the child. It includes injuries that are caused by excessive discipline, severe beatings or shakings, bruising, lacerations or welts, burns, fractures or dislocation.

Indicators can include:

- injuries without a plausible explanation, bruises, welts or burns in unusual configurations, fractures
- multiple injuries in varying stages of healing
- evasive answers, improbable explanations
- unusual fear of physical contact eg flinching, wariness or fear of parent/caregiver, reluctance to go home
- habitual absences from school or other regular activities
- aggressive, withdrawn or sad eg frequent crying.

From online mandatory reporting guide: While corporal punishment is not endorsed, it is not prohibited as long as physical force is not applied to any part of the head or neck of a child, or any other part of the body of a child in such a way as to be likely to cause harm to the child that lasts for more than a short period. (Crimes Act 1900 s 61AA; Education Act 1990)

Prohibited person

A person convicted of a serious sex offence, the murder of a child, a child-related personal violence offence or a person who has been found guilty of a registerable offence against children under the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000.

Registrable person

A person who has been found guilty of a registrable offence against children under the Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000.

Relevant record

Relevant records include Relevant criminal records, Relevant Apprehended Violence Orders and Relevant employment proceedings.

Sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse is any sexual act or sexual threat imposed on a child. Adults or adolescents who perpetrate child sexual abuse exploit the dependency and immaturity of children. Coercion, which may be physical or psychological, is intrinsic to sexual abuse and differentiates such abuse from consensual peer sexual activity.

The sexual abuse of a child commonly has the following characteristics:

- usually starts with something minor and gradually builds to more involved behaviours through 'grooming'
- secretive and generally known only to the abuser and victim making it extremely difficult to detect;
- perpetrated by someone known to the child and/or held in a position of trust by the child or their parents
- rarely a one-off incident but part of an ongoing relationship that is corrupting and distorting.

Indicators can include:

- inappropriate sexual activity and/or sexual knowledge beyond their years
- unusual fear and anxiety
- deteriorating relationships with peers and adults
- sudden decline in performance at school
- avoiding going home or to another venue they previously enjoyed visiting
- evidence of grooming eg unexplained gifts
- injury, discomfort in the genital areas, inflammation or recurrent infections eg urinary tract infections.

Sexual abuse is often preceded by grooming. The grooming process is a **pattern** of behaviour that can include:

- persuading a child that a 'special' relationship exists – spending special time with the child, establishing a relationship outside the employment/ministry context, giving gifts, showing special favours to them only, allowing the child to overstep rules etc

testing of boundaries – undressing in front of the child, allowing the child to sit on the lap, talking about sex, 'accidental' inappropriate touching.

Serious sex offence

An offence, involving:

- sexual activity or acts of indecency committed in NSW and was punishable by penal servitude or imprisonment for 12 months or more; or
- an offence, involving sexual activity or acts of indecency, committed elsewhere that would have been an offence punishable by penal servitude or imprisonment for 12 months or more, if committed in NSW; or
- an offence under section 800 or 80E (sexual servitude) of the Crimes Act 1900, committed against a child: or
- an offence under Sections 910-91 G (child prostitution, other than if committed by a child prostitute) of the Crimes Act 1900 or a similar offence under a law other than a law of New South Wales; or
- an offence under Section 91 H, 578B or 578C (2A) (child pornography) of the Crimes Act 1900 or a similar offence under a law other than a law of NSW; or
- offence of attempting, or of conspiracy or incitement, to commit an offence referred to above;
- any other offence, whether under the law of New South Wales or elsewhere, prescribed by the regulations.

Sexual offences include sexual assault, the involvement of children in sexual acts or acts of indecency and any sexual threat imposed on a child. Sexual assault refers to sexual intercourse by a person with a child.

Spiritual abuse

When a person is mistreated by actions or threats when justified by appeal to God, faith or religion. Includes use of a position of spiritual authority to dominate or manipulate another person or group.

Indicators can include:

- low self-esteem
- anxiety and fear
- excessive deference to a leader
- isolation from friends and family.