NEW SOUTH WALES
Breaking the Silence & The Child Safe Standards

WHAT IS THE CHILD SAFE SCHEME AND HOW DOES IT RELATE TO BREAKING THE SILENCE?

The Children's Guardian Amendment (Child Safe Scheme) Bill 2021 was passed in November 2021 (NSW). The Office of the Children's Guardian (OCG) oversees compliance to the *Child Safe Scheme*. The Presbyterian Church NSW as a 'relevant entity' is required to implement the **Child Safe Standards** under the *Child Safe Scheme.*

WHAT ARE THE CHILD SAFE STANDARDS?

A list of 10 standards recommended by the Royal Commission into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse (the Royal Commission), now mandated under the *Child Safe Scheme*. Implementing the standards keeps children safer from harm and abuse. They are:

1. Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture.
2. Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.
3. Families and communities are informed and involved.
4. Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account.
5. People working with children are suitable and supported.
6. Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused.
7. Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.
8. Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.
9. Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved.
10. Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR BREAKING THE SILENCE AND OUR CHURCHES?

Breaking the Silence (BTS) is aligned with the **Child Safe Standards.** The Presbyterian Church is committed to making our churches safer for children and vulnerable people and we are already implementing the Child Safe Standards in a number of ways. We hope this info sheet assists you in understanding how the Child Safe Standards (CSS) are embedded within BTS and what this can look like in practice.

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Standard 1: Child safety is embedded in institutional leadership, governance and culture.

How it is reflected in BTS policy	- Both the National Safe Ministry Framework and the BTS Policy commit us to protecting children and other vulnerable people. We want to set a culture that priorities safety of the vulnerable. - The BTS Code of Conduct applies to all staff and volunteers setting a clear standard of behaviour expected of all leaders towards children (0-18years). - The establishment of the Conduct Protocol Unit (CPU) is an expression of PCNSW's commitment to child safety.
What this might look like in practice	- Displaying BTS posters – commitment to child safety occurs at a leadership level. - Make child safety a standing agenda item at Session meetings and other meetings overseeing children's ministries. - Session appoints and supports a BTS rep. - Sessions understand their obligations in reporting, sharing information and keeping records. - Leaders regularly communicate collective responsibility for children's safety via services, when running activities, on social media etc. - Church websites have the link to BTS and contact information for CPU. - Weekly bulletins have the link to BTS and contact information for CPU.

Relevant BTS or other resources	- BTS Policy and Code of Conduct
	- BTS 2024 poster
	- Info sheets
	    o "BTS Implementation Guide"
	    o "Running youth group games and activities"
	    o "Risk management"

What will we check during an audit to comply with Child_Safe Standard 1?	- Does your pastoral charge have a copy of and reviewed the latest edition of *Breaking the Silence* OR all Session members know how to access it online*? Were any changes made to Point 11 to meet the needs of the pastoral charge*? - Does Session nominate and minute a person to be the BTS rep each year to ensure that all BTS matters are kept up to date, or is this managed by the Session Clerk*?

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Standard 2: Children participate in decisions affecting them and are taken seriously.

How it is reflected in BTS policy	- BTS training promotes respect and inclusion of all people, including children and young people. - Children's ministry posters are available to assist children access information on abuse prevention. - BTS training covers signs of harm and how to respond when children disclose concerns.
What this might look like in practice	- Distribute copy of "Giving a Voice to Children & Young People" to kids' and youth ministry leaders. - Seek creative ways to gather feedback and input from children and young people regarding ministry programs. - Children know what safe behaviour at church is and who to speak to if something is wrong, they are worried or feel unsafe. - Age-appropriate language is used when communicating with children.

Relevant BTS or other resources	- Kids' Ministry posters:
	   o "I'm worried about my friend"
	   o "My feelings matter"
	   o "I don't have to keep a secret that makes me feel scared"
	   o "Listen to me when I speak"
	   o "I have an idea"
	- Info sheets:
	   o "Giving a Voice to Children and Young People"
	   o "How to Really Listen"
	   o "Telling our Children about Sexual Abuse"

What will we check during an audit to comply with Child_Safe Standard 2?	- Are the Kids' Ministry posters (listed above) displayed in an appropriate place visible to children?* - Are children and young people actively encouraged to participate, giving input and feedback into their ministry programs?

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Standard 3: Families and communities are informed and involved.

How it is reflected in BTS policy	- The BTS Manual recognises that others are impacted when allegations are made and consideration needs to be made for how others, including families and communities are informed and involved in relation to:
	    ○ Leadership
	    ○ Pastoral care
	    ○ Provision of information, training and education

What this might look like in practice	- Providing information to parents via regular updates. - Families are encouraged to participate in the life of the church and have opportunities to participate (e.g. annual Congregational Meetings, raising issues with the Minister or Elders.) - Provide opportunities for families and communities for feedback or suggestions. - Display BTS posters to make people aware who they can speak to. - Have a 'child safety' section on your website. - Church websites have the link to BTS and contact information for CPU. - Weekly bulletins have the link to BTS and contact information for CPU.

Relevant BTS or other resources	- "Speak Out Seek Help" Poster
	- "Sunday School Expectations" Poster - Template
	- BTS Policy and Code of Conduct booklet informs families of child safe expectations.
	- Info sheets:
	    ○ "How to Really Listen"
	    ○ "Making a Complaint or Allegation about Abuse"

What will we check during an audit to comply with Child Safe Standard 3?	- Is the BTS poster current and prominently displayed in your church venues and showing contact details of who to contact*? - Are copies of the "Policy & Code of Conduct" and "Speak Out Seek Help" brochures readily available in your church*?

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Standard 4: Equity is upheld and diverse needs are taken into account.

How it is reflected in BTS policy	- BTS training promotes treating all people, including children with respect and understanding.
What this might look like in practice	- Ensure buildings are accessible for people with mobility issues. - Consulting with the Jericho Road Disability Advocate regarding inclusive and accessible ministry practices. - Ensure communications are culturally sensitive. - Welcome and support children with additional needs, seek advice from the CPU if you are unsure how to do this.
Relevant BTS or other resources	- CPU is working to develop BTS resources in a number of community languages and can be contacted for advice on diverse needs. - Disability Advocacy – Jericho Road: jerichoroad.org.au/disability-advocacy
What will we check during an audit to comply with Child Safe Standard 4?	- Do you have any children or young people from Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander background, with a disability or from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds*? If so, have you taken steps to adapt and respond to the diverse needs of these children*? Are they actively encouraged to participate*?

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Standard 5: People working with children are suitable and supported.

How it is reflected in BTS policy	- The BTS Manual and training includes information on reporting notifiable circumstances to the CPU. - The CPU provides guidance for the handling of a complaint which includes having a child-focused perspective. - BTS Foundations Training is required every 3 years by people in a position of authority within the church, which includes all those working with children and young people in any capacity. - Leaders are required to contact the CPU to report notifiable circumstances and seek advice on any child-safe matters.
What this might look like in practice	- Session oversees the provision of pastoral care to those working with children to ensure they remain supported. - Leaders are encouraged to make use of the resources on the BTS website and to participate in relevant additional training that is offered by the CPU.
Relevant BTS or other resources	- "Application to work with Children or Young People" form. - "WWCC Registration" form. - "Young Helper Agreement" form. - "Record of Reference check" form. - Breaking the Silence – Getting Started: breakingthesilence.org.au/resources/getting-started - Breaking the Silence: Foundations Training: breakingthesilence.org.au/training
What will we check during an audit to comply with Child Safe Standard 5?	- Have all ministers, home missionaries, deaconesses, licentiates, elders, paid employees, church workers whether paid or volunteers and all those working with children completed the appropriate BTS training for their role?* Do they all have a current Working with Children Check which has been verified by the CPU*? - Has Session appointed anyone to a child-related position in the last year*? If so, did Session follow the BTS child-related employment process (for employees and volunteers) set out in BTS and on the website*? - Has a job description been provided to all those working directly with children and young people (excluding elders, ministers, licentiates, deaconesses or home missionaries)*? - Are there any young helpers (aged 12-17) working with children or young people? Have they completed the Young Helper Agreement*? - Do all SRE teachers have current training and up-to-date authorization through the CPU*? If the SRE teacher is not part of the pastoral charge, do they have an annual letter for a local arrangement completed*?

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Standard 6: Processes to respond to complaints of child sexual abuse are child focused.

How it is reflected in BTS policy	- The BTS Manual and training includes information on reporting notifiable circumstances to CPU. - The CPU provides guidance for the handling of a complaint which includes having a child-focused perspective.
What this might look like in practice	- People wanting to make a complaint are responded to sensitively and respectfully. - Leaders are aware of how to make a report and seek guidance from the CPU. - The safety, welfare and wellbeing of children and young people is the most important consideration and concerns are addressed effectively whilst support is provided to all family members affected.

Relevant BTS or other resources	- Breaking the Silence Manual – 2024 Edition
	- Info sheets:
	  o "Making a Complaint or Allegation about Abuse"
	  o "How to Really Listen"
	- Breaking the Silence: Foundations Training - Section 3 'Bringing Issues to Light'.

What will we check during an audit to comply with Child_Safe Standard 6?	- Is the Session aware of any breaches of the BTS Code of Conduct or allegations of abuse since your last audit*? Were these reported to the CPU*? - Is there anyone in your pastoral charge that would be considered a person of concern as defined in BTS*? Have you spoken to CPU about a safety agreement and management plan*?

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Standard 7: Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training.	
How it is reflected in BTS policy	- The BTS Manual and training includes information on reporting notifiable circumstances to CPU. - The CPU provides guidance for the handling of a complaint which includes having a child-focused perspective.
What this might look like in practice	- The BTS Policy, Code of Conduct and training covers managing risk in both online and physical environments. - Leaders are encouraged to make use of the resources on the BTS website and to participate in relevant additional training that is offered by the CPU.
Relevant BTS or other resources	- Breaking the Silence: Foundations Training: breakingthesilence.org.au/training
What will we check during an audit to comply with Child_Safe Standard 7?	- Ensure leaders are up to date with BTS Foundations Training*. - Reading and reviewing the Policy & Code of Conduct is highly recommended in the years between the Foundations Training. - Support and facilitate leaders to attend further and external appropriate training opportunities. - Has a copy of "Our Policy and Code of Conduct" booklet and the BTS Info Sheet "Giving a voice to Children and Young people?" been provided to all those working directly with children and young people*?

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Standard 8: Physical and online environments minimise the opportunity for abuse to occur.

How it is reflected in BTS policy	- The BTS Policy and Code of Conduct outlines the expected behaviour of leaders in respect to contact with children, regardless of whether it is in person or online.
What this might look like in practice	- The BTS Policy, Code of Conduct and training covers managing risk in both online and physical environments. - Ensuring leaders are never alone with a child who is not a family member. - Ensuring risks assessments have been completed of all ministry activities involving children, young people and vulnerable people. - Following the PATH principles of wise ministry; prepare, be accountable, transparent and humble.

Relevant BTS or other resources	- Breaking the Silence: Foundations Training: breakingthesilence.org.au/training
	- Info sheets:
	  o "BTS & COVID: Connecting and communicating online"
	  o "BTS & COVID: Online meetings with young people"
	  o "Transport"
	  o "Physical Contact"
	  o "Running Youth Group Games & Activities"
	  o "Pastoral Care"
	- PCNSW Work Health and Safety Guidelines for our Church Organisations: pcnsw.org.au/work-health-and-safety

What will we check during an audit to comply with Child Safe Standard 8?	- What spaces do you use for ministry to children and young people, have you assessed them for safety*? - Has Session ensured that all ministries involving children and young people have a minimum of 2 adult leaders and adequate number of leaders to provide supervision as required under BTS*? - Has Session ensured that any form of electronic communication with children and young people is safe*? - If any camps for children and young people are held, are they complying with the BTS camping requirements*?

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Standard 9: Implementation of the Child Safe Standards is continuously reviewed and improved.

How it is reflected in BTS policy	- The BTS Manual is regularly reviewed, and changes are requested at General Assembly to ensure BTS reflects legislation and best practice. - The CPU has a continual improvement program.
What this might look like in practice	- Churches incorporate the Child Safe Standards into their review processes. - BTS Audits support churches and identifies areas to improve safe ministry. - The CPU provides support, assistance and advice to churches in relation to safe ministry and implementing BTS. - Churches can submit local policies and procedures to the CPU for review to ensure they are compliant with BTS and the CSS. - The CPU is part of an interdenominational network that provides information on best practice from a variety of sources and receives input from the OCG in relation to latest developments on resources and training.
Relevant BTS or other resources	- Breaking the Silence: Foundations Training: breakingthesilence.org.au/training
What will we check during an audit to comply with Child Safe Standard 9?	- Participation in the BTS Audit program*.

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Standard 10: Policies and procedures document how the organisation is child safe.	
How it is reflected in BTS policy	- BTS and the National Safe Ministry Framework address both policy and procedure for how allegations of abuse are handled and to minimise the risk of abuse occurring. - The BTS Policy, Manual and National Safe Ministry Framework are committed to child safe practices. - The CPU is established by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church to provide congregations, presbyteries, organisations and committees with the best possible support, advice and resources in relation to abuse matters.
What this might look like in practice	- All people in a position of authority undertake BTS Foundations training including awareness of the BTS procedures for dealing with and preventing abuse within the church.
Relevant BTS or other resources	- Breaking the Silence: Foundations Training: breakingthesilence.org.au/training
What will we check during an audit to comply with Child_Safe Standard 10?	- Is there a Session minute from the past 12 months that shows all persons appointed to roles that work with children and young people?* - Are records stored in line with BTS policy*?

FOR FURTHER RESOURCES:

Conduct Protocol Unit - Presbyterian Church of NSW/ACT, 'Resources', *Breaking the Silence.* Online: breakingthesilence.org.au/resources for resources, templates, job descriptions and documents.

Office of the Children's Guardian, NSW Government, 'implementing the Child Safe Standards', *Child Safe Scheme*. Online: ocg.nsw.gov.au/child-safe-scheme/implementing-child-safe-standards

Office of the Children's Guardian, (2020) *Implementing the Child Safe Standards: A Guide for Faith-Based Organisations.* Online: breakingthesilence.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Implementing-the-Child-Safe-Standards-A-Guide-for-Faith-Based-Organisations.pdf

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