2024 Edition

BREAKING THE SILENCE

FOUNDATIONS

TRAINING WORKBOOK

2024 EDITION

Conduct Protocol Unit

Presbyterian Church of Australia in NSW/ACT

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Content warning: This training course contains content relating to abuse that some people may find upsetting. If you find that you are distressed and need to talk to someone, please get in touch with one of your church leaders or contact the Presbyterian Counselling Service on 1800 818 133 if needed.

Scripture quotations taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®.
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Breaking the Silence: Foundations Training
Produced by the Conduct Protocol Unit, Jericho Road, 2024.
breakingthesilence.org.au

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

What is Breaking the Silence?

Breaking the Silence 2024 edition is the policy and procedures used by the Presbyterian Church of Australia in a number of states, territories, and ministries to address and prevent abuse within the church. It is overseen by the Conduct Protocol Unit (CPU), which has been established by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales to address all safe ministry matters in our various churches, and ministries.

What is Foundations Training?

Breaking the Silence: Foundations Training covers the essential areas of safe ministry that all those in a position of church leadership need to be competent in as part of our commitment to ensuring that our church communities, ministries and activities are safe places for all. The course must be completed every three years by **anyone in a position of authority within the church** and **those interacting directly with children and young people** in their position. This may include the following roles:

Anyone with **preaching or pastoral responsibilities**	- Ministers - Elders - Home Missionaries - Pastoral assistants (supervised and unsupervised) - Licentiates - Deacons and Deaconesses - Church staff with preaching or pastoral care responsibilities - Ministers/elders emeriti who occasionally preach or provide pastoral care - Ministry students and trainees - Other similar roles
Anyone with a **congregational care position**	- Women's ministry workers - Pastoral care coordinators and volunteers - Anyone involved in ministries for the vulnerable (language classes, ministry to people with disabilities and in aged care facilities) - Other similar roles
Anyone **working with children or young people in any direct capacity**	- Sunday School/Kids' Church teachers, leaders, and helpers - Creche, Playgroup and Mothers' group leaders and helpers - Leaders and helpers for Youth Groups or other activities or services provided to young people. - Kids program leaders and helpers (kids club, church camp, mission event) - Other similar roles

SECTION 1:

BREAKING THE SILENCE ON ABUSE

Breaking the Silence was adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales in 1997, with revisions adopted the following year. This represented a very significant step towards understanding and dealing with the problem of abuse within the Presbyterian church.it has been adopted and adapted by other States and Territories.

Since then there have been significant developments in child protection legislation, mandatory and voluntary reporting procedures, the participation of offices such as the Office of the Children's Guardian in monitoring investigations of allegations, the involvement of government departments responsible for caring for children in various States and Territories.

From 2012 to 2017, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse was held. 4029 survivors told the Royal Commission in private sessions their experiences of sexual abuse as children in religious institutions. 2.8% of these instances occurred within Presbyterian or Reformed churches. These findings brought to light the tragic reality of the harm that has occurred within churches.

National Safe Ministry Framework Fundamental

'We remember at all times that we are representing the Lord Jesus Christ in all our conduct and we will, accordingly, strive to refrain from any action that is contrary to Scripture or a law of the land consistent with Scripture or which violates the requirements of biblical ethics, striving to ensure that all our conduct is motivated by love for God and a desire to commend him and to promote his glory."

Read the full NSMF at breakingthesilence.org.au

In 2019, the General Assembly of Australia adopted the National Safe Ministry Framework (NSMF) to establish a uniform and consistent approach to the protection of children within the Presbyterian Church of Australia. This was adopted by the NSW General Assembly in 2020.

Breaking the Silence in its present form is intended to address these issues and provide all congregations, Presbyteries, organisations, and committees within the church with a comprehensive tool to meet our legislated obligations and the requirements of the Presbyterian Church of Australia's Code of Discipline.

We do this, not just in response to legal and societal expectations, but more importantly to ensure the safety of our ministry activities for all and to attain justice for those who have been harmed. This action also mitigates the biggest risks to the church: the misrepresentation and dishonouring of God and damage to His mission caused by the occurrence of abuse itself and also failures in the handling of allegations of abuse, both of which undermine our credibility and our message.

In 2021, the Child Safe Scheme mandated the ten Child Safe Standards. The Child Safe Standards are embedded within Breaking the Silence and are best practice standards in keeping children safer from harm and abuse.

Duty of Care

Duty of care is your obligation to act as a reasonable person towards others in whatever circumstances arise in your position as a leader. Your actions will affect other people and should be made with care, attention, caution, and common sense. If they are not, then you may breach your duty of care.

To minimise the risk of breaching your duty of care:

- Regularly re-assess your ministry and take steps to minimise the risks.
- When you see a situation that may be dangerous, take action.
- Seek advice when you are unsure of what to do.
- Do nothing to harm any person.
- Complete this training every three years, and complete the Read & Review each year in-between.
- Be fully aware of the Breaking the Silence requirements, in particular the Code of Conduct.

> Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them – not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.
>
> **1 Peter 5:2**

Looking out for the vulnerable

There are many different factors that may cause someone to be vulnerable to abuse. Some of these factors may only impact a person temporarily, while other factors can have a life-long effect. It is important to recognise various factors and circumstances that may cause a person to be at a higher risk of abuse so we can ensure that support and care are provided when a person needs it most. These factors include isolation, difficulty communicating, limited social support, limited resources, major life changes and many others.

Our Policy

This policy applies to all persons holding a position of authority within the church, and all congregations, presbyteries, organisations, and committees within the church. It is our commitment to dealing with abuse within the church. The statement contains some terms that have a specific definition within Breaking the Silence. As you read the policy statement on the next page, you will see bolded terms which are defined in the boxes. The full list of terms is found at the back of this workbook and is important in understanding the scope of Breaking the Silence.

Our Policy is a clear reflection of our values and our attitudes. It shows that we are serious about protecting those under our care, confronting abuse when it arises in our church and being transparent and accountable for our attitudes and actions.
Our Policy is public. It can be accessed by anyone wanting to know what we are doing to prevent and address abuse. We want to be held accountable.
Our Policy acknowledges that people place an enormous amount of trust in us, and that the right response to that is to be committed to making sure that all our actions are morally upright. We want our ministries to be places of safety for everyone.

Policy Statement

- We commit ourselves to respect other people's minds, emotions, and bodies. We have established **Breaking the Silence** as the public criteria according to which the community may judge the resolve of **the church** to address issues of abuse within **the church**.

- We acknowledge and accept the trust granted to us by those who are taking part in church activities, their families, and the wider community. We therefore commit ourselves to striving to ensure that all our actions are morally upright.

- We acknowledge that, as a church, our responses to **victims** in the past have varied greatly. We express regret and sorrow for the hurt caused whenever the response has denied or minimised the pain that **victims** have experienced or caused them to experience further pain.

- We are committed to establishing a process that strives for truth and confidentiality. We will ensure as far as possible that a compassionate response is the first priority in all **allegations**, even at a time when it is not yet certain that the **allegations** are accurate, through offering assistance, protection and care without passing judgement or prejudicing the rights of the **alleged offender**. We acknowledge that concealing the truth is contrary to the character of God, unjust to victims and a disservice to **offenders**.

- We understand and value the need for support to all parties involved in an **allegation**, including the **aggrieved person** and the **alleged offender**, and we actively seek to provide this support.

- We acknowledge the personal and public difficulties that a false, misconceived, malicious or vexatious **allegation** can cause for the person accused. We will take whatever steps are possible to address these difficulties.

- We are willing to know the full extent of the problem of abuse and the causes of such behaviour within **the church**. We will strive to be aware of our legal responsibilities and obligations in relation to prevention, reporting and processing requirements and seek to meet them at all times.

- We acknowledge that we have had to make changes in the way that we relate to **children** and **young people** and others, and as a

The Church:
The Presbyterian Church of Australia in those States or Territories where Breaking the Silence has been formally adopted by the appropriate State general Assembly, including all:
- congregations,
- organisations,
- committees,
- associations,
- groups,
- schools,
- hospitals, and
- other institutions.

Victim/s:
The person against whom abuse was directed, many of whom refer to themselves as survivors.

Allegation:
A complaint, incident, allegation, or allegation – reportable conduct includes any matter brought to the church by an aggrieved person that may be rightly dealt with under Breaking the Silence.

Alleged Offender:
The person who is alleged to have offended.

Aggrieved Person:
The person making the complaint, whether they present as a victim or complainant.

Child / Children:
Any person/s under 16 years of age and in some instances any person under the age of 18 years of age.

result some good things have been lost. However, we will bear this loss to ensure as far as possible that the vulnerable are safe.

- We will ensure as far as possible that all people in **positions of authority within the church** and/or working with **children** and **young people** are aware of the appropriate standard of conduct and boundaries. We require those who work on behalf of **the church** to indicate their agreement with this policy statement and work towards providing an environment that prevents abuse.

- We believe that churches ought to be places of safety and refuge for **children**, **young people** and others, where they should be and feel safe from any threat when on church property or involved in activities operated by **the church**, or accessing services provided by **the church**. We believe that the church should be a place where people can disclose abuse and have it dealt with effectively.

- As a church we are committed to the implementation of the **Child Safe Standards**.

- We will establish a prevention strategy that includes screening, sound recruitment and selection procedures, clear boundaries, risk identification and management, education, support, supervision, and training.

- We acknowledge that the age of consent for sexual activity is determined by legislation. However, we are mindful that this must be read in the light of our moral and spiritual responsibility. All people in a **position of authority within the church**, be it real or perceived, paid or unpaid, have a moral and spiritual responsibility towards those over whom they have authority. In this situation it is never appropriate to take part in sexual activity of any kind, regardless of the person's age. We affirm that sexual behaviour belongs in a biblical marriage relationship only and that in this context it is a good gift of God.

- All **allegations** will be notified to the appropriate external authorities, overseen by the **CPU**, investigated thoroughly and determined as described in **Breaking the Silence**.

- Irrespective of any other action that may be taken by authorities outside **the church**, **the church** reserves the right to exercise its powers according to the **Code of Discipline** and **Breaking the Silence** wherever this action is deemed necessary.

Young Person or Young People:
Any person/s above 16 years of age but under 18 years of

Position of Authority within the Church:
Those in a position of authority within the church include all:
- ministers
- home missionaries
- deaconesses
- licentiates
- elders
- paid employees
- church workers whether paid or volunteers
- those working with children and young people.

Child Safe Standards:
Standards identified by the Royal Commission which aim to make institutions safer for children

CPU:
Conduct Protocol Unit of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales, acting on behalf of the church.

Code of Discipline:
Contained in the Presbyterian Church of Australia Constitution, Procedure and Practice - Code of Discipline.

SECTION 2:

ABUSE

This section discusses abuse and what it entails in its different forms and in different contexts.

Categories of Abuse

Within the scope of Breaking the Silence, we define abuse in the following ways:

- **Child Abuse**
- **Risk of Significant Harm**
- **Reportable Conduct**
- **Sexual Misconduct**
- **Conduct that Breaches the BTS Code of Conduct – including Domestic Violence**

Abuse is complex, and there is always more than one contributing factor. A situation may be considered to fit under multiple classifications, or it may only be considered to be a breach of the Code of Conduct. Whatever the case, any situation that relates to possible abuse is considered to be a **notifiable circumstance** which means that you must notify the CPU and follow the advice given.

Child Abuse

There are different kinds of child abuse and all of them require our attention:

Neglect: Chronic failure to provide the basic necessities of life, such as love and affection, safety, food, clothing, hygiene, medical care, and education.

Emotional Abuse: Depriving a child or young person of love and attention. These actions and others are used by a person in a position of power to make the child feel worthless. It may also include actions that cause serious mental anguish.

Physical Abuse: All non-accidental physical injuries. This can include but is not limited to hitting, beating, burning, scalding, or shaking, and actions that cause serious pain without any legitimate disciplinary purpose.

Sexual Abuse: Involvement in sexual activities with anyone who is older, bigger, in authority or perceived authority or more powerful where the child or young person is unable to give informed consent. These activities may be initiated by either party. It can involve apparently consensual intercourse or sexual activity, but the validity of consent is negated by a power differential. It also includes permitting another person to undertake these activities with your knowledge or in your presence. It is not possible for a person under the age set by legislation to legally consent to sexual activity.

Domestic Violence: Any of the above four forms of abuse within the context of a family. It also includes social isolation and / or financial control or deprivation. Domestic violence can be carried out upon a child or young person or they can be a witness to violence. That is, to fall within this provision, the violence does not have to be directed at the child.

	NEGLECT	EMOTIONAL	PHYSICAL	SEXUAL
Child physical indicators:	- low weight for age and failure to thrive and develop, - consistent hunger, - poor hygiene, - inappropriate dress, - chronically unwashed, - inadequate supervision for their age-being left unattended in dangerous situations or without an adult being available to provide support and care, - unattended physical problems, medical or dental needs.	- attempts suicide, - toileting problems without a physical cause.	- unexplained welts, bruises, burns, scalds, - drowsiness, vomiting, fits or pooling of blood in the eyes, which may suggest head injury, - unexplained fractures, dislocations, unexplained lacerations or abrasions, - head injuries, - human bite marks, - premature loss of teeth, - wears clothes over injuries.	- going to bed fully clothed, - bruises or bleeding around the genital area, - sexually transmitted diseases (especially in pre-teens), pregnancy, - other physical signs that a medical practitioner may identify, - recurrent urinary tract infections.
Child behavioural indicators:	- rocking, - sucking, - head-banging, - abandonment, - begs or steals food, - poor school attendance, - substance abuse, - states there is no carer or parent.	- constant feelings of worthlessness about life and themselves, - inability to trust, - lack of people skills necessary for daily functioning, - extreme attention-seeking behaviour, - risk-taking behaviour, - is highly self-critical, depressed or anxious, - behavioural extremes (compliant, passive, shy, aggressive, demanding), - overly adaptive behaviour (inappropriately infantile).	- verbal reports of abuse by the child or young person, - wary of adults and adult contact-flinching with unexpected movement, - explanation of injury offered by the child or young person is not consistent with their injury, - behavioural extremes, seeks affection from any adult with no discrimination, - non-expression of needs, - non-communicative.	- aggressive, overt sexual behaviour, - drawing pictures of people with genitals, - cruelty to animals without physiological basis, - describes sexual acts that a child of their age would not normally know, - child or young person telling you about it directly or indirectly, - unexplained accumulation of money or gifts, - wary of physical contact, especially with an adult, - regressive behaviour, such as bedwetting, nightmares or thumb sucking, - reports of sexual abuse, - self-destructive behaviour, such as drug use, suicide attempts, self-harm.
Carer behavioural indicators:	- unwilling or unable to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing or medical attention, - leaves the child unsupervised in the home or in potentially dangerous situations, - isolated from friends, relatives, neighbours, - withholding physical contact or stimulation for long periods, - unrealistic expectations of the child, - substance abuse, - limited understanding of the child's needs.	- constant criticism, belittling, teasing of a child or young person, or ignoring or withholding praise and attention, - excessive or unreasonable demands, - persistent hostility and severe verbal abuse, rejection and scape-goating, - belief that a particular child or young person in their care is bad or 'evil', - uses inappropriate physical or social isolations as punishment, - domestic violence.	- frequent visits with their child or children to health or other services with unexplained or suspicious injuries, swallowing of non-food substances or with internal complaints, - explanation of injury offered by the parent is not consistent with the injury, - family history of violence, - history of their own maltreatment as a child, - fears injuring their child, - uses excessive discipline.	- very protective or jealous of child, - extremely protective of family privacy, - intentional exposure of child to sexual behaviour of others, - does not allow child to be involved in extra-curricular activities, - exposes a child or young person to prostitution or pornography, - substance abuse, - geographically isolated and/or lacking in social and emotional contacts outside the family, and low self-esteem.

CASE STUDY: Belinda's Story - Take notes while you listen to this story. Consider:

What kind of abuse did Belinda experience in her childhood?
What impact did it have on Belinda?
What signs might have indicated that something was occurring at home?

There are signs that abuse has taken place both in the child and in the abuser where this person is a parent or carer. The table above contains some potential indicators of the various types of child abuse. Being vigilant towards these signs will help you to identify potentially abusive situations.

Risk of Significant Harm

'At risk of significant harm' is a term used by Community Services for situations where a reasonable person has current concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a child or young person. It is the measure used to determine if a mandatory report must be made.

Reportable Conduct

In NSW, and in other states, abuse of children and young people by church leaders and workers is reportable to a statutory authority in NSW Office of the Children's Guardian under the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Reportable conduct applies to behaviour both while on duty as a leader or worker, and also in their private life.

Sexual Misconduct

Sexual misconduct is contact or invitation, via any means, of a sexual nature which is inconsistent with the integrity of a person in a position of authority within the church. Sexual misconduct includes any behaviour that could be reasonably considered to be **sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, coercion or grooming of an adult or a child or young person.** A full list of what these include can be found in the BTS Manual[1] Sexualised behaviour is any behaviour that may reasonably be perceived to be of a sexual nature according to the standards of the time by the person to whom it is directed. Sexualised behaviour is only permitted as set out in the Word of God.

[1] *BTS Manual* refers to '*Breaking the Silence: Procedures for dealing with and preventing abuse within the church, 2024 Edition'.* This is the full documentation for Breaking the Silence, and copies are held by every pastoral charge.

*The following descriptions are summaries of the different kinds of **sexual misconduct**:*

Sexual Assault

Sexual assault means any intentional or reckless act, use of force or threat to use force against an adult, child, or young person without their consent, to involve them in a sexual act.

Sexual Exploitation

Sexual exploitation refers to any form of sexualised behaviour with an adult, child, or young person, whether or not there is consent and regardless of who initiated the behaviour, where that behaviour is contrary to the Word of God. This includes a range of actions that are carried out in relation to another person, as well as conversations that suggest sexual intent. It also concerns a leader's engagement in sexually explicit material, pornography, and abuse-of-sex services.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment means unwelcome sexualised behaviour, whether intended or not, in relation to an adult, child or young person where that person reasonably feels in all circumstances offended, belittled, or threatened. Such behaviour may consist of a single incident or several incidents over a period of time. It includes among other things making any gesture or comment of a sexual nature to or about a person, or physical contact that is inappropriate to the situation or uncomfortable or confusing for the receiver, including "only kidding" or accidental occasions of sexual touch. It also includes inappropriate advances in regard to sexual or romantic feelings or those in breach of the Code of Conduct. This may include personal correspondence, Inappropriate intrusion of personal space and persistent following.

Only if required and necessary within the context of pastoral care, should someone be asked questions about their sexual life or history. This should be done extremely carefully and with another person present (such as the person's husband or wife or a trusted friend).

Coercion or Grooming

Coercion or grooming behaviour refers to physical or psychological actions intrinsic to initiating or hiding abusive behaviour, which involved the manipulative cultivation of relationships with vulnerable adults, children and/or young people, their carers, and others in authority. This will be discussed in detail in the next part of this section. Coercion or grooming behaviour can be considered a type of sexual misconduct.

Conduct that breaches the BTS Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct applies to all people in a position of authority within the church, and clearly sets out what behaviour is inappropriate and unacceptable for a person in such a role. We will look at the Code of Conduct in detail in Section 5, but for now take note that a breach of this code can be considered as abuse under Breaking the Silence.

Along with child abuse and sexual misconduct, **domestic and family violence** is one area of behaviour that breaches the Code of Conduct where you may need further information.

This will be covered in the next part of this section that will highlight signs and symptoms that may help us to recognise abuse and grooming behaviour.

Recognising Abuse & Grooming Behaviour

Some behaviours are more easily spotted than others. Certain actions or comments may seem harmless on their own, but once you recognise them as part of pattern of behaviour, the bigger picture may become a lot clearer.

Grooming & Coercion

Grooming, or coercive behaviour involves cultivating a relationship and trust that opens up situations and opportunities in which abuse can take place. Often this involves establishing conditions that will allow the abuse to go unnoticed. This may be aimed directly towards the individual targeted for abuse, and often is also directed at their family and those in authority.

This can be done in a number of ways, including but not limited to:

- identifying children or young people who are emotionally needy,
- establishing a relationship with the child or young person's family to gain trust,
- touching the child or young person in the presence of the family to get them and the family used to the behaviour,
- initiating contact in situations where no other adult is present or setting up situations where this is the case,
- setting a child or young person apart from peers or siblings as 'special',
- gaining their affection through gift-giving and favours,
- establishing a 'peer' or 'buddy' relationship with them.

Grooming behaviour or coercion is a pattern of behaviour aimed at engaging an adult, child, or young person as a precursor to abuse. It can also include the testing of boundaries, such as undressing in front of them, allowing them to sit on the lap, talking about sex, or the 'accidental' touching of genitals.

Many of these actions would also be considered sexual exploitation. While, in isolation, some of these actions may not present a risk, when they occur in a pattern, they may indicate grooming. Similar manipulative behaviours may be used with regard to vulnerable adults.

Domestic & Family Violence

Another way that abuse goes unnoticed is when it occurs within the context of the home.

Domestic and family violence includes actions which involve violent, abusive, restrictive or intimidating behaviour carried out by a partner, carer or family member to control, dominate or instil fear, including physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial or other types of abuse. It is sometimes called 'relationship violence' or 'intimate partner violence'. Domestic violence where there are children in the household is child abuse.

Domestic and family violence is a pattern of behaviour, rather than a single incident. Like grooming, it gradually undermines the victim's ability to seek help and their confidence in themselves and others. A person does not need to be married for it to be considered domestic and family violence. It can be perpetrated by a partner, family member, carer,

boyfriend or girlfriend. A person does not need to experience all of these types of abuse for it to be considered domestic or family violence.

It can happen in all sorts of relationships, including:

- intimate partners (husbands and wives, or boyfriends and girlfriends)
- parents and children
- older people (sometimes called elder abuse)
- people with a disability and their carer

In recent years, this issue has been brought to the attention of many in society. It has become apparent that far more people, often women and children, have experienced domestic abuse than was previously thought. For a number of reasons, it is not always easy to spot an abusive relationship in someone's homelife.

Some potential indicators you might notice in someone's behaviour include:

- They start to see friends and family less and become withdrawn and isolated.
- Their partner may often criticise them or humiliate them in front of other people.
- Their partner takes advantage of (and misuses) Bible verses that speak of submission as a way to control them.
- Their partner often insists on making all the decisions (e.g. their partner controls all the money, tells them who they can see and what they can do).
- They become anxious, depressed, unusually withdrawn, or confused.
- They become overly anxious about pleasing their partner.
- They often seem 'on edge', fearful and/or flighty
- They talk about relationship difficulties, and their partner's 'jealousy', 'bad temper' or 'possessiveness'.
- They report that their partner uses passive aggression to control or manipulate them.
- They often have physical injuries and make excuses for the injuries to conceal the truth.
- They report that their partner pressures or forces them to do sexual things.
- Their children seem afraid, have behaviour problems, or are very withdrawn or anxious.
- They are reluctant to leave their children with their partner.
- If they have left the relationship, their partner constantly calls, harasses, or stalks them.

CASE STUDY: Steph's Story - Take notes while you watch the video. Consider:

What kind of ways did Nick demonstrate concerning behaviour?
What were some signs of the abusive relationship that were noticed?
What could Steph's friends do next?

Domestic and family violence situations are difficult, and it can be hard to know what the best thing is to do for someone in that sort of relationship. If you want to know more, there is information in the BTS Manual, or you can find a range of resources on this topic on the BTS website – and remember, you can always contact the CPU for advice.

SECTION 3:

BRINGING ISSUES TO LIGHT

Creating a safe space to disclose

It is important that we know how to cultivate a safe space in which people can disclose abuse, and that we know how to respond in a way that is sensitive and helpful.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse found that the majority of survivors did not disclose the abuse for over 20 years. Feelings of fear, shame, isolation, and frustration can stop someone from disclosing. We need to work hard to be making our ministry environments places where people of every age feel safe and feel that they could speak up about abuse and be taken seriously.

How do we do that?

- Use your position to reinforce a culture that does not tolerate abuse in any form.
- Remind the people in your ministries that you are available to listen to any concerns they may have.
- Display information in obvious locations so that people can clearly know the church's stance on abuse matters and know who to talk to about their concerns.

Write down some ways that you could make your ministry a place where it is easier to disclose:

Responding well to disclosures

There may come a time when someone does approach you to disclose something to you. This can be very confronting, and it is extremely important that you do not compromise the situation in any way. Your role may vary depending upon your position within the church. The following steps are intended to ensure that we hear their concern and take appropriate immediate action to ensure the safety of those involved without compromising the evidence.

What to do when someone discloses to you

Listen. You must allow the person to say what they have to say, in their own words, without adding to, or leading them to say anything.

Don't promise too much. They may ask you to promise not to tell anyone what they are about to tell you. You can't promise this, because you are required to report. You can tell them that you will need to seek assistance and will only share with those who need to know.

Reassure them that they are doing the right thing in bringing their experience to light. Reassure them that abuse is unacceptable, and you will do your best to address the situation.

Ask them what they would like to see happen next. This is helpful in getting an idea of what the person sees as the highest priority in dealing with the matter.

Make notes shortly after the conversation, objectively recounting what you heard, what you said and what you observed, ensuring that the notes are kept in a secure place.

Report - to the police immediately if it is an emergency, and to the CPU as soon as practical.

Remember:

- Do not compromise the situation by making comments, giving advice or adding to an aggrieved person's allegations.
- Do not make a judgment about whether you think an allegation is true or not at this early stage.
- By responding compassionately to an allegation, you are not undermining the rights of the alleged offender.
- Look after yourself. As a leader it can be very distressing to have someone disclose abuse. Start by debriefing. That is, find some way to verbally and emotionally unload. You can talk to a trusted person regarding your feelings about what has been disclosed or what you have witnessed. You do not need to tell them the details, simply how you feel about it.

More detail about what to do and say is available in the Breaking the Silence Manual. Each pastoral charge has a copy of this document, or you can simply contact the CPU for assistance.

SECTION 4:

REPORTING

Every day we come into contact with people, (adults, children, and young people) who are vulnerable in one way or another. As a church we are privileged to be in a position where these people trust us. **We therefore need to be clear that when we become aware someone has been abused, we have an obligation to report**. The legal reporting requirements can differ depending upon what kind of abuse has taken place and who is involved. **All abuse will be reported to the appropriate civil authorities and the CPU.**

What needs to be reported

The Conduct Protocol Unit must be advised of all 'notifiable circumstances', including:

- any fact, circumstance, allegation, notification, knowledge of, verbal advice of, direct or indirect connection to, or attempt of abuse, and
- all allegations, complaints, reportable allegations, and allegations - reportable conduct.

A notifiable circumstance may identify:

- someone who is currently or has been a member of the church,
- someone who is currently or has been a person in a position of authority within the church,
- a current or ex-employee, a current or ex-student, a current or ex-volunteer, and/ or
- a current or ex-third party.

Basically, if you are aware of anything at all in relation to an abusive situation, whether it is happening right now or at some time in the past, you should let the CPU know.

Am I a mandatory reporter?

Legal requirements about mandatory reporting, particularly in relation to children and young people, vary depending on a leader's role and are different in different states and territories. **In the church it has been agreed that any person in a position of authority, or any person working with children and young people in any capacity, will consider themselves to be mandatory reporters.** This means that people in these roles, whether they are required to or not under legislation, must consider themselves to be mandatory reporters. This may mean reporting to external authorities such as Community Services. Remember, that all abuse and allegations of abuse are also to be reported to the CPU. The CPU can help you work out what is required in any particular situation.

The important thing to remember is that you are not alone in these things. Seek advice and assistance. It is always better to err on the side of caution.

How to make a report or notification

- Within the local church, you can notify church leadership (your minister/elder) or the BTS rep and they will be able to contact CPU.
- If you don't feel comfortable discussing it with your church leaders, you can contact the CPU directly by phone, email or on the website.
- Reporting to civil authorities is sometimes necessary – The CPU will assist in any reports that might need to be made to external agencies such as Community Services or other government agencies.



Remember: It is very important that you do not share the information with anyone beyond those you must inform in order for the proper process to take place. In order to ensure the safety of the people involved and to ensure a fair process can take place, confidentiality must be maintained.

The CPU is not an emergency helpline. So if someone is in danger, or a child faces immediate risk, contact emergency services on 000.

What happens when you contact the CPU

We will be able to discuss the nature of the notifiable circumstance to ensure all aspects of mandatory reporting and risk management have been appropriately considered.

We will be able to provide the person contacting the CPU with relevant supports and resources appropriate to the situation.

If you are unsure what to do or whether you need to report something, we can provide a safe and confidential way to work out what to do next.

We also check in with the person reporting the notifiable circumstance to ensure their care and well-being. Sometimes people can be emotionally impacted by a situation which has happened if they are closely connected to the aggrieved person.

> Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to act.
>
> **Proverbs 3:27**

Our questions are very broad and open and usually the person calling initiates what they want to talk about.

Depending on the circumstances we may ask specific questions regarding mandatory reporting and risk management such as:

- Are there any children involved and how old are they?
- Does the person of concern have contact with children?
- Does it meet the threshold for reporting to Community Services (risk of significant harm)?
- What other supports are in place for the aggrieved person?
- Is the aggrieved person currently safe?
- Any other information which is relevant to the case.
- What pastoral care supports are in place?

Consent and confidentiality

- **The BTS policy of reporting all notifiable circumstances is applicable to all persons holding a position of authority within the church. You do not need the consent of the aggrieved person to notify the CPU. That said, it is good practice to inform the aggrieved party where it is possible and practical to do so.**

- **If the aggrieved person does not wish to be identified, it is not always necessary to provide their name, but initials are helpful, if possible, for documentation purposes. The reason for notifying is to ensure that all appropriate steps have been taken by the church leader to ensure duty of care to the aggrieved party.**

- **CPU keeps confidential records of all notifiable circumstances. The information is collected and held in accordance with the Data Protection Principles endorsed by the NSW Privacy Commissioner. More information is available in the BTS Manual in Section 1.6.**

SECTION 5:

PREVENTION & PROTECTION

Adopting and upholding Breaking the Silence makes a difference to the leadership, culture, and practices of ministry activities. The principles and values of safe ministry need to be a considered element of every part of church life. This section will discuss the ways in which this is achieved by focusing on **people**, **places**, and **practices**. These measures are part of the way we implement our commitment to the Child Safe Standards.

> As a church we are committed to the implementation of the **Child Safe Standards**.
>
> *Breaking the Silence Policy Statement, Point 11.*

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

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

Standard 3: Families and communities are informed and involved

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

Standard 5: People working with children are suitable and supported

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

Standard 7: Staff are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training

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

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

Standard 10: Policies and procedures document how the institution is child safe

The core components for implementing each of the standards are embedded in the advice of this section. You can read more about these standards on the BTS website on our info sheet *BTS & the Child Safe Standards*.

People

There are many positive things, big and small, that a person can do in their leadership role that will impact those under their care. However, the opposite is also true – people can abuse their authority, abuse the trust they are given and abuse the people they are meant to care for. Therefore, we have the following measures to ensure that leaders are chosen carefully and are well supported.

Good **selection** processes for leaders significantly reduce the risk of abuse occurring. The BTS selection procedure involves an application, reference checks and a formal appointment by Session. It is extremely important that Sessions have a formal appointment process for all key roles, and that people working with children and young people are reappointed by Session each year.

Screening people to make sure they are suitable is also done by verifying a person's Working with Children Check (or equivalent). The CPU admin team completes all verifications, which is why anyone in a position of authority within the church, including those who work directly with children and young people, must submit a registration form to the CPU before serving at church.

For people that are teaching or helping with Special Religious Education, or SRE, you will also need to apply for an authorisation card from the CPU.

Supervision is an important way of creating a safe environment and preventing abuse. Supervision in Breaking the Silence is not referring to professional supervision, such as that provided by a counsellor or through a professional supervision program. Supervising bodies, such as Sessions, that have people engaged in activities involving children, young people, or other vulnerable people, will strive to ensure that an appropriate level of supervision is provided. It is particularly important to directly supervise people that have been newly appointed to roles. Supervision also involves leader support. Session ensures that support is provided for all leaders once they are appointed.

> So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
>
> **Genesis 1:27**

When we think about people in terms of wise ministry, we also need to consider the people who we are coming into contact with. God has blessed humanity with diversity. In our ministry activities, we encounter people from different backgrounds and cultures, young and old. We must be mindful of these differences and always look to treat others with respect and **sensitivity**. Think about the particular needs of the individuals you serve and work out what you can do to make everyone feel welcome so that nothing hinders the work of gospel.



Places



An environment shapes what can or cannot happen. You should always consider the **safety** of the space in which you run ministry activities. Part of your duty of care is to reduce any foreseeable risks that have the potential for harm. This means that you should be maintaining your furniture and building to a safe standard, but also consider the different risks posed to the different kinds of people who use the space – for example, something that is low risk to adults may pose a high risk to toddlers. You can find out more about risk assessments on the BTS website or from the Church Insurance Department.

The **visibility** of a location in which an interaction takes place can increase or minimise the risk of abuse. In order to maintain accountability and transparency, a lot of interactions need to be kept in view of other people. Think about where an appropriate place would be to have a private conversation while still maintaining accountability by being visible to others.



These considerations are just as important when running an off-site activity.

In addition to physical places, we must also think about **virtual spaces** and **online environments**. Ministry can occur in person, but can also occur using technology-facilitated communication, such as running a prayer meeting in a video conference or sending pastoral encouragement to someone via text message. Social media and online messaging can be really useful ways to connect with people in your ministries, however it is important to implement measures that prevent it from being misused. Visibility and accountability are key considerations for the virtual spaces that are used in ministry, particularly with children and young people.



More information on technology can be found on the BTS website.

CASE STUDY: Sophia's Story - Take notes while you watch the video. Consider:

What factors made Sophia more vulnerable to the leader Chris' grooming behaviour?
What were some early warning signs that the interaction was inappropriate?
What are some boundaries that could have prevented this from taking place?

Practices

Wise ministry practices involve developing and implementing a certain way of doing things so that safety, **accountability** and **transparency** are embedded in your actions.



These include practices relating to record keeping, transport, medication, food, activities, pastoral care, listening to children, discipline strategies and technology. The BTS website has info sheets on these topics please visit the website and access those relevant to your ministry role.

As a person appointed to a particular role within the church, whether that is as a minister, elder, Bible study group leader or any other role, you have been given certain authority. When the church appoints a person into a position such as yours, they are saying "We trust this person to represent God's church in this way."

This privilege is not something to be taken lightly, and leaders should prayerfully consider their willingness to take on the responsibility that comes with authority before accepting such an appointment. The power that comes with your position in authority is something that you must not abuse. It is always your responsibility to ensure that your actions do not cause harm.

The **Code of Conduct** can be described as the fence we build around the church. That fence achieves two things: it makes our churches and activities as safe as possible by creating an environment where it is difficult for offenders to hide; and we educate those in a position of authority within the church about appropriate boundaries, and the dangers of crossing those boundaries.

> In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us.
>
> **Titus 2:7-8**

Point 8 of the policy statement says:

We acknowledge that we have had to make changes in the way that we relate to children and young people and others, and as a result, some good things have been lost, however we will bear this loss to ensure as far as possible that the vulnerable are safe.

We should remember this as we look at the boundaries contained within the Code of Conduct. It is central to keeping our communities safe so that our ministries can flourish.



Code of Conduct

The following constitutes **the church's** Code of Conduct for behaviour for a person in a **position of authority within the church**:

1. As a person in a **position of authority within the church** you must always be concerned about the integrity of your position, likely perceptions of **the church** and the wider community, and the need to acknowledge the real or perceived power given to you as a result of holding this position. You should avoid situations where you are vulnerable to temptation or where your conduct may be construed to be a breach of this Code of Conduct. You will make yourself familiar with the provisions of **Breaking the Silence.**
2. You must not fail to take action to prevent to the best of your ability and report as required any of the following:
   - **child abuse,**
   - a **child** or **young person** at **risk of significant harm,**
   - **reportable conduct,**
   - **sexual misconduct,** and/or
   - conduct that breaches the **Breaking the Silence** Code of Conduct.
3. **Sexualised behaviour** is any behaviour that may reasonably be perceived to be of a sexual nature according to the standards of the time by the person to whom it is directed. **Sexualised behaviour** is only permitted as set out in the Word of God. Except with one's own marriage partner, all **sexualised behaviour** is forbidden. If you are not married, you must abstain from all sexual or **sexualised behaviour.**
4. You must not engage in or condone any behaviour that could be considered to be:
   - **child abuse,**
   - putting a **child** or **young person** at **risk of significant harm,**
   - **reportable conduct,** and/or
   - conduct that breaches this **Breaking the Silence** Code of Conduct.
5. You must not engage in or condone any behaviour that could be considered to **be sexual misconduct,** understanding that **sexual misconduct** is contact or invitation, via any means, of a sexual nature which is inconsistent with the integrity of a person **in a position of authority within the church. Sexual misconduct** includes any behaviour that could be reasonably considered to **be sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, coercion** or **grooming** of an **adult** or a **child** or **young person**.
6. **Sexual exploitation** refers to any form of **sexualised behaviour** with an **adult, child,** or **young person,** whether or not there is consent and regardless of who initiated the behaviour, where that behaviour is contrary to the Word of God. Therefore, you will not among other things engage in or condone any of the following:
   - behaviour or a pattern of behaviour aimed at the involvement of others in sexual acts, including but not limited to **coercion** or **grooming behaviour,**
   - **sexualised behaviour** with a person below the age of consent,
   - **sexualised behaviour** with a person with whom there is a supervisory, **pastoral care,** or counselling relationship,
   - the production, distribution, possession of or accessing of pornographic material of any kind,
   - taking advantage of the conscious or unconscious use of sexually provocative behaviour that some victims of abuse display,

- engaging the services of a prostitute, or soliciting or providing such services,
- visiting, without legitimate reason, a brothel or any place maintained for the abuse-of-sex industry,
- viewing or reading, in print or otherwise, material of a sexually explicit nature, except for a legitimate purpose,
- participating in sexually explicit conversation via social media, chat rooms, gaming, or any other means, and
- asking, without legitimate reason, any questions about the intimate details of a person's sexual life or providing details of your own sexual life.

7. **Sexual harassment** means unwelcome **sexualised behaviour,** whether intended or not, in relation to an **adult, child** or **young person** where that person reasonably feels in all circumstances offended, belittled, or threatened. Such behaviour may consist of a single incident or several incidents over a period of time. Therefore, you will not, among other things engage in or condone:
   - implicit or explicit demands or suggestions for sexual activities,
   - making any gesture, action or comment of a sexual nature to a person or about a person in their presence,
   - making jokes containing sexual references or innuendo using any form of communication,
   - exposure to any form of sexually explicit or suggestive material, including but not limited to pornography of any kind,
   - physical contact that is inappropriate to the situation or uncomfortable or confusing for the receiver, including kissing, hugging, touching, pinching, patting or aggressive physical conduct,
   - touching any sexual part of the body, including the "only kidding" or accidental occasions of sexual touch,
   - generating or participating in inappropriate personal correspondence (including electronic communication) in respect of sexual or romantic feelings or in breach of the Code of Conduct,
   - inappropriate giving of gifts, including those of a sexual, suggestive, or romantic nature that is in breach of the Code of Conduct,
   - inappropriate or unnecessary discussion of, or inquiry about, personal matters of a sexual nature,
   - inappropriate intrusion of personal space or physical privacy, including being alone in a bedroom or bathroom or allowing inappropriate exposure during activities that require dressing or changing clothes,
   - voyeurism, and
   - persistent following or stalking.

8. **Coercion** or **grooming behaviour** refers to physical or psychological actions intrinsic to initiating or hiding abusive behaviour, which involved the manipulative cultivation of relationships with vulnerable **adults, children** and/or **young people,** their **carers,** and others in authority. You will not exhibit any behaviour that could be considered to be **coercion** or **grooming behaviour.**

9. With regard to **children** and **young people:**
   - You will not visit a **child** or **young person** in their own home unless a parent is present, or you visit with another person in a **position of authority within the church** with parental permission.

- You will adhere to Section 16 of **Breaking the Silence** when providing overnight activities which include accommodating groups of **children/young people** in any way other than with their **carer**.
- You will not provide any form of accommodation for any reason where there is not strict segregation by sex, with the exception of married couples and families. Supervision of **children** and/or **young people** must be provided by a person of the same sex.
- You will ensure that any activity involving **children** and/or **young people** is open to observation by parents and other adults with a legitimate interest.

10. With regard to **adults, children,** and **young people:**
    - You will not condone or participate in **bullying** behaviour, where **bullying** is the repeated seeking out or targeting of an **adult, child** or **young person** to cause them distress and humiliation or to exploit them, including exclusion from a peer group, intimidation and extortion.
    - You will not condone or participate in **domestic or family violence,** which involves violent, abusive, or intimidating behaviour carried out by a partner, carer, or family member to control, dominate, or instil fear. This includes physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial, or other types of abuse.
    - You will not participate in or allow nude swimming or other such activities.
    - You will not participate in or allow initiations and secret ceremonies.
11. With regard to **adults, children,** and **young people,** either the Presbytery or Session may make temporary variations in respect to the details of the following. These temporary variations will be formally recorded by the Presbytery or Session and will be made on a restricted basis for individuals in specific circumstances for a specific period of time. Where no temporary variation is formally recorded, the following will apply without change:
    - You will take care to ensure an appropriate balance of transparency and confidentiality so that the private concerns of others are not disclosed or revealed improperly. In ordinary circumstances, when you are providing **pastoral care** to, or working with members of the opposite sex, you will strive to do so in an environment that allows visual surveillance and, where reasonable, have other people within hearing distance.
    - You will not allow a child to sleep in close proximity to an adult, other than a parent or guardian, unless there is a significant separation, and privacy of all parties is respected.
    - You will not allow an **adult** to share accommodation with one **child** or **young person** only unless they are a parent or guardian of that **child** or **young person.**
    - You will not drive a **child** or **young person** unaccompanied.

Where specified provisions cannot be followed in an emergency, the circumstances of the emergency and the actions taken should be reported to and approved by the **supervising body.** Where the actions taken are not approved, they will be considered to be a breach of the Code of Conduct.

Any breaches of this Code of Conduct for any reason will be reported to the appropriate **supervising body** as soon as possible. The **supervising body** will then report the matter to the CPU.

PATH TO WISE MINISTRY

Making sure our ministry practices are safe requires us to think hard about ourselves, our ministry and what boundaries should be put in place for us, personally. And we need to do this before we confront a situation.

In safe and effective pastoral care and ministry, appropriate boundaries are held in place by the person in authority. When thinking about your personal boundaries and the various safe ministry considerations needed in your role, you can use the 'PATH to wise ministry' as a self-check method. Ask yourself:

Preparation	Have we prepared for this ministry activity? (risk management, consent forms, screening, and training for all leaders, etc.)
Accountability	How are we staying accountable in this activity? (always more than one leader, recording incidents, agreeing to the Code of Conduct, etc.)
Transparency	How are we maintaining transparency in our ministry? (online interactions open to observation by other leaders, clear communication to parents, etc.)
Humility	How are we practicing humility in our role? (Acknowledging our limits, getting support from church / CPU, being godly in the way we serve, etc.)

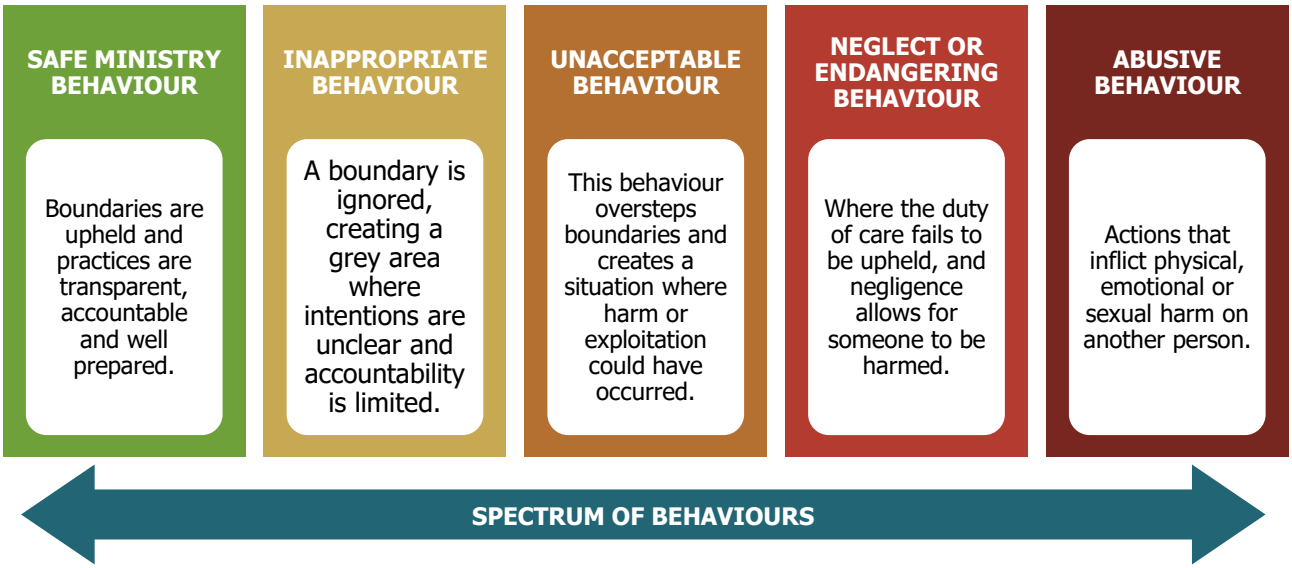
Write down the ways you demonstrate preparation, accountability, transparency and humility in your main ministry role:

SECTION 6:

CASE STUDIES

Spectrum of Behaviours

We will now look at some examples of responses to various situations. Using the things we have learnt in this training, assess the examples and identify where each response could fit along the spectrum of behaviours.



EXAMPLE 1:

Elder
You are chatting with Josh, one of the teenage boys at church, discussing a school woodwork project he is working on. He is almost finished the construction but one of his dad's power tools has stopped working and his parents are away for the week. You are a keen wood worker yourself and have the right equipment at your home where you live alone...

A. You suggest to Josh that you could both drive to his house, collect the project materials and go back to your house to use your equipment. Josh is keen to finish the project and gladly accepts your offer. You both get in your car and head off.

B. You suggest to Josh that he could come use your tools after school during the week if he checks with his parents first. You organise for one of the other elders and his son to be there while Josh is over.

C. You tell Josh that you can deliver some of your tools to his house while he is at school the next day. You drop off the tool Josh needs, along with a couple of other tools he might find handy, including your spare circular saw.

EXAMPLE 2:

Creche leader
You, and two other leaders, are looking after the young children of those attending the Wednesday morning Bible study which meets in a room upstairs. There are 9 kids in the creche. At some point, two of the children start fighting over a toy, resulting in one of them falling over and knocking her lip on the corner of the table. Her mouth is bleeding and she begins to cry...

A. You quickly pick her up and take her out of the room to calm her down. She is screaming loudly, so you take her into the kitchen to wash the cut under cold water.

B. You take both children aside and tell them that this is what happens when you don't share. You tell the children that they mustn't tell their parents what happened because you will all get in big trouble if they do.

C. You ask one of the other leaders to call the girl's mother on her mobile. While she does that, you get the girl to hold a tissue to her lip and reassure her that her mum is on the way.

What would you do?

In the scenarios below, think about how you would respond as someone in the role indicated. Think about what areas of the Code of Conduct might apply, what boundaries might be needed, whether abuse may have taken place, and what conversations may need to be had.

Female Pastoral Carer
You are supporting Trish, a woman from your congregation who is having what seems like marriage troubles. You normally go over to her place for a cuppa every few weeks, but she's cancelled on you the last 2 times. She hasn't been to church for a month or so, and is not responding to your texts, so you decide to give her a call. Her husband answers and you ask to speak to Trish. He tells you that she's out and hangs up.
What do you do?

Bible Study Leader
You lead a group of young adults and the group has been growing over the past few months. One of the guys has started bringing along his younger sister Ruth, who is 15. At the end of the study, you separate into 2 groups to pray, with one group moving into another room. When you finish praying with your group, the others start returning, two at a time. The first couple explain that they have been praying in pairs. After a few minutes you realise that only Ruth and one other man haven't returned yet. **What do you do?**

BTS Rep
You receive your church compliance list from the CPU and notice that several people have not completed BTS training in over three years. When you contact them to ask them to complete the training, one of the men refuses, stating that he's been at the church his entire life and would never abuse a child. **What do you do?**

Male Youth Leader
One of the teenage girls who attends your youth group tells you that her 15-year-old sister has secretly started dating a 24-year-old man. She tells you that she isn't supposed to know and asks you to promise not to tell anyone, especially not her parents. **What do you do?**

Male Pastoral Carer

You meet up weekly to go for a walk with Vincent, a man from church who is recovering from chronic illness. You arrive at his place at the normal time and he lets you in, telling you that he won't be long, he just needs to finish a call. He indicates for you to wait in the living room, before going upstairs. His young daughter wanders into the room. She knows you from church and is friends with your daughter who is the same age. She asks you to come and see her toys in her room, which is just down the hallway. **What do you do?**

Female Youth Leader

You are in your early twenties, serving in a small-town church. There are no other young adults at your church, but you find that you get on pretty well with the more senior high schoolers who you lead at youth group. The girls see you as a big sister and have had great conversations with you at youth group. One of the girls invites you to her 16th birthday party. The girls will get dropped off at the cinema and then go back to her house for a sleepover. **What do you do?**

Female Kids Ministry Leader

Jasper is one of the kindergarten boys in your Sunday School class. He is energetic and enjoys attention, often disrupting the group time. Each week, he is collected by his mother or father. When his mother comes, he becomes very cheeky, taking a long time to pack up and won't listen to her. When his father comes, he is quite withdrawn and leaves silently. One week, Jasper comes to Sunday School with a chipped tooth. You expect that he'll be bursting to tell everyone the story of how he did it, but instead he says that it was an accident and he doesn't want to talk about it.

The following week, your class finishes their craft early so you get them to draw pictures on scrap paper. You notice that Jasper is drawing pictures of people punching each other and one drawing shows a man throwing a chair at a woman.
What do you do?

Male Kids Ministry Leader

You are involved in a holiday kids club. During the singing, lots of the kids like dancing and jumping around to the music. Some of the kids grab your hands and start swinging them around. Seeing that you're dancing too, other kids start climbing onto your back and holding onto your legs.
What do you do?

Elder

You have known Barbara since you joined the church 15 years ago. She is an elderly woman who lives on her own and comes to church each week by taxi. While chatting with you at morning tea, she mentions that her daughter has been getting very cross at her for being disorganised and will be helping out with more of the money matters in future.

The following week, Barbara tells you that her daughter has decided to move in with her. She asks if you would help her set up the sofa bed that afternoon. When you arrive, Barbara's daughter is there already setting up and rebukes her mother for wasting your time by bringing you over. You assure her that it was no trouble and as you're leaving, she comments to you that her mother is 'not really all there' these days.

A few weeks pass before you get a call from a woman on the pastoral care team who is organising a roster of people to pick up Barbara for church each week. Her daughter doesn't want her wasting money on taxis and is only giving her a set amount of her money to spend on groceries and medication each week.

What do you do?

APPENDIX:

DEFINITIONS

Throughout **Breaking the Silence** there are words in bold. This indicates that there is a definition for that term, which is provided below. Please note that these definitions are inclusive of the singular and plural of the term used and noted in bold throughout the text.

- **Abuse**: **Abuse** is a broad term. For the purposes of **Breaking the Silence**, **abuse** includes:
  - **child abuse**
  - **risk of significant harm**,
  - **reportable conduct,**
  - **sexual misconduct**, and/or
  - conduct that breaches the **Breaking the Silence** Code of Conduct.

- **Adult**: Any person over the age of 18.

- **Aggrieved person**: The person making the complaint, whether they present as a **victim** or **complainant**.

- **Allegation**: A complaint, incident, allegation, or **allegation – reportable conduct** includes any matter brought to the church by an **aggrieved person** that may be rightly dealt with under **Breaking the Silence.**

- **Allegation - reportable conduct**: An allegation made within a procedure conducted in terms of the Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW) of **reportable conduct** must identify a current employee (including volunteer leaders); describe behaviour that may constitute **reportable conduct** or details of conviction; and involve a person who was under 18 years at the time of the alleged behaviour or conviction. All such **allegations – reportable conduct** are **notifiable circumstances**.

- **Alleged offender**: The person who is alleged to have offended.

- **Breaking the Silence**: Unless otherwise specified this refers to the current issue of **Breaking the Silence**.

- **Bullying**: The repeated seeking out or targeting of an **adult**, **child** or **young person** to cause them distress and humiliation or to exploit them. It includes exclusion from a peer group, intimidation and extortion.

- **Carer**: The adult person responsible for a **child** or **young person**.

- **Child**: Any person under 16 years of age and in some instances any person under the age of 18 years of age.
- **Child abuse**: Includes neglect, emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, domestic violence as defined in *Section 2*. **Child abuse** is a **notifiable circumstance.**

- **Child-related** employment: Employment where at least one of the essential duties of the position involves direct contact with children where the contact is not directly supervised, such as child protection services, pre-schools, kindergartens, childcare centres, schools, refuges used by children, hospitals, clubs, Sunday schools, camps etc.

- **Child Safe Standards:** Standards identified by the **Royal Commission** which aim to make institutions safer for children.

- **Civil authorities**: The Police and officials of government departments responsible for child protection, for the administration of laws relating to complaints of sexual harassment, for the discipline of professions and for industrial relations.

- **Code of Discipline**: Contained in the Presbyterian Church of Australia Constitution, Procedure and Practice - Code of Discipline.

- **Coercion**: Physical or psychological actions intrinsic to initiating or hiding abusive behaviour, which involved the manipulative cultivation of relationships with vulnerable **adults**, **children** and/or **young people**, their **carers** and others in authority. This is also referred to as "grooming". **Coercion** is a form of **sexual misconduct**.

- **Community Services**: The relevant State or Territory government department with responsibility for caring for children.

- **Complaint**: See **allegation**.

- **Complainant**: The person who has alleged abuse. In most cases, but not all, the **complainant** will also be the person against whom it is alleged that the abuse was directed. Unless it is necessary to specify **complainant** the term **aggrieved person** is used throughout this document.

- **Contact persons**: The **CPU** can appoint a **contact person** so that if an **aggrieved person** wishes to make a complaint to a person who is independent of **the church** they may do so.
- **CPU**: Conduct Protocol Unit of the Presbyterian Church of Australia in the State of New South Wales, acting on behalf of **the church**.

- **CPU Advisors**: The Clerk and Deputy Clerk of the Assembly, the Law Officers, the Superintendent of the Ministry and Mission Committee and the General Manager are advisors to the Manager, Conduct Protocol Unit.

- **Direct supervision**: Where the supervisor is present at all times and is observing the contact by the person under supervision with any **child** and is responsible for directing that person if required.

- **Disclosure**: A **disclosure** occurs when someone informs a **person in authority within the church** that they have been subject to **abuse** or know of **abuse**. A **disclosure** may or may not be an **allegation** or a **notifiable circumstance**.

- **Domestic or family violence:** Actions which involve violent, abusive or intimidating behaviour carried out by a partner, carer or family member to control, dominate or instil fear, including physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, financial or other types of abuse.

- **Facilitator**: Those appointed by the **CPU** to facilitate procedures by which agreements may be reached between an **aggrieved person** and **the church** about what **the church** can and should do to assist the **aggrieved person**.

- **Grooming behaviour**: Physical or psychological actions intrinsic to initiating or hiding abusive behaviour, which involve the manipulative cultivation of relationships with vulnerable **adults**, **children** and/or **young people**, their **carers,** and others in authority. This is also referred to as "coercion". Grooming behaviour is a form of **sexual misconduct**.

- **National Safe Ministry Framework:** a framework adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia to establish a uniform and consistent approach to the protection of children within the Presbyterian Church of Australia and all of the State churches.

- **Notifiable circumstance**: The **CPU** must be advised of all **notifiable circumstances**, including:
  - any fact, circumstance, **allegation,** notification, knowledge of, verbal advice of, direct or indirect connection to, or attempt of **abuse**, and
  - all **allegations**, **complaints**, **reportable allegations** and **allegations – reportable conduct**.

  A **notifiable circumstance** may identify someone who is currently or has been a member of the **church**, someone who is currently or has been a person in **a position of authority within the church**, a current or ex-employee, a current or ex-student, a current or ex-volunteer and/or a current or ex-third party.

- **Offender**: The person who perpetrated proven abuse.

- **Pastoral care** or **pastoral support**: The provision of care, counsel and education to persons who seek the support of **the church**, including:
  - guiding to make decisions concerning spiritual matters by means of Biblical teaching,
  - prayer,
  - provision of practical support, such as medical care or counselling,
  - reconciling someone to God and/or other people,
  - spiritual guidance, and
  - sustaining through a period of hardship and/or crisis.

- **Person of concern:** A person of concern can be considered to be subject of a substantiated complaint of abuse; has been convicted of an offence relating to abuse; has been denied a clearance or where their clearance has been

withdrawn, suspended, barred or revoked; or poses a reasonably-known risk to **children, young people** or other vulnerable people (refer **National Safe Ministry Framework** section 2.5).

- **Position of authority within the church**: Those in a position of authority within the church include all ministers, home missionaries, deaconesses, licentiates, elders, paid employees, church workers whether paid or volunteers and all those working with **children** and **young people**.

- **Prohibited person**: Under New South Wales law, a **prohibited person** is someone who is a registrable person as defined in the *Child Protection (Offenders Registration) Act 2000* (with some exceptions) or has been convicted of certain offences as set out in the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998.*. Where a declaration in relation to prohibited persons is required under New South Wales law, a similar declaration is required in other States and Territories under **Breaking the Silence.**

- **Reportable allegation**: A claim, statement or assertion that has yet to be substantiated or proven within a procedure conducted in terms of the Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW). All **reportable allegations** are **notifiable circumstances**.

- **Reportable conduct**: is a defined term that appears in the Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW). Section 20 of the Children's Guardian Act defines **reportable conduct** as:
  - a sexual offence,
  - sexual misconduct,
  - ill-treatment of a child,
  - neglect of a child,
  - an assault against a child,
  - an offence under section 43B or 316A of the Crimes Act 1900,
  - behaviour that causes significant emotional or psychological harm to a child.

  Reportable conduct is a standard that is applied to all people in a **position of authority within the church** under the Children's Guardian Act 2019 (NSW). **Reportable conduct** applies to conduct towards children under the age of 18 years. Reportable conduct includes conduct that is defined in relevant legislation that occurs within a person's public ministry as well as their personal life. All **reportable conduct** is a **notifiable circumstance.**

  Reportable conduct in **Breaking the Silence** also covers ACT, TAS and WA.
  The **CPU** will maintain an internal policy setting out the administrative requirements of each scheme in more detail.

  Where **Breaking the Silence** has been formally adopted by the appropriate State General Assembly in other States and Territories, the **CPU** will provide support to establish a local policy for any reportable conduct scheme implemented in that State or Territory.

- **Risk of significant harm**: At **risk of significant harm** is a term used by **Community Services** for situations where a reasonable person has current concerns about the safety, welfare or wellbeing of a **child or young person**. Conduct putting **a child or young person** at **risk of significant harm** may also be **reportable conduct** and is a **notifiable circumstance**.

- **Sexual misconduct:** Any behaviour that could be reasonably considered to be **sexual assault**, **sexual exploitation**, **sexual harassment, coercion** or **grooming** of an **adult** or a **child** or a **young person** as defined in the Code of Conduct. **Sexual misconduct** is contact or invitation, via any means, of a sexual nature which is inconsistent with the integrity of a person **in a position of authority within the church** or who is working with children or young people. It includes behaviour that may reasonably be perceived to be of a sexual nature according to the standards of the time by the person to whom it is directed. **Sexual misconduct** is a **notifiable circumstance**.

- **Sexual assault**: Any intentional or reckless act, use of force or threat to use force against an **adult**, **child** or **young person** without their consent as defined in *Section 2,* and in the BTS Manual.

- **Sexual exploitation**: Any form of **sexualised behaviour** with an **adult**, **child** or **young person**, whether or not there is consent and regardless of who initiated the behaviour,

where that behaviour is contrary to the Word of God and as defined in point 6 of the Code of Conduct**.**

- **Sexual harassment**: Any unwelcome **sexualised behaviour**, whether intended or not, in relation to an **adult**, **child** or **young person** where the person reasonably feels in all circumstances offended, belittled or threatened as defined in point 7 of the Code of Conduct.

- **Sexualised behaviour** is any behaviour that may reasonably be perceived to be of a sexual nature according to the standards of the time by the person to whom it is directed. **Sexualised behaviour** is only permitted as set out in the Word of God.

- **Supervising body** or **bodies**: The body with direct supervision and jurisdiction over a person or person/s. For example, the **supervising body** for an ordained minister would be the presbytery. The **supervising body** for a school Principal would be the Board or Council.

- **Support persons**: Appropriate individuals sourced by the Manager, **CPU** from time to time, drawn from within and without **the church**, from diverse backgrounds, having skills in areas such as mediation and conflict resolution, child protection, the social sciences, civil and church law and industrial relations.

- **Survivor**: The person against whom proven abuse was directed. See **victim**.

- **The church**: The Presbyterian Church of Australia in those States or Territories where **Breaking the Silence** has been formally adopted by the appropriate State general Assembly, including all congregations, organisations, committees, associations, groups, schools, hospitals, and other institutions.

- **Victim:** The person against whom abuse was directed, many of whom refer to themselves as **survivors**.

- **Young person** or **young people**: Any person/s above 16 years of age but under 18 years of age.

APPENDIX:

NOTES

In the space below, write down things that you learn throughout the training, any questions you want to follow up on, and any tasks or actions that you need to complete as part of applying BTS to your ministry practices.

Who do I talk to about safe ministry paperwork and requirements?

BTS Rep: _____

Contact: _____

Who supervises and supports me in my ministry role?

Name: _____

Contact: _____

Who do I talk to when I have concerns about abuse / misconduct?
e.g. the minister, an elder, or pastoral carer appointed for this purpose.

Name: _____

Contact: _____

Name: _____

Contact: _____

Or contact the CPU on:
02 9690 9325 or
cpu@jerichoroad.org.au

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BREAKING THE SILENCE | Conduct Protocol Unit
Presbyterian Church of Australia in NSW/ACT

Foundations Training Workbook

Nov 2026

For more information, contact Conduct Protocol Unit, Jericho Road
02 9690 9325 □ cpu@jerichoroad.org.au □ breakingthesilence.org.au