

Policy

Engagement with young people outside of ministry programs and services

Statement of purpose

St Stephen's Anglican Church, Coorparoo (St Stephen's) is committed to the safety and wellbeing of young people within our communities in accordance with the Anglican Church Southern Queensland's Statement of Commitment.

The following policy outlines specific guidelines and expectations that apply to leaders who participate in ministry programs involving young people under the age of 18, run by St Stephen's.

Engagement with young people outside of ministry

Leaders should avoid intentionally organised 1:1 contact with young people who attend ministries run by St Stephen's outside of those designated ministries and church services, including the following non-exhaustive contexts:

- a. Private homes.
- b. Public gathering spaces such as shopping centres, cafes, or cinemas.
- c. Internet spaces including social media platforms.
- d. On church grounds outside of planned programs.

Leaders are not to engage in the following actions:

- i. Create or accept social media connections i.e., following on Instagram/Tik Tok/Snap Chat or friending on Facebook.
- ii. Offer to or privately communicate with young people via any means.
- iii. Offer or accept invitations to spend time privately with young people outside of programmed events, i.e., going to the movies, getting coffee or food together, offering private baby-sitting or childcare services to parents.
- iv. Offer private pastoral care conversations outside of programmed ministry contexts.
- v. Engage in any other such conduct that would be considered inappropriate of the manner and conduct of a leader by the standards of a reasonable, considered parent.

Reasonable exceptions

There are reasonable exceptions that can be considered, including:

- i. Social media connections that were made prior to becoming a leader in a youth ministry context.
- ii. Social functions in the natural accordance of church family friendships, i.e., being invited to come to lunch as part of a family or as a friend.
- iii. Broader church family functions such as weddings, funerals, or social events such as birthday parties.
- iv. Any other exceptions provided with written consent from parents, youth minister, and the Parish Priest with clear understanding of the approved exceptions and reasonable safeguards to ensure the youth's and the leader's overall safety and wellbeing.

Recording of exceptions

All exceptions initiated under section iv of 'Reasonable exceptions' should be communicated and recorded by the St Stephen's youth minister to ensure that such exceptions are appropriate and reasonable; and to implement any safeguards deemed necessary to ensure the overall safety and wellbeing of young people involved.

Breach of policy

If a breach of this policy is believed to have occurred, please report the breach to one of the following members at St Stephen's:

- i. Youth minister
- ii. Children's minister
- iii. Parish Priest

to be investigated and addressed in accordance with this policy. The appropriate minister (youth or children's) will have a discussion with the leader in question to reiterate the importance of following the policy and discuss potential steps to rectify the situation if necessary.

If further breaches occur, the following steps may be taken:

Step 1 – A formal discussion with the leader in question with both the relevant minister and the Parish Priest to discuss the circumstances of the breaches and potential avenues of rectification which can also include temporary breaks from being involved in the relevant ministry. The leader may request a support person to attend this discussion.

Step 2 – If there are further breaches after Step 1, the leader will be formally asked to step down from leading for a period of time deemed appropriate by the minister and the Parish Priest. The leader will also be offered clear expectations of what will be required of them to be considered for leadership positions after this period of time, which will include training and resubmission of safety checks.

If there are reasonable concerns at any stage of this process that the behaviour is of an intentional nature or raises concerns regarding the safety and wellbeing of the young person/s involved as guided by Diocesan policies, procedures, and code of conduct, the leader will be reported to the Department of Professional Standards for further investigation.

Review of policy

This policy is to be reviewed by 31 January 2024.