



## Health and Safety for congregations

# Volunteers Guide

### How this guide can help you

Volunteers are an integral part of the life of our churches. The church has a responsibility to protect our volunteers, the people they encounter and the church itself. Volunteers also have a responsibility for their own safety, and that of others.

Our volunteers should be treated with respect and kindness, and in turn behave in a way that upholds integrity. This guide gives you helpful information about how we provide a safe environment for our volunteers.

### Protecting the health and safety of our volunteers

Uniting Church has a responsibility to ensure the health and safety of our volunteers. It is important to remember that safety is about more than just physical hazards like a spill on the floor or lifting a heavy box. Psychological safety is just as important, but can be less clear cut. Everyone contributes to the creation of a positive and protective environment where people and our volunteers feel safe.

#### **Consulting Volunteers:**

There is a duty to consult with volunteers in relation to health and safety matters. Consultation is an effective way to ensure volunteers contribute to the identification of hazards and the assessment and control of risks they face in carrying out their mission for our churches.

### Selecting and engaging with volunteers

Volunteers should be selected in accordance with the congregation's arrangements. Before any person can work with children or vulnerable adults, an appropriate screening process must also be undertaken. Selecting appropriate volunteers is a key step in protecting the safety of vulnerable people. The congregations local arrangements will help guide you through this process.

From a health and safety perspective it is also important to ensure volunteers understand the physical and psychological components of their volunteer role and they are medically fit to perform the requirements or tasks. Make sure you clearly step them through what is required of them so they can make decisions about whether they are suitable for the role.

### Training and instruction

Part of our responsibility to volunteers is to provide training and supervision to perform tasks safely. Volunteers are also required to complete appropriate training before they commence to ensure they are upholding church values, professional and ethical standards during their term of service. Just as for paid employees, new volunteers should also be provided training and instruction accordingly (e.g. emergency planning, first aid, risk management).

