



## GUIDE 4: SUITABILITY SCREENING FOR WORKING WITH YOUTH

This guide provides information about selecting the right people to engage with youth on behalf of Defence. By following the guidance, personnel will be equipped to create a safer environment for youth and ensure compliance with relevant policies and regulations.

This guide aims to help personnel:

- identify the values and behaviours to consider when selecting staff to work with youth
- understand that all staff who work with youth need to be screened – the type of screening required depends on the type of youth engagement
- determine when formal screening, such as Working with Children Checks, is required
- identify and record a youth-related work position

[Military Personnel Policy Manual](#) (MILPERSMAN) provides the procedures for managing ADF personnel under 18.

### Key qualities of suitable staff

There is an expectation that Defence personnel will be positive role models for youth. In addition to upholding and demonstrating the Defence values and behaviours, their communication style should be respectful and tailored to the audience.

Before tasking an individual to engage with youth, commanders, managers and supervisors should make an assessment of the individual's values and behaviours and their interest in the health and wellbeing of youth.

When selecting suitable staff, commanders, managers and supervisors should consider:

- the youth protection risks associated with the activity
- the desired outcome/s of the engagement activity.

### Determining type of youth engagement

The type of youth engagement determines whether formal screening is required. Formal screening refers to suitability checks undertaken by governing bodies and includes Working with Children/Vulnerable People checks (WWCC/WWVP).

Personnel tasked with **incidental or irregular youth engagement work** (such as a unit open day or Defence Family Member event) will **not** require formal screening (i.e WWCC/WWVP). However, before assigning personnel for this type of youth related work, commanders, managers and supervisors should be satisfied that the individual is suited to engage with youth.

Personnel for whom youth related work is their **primary role/duty** (e.g. supporting a youth program activity such as the Young Endeavour Scheme), who are in a youth-related work position, or who provide overnight supervision of youth, **will** require formal screening (WWCC/WWVP).



## Youth related work and youth-related work position definition

1. **Youth-related work position.** A youth-related work position is any APS, ADF, contractor or volunteer position where the incumbent is required to, on behalf of Defence:
  - a. undertake youth-related work as the primary duty/responsibility of the position;<sup>1</sup> **OR**
  - b. provide overnight care and supervision of youth participating in a Defence Youth Program or ADF Careers activity.
2. **Youth-related work.** Youth-related work is supervised or unsupervised work, whether paid or unpaid, that:
  - a. involves face-to-face or physical interaction, or oral or written communication via any medium, with one or more youth on behalf of Defence; **AND**
  - b. relates to religious activities and services, or activities and services that are provided specifically (only or mainly) for youth<sup>2</sup>.

Within Defence each business area or unit must assess the required level of contact with individuals under 18 for each position or role to determine whether it should be designated as a youth-related work position.

To avoid doubt and assist in identification of youth-related work positions, APS and ADF personnel are **not** in a youth-related work position if they are:

- a. commanders, managers, supervisors, instructors or the colleagues of, or service providers<sup>[1]</sup> to, Defence personnel who are youth in a Defence workplace where youth-related work is not the primary duty, function or service provided by the unit/organisation/position
- b. peers of Defence personnel who are youth undertaking education and training
- c. required to support a Defence youth program activity, **unless**
  - i. they are required to provide care and supervision of youth participating in an overnight activity<sup>[2]</sup>, **or**
  - ii. providing services to youth is one of the core business functions of the role.

The majority of youth-related work positions will be related to Defence youth programs, ADF Careers contexts, chaplaincy and other support services (see [Enclosure 1](#) for context specific information).

Once an APS or ADF youth-related work position has been identified, it must be recorded in PMKeyS. For guidance on recording an identified APS or ADF youth-related work position in PMKeyS, refer to [Enclosure 2](#).

All ADF Cadets positions held by adult volunteers are youth-related work positions.

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<sup>1</sup> A position is not a youth-related work position if any likely interaction/work with youth is incidental (secondary) to the primary duty/responsibility of the position and can generally be observed or monitored by others.

<sup>2</sup> The majority of youth-related work is undertaken in Defence Youth Program and ADF Career Centre contexts.

<sup>[1]</sup> Including health, psychology, administration, logistics, accommodation and transportation services that are not specifically (only or mainly) provided for youth, but excludes chaplaincy services.

<sup>[2]</sup> Commanders, managers and supervisors who support a discrete Defence Youth Program activity will be briefed well in advance in relation to youth protection requirements, including the need for WWCC if applicable, by the program/activity sponsor.



Volunteer youth-related work positions are recorded in CadetNet by assigning the appropriate ADF Cadets organisation role (Officer of Cadets, Instructor of Cadets or Defence Approved Helper) to the individual.

## Requirements and risk mitigation strategies

Personnel undertaking youth-related work should be assessed as suitable to engage with youth and complete youth protection training.

It is recommended that personnel undertaking daytime, incidental and irregular engagement complete at least one of the following risk mitigation strategies:

- a. read and sign an adult version of the youth safe code of conduct
- b. complete additional youth protection training – options include:
  - i. completing refresher training of the Awareness course, if it hasn't been completed within the last 12 months
  - ii. completing the Supervisor and Manager course.

*Examples of daytime, incidental and irregular youth-related work include volunteering in a service museum, working at a unit open day, talking to Defence Work Experience students about your role, presenting the ADF Long Tan award, being in the catafalque party at a school's Anzac Day commemorations.*

Personnel in **youth-related work positions** are required to:

- a. undergo formal suitability screening (WWCC/WWVP)
- b. have their position recorded on PMKeyS
- c. sign an adult version of the youth safe code of conduct
- d. complete youth protection training on LXP: OS (ADF/APS), LXP: Global (contractors) or CadetNet (ADF Cadets adult volunteers).

*Examples of youth related work positions include some DMFS roles, Defence Work Experience Managers, Young Endeavour Youth Scheme, ADF Career Centre roles, all ADF Cadets adult volunteers.*

**Guide 5 - Youth Engagement Suitability Flowchart and Matrix** provides the requirements in a table format.

Risk assessments should be conducted to identify and manage potential risks to youth prior to any youth engagement activities. All youth related work should be conducted in view of other adults.

## Youth Related Work – informal suitability screening

### SCENARIO

*Brenda is a transition coach. Her usual role involves assisting ADF members to transition into the civilian workforce. Brenda does not typically work with youth. Brenda is known in her office for being kind, respectful and caring. Another Defence organisation she shares her office space with are planning a 'Job Ready' event for teenagers and asked if Brenda could be involved. Brenda's role in the event is to provide interview tips and techniques to the teenagers. Brenda's*



*supervisor is happy for her to support this event as Brenda has the attributes to be a positive role model for youth.*

*As Brenda's regular role is **not** a youth related work position, Brenda does not need to have a Working with Children's Check. However, during the 'Job Ready' event she would be undertaking youth related work. Keeping young people safe is a priority, so Brenda followed a few key steps to help keep the youth safe.*

*Prior to the event Brenda completed Youth Protection Awareness training. As Brenda is an APS employee, she is only required to complete this training if she engages with youth as part of her duties.*

*Brenda read and signed a Youth Safe Code of Conduct. This risk mitigation strategy outlined expectations of acceptable behaviour.*

*Brenda is excited to take part in the workshop. She showed her colleagues the content she had prepared to ensure that it is age-appropriate and engaging.*

*The workshop was held in the community room. This was a great space for the workshop as there were open lines of sight which meant that the youth, and the supervisors, were easy to see. Brenda delivered her presentation to the youth as her colleagues watched on. This allowed Brenda to be appropriately supported and the youth to be adequately supervised.*

*The workshop was successful, with positive engagement from the youth. Brenda proved to be the right person to assist with the workshop, thanks to her respectful nature and the training and safeguards that supported her delivery.*

## **Youth Related Work – formal screening including YR Position annotation**

### **SCENARIO**

*LS White is posted to ADF Careers as Military Recruiter. As LS White's position **is** a youth related work position he must:*

- a. obtain and maintain a Working with Children check or Working with Vulnerable People registration for the state/territory he works in*
- b. read, sign and adhere to a Youth Safe Code of Conduct (Adult)*
- c. complete Youth Protection Training Courses - Youth Protection Awareness; Defence Youth Supervisor and Manager if applicable.*

*LS White's position is recorded in PMKeyS as a youth related work position.*

*Prior to selecting LS White for his position, his career manager or commander should assess LS White as being suitable to work with youth. Examples of ways this may be done include:*

- a. outlining any youth-related experience required for the role and consider if LS White has the experience required*
- b. asking LS White youth safe behaviour based questions <sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> Referees from previous managers/supervisors could also be sought if considered appropriate



## Suitability screening for youth-related work positions

Screening adults to work or volunteer in youth-related work is mandated under relevant state or territory legislation and policy. Prior to selecting an individual to fill a youth-related work position, it is recommended managers assess the suitability of an individual by reviewing:

- a. the Defence ERP Case Management Solution (DECMS) or any other unacceptable behaviour database, including SENTINEL
- b. the Defence Policing and Security Management System
- c. PMKeyS
- d. the member/employee's service/employment file
- e. interviews and referee checks
- f. National Police Checks (for ADF Cadets adult volunteers only)

An individual must not be selected for a youth-related work position if they have adverse findings against them that relate to:

- a. protection orders or child custody matters, where the adverse finding relates to an individual's suitability to work with youth
- b. WWCC/WWVPs, in the circumstances where:
  - i. a bar, or interim bar has been applied to the individual
  - ii. the individual's WWCC/WWVP has been suspended or cancelled by the issuing authority.

Commanders and managers must use judgement to determine whether a record of past offence prevents an individual from working in a youth-related work position. This includes but is not limited to a criminal or civil offence, or a Defence disciplinary offence or misconduct that demonstrates poor character and/or prior unacceptable behaviour, as defined in the Defence Youth Safe Code of Conduct-Adult.

Commanders and managers should conduct referee checks and/or include child safety related questions in interviews when considering an employee, contractor or volunteer for a youth-related work position. Refer to [Enclosure 3](#) for sample referee and interview questions.

Commanders and managers must ensure a Defence Youth Safety Code of Conduct (Adult) is signed once screening is successfully completed. The signed Code of Conduct is to be recorded:

- a. on the Defence member's personnel file in Objective for an individual in a Defence youth-related work position, or
- b. in CadetNet under Accomplishments in the Education & Qualifications section of My Details for volunteers in youth-related work positions in the ADF Cadets.





## Working with children/vulnerable people checks

Defence working with children checks policy is consistent with the [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) and the [National Standards for Working with Children Checks](#).

The following individuals are required to obtain and maintain WWCC or WWVP registration for the State/Territory relevant to the youth-related work:

- a. APS and ADF personnel in recorded youth-related work positions
- b. APS and ADF personnel whose primary role is to work with youth
- c. adults who provide overnight supervision of youth
- d. adults who volunteer with ADF Cadets
- e. chaplains

Commanders, supervisors and managers may request an individual obtain a WWCC/WWVP if they deem it appropriate. For example, if a person is not engaging with youth, but is accessing youth's records, it may be appropriate for a formal screening check to be obtained, depending on the task.

When obtaining or renewing a WWCC/WWVP, where applicable<sup>4</sup>, personnel should nominate Defence as the notifiable organisation.

The process and clearance validity period of WWCC/WWVP checks differs by location. Defence business areas/units are responsible for ensuring:

- a. the appropriate state or territory procedures are followed
- b. clearances are current and renewed within the appropriate timeframe.

The assessment outcome of all Defence personnel who obtain a WWCC/WWVP clearance must be recorded on PMKeyS. For guidance on recording a WWCC/WWVP assessment outcome in PMKeyS, refer to [Enclosure 2](#).

ADF Cadets Adult Volunteers clearance information is to be recorded in CadetNet under Accomplishments in the Education & Qualifications section of My Details.

A record of WWCC/WWVP expiry dates for all personnel should be maintained and recorded appropriately by the relevant commander, manager or supervisor, and stored in accordance with Defence record management policy.

## Further assistance

For further information and assistance contact [defence.youth@defence.gov.au](mailto:defence.youth@defence.gov.au)

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<sup>4</sup> Legislation varies on a state by state/territory by territory basis



## Youth related work position suitability

Context	Youth-related work position suitability
<b>Defence youth programs</b>	
<b>Australian Defence Force cadets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ADF Cadets aged 12-17</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Applicable to all adult volunteer positions</li> <li>✓ Applicable to APS and ADF positions required to deliver or participate in Cadet activities</li> <li>× Generally not applicable to other positions, for example Canberra based Cadet Headquarters and Reserve and Cadets Support (RCSD) positions where contact with youth is not a primary responsibility of the position/role</li> </ul>
<b>Defence Work Experience Program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work experience students aged 15-17</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Applicable to all RCSD Work Experience Managers, Work Experience Coordinators</li> <li>× Not applicable to Defence directorate or ADF unit positions that support work experience placements, unless the placement requires overnight supervision</li> <li>× Generally not applicable to other RCSD positions</li> </ul>
<b>Young Endeavour Youth Scheme</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth &lt;18</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Applicable to all Young Endeavour Scheme positions</li> </ul>
<b>Other Defence youth programs</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth &lt;18</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Applicable to all positions where youth-related work is the primary duty/responsibility of the position</li> </ul>
<b>Defence workplaces and support services</b>	
<b>Defence training establishments</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>likely to include a small percentage of ADF members who are 17</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ May be applicable to positions whose main role is to provide support to Defence members who are 17</li> <li>✓ Not applicable to other positions, unless youth-related work is the primary duty/responsibility of the position</li> </ul>
<b>Defence support directorates and units</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may support ADF members who are 17</li> <li>may interact with Defence youth program participants who are &lt;18</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Not applicable, unless the position requires services to be provided specifically (only or mainly) for youth</li> </ul>
<b>Other Defence directorates and units</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may have ADF members who are 17</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>× Not applicable</li> </ul>
<b>Defence Member and Family Support Branch</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May provide support and services to youth &lt;18</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Applicable to all positions where youth-related work is the primary duty/responsibility of the position</li> </ul>
<b>Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>may support ADF members who are 17</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ May be applicable to some case management positions</li> </ul>



Context	Youth-related work position suitability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>may support Defence Youth Program participants &lt;18</li></ul>	
<b>Employee Assistance Program</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>may support ADF members who are 17</li><li>may support Defence Youth Program participants &lt;18</li></ul>	✓ May be applicable to some case management positions
<b>ADF Careers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>engage and recruit youth &lt;18</li></ul>	✓ Applicable to all ADF Careers Centre positions × Generally not applicable to other positions, in particular Canberra-based ADF Careers Headquarter positions
<b>Health and Psychology services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>may support ADF members who are 17</li></ul>	× Not applicable, unless youth-related work is a primary duty/responsibility of the position/role
<b>Chaplaincy Services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>may support ADF members who are 17</li><li>may interact with Defence Youth Program participants &lt;18</li><li>may interact with other children of Defence members</li></ul>	✓ Applicable to all Chaplain positions





## Youth related work position and recording position accomplishments in PMKeyS

Load the following proficiencies (Table 1) under the Position Accomplishments tab (Figure 1) for the position:

- Working with Children Checks (WWCC)/Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) proficiencies for all applicable states and territories where the incumbent of the position will be required to undertake youth-related work<sup>5</sup>
- Defence Youth Protection Supervisor and Manager Course

**Table 1: Youth-related Work Position Proficiencies**

Proficiency Number	Name of Proficiency	Evidence to Assign Proficiency
P121830	WWVP ACT	Sight WWVP Notice of Decision issued by the ACT Government or actual WWVP card
P122991	WWVP Tasmania	Sight WWVP clearance issued by the TAS Government or presentation of actual WWVP card <sup>6</sup>
P122992	WWCC WA	Sight WWCC Assessment Notice issued by the WA Government or presentation of actual WWCC card
P122993	WWCC Queensland	Sight WWCC clearance issued by the QLD Government or presentation of actual WWCC Blue card
P122994	WWCC NT	Sight WWCC clearance notice issued by the NT Government or presentation of actual WWCC Ochre card
P122995	WWCC Victoria	Sight WWCC clearance email issued by the VIC Government or presentation of actual WWCC card
P122996	WWCC SA	Sight WWCC Screening Letter issued by the SA Government
P122997	WWCC NSW	Sight WWCC Notice letter issued by the NSW Government
P129871	Defence Youth Protection Supervisor and Manager Course	Completion of Course Defence Youth Safety Supervisor and Manager Course

The Working with Children/Vulnerable People Check/s assessment must be sighted and recorded in PMKeyS.

<sup>5</sup> Each state and territory jurisdiction has its own WWCC/VP legislation. Consequently, a WWCC/VP Clearance may be required for each jurisdiction where youth-related work will be undertaken. For more information visit <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/pre-employment-screening-working-children-checks-and-police-checks/part-overview>. If a WWCC clearance is held in one jurisdiction, the ability to undertake youth-related work in other jurisdictions without the need for additional WWCC clearance(s) varies depending on the jurisdiction. A single WWCC proficiency annotation may be sufficient in cases where an additional WWCC is not required.

<sup>6</sup> PMKeyS refers to a WWCC for Tasmania but the actual name is a WWVP clearance. This will be amended in PMKeyS to reflect the true name.



## Advice for interviewers recruiting for youth-related work positions

Robust recruitment processes help keep youth safe. The interview process is an important step in selecting the right people to work with youth, and identifying people who may pose a risk to youth.

Interviewers should assess if the applicant has awareness of youths' additional [rights](#) and needs beyond that of adults, and recognise the valuable contribution youths make to society.

Interviewers should ask open-ended behavioural-based questions to gain an insight into the applicant's values and accountabilities.

The interview should include questions about youth protection. Some useful questions may include:

*"Tell us why you want to work with youth".*

*"How would you approach a situation where a young person discloses abuse to you?".*

*"Describe a time where you had to advocate for a youth's welfare in a challenging situation".*

Throughout the entire interview process interviewers should be mindful of responses:

- a. that are vague or unrealistic
- b. that show no or little understanding or appreciation of young people's needs or expectations
- c. that fail to recognise vulnerabilities of youth who have faced adversity
- d. that are insensitive to the needs of youth from diverse backgrounds
- e. that includes inappropriate language about youth
- f. that conveys the applicant does not need, or value, supervision.

All applicants should be assessed on their understanding of professional boundaries, acceptable behaviour, and commitment to youth safety. Tailor your questions to your setting, especially when considering younger or less experienced candidates. Assess both their values and boundary awareness. Look for those who show respect and a willingness to learn. Use scenario-based questions to explore how they would handle issues like role overstepping or how they would maintain appropriate boundaries with a youth who is close to their own age group. Emphasise that while establishing a good rapport matters, maintaining boundaries is essential to uphold trust and safety. If successful, ensure appropriate training and mentoring are provided.



## Referee questions for youth-related work positions

These questions are provided as a guide and may be adapted as appropriate.

Referee	Candidate
How well do you know (the candidate) and in what capacity?	<p>Can you give an example where you have interacted with a young person?</p> <p>Protecting youth is an important part of our work. Can you give me some examples of how you would contribute to making the organisation a safer environment for young people?</p>
<p>Have you observed (the candidate) interacting with children/youth in their professional capacity?</p> <p>If yes: how would you describe that interaction?</p> <p>Do you know of any reason why Defence should be concerned about this applicant working with young people? Would they pose a risk to young people?</p>	<p>Have you experienced any challenges interacting with youth? Can you give an example of what has worked well, and any lessons you may have learnt?</p> <p>If you had concerns about a colleague with regard to their behaviour or attitude towards youth in their care, how would you deal with this?</p>
If (the candidate) was offered a job with this department, where their primary role would be to interact with young people on a regular basis, including supervising young people on camps and at overnight activities, would that give rise to any concerns for you?	<p>What is your understanding of the terms: "Child Safety" and "Child Protection"?</p> <p>Can you spot the signs that a child is suffering from a type of abuse, neglect or harm? What are these signs?</p>
What particular traits would assist the candidate when interacting with people from different social, ethnic or religious backgrounds?	<p>What interactions do you currently have with young people?</p> <p>(for example, through sport/other community youth programs)</p> <p>Tell me about a time when you have been working with youth and your authority was seriously challenged. How did you react? What strategies did you employ to bring things back on course? With hindsight, how might you have improved your response?</p>



## Frequently asked questions and top tips

**Q.** Youth will be attending my workplace for 5 days in a row. I need to show them what my role involves. Will I need a WWCC/WWVP?

**A.** No, you will not need a WWCC/WWVP, as long as there is no overnight care involved, and the engagement is not part of your primary role or responsibility.

**Top tips** – Prior to the event, you could read and sign the adult version of the youth safe code of conduct as a risk mitigation strategy. When talking with the students, be sure to stay in view of other adults. Remember to use clear, positive language when speaking with youth.

**Q.** I volunteer in a service museum. Do I need a WWCC/WWVP?

**A.** You will not require a WWCC/WWVP unless your primary role is to provide youth programs at the museum, or if you provide supervision at overnight youth incursions. For example, if a Defence community group held a 'Night at the Museum' sleepover event at the museum, and you helped supervise, then you would require a WWCC/WWVP.

**Top tips** – if your primary role *does not* involve providing services to youth, but sometimes you provide information to youth who visit the museum, you could read and sign the adult version of the youth safe code of conduct.

**Q.** I'm in a Navy Band and I'm going to perform at a school assembly and then talk to the students about my career highlights. Do I need a WWCC/WWVP?

**A.** If this type of work is not your primary duty, Defence does not require you to have a WWCC/WWVP. However, you should always check and follow the school's requirements.

**Top tips** – Prior to the event, you could read and sign the adult version of the youth safe code of conduct as a risk mitigation strategy. When talking with the students, be sure to stay in view of other adults. Remember to use clear, positive language when speaking with youth.

**Q.** I have my WWCC for NSW. I'll be travelling to another state to help out with a youth program. Do I need to get a check for the other states?

**A.** That depends! Requirements vary across the states and territories. Other factors include how long you spend working interstate and if overnight care is being provided.