# Safeguarding Newsletter – June 2023

I hope you are all enjoying the summer and looking forward to holidays and family events over the holidays. I’m taking my young family away to Malta in August for some much-needed rest after another busy year for us all. On Monday 12th Leonie and I joined in with the Clergy Day in Bridgwater. It was very nice to meet so many of our fantastic incumbents and to see the positivity around safeguarding in their parishes. I want to put on record my most sincere thanks to all of our clergy for the support and kindness offered to myself and my team in our work and on a personal level. It is such a tough job that they do and my respect for that, and them, grows by the day.

# DBS checks – a plea

Please note that we continue to struggle due to the lack of information sharing from some parishes in relation to their DBS checks. This is especially tough in a year where we are transitioning a lot of people from five to three yearly DBS checks, which means an increase in the number of checks by over 40%, without a corresponding increase in staff to help achieve this. To help us process your checks for all our benefits, please note the following:

* When you have completed the ID section of the DBS please don’t just leave it there without telling us.
* Once you complete your I.D check please email the DBS mailbox (not me or Leonie directly) dbs.safeguarding@bathwells.anglican.org and tell us you need your DBS check signing off by us and then what the role involves (working with children / vulnerable adults, paid / voluntary etc.)
* If your check relates to working with children we also need to know if this involves regular (weekly or more) unsupervised work with children, or involves helping with toileting, and with adults if this includes providing one of the areas of care (health or personal care, assisting with money handling or shopping, personal affairs or conveying to medical appointments).
* Please provide specific details so we can determine what level of DBS check is required. For example, generic descriptions of roles such as Administrator or Outreach worker are not sufficient.
* Also, if you don’t communicate with us, we won’t have your email address and often the church system for recording volunteer email addresses has your personal rather then PSO one. We have been raising this for at least a year, but this continues to cause substantial issues and causing unnecessary additional work, to the detriment of the team and the service we can provide.
* If a check has been started but is no longer required, please withdraw it from the system. Any check that has been open but left incomplete after 6 months will be deleted.

I completed an audit this week and we had over 70 checks on the system that needed countersigning but we lacked the information to do so. It took me 3 days to clear the majority of these. If you are not confident using the DBS system then please do not do so until you have undertaken your PSO induction training or sought help from Leonie. We fully appreciate that you need support to do this skilled role and we want to ensure you have the support you need to carry it out with confidence. Please do utilise the support offered through our PSO training, forums and access the resources available on the website and shared via our newsletters to help you.

Finally, please note that we are now only going to ask for a confidential declaration for initial DBS checks. We will no longer be asking for these for renewals. This is in order to try and speed this process up.

Staff availability over the summer

Please note that whilst we continue to provide support over the summer holidays there will be periods where we are quite short. I will be away from 9 August until 28 August, however, Joanne Austin will be around to take any referrals or provide you with advice. As mentioned last month our Safeguarding Training will pause for August to enable our trainers to get ready for the newly developed leadership training starting in September. To support this, we have applied to be the first to go live with a new administrative process whereby you can book onto training using the online training portal rather than Eventbrite. This will then be able to store your in-person training alongside your online learning content. We hope this will make it easier to book but also easier to administer training. We will let you know when this is ready to go live hopefully sometime in August.

Training success for Bath and Wells

I just wanted to celebrate the news that we have the highest training completion rates in the south west region and some of the highest training completion rates in the country here in Bath and Wells. Additionally, I have been informed that comparatively to other organisations our numbers are extremely high. We are second in the country for safer recruitment and the highest for Awareness of Domestic Abuse.

* Basic – 5985
* Foundation – 2923
* Domestic Abuse – 696
* Safer recruitment – 290

We have also now completed over 1000 Leadership courses over the past two years again one of the highest nationally. Whilst there is still much to do (we are only 50% there with Leadership) this is something for us all to be very proud of. I would like to thank you all for taking the time to train in safeguarding and for making us stand out as a diocese with real commitment to learning and improving practice.

# Out of hours cover

Another reminder that The Diocese of Bath & Wells partners with thirtyone:eight in relation to accessing the safeguarding Helpline on 0303 003 1111 during out of hours (which operates 5pm - midnight on Mon-Fri;  7am - midnight on Sat and Sun), on bank holidays and other absences. This service is being chronically under used in comparison to the high volume of out of hours calls I used to receive. thirtyone:eight are a Christian safeguarding organisation and work closely with many dioceses. They offer the same advice that we would give and should be your first point of contact out of hours.

# Parish Safeguarding Officer Forum

**Our next forum will be on Wednesday, 12th July at 4pm**

**Join Zoom Meeting**

<https://zoom.us/j/95668026724?pwd=azNYVEhHOVFtNmRoK2FCL05xSnRFZz09>

**Meeting ID: 956 6802 6724**

**Passcode: 070110**

**Safeguarding posters**

**We have a number of safeguarding posters and dashboard leaflets left over from the Clergy Day last week. If you would like one, please drop into the safeguarding office in Flourish House.**

**Celebration of Lay Ministry**

Each year we come together to celebrate all the gifts people share in their communities, churches and contexts. This year the Celebration of Lay Ministries takes place on Saturday 15 July from 1pm, St. James’ Church, Taunton.

This is a great opportunity to share in the successes of the last year and be recognised for the hard work you do as Parish Safeguarding Officers. For more information and bookings visit the [Celebration of Lay Ministries page on the diocesan website.](https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/calendar/662)

Independent Safeguarding Board – Statement by Bishop Michael

[Independent Safeguarding Board: Bishop Michael response - Bath and Wells Diocese](https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/independent-safeguarding-board-bishop-michael-response.php)

If anyone has been impacted by the news regarding the Independent Safeguarding Board please get in touch with us so that we can support you.

Survivor Strategy

We hope to be in a position by the end of the summer to announce our new approach to supporting survivors from within our diocese. I have been working hard over the last year in this area to develop an approach that people can feel confident in and that can be effective in offering independent advocacy and support. I have been in discussions with a range of survivors, survivor groups and charities and we are working with our preferred organisation to develop a Service Level Agreement for 2024. I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to the survivors who have shown courage and a desire to improve our work and hope that this new approach will reflect their input well.

**Ben Goodhind**

Diocesan Safeguarding Manager

Diocese of Bath and Wells

Diocese of Bath and Wells – Safeguarding team

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