



Safeguarding Newsletter



Dear all,
As we approach another Christmas, I wish you and your family a peaceful and memorable time. We also pray for those for whom Christmas is a struggle.

In this month's newsletter we have lots of updates and events to share with you.

Ben

Christmas opening times

A reminder that, as with previous years, Flourish House will be closed from Christmas Day until 2 January 2026. Out of hours cover arrangements with the 31:8 helpline will be in place during this period. Please note the safeguarding department will be open as usual before and after these dates.

New appointments

Following recommendations from the recent independent audit the following new appointments have been made to the Safeguarding team.

Jake Lent, has been appointed as Parish Safeguarding Support Officer focusing on support for parishes. Jake will help set up new PSOs, support safeguarding administration with 31:8, dashboards, and hubs, and support parishes that have a PSO and/or incumbent vacancy.

Jake will also support the wider diocesan safeguarding work through the Deanery Reviews. This will enable the team to respond more effectively to the individual needs of parishes.

Julie Davies, has become a permanent caseworker. Julie joined the diocese in February on a temporary contract. She will work four days a week.

Richard Brown has been retained for one day a week as a caseworker, he will also support the Safeguarding team with quality assurance work on a casual basis.

Parish Safeguarding Handbook update

The Parish Safeguarding Handbook has now been withdrawn from use by the National Safeguarding Team and is no longer official guidance. The Handbook will gradually be replaced by an online 'Toolkit'. This is currently being developed by the National Safeguarding Team and will be rolled out gradually over the coming months. As the new 'Toolkit' has not been fully developed just yet, please refer to the [C of E online Safeguarding E-manual](#), your [Safeguarding Dashboard](#), and the [diocesan Website](#) for all current guidance and resources. We realise that the timing of this withdrawal without a complete replacement is not ideal. If you do need additional support, please contact the team at safe.guarding@bathwells.anglican.org.

PSO Forums

More frequent PSO forums with bite-sized training on a number of topics are being planned. The next is on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and safeguarding with Ben and Dr Aisling Tierney from Bristol University. Aisling is a research specialist in AI.

Thursday 22 January 2026 13:00 – 14:30 Artificial Intelligence and Safeguarding. [To reserve a place please book tickets on Eventbrite](#)

The Safeguarding team is developing other areas of training which they will deliver in this format. These include modern slavery, misogyny and sport (the risk to girls), SEND and safeguarding. Information about these courses and

the dates planned will be available soon. Please get in touch with the team if you have suggestions of topics which you would like them to cover

Further training for PSOs in 2026

Suicide prevention

Somerset Public Health is providing free suicide prevention courses which are delivered online by Every Life Matters. One hour and half day courses are available for those living or working in Somerset.

Dates and timings can be found on the Eventbrite page: [Every Life Matters Somerset by Every Life Matters - Somerset | Eventbrite](#). There are a few places available in the next few months. Please be aware this course will discuss difficult subjects around suicide, so this training may not be suitable for everyone.

Domestic abuse awareness

In-person and online domestic abuse awareness training is being planned for late January or February. The in-person training will take place at Flourish House, Wells and will prioritise those who struggle with online content or feel they need more specialised support. Dates will be announced soon.

Reference group training

Exeter Diocese, in partnership with Circles of Support and Accountability, are piloting training for those involved in safeguarding reference groups which manage safety plans for those who pose a risk in the church. This pilot takes place at the end of January. The aim is then to roll it out across the South West online. Updates will be available on the safeguarding channels.

Training Library

Over the next few years the Safeguarding team plan to develop a library of training resources. This will include recorded online training sessions, access to external courses and practical tools to help manage areas of concern confidently. Once it has been developed the Training Library will be available to everyone on the safeguarding training pages of the diocesan website.

Dashboard and Hub updates

More than 95% of parish safeguarding dashboards in Bath and Wells now have an owner. There has been a big increase in both usage and compliance on the dashboards with more than half those active showing they are over 50% compliant with their safeguarding requirements.

The Safeguarding team would like to thank dashboard owners who are engaging with this tool and evidencing the hard work put in to keep their parishes safe.

A gentle reminder to all parishes that use of the dashboard is mandatory. If you need help with the system please get in touch with the Safeguarding team. Further information can also be found on safeguarding pages of the diocesan website: [Parish Safeguarding Dashboards - Bath and Wells Diocese](#).

From 2026, dashboard lights will only be updated once a year in early January. (If an urgent update is required by General Synod this information will be shared as soon as possible with dashboard owners.)

The changes are based on feedback from PSOs in Bath and Wells and others nationally. The dashboard team hope it will help dashboard users manage updates more easily and give them more time to respond to changes.

Planned updates for 2026 can be found here: [Dashboard changes - January 2026 - Safeguarding Dashboards](#)

- The Dashboard will soon be able to link with the Hub for parishes using both systems. This integration means that certain fields will update automatically, reducing the need to enter the same information in multiple places. More details about these developments will be shared as they are rolled out.
- From Spring next year, the Hub will be able to send out DBS invitations that are linked with the 31:8 portal. Linking these systems means that when DBS checks are returned, there will be no need to input the results/information for clear checks. The ClearlySimpler team is also working to link the Training Portal with the Hub. They hope this will go live in late 2026. Further information and training will be provided as these developments are rolled out.

If you have any questions about the Safeguarding Dashboard or would like to learn more about the Hub (a place to keep track of volunteer DBS and training records) please contact Jake at safe.guarding@bathwells.anglican.org.

Additional guidance on PCC safeguarding responsibilities

A reminder that the PCC is the body responsible for safeguarding in the parish. The PCC are legally required to ensure that their safeguarding practices and process are compliant with current Church of England codes and guidance.

This is set out in the [Safeguarding \(Code of Practice\) Measure 2021](#) and under section 5 of the [Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure 2016](#). It is important to ensure that as a PCC you follow safer recruitment guidance when adding volunteers to the PCC and that any appointments are conditional on completing the relevant DBS check and safeguarding training.

2026 Year of action on domestic abuse

All parishes, chaplains and Wells Cathedral are being asked to consider 2026 as a year of action on domestic abuse. This will be undertaken in partnership with the Mothers Union which celebrates its 150 anniversary in 2026.

There are several ways you can get involved.

1. Sign up to and actively promote [the Mothers Union 'Rise Up' campaign](#)
2. Ask your PCC and volunteers to undertake domestic abuse awareness training.
3. Pray for victims of domestic abuse.
4. Engage with diocesan wide events.
5. Show your support for victims in your parish communications.
6. Engage with the upcoming podcast planned for the new year. (More details on this to follow).

The Safeguarding team are currently working with the Mothers Union, the National Safeguarding Team and local specialists to develop an exhibition on domestic abuse that can be sent on tour. Any parishes who would like to will have the opportunity to display it locally. Updates on this will be shared on the diocesan website, on social media and in future newsletters.

Wells Cathedral

The diocesan Safeguarding team also provides safeguarding services to Wells Cathedral and Wells Cathedral School choristers.



From January specialist Cathedral Safeguarding Adviser, Jill Edmunds will be working at the Cathedral.

Jill will work under Ben's supervision but will be employed by Wells Cathedral.

Trauma Foundation South West refugee trauma therapy, training and therapeutic support

The SARI network is offering support for individuals, staff and volunteers through trauma-informed training and therapeutic supervision to strengthen resilience, deepen understanding, and improve the support offered to people affected by trauma. This training may be helpful to those who support refugees in their area. All training courses are available online as part of a national programme. [Find out more.](#)



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