 Wednesday 1st December 2021

**“Safeguarding Christmas Update”**

Dear all,

I promised myself I would write to you once a month so we can stay connected, get to know each other, and I can update you on all things safeguarding. I also promised I would not send you too much information as I know how busy everyone is and how frustrating long emails are. This month I will have to cheat a little bit as I have three areas I want to discuss, so I will call these, three briefings for the price of one. Please feel free to read them all or pick out the bits that may be of interest to you.

Firstly, I would like to discuss the Christmas arrangements for safeguarding, what our working schedule will be during the Christmas period and what this means for our work. (Page 2-3) Secondly, since I started in post, I have talked with lots of PSO’s, clergy and PCC members and would like to discuss the feedback and comments I have received. The Diocesan Safeguarding Panel evaluates our work and as such feedback should form part of that evaluation, so I have created a new section for feedback at the start of the panel under matters arising. (Page 4-5)

Finally, I would like to offer a little insight on domestic abuse and encourage everyone to give some thought to this during Christmas which is often a time of high-risk. I have also provided some resources for you if you wish to use them or have them to hand in case, they become useful later. This is just to support you not a mandatory request of any sort. (Page 6-8)

Best wishes and Happy Christmas

Ben

Ben Goodhind

Diocesan Safeguarding Manager

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1. **Christmas and Cover Arrangements**

May I be one of the first to wish you all a happy Advent and Christmas. I love Christmas and especially the vast array of traditions we all observe that tell us a lot about ourselves and our heritage. Christmas in the Goodhind household is a very confusing time. My wife was born in Italy to a German mother and English father. We are Catholic, and there are devout atheists, Lutherans, Methodists, and Anglicans in our families. As such, Christmas for our young children has become a long list of various religious and cultural phenomenon climbing down our chimney (we don’t actually have one) to deliver gifts.

St Nicholas is the first to arrive on the evening of December 5th. This fifth century Bishop from what is now Turkey and is often celebrated as a catholic saint of children, comes down our non-chimney to leave chocolate in the children’s shoes. I have tried leaving out extra tall wellington boots but sadly he sees through this every year. Then Christmas Eve arrives when Christkindl (Christ-Child) originally a Lutheran concept comes down our non-chimney in the afternoon and leaves presents. We sing German carols at my German Mother-in-Law’s house in Nailsea and have a happy evening. Midnight Mass on a good year brings more carols, this time in English, and is followed by a third trip down our non-chimney by Father Christmas. By the end of that day the children must be thoroughly confused.

So, we all have our traditions. Maybe not as complex or confusing as mine but the message is always one of love, of kindness, of giving and of wanting to see the people we care about happy. That for me is also the message of safeguarding; caring for each other, loving our fellow man, keeping each other happy and safe. However, Christmas is not a happy time for everyone, it’s often a time when people miss loved ones, feel lonely or are vulnerable to people who may wish them harm or want to exploit them. It is such a busy time for our churches and our clergy and indeed our arish safeguarding officers. At Christmas our statutory services are often very stretched with high rates of domestic abuse, substance misuse and self-harm reported.

As such I have attached the following useful numbers for you especially due to the limited availability of staff during Christmas.

* **National Domestic Abuse Helpline**: 0808 2000 247 (lines free and open 24 hours). Phone if you are experiencing domestic abuse.
* **Safeguarding Adult Concerns** [Contact Us – Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board (safeguardingsomerset.org.uk)](https://ssab.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/contact-us/)
* **Safeguarding Children Concerns** [Useful Contacts and Links – SSCP (safeguardingsomerset.org.uk)](https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/information-for-children-and-young-people/useful-contacts/)
* **Mental Health Crisis** – (Somerset Mind line) 08001381692(freephone) 01823276892 (local)
* [**Samaritans Helpline**](https://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you/contact-us): 116 123 (open 24 hours). Phone if you feel you are struggling to cope and need someone to talk to.
* **National Rape Crisis Helpline**:0808 802 9999 and is open every day from 12-2.30pm and 7-9.30pm.
* [**The Survivors Trust**](https://thesurvivorstrust.eu.rit.org.uk/contact): 0808 801 0818 and is open Monday to Wednesday 10-7.30pm, Thursday 10-6pm and Friday 10-2pm.
* **LGBT+ Domestic Abuse Helpline**: 0800 999 5428 [help@galop.org.uk](mailto:help@galop.org.uk)
* **Men’s Advice Line**: 0808 801 0327 [info@mensadviceline.org.uk](mailto:info@mensadviceline.org.uk)
* **Age UK Advice Line**: 0800 678 1602
* **Action Fraud** - [Contact us | Action Fraud](https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/contact-us)

All our staff finish on December 23rd and return on January 4th. I will be providing a limited voluntary out of hours emergency service during this period and would ask where you need urgent advice to firstly email me at [Ben.Goodhind@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:Ben.Goodhind@bathwells.anglican.org) I will be able to access emails from my phone, however receiving phone calls will be challenging as I may not be in a position to have a confidential phone call as I will be on my own Christmas holiday. It is likely that I will need to call you back as and when I can. The out of hours mobile is 07834 514842 please note this will be an answer phone message service during this time that will be checked once or twice a day.

Wishing you a peaceful and happy Christmas

The Bath and Wells Diocesan Safeguarding Team

**Safeguarding Feedback**

So, I’m about two months into my new role now. I have focused on listening and learning to see what you need from us, how you feel about what we are providing and general ideas and issues.

**Safer Recruitment**

Generally, there is a lot of anxiety about getting this right. We shared a briefing in October which should be helpful for working out when you need to complete DBS checks. Overall, the process which becomes mandatory in January 2022, has been functioning well since 2015. I do appreciate there are a lot of communications about this and other matters and at times it can feel overwhelming. Others and I have been feeding this back and I’m pleased to say that next year the parish dashboards are developing a safer recruitment section that will walk you through the process more easily.

**Training**

I’m really pleased with the positive feedback I’m receiving about the leadership training. It’s clear this is going well, and our trainer Emma is working hard to make it a success. With regard to training, there are two contrasting themes in the feedback we have had. Some view it as a chance to develop their learning and have appreciated the increased offering. I have really valued the calls and emails of thanks I have had from our learners. Others though have found it too much. There have been many comments suggesting it will put people off becoming parish safeguarding officers.

Please keep the conversation going and help us focus on what you see and hear on the ground. We are doing all we can to condense training and are also looking at delivering some of the online content face to face for those who can’t access the internet. We are also considering providing some bespoke training for non-parish-based roles such as chaplaincy.

**Parish Safeguarding Officer Role**

The PSO role is absolutely vital, it’s particularly helpful to those coming out of prison or who have complex issues in their lives. The support of the Church plays a huge part in helping to reduce the risk of further harm by reducing social isolation which has such an impact on people. I would say from my time working in prisons that the Church has done as much as anyone to help rehabilitate dangerous people and I’m so proud of the examples of good practice I have observed since my arrival. I appreciate it is often difficult for us to celebrate the work we do in a public sense, but you do an amazing and impactful role.

We need to always remain vigilant however, and we need to have an awareness of risk in a range of areas which is why the training is crucial. I really do appreciate that it’s a massive ask of volunteers and we will keep doing all we can to keep time commitments to a minimum. It’s a balance between wanting to support you with additional learning and not overburdening you. Generally, I have been blown away by the skills and values of our Parish Safeguarding Teams. People with such a range of backgrounds and skills. I wish I could have had you in my public protection teams over the past few decades. It is clear people are desperate to do the right thing for the right reasons and at times people feel insecure because of this. What I will say is that almost without exception the calls I receive are from people doing exactly the right thing with courage, kindness, and sincerity. You will never be made to feel bad for calling me or my team, we will always support you.

For those feeling overwhelmed I really want to push the parish dashboards <https://www.parishdashboards.org.uk/> as these walk you through everything you need to do. At present we have around 33% of you engaged with these (around the national average). We need everyone signed up as this will support your work and increase your confidence. If you are unsure how to make a start please visit this site, it tells you everything you need to know and provides videos too. [Safeguarding Dashboards](https://www.safeguardingdashboards.org.uk/)

Thank you all so much for all you do and also for the fact that since I joined, I have found so much happiness in my work, which is down to this fantastic community. It really is something to celebrate and be thankful for.

Ben

3. **Domestic Violence**

As we are currently in the period of the 16 days of action against domestic violence it would be amiss of me not to raise the issue as part of this briefing. [NHS England » Your silence is their greatest weapon: 16 days of action against domestic abuse](https://www.england.nhs.uk/blog/your-silence-is-their-greatest-weapon-16-days-of-action-against-domestic-abuse/). Due to the high-profile nature of child abuse it can become the dominant focus of safeguarding and often mean other important issues lack the same focus. For us as a safeguarding team most calls, we receive are in relation to family concerns, including domestic violence.

During December, most families are preparing for the most joyous time of the year. However, for some, the festive period is the time of year that they dread the most. It is reported that approximately 900,000 children witness domestic violence every year and this statistic is particularly high during Christmas time. Childline states a child will contact them every 25 seconds during the Christmas period after witnessing domestic abuse in their household. The increase in this could be due to various different factors. The most prominent to note is that more people are drinking alcohol excessively during Christmas. Although the consumption of alcohol is not the cause of domestic violence, it can exacerbate the chances of a perpetrator abusing their victim. Due to alcohol increasing irrational thoughts, it in turn can increase an individual’s anxiety and depressive thoughts. This consequently can increase the severity and frequency of domestic violence being committed.

The excessive consumption of alcohol combined with the financial pressure the festive season brings, will exert an additional burden on any relationship. This burden is severely increased in a relationship that is impacted by domestic abuse. In addition, in the current COVID-19 circumstances, these emotions are even more heightened with up to 20% of all police calls related to domestic violence.

During the festive period we are asking our church communities to reflect on relationships and to be vigilant of concerns. It may be that you are supporting someone who is concerned about their own actions, or you have your own concerns. A useful task is to talk through the different types of negative traits within a relationship to help them identify what they need to work on and to have some ideas of how to replace that trait. As a help I have attached The Power and Control Wheel and Equality Wheel. This was created by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP) in 1984 to both help victims of domestic violence and to educate abusive men. Through focus groups with survivors, they developed a wheel outlining the most common tactics of abusive partners. The wheel doesn’t imply these experiences happen in a certain order, but rather, in combination. They denote a pattern of power and control, the two facets that hold the wheel together at its center. It also useful for learning about the different types of abuse.

If anyone is interested in this area, I’m more than happy to support as it’s a keen interest of mine professionally. As always supporting you all the way.

Ben

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