



# Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults: Policy and Procedure

March 12<sup>th</sup> 2025

# The Benefice of Creech St. Michael, Ruishton and Thornfalcon

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## Safeguarding Policy

### Introduction

Throughout this policy:

- The term 'Benefice' is used to denote the three churches of Creech St. Michael, Ruishton & Thornfalcon jointly, plus the incumbent.
- The term 'Parish' is used to denote an individual PCC plus the incumbent, who together are responsible for ensuring that safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented.

The Benefice takes seriously its responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. It fully accepts and endorses the Children Act 1989 & 2004 and the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

This Policy and Procedure applies to all who have received the Bishop's Licence or Permission and all others who work with children, young people and vulnerable adults in our Benefice.

For the purposes of this document a child is anyone under the age of eighteen years.

**1. Policy Statement** (this policy is to be read alongside the Church of England's 'Code of Safe Working Practice' [code-of-safer-working-practice-02.07.2021.pdf](#))

- The Benefice is committed to:
  - respectful pastoral care for all to whom we minister;
  - the safeguarding of people who may be vulnerable, ensuring their well-being in the life of the Benefice;
  - promoting safe practice by those in positions of trust;
  - promoting the inclusion and empowerment of people who may be vulnerable;
  - supporting, resourcing, training and regularly reviewing those who undertake work amongst people who may be vulnerable.
- The Benefice will:
  - undertake to exercise proper care in the appointment and selection of those who will work with people who may be vulnerable.
  - appoint a Safeguarding Officer to work with the Incumbent on safeguarding matters. The parishes will each appoint a safeguarding representative to liaise with the Safeguarding Officer and Incumbent on behalf of their PCCs.
  - ensure that all those whose work brings them into regular contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults are safely recruited, following the Benefice *Safer Recruitment Policy*.
  - agree to follow the Practice Guidance from the House of Bishops on safeguarding matters, and to adopt the Diocese of Bath and Wells Safeguarding Policies. (see website link on page 10).
- Parishes will have adequate insurance cover in place.

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- It is the responsibility of individuals to prevent the physical, emotional, sexual, financial and spiritual abuse of vulnerable people and to report any abuse that is discovered or suspected.
- Each person who works with children, young adults and vulnerable people will agree to abide by the guidelines established by the Benefice.

## **The Benefice recognises that:**

- the welfare of the child, young person or vulnerable adult is paramount.
- everyone has different levels of vulnerability, and each of us may be regarded as vulnerable at some time in our lives.
- all children and adults who may be vulnerable (regardless of age, disability, gender, racial heritage, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity) have the right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse.
- working in partnership with children, their parents, adults who may be vulnerable, their carers and other agencies is essential in promoting their welfare.

## **The Benefice will develop a safeguarding culture that:**

- enables and encourages concerns to be raised and responded to openly and consistently and protects children and adults who may be vulnerable from actual or potential harm.
- is child-friendly and ensures that all people feel welcomed, respected and safe from abuse.
- values, listens to and respects children and adults who may be vulnerable, encouraging them to be active contributors to the Benefice community.

## **When concerns are raised the Benefice will:**

- respond without delay to every concern raised that a child or adult who may be vulnerable may have been harmed, or may be at risk from harm, through abuse, harassment or bullying; or about the behaviour of an adult or child.
- work with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and the appropriate statutory bodies during an investigation into abuse, including when allegations are made against a member of the Benefice community.
- challenge any abuse of power especially by anyone in a position of trust.

## **If abuse has occurred, the Benefice will ensure, in partnership with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and other agencies, that:**

- informed and appropriate pastoral care is offered to any child, young person or adult who has suffered abuse, including support to make a complaint if so desired.
- supervision is provided for any member of our Benefice community known to have offended against a child or vulnerable adult, or to pose a risk to them.

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- appropriate pastoral care is offered to any member of our Benefice community against whom an allegation is made.

## **In all recruitment and selection, the Benefice will:**

- ensure careful selection of ordained and lay ministers, voluntary and paid workers with children, young people and adults in line with safer recruitment principles and checks following the Benefice *Safer Recruitment Policy*.
- provide supervision, support and training after appointment.
- commit ourselves to support, resource, train and regularly review, those who undertake work amongst people who may be vulnerable.

## **In our publicity the Benefice will:**

- share information about good safeguarding practice with children, parents and adults who may be vulnerable, their carers, and all those working with them.

## **2 Responding to a child or adult who may be disclosing abuse**

### **The Benefice will endeavour to:**

- Listen carefully, take the child or vulnerable adult seriously.
- Tell the child s/he has done the right thing by telling.
- Clarify if necessary.
- Say, if we can, what we will do next.
- Make an accurate record as soon as possible.

### **The Benefice will not:**

- Promise confidentiality.
- Investigate.
- Ask leading questions.
- Repeatedly question/ask the child or adult to repeat the disclosure over and over.

### **Imminent risk**

If a situation is encountered where the child or adult is in imminent danger, the Benefice will act immediately to secure their safety. The Benefice will seek the assistance of the police and then make a referral to Local Authority Social Care in accordance with the Child and Adult Protection Procedure below. If a child or adult needs emergency medical attention, this will be sought immediately and directly from the emergency services. The Benefice will keep parents, if available, fully informed.

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## 3 Child and Adult Protection Procedure

**The following procedure will be followed where there is concern that a child or vulnerable adult has been harmed as a result of abuse and urgent action is needed**

- If a child or adult who may be vulnerable needs immediate medical help, call emergency services, and ensure that ambulance and hospital staff are informed of any protection concerns. If it would be dangerous for the child or adult who may be vulnerable to return home, or he or she does not want to return home and you are sufficiently concerned for their safety, contact the emergency social care service or the police. If a child or adult who may be vulnerable is observed being harmed by someone other than a family member, or you believe they are at risk of harm from someone other than a family member, the parents or carers should be informed immediately, so that an appropriate referral to the police or social care can be made.
- If there is concern that a child or vulnerable adult is at risk of harm, the Benefice Safeguarding Officer or Incumbent should be informed who will take advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer (DSO) or Local Authority Social Care. If the incumbent is implicated, the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer must be informed.
- If there is concern that a child or vulnerable adult has been harmed, inform the Benefice Safeguarding Officer, Incumbent or DSO and agree who will make the referral to Local Authority Social Care team. If no-one is available contact the Somerset Social Care Team or Police directly.
- The child and family or adult should, wherever possible, be informed about and consent to the referral unless this would put the welfare of the child or vital interests of the adult who may be vulnerable, or another person at further risk. If there are serious concerns, the absence of consent should not prevent a referral. The Duty Social Worker will give advice about this if necessary.
- Further discussions with the social work team or the police investigation team may be required. Say if you do not want your details disclosed to the family.
- For contact details of the appropriate authorities to whom concerns should be reported see Section 4 below
- Consult with the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer at any point in this process but in any case, always ensure the DSO is informed of the concern and actions taken.

Do not delay your referral. Clergy and Diocesan Officers are NOT authorised to investigate any allegations and must never attempt to do so. Only the Police and the Local Authorities are granted such powers in law.

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## 4 Who to contact where there is concern about a child or adult

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & VULNERABLE ADULTS	Contact Numbers
Somerset Children's Services Referral and Assessment	0300 123 2224 childrens@somerset.gov.uk
Somerset Adult Social Care	0300 123 2224 adults@somerset.gov.uk
Out of hours contact children & adults	0300 123 23 27
POLICE	101

**Local Safeguarding Children Partnership** <https://sscb.safeguardingsomerset.org.uk/>

**Adult Social Care:** <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/adult-social-care/safeguarding>

Childline	0800 1111 Email via <a href="http://www.childline.org.uk">www.childline.org.uk</a>
NSPCC National Helpline	<a href="mailto:help@NSPCC.org.uk">help@NSPCC.org.uk</a> (Telephone helpline currently unavailable)

For detailed advice on making a referral relating to the suspected abuse of children see the following website [http://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/somerset/p\\_report\\_concerns.html](http://www.proceduresonline.com/swcpp/somerset/p_report_concerns.html)

Alternatively call ChildLine for advice.

For detailed advice on making a referral relating to the suspected abuse of vulnerable adults see the following website <http://www.scie.org.uk/adults/safeguarding/>

**DIOCESAN SAFEGUARDING MANAGER:** Tel. 01749 588917  
Email: [ben.goodhind@bathwells.anglican.org](mailto:ben.goodhind@bathwells.anglican.org)

**DIOCESE OUT OF HOURS HELPLINE** via thirtyone:eight Tel. 0303 003 1111

The Diocese of Bath and Wells partners with thirtyone:eight in relation to accessing the Safeguarding Helpline out of hours. It operates 5pm to midnight Monday to Friday, 7am to midnight on Saturday and Sunday, on bank holidays and other absences. During the above-mentioned instances, you are advised to contact thirtyone:eight's Safeguarding Helpline for emergency safeguarding queries. An Information Sharing Agreement between the two organisations will allow for the Diocese to receive a copy of the advice thirtyone:eight may offer the parish church/caller, so that appropriate follow up and support can be offered to the caller/situation, on the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor's return to the office.

## 5 Safeguarding children and adults training

The Benefice will make every effort to ensure that clergy, licensed workers and lay ministers, volunteers and employees working with children and vulnerable adults regularly seek and obtain safeguarding training appropriate to the level of their responsibility.

## 6 Safe Recruitment

Recruitment of volunteers and paid staff will follow the processes and procedures set out in the Benefice *Safer Recruitment Policy*.

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## **7 Those who pose a risk to children**

When it is known that a member of the congregation, or someone wishing to join the congregation, has sexually abused a child or young person, or is not a sexual offender against children but nevertheless may pose a risk, the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer will be consulted, so that a safe course of action in accordance with recommended Church of England procedure can be pursued in conjunction with the relevant statutory agencies.

## **8 Care of Survivors of abuse and their families**

The Benefice will seek to work with anyone who has suffered abuse, developing with them an appropriate ministry of informed pastoral care.

## **9 Record Keeping and Storage**

Notes will be made of all safeguarding incidents. They will be treated confidentially and will be securely stored by the incumbent and the Safeguarding Officer. They will be retained even if the information received was judged to be malicious, unsubstantiated or unfounded. During an interregnum, the Safeguarding Officer will be responsible for all safeguarding records which will be passed to the incoming incumbent.

## **10 Safe Practice with children**

The Benefice will ensure that work with children is carried out in a safe environment as follows:

- The ratio of leaders to children will comply with the Children Act 1989.
- Each group will have a minimum of two adults and a gender balance will be maintained if possible.
- Adults will not work alone with children.
- Meeting places will be risk-assessed for safety, security and suitability for purpose.
- There will be clear about boundaries with regard to touching always related to the child's needs and normally initiated by the child.
- Parental/guardian permission for attendance at groups, trips, use of images and transporting children in private cars will be obtained.
- All those who drive children on Parish/Benefice-organized activities will have held a full driving licence for over two years which must be "clean" i.e., with no current points.
- All cars that carry children will be comprehensively insured for both private and business use. The insured person should make sure that their insurance covers the giving of lifts relating to Parish/Benefice-sponsored activities.

## **11 Unaccompanied Children**

If children attend our Benefice services or events without their parents' or carers' knowledge they will be welcomed and attempts made to establish whether their parents are aware of where they are. Where possible an adult recruited for work with children will take care of the child and attempts made to discover when they are due home and encourage them to keep to that arrangement. Depending on the age and competence of the child, the parents will be contacted or ask the young person asked to contact them to gain their parents' consent to them to remain. If a child attends regularly, regular contact with the parents or carers will be established where possible.



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## 12 Bell Ringing

Where any member of the bell-ringing team is under 18 or a vulnerable adult, the Parishes will safely recruit tower captains and others who are likely to be in charge of ringing at any time in accordance with the Benefice *Safer Recruitment Policy*. All Tower Captains and ringers are expected to abide by the Child Protection policy of the Central Council for Bell Ringers. In particular, no adults will work alone with children and young people, at least one adult should be in calling distance at all times and instruction should be given with minimum physical contact.

## 13 Organizations hiring Parish Buildings or Premises

In relation to all activities and events which are not run directly by the Parish/Benefice but which take place in Parish/Benefice buildings or grounds, the responsibility for implementing safeguarding policies rests with the hiring organisation and not with Parish/Benefice. However, PCCs need to take reasonable steps to ensure that safeguarding policies and procedures are being practised by the hiring organisation. PCCs will require visiting groups to ensure that children and vulnerable adults are protected at all times, follow safe recruitment procedures, and are aware of health and safety issues in the building. Visiting groups will be required to sign a hire agreement and abide by the Benefice *Safeguarding Policy*. Please refer to the resources page on the Church of England website for a model agreement (see website link on page 10).

## 14 Use of photographs and video recordings of children, young adults and vulnerable adults

The Benefice will follow the guidelines, set out in Appendix A of this policy, on the use of photographs and video recordings of children, young people and vulnerable adults.

## 15 Social Media and Engaging with Young People

The parishes have adopted the Church of England's guidelines for the use of social media and have agreed to abide by the Church of England Digital Charter. Full details may be found in the Benefice *Social Media Policy*.

Specific requirements when communicating with children, young adults and vulnerable adults are as follows:

### E-mails on-line chat and texting

- Parental agreement should be obtained before communicating with young people.
- Language should be clear and unambiguous.
- All conversations must be made available for viewing by a worker's/volunteer's team leader.
- Workers/volunteers may provide advice and support, but avoid counselling.

### Mobile Phones

- If the role requires, workers/volunteers will be allocated a dedicated work phone.
- Only group texts should be used wherever possible.
- There should be an agreed length of time for conversations and a curfew e.g., no communication between 10pm and 7am.
- Conversations causing concern should be saved and passed to supervisor/team leader.
- Photos should only be taken in accordance with the guidance set out in Appendix A of this policy.

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## 16 Personnel with responsibility for safeguarding

Incumbent:		Revd. Lee Mullen	
Benefice Safeguarding Officer:		Liz Evans	
Pastoral Care Leader:		Revd. Lee Mullen	
	Creech St. Michael	Ruishton	Thornfalcon
Churchwarden(s):	Maggie Savage	Bridget Dickinson	Ian Small Bob Pamplin
Parish Safeguarding representative:	Liz Evans	Sonia Tucker	Bob Pamplin

### POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually by the PCC in each Parish, unless changes in Diocesan or Governmental policy require earlier review.

The policy was approved at a meeting of ..... (parish) PCC.

Signed (PCC Chairman).....

Print name .....

Signed (PCC Secretary) .....

Print name .....

Date .....

Church of England website links:

Church of England Safeguarding policy & Guidance

<https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/promoting-safer-church/policy-practice-guidance>

Church of England Templates & resources for good safeguarding practice

<https://www.churchofengland.org/safeguarding/policy-practice-guidance/templates-and-resources>

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## **APPENDIX A: PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEO RECORDINGS OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND VULNERABLE ADULTS GUIDELINES**

The use of images is governed by the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation (2018) which requires that permission must be given for the use of images in the public domain. Thus, an individual/parent/carer must have given explicit permission before any personal details, including photographs and videos, can be published.

The Benefice adheres to the Diocese of Bath and Wells policy and responsibilities for safeguarding and the protection of children, young people and vulnerable adults require that an assessment is made about whether publishing a photograph or video recording in any format might pose a risk to a child, young person or vulnerable adult.

### **Good practice guidelines for photography or video recording at Parish /Benefice events**

- Permission for the photographing or videoing of children should be obtained from parents/carers as part of the registration process for all groups and events.
- Photography or video recording should focus on the activity or on a small group not on a particular child, young person or vulnerable adult.
- If a child, young person or vulnerable adult is named avoid using their photograph or video recording.
- Do not photograph or video record any child, young person or vulnerable adult who has asked not to be photographed or who is under court order (where it is known).
- All children, young people or vulnerable adult must be appropriately dressed when photographed or video recorded.
- All people taking photographs or video recording footage for official use at the event should register with the event organiser.
- All concerns regarding inappropriate behaviour or intrusive photography or video recording should be reported to the event organiser.
- At large events set up photo or video recording opportunities at the end. This allows the performance to go ahead with limited interruption, and allows any child, young person or vulnerable adult to take part in the event but not to be photographed or video recorded.
- If there are children, young people or vulnerable adults at an event for whom a completed consent form has not been obtained, a Notice about Photographs or Video Recording should be put in prominent places or in the event programme and make sure official photographers and video recorders are aware of these guidelines.

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## **Guidance on the use of photographic material in the Benefice, including the internet**

- Photographs and video recordings are 'personal data' as far as data protection legislation is concerned and must be used responsibly in accordance with the Benefice *Data Protection Policy*.
- Obtain specific, and where possible written (see Appendix B), consent from parents, guardians or carers before using photographs or video recordings of children, young people or vulnerable adults on a website or on Facebook.
- Images administered by The Benefice should only be used as follows:
  - in printed form
    - in the Creech, Ruishton & Thornfalcon Parish Magazine
    - on Parish/Benefice display boards
  - in electronic form
    - on the Benefice website, [crtbenefice.org.uk](http://crtbenefice.org.uk),
    - on the Benefice Facebook page: 'Creech Ruishton Thornfalcon Churches'
    - on the Advent Windows Facebook pages:  
AdventWindowsCreechStMichael & AdventWindowsRuishtonunless specific permission has been given by the individuals concerned or their carers for the images to be used for other purposes related to Parish /Benefice activities.
- Children, young people or vulnerable adults should not be identified by name or other personal details. These details include e-mail or postal addresses and telephone numbers.
- When using photographs or video recordings of children, young people or vulnerable adults, it is preferable to use group pictures. When a photograph or video recording of an individual child, young person or vulnerable adult is used, names or other personal details should not be used in any caption.
- Ensure that the image files are appropriately named – do not use names in image filenames or Alt tags.
- Only use images of children, young people or vulnerable adults in suitable dress to reduce the risk of inappropriate use.
- The use of inappropriate images should be reported through the standard procedures (statutory authorities and Diocesan Safeguarding Manager) to reduce the risks to children, young people or vulnerable adults.
- When posting activity ideas for children, young people or vulnerable adults ensure they comply with good safeguarding practice.
- Regularly review the pages of the Benefice website so that it remains up to date, effective and safe.

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## **APPENDIX B: Publicity Consent Form**

The Benefice takes the issue of safeguarding very seriously, and this includes the use of images of children, young people and vulnerable adults. We occasionally include images of children, young people and vulnerable adults in publications and on our website, but we have a duty of care to protect them, minimising the risk of inappropriate contact.

We ask that parents, guardians or carers consent to the Parish /Benefice taking and using photographs or recorded images of children, young people or vulnerable adult. Any use of images in the Benefice is underpinned by our *Safeguarding Policy*. The full name of a child, young person or vulnerable adult will never be included alongside an image.

Please complete, sign and return this form to the Benefice Office, c/o The Rectory, Creech St. Michael.

I consent to photographs or video recording of the person named below, appearing in:

- Benefice printed publications – The Creech, Ruishton & Thornfalcon Parish Magazine ☐
- on Parish /Benefice display boards ☐
- the Benefice website, crtbenefice.org.uk ☐
- Facebook:     'Creech Ruishton Thornfalcon Churches' ☐  
                      'AdventWindowsCreechStMichael'  
                      'AdventWindowsRuishton'

I understand that the images will be used only for Parish /Benefice purposes and that the identity of the person will be protected

Name of child(ren), young person/people or vulnerable adult(s):

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.....

Name of parent, guardian or carer .....

Address .....

Signature .....

Date .....