

Welcome to the March edition of my Connect newsletter, bringing you news from The Children's Society in the South-West.

February was certainly a mixed month for me! As you may know, I caught covid. This was after visiting some friends in London for the weekend. It wiped me out for a week and as I type this, I still haven't regained my full sense of smell and taste and get tired easily. However, that hasn't stopped me getting out and about for an incredibly busy couple of weeks! I ran two thank you events in mid-February for some of our Salisbury Fundraising Group members. I gave an update on our work and we started to think about fundraising in a post covid world. The picture here is of the event that took place in Westbury on 15 February with members of the Warminster and Bratton groups. The next day I headed over to visit the Dorchester Committee, who have raised an amazing £7247.99 this year!



In the last week of February, I attended the Winchester Committee Literary Lunch, spent two days promoting The Children's Society at the Christian Resources Exhibition at Westpoint Arena in Exeter and also attended the Readers Conference at Lee Abbey in Lynton, where we delivered a talk about our work and Jim Davis, Head of Youth Engagement, ran two workshops around the issues facing children and young people in the modern day.



Christingle season has ended, and I'm delighted to tell you that we have raised £362,000 so far across the country. However, this is significantly lower than previous years. Thank you so much for your support over what has still been a difficult Christingle season. We're currently reviewing our Christingle offer and will be starting to think about the 2022 season in April.

On a final note, I just wanted to let you know that I'm using up my remaining annual leave over the next month and will be out of the office on the 2nd, 4th, 10th, 11th, 14th, 17th, 21st, 24th, 25th & 31st March. I will respond to your email on the days I'm in the office, but should you have any urgent enquiries, please contact our Supporter Care Team on supportercare@childrenssociety.org.uk or call 0300 303 7000.


Thank you for all you do to overturn the damaging decline in children's mental health and well-being, creating a path for long-lasting growth.


Jess

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Thank you.

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Campaigns

The Children's Society has been campaigning for years on a variety of issues. In fact, 4.4 million children and young people benefited in changes in the law that we fought for last year. Our campaigns can't happen unless we all come together – young people, teachers, students, parents, carers, anyone who wants to stand with us and make a noise about the issues that matter most. You can view our latest campaigns [here](#) and sign-up to receive campaigning news [here](#). Our campaigns are not funded externally but rely on the donations we receive through the church, community, individual giving and major donors. We also have a volunteering role called a Campaigns Champion. As a campaigns champion, you'll do whatever you can to elevate the voices of young people in your area. You might visit local decision makers or organise events to spread the word. You'll be provided with all the training, connections and support you need to help us make real change. To register your interest in this role, please click [here](#).



Prevention Programme

I caught up with Jackie Thomas, South-West Prevention Officer, to find out what she's been working on:

- The #LookCloser campaign running from 7-20 March (more details overleaf)
- Working with the West Midlands Prevention team, (part of the national hospitality TCS working group) to look at themes/hot spots and types of exploitation that children are being targeted for,
- Continuing to develop a programme of learning for virtual and face to face delivery on 'Reachable moments' across the South-West within the health sector.
- Working with 'Early intervention' teams across the region to look at 'Missing children' and return home interviews. How can we improve the responses on engagement with children and young people? This has translated into delivery of TCS 'Missing tool workshops (April – June) across the region.
- Safeguarding boards SW – picking up on exploitation strategies and the changing landscape of how we mitigate these. For example, the new launch of Facebook's 'metaverse' and the implications of this. Gaming applications are still arenas were perpetrators groom and exploit children online.
- Creating a safeguarding strategy for large self-catering accommodation provider nationally and predominantly in the Southwest, to ensure all staff teams area aware of the signs to look for.
- Meeting with organisations who support and work with children from under-represented communities and UASC young people, to see what CYP are experiencing and what is in place to support them.

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#LookCloser





This is a national campaign from 7-20 March, raising awareness with the public on the signs of child exploitation and how to report it. More information can be found [here](#). Please share!

Look closer



Exploited young people don't always look and act vulnerable

If something doesn't feel right, it might not be.



Public spaces like bus and train stations, fast food outlets, hotels and roadside services can be where young victims of child exploitation are most visible.


If we all learn to spot the possible signs of a young person being exploited, we can all help to keep them safe and stop this abuse from happening.

Please take a few minutes to learn a little about child exploitation and what to do if you are concerned about a young person or group of young people you see.

#LookCloser Don't wait. Report it.

Young people who have been exploited or abused:

- Don't always look vulnerable
- Don't always act like victims
- May not understand they are being exploited
- May have a distrust of police/adults in authority
- May appear angry or aggressive; these are common signs of trauma
- Can feel scared about what might happen to them next
- Need to feel safe and heard, so that they feel comfortable talking about what might be happening to them



Young people can be exploited anywhere. These are some of the common sites where you may be able to spot the signs:

Public transport: Trains, trams, coaches and buses are all used by organised crime groups to transport children for exploitation. 

Petrol/service stations: Young people who are being exploited may stop at service and petrol stations to use the bathroom or get food.

Car washes: Young people trafficked into the country are sometimes made to work in this setting.

Fast food outlets, cafés and shopping centres: These popular youth spaces provide affordable food and access to wi-fi. Some outlets are open 24 hours a day. Perpetrators sometimes take advantage of this.

Hotels/private lets: Perpetrators often use hotel rooms or private lets to sexually abuse and criminally exploit young people. They can also be used as a base by organised crime groups to store, prepare and distribute drugs. 

Taxis and ride shares: Taxis and private ride share apps can be used to transport exploited young people.

Hair and beauty salons: Young people trafficked into the country are sometimes made to work and stay in these settings.

If something is worrying you about a young person's behaviour or appearance and it is safe to do so, ask them if they are ok – it could make a difference.

Some ways to start a conversation:

'You look lost. Do you need some help?'

'Hi. Are you alright? Where are you off to today? Where have you travelled from today?'

'I hope you don't mind me saying, but you seem a little upset? Can I help?'



#LookCloser for signs of exploitation or abuse

Is a child or young person:

- Travelling alone, particularly in school hours, late at night or frequently?
- Looking lost or in unfamiliar surroundings?
- Anxious, frightened, angry or displaying other behaviours that make you worried about them?
- In possession of more than one phone?
- Carrying lots of cash?
- Potentially under the influence of drugs or alcohol?
- Being instructed or controlled by another individual?
- Accompanied by individuals who are older than them?
- Seen begging in a public space?



Help us protect children and young people from all forms of exploitation. **Don't wait. Report it:**

If you are concerned about a child and think it's an emergency, dial **999** or if it's not an emergency call **101**.

If you are on a train text British Transport Police on **61016**.

If you would rather remain anonymous, you can contact the independent charity Crimestoppers online or call **0800 555 111**.

childrenssociety.org.uk/lookcloser



Charity Registration No. 221124 © The Children's Society 2021 DEX015b/0421

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Lent and Mothering Sunday

Lent begins on 2 March and Mothering Sunday is on 27 March. At The Children's Society, we have resources for both, which can be viewed on our Flipsnack site [here](#). Both resources include worship and prayer materials and even activities for you to carry out in your church. Some of our speakers will be out and about giving talks at Lent Lunches and the Shaftesbury Committee are holding a 'Give it up to God' event, where they will be asking people to donate to us based on the costs saved by not eating chocolate etc. through Lent. Are you planning any fundraising events for The Children's Society through Lent? If so, I'd love to hear what you're up to so I can include it in my next newsletter.

The Children's Society at CRE

The Christian Resources Exhibition returned to Exeter for the first time in many years and The Children's Society were delighted to be involved. We had a stand across both days, where we spoke to members of the church and the public about our work and shared our resources. I was there both days, supported by Volunteer Speaker, Chris Shepherd, on the Wednesday and Diocesan Ambassador for Exeter, Ann Stevens, on the Thursday. We had conversations with 84 people across the two days who took away lots of our resources.



Chris Shepherd,
Volunteer Speaker



Ann Stevens, Diocesan
Ambassador for Exeter



Ian from [One Way Uk Creative Youth Ministries](#)
with his Christingle
puppet!

Diocesan Ambassadors Needed

A Diocesan Ambassador is an individual who can work collaboratively with senior diocesan staff, clergy and our Volunteers, as well as the staff of The Children's Society, in particular myself. If you, or someone you know, has amazing communication skills and enjoys talking to audiences both large and small, has excellent networking and engagement skills, coupled with a knowledge of the church of England and how diocese and parishes work, then please contact me for a chat and full information pack. I will be here to support you every step of the way and together, we will create a plan of action for your respective diocese. It's a wonderful opportunity and incredibly respected role here at The Children's Society. If you'd like to help the most vulnerable children in the UK by engaging your church networks, then please do get in touch.

We're in need of a Diocesan Ambassador in **Salisbury, Bristol & Truro**.

As well as discovering new opportunities for the church and community to get involved in our work, Diocesan Ambassadors will be key in working with our existing committees, support groups, speakers and Campaign Champions.

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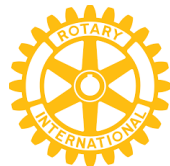
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'Diocesan Ambassadors play a very important part in The Children's Society and knowing about the work done with some of the most vulnerable young people means I've found it one of the most rewarding roles I've played' – Diocesan Ambassador

Check out my **Salisbury Diocesan Ambassador Recruitment video** [here!](#)

Your connections



Do you have any connections with a local Rotary, WI, Freemason, Golf Club etc.? It seems there is huge appetite at the moment for these organisations to book a speaker or look to support financially. It's always better if a connection is made with someone who is already part of the group or knows someone in one of these groups. My plea to you is could you speak to them on my behalf? It would be great if you could mention that we can offer a speaker, either in person or virtually. Maybe ask if they'd consider us as their charity of the year? I'm very happy for you to pass on my details to them, or theirs to me, so I can follow up. Thank you in advance for your support.

Supporter Stories

Winchester Committee Literary Lunch

The Winchester Fundraising Committee held their annual Literary Lunch on Tuesday 22 February. The guest speaker was Andrew Gimson, a British Political journalist, who formerly wrote the parliamentary sketch for The Daily Telegraph and has written a novel



entitled The Desired Effect, as well as books about Boris Johnson, British Monarchs and British Prime Ministers. It was in his capacity as Boris Johnson's Biographer in which he spoke, giving an insightful and humorous talk into his relationship with our PM.

The event was held at Itchen Abbas Village Hall and was packed with attendees, who seemed delighted to come together again after a tumultuous couple of years. Everyone enjoyed a delicious lunch and over £3000 was raised for The Children's Society!

The Winchester Committee have raised a staggering £428,127.10 towards our work since our records began in the 1980's. Having just taken over Community Relationships in the Diocese, I was delighted to be able to attend and give a short update on our work and children's lives in the area and thank everyone for their incredible support.

Please do keep sending me your stories, as it's a delight to be able to share them in my monthly newsletter.

As ever, thank you for your ongoing support. The next issue of Connect will be sent out on Friday 1 April.

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