

On the vine

A Longer Read: A Vision of Prevention

We work closely with a number of Christian charities, including the Children's Society. This piece first appeared in the November edition of Connect - Salisbury & Bristol Diocese Supporters eNews. Our thanks to Relationship Manager Gill Ford for letting us reproduce it here.

Gill Ford caught up with Jackie Thomas, The Children's Society Prevention Officer for the South-West, to find out more about her work.

Please tell us a bit about yourself?

I live in Devon, so I love being by the sea and countryside walks. I took up making bread (not very well) during lockdown and have a full family life.

How long have you been with The Children's Society and what does your role entail?

I have been with The Children's Society since July 2019 working on the Prevention Programme and my role is to reduce the risk of abuse, exploitation, modern day slavery and human trafficking. I also increase awareness, particularly amongst minority groups. We work to have improved identification of risk with appropriate safeguarding and disruption action being taken. We support statutory and voluntary agencies to have an enhanced understanding of exploitation, abuse, modern day slavery and human trafficking and have a greater focus on prevention. (Find out more by clicking [here](#).)

What are you working on here in the South West?

- 1) Working with Gloucestershire Police children's' teams sessions for year 8 pupils about 'online exploitation, and sextortion'. The PCSO's will be delivering this across the 53 schools in the county.
- 2) In neighbouring Wiltshire, I have been working with the police force to roll out an awareness campaign to parents, to help spot the signs of sexual and criminal exploitation and where and how they can access support.
- 3) Across the South West region I am working with school safeguarding leads, foster care organisations and child social services to look at what children are presenting during this lockdown. This includes the virtual delivery of risks and vulnerabilities, peer on peer abuse, modern slavery and human trafficking.
- 4) Several initiatives which are public facing on currently on hold until restrictions lift much further, so hopefully they will take off again in the New Year.

What's the biggest thing you've learnt since being in your role?

To keep in mind the vision of The Children's Society, values and beliefs, and move forward to raise awareness on exploitation across the South West. This can often mean working with challenging topics, and delivering these in a factual but sensitive way.

What's been the biggest challenge?

During Covid 19, being able to adapt quickly and effectively in working remotely, and still deliver meaningful communication and pieces of work.

What's the one thing our supporters could do to support you in your role?

Take a look at the [Prevention Programme](#) on The Children's Society website and the toolkits that are there for everyone to read. This will help supporters to see the role and programme regionally as well as nationally.

If you were PM for the day, what 3 things would you introduce?

If I was PM for the day, I would introduce a day a week for children to be out in nature, make a law for everyone to see the good in all of us, and for people to take away their plastic when they go to the beach.