

Introduction and Background

1. These guidelines are designed to ensure that young people can be fully and safely involved with ringing activities. Ringers are keen that they should reflect the need to cherish and defend the exceptional features of ringing, being one in which young and old meet and take part on an equal footing. This enriches those of all ages who know and respect each other, not only for their abilities as ringers but also as individuals. The guidelines should be viewed as a framework for sensible behaviour. In exceptional circumstances alternative arrangements might be made through full consultation with the young person's parents or guardians and the relevant Diocesan Child Protection Adviser.
2. These guidelines are a working document for Tower Captains. They are not intended to be exhaustive and should be read in the context of Diocesan guidelines, PCC policy, and the Church of England House of Bishops' Policy on Child Abuse *Protecting All God's Children 2004*¹ and equivalent documents from other churches, as well as the Home Office publication *Safe from Harm*.
3. Ringers are urged to absorb these guidelines into the normal way that ringing is organised so as to minimise any fuss being made or any disruption caused.
4. The Children Act 1989 requires that all who work with young people (in voluntary or in paid employment) should keep them safe from harm. 'Children' are defined in the Act as anyone under the age of 18, or anyone who has been assessed as having a mental age of under 18 (vulnerable adults need similar protection from harm). We refer to these as young people in these guidelines.
5. Allegations of abuse will affect not just those claiming they have been abused, but **those who are accused. Ringers all need to protect themselves and each other from such accusations by following good practice.**
6. To protect young people and adults who work with them it is necessary to create an open environment where the possibility of abuse or a false allegation cannot occur.
7. Abuse can be emotional, verbal, physical or sexual.
8. Each diocese has published a set of guidelines that it is the responsibility of every PCC to administer.
9. Most PCCs will have appointed a responsible adult to be the first point of contact should notification of child protection issues be necessary, and that person's name or other means of making a complaint should be prominently displayed in the belfry.
10. It is the responsibility of the Tower Captain to liaise with the PCC and understand local arrangements. The Tower Captain should ensure that he/she knows who holds specific responsibility for Child Protection issues in the church.
11. The PCC is responsible for appointing all those involved in church activities that have responsibility for young people. Among ringers this is likely to mean the tower captain and others who are likely to be in charge of ringing at any time. Each person will need to complete a confidential self-declaration form and have this information checked by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), an executive agency of the Home Office². It does not imply any criticism of those asked to apply for a check. Ringers should be encouraged to apply without fear, in order to be able to ensure that young ringers continue to be recruited so as to secure the future of the Exercise. It is recommended that at least two adult members of the tower (preferably one of each sex) complete the declaration and CRB check procedure, and at least one of these should always be present when young people attend ringing.
12. Sensitive information about convictions or other matters will be taken into account only if it is relevant to the activity. Information disclosed by the Confidential Declaration or the CRB will be assessed by the Diocesan Child Protection Adviser or a Diocesan risk assessment panel and the incumbent advised how to proceed. In most cases past conduct will not be relevant. However, people with offences against children or some other serious offences will not be able to be leaders of mixed-age activities. Unless specifically required by the PCC, it is not necessary for all adult ringers to undergo this check or, for any who prefer not to do so, to be prohibited from taking part in ringing. Nor is it necessary for visitors to the tower to demonstrate that they have been 'cleared' in this way, unless the Tower Captain has concerns.
13. We have referred throughout to the 'Tower Captain,' but it is important to remember that others in charge of ringing events where young people are present also carry the same responsibilities.

¹ These guidelines offer an alternative procedure to that recommended in the House of Bishops' Policy. Compliance with local agreed procedures is required.

² Further information is available at www.disclosure.gov.uk/ or from the CRB, PO Box 110, Liverpool L3 6ZZ. Information Line 0870 9090811. This is something that is routinely done these days by all those whose paid or voluntary work or hobby brings them into contact with young people.

