



Stewardship & Management Workgroup

of The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers



THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CHURCH
BELL RINGERS

Safeguarding

Update December 2018

It is perhaps satisfying that Safeguarding in the context of bell ringers has largely settled into an acceptance of both legal and church requirements. Similarly, there have been no significant problems of interpretation at local level and indeed there have been some points of clarification which are mentioned below.

Much of the Church of England's energies have been focussed on the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse (IICSA) in the early part of the year plus preparation for the General Synod in July. A report was tabled at Synod presented by Bishop Peter Hancock of Bath & Wells and widely reported in the Church Times. The principal direction of Safeguarding is at present concerned with an improvement in the way that victims or those making allegations are treated by the Church authorities. In parallel there are measures to ensure that appointment and management of staff, including retirees with Permission to Officiate, and lay workers is of the highest quality. As ringers we can be sometimes forget that the Church is responsible for some 28,000 clergy and lay ministers, 16,000 buildings and an average Sunday attendance of 750,000 worshippers, no mean challenge in safeguarding terms.

An important document "Parish Safeguarding Handbook" was published on-line in June and I had held **back hoping** that it would be more widely available in print. However, it is an excellent distillation of the principles previously contained in three separate volumes giving guidance on recruitment, development and training within the church. The Handbook can be found at:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/more/safeguarding/templates-resources>

One of the key items clarified in the Handbook is that of Safeguarding Training as it applies to volunteers within the church. In terms of bell ringers, the **formal requirements** are shown in the table below:

Training Requirement	Tower Captain or Leader	Trainer of Children	Other bell team members	Comments
CO - Basic awareness	YES	YES	RECOMMENDED	
C1 - Foundation	YES	YES		
C2- Leadership	YES	YES		
C3-Clergy and Lay Ministers	OPTION **	OPTION **	OPTION **	** Where person is licensed. Is also instead of C2
C5 - Refresher	YES	YES		After 3 years for those completing C1, C2 or C3

There had always been some contention about mandating that certain categories of volunteers should undergo Safeguarding training and in this respect for posts such as flower arrangers, refreshment servers, shop staff and bell team members it is not compulsory. However, it is in the interest of promoting awareness and vigilance that any member of a congregation can partake in Awareness Training and bell ringers should be encouraged to support these aims. We should, after all, be seen to go the extra mile in such an important responsibility.

There are some minor outstanding questions about treatment of ex-offenders in ringing circles and, in addition, regarding isolated moves by parishes to “vet” visiting ringers. I hope that I may be able to report back on these shortly.

Finally, in late September, former MP and social worker Meg Munn was appointed as the first independent chair of the National Safeguarding Panel of the Church of England. This appointment does not alter the position of lead Bishop but provides for independent scrutiny of the Church and its Safeguarding practices.

Chris Mew

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