

Young Ringers – Schools & Youth Groups Update – June 2020

As one of the newest Council Workgroups, our team is still very much in the formation stages of its lifecycle. The report below outlines our strategy objective, and what we have been doing in our rather short lifetime.

Our Goal

The group has a very clear and concise (although not necessarily easy to deliver), goal:

To establish new long terms sources of recruits from schools and youth groups.

I am sure it is apparent to most of us, that for some time now the number of young people taking up our art is on the decline, and that we can no longer rely on our age-old sources to feed in new 'young' recruits. If we look around the ringing community as a whole, it doesn't take much scrutiny to see that in most areas, this decline has resulted in a generation gap within the ringing community of at least one whole generation, probably more. To continue as we are without positive action will almost certainly result in a further decline in numbers.

The goal of this group is not to try to mend the aforementioned gap, but rather to reverse the decline, by identifying and engaging with other sources of potential young ringers, to promote bell ringing as an option.

It is wholly understood that this work is not a single passport to success. We also need, (amongst many other things), to have good coaches and a good underlying leadership platform. In some places this exists, but alas in many it does not. There begins the subject of retention which will need first to understand the gaps in the bigger picture so that young ringing doesn't just develop in isolated bubbles.

The Strategy Statement above goes on to read:

... and make sure they transition through higher education and beyond.

Although closely linked to the Schools and Youth Groups work, it is considered important enough in its own right to warrant some dedicated focus under the banner of 'Young Ringers – Universities & Colleges', headed up by Ian Roulstone. These two groups will work closely together as there are a number of overlaps.

The Team

Our team currently has 6 active members (mainly teachers), 5 of whom have met twice since the inception of the Workgroup in April of this year. The 6th member has recently joined us, and a small number of further additions may be made to the group in the coming months to ensure we have all bases covered. We are rapidly gaining an understanding the strengths of our current membership and where we have gaps that need to be filled.

What so far?

As already mentioned, we have held two meetings now. Both of these have been energetic and productive. We have another scheduled in mid-July with the intention of holding them every 5-6 weeks going forward for the time being.

- **Schools**

What with most of our group being educators (either past or present), it is not surprising that most of what we have considered so far is schools related. Amongst other things we have discussed how we could fit in with Enrichment Programmes for different age groups, which year groups to perhaps avoid (exam periods) and what we may be able to do to get ringing into the classroom via focussed lesson plans. Our biggest challenge is likely to be how we get this into schools which do not have ringers on their staff, but one thing at a time, we have to have an offering which is mutually beneficial first.

- **Youth Groups**

Far less debate has been had in this area. Although there is a general awareness amongst the group of these organisations and their working, we have not yet got enough information to make significant headway. Having said that there are many contacts being followed up to help us understand the operating models of groups such as Scouts, Guides, Boys Brigade and DofE.

Once we have a more clear picture of how these groups operate, we will be better placed to understand how we may fit in, what we would need to offer, and what paths we need to take to sell our wares.

Next Steps

Our key next step is to continue conversations both inside and outside the team to build our knowledge and identify avenues of opportunity. This will also help to complete the 'forming' of the workgroup in terms of membership. Once we have plugged our knowledge gaps and onboarded people where appropriate, we will be on good footing to move forward and deliver something meaningful.

A specific item of work we are actively starting, is to build a lesson plan portfolio. Our esteemed president has been known to use the words 'well stocker larder' on several occasions, especially during the PPE project, and although we are probably going to use 'resource bank' rather than 'larder', there is a clear understand that we need to start building a set of good quality resources which can be easily accessed by those that need them.

Can you help?

Below is a list of areas where we feel input from the wider community would be helpful. Anything you feel able to share can be sent to syglead@cccbr.org.uk

Schools – For teachers and others, if you have any lesson plans which refer to ringing (any subject and no matter what the format), and you are willing to share them with the wider community, we would really love to see them. In addition, it would be great to see ideas for cross curricular and enrichment activities.

Scouts & Guides - We would be very keen to understand people's experiences with ringing youth groups such as Scouts and Guides (plus others). Both those with positive and perhaps not so positive outcomes.

DofE – This is an area to which we would like to add some real structure. Some enquiries are already being made but any DofE experiences and/or suggestions would be welcome.

Anything Else - If you have anything at all you feel you could add to this workgroup, please do share it. The more input we have, the greater our chances of success in delivering results.

Colin Newman

Young Ringers – Schools & Youth Groups Lead

syglead@cccbr.org.uk