

## The Central Council of Church Bellringers

# Safeguarding

## A Guide for Bell-Ringers

### Introduction

Between 2004 and 2019 there was a stream of both Government legislation and Church directives relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults (now termed “adults at risk”). The following notes seek to summarise current requirements and expectations of bell ringers during their activities.

The UK legal requirements extend to all denominations and secular rings, whilst churches and ringing establishments outside the UK will be subject to local laws. In all cases ringers should maintain good practice principles whenever dealing with young and vulnerable persons.

### Basic legal requirements.

Any ringers carrying out one-to-one physical training of young people under 18 years of age on a regular basis are considered to be carrying out a “regulated activity”.

Regular basis frequency is defined as being minimum of

- I. once a week
- II. four days in 30 or
- III. involving overnight hours of 02.00 to 06.00.

Anyone meeting these criteria will be required to undergo a background check through the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or, in Scotland, Disclosure Scotland check. On a local basis such checks will be initiated by the Parish Safeguarding Officer of the parish in which the ringing is taking place.

**It is an offence for anyone to knowingly allow a person who has a criminal record relevant to the protection of minors or vulnerable adults to carry out a regulated activity.**

### Church requirements and expectations

The Church of England has issued several documents setting out their requirements for church workers, paid or volunteer, relating to both children under 18 and “vulnerable adults”.

The official definition of an adult at risk, is a person over the age of 18 who is unable to take care of him or herself OR unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation. This is unlikely to apply to many, if any, ringers but ringing must take seriously its responsibilities to ensure the wellbeing of all ringers.

The principal documents may be referred to through the Church of England website under Safeguarding, these include:

1. Promoting a Safer Church
2. Practice Guidance series: Safer Recruitment
3. Practice Guidance: Safeguarding Training and Development
4. Practice Guidance: Risk Assessment for Individuals who may pose Risk
5. Parish Safeguarding Handbook
6. Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework 2021

The foregoing documents amount to some 260 pages and the following summary seeks to clarify their overall application to bell ringers.

## Appointment of Tower Leaders (Captains and Deputies)

As part of the Church Safer Recruitment policy, those **working closely with children** in terms of training will be required to be formally appointed by the Parish, usually through the incumbent on behalf of the PCC. This process is extended to deputies where they cover absence of the leader and where they assist in managing training.

The formal process requires that a role description be agreed and that individuals complete a confidential declaration relating to any relevant cautions or convictions. Those seeking to fill such roles will also be required to undergo DBS application and provide two references. There are no charges for volunteers. The Central Council has published an example role description, which can be found on our website.

## Safeguarding Training

Those persons who are leading or managing training activities involving children will be required to undergo several levels of awareness training.

All parishes have audits carried out by Dioceses to ensure that there is compliance with national and local Safeguarding Policies. Failure to do so has, since 2016, carried disciplinary measures which could result in suspension from posts. It is for this reason that clergy and churchwardens are sensitive regarding fulfilment of Safeguarding requirements locally.

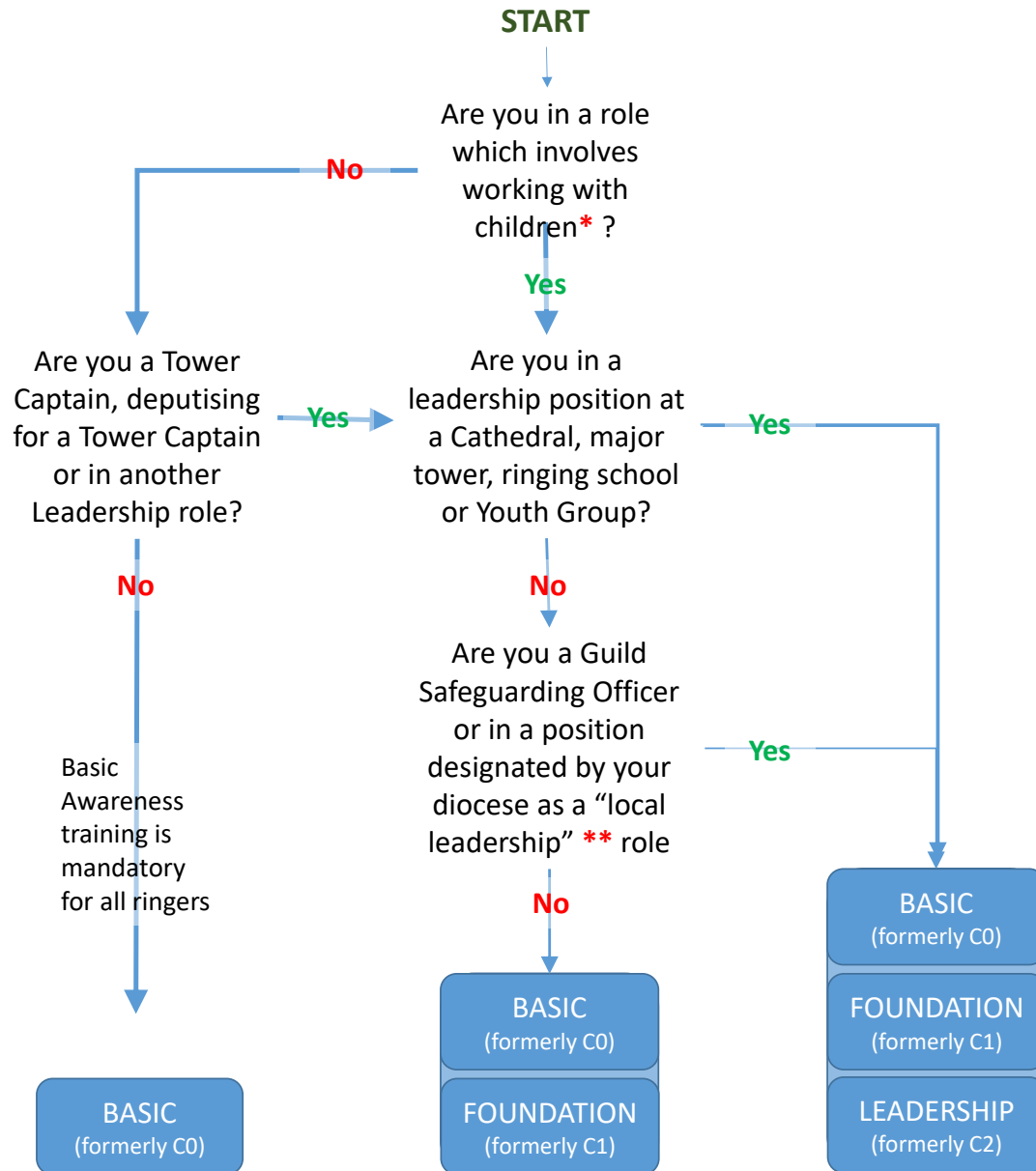
Basic Awareness and Foundation training modules are available on-line. Other training sessions are normally carried out by staff from the respective Diocesan offices in all cases a certificate of completion is available and a record kept of attendance.

## RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING SUMMARY

Requirements by person	Tower Captain, leader (and their deputy if appointed) or Guild Officer	Trainer or helper working with children or adults at risk	Other ringers	Comments
Appointed by PCC	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	No	No
Confidential declaration and Enhanced DBS check with Barred List	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	No	No
Basic Awareness Training:	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	Renewable every 3 years
Foundation training	<b>YES</b>	<b>YES</b>	Only where determined by local context (see "Questions and Answers" below)	Renewable every 3 years
Leadership training	Only where determined by local context (see "Questions and Answers" below)	No	No	Renewable every 3 years

## TRAINING DECISIONS

The chart below shows **Training** requirements, as set out in the above matrix, in the form of a flowchart: to aid decision-making:



\* Children also includes Adults at Risk, formerly referred to as 'vulnerable adults'

\*\* Each diocese will determine whether their tower captains have a local leadership role, based on guidance from their parishes and input from the local territorial ringing society or association

## Certificates and their Portability

When a person has undergone a DBS check, the results are notified to the Parish and the individual only will receive a copy of their certificate.

To enhance the usefulness and portability of a certificate, it is recommended that individuals register for the DBS Update Service. This service effectively monitors the status of the individual and can provide confirmation to an interested party that their status has not changed. However, to register for Update this **must be done** within 30 days of the date of issue of the certificate OR during a period of 28 days whilst their DBS is being processed. Note the time limit has increased from 19 days previously applied.

The Church of England has agreed that ringers carrying out similar youth training functions outside their home parish may rely on their certificate but **only within the same Diocese**. It is understood that ringers do teach across Diocesan boundaries and in these cases only those who have subscribed to the DBS Update Service may present their details to the host parish.

## Known Offenders

Whether coming in the form of established ringers or seeking to become a ringer, any persons known to be on the Sex Offenders Register must not be allowed to engage in a regulated activity as this would be a legal offence.

However, a known offender **may** be able to take part in ringing activities depending upon (a) the nature of their offence, (b) any court restrictions on their activities, (c) perceived risk and (d) the level of supervision that can be afforded.

Both the Church of England and the Police have agreed procedures known as Multiple Agency Public Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) for dealing with offenders returning to circulate in society. The church position is set out in Section 8 of the House of Bishops document *Protecting all God's Children*.

Any proposal for such a person to be accommodated must be reviewed very seriously with all concerned parties including the incumbent, ringing Society and Diocesan Safeguarding Officer and must have due regard to **absolute safety of children** and the reassurance of parents. A written agreement with the church **must** be obtained, this generally is between the individual, the parish and the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.

## Potential offenders

Where there is concern about the behaviour of a ringer, this should be brought to the attention of the Parish Safeguarding Officer who may also involve the Diocese. A decision may then be made as to how to proceed and where actions demand, police may need to be involved.

In the case of both known offenders and potential offenders it must always be remembered that the incumbent and churchwardens have ultimate sanction in allowing access to the tower. All ringers should appreciate that there is no automatic right to ring bells in any tower controlled by the church.

## **Safeguarding -the Wider Considerations.**

The term "Safeguarding" has deliberately been adopted by the Church to extend concern for the well being of all church users, although "Child Protection" is still foremost. Those undergoing Basic Awareness training will be shown how to recognise signs of anxiety, neglect or abuse in both children and adults.

In the case of a direct approach from an individual then they should be given reassurance and concerns noted. Whether as a result of evidenced concerns or direct approach, matters should be referred to the Parish Safeguarding Officer and if action is required immediately to prevent further harm, to the police.

## **Responsibilities of Ringing Societies.**

Most ringing societies and guilds are involved in dealing with young people although some non-territorial societies do not have any initial training role.

Whilst most initial training of children is carried out at home towers, there may be specific training organised by the local society which could draw them into the "regulated activity" category. For example, if there are regular meetings which host young people with close contact with the same adults, then the scope for familiarity is the same as for one-to-one training.

It is, therefore, recommended that the following measures be taken to ensure the safety of young people:

1. Have an agreed safeguarding policy for the society covering all activities.
2. Appoint a Safeguarding Officer. The Central Council has published a template role description which can be found on our website. .
3. Consider provision of suitably DBS checked persons to run ringing meetings.

It is likely that provision No. 3 will be met by the presence of adults who, through their own parishes, have been DBS checked and this may include society officers. The argument for having "vetted" persons present is that they will be aware of the requirements for overseeing young people, will be able to deal with any problems which may arise, and their very presence is a reassurance for parents and guardians.

When young people attend society activities, then the organisers are on the day in effect carrying the same responsibility as a tower captain.

## **Good Practice**

The Central Council has published Guidelines for maintaining a safe environment for young people in the belfry and these are available from our website. For display in your tower.

## Questions and Answers.

### **Q. Are all tower captains required to be formally appointed and DBS checked?**

**A.** It is a church requirement that all leaders of mixed age groups working closely with under 18s should be formally appointed and undergo a DBS check. This may extend to acknowledged deputies who undertake training and supervisory roles in the captain's absence on a planned basis.

### **Q: Do all tower captions need to do the Leadership Training?**

**A:** No, there is no blanket assumption or requirement that ALL tower captains or other leaders in ringing will do Leadership Training. The key words in the quote from the new Framework above are according to local context and following discussion between the CCCBR Safeguarding Officer and Lisa Clarke, National Safeguarding Training and Development Manager for the C of E, the following position was agreed:

*"All ringers are required to do Basic Awareness, many will also need to do Foundation depending on local circumstances. For Leadership, a conversation needs to happen within the Diocese around their level of "culture setting" and there is no blanket mandate that just because you are a tower captain etc you have to do the Leadership course. Some tower captains etc WILL be required to do Leadership but this will be discussed with the Diocese."*

If you have any questions about safeguarding training you should discuss them with your society safeguarding officer/lead and if they have any questions they will be able to discuss them with the appropriate Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.

### **Q: Do all ringers need to do Foundation Training?**

**A:** No, there is no blanket assumption or requirement that ALL ringers will do Foundation Training. Lisa Clarke, the Church of England's National Safeguarding Training and Development Manager, issued the following guidance to Diocesan Safeguarding Advisors, in January 2022:

*"All ringers are required to do Basic Awareness, many will also need to do Foundation depending on local circumstances ...."*

*Training for bell ringers and Tower Captains may therefore look something like the below:*

- *Bell ringers – all to complete Basic awareness*
- *Tower captains and those teaching children - complete Foundation*
- *Tower captains at prominent towers (including Cathedrals, towers with frequent visitors or people learning), District chair / district safeguarding lead – to complete Leadership*

*It should also be noted that in all matters regarding safeguarding training, it is the DSA and their team who should make the decisions about how to apply the*

***Framework and no individual parish should be making decisions on this that are outside of the policy adopted by the diocese.”***

If you have any questions about safeguarding training you should discuss them with your society safeguarding officer/lead and if they have any questions they will be able to discuss them with the appropriate Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor.

**Q. What are the requirements for an all- adult band?**

**A.** Where there are no children involved, there is no legal obligation for leaders to have either an agreed role description or DBS check. However, it would be good practice to voluntarily fulfil these requirements on the basis that a young recruit might present themselves at any time, it would be illegal to train them without DBS certification, their parents would expect properly certified supervision and there is the responsibility to safeguard any visiting young ringers who may visit practises on a regular basis.

**Q. Is there a set ratio requirement for adults to children in a tower?**

**A.** There are recommended ratios for child supervision in Sunday schools and other church activities but in the context of ringing it is unlikely to fall short of the ratio of 1 adult to 8 (9-12 year -olds) or 1 adult to 10 (13-18 year-olds).

**Q. Can I take a child to ringing in my car?**

**A.** Conveying children to ringing activities where agreed with parents is considered a private domestic arrangement. Any pre-agreed **formal** provision of transport as a tower or society service, even with parental approval, must adhere to the requirement of the driver being DBS checked. It is recommended that a second adult be present, preferably one of each gender.

**Q. What is the status and requirement for visiting adult ringers?**

- A.** The requirements for individual visiting ringers fall into three categories:
- a) Individuals joining a team just to ring, no specific requirement.
  - b) Known ex-offenders (see above), should have prior clearance to ring within the constraints of any restrictions to which they are subject
  - c) Visiting bands for outings, quarters and peals. It is the responsibility of the leader of such a group to ensure that any Safeguarding issues relating to young people are addressed. A parish may ask for such assurance

*Safeguarding in Bell Ringing prepared by Chris Mew June 2019.*

*Updated by Dave Bassford & Ann White April 2022*