

The new Safeguarding Training Framework – no longer one size fits all.....

As promised in last week's RW, this is a more detailed update on the current state of discussions with the Church of England regarding safeguarding training.

A new Framework

The Church began working on its new Safeguarding Training Framework several years ago. The final version was published last year and is now in use as the Church's live policy on all aspects of Safeguarding training.

We have always advised that the Parish Safeguarding Handbook has been the "bible" on safeguarding for ringers. Going forward, the new Framework is the definitive document on current policy and the Parish Safeguarding Handbook will be updated to reflect it.



Unfortunately, there was no opportunity for the Church of England to consult with CCCBR on the new Framework when it was at draft stage. It seems clear that this was the case for the vast majority of interested groups so I think we should not feel that ringing has been overlooked or, even worse, deliberately excluded.

For the past nine months, I have been working with Lisa Clarke, National Safeguarding Training and Development Manager for the C of E, regarding the ways in which the new *Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework* will affect ringing and ringers. We have enjoyed an extremely positive working relationship and Lisa is keen to ensure that the voice of ringers is heard and any concerns are given due consideration.

Possibly the greatest change is that the new Framework is significantly less prescriptive than one would expect. Rather there is a greater role for local input, with decisions made at diocesan level in most cases.

This flexibility allows individual dioceses to make decisions on a large range of matters based on local situations, so, whilst we did not have the opportunity to consult with the National Safeguarding Team when the Framework was being developed, there is now an important opportunity for territorial guilds to work with their Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor (DSA) in deciding how the policy will be applied to ringers in their diocese.

It seems clear that the C of E opted for this approach in preference to "one size fits all" in view of the vast differences (as they see it) between different dioceses. But this approach makes it essential that DSAs are willing to engage with ringing, listen to our concerns and make decisions which are proportionate, based on sound reasoning and an acknowledgement of the huge variety between different towers and parishes.

You can access the new Framework here:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-06/SafeguardingLearningAndDevelopmentFramework2021.pdf>

Farewell C0, C1 and C2

With regard to specific levels of training, the Church has been changing its Safeguarding training offer over recent years.

Many of us still refer to CO, C1 and C2 level training, but to be clear these levels are now obsolete and the main courses are now called Basic Awareness, Foundation and Leadership.

Whilst these new courses have strong overlap with much of the content of their predecessors, C0, C1 and C2 respectively, there are also differences and the new courses have been written with current good practice in mind.

Basic Awareness and **Foundation** training courses are both freely available from the C of E Safeguarding Training Portal and involve self-directed learning done at the user's own pace, very similar to C0 and C1 in "old money".

The **Leadership** course is a blend of self study and face to face training, usually via Zoom or similar, and is booked through your diocesan safeguarding office. Your Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) will be able to advise more on this. The PSO is the person in your church with responsibility for ensuring all parties do appropriate training so you should advise them when you have completed each course as appropriate.

Basic Awareness Training for All Ringers

Under the Framework, virtually everyone who has any involvement with the church on any level is now described as a "church officer". On p4 the Framework states that "a 'church officer' is anyone appointed/elected by or on behalf of the Church to a post or role, whether they are ordained or lay, paid or unpaid" and Lisa was clear that this definition includes all ringers.

Under previous guidance it was *recommended* that all ringers should do the C0 training and this is reflected in the Parish Safeguarding Handbook. The CCCBR have always strongly supported this position and encouraged all ringers to do this. Under the new Framework all "church officers" *must* take Basic Awareness training.

In practical terms the move to make the Basic Awareness training compulsory is not a great change and the CCCBR supports this position - it's online learning and takes an hour or so to complete. Once you have done the course you should let the Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) of your home tower know so that they can update their records. If you have previously undertaken C0 training you may not need to do the Basic Awareness course for some time and should discuss this with you PSO.

The requirement for Basic Awareness training has met some opposition from ringers but if you see it from the Church's perspective, they are simply asking those who ring their bells freely to undergo an hour or so of online training every three years.

Leadership Training for Tower Captains and other "Local Leaders"

The main thing Lisa and I have discussed is the concern that all Tower Captains may be "forced" to take Leadership training - something which has featured in the CCCBR Safeguarding inbox and has been discussed at length on Facebook and in the pub after ringing.

It is worth noting that there are many people in ringing who see this as a positive move and are happy to take part in this course as they recognise the important role that a Tower Captain can play in the life of the church but we acknowledge that there are many others who disagree.

The key section of the new Framework here is section 3.3 on p22, under Required Attendees (my emphasis):

*It should also, **according to the local context**, include such other people who significantly influence the culture of that Church body. These may include, for example, lay ministry staff employed by a PCC or Bishops' Mission Order, locally appointed leaders of new worshipping communities, focal ministers, and Churchwardens*. The requirements for attendance for people in local leadership roles will be determined by agreement between the Bishop/Dean and their respective safeguarding adviser. Where there is a determination that someone must undertake this pathway, that person then becomes a required attendee*

This is being interpreted in some dioceses as including all tower captains and ringing masters etc but I am pleased to say that early feedback we are receiving suggests that this approach is not universal and a number of dioceses have already decided they do not expect ANY of their tower captains or ringing masters to undertake the Leadership course.

For the C of E, Lisa Clarke recognises that there is huge variability at a local level between the 'average' church tower, larger churches and cathedrals and those teaching large numbers of young people.

Above all, the key words in the quote from the new Framework above are **according to local context** and Lisa advised that the following summarises the position of the church on this matter (direct quote):

"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 you

have to do the Leadership course. Some tower captains WILL be required to do Leadership but this will be discussed with the Diocese."

The importance of the DSA

I mentioned above the way that the Framework is intended to support decision making at a local level and according to local context. Whilst understanding the rationale for this, I am concerned some dioceses will interpret the guidance particularly strictly, causing upset to ringers particularly where a neighbouring diocese may have taken a different position. Lisa understood my concern and was at pains to point out that they are very keen to avoid this and that local dioceses should draw up their plans based on dialogue between guilds and their DSAs.

It should be noted that in all matters regarding Safeguarding training, it is the DSA and their team making all the decisions about how to apply the *Framework* and individual parishes cannot deviate from the policy adopted by the diocese.

Lisa is going to put a note out in the January Safeguarding Newsletter which goes out to all DSAs and many others in the Church, summarising the above and **stressing that there is no assumption from the National Safeguarding Team that ALL tower captains will be forced to undertake the leadership training.**

Lisa felt that the diocese of London will take the view that tower captains do not need to take Leadership training and other dioceses "will follow suit when they start to work out how many people are involved" all of which is good news for ringing. We have already heard from a number of guilds that this is the case, Lichfield being possibly the first example of a diocese which has decided that they do not expect any tower captains or those in a similar role to undertake the Leadership training.

Whatever happens every territorial guild would be well advised to engage constructively with their DSA as soon as possible. Lisa said that she feels DSAs will be open to each territorial society working with them to explain why they do not think a blanket approach is appropriate and, perhaps the requirement for tower captains to undertake Leadership training being the exception rather than the norm. Building a strong relationship with their DSA will help territorial societies to influence future decisions about how ringing is managed in their diocese.

We are aware that there are many territorial guilds whose area does not match exactly that of a single diocese or may cover a number of dioceses. Some territorial societies may have to work with the DSA in more than one diocese and we hope that they will be able to achieve a pragmatic approach to this, encouraging DSAs to communicate with each other where necessary. Our experience of speaking with several different DSAs is that they will recognise this need.

It would, be very useful for us to understand the way these discussions are going, so we can publish a summary of the different approaches which are being adopted in different dioceses. Knowing what is being discussed elsewhere may be useful to individual guilds as they engage with their own DSA. We would therefore be very grateful if the Safeguarding lead from each society could let us know when their discussion with their DSAs have concluded and what the outcome is by emailing safeguarding@cccbr.org.uk

Concerns among non-believers

Many of the concerns raised about the Leadership training course concern its religious elements (for example, it requires advance reflection on a particular Psalm).

There are many people in the ringing community who are not religious or are members of other faiths or denominations. Equally, for very many ringers, the church connection is important and is a crucial part of why they ring, remembering that many ringers see ringing itself as a part of their witness.

I have raised these concerns with Lisa and made it clear that we would like to work with the C of E to ensure that the training is as accessible as possible to all ringers, regardless of their faith, and have stressed the importance of supporting all ringers and ensuring that all training is welcoming to all.

To this end, I have asked that the Church consider giving advice along these lines to DSAs:

We understand that there are a significant number of ringers, including tower and association officers etc, who are not members of the Church of England, including people who do not have any religious beliefs and members of other faiths and denominations. These people are a valued part of the ringing community, and therefore, the wider church community and as such are dedicated servants of the church.

We appreciate that that the faith-based aspect of some of the training may put these people in an uncomfortable position and we hope that those running safeguarding courses will understand this and treat people in this situation with dignity and respect as valued members of the church family, including allowing them to withdraw from some aspects of the training if they wish to.

We are hopeful that the Church's National Safeguarding Team will understand this position and will be keen to support us in this.

Dave Bassford
CCCBR Safeguarding Officer

The above article appeared in The Ringing World published on 21st January 2022