

# “Sound Start” Ringing Recruitment

## Network talk (Caroline Noonan, 20 Sep 2026)

### Key Outcomes

The Devises Branch of the Salisbury Diocesan Guild of Ringers has implemented a comprehensive "Sound Start" program to improve the recruitment, support, and retention of novice bell ringers. The initiative has successfully established a dedicated Learner Engagement Officer (LEO), introduced standardized learner packs, and launched a successful annual learner day ("Baldrick").

### Decisions Made

- **New Committee Role:** Created the **Learner Engagement Officer (LEO)** to advocate for and support new learners.
- **Registration Process:** Re-established a formal registration system for new learners, including a **£5 registration fee** to cover training and a starter pack.
- **Teaching Standards:** Recommended the **ART system** as the preferred standard for consistent learning, while still embracing other effective teaching styles.
- **Communication & Networking:** Re-established **tower captain meetings** and formal **practice night visits** to improve connectivity between the 35 towers in the branch.
- **Event Integration:** Combined the branch novice striking competition with the annual learner day to maximize value and experience.

### Program Components

- **Learner Starter Pack:** Includes the *Discover Bell Ringing* book, a glossary of terminology, progress logs, and an updated welcome card with tower practice schedules.
- **Baldrick (Branch Annual Learner Day with Rounds Competition):**
  - **Workshops:** Features sessions on bell handling (on tied bells), rhythm (clapping exercises), and listening (computer-based).
  - **Competition:** Novices ring a four-minute test piece of rounds, supported by experienced ringers.
  - **Technology:** Utilizes **Hawkear** software to provide visual feedback on striking errors.
- **Eddington Ringing Center:** Provides weekly bell handling and rounds/plain hunt sessions for learners from various towers.

## Metrics & Findings

- **Retention:** The program has retained nearly all learners, with only one loss due to a physical injury (not ringing related).
- **Participation:** 25 students participated in the first Learner Day, with 19 providing overwhelmingly positive feedback.
- **Novice Pipeline:** There are currently **21 novices** on the register, with several recently "graduating" to full branch membership.
- **Novice Definition:** Defined as having **two years of continuous active ringing** for Sunday services.

## Next Steps

- **Baldrick 2027:** Scheduled for **May 22nd** in Trowbridge, featuring "Peals on Wheels" and enhanced Hawkear real-time feedback sessions.
- **Teaching Pathway:** Developing a formal pathway to support and accredit teachers within the branch.
- **Advanced Support:** Creating new initiatives for intermediate and expert ringers, with working titles "**Ringing Up**" and "**Look To The Future**".
- **Technology Exploration:** Investigating the use of **CIREL** as an alternative or supplement to Hawkear for striking analysis.