



Stewardship & Management Workgroup

of The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers



THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CHURCH
BELL RINGERS

Safeguarding

A Guide for Bell-Ringers

Introduction

Between 2004 and 2019 there has been a stream of both Government legislation and Church directives relating to the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults. The following notes and appendices seek to summarise the present requirements and expectations of bell ringers during their activities.

Most ringing towers come under the jurisdiction of the Church of England, Church in Wales and Scottish churches all of which have common requirements. The UK legal requirements extend to other 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 persons 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 latter inclusion is not paralleled by state legislation except in the context of institutions. 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*

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. An example role description is given at *Appendix A*.

Safeguarding Training

Those persons who are leading or managing training activities involving children will be required to undergo several levels of awareness training. Ringers forming part of band who only assist by their presence are not required to attend courses but, as with most church volunteers, it is still a recommendation that they do so. The table below sets out the requirements.

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.

Training sessions are normally carried out by staff from the respective Diocesan offices although there may be basic training given to some volunteers by Parish Safeguarding Officers. Training is also available through on-line modules and in all cases a certificate of completion is normally made available and a record kept of attendance.

Requirements by Person	Tower Captain or Leader	Trainer of Children	Other Ringers	Comments
Role description appointed by PCC	YES	YES		
Confidential declaration and DBS check	YES	YES		
Basic training: Level C0	YES	YES	Recommended	Renewable each 3 years
Level C1	YES	YES		Renewable each 3 years
Level C2	YES	YES		Renewable each 3 years
3-yearly refresher Level C5	YES	YES		

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 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 Officer.

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 borne in mind 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 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 (see description of role) *Appendix B*.
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 on the day in effect carry the same responsibility as a tower captain.

Good Practice

Guidelines for maintaining a safe environment for young people in the belfry have been previously issued and these are reproduced in *Appendix C* which may be used as a reminder and displayed in the 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. What are the requirements for an all-adult band?

A. Where there are no children involved, there is no legal compunction on 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 practices 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, albeit with parental approval, must adhere to the requirement of driver being DBS checked and, in addition, recommended 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 team just to ring, no specific requirement.
- b) Known ex-offenders (see above), should have prior clearance to ring within constraints of restrictions to which they may be 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.

Chris Mew
Central Council of Church Bell Ringers
Stewardship & Management Workgroup
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Appendix A

*The sample given below is intended as a bell ringers' input to any Parish document.
The content may vary according to local circumstance.*



THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CHURCH
BELL RINGERS

Sample Role Description for Bell Ringing Leader

Name of church, Name of parish

Role Description for Bell Ringing Leader

The role description outlined below is divided into two sections, the first covering the practical requirements of the role and the second the associated safeguarding responsibilities.

Practical Requirements

The post holder, known as Tower Captain or Tower leader, should be a competent bell ringer and will fulfil the following general requirements:

- Be first point of contact with incumbent, PCC and parish office
- Take responsibility for arrangements for the bells to be rung for services and for other occasions as required
- Maintain a team of ringers, including arrangements for training of new recruits and advancement of skills
- Ensure that activities in the tower are carried out safely including any day to day maintenance
- Assist any persons appointed by the PCC to carry out risk assessments pertaining to the bell ringing sections of the church including tower and bell installation.

Parts of the above duties **may be delegated** to an agreed role including, where appropriate, tower secretary - correspondence, steeple keeper - maintenance, trainer or assistant - training of recruits.

The tower leader will ensure that activities in the tower are carried out in accordance with the Parish Safeguarding Policy as set out below.

Parish Safeguarding Principles

We take the safety of everyone within the church very seriously and expect everyone to work in accordance with the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy. A copy of the Safeguarding Policy should accompany this Role Description.

This Role Description is binding in honour only, and it does not create a legally binding contract between us. It may be cancelled at any time at the discretion of either party. No employment relationship is to be created either now or in the future.

Volunteers working with children and/or adults at risk must have a commitment to:

- Treat individuals with respect;
- Recognise and respect their abilities and potential for development;
- Promote their rights to make their own decisions and choices, unless it is unsafe;
- Ensure their welfare and safety;
- The promotion of social justice, social responsibility and respect for others; and
- Confidentiality, never passing on personal information (except to the person to whom you are responsible) unless there are safeguarding issues of concern.

Safeguarding issues of concern (e.g. an allegation of abuse) must always be reported to the Parish Safeguarding Officer or the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

Responsibilities of this Role

- To provide a safe environment for the teaching and management of bell ringing for children.
- To ensure that health and safety requirements for the activity are strictly observed due to the physical nature of bell ringing and in accordance with Safety Statement to the PCC.
- To supervise any adults who are assisting with the training and activity of children in the tower
- To ensure that safeguarding policies of the Parish are adhered to and that guidelines issued by the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers via the Dioceses are followed.
- To create a welcoming and sympathetic environment for the activities of children.
- To liaise with parents or guardians of children regarding expectations of the activity.
- To ensure that there are no medical or physical limitations of any child which could represent a risk.
- To act as the first contact for any concerns whether voiced by children or parent/guardian.
- To work in accordance with the Diocesan Safeguarding Policy and to report any areas of concern (see 'what to do if...' on website).

Accountability

When carrying out the above responsibilities you will be accountable to:

- The incumbent - *Name*
- Parish safeguarding team
- ... and through them to the PCC

Responsibilities of the Church

As a valued volunteer, you can expect the church:

- To provide a supportive, inclusive and positive environment that helps you to enjoy this role.
- To treat you with respect and courtesy.
- To provide you with appropriate Safeguarding training.

Person Specification

- To have practical experience in the teaching and management of bell ringing.
- To have experience of working with children and young people.
- To understand the needs of children in a predominantly adult environment.
- To be willing to develop skills and to engage with training as appropriate.
- To keep up to date with matters relating to this role.

DBS Check

As a volunteer working with children this role requires an Enhanced DBS check **with** barred list information. This DBS check needs to be renewed every five years unless obviated by subscribing to the on-line update service.

Signature _____

Name and position held _____

Date _____

Based on Diocesan example

Appendix B

Sample Role Description for Society Safeguarding Officer



Safeguarding Officer – Suggested Job Description

The following is a suggested job description for posts of Safeguarding Officer (SO) created within ringing societies and taking cognisance of latest requirements.

Title: Safeguarding Officer or Safeguarding Co-ordinator

Purpose of Post

- To ensure that the procedures of the Society comply with the Guidelines issued by the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (CCCBR), the Dioceses and Parochial Church Councils of the area of the Society's operation, and government legal requirements.
- To ensure, as far as possible, that towers affiliated to the society are aware of and meet such guidelines and requirements.

Remit

The SO should be familiar with the CCCBR Guidelines and such Guidelines as are issued by the Dioceses covering the Society's area of operation.

The SO should be familiar with legislation regarding vulnerable persons and Health & Safety issues applicable to church bell ringing.

The SO should be the **custodian of all Society documentation associated with these matters** and should be the responsible for distribution of relevant information to tower and society officers.

The SO will deal with any issues which may arise regarding Safeguarding where this is appropriate within legal limits. Advice should be made available to tower representatives and Parochial Church Councils where requested.

The SO will **act as the responsible person** where it is the legal responsibility of the society to ensure suitably qualified (DBS checked) persons are available at society organised activities.

The SO will act as liaison officer with the local Dioceses ensuring good relations are maintained.

Limitations

The SO will not be expected to deal with any issues directly arising from complaints or allegations of abuse other than to refer to the appropriate authorities immediately. Any advice to towers, PCCs or society members must be qualified limiting the society's own responsibility.

Signature _____

Name and position held _____

Date _____

Appendix C

The following notice should be exhibited in the belfry together with any Parish Safeguarding Policy statement and local Safeguarding contact.



THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CHURCH
BELL RINGERS

Good Practice for Maintaining a Safe Environment in the Belfry for Young People

1. Parents' consent in writing should be sought prior to commencing teaching, outings or Guild meeting visits and they should be made aware, in advance, of the content and arrangements for teaching, outings or visits. Any medical conditions of the child should be established in advance as should the agreement that the parents are responsible for delivering and collecting the child. It is good practice to invite the parents to a training session so they understand what is involved in learning to ring.
2. If there is a child who it is believed is at immediate risk of harm call the emergency services on 999 and then inform the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser. Any behaviour of adult ringers which gives cause for concern should be discussed with the Parish Safeguarding Officer who will advise about any further action. They can then liaise with the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.
3. Keep an attendance register, which all attendees must sign, so that everyone is aware who was present at any given time.
4. Children must be supervised at all times and should only be allowed into hazardous locations, such as the bell chamber, when accompanied by the Tower Captain / Deputy or Assistant
5. Always have two adults (preferably one of each gender) present whenever children/young people are ringing or being supervised, taught or transported.
6. Touching should be only that appropriate for teaching, supervision and/or in an emergency. Those helping children by ringing another bell or standing nearby should be aware of the need to protect personal space.
7. Relevant health and safety procedures should be followed and first aid available.
8. Local tower arrangements should always be approved by the PCC in line with the Parish Safeguarding Policy. The Tower Captain should have a copy of the Parish Safeguarding Policy and ensure that Ringers have access to it.
9. Ensure that the appropriate insurance is in place prior to any teaching, training or ringing session.
10. All local ringing societies should appoint a Safeguarding Officer, someone who can oversee the performance of safeguarding matters in their area.
11. Good liaison should be established between Tower Captains and PCCs and between the Safeguarding Officer of local societies and the Parish and Diocesan Safeguarding staff.
12. Please note that it is the responsibility of all visiting groups to ensure that those leading/supervising a group have had all relevant checks and it is not the responsibility of the host church, unless the host church is providing the leader/supervisor for a visiting group. All visiting groups should have a copy of this General Statement on Safeguarding Towers in relation to children available to them.

*Developed in collaboration with the **Church of England, National Safeguarding Team.***

Chris Mew
Central Council of Church Bell Ringers
Stewardship & Management Workgroup
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