

# The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers

## Protecting Young Ringers

### *Guidelines for Maintaining a Safe Environment for Young People in the Belfry*

#### Introduction and background

1. These guidelines are designed to ensure that young people can be fully and safely involved with ringing activities. Ringers are keen that they should reflect the need to cherish and defend the exceptional features of ringing, being an activity in which young and old meet and take part on an equal footing. This enriches those of all ages who know and respect each other, not only for their abilities as ringers but also as individuals. The guidelines should be viewed as a framework for sensible behaviour. In exceptional circumstances alternative arrangements might be made through full consultation with the young person's parents or guardians and the relevant Diocesan Child Protection Adviser.
2. These guidelines are a working document for Tower Captains. They are not intended to be exhaustive and should be read in the context of Diocesan guidelines, PCC policy, and the Church of England House of Bishops' Policy on Child Abuse *Protecting All God's Children 2004*<sup>1</sup> and equivalent documents from other churches, as well as the Home Office publication *Safe from Harm*.
3. Ringers are urged to absorb these guidelines into the normal way that ringing is organised so as to minimise any fuss being made or any disruption caused.
4. The Children Act 1989 requires that all who work with young people (in voluntary or in paid employment) should keep them safe from harm. 'Children' are defined in the Act as anyone under the age of 18, or anyone who has been assessed as having a mental age of under 18 (vulnerable adults need similar protection from harm). We refer to these as young people in these guidelines.
5. Allegations of abuse will affect not just those claiming they have been abused, but **those who are accused. Ringers all need to protect themselves and each other from such accusations by following good practice.**
6. To protect young people and adults who work with them it is necessary to create an open environment where the possibility of abuse or a false allegation cannot occur.
7. Abuse can be emotional, verbal, physical or sexual.
8. Each diocese has published a set of guidelines that it is the responsibility of every PCC to administer.
9. Most PCCs will have appointed a responsible adult to be the first point of contact should notification of child protection issues be necessary, and that person's name or other means of making a complaint should be prominently displayed in the belfry.
10. It is the responsibility of the Tower Captain to liaise with the PCC and understand local arrangements. The Tower Captain should ensure that he/she knows who holds specific responsibility for Child Protection issues in the church.
11. The PCC is responsible for appointing all those involved in church activities that have responsibility for young people. Among ringers this is likely to mean the tower captain and others who are likely to be in charge of ringing at any time. Each person will need to complete a confidential self-declaration form and have this information checked by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB), an executive agency of the Home Office<sup>2</sup>. It does not imply any criticism of those asked to apply for a check. Ringers should be encouraged to apply without fear, in order to be able to ensure that young ringers continue to be recruited so as to secure the future of the Exercise. It is recommended that at least two adult members of the tower (preferably one of each sex) complete the declaration and CRB check procedure, and at least one of these should always be present when young people attend ringing.
12. Sensitive information about convictions or other matters will be taken into account only if it is relevant to the activity. Information disclosed by the Confidential Declaration or the CRB will be assessed by the Diocesan Child Protection Adviser or a Diocesan risk assessment panel and the incumbent advised how to proceed. In most cases past conduct will not be relevant. However, people with offences against children or some other serious offences will not be able to be leaders of mixed-age activities. Unless specifically required by the PCC, it is not necessary for all adult ringers to undergo this check or, for any who prefer not to do so, to be prohibited from taking part in ringing. Nor is it necessary for visitors to the tower to demonstrate that they have been "cleared" in this way, unless the Tower Captain has concerns.
13. We have referred throughout to the 'Tower Captain,' but it is important to remember that others in charge of ringing events where young people are present also carry the same responsibilities.

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<sup>1</sup> These guidelines offer an alternative procedure to that recommended in the House of Bishops' Policy. Compliance with local agreed procedures is required.

<sup>2</sup> Further information is available at [www.disclosure.gov.uk/](http://www.disclosure.gov.uk/) or from the CRB, PO Box 110, Liverpool L3 6ZZ. Information Line 0870 9090811. This is something that is routinely done these days by all those whose paid or voluntary work or hobby brings them into contact with young people.

# Protecting Young Ringers

## Guidelines for Maintaining a Safe Environment for Young People in the Belfry

1. The parents or guardians of the young person (referred to here as the parents) should complete a consent form when the young person starts to learn to ring. This form should be up-dated annually and should set out the necessary rules for safe practice. The form should be available from the PCC, but a sample consent form is attached here and may also be downloaded from [www.cccbr.org.uk/guidelines](http://www.cccbr.org.uk/guidelines). The parents of young people already engaged in ringing should be asked to complete a consent form at the earliest opportunity. The parents should be encouraged to come to an early lesson to see what is involved.
2. The Tower Captain should endeavour to establish that the young person has no known medical conditions that may affect safety.
3. The Tower Captain should make sure that the parents are aware of and content with arrangements for young people travelling to and from ringing activities.
4. The parents should be told if there is any plan to use a video camera as a training tool, and the consent form should make this clear. The videotape should be erased after the teaching session, preferably in the presence of the parent or the Tower Captain.
5. The young people should undertake to ensure that suitable clothing is worn for all ringing activities. It should be loose under the arms to allow freedom of movement and not overtly provocative. These requirements should also be made clear to parents at the outset.
6. The parents should be informed that to act with sufficient speed in an emergency or when learning to control a bell, it may be necessary to raise one's voice, or make physical contact (e.g. by taking hold of the learner's hand to take control of the bell rope). This can be demonstrated to the parents during their early visit to a practice. Procedures for acting in an emergency should be rehearsed, e.g. following the instruction 'Let Go' if the bell gets out of control.
7. If an outing is planned, parents should sign a detailed permission form. Transport arrangements should be made so that young people do not travel in a car with just one adult. In the event of this being necessary as an exception, the young person should sit in the back.
8. Where a parent is always present during ringing, e.g. as a member of the band, the parent is responsible for the young person's welfare. However, it is important to bear in mind that there may be occasions when a parent cannot be there or the young person is taken out by other members of the band (e.g. to another tower). As with other aspects, it is advisable to follow the standard procedure in all cases so as not to make an issue of any changes in routine.
9. Two adults (if possible of different sexes) should normally be present whenever young people are taking part in ringing or being transported to or from ringing events. The Tower Captain should endeavour to ensure that at least two adults arrive at the start of any planned ringing.
10. The Tower Captain and any deputies who may run the practice or any ringing sessions where young people are present should be notified to the PCC, and will be responsible for ensuring that these guidelines are followed. It is likely that it will be these people who will need to undergo a criminal records check.
11. The Tower Captain should not delegate responsibility for the care of the young people unless it is to someone previously notified to the PCC and who has completed the criminal record check.
12. It is always good practice for an attendance register to be kept and completed, including the recording of the names of any visitors.
13. Young people should not be allowed into a potentially hazardous situation unaccompanied.
14. Normal Health and Safety issues should always be taken into consideration, and if possible a trained first aider should be present. A first aid kit should be available and an accident logbook kept.
15. A copy of these Guidelines should be displayed on the belfry notice board.