



## Standard of Conduct for EACR members<sup>i</sup>

### Background

Whilst running ringing and Association business, differences of opinion can occur. These have the potential to be positive and are to be encouraged. Healthy debate can reveal innovative and unexpected solutions to difficult problems. The Association expects its members to manage such disagreement in a respectful manner for instance through the criticism of ideas rather than individuals.

Occasionally, differences of opinion can lead to behaviour that is hurtful, disrespectful or psychologically harmful.

Similarly, within towers, teaching and training activities, and feedback on ringing performance, can often present differences of opinion, which occasionally can be hurtful.

The purpose of this Standard is to set out the behaviours that are expected within the Association and provide guidance on how to manage unwelcome behaviours if they occur.

### Standard of Conduct

All ringers are entitled to be treated respectfully by members of the EACR. Members should uphold a high standard of behaviour in all activities connected to the Association. Feedback to individuals should always be constructive and supportive.

### Scope

This covers all activities conducted by its members or associated with the EACR, including:

- Association and District business and ringing meetings, and social events
- Teaching and training sessions, including Ringing Schools
- The Essex Course
- Written and email correspondence relating to the Association
- Association social media
- Conduct of members ringing for Sunday Service and practice sessions
- Activities not directly related to the Association, but for which a strong association might be inferred, may also be included in the scope of this Standard, to be determined by the Association Trustees.



## Examples

The following is a list of behaviours that are not acceptable – this list is not exhaustive:

Unnecessary shouting <sup>1</sup>	Trolling <sup>2</sup>	Violent behaviour
Undermining	Bullying <sup>3</sup>	Unsafe behaviour
Personal attacks	Harassment <sup>4</sup>	Recklessness
Shaming	Unwelcome physical contact	

## What to do if this standard is not upheld

If the complaint applies to a particular tower, the matter should be managed by the Tower Captain, who may wish to call on the advice of a District Officer. If the matter cannot be resolved, the Tower Captain should inform the priest or church warden responsible (or whoever has overall responsibility if it is a secular tower) and ask them to help resolve the concern or problem in line with that church's policies.

In many of these cases a confidential discussion may be all that is needed to agree changes to behaviour or to a role that would enable the ringer or Officer to feel happier and to continue in their role in the Association. If the issue relates to an Officer of the Association, then the discussion should be with the Association Master or their nominated deputy.

If it is believed that the matter may be a safeguarding issue then the Tower Captain / Association or District Officer shall immediately refer to the Association, Parish and/or Diocesan Safeguarding Officers as appropriate.

If the matter cannot be resolved through an informal route, then it will be referred to the Association Master.

A meeting will be convened by the Association Master as soon as is practicable. Both the complainant and the person who is the subject of the complaint may each be accompanied by one person whose role is to support but not to speak for either person. The grievance or complaint will be circulated in written form beforehand to those attending, together with any

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<sup>1</sup> N.B. shouting may be acceptable in situations where necessary to attract a ringer's attention over the sound of bells; this example applies to shouting that is used unnecessarily, and it is understood that this distinction may at times be subjective. Care should be taken to ensure that ringers understand why raised voices are sometimes required

<sup>2</sup> Definition – “the act of leaving an insulting message on the internet in order to annoy someone” – Cambridge Dictionary

<sup>3</sup> Definition – “The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face to face or online” – Anti-Bullying Alliance, <https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/what-bullying/aba-definition-bullying>

<sup>4</sup> Definition – “Harassment is unwanted behaviour which you find offensive or which makes you feel intimidated or humiliated. It can happen on its own or alongside other forms of discrimination.” Citizen's Advice Bureau, <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/law-and-courts/discrimination/what-are-the-different-types-of-discrimination/harassment/>



relevant information. The aim of the meeting is to identify the problem and agree a solution, which can then be monitored. A written agreed record will be kept.

If the matter cannot be resolved by agreement, the Association Master will bring the issue to the attention of the Trustees, whose decision will be final.

### **Mediation**

Mediation involving an external third party may be offered as one solution, as a confidential process which is generally completed through discussions between the parties within one day.

### **The legal position of volunteers**

Ringers, Association Members and Officers as volunteers are not covered by employment law and therefore do not have formal rights to redress in an Employment Tribunal. Volunteers do not have the right to insist the Association follows proper investigative procedures when things go wrong. They do not have the right to appeal a decision made by the Association. As a membership organisation, the Association has no authority over bell ringers, and other than to remove a person from membership or office has no sanction on their behaviour.

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<sup>1</sup> The Essex Association acknowledges references to the guidance produced by the Lincoln Diocesan Guild and Kent County Association of Change Ringers in this document.