



Central Council of Church Bell Ringers

"Registered Charity number 270036"

Tower Stewardship Committee

THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CHURCH
BELL RINGERS

Safeguarding update for Ringing World September 2017

The last article regarding Safeguarding dwelt upon some of the processes being followed by the Church of England including responses to allegations. There were new issues arising from requirements for training and these have, to some extent, become clearer.

Regarding the York Minster situation, ringers will be aware of the appointment of a new Head of Tower, Angela Mitchell, reported in the *RW issue of 16th June, p598*. Subsequently the Minster has sought applications for a new band of ringers and has held interviews and made appointments, a definitive list being awaited. There remain issues over exclusions from the new team and the reasons for these decisions. The question of fair representation has been raised with the Church and it is ironic that earlier this year a new protocol for dealing with allegations against Clergy has given them greater rights of hearing. It is hoped that such machinery will be extended to lay persons who appear at present to be at a disadvantage.

There have been concerns raised about the extent and level of Safeguarding Training which is being demanded, not only amongst ringers but also involving other volunteers within the Church. The intention of the training guidance issued in January 2017 was to cover clergy, church officers and those having close contact with children or vulnerable adults where DBS checks were already required. However, under the guise of parishes having "due regard", training is being extended to most volunteers whether flower arrangers or coffee servers. There is evidence that parishes are questioning this level of requirement but as far as both leaders and "rank and file" ringers (*the church description*), the current expectation by Church centre is as shown in the following table.

Requirements by person:	Tower Captain or Leader	Trainer of children	Rank and File bell ringers	Comments
Role description and PCC appointed	YES			
DBS Check	YES	YES		Query status of Supervised trainer
Basic training Level CO	YES	YES	YES	Renewable each 3 years
Level C1	YES	YES		Renewable each 3 years
Level C2	YES	YES		Renewable each 3 years
Level S1	YES			
Level S2	YES			

I have made no reference so far to "vulnerable adults" since this category is a contentious matter. There appears to be a difference between legal requirements as defined under the 2012 Protection of Freedoms Act and the latest definition issued by the Church which is as follows:

“a person aged 18 or over whose ability to protect himself or herself from violence, abuse, neglect or exploitation is significantly impaired through physical or mental disability or illness, old age, emotional fragility or distress, or otherwise; and for that purpose, the reference to being impaired is being temporarily or indefinitely impaired”

Following the 2012 Act, the definition of vulnerable adult was restricted to those in institutional or social care situations and I have not come across any instances of bell ringing being involved with training or supervising adults on behalf of such agencies.

In some Dioceses training modules are available on-line and whilst this does remove time attending lectures it does remove the opportunity for exchange of experience and views. There have been moves for training to be given on a delegated basis from the Diocese and possibly available to be given by fellow bell -ringers. This concession does mean that the circumstances peculiar to ringers can be accommodated within presentations thus improving the relevance of the information provided.

Another ongoing concern is that of treatment of visiting ringers and demands, whether by Parish or encouraged by Diocese, to seek “vetting” of visitors. Visitors may come to a tower as individuals or as a group as part of an outing or for a peal / quarter peal attempt. In the normal course of events none of these visitors are engaged in a regulated activity and there is no need for any confirmation of “DBS check” credit-worthiness. If a group includes juniors then the requirement for a DBS checked driver and permission from parent or guardian should have already been met as per CCCBR guidelines.

In the instance of a meeting or training session organised by the local ringing society, whilst it might be a one-off situation it is recommended that a DBS checked person be in charge or present. Training sessions might of course be of a regular nature and frequency triggering regulated activity needs. An individual “visitor” attending specifically to assist with teaching of young people should be DBS certified.

Finally, there is the question of treatment of persons who are either ex-offenders or have restriction orders placed upon them. Unless such persons have a specific barring from being in the presence of young people, then there is no reason why they should not join in ringing in an adult or mixed age activity *provided* they are not undertaking face to face training. The ability for tower leaders, let alone church authorities, to check the status of every ringer who visits a tower would imply either identity cards held by every one of 40,000 ringers or a doorstep interrogation which is totally unacceptable. There have been instances of ringers being refused visits even where restrictions are being complied with. The whole issue is very difficult to resolve since it relies upon the knowledge and discretion tower leaders being accepted and supported by local Parish authority.

I have had meetings with Church House, the lead Bishop for Safeguarding and my local Diocese and concerns and uncertainties relating to bell ringers and others have been raised. The Guidance documents issued by the Church are all subject to review and I will keep in mind the need to achieve good understanding with ringers and will update through the *Ringing World* as appropriate.

In the mean- time, I would reiterate my message given in March that as church workers we need to maintain good relationships and recognise our role in the field of Safeguarding.

Chris Mew, Safeguarding Adviser to CCCBR Tower Stewardship