

Safeguarding Guidance for Church Bell Towers

Purpose

Church bell towers are an important part of parish life and ministry. Bell ringers frequently work together in confined spaces, often involving adults, children and young people, visitors, learners and members of the wider community. As with all church activities, appropriate safeguarding arrangements should be in place to promote a safe and welcoming environment for everyone.

This guidance sets out safeguarding expectations and recommended good practice for parishes, tower captains and bell ringing groups operating within the Diocese.

1. Safeguarding Training

All bell ringers attached to a parish tower must undertake safeguarding training appropriate to their role.

As a minimum:

- All attached bell ringers should complete the Church of England Basic Awareness safeguarding training.
- Bell Tower Captains and any person exercising leadership or management responsibility within a tower should complete the Church of England Leadership Safeguarding Training.
- Refresher training should be completed in accordance with current Church of England safeguarding requirements.

Parishes should maintain a record of safeguarding training undertaken by all attached ringers.

2. Information Held by the Parish

The Incumbent, Churchwardens and Parish Safeguarding Officer (PSO) should be aware of who is regularly ringing within their tower.

It is recommended that Tower Captains provide the parish with:

- A current list of all attached ringers.
- Contact details for those ringers.
- Details of safeguarding training completed.
- Confirmation that appropriate safer recruitment arrangements have been undertaken where required.

The parish should review this information periodically to ensure records remain accurate and up to date.

3. Membership of Bell Ringing Associations

It is recommended as good practice that all attached ringers are members of either:

- The Kent County Association of Change Ringers (KCACR), or
- The Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (CCCBR), or
- Another recognised bell ringing association where appropriate.

Membership of a recognised ringing organisation provides an additional level of accountability and access to nationally recognised standards and guidance.

Where an attached ringer is not a member of a recognised bell ringing association, this should be identified on the list provided to the Incumbent, Churchwardens and PSO.

The parish should discuss any such cases with the Diocesan Safeguarding Team, who can advise on whether any further safeguarding enquiries or safeguards are required before the individual participates in ringing activities.

4. Visiting Bands and Unattached Ringers

Parishes frequently welcome visiting bands and ringers from other towers.

Where a visiting band wishes to ring at a parish tower, it is recommended that:

- The Band Leader or Tower Captain is a member of a recognised local or national bell ringing association.
- The Band Leader or Tower Captain has undertaken safeguarding training, ideally Church of England Leadership Safeguarding Training or equivalent.

Where this is not the case, the parish should seek advice from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team before granting access to the tower.

When seeking advice, the parish should provide:

- The name of the visiting band.
- Details of the Band Leader or Tower Captain.
- The parish, tower or organisation from which the group originates.

Where necessary, the Diocesan Safeguarding Team may liaise with safeguarding colleagues in another diocese or organisation to establish whether there are any known safeguarding concerns that require consideration before ringing takes place.

5. Individuals with Relevant Convictions, Charges or Investigations

The safety and wellbeing of all participants must remain paramount.

Any individual who:

- Has been convicted of a violent or sexual offence;
- Is currently charged with a violent or sexual offence; or
- Is currently under investigation in relation to a violent or sexual offence,

must not participate in bell ringing activities at a parish tower until a safeguarding risk assessment has been completed by the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

The purpose of the risk assessment is to:

- Consider any identified risks.
- Determine whether those risks can be appropriately managed.
- Establish whether a safeguarding agreement or safety plan is required.
- Assess whether the parish and Tower Captain can implement and monitor any safeguards identified.

Only once this process has been completed and any required safeguards are in place should participation in ringing activities be considered.

The Diocese reserves the right to advise that participation is not appropriate where identified risks cannot be safely managed.

6. Code of Conduct

It is recommended that all parish towers adopt and promote the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers' Code for Ringing.

[Code for Ringing – CCCBR](#)

The Code provides clear expectations regarding:

- Respectful behaviour.
- Inclusion and welcome.
- Appropriate conduct.
- Safety and wellbeing.
- Raising concerns.

A copy of the Code should be made available to all ringers and visiting bands, and Tower Captains should actively promote adherence to its principles.

Raising Safeguarding Concerns

Any safeguarding concern arising in connection with bell ringing activities should be reported promptly in accordance with the parish safeguarding procedures and the Church of England's safeguarding guidance.

Advice can be sought at any time from the Diocesan Safeguarding Team.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All those involved in bell ringing should contribute to creating a culture that is safe, respectful and welcoming for all.