



Central Council of Church Bell Ringers

General statement on Safeguarding Children in Towers

There are moral and legal responsibilities placed upon all adult ringers to protect children (i.e. those under 18 years of age) and adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect¹ who may join in ringing activities. There are expectations and legal requirements contained in legislation, church and government guidance, the details of which are set out in the Council's Guidance Note 3 "Child protection in Bell Towers".

This statement, relates to all Towers where children ring. It updates and replaces the Appendix to Guidance Note No 3 "Child Protection in Bell Towers". It highlights the principal requirements which must be met together with guidelines for good practice in organisation and behaviour. Additional guidance is to be developed in relation to adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect.

Tower Captains, their Deputy / Assistant and bell ringing teachers/trainers must be safely recruited in line with their responsibilities to teach or train children and/or manage those that teach or train children in accordance with the [Church of England Safer Recruitment Practice Guidance](#). It is the responsibility of the Tower Captains and the local PCC to ensure that this happens. In addition the Tower Captain and Deputy / assistant /bell ringing teachers/ trainers must undertake Diocesan safeguarding training, in line with Diocesan expectations, which must be refreshed every three years.

The Church of England requires those that are eligible for a DBS check to have one in the following roles:-

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Supervision by</i> ²	<i>DBS checking by</i> ³	<i>Any new checking</i>
Directly caring for, teaching, training or supervising children by tower captain, deputy/assistant /bell ringing teachers/ trainers or visiting tutors ⁴ .	Tower Captain / Deputy or Assistant	PCC via Diocese	PCC
Transporting children as formal arrangement Irrespective of frequency	Driver organised by the Church or Guild	PCC via Diocese	PCC

¹ An adult is a person aged 18 or over. The Care and Support Statutory Guidance issued under the Care Act 2014 (14.2) by the Department of Health replaces the previously used term 'vulnerable adult' with 'adults experiencing, or at risk of abuse or neglect'. However the term vulnerable adult is retained by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) in its Guide to eligibility for DBS checks and by the Church of England in its Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure which will come into force late next year.

² Supervision: The Church of England defines supervised activity as being where the supervisor, who has been safely recruited and has been DBS checked, is **always** able to see the supervised worker's actions during their work.

³ DBS checks to be requested by the PCC according to the DBS system used in the diocese. It is illegal for an organisation to knowingly allow a person to work with children if they are on the DBS barred list.

⁴ A visiting tutor is one invited to teach bell ringing in a Home Tower and will be in charge of the teaching. This may have been arranged through the Guild or by the Home Tower. The tutor should present their DBS certificate to the Tower Captain or Deputy who will still supervise overall activities.

Activities/roles not eligible for a DBS check

- Ringers in general supporting roles
- Unplanned one-off teaching or deputising in an emergency⁵
- Transporting children as part of arrangements between families

Guidelines for maintaining safer environment for children in the belfry

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 Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser who will advise about any further action. They can then liaise with the Parish Safeguarding Officer.
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.
- 7 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.
- 8 Ensure that the appropriate insurance is in place prior to any teaching, training or ringing session.

Recommended Additional Best Practice safeguards

- 9 All local ringing societies should appoint a Safeguarding Officer, someone who can oversee the performance of safeguarding matters in their area.
- 10 Good liaison should be established between Tower Captains and PCCs and between the Safeguarding Officer of local societies and the Parish and Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser.

- 11 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.

Chris Mew

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December 2015

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

⁵This emergency unplanned teaching/deputising must only happen on one occasion. If the same person volunteers to teach/supervise/care for etc. the children each time that the DBS checked person is absent for whatever reason, then that individual must be checked.