

St Aidan, Bamber Bridge & St Leonard, Walton-le-Dale*Making disciples – Transforming lives***SAFEGUARDING POLICY FOR ST LEONARD'S BELL TOWER**

**THIS DOCUMENT SHOULD BE READ IN CONJUNCTION WITH
THE UNITED BENEFICE SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

The United Benefice of St Aidan and St Leonard is committed to

- Promoting a safer environment and culture.
- Safely recruiting and supporting all those with any responsibility related to children, young people and vulnerable adults within the church.
- Responding promptly to every safeguarding concern or allegation.
- Caring pastorally for victims/survivors of abuse and other affected persons.
- Caring pastorally for those who are the subject of concerns or allegations of abuse and other affected persons.
- Responding to those that may pose a present risk to others.

Child Protection in Bell Towers

The Incumbent, Churchwardens and PCC of any parish have a legal and primary responsibility to maintain a safe environment for all people in the Tower and elsewhere on Church premises and this entails particular actions in the case of children and young people. In practice, where ringing is concerned, this responsibility is discharged through the Tower Captain whose appointment, together with any formal Deputies, should be agreed with the Church administration. It is important that there is a good working relationship between the Tower Captain and Church Officials.

"Protecting Young Ringers" (see Appendix 1 below) outlines those actions necessary for maintaining a safe environment. The PCC endorses these recommendations, and they should be on display in the Tower. Following these guidelines will ensure that young people can be fully and safely involved with ringing activities and that must be a priority for all concerned. The Tower Captain should be aware of and work in harmony with Parish Safeguarding policies.

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.
8. 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.
9. Ensure that the appropriate insurance is in place prior to any teaching, training or ringing session.
10. All local ringing societies should appoint a Safeguarding Officer, someone who can oversee the performance of safeguarding matters in their area.
11. 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.
12. 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.
13. 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.
14. 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.
15. A copy of this policy should be displayed on the bell tower notice board.

Appendix 1

Protecting Young Ringers

Protecting Young Ringers Guidelines for Maintaining a Safe Environment 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 Permission To Ring Form may be downloaded from www.leicesterddg.org.uk. The parents of young people already engaged in ringing should be asked to complete a Permission To Ring 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 camera as a training tool, and the Permission To Ring Form should make this clear. The recording 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.

General Guidance

Legal requirements for working with Children

In the past many Church workers, both paid and voluntary, have according to circumstance been expected to undergo Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for activities involving children. Such checks stem partly from the House of Bishops Policy Document "Protecting All God's children" re-issued in November 2010 which gives guidelines. The document is complemented by the document "Practice Guidance: Safer Recruitment" ratified by Bishops in July 2015. However, in October 2009 new legal requirements were phased in under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 and apply in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The Act was subject to Government review and report in February 2011, and subsequently there was amendment under the Protection of Freedoms Act which became law in May 2012.

Under the 2012 Protection of Freedoms Act checks for working with vulnerable adults are confined solely to those requiring personal care and there is normally no requirement relating to ringing activities. However, additional guidance is to be developed for circumstances where adults may suffer or be at risk of abuse.

Regulated activities

The 2006 Act defined those activities which would legally require Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks for workers dealing with children whether in a paid or voluntary capacity. The key consideration is where an adult has the opportunity to develop a relationship of trust with a child stemming from close and regular contact. The teaching, training or instruction, care or supervision of children and also in certain health and care institutions. For bellringers this has been clarified as being the activity of hands-on teaching of children by the group leader or other designated person. In a mixed group, other adult ringers are deemed to be a peer group assisting or under the supervision of the group leader. The legal requirement is, therefore, confined to those actually physically teaching the young juniors on a regular basis and the various possible scenarios are shown on the appended table. DBS checks should not be otherwise necessary and in this respect attempts to blanket check all ringers including those supervised by a leader are illegal.

DBS checks

DBS checks can only be applied for in relation to positions, including those relating to children, by organisations which are registered with the DBS. DBS Applications are made online via The Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPA), and applicants will be assisted through this process by Mr Len Weir, Mrs Anne Whittle or Mrs Heather Thomas, the Parish Recruiters who are registered with Thirtyone:eight.

Sex Offenders Registers

There are a number of different lists of sex offenders currently held by Government organisations and in future these will be consolidated together with reports from other agencies such as Police and Social Services. Where a person is already registered to work with children in Regulated Activities, should their status change as a result of the monitoring process, they may be barred from such activity. In these circumstances organisations employing or using the individual will be immediately notified provided they have registered for updates. It is an offence to knowingly employ an individual who is barred. If a ringer is known to be on the Sex Offenders Register they must not be allowed to engage in Regulated Activities as it will be an offence.

Known Offenders

A known offender, like any other seeking rehabilitation, may be able to take part in other ringing activities depending on (a) the nature of their offence, (b) any court restrictions on their activities, (c) perceived risk and (d) the level of supervision that can be afforded. Both the Church of England and the Police have agreed procedures known as Multiple Agency Protection Arrangements (MAPPA) for dealing with offenders returning to circulate in society. The church position is set out in Section 8 of the House of Bishops document "Protecting all God's Children". Any proposal for

such a person to be accommodated must be reviewed very seriously with all concerned parties including the incumbent, Ringing Society and Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor and must have due regard to absolute safety of children and the reassurance of parents. A written agreement with the church must be obtained, this generally is between the individual, the parish and the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor. It must always be borne in mind that the incumbent and churchwardens have ultimate sanction on allowing access to the Tower. Agreements for an offender to take part in church activities are kept in confidence on a “need to know” basis as part of the pastoral care ethic regarding rehabilitation of the individual. The treatment of offenders can be an emotive subject for ringers, and each must follow their own conscience. However, ringers should seek to support their churches standpoint on rehabilitation, being mindful of restrictions and need for supervision. It is quite unacceptable for offenders to be named publicly on social media or through ringing society channels, nor should ringers act upon hearsay.

Potential offenders

An important aspect of the 2006 Act is the provision for informing authorities regarding any persons who may present a risk to children. In this context it is a legal duty for employers or users of volunteers, referred to as “Regulated Activity Providers”, to inform the DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) of any withdrawal of an individual from a post because of child abuse, any behaviour which gives cause for concern but is short of disciplinary procedure, conduct of a sexual nature or where the individual is believed to present a risk.

Where there is insufficient evidence to hand but concerns warrant, the case should be referred to the appropriate body which may be the ringing Society and Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor, and the police or social services.

Facing the unthinkable

Where there are indications by a child’s behaviour or conversation that abuse may be taking place, what response or action should be taken? The following are practical tips which should assist but are only initial safeguards. If abuse is disclosed some action must be taken.

- ☐ Listen to the child.
 - ☐ Do not ask any leading questions such as who did it?
 - ☐ Give the child your attention but do not over-react or show shock or distaste. Try to listen calmly and try not to show strong emotions about what is being said.
 - ☐ Say that you understand what they are saying and that you take it seriously but be careful not to say much more at this stage.
 - ☐ There might be elements of fancy or imagination in what children say but there will be a reason for having said it.
 - ☐ When children speak to someone outside the family they are generally looking for some help but they will probably be ambivalent and uncertain about precisely what.
 - ☐ Disclosures may be direct but are sometimes very indirect.
 - ☐ Do not make any promises such as it will be alright – it might not be. Nor I won’t tell anybody – you almost certainly will have to.
 - ☐ **Seek immediate advice from the Benefice Safeguarding Officer in the parish: Len Weir (07583 759917); or the Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor: Catherine Smith (07711 485170); or contact Thirstyone: eight 24-hour helpline (0845 120 4550).**
- If you have serious concerns that a child is at immediate risk, call 999**

If it is a child’s behaviour which gives cause for concern, consider whether

- ☐ There are bruises or other injuries, especially when regularly seen or of an unusual nature
- ☐ A child is nervous or wary of adults as though expecting chastisement
- ☐ The child is withdrawn, has solitary ways of behaviour that go beyond occasional bad mood
- ☐ Displays extreme aggression or bullying
- ☐ Displays sexualised behaviour, especially towards younger children
- ☐ Shows signs of neglect

In any of these cases see if colleagues share your concerns and speak to your incumbent. It may also be helpful to talk to your Parish Safeguarding Officer or Diocesan Safeguarding Advisor. It is most important to remember that if such behaviour is triggered by matters at home rather than at church it may NOT be appropriate in the first place to speak to parents.

Related Documents:

- i. *“Protecting Young Ringers: Guidelines for Maintaining a Safe Environment for Young People in the Belfry” Central Council of Church Bell Ringers*
- ii. *Permission to Ring Consent Form*

Agreed at The United Benefice Joint PCC (Parochial Church Council)

Meeting on 26th June 2025

To be read alongside the Parish Safeguarding Policy

To be reviewed in June 2026

Vicar: Revd Stephen Martin

Church Wardens: Mr Arthur J Fish; Mr Lester Metcalf; Mrs Heather Thomas.