

**Diocese of Canterbury**  
**Safeguarding Guidelines for Bell Ringers - October 2015**

The Diocese has previously issued guidance about safeguarding procedures, including DBS disclosures, in relation to bell ringing. It is now appropriate to review these guidelines in the light of the House of Bishops latest safeguarding children policy “Protecting all God’s Children” 2010 and the accompanying House of Bishops document “Safeguarding Guidelines relating to Safer Recruitment”.

If your bell ringing team does not contain children or vulnerable adults there is no need to create a specific safeguarding policy or for any members of the bell ringing team to be DBS checked. However the ringing team will be covered by the PCC’s general safeguarding policy. It is the responsibility of Tower Captains to familiarise themselves with that general safeguarding policy which includes emphasis on safe recruitment.

If your bell ringing team does contain children (anyone under 18) or vulnerable adults it will be necessary to formulate a specific safeguarding policy for the group. The Diocese and the Kent Association of Change Ringers (KACR) commend the guidance provided nationally by the Central Council of Church Ringers. This can be accessed via the KACR website <http://www.kacr.org.uk/county/safeguarding>

As part of that policy DBS disclosures will be required for:

- Tower Captains and Vice Captains if applicable
- Ringing Masters
- Adult Ringers who train or teach children or are designated to supervise the welfare of children

In bell ringing groups the leader of the group and at least one person designated to supervise the welfare of the children/vulnerable adults should be safely recruited including a DBS check. In practice it is appropriate and sensible for more than one Adult Ringer to be DBS checked taking responsibility, including teaching/training responsibilities, for the children/vulnerable adults on a rota ensuring cover when people are away.

The Tower Captain has the overall responsibility for the operation and monitoring of the safeguarding policy and procedures. The Tower Captain may share the supervision responsibility with other designated Adult Ringer(s) who have been DBS checked.

If a bell ringing team containing children or vulnerable adults visits another tower to ring the safeguarding responsibility lies with the visiting team.

These new arrangements will mean that the majority of the bell ringing team will not be DBS checked. This therefore puts greater responsibility onto the shoulders of the Tower Captains and those designated to supervise/teach/train children and vulnerable adults. It is essential that, if the need arises, they feel able to challenge any inappropriate behaviour of others.

If a matter comes to the attention of the Tower Captain which causes him/her concern – e.g. a new ringer is known to have previous offences or a dubious reputation from another tower – the Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (Elaine Rose 01233 720930) and/or the Parish Safeguarding Coordinator are available for help and advice and should be contacted.

Tower Captains and those designated to supervise/teach/train are very strongly encouraged to attend Diocesan children and vulnerable adult safeguarding training. Forthcoming courses are often advertised on the child protection/adult protection sections of the Diocesan website [www.canterburydiocese.org](http://www.canterburydiocese.org)

The most important reason for following best practice and requiring a safeguarding policy including DBS disclosures in appropriate circumstances is the moral requirement to protect children. However, there are other considerations as well. If a child were to suffer harm as a result of a failure to follow best practice, then the reputation of the church community would be damaged and the church's mission would be compromised. Also, insurers require the PCC to follow official guidance and best practice and any PCC not doing so runs the risk of invalidating its insurance cover if anything were to go wrong. Finally, it is a reassurance to parents and/or carers of vulnerable adults to know that the ringing team have a safeguarding policy, backed by safe recruitment and people designated to ensure that the policy is adhered to.

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