

## Safeguarding update

The preparation of an update regarding Safeguarding had commenced before the events in York but is nevertheless a timely reminder of where ringers stand in relation to requirements of the Church.

In the space of just over a year there have been four major documents emanating from Church House, Westminster relating to safeguarding. Three of these were:

- June 2015 Practice Guidance : Safer Recruitment - Revised version issued July, 2016
- January 2016 Practice Guidance : Safeguarding Learning and Development Framework
- October 2016 Promoting a Safer Church The Church of England's Safeguarding Policy for children , young people and adults.

The latter document was issued for consultation and has been circulated to all society secretaries for comment by their respective Safeguarding Officers, the Central Council responding as well. Herewith a reminder that consultation ends on 11th November, so comments quickly please.

In addition to the above documents, there was a joint "General Statement on Safeguarding Children in Towers" issued by CCCBR in collaboration with the Church of England National Safeguarding Team. This statement was issued to Diocesan offices and society secretaries in January 2016 and was subject of an article in the Ringing World.

At the risk of repeating some aspects covered earlier, the following note is a reminder of key processes which are required of ringers who lead towers and teach young

people. In each parish where bells are rung and teaching of minors is involved, there is now a mandatory requirement for the "leader" (Tower Captain) to have a "Role Description" which clearly sets out responsibilities; this may be drawn up with the Parish Safeguarding Officer (a sample "Role description will be posted on the CCCBR website). A confidential declaration covering past conduct is required and a DBS check completed. If at any stage the individual does not complete these requirements, their confirmation in post will not proceed. It may be good practice to have a number of the band DBS checked to act as deputies and even where no young people are at present being trained, a DBS cleared leader will meet potential demand. It would be bad if a young person presented themselves and could not be taught until "certified adults" were available.

In applying for a new DBS certificate or for a renewal, it is recommended that all applicants tick the requirement for the DBS Update Service AND for automatic renewal of that facility. The Update Service means that an individual's records are continuously updated to include any possible relevant details including investigations, cautions or convictions. The whole point is that, for most people, there will be no change from a "clear" certificate and this can, with permission of the individual, be verified online. This in turn means that if someone is moving from one parish to another a new certificate is not required for the same activity (i.e. working with children), since their history is online and up to date. Key points: application for the update service **MUST** be made at the time of application or within nineteen days of issue to the individual of their certificate. Furthermore, the automatic updating can only be requested at time of application

otherwise this service must be renewed each year. Complicated, yes, but the good thing is that it is all free for volunteers. Applications for renewal or new DBS certificates has now become much more easy with most Dioceses now operating on electronic systems.

Quite apart from the DBS Update Service, the latest Church Guidelines recognise a degree of portability, with certificates issued in one parish (for, say, bellringing teaching) being recognised for the same activity in other parishes but ONLY within the same Diocese. This will facilitate a lot of the mutual assistance which exists in ringing, also helping at Guild training days. We know that many ringers do assist towers across Diocesan boundaries and the question has been asked as to whether our unique activity may receive a fully portable "peripatetic" use. Certificates are not portable between activities, so one held for work with children would not be valid, for example, for a vulnerable adult role such as "befriending" elderly parishioners.

A very important development is that of alterations to Canon Law 34 under the Safeguarding and Clergy Discipline Measure which came into effect from 1st October, 2016. From this date, all incumbents and PCCs must have "due regard" to Safeguarding Guidelines and Practice which means that there will normally be no derogation from implementing those requirements. PCCs will be required to make a statement within their Annual Report to the effect that they have complied with their duties. Some Dioceses are already carrying out audits of safeguarding processes. Finally, the measure gives more extensive powers for suspending clergy, churchwardens and PCC members on safeguarding grounds.

There have been concerns raised about the

level of safeguarding training which is now expected and which is described in the Learning and Development Framework manual. Regarding Tower Captains, this could extend to two modules in the first year and a third every fifth year, a total of five hours training. In addition, there are a further five specialist modules totalling twelve hours which are classed as "desirable". At present there appears to be no statutory requirement but the burden upon trainers and attendees alike could be heavy and delegated training an unresolved issue.

Very pertinent sections of the October 2016 consultation document refer to provisions for protecting "whistle-blowers" whether paid or volunteer workers. Similarly, there is a clear policy on giving pastoral care to those who are, for whatever reason, under investigation or are considered a risk.

The Church in Wales has been developing its own policies, which came into effect on 11th April, 2016 and which are similar for bell ringers in England. Whereas the first point of contact in England is the Diocesan Safeguarding Officer, there are in Wales Provincial Safeguarding Officers for North Wales and South Wales, with supporting officers covering six areas. In Scotland, the Protection of Vulnerable Groups scheme continues, there being a confusing reference to Disclosure Scotland in Section 8 of the Church of England documents.

There are still questions which remain to be clarified by the Church National Safeguarding team but the foregoing sets out where we stand today. Queries regarding safeguarding are regularly received and are answered as quickly as possible to the best of our ability.

CHRIS MEW  
for CCCBR Tower Stewardship Committee