The Four Shires Guild of Bell Ringers Safeguarding of Children, Young Persons and Vulnerable Adults Policy

Policy Statement

The Four Shires Guild of Bell Ringers (hereafter referred to as FSG) is committed to the safeguarding of child, young person and vulnerable adult bell ringers at all events run by the FSG and is committed to supporting the Dioceses of Coventry, Gloucester, Oxford and Worcester's safeguarding practices in all of the FSG's associated towers.

This policy applies to all FSG organised events and is based on policies and advice provided by the House of Bishops, the Safeguarding e-Manual, the four Dioceses, and the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (Appendix 1). All FSG members should familiarise themselves with this policy. In addition to this Tower Captains should familiarise themselves with their Parish and Diocesan requirements as safeguarding in each tower is the responsibility of the Tower Captain and the PCC.

The FSG has a named Safeguarding Officer who is available to provide advice. The FSG Safeguarding Officer will also ensure that FSG members are informed of relevant legislation and good practice. It is the responsibility of the FSG Safeguarding Officer to monitor compliance with this policy.

FSG Safeguarding Officer details: Matthew Turvey – matthew.turvey.89@hotmail.co.uk 07742606299

The FSG advises that FSG members who teach across more than one diocese e.g. where groups of members come together to form ringing schools, share details of DBS checks and C of E training with the Tower Captain and Parish Safeguarding Officers (hereafter referred to as PSOs) of parishes in which they teach, if this is different from their own.

The policy has been approved by FSG officers who will review it, and if necessary update it, annually or more frequently should changing circumstances require this. Ringers who have concerns that this safeguarding policy is not being correctly followed should report this to their PSO or the relevant Diocesan Safeguarding Adviser (hereafter referred to as DSAs).

Definitions

Who is a child or young person? For the purpose of this policy a child or young person is any person under the age of 18 years.

Who is a vulnerable adult? For the purpose of this policy, a vulnerable adult is someone who is 18 years of age and over who needs additional care and support. As a result of their needs, they are unable to protect themselves from harm or exploitation, and are therefore at a higher risk of experiencing abuse or neglect. Whilst most of this policy relates to the protection of children, we should not lose sight of the fact that on occasions there may be adult ringers who require our support and protection.

Responsibilities of FSG Officers and Nominated Leaders

Training and DBS Checks

FSG officers will have completed Basic Awareness, Foundation and Domestic Abuse training and be checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) - Enhanced without Barring, in addition to this the FSG Ringing Master will be checked by the DBS - Enhanced with Barring, as their role involves frequently teaching child, young person or vulnerable adults. In organising events, the FSG will ensure that those who are running FSG events are appropriately selected, trained and, if appropriate, vetted for the role. Any questions over an individual's suitability should be raised with the FSG Safeguarding Officer. Those running events must be prepared to show evidence of Basic Awareness, Foundation and Domestic Abuse training and DBS Enhanced without Barring (with Barring for frequent events) check to the FSG Safeguarding Officer. Those running FSG events should also be aware of the FSG's Ecclesiastical Insurance Policy's position regarding child, young person or vulnerable adult ringers – details of the policy can be requested from the FSG Secretary.

Risk Assessments

In preparing to hold an FSG event it may be appropriate to undertake a risk assessment. If this is necessary, guidance on completing a risk assessment together with a typical template may be found on the CCCBR website. Should you require guidance as to whether you should complete a risk assessment, please contact The FSG Safeguarding Officer. Every effort should be made to ensure that First Aid help can be quickly obtained either from a member of the band or from someone living near the church and that rapid contact can be made with the emergency services – for example by having a mobile phone in each tower. Never allow children up amongst the bells apart from (if it is safe to do so) an initial demonstration visit and for the purposes of learning simple maintenance if they are accompanied by DBS checked adults and are never alone. Records of attendance at all FSG events should be taken and retained for at least 3 years.

In-person Activities

At FSG events children and young persons will not be left alone with a single adult. At all FSG events involving children or young persons, there should be an appropriate ratio of Trainers to Trainees; this should be gauged by those organising the event, but ideally there should be always at least two adults with any child or young person, and there should be at least one trainer of each gender with a mixed gender group. At every FSG event when there is a child, young person or vulnerable adult present an adult will be nominated to be responsible for safeguarding on that occasion. This adult should be aware of the behaviour in the ringing room and be prepared to take action if any inappropriate activity occurs. Everyone present at the FSG event should be able to identify the nominated person and could approach them if necessary. This adult should be identified on the attendance register for the occasion and should also be DBS checked (Enhanced without Barring as a minimum) as should the trainers at each event.

Online Activities

Those FSG officers organising online activities must all be aware that it can be much harder to control who has access to events, meetings, practices, and communities on any digital platform. Control can be managed by the use of appropriate security measures available within each of the platforms or software in question. Those leading online meetings should make themselves aware of such controls and be able to use them to manage these. Good practice must be followed for such events which should include:

- Setting some ground rules with the group and explain how the activity will work.
- Parents of children and young persons should be invited to take part in or supervise the child/young person's involvement in the activity if possible.
- Asking those participating in the group to wear suitable clothing, as should anyone else in the household.
- Devices should be used in appropriate areas, for example, not in bedrooms; and where possible be against a neutral background.
- Activities should be kept to a reasonable length of time and it should be clear how long it will last.
- Language used should be professional and that should include any family members in the background.
- Any safeguarding concerns should be dealt with using the same guidance as if it were an in-person event.
- Always use cameras to see who is involved in the meeting and restrict the use of breakout rooms.

Parental Consent
Parental consent will be obtained by the FSG before a child or young person participates in an FSG event, which will also include consent for transport to/from/between FSG events where this is not a private arrangement between friends. Children, young persons and vulnerable adults must be safely seated in the car according to current legislation. Where there are children, young persons or vulnerable adults being transported, there must be two adults present in the vehicle, at least one of whom must have a valid DBS certificate (Enhanced with Barring if solely for children). Parents should be advised that they are responsible for delivering and collecting their child or young person at the beginning and ending of the day.

Photography
If the FSG takes photographs (or makes any other images) of children for publication in a newsletter or newspaper or on a website etc. then parental permission must be obtained. A child or young person's first name only should be linked to his/her photograph. Permission must be sought and received from all participants (and the parents/guardians of those under 18) prior to any photographs being taken and/or published (for example, on the FSG website or newsletter). Where video recordings or photography might be used as part of the training process, ensure parents and guardians are aware. Content should be destroyed at the end of the event unless specific consent for its retention is agreed. Still in doubt? Any question or queries around this policy and guidance should be raised with the FSG Safeguarding Officer. If you have any safeguarding concerns, please contact the FSG Safeguarding Officer or relevant PSO or DSA.

Communication
Care should be taken when emailing groups: use the 'blind copy' to conceal individual's addresses; if using email to make arrangements for FSG events consider copying in the FSG Safeguarding Officer, Tower or FSG secretary as well so that the message is in the public domain. Group communications (such as email or What's App) should be through parents initially. As children approach adulthood (16+) they can be included in groups in their own right. Every effort should be made to ensure content of messages is appropriate and that addresses of young persons are concealed where possible.

Responsibilities of FSG Members

All members of the FSG have a strict duty never to subject anyone to any form of harm/abuse or bully any other FSG member. This means that it is unacceptable, to undertake:
Emotional Abuse • Being unfriendly, excluding, sending harmful messages, tormenting.
Physical Abuse • Pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching or any use of violence. Sometimes physical contact may be necessary to protect them from harming themselves or others (e.g. removing a person from the path of a rope, or to prevent a non-ringing person from handling a rope)
Sexual Abuse • Unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.
• To do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves or an accompanying adult can do for them; this includes going to the toilet with a child.
• To give or show to a child or young person anything which could be construed as being pornographic
Discrimination • Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures, homophobic, transphobic or sexist comments, jokes about disabled people • Verbal name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
Generally Inappropriate Behaviour • To allow or engage in sexually suggestive behaviour within a child's sight or hearing, or make suggestive comments to or within earshot of a child.
• To seek or agree to meet children anywhere outside normal ringing times and outside the tower without the full prior knowledge and agreement of their parents or guardians
• To give personal details (e.g. your address or phone number) to a child or young person. There may be reasons for the child to have these details, but it is advisable to give the details straight to a parent
(This list is provided to give examples. it is not meant to be exhaustive – please see Appendix 2 for more guidance)

The FSG recognises that abuse can take many different forms and varying degrees of severity, but it remains the responsibility of all to remain vigilant and to report any inappropriate behaviour. When using digital platforms to access FSG activities it is still paramount to continue to follow all the procedures and good practice guidelines that have been highlighted in this policy.

Guidance for the Tower Captain of an FSG associated Tower

• All tower captains should be aware of the House of Bishops, their Diocesan, the CCCBR, their Parish and the FSG policies on safeguarding children, young persons and vulnerable adults.
• As church officers, all tower captains should have undertaken Basic Awareness, Foundation (formerly module C1) and Domestic Abuse training. Some tower captains, who have a more significant impact on the safeguarding culture of the church community will need to complete face to face Leadership training with their Diocese, the FSG Safeguarding Officer or DSA can advise.
• The tower captain and anyone who teaches children or young persons frequently will need Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) with Barring clearance. DBS clearance certificates can be used in other towers if in date and in the same context. That is, DBS obtained through the parish office for the specific activity related to ringing and teaching of ringing, can be used for teaching and supervision in other towers and on courses. DBS obtained for other activities may not be used unless portability was applied for at the time of issue. When working with children, young persons and vulnerable adults no relevant offences will be considered as spent. The FSG must emphasise that it is the responsibility of the local PSO to administer the DBS process and procedures. If relevant, please arrange any DBS checks through your local PSO.
• All ringers must complete the online training module Basic Awareness (formerly C0).
• See Appendix 3 for a safeguarding poster for towers & Appendix 4 for a tower captain role description.

Guidance for Tower Captains hosting visiting groups
The FSG make the recommendation that the following sentence should be included when giving permission to visiting groups to ring in FSG associated towers: *'This tower follows the safeguarding policy of the Church of England Coventry/Gloucester/Oxford/Worcester (delete as appropriate) Diocese, and expects all visiting bands to conform to this policy'.*

Reporting Procedures

Where a concern is raised regarding the safeguarding of a child, young person or vulnerable adult, then the matter should be reported as per Appendix 5. Any incidents or complaints of inappropriate behaviour will be subjected to review by the FSG Safeguarding Officer and may be referred to appropriate authorities in line with best safeguarding practice. In all circumstances, concerns, both within a local tower or at an FSG event, can be raised with the FSG Safeguarding Officer who can advise as required in line with the government "Working Together to Safeguard Children" statutory guidance. (a link to the guidance is provided at the end of the policy)

If a ringer is found to have a record of inappropriate behaviour, or is convicted of offences against children, the FSG will take the matter extremely seriously. In consultation with the relevant DSA, the FSG Safeguarding Officer will receive advice on the appropriate precautions for the protection of child, young person and vulnerable adult ringers that are included in any agreement the relevant Diocese decides to make with the offender regarding their activities. Depending on the nature of the risk, these precautions may include increased supervision of the ringer, or a requirement that the ringer agrees not to attend practices or other ringing activities in any tower where children are present.

If the behaviour of the ringer in question is judged to have been so severe as to bring the FSG into disrepute, then the FSG may consider exercising its established process of censure or exclusion from membership as described in the FSG rules. This would be separate from any agreement made by the relevant DSA and the ringer concerned.

Useful links:

• Church of England Safeguarding e-Manual
• Statutory Government Guidance "Working Together to Safeguard Children"
• CCCBR Stewardship and Tower Management
• NSPCC • CEOP • Think You Know • NAPAC