



Ancient Society of College Youths Policy for the Protection of Young People

Throughout this document, the phrases “young people” and “young person” refer to individuals under the age of 18 or older people having a mental age of less than 18 (sometimes referred to as “vulnerable adults”). This definition is consistent with that applied by the Church of England and the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, although other organisations use different definitions. It is recognised that members may not be qualified to identify vulnerable adults with certainty. Care should be taken if there are indications that people may fall into this category.

The Society is predominantly an adult organisation and does not undertake teaching. However, it is its policy to elect suitable young people over the age of 14 to membership and to encourage young potential members to take part in its activities. As such, it has a responsibility to ensure that young people are appropriately protected and that they and their parent(s) or guardian(s) can have confidence that young people can attend Society events in safety.

The Diocese of London, in common with other Dioceses, has a Child Protection Policy. This sets out different requirements for church groups and outside bodies using church premises. The Society does not exactly fit either of these descriptions at the towers in Central London where it normally rings. However, it is in its interests to ensure that nothing takes place which may have a detrimental effect on its standing with the church, to comply with any specific requirements of the incumbents at the churches where it rings and to observe the spirit of the Diocesan Policy.

As it is not possible to foresee every possible eventuality in this Policy, judgement and common sense should be applied in its application.

This Policy was agreed by the Society at a Business Meeting held on Tuesday 9th February 2010 and remains in effect until withdrawn or superseded by a Business Meeting. Any amendments to this Policy require the approval of a Business Meeting.

General Principles

All people attending Society events are entitled to be confident that in doing so they will not suffer harm. “Harm” includes any form of physical, mental or sexual abuse, injury through the reckless or irresponsible behaviour of others, bullying, intimidation etc. Whilst this principle applies to everyone, particular care is needed when young people attend Society events. What may be acceptable behaviour between mature adults could result in harm for young persons.

All Society Members have a responsibility to ensure that the above principles are adhered to and that young people in particular are not put at risk of harm. The Officers and other Members have a responsibility to provide an environment at Society events which protects young people from harm. If Members observe any behaviour which could constitute a breach of these principles they should take appropriate action. This should include informing the Officer or other Member responsible for organising the event. In the case of ringing activities, this will normally be the Master or other Member delegated by him to take charge. For other events it will normally be the Secretary. The responsible person will have been briefed by an expert in child protection issues as to what (if any) further action to take. The Society will keep a register of all Members who have been briefed.

Practical Considerations

Young people attending Society events should normally be accompanied by a parent, guardian or other responsible adults (at least 2 of the latter wherever possible). Where a young person attends an event unaccompanied or is accompanied by someone other than a parent or guardian reference should be made to the parent(s) or guardian(s) in the case of doubt. The age of the person concerned may be taken into consideration when deciding whether to raise an enquiry, particularly when they are approaching their 18th birthday, are generally mature, are known to a significant number of those attending and/or are known to attend ringing events on their own.

Organisers are responsible for ensuring that young people are properly protected when attending Society events. This includes ensuring that clothing is suitable for the activity concerned, that there is no touching or other behaviour which could be considered a sexual advance or grooming, that no inappropriate remarks are made including sexual innuendoes or correction which could be interpreted as bullying, that they are not left alone with an adult other than a parent or guardian and that their ringing is supervised at a level consistent with their age and experience.

In the case of persistent or serious breaches of this policy, it may be appropriate to consider disciplinary measures under Rule 2.4 or other action. Normally any Member considering such action should give notice of a Motion at a Business Meeting of the Society, but where emergency action is necessary to protect individuals or the Society, the Master or Secretary are empowered to impose temporary restrictions pending the next Business Meeting, when they can be reviewed.

Offenders

The Church of England, including the Diocese of London in its document “Protecting Young People” makes it clear that, whilst rehabilitation of offenders is an important priority for the church, protection of young people takes priority over the interests of offenders.

A very small number of ringers, including one or two Society Members, have been convicted of offences against young people. In at least one case, conditions have been applied by the court which restrict their ability to take part in mixed age activities. In addition, the Diocesan Policy has procedures in place if offenders wish to take part in church activities, including bellringing.

It is the Society’s policy that where there is a choice between restricting the activity of offenders or restricting young people, the former will be selected. Where the Officers become aware that a Society Member has been convicted of an offence which could raise issues for the protection of young people, they should consult with the churches at which the Society rings and then consider what (if any) restrictions on the future activities of that Member are appropriate and, if so, make a suitable proposal to a Society Business Meeting. It is also open to any other Member to propose restrictions if they feel it appropriate to do so.

Maintenance of this Policy

The Secretary has responsibility to maintain this Policy and to remain up to date with developments in child protection legislation, Church policy etc.

Policy adopted: 9th February, 2010