

A New Framework for Training Background

Over the years, there have been many initiatives seeking to improve the training of ringers, which historically has varied from the very good to the less good. Some initiatives have taken the line of education, with books about how to teach ringers, and hands-on courses to coach ringers in the art of teaching, and have generally been well received. Others, suggesting some form of regulation, found less favour. One fear that always emerges, is that imposing any minimum standards for teaching would exclude those who either can't or won't improve, and that their loss would cause towers to close for lack of new ringers. The feeling of responsibility to keep towers manned singles out ringing from most other skill based activities, where training is focused solely on the needs of the trainee, but it is a part of our culture.

The most recent initiative to improve the standard of training was very much in keeping with the spirit of non-regulation. The Network for Ringing Training (NRT) can best be described as a 'club for improvers', where those interested in training try to help each other and themselves to become better trainers. Its success shows that many who train ringers care about doing it well, and undoubtedly they benefit from membership. But such a network can only do so much. Its main activity is the exchange of information (with a discussion list, distribution of discussion summaries, periodic conferences, and sharing contact details). Successful training in a tower is about more than individual trainer's skills. It requires a systematic approach to the whole process, how it is managed as well as how it is conducted, and how training skills are developed and passed on for the future.

A new approach

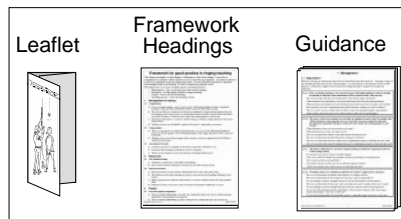
The CC Education Committee has developed a Framework for ringing training that supports such a systematic approach. It covers all aspects of training, and will help you systematically to identify the processes, procedures and techniques most suitable for **your** tower, to make sure that they are implemented, and then to check that it all works as intended.

The Framework provides the starting point, by providing a set of objectives that cover all aspects relevant to training, but it does **not** tell you **how** you should achieve those objectives. It might seem simpler if it did just tell people what they should do, but it doesn't for three good reasons:

- **It wouldn't work** . Towers have different needs, constraints and resources. They don't want a 'one size fits all' solution, and it would be too complex to try to describe all the different possible situations and options in detail. In any case, there is rarely one single 'right' way to do things. What works best in one situation might not work so well in another.
- **It wouldn't wash** . Ringers don't like being dictated to. They will only change the way they do things if they believe it is better for them. Telling them what to do rarely works unless they also understand why. We all prefer to decide what is appropriate in our own particular situation, providing we have enough information to do so.

- **It would remove local responsibility** . If the local band feels responsible for how training is done, its members will make sure that it works. If they don't 'own' the solution, then it is unlikely to be effective (and they will blame someone else if anything goes wrong).

What is the Framework?



The Framework is a set of headings. It is accompanied by an explanatory leaflet and a set of matching Guidance to help you decide what good practice means for your tower, and how to apply it to your tower's training.

It does not tell you how to teach, or how to manage a tower – you can buy books, and go on courses, that do that. It is a foundation on which to build a code of practice for training in your tower. The Framework marks out the extent of the house, with the outlines of each room, and the Guidance helps you to think about what to put in each room, but you decide what goes in the rooms. The value of the Framework is that when you have satisfied yourself about how your tower's needs are best met under each of its headings, you can be confident that you have covered all angles. The section headings are:

Management of training

- Organisation
- Young people
- Assessment of results

Resources

- The training setting
- Physical resources

People

- Personal ringing competence
- Teaching skills
- Development of tutors

Teaching process

- Bell control
- Ringing together
- Change ringing

Under each heading there are several broad statements of good practice, for example:

"Decisions about training are based on reviews of progress".

"Tutors teaching bellhandling are able to intervene in a timely and safe way if necessary".

"Trainees are taught a basic safety drill before they learn to ring".

Each of these statements is a 'good thing' that no tower would wish to be untrue. But (deliberately) none of them tell you **how** to achieve the 'good thing' in your tower, or indeed how to interpret the degree of 'goodness' that your tower should aim for. Only you can answer those questions, though you might choose to seek some advice before doing so.

Using the Framework

There are two broad ways to use the Framework. The primary use is as a tool to help you to review the way you handle training in your tower. By providing a systematic approach, it helps you to cover every angle. If after thinking about each heading, you are satisfied that what you do (or intend to do)

meets the objectives, then you can quite fairly claim that you are applying good practice. How 'good' is up to you. Your tower might aspire to excellence, or it might be content to be adequate. In either case, you should do better with a systematic approach.

Where do you start? How do you know if you are asking the right questions? The Guidance will help you. It uses the same headings as the Framework, with questions under each heading to start you thinking. If your tower is fortunate enough to have a team of experienced trainers and tower managers, then you might not need the Guidance, but most people will, and it is there if you do need it. Answer the questions honestly, and you will be well on the way to understanding how far what you already do meets good practice, and what else if anything you ought to consider doing as well. So:

- Use the headings in the Framework as a guide.
- Use the Guidance notes to stimulate your thoughts.
- Swap ideas with other ringers, and seek advice if you need to.
- Keep some sort of record for later reference.
- Act on any points that you think ought to be improved.

Formal descriptions

There is a second way to use the Framework. Most towers won't need to do this, but one day you might so it is worth being aware of it. Despite the ethos of ringing as an unregulated activity, our increasingly regulated modern world impinges on us from time to time, so we need to take account of the expectations or demands of those on whom we depend. For example:

- Parents of trainees might expect to see evidence of formal training and management processes (of the kind that they have come to expect with other activities).
- PCCs might require evidence that training is managed and conducted in a proper and safe way (because ultimately they are responsible for everything that happens in the church).

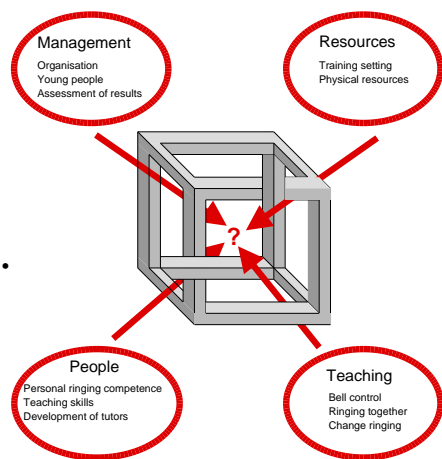
PCCs are normally happy for ringers to manage everything within the tower, but an accident (not necessarily in your tower) might cause them to take a much closer interest. Likewise, the church insurers, or a vocal member of the congregation, might raise concerns about what goes on in the tower. The interest might relate to any aspect, but since training involves inexperienced people, it is likely to attract more attention, and as one of your most important activities, it is important that it should not be unreasonably constrained.

Whatever the cause of demands on you, the more convincingly you respond to any concerns, the more likely a PCC will accept 'your' procedures, and not try to impose anything unsuitable. What they are looking for is some solid assurance that good practice is being applied, but how do you convince non-ringers that the way you do things is OK? Writing things down gives people more confidence, because it is possible to check whether you do what you say you do (the first mark of quality). Comprehensive procedures also give confidence, because things are less likely to 'fall between the cracks'. You might not like

paperwork, but in such situations the best approach is to document how you run training in a way that makes it clear to external parties that you know what you are doing, you have thought through any problems or risks, and you have everything under proper control. The Framework helps you to do this:

- Use the Framework headings for your document.
- Use the Guidance to stimulate your thoughts.
- Under each headline statement, explain (in simple language) how your training regime is consistent with the statement.
- Describe things explicitly, do not use vague generalisations.
- If necessary, justify any compromises that are needed to cater for your particular situation.
- Be honest. If things are adequate, explain why they are. If they are not already adequate, then put right the deficiencies, rather than try to cover them up.
- Don't try to prove that everything is perfect. It probably isn't, it doesn't need to be, and pretending that it is could cause you more problems later.

Training ringers - Have you got all angles covered?



- Want a systematic approach?
 - Need to demonstrate good practice?
- Then take part in the pilot trial of the Framework

The pilot phase - can you help?

Before making the Framework and Guidance widely available, it is important to ensure that they are easy to use in typical towers, so initially they will only go to a small number of towers during the pilot phase. The aim is for these towers to use the Framework and Guidance 'for real', not just to comment on it. In return, the early users will feed back information on how useful it was for them and on how easy it was to use.

If you are responsible for some aspect of training in your home tower, and you think that the Framework might help you, then please contact me about taking part in the pilot phase.

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