



THE CENTRAL COUNCIL OF CHURCH
BELL RINGERS

COVID-19 and ringing Central Council position statement May 5th 2020

It is expected that the UK Government will announce plans for a gentle easing of the current lockdown on Sunday May 10th and ringers have already been asking if that means they may return to ringing as normal. The key consideration at all times must be the safety of individual ringers, others with whom they ring and those with whom they live or may come into contact.

We do not know what the Government will propose but it is clear that, as lockdown is gradually eased, the re-opening of sections of the economy will be a priority and major restrictions on the activities of all of us will remain in place for a significant period. Government and public health teams working with others will be maintaining a very close watch on new cases and hospitalization of people with COVID-19. Ways of tracking of where such patients have been and tracing of all of their contacts will be key. All of this will take time to put in place.

The Central Council's guidance to ringers is that currently it is too early for any return to ringing and that the current suspension of all ringing of any kind should remain in place. This includes chiming of single bells and the use of Ellacombe chimes. We will be sharing this guidance with the Church of England and ringing societies and where possible with other bell owning organisations.

Over recent weeks Dr Phillip Barnes, a recently retired NHS Consultant and Medical Director as well as a member of the CC Executive, has been reviewing the emerging scientific and medical evidence about COVID-19 and what it means for the safety of ringing. The key issues which affect the safety of ringing are the physical environment of towers including access to ringing rooms, the space between ropes, how to maintain hand hygiene in towers and the numbers of people in a restricted space for a relatively long period of time. Even if churches reopen, the environment in towers is very different.

This evidence review is being published online this week via the Central Council website and an article will appear in next week's edition of *The Ringing World*. Guidance on how it might be possible to restart ringing and what restrictions and precautions would be needed to do so are an integral part of this work.

The evidence and guidance will be reviewed formally at least monthly as well as in the light of any significant developments. We are all as keen as anyone to get back to ringing as soon as possible, but that must only occur when it is completely safe to do so.

FOR RELEASE May 5th 2020

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For and on behalf of the CC Executive.