

# A shared approach to training?

This is one of the topics that will be on the agenda at the Business Meeting in November, at which we hope all tower bands will be represented. I was asked to circulate a note before the meeting explaining some of the issues and introducing some of the questions so that we can all come to the meeting prepared to discuss them. There are no easy answers so please can think about the issues and discuss within your band.

## What's the problem?

Many bands are short of ringers. Even if they find some recruits, and start training them the recruits often give up. Many bands have limited ability to train ringers – they may not have anyone good at teaching basic bell control and may not have a strong enough band to support rapid development of new ringers' skills. Poor progress and limited opportunities undoubtedly contributes to recruits giving up because they don't feel they are getting anywhere.

Even the resources that do exist (teachers and experienced ringers for coaching and support) are spread so thinly that very few bands have the critical mass to provide a strong environment for teaching and development.

## How could shared training help?

In some places (in the Guild and elsewhere) ringers have found that concentrating resources can produce better results with the benefit spread across several towers. There is no single formula, with different arrangements working well in different situations, but there are some common factors. Teaching to serve an area is focused in one (or maybe a few) places. Several teachers work together to support and complement each other. The number of teachers has been boosted (typically using ITTS) with the new teachers being developed in the shared teaching environment. Teaching sessions (both initial bell control and later development) take place regularly. All sessions (both content and participants) are planned in advance.

Societies/districts or groups of towers that have these approaches report both improved quality and quantity of training.

## What could prevent it working?

To be effective, a teaching programme would need to be regular and properly resourced (including a margin to allow for the fact that individuals cannot commit all the time. Do we have enough teaching resource within the Branch?

Most places that have run successful shared teaching initiatives started by increasing the number of teachers. Do we have people willing to learn to teach? Do we have enough experienced teachers to mentor them?

How many of the bands and teachers within the Branch would really be willing to share:

- Would teachers be willing to devote their effort to shared teaching rather than just to their own bands?
- Would bands be willing to have their recruits taught outside their own tower?
- Would teachers be willing to harmonise their methods to provide continuity for trainees?

## How should we proceed?

If we decide to undertake shared training within the Branch there are several options to consider, for example:

- Should it include bell handling & bell control, method ringing, or both?
- Should the programme start by increasing the number of teachers?
- What would be the most suitable location(s) for the training to be done?
- How often should training take place?
- Should students pay for the marginal cost of the training?

All of these (and possibly other) options can be considered but they all depend on whether enough bands want to support shared training and whether enough individuals are prepared to commit the time and effort to make it work.

Please discuss this within your band so that whoever represents you at the meeting on 15th November can make an informed contribution to the discussion.

*John Harrison (Chairman)*