

Tips for holding a successful Open Day

- Advertise before your event – ‘Coming soon’ if you don’t know the date yet.
- Make sure that you have fulfilled all the safeguarding and health and safety requirements, such as completing a risk assessment.
- Have one person responsible for safety - someone other than the speaker who can watch what is going on.
- Have a means of communication between the ringing room and downstairs so you don’t have to keep running up and down the stairs.
- Keep your own belongings safe.
- Make sure visitors can find their way to the tower –have lots of meeters and greeters to guide them into the church and up the tower, and/or lots of signs and posters to direct them the right way.
- Have refreshments available. People are likely to stay longer.
- Decide on a limit for how many people can be in the ringing room at once and stick to it.
- Have a safety notice and a steward at the bottom of the tower warning them about any uneven steps, low headroom etc. Warn them how many steps there are, they won’t be able to turn around halfway up if there is anyone behind them. Make sure that they are wearing suitable shoes. If they can leave their bags somewhere safe below then they will find the stairs easier.
- If you have organised demonstrations or ‘trips up the tower’ remember that it will take visitors longer to get them up and down the stairs than ringers who are used to spiral staircases and uneven steps, and allow for this in your timings.
- Make sure the ringing room is bright and welcoming by having a good cleaning/tidying session first.
- Have plenty of seats so people can sit down.
- Have attractive and interesting displays – colour photographs and diagrams are good. Keep it simple and keep the text brief.
- Have a few things around that you can show people – old clappers, stays (broken ones even), sallies (if you’re not in the ringing room), a model of a working bell. Seeing something is better than trying to imagine what it looks like. Photographs are good, but if people can see or feel something they will get a better idea of size, weight etc.

- Disengage the clock chimes, unless this is part of your talk.
- Be positive and stress the enjoyment and benefits of ringing to the individual. Vary what you say depending upon who you are talking to. Different aspects of bellringing will appeal to different people, some people will be more interested in the history and traditions, others in the social aspects and others in the mechanics of a bell ringing. Service to the church will attract church groups but not others.
- Avoid negative ideas such as 'dying tradition', or 'no young people'
- Don't mention too early on the length of time it takes to learn and the commitment involved. Talk about 'trying ringing for a while' and introduce commitment later. If asked how long it takes to learn say that everyone learns at different speeds and younger people tend to learn more quickly.
- Don't stress too much about what you say, the most important message to get across is your enthusiasm. The more enthusiastic the ringers involved in the Open Day are then the more likely you are to encourage people to give it a try.
- Smile and make sure all the ringers taking part are friendly 😊
- Afterwards, keep the momentum up. Contact anyone who was interested as soon as possible and arrange their first lesson. People will have lost interest if you contact them months later.
- Personal contact is better, phone them rather than e-mail them.

Other ideas

- Demonstrate bellringing, but keep it short, people will get bored if you carry on too long.
- Let young children/people have a go at chiming.
- Let interested people have a go at ringing backstrokes if you feel confident.
- Rig up CCTV in the bells and/or ringing chamber so those who can't make it up the stairs can still be involved.
- Show videos of bellringing in the church (there are plenty on YouTube if you haven't your own).
- Try getting people to ring handbells (or toy bells)
- Get people to 'walk' plain hunt.
- See if you can borrow the Association Wombel.