



Ringing World National Youth Contest

THE RINGING WORLD NATIONAL YOUTH CONTEST (RWNYC)

VISION AND VALUES

Vision statement

The Ringing World National Youth Contest exists to *inspire young bellringers*.

This is the RWNYC's ultimate purpose – more important than striking scores or medals. We succeed when a young person goes home feeling excited, included, and motivated to continue ringing. The contest is not just about ringing well; it's about creating powerful, positive memories and an emotional connection to ringing.

This focus aligns with *The Ringing World's* charitable objects: **to promote and foster the art of bells and ringing to ringers and general public ... by facilitating communication, encouraging public interest and uniting the ringing community.** We make ringing something that young people are proud to be part of and want to return to.

Three key values

The key to delivering this vision over more than a decade has been that the RWNYC combines three values: the enjoyment of a good day out, the commitment that leads to teams' presence, and the enduring memory of being part of a wider community. These strands define why the day is successful and can inform decisions about its format and future.

1. **Enjoyment: exploration and novelty**

Contestants are energised by ringing in new towers, navigating a new city and its churches, trying handbells, mini-rings or simulators, and joining workshops. Enjoyable RWNYC days are an adventure. Emotional connection is created through exploration, giving participants memories and formative experiences that deepen their curiosity.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION: *We don't need famous towers or expensive logistics to deliver this. We can design flexible, creative experiences that encourage discovery in new ways.*

Repeating the same Contest venues within a small timescale may not be as successful on this metric.

2. **Commitment: teamwork and performance**

The competition element of the day provides a shared goal that motivates practice and collaboration. It is a year-round anchor, encouraging engagement, growth and leadership.

Importantly, the competition element engages multiple groups of stakeholder adults. It is a relatable concept for non-ringing parents amongst the otherwise unfamiliar world of bellringing; they understand the idea that a team is practising for a national competition. Supporters and the local ringing community also support youth teams, perhaps more than they might if the day was framed as a more general 'festival of ringing' without a competition. It galvanises regional ringing communities to bring isolated young ringers together.

In the history of the contest thus far, most teams have not been upset about *not* winning. Instead, whether they ring call changes or method, at whatever standard of striking, they find satisfaction in commitment, teamwork and having made progress towards a shared goal of performance.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION: *All performance levels are valid. Inclusivity, learning and celebration matter more than results. Future contests might still achieve these goals with very different competition formats.*

Subtle tweaks to the competition format may be ultimately irrelevant.

3. **Community: belonging and size**

One of the most repeated sentiments is: "*I realised I'm not the only one.*" The size and atmosphere of the RWNYC – especially the results ceremony as a moment which gathers all involved – creates a powerful sense of shared identity. Some young ringers don't directly make new friends, but participants and supporters still feel part of something bigger than their local ringing experience. This quiet but profound sense of belonging is essential for motivation and long-term retention.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION: *Maintaining a large, shared experience is vital. Whether physical or hybrid, regional or centralised, the event must offer a moment of collective celebration and visibility.*

Regional or events with restrictive participation may struggle to achieve the RWNYC's level of success.

Skills development and volunteering

The Ringing World believes not just in the heritage value of ringing, but in the broad set of skills it develops: physical, mental, musical and social. Many of these are increasingly extra-curricular for young people, yet they are highly transferable, supporting wider education, confidence and future employment.

Ringing encourages self-directed learning, teamwork and leadership. Young ringers must understand abstract method structure, refine their physical bell control, listen and comprehend the sound of this unique music and practise towards shared team goals. They learn to commit, support others, manage practice time, and take initiative in organisation and self-improvement.

The ringing community is naturally intergenerational and inclusive. Young people gain confidence working alongside adults of all ages, learning to hold constructive conversations and learn from diverse character types. Neurodiversity is celebrated and included, and bands typically have rich social histories stretching back through centuries.

Finally, ringing and the RWNYC are powered by volunteers. Many 'graduates' of the Contest return to help deliver the event – greeting teams, stewarding towers and even judging, becoming role models. In everyday ringing, commitment is a deep value, with the expectation to 'turn up' powering thousands of bands. This introduces all ringers to charitable service, encouraging a sense of social responsibility and pride in helping others participate. We are creating not just a circle of success but also a skills development pathway for young adults after their teenage years.

Long-term cultural change

The RWNYC is more than a single annual event, and its long-term aim can be to energise and even challenge the ringing community. The introduction of contest 'graduates' has been successful, and past contestants are now a key portion of the volunteering community who make it happen. By placing children and young adults at the centre of a joyful, modern experience of ringing, it:

- Signals that young people belong in ringing
- Provides a structured annual rhythm that helps local teams recruit, practise, and grow
- Creates ripple effects throughout towers, branches and associations
- Encourages past contestants to grow into positions of responsibility and leadership
- Challenges older ringers to reconsider how they teach, welcome, and lead

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION: *The RWNYC can be a driver of change, not just an event. Partnerships could amplify this change: with the Central Council of Church Bell Ringers (CCCBR), the Association of Ringing Teachers (ART), sponsors, university societies and others. The contest should inspire not just participants, but the whole ringing ecosystem.*

Raising the profile of ringing – national and local impact

The RWNYC also offers a powerful opportunity to raise the public profile of bellringing. The sight and sound of hundreds of young people taking over a city centre with bells, laughter, wrist-bands and

team mascots makes a striking impression – not only on local residents and the host towers, but on the wider media.

In recent years, the contest has generated local press coverage and regional TV/radio as well as national exposure. It also sparks social media buzz, showcasing ringing as fun, dynamic, and alive. These moments reshape the public narrative, presenting ringing as youthful, inter-generational, and evolving.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION: *Investing in media engagement, photography, and local partnerships enhances its impact and reach, helping shift cultural perceptions and attracting new interest in ringing.*

The role of The Ringing World

The Ringing World is uniquely positioned to lead and sustain the RWNYC. It benefits from an experienced staff team and a committed volunteer network with both the time and skills required. Its infrastructure – office facilities, digital platforms, and publishing systems – provides a strong operational base. Its financial systems can support the flexible and responsive cost structures that the contest demands. As the international communications hub for ringing, it connects towers, associations, teams, and individuals across generations and geography.

Its charitable mission – **to promote and foster the art of ringing** – aligns directly with the contest’s purpose. The weekly publication and BellBoard provide visibility, recognition and connection year-round. The Ringing World offers the reach, credibility, and continuity needed to run a high-impact national event that inspires the next generation and energises the whole community.

Summary vision (for publication or external use)

The RWNYC exists to inspire young bellringers.

It does this by:

- Helping them explore and discover the wonderful world of ringing
- Encouraging commitment, teamwork, and learning towards shared performance goals
- Making them feel part of a wider community of young ringers who are part of the future of bellringing

It provides year-round purpose, momentum, and visibility for young ringing teams – and acts as a catalyst for energising the wider ringing community and modernising the culture of ringing for future generations.

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