

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Introduction

The Birmingham Buddhist Centre is seeking to put into practice the key Buddhist ethical principles of kindness, generosity, contentment, truthfulness and awareness.

We work within an inter-agency framework guided by the best practice and policy guidelines of the Birmingham Safeguarding Board. It refers to law and good practice as defined in England and Wales.

Purpose of this policy

This policy is for Friends, Mitras and Order members involved in the Birmingham Buddhist Centre and its activities (and those of any outreach group run by this charity) as employees, volunteers, leaders, teachers, parents or members of the general public attending our classes, as well as room-hire customers.

It aims to provide:

- Protection for children (anyone under 18) who visit the Birmingham Buddhist Centre or otherwise participate in our activities, including children of Buddhists and other users of the Buddhist Centre;
- Protection for Friends, Mitras and Order members who may have contact with children through the Buddhist Centre and our activities.

It sets out:

- Practices and procedures contributing to the prevention of abuse of children.
- A course of action to be followed if harm is suspected.

Our responsibilities

We have a duty of care to prevent or address harm to all children in the course of our activities.

The trustees of Birmingham Buddhist Centre recognise their responsibility to Safeguard children, as set out by the Charity Commission in its latest guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees>

Dharmashalin is our Safeguarding Lead. He is responsible for coordinating the protection of at-risk children and adults.

Pasannamati is our Safeguarding Trustee. She is responsible for making sure safeguarding is taken seriously by the trustees and appears regularly on their agenda, ensuring trustees comply with their safeguarding obligations as required by the Charity Commission.

Principles

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, ethnicity, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from harm.
- Partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting the welfare of young people.

We will seek to safeguard children and young people by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- Adopting child protection guidelines and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring checks are made where necessary.
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers.
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

Who is a “child”?

In the United Kingdom a “child” is a person who has not yet passed their 18th birthday.

Although the UK age of consent is 16, it is a criminal offence to have sex with a person under 18, where the older person is in a teaching or mentoring role in relation to the younger person. This ‘Position of trust’ law is likely to apply to Order members and Mitras in teaching roles in Triratna.

What is “child abuse”?

The World Health Organisation defines “child abuse” as “all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.”

Types of abuse (See Appendix 1 for fuller details)

- Physical abuse including hurting or injuring a child, inflicting pain, poisoning, drowning, or smothering.
- Sexual abuse including direct or indirect sexual exploitation or corruption of children by involving them (or threatening to involve them) in sexual activities.
- Emotional abuse, e.g. repeatedly rejecting children, humiliating them or denying their worth and rights as human beings.
- Neglect, e.g. persistent lack of appropriate care of children, including love, stimulation, safety, nourishment, warmth, education and medical attention.

A child who is being abused may experience more than one type of cruelty. Discrimination, harassment, and bullying are also abusive and can harm a child, both physically and emotionally.

Signs of abuse

These are many and varied. Some have perfectly acceptable explanations. It is useful to bear in mind:

- Any injuries that cannot be explained;
- Injuries not consistent with falls or rough games;
- Malnourishment;
- Any allegations made by children concerning abuse;
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing;
- Self-harm;
- Eating disorders.

People who might abuse

Abuse may happen anywhere and may be carried out by anyone, e.g.:

- Order members, Mitras and Friends, whether financially supported or volunteering;
- Parents;
- People you consider good and trusted friends;
- Informal carers, family, friends, neighbours;
- Other users or room hire customers of the Birmingham Buddhist Centre;
- Strangers or visitors to the Birmingham Buddhist Centre.

Practical expression of our duty of care

You **MUST** report to the Buddhist Centre's Safeguarding Lead if you:

- Receive a disclosure of abuse.
- Suspect abuse is happening.
- Witness abuse or neglect.

What to do if a child alleges abuse

- Stay calm.
- Listen patiently.
- Reassure the person they are doing the right thing by telling you.
- Clarify issues of confidentiality early on. Make it clear that you may have a legal

duty to discuss their concerns with others, on a strictly need-to-know basis. If at all possible gain their permission to do so.

- Explain what you are going to do.
- Write a factual account of what you have seen and heard, immediately.

Do not

- Appear shocked, horrified, disgusted or angry.
- Press the individual for details.
- Make comments or judgments other than to show concern. Your responsibility is to take them seriously, not to decide whether what they are saying is true.
- Promise to keep secrets.
- Confront the alleged perpetrator.
- Risk contaminating the evidence by investigating matters yourself.

Additional guidance can be found in Appendix 2 'Assessing and Managing Risk'.

As soon as possible

Remember these are complicated situations; your duty is to ensure the person in question is safe.

If you feel someone is in immediate danger contact the Police directly on 999. If not, but you think there has been a crime committed, contact West Midlands Police on 0345 113 5000.

Report, as accurately as possible, what you have been told or what you have seen to the Buddhist Centre's Safeguarding Lead: Dharmashalin on 07779 148172 or at dharmashalin@gmail.com. He will then contact the appropriate local bodies and Triratna Central Safeguarding. If he is not available then you could contact our Safeguarding Trustee Pasannamati - her contact details are Pasannamati@gmail.com or 07946 033161. If they are not available then contact Triratna's ECA Safeguarding Team at safeguarding@triratna.community.

Normally the Safeguarding Lead will follow up any report. If for some reason that is not possible, contact the Birmingham Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS) on 0121 303 1888 (out of hours emergencies 0121 675 4806) or visit https://www.birminghamchildrenstrust.co.uk/info/6/contact_us/38/worried_about_a_child.

If a formal safeguarding alert is raised we will inform our insurers, Buddhist Insurance Scheme via the broker, CliveAdams. (clive_adams@ajg.com)

NB These last two reports involve describing briefly the type of incident/concern and what is being done to address it. They do not need to include any personal details about those involved.

It is **not** your job to resolve the situation or decide what is right, simply pass the information and concern on to those with the experience and training necessary to resolve the situation.

Why should you report abuse?

- It won't stop if you don't.
- There could be other victims.
- You have a duty of care.
- The person being abused may not be able, for whatever reason, to report it themselves.

Safeguarding Children should be centred on five principles:

1. Person Centred - The child concerned is at the heart of any investigation and action taken. Work and engage with the child to manage the risk.

2. Risk Management – Think holistically, agree on the prioritised risks and document

them. Be clear on the individual's roles and responsibilities and who the lead person for the case is. The situation should where possible be reviewed with the child concerned, with specific timescales set out.

3. Information Sharing – Share information that is relevant, timely and proportional to

the risk identified. This information must be shared in a secure way, on a need-to-know-basis.

4. Defensible Decision Making – Safeguarding Leads and trustees are accountable

for decisions and actions taken and not taken. Record the reasons for decisions and demonstrate a proportionate approach.

5. Multi-Agency Best Practice – Talk to the right people and share information

appropriately. Evidence shared decision making and keep communication with all relevant parties updated.

Engaging safely with children in person

Outside our own personal and family relationships we will not arrange to meet any child under 16 individually anywhere without written permission from their parent or guardian.

Having gained such permission we will conduct individual meetings with a child under 16 in public spaces such as our Buddhist Centre reception area or a room with the door open.

We do not need parental permission to meet those aged 16-17 but we will take care to meet in public spaces such as our Buddhist Centre reception area or a room with the door open.

We will not give lifts to those under 16 on their own. Or, if this is unavoidable, we will ask the child to sit in the back seat.

We follow a Safer Recruitment Policy where the need to be aware of and committed to safeguarding is made explicit in the advert and we follow up with appropriate checks.

Engaging safely with children online and on social media

We are aware that individual contact with under 18s online, by email or using social media carries the risk of accusations of “grooming” (relationships established with a view to sexual contact).

We will not engage personally by email, text or online with anyone known to be under 18 using social media, for example by ‘friending’ them on Facebook or including them in WhatsApp groups or similar – except with written permission from their parent/guardian, specifying the agreed medium and the named Order member or event organizer.

As a Buddhist Centre we may receive emails from school pupils wanting information about Buddhism. Having answered their questions, we will not engage in further personal correspondence.

See also the guidance document ‘Caring for teenagers in Triratna’ (currently being drafted.)

Welcoming school visits safely

Schools and other youth groups visit our Buddhist Centre. We will require every group to bring at least two adults capable of supervising all members of the group at all times. We will make clear that we are not to be left alone with their pupils, as the Staff are responsible for the pupils safety. (Please see Appendix 3 for information on DBS checks and managing those who pose a risk to others.)

Lettings/Room Hire

We understand that our charity is jointly responsible with those renting our premises for the safeguarding of children and adults coming to the Buddhist Centre, but that our trustees bear ultimate responsibility for the safeguarding of everyone on our premises. Therefore our standard hire agreement requires an organisation or individual renting our premises to comply with our safeguarding policies which are made available to them.

Secure, confidential record-keeping

We understand our responsibility for secure and careful record-keeping. Our Safeguarding Lead will keep a detailed log of all Safeguarding-related incidents as well as conversations, actions and the reasoning behind them. These records are kept securely online behind 2FA.

We also understand that under data protection law we need to word our records in a form we would be happy for the subjects to read if they ask to, as is their legal right. This means notes should be factual and respectful, free of interpretations and value-judgements.

Keeping confidential records

We understand that because many abuse cases come to light 30 or more years later our insurers may require us to keep our logs for up to 50 years. (This is a requirement of the UK’s Buddhist Insurance Scheme.)

If our charity closes down, we will give our records to another Triratna Buddhist Centre/charity to keep with their own confidential Safeguarding logs.

Training

The Safeguarding Lead will organise frequent safeguarding training for employees, class leaders, event organisers and volunteer supporters.

Publication of this policy

This policy will be communicated to all employees, class leaders, event organisers and volunteer supporters and made available at the Buddhist Centre. Its existence and whereabouts will also be made known to those attending residential events organised by the Buddhist Centre elsewhere.

Chair of Trustees

Maitrisara (Pippa Bobett)

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Safeguarding Lead

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Safeguarding Trustee

Pasannamati Francis Neal

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Appendix 1: Types and Signs of Abuse

Types of Abuse, in more detail

Physical

- Bodily assaults resulting in injuries, e.g. hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.
- Bodily impairment, e.g. malnutrition, dehydration, failure to thrive.
- Medical/healthcare maltreatment.

Sexual

- Rape, incest, acts of indecency, sexual assault.
- Sexual harassment or sexual acts to which the person has not consented, or could not consent or to which they were pressured into consenting.
- Sexual abuse might also include exposure to pornographic materials, being made to witness sexual acts; also sexual harassment, with or without physical contact.
- Sexual contact of any kind with anyone under 16 is a crime. (In the case of Order members “position of trust” law means sexual contact of any kind with anyone under 18 could be considered a crime.)

Abuse through neglect

- Ignoring medical or physical care needs.
- Failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational services.
- The withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Organisational abuse

- Neglect or abuse within an institution (e.g.hospital/care home) or care provided in own home.
- One-off incident or continuing ill-treatment.
- Poor professional practice, policies or structure of an organization.

Self-neglect

- Alcohol abuse.
- Hoarding.
- Drug abuse.

Modern slavery

Examples: working as housemaids, in brothels, cannabis farms, nail bars and agriculture against their will, unpaid.

Some possible signs

- Physical appearance, inappropriate clothing.
- Isolation, not being allowed to travel alone, restricted freedom of movement.
- Poor living conditions, few possessions, no ID documents.
- Unusual travel times – being dropped off early morning or late at night.

Modern Slavery Helpline (UK) 0800 0121 700

Domestic abuse

- Physical, psychological, sexual and financial abuse.
- ‘Honour’-based violence or forced marriage
- Involving intimate partner or family member
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- N.B. 16 year-olds can be defined as suffering domestic abuse.

Some signs and symptoms of domestic abuse

- Visible injuries or unexplained marks, scars or injuries
- Making ‘excuses’ for injuries
- Controlling and/or threatening relationships

Discriminatory abuse

- Discrimination including gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, age, skin colour, language, culture, religion or belief, or politics.
- Harassment.
- Loss of self-esteem.
- Not being able to access services or being excluded.

Financial or material abuse

- Misuse or theft of money.
- Exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance.
- Unexplained withdrawal of large sums of money.
- Personal possessions going missing from home.
- Extraordinary interest and involvement by the family/carer or friend in an individual's assets.

Psychological/emotional

- Threats of harm, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, enforced isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.
- Humiliation
- Bullying, shouting or swearing

Signs of Abuse**Physical**

- A history of unexplained falls or minor injuries.
- Bruising in well-protected areas, or clustered from repeated striking.
- Finger marks.
- Burns of unusual location or type.
- Injuries found at different states of healing.
- Injury shape similar to an object.
- Injuries to head/face/scalp.
- History of moving from doctor to doctor, or between social care agencies; reluctance to seek help.
- Accounts which vary with time or are inconsistent with physical evidence.
- Weight loss due to malnutrition; or rapid weight gain.
- Ulcers, bed sores and being left in wet clothing.

- Drowsiness due to too much medication; or lack of medication causing recurring crises/hospital admissions.

Sexual

- Disclosure or partial disclosure (use of phrases such as 'It's a secret').
- Medical problems, e.g. genital infections, pregnancy, difficulty walking or sitting.
- Disturbed behavior, e.g. depression, sudden withdrawal from activities, loss of previous skills, sleeplessness or nightmares, self-injury, showing fear or aggression to one particular person, inappropriately seductive behaviour, loss of appetite or difficulty in keeping food down.
- Unusual circumstances, such as, for example, two people found in a toilet/bathroom area, one of them distressed.

Signs of psychological or emotional vulnerability

- Isolation.
- unkempt, unwashed appearance, smell.
- Over-meticulousness.
- Inappropriate dress.
- Withdrawnness, agitation, anxiety, not wanting to be touched.
- Change in appetite.
- Insomnia or need for excessive sleep.
- Tearfulness.
- Unexplained paranoia, excessive fears.
- Low self-esteem.
- Confusion.

Signs of neglect

- Poor physical condition.
- Clothing in poor condition.
- Inadequate diet.
- Untreated injuries or medical problems.
- Failure to be given prescribed medication.
- Poor personal hygiene.

Signs of financial or material vulnerability

- Unexplained or sudden withdrawal of money from accounts.
- Disparity between assets and satisfactory living conditions.

Signs of discrimination.

- Lack of respect shown to an individual.
- Substandard service offered to an individual.
- Exclusion from rights afforded to others, such as health, education, criminal justice.

Other signs of abuse

- Controlling relationships.
- Inappropriate use of restraint.
- Sensory deprivation, e.g. spectacles or hearing aid.
- Denial of visitors or phone calls.
- Failure to ensure privacy or personal dignity.
- Lack of personal clothing or possessions.

Appendix 2: Assessing and Managing Risk

Assessing and managing risk includes:

- Fully assessing the risk.
- Take the necessary steps to address this with the child at risk in the first instance (taking account of the child's views, experiences or concerns).
- Collaborate in a planned manner with multi agency colleagues.
- Keep accurate records.
- Identify the case holder or lead manager through which all information should flow at all stages of the process.

Appendix 3: DBS checks and managing those who pose a risk to others

DBS checks (Disclosure and Barring Service)

Since the rules on eligibility are complicated and change from time to time, our Safeguarding Lead will check at least annually with external Safeguarding experts such as Thirtyone:eight (www.thirtyoneeight.org) and ensure everyone eligible for a DBS check has been checked within the previous three years.

The Buddhist Centre will complete DBS checks in line with legal requirements and current guidelines. At this time none of our activities warrant such checks. If the Centre starts running activities for children then we will acquire DBS checks for the staff/ volunteers running the events in question.

Our leaders and volunteers are asked to:

- Have read the charity's Safeguarding Policies and Child Protection Code of Conduct, and had an opportunity to discuss them with the Safeguarding Lead.
- Have signed a document recording that they have read and agree to abide by them.
- Participate in Safeguarding training.

It is regarded as good practice that any DBS certificate should be less than three years old.

Managing those who pose a risk to children

We will not knowingly allow someone who is likely to pose a risk to children to have contact with anyone under 18 (for example, a person who is known to have a previous criminal conviction for sexual or other violent offences, someone who is under investigation for possible sexual or other violent offences or someone who has disclosed a sexual interest in children).

Such a person will be asked by the Safeguarding Lead to negotiate a behaviour contract setting out the terms of their continued participation in Birmingham Buddhist Centre activities within agreed boundaries (see the document 'Managing those who pose a risk').

Such a person cannot be asked to sign the Child Protection Code of Conduct as it would conflict with the terms of their contract and in any case it would be very unwise to permit such a person to have any contact with those under 18 in the course of Triratna activities.

Where it is felt that the charity does not have the resources to manage this relationship safely, we reserve the right to ask the person not to attend our activities.