

ETHICAL GUIDELINES

All Triratna Buddhist Centres aim to support the awakening of the individual, in an atmosphere of kindness, safety, and positive spiritual stimulation and the intention of these guidelines is help us create and maintain that space.

It is not unusual for people, especially those new to Triratna, to come looking for answers and tools in times of difficulty, sometimes crisis, and these guidelines help us treat each other with the necessary care and respect.

The guidelines are a re-statement of the five Buddhist ethical precepts, offering a general principle for each and a few specific examples of how they are lived out in the context of the Buddhist Centre and our Community. It is neither possible nor desirable to draw out all the applications of these principles.

It is recommended that these guidelines be observed by everyone in our Community, including anyone participating in our activities and those living in any of our residential properties. However, they are of particular relevance to all those leading, supporting or administering Buddhist activities, who are strongly urged to follow them. These members of our Community are in positions of trust and the guidelines can help prevent any misuse, real or perceived, of their trusted position for their own benefit or to influence others inappropriately.

The guidelines have been co-created in dialogue with Birmingham Order Members, and agreed by the Birmingham Buddhist Centre Trustees. It is our intention that these guidelines are circulated to Order members, Mitras and regular volunteers in our Community, displayed at the Buddhist Centre and on our webpage, and made available to others in discussion at classes.

As well as recognising the importance of ethical guidelines, we also take seriously our safeguarding responsibilities, with named Safeguarding Officers and policies for the protection of children and adults at risk (details of which available the Buddhist Centre and on our website). If you have a concern relating to a safeguarding issue then please contact one of the Safeguarding Officers (see Appendix 1 for contact details).

1. I undertake the training principle of abstaining from taking life. With deeds of loving-kindness, I purify my body.

Principle: We are always trying to cause as little harm as possible to others and the planet. We aspire to treat one another and all beings with kindness.

Examples: We practise together in spiritual friendship, a core value for our Community, supporting growth, depth and spiritual development.

We aim to create a welcoming space at the Buddhist Centre and make efforts to encourage diversity.

Physical violence and verbal aggression have no place among us.

The Buddhist Centre buys vegan products, as far as practicable, and allows only vegan or vegetarian food to be served. It is committed to protecting the environment and reducing its carbon footprint as part of the Triratna Sustainable Buddhist Centre Scheme.

2. I undertake the training principle of abstaining from taking the not-given. With open-handed generosity, I purify my body.

Principle: We are careful to act responsibly with regard to the resources of others, as well as resources given to or otherwise acquired by the Buddhist Centre. We try to encourage a culture of giving in our Community.

Examples: Our Buddhist activities are run in a spirit of generosity, making the teachings freely available to people regardless of their circumstances.

Members of our Community are invited to get involved and are encouraged to give what they can to support the Buddhist Centre with money, time, energy, skills and practical help, in a way that is appropriate for them.

Those with responsibility for the Buddhist Centre's financial and other material resources do so with the utmost care and in accordance with financial rules agreed by its Trustees.

We aspire to reduce consumption, make ethical purchases and recycle, trying our best to reduce our impact on the natural world.

3. I undertake the training principle of abstaining from sexual misconduct. With stillness, simplicity and contentment, I purify my body.

Principle: We encourage everyone in our Community and coming to the Buddhist Centre to conduct their sexual relationships ethically, with awareness and kindness. We aspire to simplify all aspects of our lives, actively trying to let go of craving and cultivating calm and contentment.

Examples: Sexual relationships may arise among us, including between an Order member and someone with less experience in Triratna. We recognise that such relationships can be healthy. We also know from experience that they need careful consideration.

We recommend that anyone wishing to enter into a sexual relationship with someone else participating in our activities or in our Community follow some guidelines (see Appendix 2). Order members and those in leading and supporting roles within our Community have a particular responsibility in this area.

We seek to create an atmosphere that is free from the dynamics and possible pressures of sexual relationships. We therefore ask people to support this by behaving appropriately and being sensitive to how their behaviour may affect others.

We recognise the negative effects, on ourselves and on others, of our compulsive behaviours, both gross and subtle. We aspire to work creatively with our behaviours, developing stiller and more contented ways of living.

4. I undertake the training principle of abstaining from false speech. With truthful communication, I purify my speech.

Principle: We wish to develop an atmosphere of friendliness, co-operation and trust to support spiritual growth. Hence in all our communication, written, spoken and online, we aim to be truthful, kind, meaningful and harmonious.

Examples: We do our best to avoid swearing and using harsh language.

We encourage everyone to be mindful and considerate in all their communication, including social media, email and text.

The management of the Buddhist Centre will hold and share information carefully and appropriately, in accordance with appropriate legislation.

To help deepen spiritual practice we encourage sharing and ethical reflection in our Community, taking care to emphasise that people proceed at their own pace.

We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality but we will share information only with those who need to know to address any issue effectively, motivated by the wellbeing and welfare of all. This could include speaking to the authorities where we have a legal obligation to do so.

5. I undertake the training principle of abstaining from taking intoxicants. With mindfulness clear and radiant, I purify my mind.

Principle: We encourage people to abstain from intoxication to facilitate the development of wisdom and compassion. We aspire to cultivate mindfulness of all of our actions of body, speech and mind, deepening and broadening awareness of their effect on ourselves and others.

Examples: We aspire to provide supportive environments for those wishing to live without intoxicants (alcohol and drugs not taken for medical purposes) therefore:

- Smoking and vaping (e-cigarettes) are not permitted on our premises.
- We will not serve, or permit to be served, alcohol or other intoxicants.
- We ask people not to attend our events under the influence of intoxicants and to be aware that we will ask them to leave if they do.

In the spirit of exemplification, those engaged in leading, supporting or administering activities for the Buddhist Centre are expected to demonstrate a responsible attitude to the use of intoxicants.

If you have any concerns

If at any time you notice what appears to be a breach of these guidelines, please contact one of our Mitra Convenors, or if that is not possible, or the matter involves them, the Chair of Trustees.

Men's Mitra Convenor: Dharmashalin dharmashalin@gmail.com

Chair of Trustees: Maitrisara maitrisara1@gmail.com

Agreed, following consultation with the local Order, by the Trustees of the Birmingham Buddhist Centre: 16 August 2019.

Appendix 1: Safeguarding

We take seriously our safeguarding responsibilities, with named Safeguarding Officers and policies for the protection of children and adults at risk (details of which available in the café area at the Buddhist Centre and on our website [Policies – Birmingham Buddhist Centre](#))

If you have a concern relating to a safeguarding issue then please contact one of the Safeguarding Officers:

Dharmashalin: dharmashalin@gmail.com

Pasannamati: pasannamati@gmail.com

Appendix 2: Recommendations before starting a sexual relationship

It is inadvisable for any Order Member or person in a supporting role at the Birmingham Buddhist Centre to enter into a sexual relationship with someone who is new to Triratna. It is also our experience that great care is needed when anyone is considering a sexual relationship with someone less experienced than themselves in Triratna.

If a mutual interest in a sexual relationship does develop, we expect the Order member or more experienced person, before pursuing the relationship, to discuss it in a sensitive and appropriate way. We would ask the Order member to discuss the proposed relationship with their chapter and/or their Preceptor and Kalyanamitras, as well as one of the Mitra Convenors, who are likely to know the less Triratna-experienced person. If the more experienced person is not an Order member we recommend they discuss it with one of the Mitra Convenors.

Such discussions should include considering the dynamics at play, the wellbeing of each person involved and consider carefully any reasons why either party might not be ready to start a sexual relationship at that time. We suggest that a summary of the discussion is confirmed in writing by the Mitra/Chapter Convenor, Preceptor or Kalyanamitras, a copy of which should then be kept by the people involved in that discussion.

We also recommend that the less Triratna-experienced person meet with other Order members, who can offer some support and guidance.

Even where there is a clear mutual wish to enter a sexual relationship and this has been carefully considered, we would ask the more experienced person to wait until the less experienced person has formed other friendships in our Community and that they are no longer their main Dharma-mentor or leading or supporting the activities they are participating in at the Buddhist Centre.

Lastly we endorse the statement from the Triratna College of Public Preceptors which clearly states that Preceptors should not engage in sexual relations with those they have ordained or are helping to prepare for ordination, and that they should not ordain anyone with whom they already have such a relationship – for full details see:

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/preceptors/statement-about-sex-between-preceptors-and-those-they-ordain-preceptors-college>