

Buddhfield East

Safeguarding adults policy and guidelines

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Web address: <http://buddhfieldeast.co.uk/>

Introduction

Triratna is a worldwide network of friends in the Buddhist life. This is for many of us a source of great richness, support and strength. However, it also carries a risk that we may fail to notice, question or act on behaviours of concern, out of naivety, loyalty to friends or lack of awareness; or an assumption that “it couldn’t happen here” or “they would never do a thing like that.”

This policy is an expression of the first ethical precept taught by the Buddha: to avoid harming living beings. It refers to law and good practice mainly as defined in England and Wales. Triratna bodies in other countries are requested to draw up similar documents in line with local requirements.

The purpose of this policy

This document is for Friends, Mitras and Order members involved in Buddhfield East activities (and those of any outreach groups run by this centre) as employees, volunteers, leaders, teachers or parents.

It aims to provide

Protection for adults attending Buddhfield East activities who may be “at risk” or vulnerable, and
Protection for Friends, Mitras and Order members working with them.

It sets out

information and practices contributing to the prevention of harm of ‘adults at risk’, previously known as ‘vulnerable adults’

a course of action to be followed if harm is suspected.

Our values

Although we do not currently run activities specifically for those with mental illness or addiction, we recognise that people who may be vulnerable in these ways do attend our events and take part in the life of our sangha.

The trustees of Buddhafield East recognise their responsibility to safeguard adults who may be deemed to be “at risk” when visiting or involved in Buddhafield East activities.

Gunasara Evans is our Safeguarding officer, responsible for the protection of children and adults who may be at risk at Buddhafield East activities. (See also our Safeguarding Adults policy.)

Who is an “adult”?

In the United Kingdom an “adult” is a person who has passed their 18th birthday.

Who is an “adult at risk”?

This is not currently well defined. However, the following is one widely-used definition:

An ‘adult at risk’ is a person aged 18 or over who:

has need for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and

as a result of those care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

‘Adults with care and support needs’ could include people who

Have dementia

Have learning disabilities

Have mental health problems

Have drug, alcohol or substance dependency

Have physical or sensory disabilities

Have been bereaved, suffered grief and loss

Have through age or illness are dependent on other people to help them

live with domestic abuse

are homeless

are refugees or asylum seekers and

for any reason may be considered not to have 'mental capacity'. (See below.)

Whether or not a person is "at risk" or "vulnerable" in these cases will vary according to circumstances, and it should be noted that a person with a physical disability is not necessarily vulnerable or at risk, though they could be. Each case must be judged on its own merits.

What is 'mental capacity'?

Whether a person has mental capacity is a matter of specialist assessment and not for us to make. However, it may be useful to know something about it.

Mental capacity is the ability to make a particular decision. An adult may be at risk if they are unable to make a decision due to illness, disability, poor mental health, dementia, a learning disability or something else that may impair their judgment.

A person may be deemed to be 'without capacity' if they cannot:

understand the decision

retain the information

weigh up the information

communicate their decision

About matters such as

finance

social care

medical treatment

Vulnerability can be variable. As is made clear above in the reference to the vulnerability of those who have suffered grief and loss we recognise that many people who are generally emotionally and psychologically stable in most aspects of their lives may on occasion find themselves vulnerable or at risk. This may be because of illness, relationship breakdown or bereavement, or because their practice of meditation or Buddhism has made them more sensitive and self-aware, particularly if they are new to Buddhism.

We will take great care to help each other avoid exploiting such vulnerability, consciously or unconsciously.

Protecting ourselves and others in relationships

More or less conscious harm can occur in our dealings with others in classes and other formal face-to-face activities; it can also occur in personal friendships, especially between those of greater and lesser experience of Buddhism, where one may be seen by the other to be in a position of trust and authority.

We recognise that this may happen even where the more experienced person does not see her/himself as in a position of power or authority.

Though it is natural that some of our relationships will be sexual, we will take great care in starting sexual relationships where there is a considerable difference in level of Buddhist experience between the partners, particularly between Order members and those not ordained.

See the Triratna Ethical Guidelines 2018, and the College 'Statement on relationships between preceptors and those they ordain 2017'.

Protecting those with psychological disorders

We are aware that those attending our centre and activities include adults experiencing psychological disorders ranging from mild to severe.

We recognise that as Buddhists we do not have the professional skills to diagnose or help people with psychological disorders and that they may not be helped solely by the kindness of Buddhists. In such cases we may need to advise them to seek professional help. We are aware that for people with serious psychological disorders traditional Buddhist practices involving recognition of the illusion of self could be extremely dangerous. We may need to encourage them in traditional Buddhist practices involving the calming of body and mind, or to avoid meditation – altogether, or during periods of relapse.

Where we believe a person to be at risk of suicide or self-harm, or to pose a risk to others, we will alert our centre Safeguarding officer, who will refer to local mental health services and/or the police as appropriate, and consult with the Triratna Safeguarding Team if necessary.
safeguarding@triratnadevelopment.org

Protecting those with psychological disorders - online

Buddhism and meditation are increasingly taught using online media. In person, it is relatively easy to notice where a person may have compromised mental health; online it is much more difficult.

We recognise that among those seeking individual online guidance from members of the Triratna Buddhist Order there may be some reporting meditation experiences which are an indication of serious psychological disorder.

In engaging in individual guidance online by email, blog, social media or text we will take great care at the start to establish with local Order members the identity, location and suitability of the participant, and which local Order members are available locally to support them in person and gaining permission to contact those Order members if we believe they are at risk. (This does not apply where the participant is an Order member and therefore well known to us.)

(Responding to children online With anyone under 18, we will not engage in personal communication online or via social media except in carefully defined ways. See the Triratna Model Child protection policy 2018.)

DBS checks

We will ensure that the core team (Mitras or Order members, paid or voluntary) running any Buddhafield East activities or events specifically intended for those clearly at risk (for example, those with addictions, depression or chronic pain and illness) have been security checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service, and that anyone else helping with such activities (paid or voluntary) who has not been DBS checked is supervised at all times by someone who is DBS checked.

This does not apply to general activities which people with mental health difficulties may happen to attend.

What is 'abuse'?

'Abuse' is not a legal term, but covers a number of ways in which a person may be deliberately harmed (legally or illegally), usually by someone who is in a position of power, trust or authority over them, or who may be perceived by that person to be in a position of power, trust or authority over them; for example by a Friend, Mitra or Order member who is helping to run Buddhafield East activities for those newer to such activities. The harm may be physical, psychological or emotional, or it may exploit the vulnerability of the person in more subtle ways.

However, harm can also occur less consciously, through naivety, idealism or lack of awareness.

Types of abuse

The 2014 Care Act identifies nine types of abuse, all of which have a psychological/emotional aspect.

physical abuse

sexual abuse

neglect and acts of omission

organisational abuse

self-neglect

modern slavery

domestic abuse

discriminatory abuse

financial or material 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 service

The withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating

Organisational abuse

Neglect or abuse within an institution (eg.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)

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

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 (See the Triratna Model policy on bullying and harassment, "Living with dignity".)

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

Discriminatory abuse

Language or treatment which is discriminatory because of a person's
race/ethnicity

sex

disability

gender identity

sexual orientation

religion

Signs of abuse

Physical

NB Ageing processes can cause changes which are hard to distinguish from some aspects of physical assault e.g. skin bruising can occur due to blood vessels becoming fragile.

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 behaviour 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 inability to pay bills

Unexplained or sudden withdrawal of money from accounts

Disparity between assets and satisfactory living conditions

Unusual level of interest by family members and other people in the vulnerable person's financial assets

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

People who might abuse

Abuse may happen anywhere and may be carried out by anyone, eg:

Order members, Mitras and Friends, whether financially supported or volunteering

Parents

People you consider good and trusted friends

Informal carers, family, friends, neighbours

Strangers or visitors to Buddhafield East

If you have a concern

All allegations or suspicions should be taken seriously and reported to Buddhafield East's Safeguarding officer: Gunasara Evans. Email: gunasara@hotmail.com.

What to do if an adult alleges abuse

Do

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 to discuss their concerns with others, on a strictly need-to-know basis, if at all possible with their permission. (See below.)

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.

What to do next

Your first concern is the safety and wellbeing of the person bringing the allegation. Do not be distracted from this by loyalty to the person who has been accused or your desire to maintain the good name of Triratna or your centre.

If you think the person is in immediate danger phone social services or police straight away. A telephone referral should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours.

Every person has a legal right to privacy under the International Convention on Human Rights; therefore if possible you need to get the person's consent to share the information they have given you, within the limits described here.

However, if necessary it is legal to pass on information without their consent if you believe they are at risk of significant harm.

If you are not the Safeguarding officer, tell Buddhafield East's Safeguarding officer only. They bear overall responsibility for the future handling of the matter on behalf of the charity.

The Safeguarding officer should contact the Triratna Safeguarding team to discuss what to do next: safeguarding@triratnadevelopment.org

Meanwhile, make detailed factual notes about the discussion as soon as possible, including time, date and location. Give them to the Safeguarding officer. If you are the Safeguarding officer, keep notes yourself and keep them either locked away or password-protected.

Confidentiality, sharing information only on a need-to-know basis, is very important. Nobody else has a right to know about the matter. This is not a matter of concealment, but is intended to protect all concerned. It will also protect your sangha from fear, rumour and disharmony which will make it much harder to deal with the matter effectively without causing further harm.

No sangha member should attempt to investigate a criminal allegation. This is the job of the police and to attempt this could prejudice a court case and put the person in danger.

Finally, if the allegation is criminal, without giving full details you should tell the Charity Commission that there has been a Safeguarding incident, that your charity has addressed it according to your Safeguarding policies and the police have been informed.

Secure, confidential record-keeping

We understand our responsibility for secure and careful record-keeping. Our Safeguarding officer will keep a detailed log of all Safeguarding-related incidents as well as conversations and actions related to them. These are kept either in a locked cabinet or safe or in a password-protected electronic file on our computer system. Access to these records is only for the Safeguarding officer and one or two others approved by our trustees.

Keeping confidential records for at least 50 years

We understand that many abuse cases come to light 30 or more years later, so we are required to keep our records safe for at least 50 years.

If our centre closes down, we will give our records to another Triratna Buddhist Centre to keep with their own past confidential records; ie with their solicitor/accountant.

Reviewing our policies annually

All our Safeguarding policies will be reviewed by the trustees and Safeguarding officer annually and the review recorded in the minutes of their meetings.

The Buddhafield East

Safeguarding officer's name and email address: Gunasara Evans

gunasara@hotmail.com

Safeguarding officer's signature

Gunasara Evans

Date

16/7/23

This document will be reviewed annually by the Safeguarding officer and trustees of Buddhafield East

This model document published January 2018 by Triratna's Safeguarding team

safeguarding@triratnadevelopment.org