

Safeguarding and Ethical guidelines in Triratna

Munisha

Safeguarding officer

Triratna Buddhist Order and Community, Europe

30th September 2018

'Bystander effect'

Looking at past ethical misconduct in sanghas (including Triratna) I observe that

- Some people had questions but
- didn't know who was responsible or
- were frightened of speaking out, or what to say
- So they did nothing.
- This is 'Bystander effect' – it's how the brain works.
- This is why we need 'Safeguarding' procedures.

What is 'Safeguarding'? (SG)

Safeguarding is the duty of legally established bodies in Britain

to protect from harm

- children (under 18s) and
- adults who may be 'vulnerable' or 'at risk' under certain conditions.
- Eg, addicts, people with mental illness
- **Do not forget the risk to children.**

Two kinds of document

Triratna has

- Safeguarding policies *and*
- Ethical guidelines

What's the difference?

1. **Safeguarding policies** show awareness of **external**, legal requirements

Eg. Crime, discrimination

2. **Ethical guidelines** are **internal** statements of a Buddhist organisation's own values.

Eg, practical applications of Buddhist Precepts

- But they overlap
- and both are public.

So for example

- How to recognise signs that a child is being abused and what you must do if you suspect a crime – **Safeguarding documents**
- Order members who teach Dharma classes should be extremely careful if they start sexual relationships with adults new to Buddhism – **Ethical guidelines**

Triratna

- British charities are regulated by the Charity Commission (CC).
- The CC requires charities to take responsibility for Safeguarding.
- We have 2,200 Order members worldwide.
- Many of them live in countries where there is no Safeguarding requirement (or it's just different)
- But half our Order members live in the UK.
- So most of our Centres/charities are British.
- So we use British requirements as our standard *model* for everyone.

Our documents are 'model' documents

- A model document is a *suggested* form of words.
- It is strongly recommended that each Triratna charity has a document like this but
- it's a choice and
- we do not all have to use the same words.
- (We tried to agree on one set of words but it was hopeless.)

Triratna since 2013

- I started talking about the need for Safeguarding policies in 2013.
- I issued our first Safeguarding policies in 2015.
- I became the Safeguarding officer in 2016.
- 2017 I created a Safeguarding *team*
- As part of an 'Ethics kula' including several senior Order members

Triratna since 2017

By 2017 every UK Triratna centre had

- a Safeguarding officer
- Safeguarding policies and
- Ethical guidelines based on the 5 precepts
- Based on our model documents
- These documents evolve all the time.

UK Safeguarding requirements

- Problems, concerns, rumours, can and *must* be reported to the Safeguarding officer.
- *They* organise what happens next because...
- Everybody doing something is nearly as bad as nobody doing anything!
- Confidentiality very important (not secrecy).
- Information must be shared only with those who need to know.
- Transparency is not permitted! (Except to the police and CC)

Safeguarding at Manchester Buddhist Centre



Suryaka
Safeguarding Officer

Contact:

Tel:

0161 834 9232 ext. 25

Email:

suryaka@manchesterbuddhistcentre.org.uk

"We are committed to the protection of children and vulnerable adults who attend the Centre. We want all who visit the Centre to feel safe and welcome.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch with me if you have any concerns in this area."

Suryaka

- All our Safeguarding Policies are available to view : www.manchesterbuddhistcentre.org.uk Click on **Contact/Info** on the Home Page and scroll down to **Ethical Policies, Guidelines and Safeguarding** section.
- **Paper copies** can be viewed in our **Ethical Policies and Safeguarding Folder** in the Ground Floor Lounge Area.

**MANCHESTER
BUDDHIST
CENTRE**

If you are not sure where to look for our Policies, have questions or would like to please get in touch with Suryaka in the first instance to see how

If the complaint may be criminal

- The Safeguarding officer must report to the police.
- This is your only protection against allegations of 'coverup'.
- Then, if you are asked, later "Did you know?"
- you will have nothing to fear.

Sexual relations in the Triratna sangha

- We are not a celibate sangha
- We do not have 'teachers' and 'students'
- We do not wish to regulate people's sex lives

But our written policies make clear that

- preceptors must not have sex with people they have ordained
- or ordain people they have had sex with.

It takes time for everyone to
understand

Question: We have precepts! Why do we need
Safeguarding policies and Ethical Guidelines?

Answer 1: How useful are your precepts when a
fire breaks out?

Answer 2: People have been hurt.
So it is obvious precepts were not enough.

Other Triratna policies and protocols

- Safeguarding teenagers
- Complaints policy
- Grievance policy
- Whistleblower policy
- Disability policy
- Bullying and harassment
- Trans and non-binary policy
- Managing ex prisoners (sexual/violent crime)
- Working with those who confess to sexual crimes
- Paralegal process for judging serious allegations against Order members

If such documents/procedures are not normal in your country

- You can use them as a starting point for awareness-raising discussion in your organisation.
- You may be surprised what emerges.
- Decide with your board/council/trustees what is appropriate for *your* organisation in *your* country.

‘Restorative process’

- Triratna used an external expert in Restorative process to work with Sangharakshita and one or two of his ex-partners
- She trained many Order members
- We set up a Restorative team
- Who can work with people in Triratna to resolve harm and disputes
- The trainer: www.restorativenow.com

Recommendations for effective Safeguarding

- have written policies
- have *named* Safeguarding officers
- Safeguarding should be championed by your senior leaders and teachers
- Get training
- (The Network of Buddhist Organisations UK is running training days for UK Buddhist organisations this year.)

May all beings be well!

Email:

safeguarding@triratnadevelopment.org