

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

Guidance for

UK Triratna Buddhist Centres and Order members

Munisha, for the Triratna European Chairs' Assembly 2015

1. Our ethical values

Ensuring the sexual, physical and psychological safety of young people and vulnerable adults involved in the activities of Triratna Buddhist Centres and other enterprises is an expression of the First Precept: the principle of non-harming, or love.

2. Meeting our ethical obligations

To ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults, every UK Triratna Buddhist Centre/enterprise should have proper policies and procedures regarding the care of such people and what to do in the case of concerns or allegations. Whilst this and the recommendations below are a matter of good practice rather than law, if something went wrong it would become an extremely serious legal matter, affecting Triratna not just locally but worldwide. Personally, it would be a disaster for all involved.

British law in this area is evolving and not entirely clear. It also varies between the British regions. Recent case law has suggested that the Triratna Buddhist Order or one of its Centres or enterprises could be held responsible in the case of an Order member or Mitra found guilty of abuse of children or vulnerable people, whether or not they were acting on behalf of a Triratna institution, or even specifically as Order members or Mitras.

However, regardless of legal considerations, it is our first responsibility to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable people with whom we have contact, as well as safeguarding Triratna's good name.

I would therefore strongly advise that every UK Triratna Centre/enterprise joins the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS), a charity dedicated to helping all religious organisations protect the young and vulnerable.

CCPAS membership costs are very reasonable, according to your charity's size and means. Membership entitles you to use their advice service, and to an online system for conducting DBS security checks, previously known as CRB checks. (DBS stands for Disclosure and Barring Service.)

CCPAS will be happy to help you.

members@ccpas.co.uk

01322 517817

www.ccpas.co.uk

3. Triratna Buddhist activities: who needs security checks?

CCPAS will help you work what is reasonable for your particular circumstances. However, in brief

- The *core team* running an event or series of events for, or involving, children and young people under 18, on behalf of any Triratna Centre (or other Triratna charity such as Buddhafield) should be DBS checked. This applies whether the core team member is an Order member, Mitra or Friend, volunteer, staff, parent etc.
- Someone supporting or helping the core team (as a one-off or regularly, but without overall responsibility) would not need a DBS check, but should be supervised at all times by at least one member of the core team. This applies whether the supporter is an Order member, Mitra, Friend, volunteer, staff, parent etc.
- You should take out references, written or verbal, for any volunteer helping with children for more than a one-off instance of a few hours. Keep a written record that you have done this.
- All these adults, whether core team or supporters, should have read your charity's Child protection policy and signed your Child protection code of conduct.

- You don't need DBS checks for those running an adult event at which the odd under-18 year old happens to attend - but you should still have a Child Protection Policy and Code of conduct.

4. Triratna Buddhists working with schools

Order members and Mitras commonly work with schools in two ways:

- **At a Buddhist Centre, or on behalf of a Buddhist Centre**

Anyone regularly working with schools visiting a Buddhist Centre, or regularly visiting schools where they may be seen as a representative of that Centre or of Triratna, should be DBS checked by that Centre and covered by its Child Protection Policy and Code of conduct.

Whether they are paid or unpaid recent case law has considered such people as employed by that Centre, which could be held legally liable in the case of allegations of misconduct.

- **Freelance/independently**

If an Order member or Mitra works with a school as a one-off, very occasionally, or as a last minute stand-in, they do not need to be DBS checked but they should make it clear to the school that they are not DBS checked. School staff should ensure that the Buddhist is never left alone with a child or children, which is in any case a requirement of the school's own Child Protection Policy.

If an Order member or Mitra regularly works with schools, voluntarily or paid but not as a representative of any particular Centre, it is their responsibility to get themselves DBS checked. I suggest they get themselves checked by their nearest Triratna Buddhist Centre.

Concluding recommendation for those regularly working with schools

For the safety of children and young people, and to safeguard the good name of the Buddha, Dharma, Sangha and Triratna Buddhist Order and Community, all Mitras and members of the Triratna Buddhist Order regularly working with schools in the UK should be DBS checked by the Triratna Buddhist Centre they represent, or by their nearest Triratna Buddhist Centre.

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To be read in conjunction with

- *the Triratna model Child protection policy 2015*
- *the Triratna model Child protection code of conduct 2015 and the*
- *Triratna model Vulnerable adults protection policy 2015.*