

Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults 2016

General advice for UK Triratna Buddhist Centres and Order members

Triratna European Chairs' Assembly

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. 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 adopts documents such as the model documents accompanying this one, and joins the Churches' Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS), a charity dedicated to helping all religious organisations protect the young and vulnerable.

CCPAS membership is charged on a dana basis. Membership entitles you to use their advice service, and to an online system for conducting DBS security checks. (DBS stands for Disclosure and Barring Service.)

Email: members@ccpas.co.uk

01322 517817

www.ccpas.co.uk

3. What does it mean, to 'adopt' a policy?

Adopting a policy means that your council/trustees discuss the document, agree a form of wording which reflects the values and actions they wish to commit themselves to, record in their minutes that this discussion took place and inform local Order members; maybe also Mitras who have asked for ordination.

The documents can be kept on file for reference, displayed in public in your centre in a file or on a noticeboard, and can also be put on your website, maybe under a heading such as "Our values". Many British Triratna centres have already done this. (*The 'Managing a sex offender' document is not for public display.*)

4. Who should sign the Code of conduct?

See point 5. The Child protection policy sets out your values and policy. The Code of conduct is a simple guide to behaviour which will keep children safe from harm and keep Mitras and Order members safe from allegations of misconduct. The Code can be signed by those running your centre/enterprise, teaching or leading activities, and those volunteering regularly. Filed away, should an allegation be made, the Child protection policy and the signed copies of the Code are legally significant evidence your organisation has shown awareness of its responsibilities and taken measures to minimise risks.

5. Who needs DBS 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 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.

6. 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.

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To be read in conjunction with

- *the Triratna model Child protection policy 2016*
- *the Triratna model Child protection code of conduct 2016 and the*
- *Triratna model Vulnerable adults protection policy 2016.*