

Safeguarding children and adults 2021

General advice for Triratna Buddhist centres and enterprises worldwide

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

We recognise that the Safeguarding documents accompanying this guidance document are written according to law, regulation, terminology and good practice expected today in England and Wales (home to nearly half the Order) and may be different from what is expected of Triratna centres or enterprises in other countries.

However, any allegation of abuse in any country would be very serious, primarily for those involved but also for Triratna worldwide - very swiftly, via social media. Personally, it would be a disaster for any Order member or Mitra accused.

Sexual abuse of children within religious groups has been uncovered in many parts of the world over the last 30 years, most commonly but not exclusively, in major Churches. Buddhists, too, have been convicted – 2017 saw the imprisonment of a Zen teacher in Germany on multiple counts of child sexual abuse. Furthermore, in the last few years there has been a dramatic increase in the use of, and trade in, indecent images and video of children and video online worldwide. Religious groups are an easy target for those who wish to gain access to children for criminal purposes.

Please raise these issues with your council and decide how to raise awareness among local Order members, agreeing locally appropriate procedures to be followed in the case of concerns or allegations. If you find them useful, you are welcome to use the 2021 model documents published by the Safeguarding team employed by Triratna's European Chairs' Assembly.

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 are committing themselves to, record in their minutes that this discussion took place and inform local Order members and Mitras; maybe also the wider local sangha.

The documents can then be kept on file for reference, displayed in public in your centre in a file or on a pinboard, and should also be put on your website, maybe under a heading such as "Our values". Many British Triratna centres have already done this.

4. Signing your policies

The policies set out the values and legal responsibilities of the council/trustees of your centre/enterprise. The Child Protection Code of Conduct is a simple guide to behaviour that will keep children safe from harm and keep Mitras and Order members safe from allegations of misconduct.

Those running your centre/enterprise, teaching or leading its activities and those volunteering regularly should add their signatures to a sign-up sheet/list of those who have read and agreed to abide by your policies. Should an allegation be made, the signatures are evidence that your organisation has shown awareness of its responsibilities and taken measures to minimise risk.

(However, anyone in the sangha who is already known to be a risk to children cannot be asked to sign the Child Protection Code of Conduct as they should not be having any contact with those under 18 in the course of Triratna activities anyway. (See the Model Child Protection Policy for more details.)

It is recommended that anyone who does not wish to sign is not permitted to teach or run activities at your centre, as this means they do not support the values of your council/trustees, who are legally responsible for the running of your centre/enterprise and therefore legally accountable for any harm which could occur in the course of your activities.

*This guidance published 2021 by Triratna's ECA Safeguarding team.
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