

# Charges and suggested donations: a survey of UK Triratna Centre websites, April 2011

The websites of the 21 UK urban centres were scoured for information on payment, donations, session charges and suggested donations levels. Costs/suggested donations for courses and classes were recorded, along with any text found on the website on the subject of dana, giving, paying and costs. All 21 centres had a charge/suggested donation amount for at least one activity.

A survey of the wide European Buddhist Centres is underway, subject to translations.

## Dana/charging policy

17 centres had a donations policy or explanation of donations/giving/dana, either as a page in its own right (see table below). These 17 centres explained/asked for dana on the basis of:

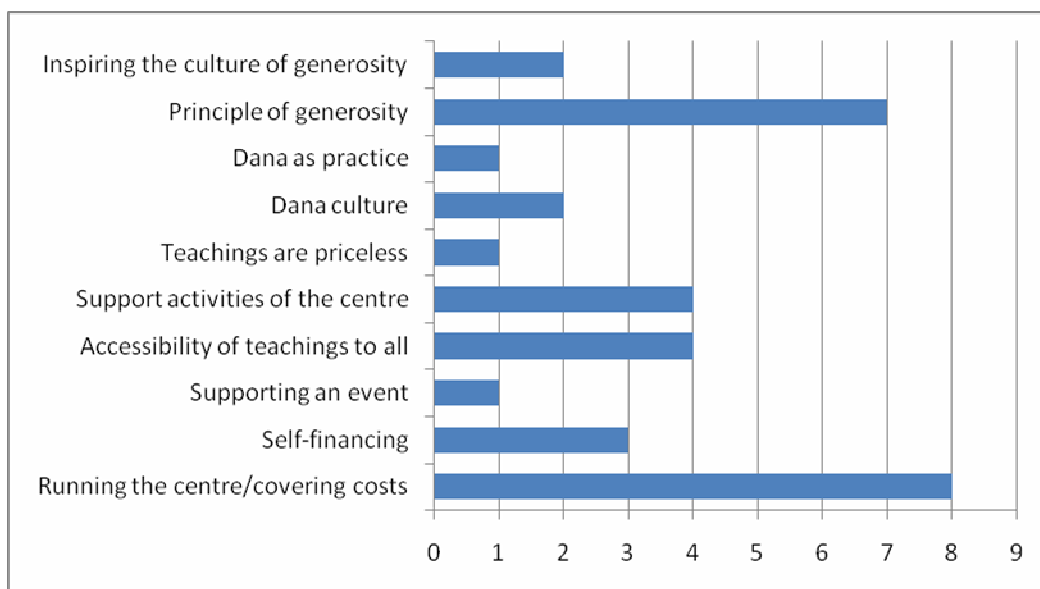


Figure 1: Themes in Triratna centres' money policies on their websites

With 2 references to a culture of generosity, 7 to the principle of generosity, this looks like a good start. It could go further by stressing the fundamental importance of generosity as a cornerstone Buddhist practice. Nottingham's text seems exemplary in this respect, conveying the higher dimension of the priceless nature of the teachings:

"The Centre offers something that is priceless - the teachings of the Buddha - which should not be bought or sold. So rather than charge for classes, we give them freely, asking only for donations.

"Our aim is to inspire a culture of generosity that will pervade the community. Through giving, we learn to transcend ourselves and respond to the needs of others. If you value what is offered, you will hopefully be inspired to help us to offer that gift to others."

Nottingham TBC website, April 2011

The mundane needs for money to cover costs may encourage some people to dig deep, but it may not inspire them in their practice of dana towards the centre. Engagement with the bigger picture of spreading the dharma in the West may inspire people more than needing to pay the bills, and be less encouraging of a transaction mentality (“I get dharma, so I pay money” – or vice versa) which can lead to devaluing the teachings.

On some websites, the text on dana formed part of the homepage. On others, the page was linked to from the main menu, and on others still it was buried somewhere at the end of several clicks.

9 centres had an online donations facility (how much is received through this route?) using PayPal, VirginMoneyGiving, Charities’ Aid Foundation or CharityChoice.

9 centres use .com or .co.uk URLs, these indicate that the organisation is commercial, for profit. On the other hand, several websites use .org(.uk) addresses which reflect their charitable/not-for-profit status more clearly. In addition, .com tends to indicate a company in the US, or worldwide, which is not typically accurate for UK Triratna Centres.

Some centres indicated the role of volunteers in running the centre (e.g. Manchester) while others added in a suggestion about leaving a legacy to the Buddhist centre (e.g. Brighton).

### **Questions for chairs:**

What are we asking for money for? Bills? Teabags? Support to spread the dharma? For our centre alone, or for the wider Triratna movement?

(How) do we communicate this in our requests for dana – whether by posters, leaflets, websites, spoken requests?

How can we improve our communications to be better in line with the dharma and encouraging the practice of giving?

How prominent do you want your dana statement to be? How important is it, in the context of everything you are doing?

Does our centre’s URL convey that it is a commercial enterprise? If yes, is it important for us to give out more correct signals by changing to .org.uk?

What messages do we want to convey about dana? (e.g. that it can be time/effort as well as money)

## **Charges, suggested donations and concessions**

Our centres used a mixture of payment/donations for individual sessions, including drop-in sessions (lunchtime and evening, or weekend) and courses.

Three types of sessions were compared across centres: drop-in sessions (evening, where possible, since fewer centres had lunchtime drop-ins than evenings), courses, and Sangha night/friends night/practice evenings. Suggested donations and charges were recorded for each centre, where information was available on the websites.

Out of the 21 UK centres:

- 15 centres had fixed charges for sessions
- 9 centres asked for donations in addition to class-associated charges/donations
- 12 centres gave suggested donation amounts
- 17 centres mentioned concessions – some having three tiers: full price, low income, student/benefits
- 1 centre (Sheffield) suggests a guideline donation only for the introductory course, thereafter all activities are without specified charges.

The results are in the chart on the next page, and summarised below:

### **Drop-in sessions**

Some centres have fixed charges, others suggested donations. The amounts ranged from £2 to £10, depending on time of day (lunchtime usually cheaper than evenings) and concessions.

### **Sangha night (Friends' night, practice evenings...)**

11 centres have Sangha nights. 7 centres invite donations, the other 4 charge £3-10.

### **Courses**

Courses ranged from 4 to 7 weeks, some including a day retreat. Course charges ranged from £6.66-£15.83 per session, or £3.00-9.16 concessions.

Some centres charge more for a concession place than other centres do for a non-discounted place!

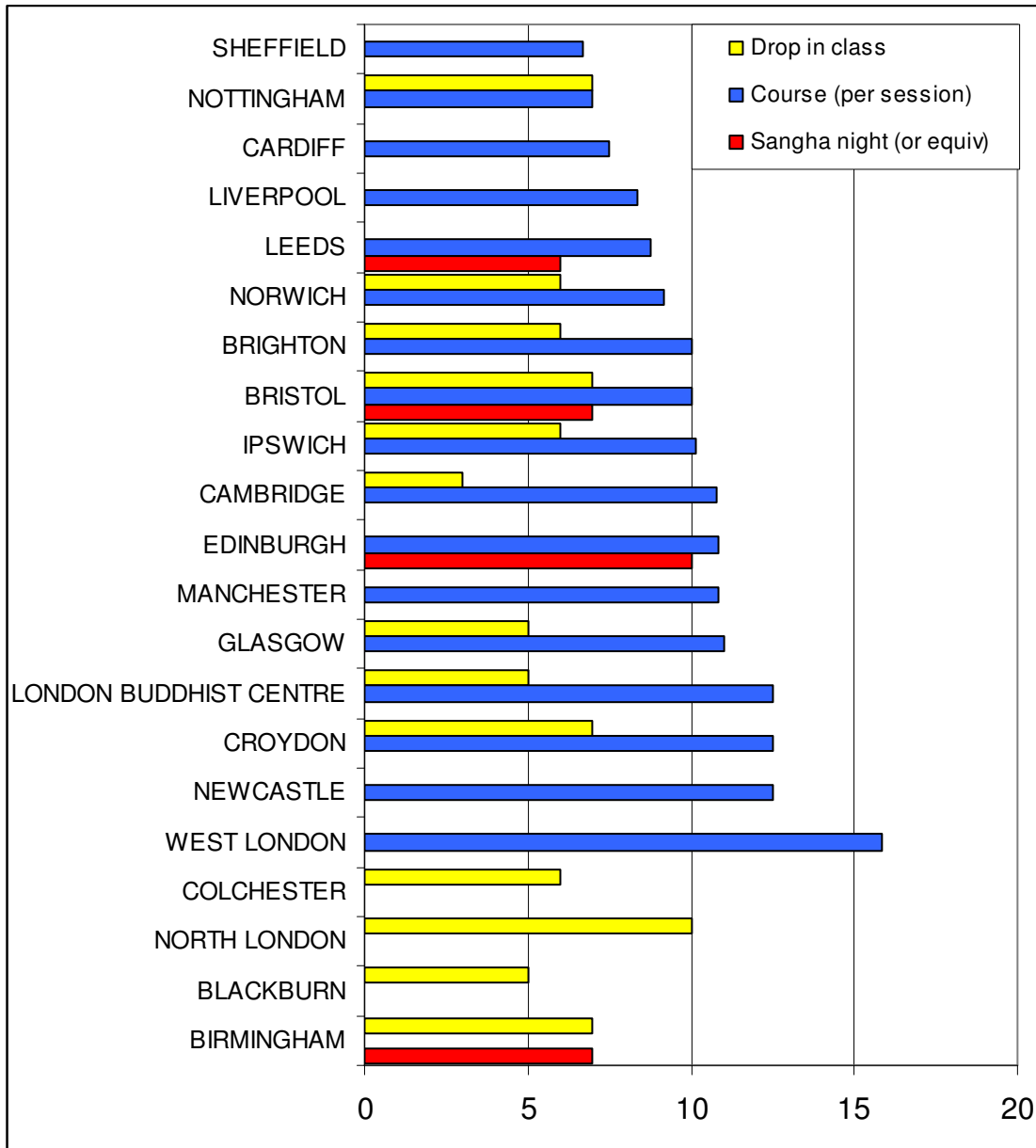


Figure 2: Suggested donations/fees for activities at 21 UK Triratna Centres.  
 Birmingham, Blackburn, Colchester and North London did not publicise any courses.

**Questions for chairs:**

Why and how are these charges/suggested donations set?

How do we encourage people to come along (even if they can't give) or to give more (if they are able and willing to)?

How else can we encourage people who come to our activities to support the work of the centre?

Dana/charges policy: text from Triratna urban centres.

N indicates that no text was found that explicitly dealt with dana/charges.

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BIRMINGHAM	<p>The Buddhist Centre runs on the principle of generosity and we don't charge for classes. All amounts you see quoted are suggested donations - please give what you can.</p>
BLACKBURN	<p>No charge but donations would be appreciated.</p> <p>Dana</p> <p>All our courses and activities are based on the Buddhist practice of dana. Dana means open handed giving. We are a self-financing charity. The Centre relies entirely on the generosity of those who attend. We give our courses free. If you would like to participate in our dana culture by making a donation each evening, that would be really appreciated. Please also think about Gift aiding your donation if you are a taxpayer.</p> <p>We suggest a donation of £5 for an evening event and £15 for a day retreat this is in order to cover our costs. However, it is only a suggestion, you may like to give more!</p>
BRIGHTON	<p>The Brighton Buddhist Centre relies on income from classes, courses and donations. Please give generously to support the Centre and its activities for the wider community in Brighton.</p> <p>'Gift Aided' donations and regular Standing Orders are greatly appreciated. If you give us a Gift Aid Declaration Form (click to download) we are able to claim back some of the tax you pay, thus increasing the value of your donation by at least 25%.</p> <p>You may wish to consider including the Brighton Buddhist Centre (charity no. 27368) in your will. If you have not had a will drawn up yet or you want to make alterations to an existing one there is a free service offered at regular intervals. See <a href="http://www.freewillsfortnight.org.uk">www.freewillsfortnight.org.uk</a> Brighton.</p>
BRISTOL	N
CAMBRIDGE	<p>The Centre is a not-for-profit charity. Our aim is to make Buddhism and meditation accessible to everyone, which is why we keep charges for classes at a minimum and where possible we ask for a donation rather than a fixed charge.</p> <p>Centre workers receive a low 'support' wage and most teachers give their time for free.</p> <p>How you can help Standing orders</p>

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If you are a taxpayer, we can recover 28p in the pound.  
To give, fill in a form

#### Donations

Please leave money in the bowls in the Centre foyer, filling in your address on Gift Aid envelope to help us claim back tax.

#### Volunteers

We need volunteers to help keep the Centre running.  
In particular, we welcome help with maintenance on Tuesdays 2pm-5.30pm and to clean on Mondays 2-4pm or to work on reception during office hours. If you can help, please contact us.

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CARDIFF	There is no fixed charge for the classes but please give us a donation. The centre is a registered charity and relies entirely on donations and income from classes for its continued existence.
COLCHESTER	N
CROYDON	We try to keep our class charges as low as possible. If you would like to attend a class but can't afford it, please speak to one of the Centre team about concessions. This is a Dana (donation only) event - you are welcome to make a donation to support the event
EDINBURGH	We do depend on the sangha members and friends for running the centre. Your Dana (donation) is much appreciated.  So, please give generously. The costs is only a suggestion however you are free to give more/less than the suggested donation of £10/ £5.
GLASGOW	We are a not-for profit organisation and all our courses offer a lower price for the unemployed, retired people, students and those on low income. However, we will never turn someone away from a meditation or Buddhism class for financial reasons (ON HOME PAGE)  Organisation: The Centre is a non-profit making organisation. All prices are given at the cost to the Centre based on our expenditure. Special reductions can be considered for meditation and Buddhism & Meditation classes. Please contact the Centre to discuss this as appropriate. Our aim is to create a radical economy based on generosity, in which we each give what we can and take what we need. We depend heavily on donations and covenants from friends who share our aim of making Buddhism available to Glasgow and, increasingly, to Scotland as a whole.
IPSWICH	N
LEEDS	It is run on a drop-in basis and we ask for a donation to help cover our

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costs. We suggest a donation of £6 or £3 (unwaged) but please give more or less according to what you are able to afford

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LIVERPOOL

All payment for courses is by suggested donation of £45 waged /£25 concessions to cover our costs

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LONDON BUDDHIST CENTRE

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MANCHESTER

<http://www.manchesterbuddhistcentre.org.uk/general-info/giving>

### **The Manchester Buddhist Centre was built on generosity**

In the mid 1990s a committed group of men and women, working for free, transformed a run down Victorian warehouse into a beautiful jewel. Since then, hundreds more have given time, skills and money to help the Centre communicate Buddhist teachings and meditation to thousands of people.

Manchester Buddhist Centre remains a registered charity with no outside funding or wealthy benefactors. We get some income from courses, events, room hire and rents, but these don't cover all our costs. We rely on the generosity of visitors and supporters to keep the Centre and its activities alive and growing.

### **Giving Money**

We always welcome donations of cash or cheques in the Centre's dana (donation) bowls. Dana is the Pali word for generosity. So, next time you visit the Centre please consider making a donation. No amount is too large or too small.

You can also make a credit or debit card donation by telephone or in person during our [opening hours](#)

### **Other Ways of Giving**

#### **Volunteer your time and skills**

Regularly or occasionally, from decorating and diy to cleaning and leafleting. More information on the [volunteers](#) page.

#### **Legacies**

If you are making a will, please consider a bequest to the Centre.

- [Triratna guide to wills](#)
- [Triratna video](#) — Keeping the Three Jewels Shining

#### **Donate items we can sell**

Volunteers raise over £150 a month from the ground floor second hand book stall. Please leave any books you no longer need with the receptionist. Maybe you would like to help us sell other donated items online?

### **Give in kind**

We always welcome tea bags, soya milk, loo rolls, heavy duty bin bags and so on. Many people just add an extra item to each shopping trip and this really helps keep our supplies bill down.

### **Be sponsored**

Choose the Buddhist Centre as your charity if you are taking part in a run or other event.

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#### NEWCASTLE

"Payment info" page:

##### Payment

The Newcastle Buddhist Centre tries as far as possible to operate on the basis of dana. Dana is the pali word meaning generosity and dana is seen as of fundamental importance in Buddhism.

We therefore hope to run the Buddhist Centre on the basis of the generosity of those who attend our courses and classes, without set charges for events.

At present however we have a set charge for our introductory courses and for our weekend retreats. All other classes are by donation though we may recommend a suggested donation.

Our aim is to make the Buddha's teaching available to anyone who wishes to access it and not to make money - yet we are reliant on a certain income to make resources available. If money is a problem with any of our events, please do get into negotiation with us.

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#### NORTH LONDON

##### Our charges and dana

We run the centre on the basis of generosity (dana), a fundamental Buddhist practice. Our charges are set at an affordable level to allow as many people as possible to benefit. Income from classes and events is not enough, on its own, to cover our running costs. We rely on additional donations and practical help from volunteers to keep our beautiful centre up and running. We are very appreciative of the amazing generosity of all those who participate in our activities and give their time, money and energy to help the centre. Regular standing orders are a particularly helpful way of giving. We are able to reclaim tax on donations from UK taxpayers. If you'd like to help keep the centre open, viable, and a focus for vibrant practice, do get involved by giving and by helping out.

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#### NORWICH

##### Fundraising

In October 2009, the Norwich Buddhist Centre launched our fundraising appeal, The Lotus Unfurls. Before the launch of the campaign, 21 people already contributed a total of £4,485 a year. When we closed the campaign in March 2010, we had increased that number to 58 Order Members, Mitras and friends of the Centre who brought the contributions up to almost £10,000 a year.

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We are a unique charity because we completely fund ourselves. We don't receive any external funding so we have the freedom to choose how we spend our income. As the amount of standing order income increases, so does the Centre's long-term financial well-being. The less we depend on income from courses and classes, the more spontaneous we can be in responding to needs that arise, and the more accurate we can be in budgeting ahead.

Setting up a standing order at the Norwich Buddhist Centre is an investment in its future. Thank you to everyone who has chosen to give and to everyone who might be thinking of it. [Click here](#) if you would like to donate

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NOTTINGHAM

Dana economy page:

Dana Economy

"The perfection of generosity is said to be the thought to give all beings everything". Shantideva, the 8th century Buddhist master

The Nottingham Buddhist Centre has no central funding. We operate a radical economy on, what is called, a Dana Economy. The Sanskrit word 'Dana' means generosity, which is a fundamental Buddhist principle. The Centre offers something that is priceless - the teachings of the Buddha - which should not be bought or sold. So rather than charge for classes, we give them freely, asking only for donations.

Our aim is to inspire a culture of generosity that will pervade the community. Through giving, we learn to transcend ourselves and respond to the needs of others. If you value what is offered, you will hopefully be inspired to help us to offer that gift to others.

The most obvious form of 'dana' is to give money through donations, both by putting money in the Dana bowl and through standing orders, Gift Aid, CAF cheque, and Charitycard schemes.

However, 'dana' can also take the form of giving time, skills, goods, friendliness; there are so many things that one can give!

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SHEFFIELD

Payment

Our aim is to inspire a culture of generosity in the way we share Buddhist Teachings. Therefore all our meditation and Buddhism activities are offered on a dana basis - what you pay is left to your generosity. Formal charges are made for Yoga and Tai Chi classes

On course pages: The course is free, but we do depend on donations, so if you are able to give, we would be grateful. We suggest between £20 – £40

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## DANA, GENEROSITY & PAYMENT

Generosity is of fundamental importance in Buddhism and the finances of the Centre are run on the basis of “dana”, which means generosity in the old Indian language, Pali. Our aim is to inspire a culture of generosity in the way we share Buddhist teachings.

We therefore only make a formal charge for our Yoga and Tai Chi classes. Other activities are offered on a dana basis – what you pay is left to your generosity. All Buddhism classes are offered free of charge, but of course, donations are very gratefully received, as we rely on the generosity of those who use the Centre to keep going.

Some people like to be given a guideline donation for courses, in which case we suggest £40 (waged) and £20 (unwaged) for a six-week introductory course, but this is entirely optional and you may feel that less, more, or nothing at all is more appropriate for you.

Any cheques should be payable to “Sheffield Buddhist Centre”. Regular attendees can choose to contribute by standing order – please contact us for more information.

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### WEST LONDON

How much does it cost?

For most classes and courses we charge a fee in order to keep the Centre running. For the Saturday morning drop-in meditation, the fee is £8 if you are waged, and £4 if you are not. We rely on your honesty to pay the appropriate amount. If you can't afford the £4 then please do talk to one of the Centre team and we can try to work something out. The lunchtime meditations are no charge, though donations are very helpful!

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