



London Buddhist Centre

51 Roman Road, London, E2 0HU

www.lbc.org.uk

020 8981 1225

Registered Charity no: 255420

Safeguarding Adults Policy and Guidelines

Principles

The purpose of this policy

This document is for Friends, Mitras and Order members involved in London Buddhist Centre (LBC) activities (and those of any outreach groups run by this centre) as employees, volunteers, leaders, teachers or parents.

It aims to provide protection for:

- all adults attending LBC activities who may be “at risk” or vulnerable; and
- for Friends, Mitras and Order members working with them.

It sets out:

- Information and practices contributing to the prevention of harm of ‘adults at risk’, previously known as ‘vulnerable adults’
- A course of action to be followed if harm is suspected.

Our values

The trustees of the LBC recognise their responsibility to safeguard adults who may be deemed to be “at risk” when visiting or involved in Buddhist Centre activities.

This policy is an expression of the first ethical precept taught by the Buddha: to protect living beings from harm. It is based on law and good practice in England and Wales.

Our activities include classes that take place within Breathing Space, which offers Mindfulness Based Approaches (MBAs) to promote health and wellbeing. We run activities specifically for those who have difficulties with depression, addiction and stress. The courses that we run are designed for people who are not currently depressed, engaging in their addictive behavior or experiencing very high levels of stress. The courses are designed to help these people not to relapse back into depression, return to their addictive behavior or high levels of stress. They aim to give them an approach and techniques for managing their own mental health moving into the future. We recognise that people who book on these courses may be vulnerable. We also run drop-in classes and residential

retreats for Carers in Tower Hamlets. We recognize that after they have completed a class, course or retreat that they may take part in the life of our Sangha/Community.

Maitreyaraja is our Safeguarding officer, responsible for coordinating Safeguarding for adults who may be at risk at the LBC. Satyadasa is the Safeguarding Trustee. Suryagupta, as the current Chair of the LBC, keeps an overview of Safeguarding.

Definitions

In the United Kingdom an “adult” is a person who has passed their 18th birthday. - The term “adult at risk” is not currently well defined. Here is one widely used definition:

An ‘adult at risk’ is a person aged 18 or over who:

- Has need for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and
- is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- as a result of those care and support needs are unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect.

‘Adults with care and support needs’ could include people who:

- Have dementia
- Have learning disabilities
- Have mental health problems
- Have drug, alcohol or substance dependency
- Have physical or sensory disabilities
- Have been bereaved, suffered grief and loss
- Have through age or illness are dependent on other people to help them
- Live with domestic abuse
- Are homeless
- Are refugees or asylum seekers and
- For any reason may be considered not to have ‘mental capacity’. (See below.)

Whether or not a person is “at risk” or “vulnerable” in these cases will vary according to circumstances. It should be noted that a person with a physical disability is not necessarily vulnerable or at risk, though they could be. Also people who are generally emotionally and psychologically stable in most aspects of their lives may on occasion find themselves vulnerable or at risk, for example when they have been bereaved or suffered grief and loss.

Each case must be judged on its own merits.

What is ‘mental capacity’?

Whether a person has mental capacity is a matter of specialist assessment. However, it may be useful to know something about it.

Mental capacity is the ability to make a particular decision. An adult may be at risk if they

are unable to make a decision due to illness, disability, poor mental health, dementia, a learning disability or something else that may impair their judgment.

A person may be deemed to be 'without capacity' if they cannot:

- Understand the decision
- Retain the information
- Weigh up the information
- Communicate their decision

About matters such as:

- Finance
- Social care
- Medical treatment

Policy Guidance

Protecting ourselves and others in relationships

Harm can occur in our dealings with others in classes and other formal face-to-face activities; it may not be deliberate. It can also occur in personal friendships, especially where one may be seen by the other to be in a position of trust and authority because of their greater experience of Buddhism.

We recognise that this may happen even where the more experienced person does not see her/himself as in a position of authority.

Though it is natural that some of our relationships will be sexual, we will take great care in starting sexual relationships where there is a considerable difference in the level of Buddhist experience between the partners, particularly between Order members and those not ordained.

See the Triratna Ethical Guidelines 2018, and the College 'Statement on relationships between preceptors and those they ordain 2017'.

Protecting those with psychological disorders

We are aware that those attending our centre and activities include adults experiencing psychological disorders ranging from mild to severe.

We recognise that as Buddhists we do not have the professional skills to diagnose or help people with psychological disorders.

We are aware that for people with serious psychological disorders traditional Buddhist practices involving recognition of the illusion of self could be dangerous. We may need to encourage them in traditional Buddhist practices involving the calming of body and mind, or to avoid meditation altogether, or during periods of relapse.

Where we believe a person to be at risk of self harm or suicide we will encourage them to contact their GP, mental health team or to go to the accident and emergency department of the local hospital. If necessary we will make the contact on their behalf, with their permission. We will consult with Triratna's ECA Safeguarding officer if necessary: safeguarding@triratna.community or with external advisers such as Thirtyone:eight.

Where we consider there is immediate danger of a person harming themselves or others we will contact emergency services, without their permission if necessary.

Protecting those with psychological disorders - online

Buddhism and meditation are increasingly taught using online media. In person, it is relatively easy to notice where a person may have compromised mental health; online it is much more difficult.

We recognise that among those seeking individual online guidance from members of the Triratna Buddhist Order there may be some reporting meditation experiences which are an indication of serious psychological disorder. In engaging in individual guidance online by email, blog, social media or text we will take great care at the start to respond appropriately which may include informing them about Mental Health Services that they could access.

Managing those who pose a risk to others

There may be cases where it is known that a person attending our activities may pose a risk to others (for example, a person who is known to have a previous criminal conviction for sexual or other violent offences, who is on the UK Sex Offender Register, or someone who is under investigation for possible sexual or other violent offences). Such a person will be asked by the Safeguarding officer to agree a behaviour contract setting out the terms of their continued participation in our activities within agreed boundaries and based on a formal risk assessment. This should be provided by the person's probation/police supervising officer or other external professional, or an Order member with professional experience in risk assessment.

Room-use

We understand that there is joint responsibility of our charity and any third party using our premises with our agreement either by rent or freely, for the Safeguarding of children and adults taking part in such activities, but that our trustees bear ultimate responsibility for the Safeguarding in all activities which take place on our premises.

DBS checks

We will ensure that the core team (Mitras or Order members, paid or voluntary) running any LBC activities or events specifically intended for those clearly at risk (for example, those with addictions, depression or chronic pain and illness) have been security checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service, and that anyone else helping with such activities (paid or voluntary) who has not been DBS checked is supervised at all times by someone who is DBS checked. This does not apply to general activities, which people with mental health difficulties may happen to attend.

What is 'abuse'?

'Abuse' is not a legal term, but covers a number of ways in which a person may be

deliberately harmed (legally or illegally), usually by someone who is in a position of power, trust or authority over them, or who may be perceived by that person to be in a position of power, trust or authority over them; for example by a Friend, Mitra or Order member who is helping to run LBC activities for those newer to such activities. The harm may be physical, psychological or emotional, or it may exploit the vulnerability of the person in more subtle ways.

However, harm can also occur less consciously, through naivety or lack of awareness. For types of abuse, see appendix

People who might abuse

Abuse may happen anywhere and may be carried out by anyone, e.g:

- Order members, Mitras and Friends, whether financially supported or volunteering
- Parents
- People you consider good and trusted friends
- Informal carers, family, friends, neighbours
- Other users or tenants of the LBC
- Strangers or visitors to LBC

What to do if you have a concern

All allegations or suspicions should be taken seriously and reported to the LBC Safeguarding Officer:

Maitreyaraja: Safeguarding_LBC@protonmail.com

The Safeguarding Officer(s) work as a team with the Safeguarding Trustee, Satyadasa and the Chair of the Centre, Suryagupta.

Procedures

Guarding against abuse

- All the Trustees of the LBC and teachers of Breathing Space events will be DBS checked and given the LBC Safeguarding Adults Policy to read.
- All LBC teachers will be given the LBC's Safeguarding Adults Policy to read.
- All team members for Breathing Space activities will be given the LBC's Safeguarding to read.
- The LBC will consciously cultivate a culture where all Order Members, Mitras and Friends will take great care to help each other to avoid exploiting people who are vulnerable, consciously or unconsciously

What to do if an adult alleges abuse

Do

- Stay calm.
- Listen patiently.
- Reassure the person they are doing the right thing by telling you.
- Clarify issues of confidentiality early on. Make it clear that you may have to discuss their concerns with others, on a strictly need-to-know basis, if at all possible with their permission. (See below.)

- Explain what you are going to do.
- Write a factual account of what you have seen and heard immediately.

Do not

- Appear shocked, horrified, disgusted or angry.
- Press the individual for details.
- Make comments or judgments other than to show concern. Your responsibility is to take them seriously, not to decide whether what they are saying is true.
- Promise to keep secrets.
- Confront the alleged perpetrator.
- Attempt to investigate a criminal allegation. This is the job of the police and to attempt this could prejudice a court case and put the person in danger.

What to do next

- We understand that our first concern must be the safety and wellbeing of this person and that we must not be distracted from this by loyalty to the person who has been accused or a desire to maintain the good name of Triratna or our charity
- If the person receiving the disclosure is not our Safeguarding officer, they must tell the Safeguarding officer only, who will co-ordinate the handling of the matter on behalf of the charity's trustees. However, if the Safeguarding officer is not immediately available the matter should be communicated to the Chair of the charity or the Safeguarding trustee.
- We understand that every person has a legal right to privacy under the International Convention on Human Rights and data protection legislation; therefore if possible we need to get the person's consent to share the information they have given us, within the limits described here and below.
- If the adult alleging abuse is not formally vulnerable or 'at risk' and their complaint may be criminal, it is up to them to report to the police if they wish to; though we will offer them help and support to do this.
- If the person is formally vulnerable or 'at risk' we may report on their behalf, though with their permission if possible.
- Whether or not formally vulnerable or 'at risk', if the person may be in immediate danger the Safeguarding officer, Chair, Safeguarding trustee or person receiving the disclosure will phone social services or police straight away. A telephone referral will be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. If necessary, our Safeguarding officer will contact Triratna's ECA Safeguarding officer for advice: safeguarding@triratna.community
- It may be necessary, and therefore legally 'reasonable', to pass on information without the adult's consent if they may be at immediate risk of harm once they leave your company and/or a crime has been or is about to be committed; also if what is disclosed indicates that there is also a risk of harm to a child.
- The person receiving the disclosure will make detailed factual notes about the conversation/concern/incident as soon as possible, including time, date and location, and pass them to the charity's Safeguarding officer. (See 'Secure, confidential record-keeping' below.) As far as possible what the person has said should be recorded in their own words, as these could be used in court.
- We understand that no sangha member should attempt to investigate a criminal allegation, that this is the job of the police and that to attempt this could prejudice a court case and put the parties in danger.

- In England and Wales we understand that we may need to make a Serious Incident Report to the Charity Commission:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity>.
- UK charities insured by the Buddhist Insurance Scheme should report to the broker. These last two points involve reporting briefly the type of incident/concern and what is being done to address it. They should not include any personal details identifying those involved. We will consult with Triratna's ECA Safeguarding officer if necessary: safeguarding@triratna.community or with external advisers such as Thirtyone:eight.

LBC Procedures

Criminal Allegations

The Safeguarding Officers will report criminal allegations to the police. The Safeguarding Officer will report the allegation also to the Charity Commission. They will report that there has been a Safeguarding incident, that the LBC has addressed it according to its Safeguarding policies and the police have been informed.

Secure, confidential record-keeping

The LBC understands its responsibility for secure and careful record-keeping. The Safeguarding officer will keep a detailed log of all Safeguarding-related incidents as well as conversations and actions related to them. These are kept in a password-protected electronic file on our computer system. Access to these records is only for the Safeguarding officers, trustee and Chair and one or two others approved by the LBC's Safeguarding Team.

Keeping confidential records for at least 50 years

The LBC understands that many abuse cases come to light 30 or more years later, so the Centre is required to keep its Safeguarding records safe for at least 50 years. This will include relevant documents and related correspondence. All such documents will be securely retained.

If the LBC closes down, it will give its Safeguarding records to another Triratna Buddhist Centre to keep with their own past confidential records.

Reviewing our policies annually

All our Safeguarding policies will be reviewed by the Trustees and Safeguarding officers annually and the review recorded in the minutes of their meetings.

London Buddhist Centre

Chair: Suryagupta

Signed;

Safeguarding officer: Maitreyaraja

Signed

Date: September 2023

This document will be reviewed annually by the Safeguarding officers and trustees of the London Buddhist Centre.

Appendix

Types and signs of abuse

Types of abuse

The 2014 Care Act identifies nine types of abuse, all of which have a psychological/emotional aspect.

1. Physical abuse
2. Sexual abuse
3. Neglect and acts of omission
4. Organisational abuse
5. Self-neglect
6. Modern slavery
7. Domestic abuse
8. Discriminatory abuse
9. Financial or material abuse

Types and signs of abuse, in more detail

Physical

- Bodily assaults resulting in injuries e.g. hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.
- Medical/healthcare maltreatment

Signs of physical abuse

NB: Ageing processes can cause changes, which are hard to distinguish from some aspects of physical assault e.g. skin bruising can occur due to blood vessels becoming fragile.

- A history of unexplained falls or minor injuries
- Bruising in well-protected areas, or clustered from repeated striking
- Finger marks
- Burns of unusual location or type
- Injuries found at different states of healing
- Injury shape similar to an object
- Injuries to head/face/scalp
- History of moving from doctor to doctor, or between social care agencies; reluctance to seek help
- Accounts which vary with time or are inconsistent with physical evidence
- Weight loss due to malnutrition; or rapid weight gain
- Ulcers, bed sores and being left in wet clothing
- Drowsiness due to too much medication; or lack of medication causing recurring crises/hospital admissions
- Bodily impairment e.g. malnutrition, dehydration, failure to thrive

Sexual

- Rape, incest, acts of indecency, sexual assault
- Sexual harassment or sexual acts to which the person has not consented, or could not consent or to which they were pressured into consenting.
- Sexual abuse might also include exposure to pornographic materials, being made to witness sexual acts; also sexual harassment, with or without physical contact. • Sexual contact of any kind with anyone under 16 is a crime. In the case of Order members “position of trust” law means sexual contact of any kind with anyone under 18 could be considered a crime.

Signs of sexual abuse

- Disclosure or partial disclosure (use of phrases such as ‘It’s a secret’) • Medical signs, e.g. genital infections, pregnancy, difficulty walking or sitting • Disturbed behaviour e.g. depression, sudden withdrawal from activities, loss of previous skills, sleeplessness or nightmares, self-injury, showing fear or aggression to one particular person, inappropriately seductive behaviour, loss of appetite or difficulty in keeping food down.
- Unusual circumstances, such as, for example, two people found in a toilet/bathroom area, one of them distressed

Abuse through neglect

- Ignoring medical or physical care needs
- Failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational service
- The withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating

Organisational abuse

- Neglect or abuse within an institution (eg.hospital/care home) or care provided in own home either as a one-off incident or continuing ill-treatment
- Poor professional practice, policies or structure of an organization

Self neglect

- Alcohol abuse
- Hoarding
- Drug abuse

Signs of neglect

- Poor physical condition
- Clothing in poor condition
- Inadequate diet
- Untreated injuries or medical problems
- Failure to be given prescribed medication
- Poor personal hygiene

Modern slavery

- Examples could include: people working as housemaids, in brothels, cannabis farms, nail bars and agriculture against their will and/or unpaid

Some possible signs of modern slavery

- Isolation, not being allowed to travel alone; restricted freedom of movement.
- Poor living conditions, few possessions, no ID documents
- Unusual travel times – being dropped off early morning or late at night
- Inappropriate clothing

Modern Slavery Helpline (UK) 0800 0121 700

Domestic abuse

- Physical, psychological, sexual and financial abuse involving intimate partner or family member
- ‘Honour’-based violence or forced marriage
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- 16 year-olds can be defined as suffering domestic abuse.

Some signs and symptoms of domestic abuse

- Visible injuries or unexplained marks, scars or injuries
- Making ‘excuses’ for injuries
- Controlling and/or threatening relationships

Psychological/emotional abuse

- Threats of harm, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, enforced isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks. • Humiliation
- Bullying, shouting or swearing (See the Triratna Model policy on bullying and harassment, “Living with dignity”.

Financial or material abuse

- Misuse or theft of money
- Exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance
- Unexplained withdrawal of large sums of money
- Personal possessions going missing from home

Signs of financial or material abuse

- Unexplained or sudden inability to pay bills
- Unexplained or sudden withdrawal of money from accounts
- Disparity between assets and satisfactory living conditions
- Unusual level of interest by family members and other people in the vulnerable person’s financial assets

Discriminatory abuse

Language or treatment, which is discriminatory because of a person’s

- Race/ethnicity
- Sex
- Disability
- Gender identity (See the document ‘Living in spiritual friendship with trans, gender-diverse and non-binary people’.)
- Sexual orientation
- Religion

Signs of discrimination

- Lack of respect shown to an individual
- Substandard service offered to an individual

- Exclusion from rights afforded to others, such as health, education, criminal justice

Other signs of abuse

- Controlling relationships
- Inappropriate use of restraint
- Sensory deprivation e.g. deprivation of spectacles or hearing aid
- Denial of visitors or phone calls
- Failure to ensure privacy or personal dignity
- Lack of personal clothing or possessions

Signs of psychological or emotional vulnerability

- Isolation
- unkempt, unwashed appearance; smell
- Over meticulousness
- Inappropriate dress
- Withdrawnness, agitation, anxiety; not wanting to be touched
- Change in appetite
- Insomnia or need for excessive sleep
- Tearfulness
- Unexplained paranoia; excessive fears
- Low self-esteem
- Confusion