



London Buddhist Centre

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www.lbc.org.uk

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Registered Charity no: 255420

Child Protection Policy

Principles

The purpose of this policy

This document is for Friends, Mitras and Order members involved in the activities of the London Buddhist Centre (LBC) (and those of any outreach groups run by this centre) as employees, volunteers, leaders, teachers or parents. It refers to law and good practice mainly as defined in England and Wales.

It aims to provide:

- Protection for children (anyone under 18) who visit or receive LBC services including children of Buddhists and other users of this Buddhist Centre and protection for Friends, Mitras and Order members who may have contact with children.

It sets out:

- Practices and procedures contributing to the prevention of abuse of children.
- A course of action to be followed if abuse is suspected.

Our values

The LBC is a Buddhist charity run by members of the Triratna Buddhist Order and Community. Some of its activities involve children and young people, either by arrangement, for example school visits or family activities, or in the form of casual visitors.

The trustees of the LBC recognise their responsibility to ensure the welfare of all children aged under 18 visiting or involved in Buddhist Centre activities, and are committed to their protection.

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, ethnicity, religious belief, sexual orientation or identity, have the right to equal protection from harm.
- Partnership with children, young people, their parents, carers and other agencies is essential in promoting young people's welfare.

This policy applies to all staff, including the Centre team and trustees, paid staff, volunteers, parents and anyone else working on behalf of the LBC, whether as a Friend, Mitra or Order member.

We will seek to safeguard children and young people by:

- Valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- Adopting child protection guidelines and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- Recruiting staff and volunteers safely, ensuring checks are made where necessary.
- Sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, staff and volunteers.
- Sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.
- Providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

Mahamani and Maitreyaraja, our Safeguarding Officers, are responsible for the protection of children and adults who may be at risk at the LBC.
(See also our Safeguarding Adult's Policy.)

Definitions

In the United Kingdom a "child" is a person who has not yet passed their 18th birthday.

The World Health Organisation defines "Child abuse" as "all forms of physical and/or emotional ill-treatment, sexual abuse, neglect or negligent

treatment or commercial or other exploitation, resulting in actual or potential harm to the child's health, survival, development or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power."

Types of abuse

- Physical abuse: including hurting or injuring a child, inflicting pain, poisoning, drowning, or smothering.
- Sexual abuse: including direct or indirect sexual exploitation or corruption of children by involving them (or threatening to involve them) in inappropriate sexual activities.
- Emotional abuse: repeatedly rejecting children, humiliating them or denying their worth and rights as human beings.
- Neglect: the persistent lack of appropriate care of children. Appropriate care includes love, stimulation, safety, nourishment, warmth, education, and medical attention.

A child who is being abused may experience more than one type of cruelty. Discrimination, harassment, and bullying are also abusive and can harm a child, both physically and emotionally.

Signs of abuse

These are many and varied. Some have perfectly acceptable explanations. It is useful to be alert to:

- Any injuries that cannot be explained
- Injuries not consistent with falls or rough games
- Malnourishment
- Any allegations made by children concerning abuse
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Self-harm
- Eating disorders

Policy Guidance

Engaging safely with children in person

Outside of our own personal and family relationships we will not arrange to meet any child under 16 individually anywhere without written permission from their parent or guardian. Having gained such permission, we will conduct individual meetings with a child under 16 in public spaces such as our Buddhist Centre reception area or a room with the door open.

We do not need parental permission to meet those aged 16-17 but we will take care to meet in public spaces such as our Buddhist Centre reception area or a room with the door open. We will not give lifts to those under 16 on their own, other than for very short journeys. In those instances we will ask the child to sit in the back of the car.

See also the guidance document 'Caring for teenagers in Triratna'. (Document under development)

Engaging safely with children online and on social media We are aware that individual contact with under 18s online or using social media carries the risk of accusations of "grooming" (relationships established with a view to sexual contact). We will not engage personally by email, text or online with anyone under 16 using social media, for example by friending them on Facebook or including them in WhatsApp groups or similar. As a Buddhist Centre, we may receive emails from school pupils wanting information about Buddhism. Having answered their questions, we will not engage in more personal correspondence.

Welcoming school visits safely

Schools and other youth groups visit our Buddhist Centre. We will require every group to bring at least two adults capable of supervising the group. We will make clear that we are not to be left alone with their pupils and we will ensure that all those who lead such visits on behalf of our Centre are DBS checked.

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 under 18 have been security checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service. Anyone else (paid or voluntary) who has not been DBS checked must be supervised at all times by someone who is DBS checked. (This does not apply to general activities at which someone under 18 may happen to attend from time to time.) This is because we understand that children are most at risk in classes and other events specifically provided for them (especially regular, repeated events) because those who wish to gain access to children look for opportunities to become a familiar and trusted figure to children, for instance seeking to join the team running children's activities.

Children's events where parents are not present

We understand that where an LBC event for under 18s does not involve

some or all of the children's parents, we must have written permission from the parent/guardian of each child and both the core team running the event and the Centre trustees must be DBS checked. This is because in the absence of parents, the trustees assume legal guardianship for the children for the duration of the event, even if the trustees are not present. (This does not apply to school group visits to our Centre, which are under the legal supervision of their own teachers.)

Managing those who pose a risk to children

We will not allow someone who is likely to pose a risk to children to have contact with children (i.e. a known sex offender or someone who has disclosed a sexual interest in children).

Such a person will be asked by the Safeguarding officer to negotiate a behaviour contract setting out the terms of their continued participation at the LBC. (See the document 'Managing those who pose a risk'.)

See also the guidance document 'Caring for teenagers in Triratna'.

Reporting concerns or allegations

All reports or suspicions about abuse must be treated seriously. They may include:

- Something you see
- Something you are told by someone else
- Rumours about a person's previous behaviour
- Behaviour you observe in a child and
- Disclosure from a child directly.

Procedures

Guarding against abuse

- All leaders of LBC activities where a child is likely to attend will be given the LBC's Child Protection Policy to read and the LBC's Child Protection Code of Conduct Policy to read and sign.
- All leaders of the following LBC activities will be required to have DBS checks: Bodhi Tree Educational Visits, Wednesday Day class crèche, Parent's Dharma Class, Sunday School, Family Retreats and Sub 25 events.
- All team members, volunteers for Bodhi Tree, Wednesday Day class, Parent's Dharma Class, Sunday School, Family Retreats, Sub

25 events will be required to read and sign the LBC's Child Protection Code of Conduct document.

- Occasional volunteers, assistants, guests to LBC activities where children may attend will not need to have to read the Child Protection Policy or Code of Conduct document. They will not be left alone with the child/children at any time.
- All team members, volunteers for Bodhi Tree, Wednesday Day class, Parent's Dharma Class, Sunday School, Family Retreats, Sub 25 events will not engage in personal communication online or via social media except in carefully defined ways. See above.

What to do if a person under 18 alleges abuse

- Be aware the child may have been threatened and may be very afraid.
- Look directly at the child.
- Keep calm and reassure the child that they are doing the right thing and are not to blame, even if they have broken some rules. ● Accept what the child says without judgment. Never suggest that the child may be wrong or mistaken. Your responsibility is to take them seriously, not to decide whether what they are saying is true. ● Never push for information or question the child. Let them tell you as much as they are ready to tell you.
- Be honest. Do not promise confidentiality; let them know you will have to get help for them but that you will try to involve them in what should happen next. This means that you will need to share what they say with others - on a need-to-know basis only.

What to do next

- Your first concern is the safety and wellbeing of the child bringing the allegation. Do not be distracted from this by loyalty to the person who has been accused or your desire to maintain the good name of Triratna or your Centre.
- If you think the child is in immediate danger phone social services or police straight away. A telephone referral should be confirmed in writing within 24 hours.
- Every person has a legal right to privacy under the International Convention on Human Rights; therefore if possible you need to get the child's consent to share the information they have given you, within the limits described here. However, if necessary it is legal to pass on information without their consent if you believe they are at risk of significant harm.

- Tell the LBC's Safeguarding officers only. They bear overall responsibility for the future handling of the matter on behalf of the charity. The Safeguarding officers should contact the Triratna Safeguarding team.
- Make detailed factual notes about the discussion as soon as possible, including time, date and location. Give them to the Safeguarding officers. The Safeguarding officers only will keep them either locked away or password-protected. Don't tell anyone else as confidentiality is very important. This is not a matter of concealment but is intended to protect all concerned. It will also protect your sangha from fear, rumour and disharmony which will make it harder to deal with the matter effectively without causing further harm.
- Do not 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.

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 either in a locked cabinet or safe or in a password-protected electronic file on our computer system. Access to these records is only for the Safeguarding officers and one or two others approved by the LBC's Trustees.

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
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Chair's signature

Safeguarding officer: Jyotismati
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Safeguarding officer's signature

Date

This document is to be read in conjunction with the accompanying LBC's Child protection code of conduct.

Key contact details

Centre Chair

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