Manchester Buddhist Centre
Child Protection Policy 2025

Manchester Buddhist Centre
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Policy number: 19092705
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The purpose of this policy

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.

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

It aims to provide:

- protection for children (anyone under 18) who visit Manchester Buddhist Centre or take part in its activities, including children of Buddhists and other users of this Buddhist centre
- protection for Friends, Mitras and Order members who may have contact with children in the course of Manchester Buddhist Centre activities

It sets out:

- practices and procedures contributing to the prevention of abuse of children
- what to do if abuse is suspected

Our responsibilities and those responsible for carrying them out

Our activities include children in the following ways, regularly or from time to time: eg school group visits, family activities at festival days and self-run family activities.

Although we do not run activities specifically for children, we recognise that they may happen to visit from time to time/ a teenager under 18 may wish to attend our activities. Our trustees recognise their responsibility to Safeguard those aged under 18 visiting or involved in our activities, as set out by the Charity Commission in its latest guidance: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees

Vishangka is our Safeguarding Lead. They are responsible for co-ordinating the Safeguarding of all children and adults in all our activities. (See also our Safeguarding Adults policy.)

Lilasuri is our Safeguarding trustee. They are responsible for making sure Safeguarding is taken seriously by the trustees, and is a standing item on the agenda at every trustee meeting, ensuring the trustees comply with their Safeguarding obligations as required by the Charity Commission.

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 Manchester Buddhist Centre, whether as a Friend, Mitra or Order member, teaching, leading or supporting.

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

Who is a "child"?

For the purposes of this policy a child is a person who is not yet 18, regardless of the age of majority or consent in any particular jurisdiction.

Although the UK age of consent is 16, it is a criminal offence to have sex with a person under 18, where the older person is in a teaching or mentoring role in relation to the younger person. This 'Position of trust' law is likely to apply to Order members and Mitras in teaching roles in Triratna.

What is child abuse?

Please see appendix 1

Recognising signs of abuse

Please see appendix 3

Engaging safely with children in person

Outside our own personal and family relationships, in connection with this charity's activities we will not arrange to meet any child under 15 individually anywhere if unaccompanied by a parent/guardian.

We understand that before meeting those aged 15-17 it is good Safeguarding practice to make contact with their parent/guardian. We will take care to meet in public spaces where others are present, such as our Buddhist centre reception area or a room with the door open.

Where it is agreed that (in connection with any of our charity's activities) that one of our employees or volunteers may give a lift to a person under 18 (with or without anyone else in the car)

- our Safeguarding Lead must ensure that the driver is well known to us, has read our Child Protection Code of Conduct and Child Protection Policy and signed to confirm they will abide by them
- Our Safeguarding Lead must have the written agreement of the child's parent/carer for the child to travel in the car of this named driver
- The driver must be over 18, have a full driving licence, adequate insurance and a vehicle which is roadworthy
- The child must sit in the back seat.

If we do not feel able to implement these criteria we will require that no employee or volunteer offers lifts to those under 18 in connection with our charity's activities.

See also the guidance document 'Caring for teenagers in Triratna 2025'.

Engaging with under-18s using email and social media

We are aware that individual contact with people of any age using email or social media carries the risk of accusations of "grooming"; relationships established with a view to sexual contact.

We will not engage by email, text or social media with anyone under 15, except where they are seeking information about Buddhism as part of school work or personal study, when we may engage, by email only, from the charity's email account only. Having answered their questions, we will not engage in further personal correspondence.

We will engage with those 15-17 only with the written permission of a parent/guardian, by email or letter, which will be stored by our Safeguarding Lead.

For more detail on this, see the guidance document 'Caring for teenagers in Triratna 2025'.

DBS checks / background security checks

The rules about eligibility for DBS checks are complex. Before running any activity involving anyone under 18 our Safeguarding Lead will consult external Safeguarding experts such as Thirtyone:eight (www.thirtyoneeight.org) to ensure that anyone required to have a DBS check has been checked, and to the correct level. Thirtyone:eight provide an advice line and online DBS service.

However, we note that DBS certificates

- apply to roles rather than persons and are not transferrable from another role elsewhere
- should be less than **three** years old
- are not required in relation to irregular or one-off non-residential activities involving those under 18, or to general non-residential activities which someone under 18 may happen to attend.

This is because children are most at risk where it is known in advance that children are likely to be attending; those who wish to gain access to children look for opportunities to become a familiar and trusted figure to children, for example seeking to join the team running regular children's activities.

Welcoming school visits safely

Where school groups and other youth groups visit our Buddhist centre, we will require every group to bring at least two adults capable of supervising all members of the group at all times. We will make clear that none of our staff or volunteers is to be left alone with their pupils**.**

We will consult external Safeguarding experts such as Thirtyone:eight (www.thirtyoneeight.org) as to whether anyone leading or helping with school visits needs to be DBS checked.

See also the guidance document 'Caring for teenagers in Triratna 2025'.

Safer recruitment more generally

DBS / security checks are only one aspect of safer recruitment.

- We will seek references for anyone, volunteer or employee, seeking to work with those under 18 in the course of our activities, including short-term volunteers, even if they have been DBS checked or will be supervised by people who have been DBS checked
- Any volunteer or employee, seeking to work with those under 18 in the course of our activities must read and sign our Child Protection Policy and Code of conduct, even if only helping on one occasion

Where parents are not present

We understand that where under 18s attend a Manchester Buddhist Centre event, if parents are not present at all, or are elsewhere on the premises, the Safeguarding Lead must make contact with their parent/guardian to ensure they know this is happening, and to record in writing that contact has been made, along with contact details and any medical conditions we need to know about.

Managing those who pose a risk to children

In the course of our charity's own activities we will not allow someone who may pose a risk to children to have contact with anyone under 18 (for example, a person who is known to have a previous criminal conviction for sexual or other violent offences, someone who is under investigation for possible sexual or other violent offences or someone who has disclosed a sexual interest in children).

Such a person will be asked by the Safeguarding Lead 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. If necessary our Safeguarding Lead will consult with Thirtyone:eight and/or ask the ECA Safeguarding Consultant to put us in touch with a professionally qualified Order member.
(See the document 'Managing those who pose a risk 2025'.)

Such a person cannot be asked to sign the Child Protection Code of Conduct 2025 as it would conflict with the terms of their behaviour contract and in any case it would be very unwise to permit such a person to have any contact with those under 18 in the course of Triratna activities.

Where it is felt that the charity does not have the resources to manage this relationship safely, we reserve the right to ask the person not to attend our activities.

We will consult with Triratna's ECA Safeguarding Consultant if necessary: safeguarding@triratna.community or with external advisers such as Thirtyone:eight.

See also the guidance document 'Caring for teenagers in Triratna 2025'.

Lettings / hireouts / room-use

Our charity rents or lends premises for the following activities which are not activities of our charity, even if they are led/run by a member of our sangha or members of our sangha take part: *[eg yoga classes, massage, 12-step groups, retreat centre hire-outs]*

We understand that there is joint responsibility on our charity and those renting/using our premises 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. This includes self-organised meetings of sangha members even where these are not seen as activities run by the charity; e.g. families group, chapter meetings and GFR meetings.

Where any organisation or individual rents space in our premises we will ask them to sign a lettings agreement which says they have read our Safeguarding policies and agree to abide by them, or that they have shown us their own Safeguarding policy, in which case their policy should be compatible with our own policy and should be written to an equal or higher standard.

Where a therapist is treating a child on our premises

It will be necessary for the therapist to work with the child in private with the door closed. Therefore we will ask to see written proof that the therapist is properly qualified and insured to work with under-18s. We will ask to see their DBS certificate, which must be less than three years old.

Reporting concerns or allegations

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

- something we have seen
- something we have been told by someone else
- rumours about a person's previous behaviour
- behaviour we have observed in a child and
- disclosure from a child directly.

If a person under 18 alleges abuse

- We need to be aware the child may have been threatened and may be very afraid. ● We need to look directly at the child.
- We need to 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.
- We need to accept what the child says without judgment, never suggesting that they may be wrong or mistaken. Our responsibility is to take them seriously and take action, not to decide whether what they are saying is true.
- We need to avoid pushing for information or question the child but let them say as much as they are ready to say.

- We need to make it clear we cannot promise total confidentiality, and that we will need to tell another trusted adult if we believe the child is at immediate risk of harm.
- We need to tell them we need to get help for them but that we will *try* to agree with them about what will happen next. This means we *will* need to share what they say with others - on a need-to-know basis only.

We will do our best to avoid:

- appearing shocked, horrified, disgusted or angry
- promising to keep secrets
- confronting any alleged perpetrator
- risking contaminating the evidence by investigating matters ourselves

What we will do next

- We understand that our first concern must be the safety and wellbeing of the child and that we must not be distracted from this by loyalty to the person accused or a desire to maintain the good name of Triratna or our charity.
- If the person receiving the disclosure is not our Safeguarding Lead, they must tell the Safeguarding Lead *only*, who will co-ordinate the handling of the matter on behalf of the charity's trustees. However, if the Safeguarding Lead is not immediately available the matter should be communicated to the Chair of the charity, or the Safeguarding trustee. If the child may be in immediate danger the Safeguarding Lead, Chair, Safeguarding trustee or person receiving the disclosure will phone the police and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) at our local social services straight away. A telephone referral will be confirmed in writing within 24 hours.
- If necessary, our Safeguarding Lead will contact Triratna's ECA Safeguarding Officer for advice: safeguarding@triratna.community
- We understand that every person has a legal right to privacy under the International Convention on Human Rights and data protection legislation; therefore, having taken any urgent actions necessary, if possible we should get the consent of the child's parent or guardian to share the information they have disclosed.
- However, it may be necessary, and therefore legally 'reasonable', to report without parental consent, if we believe that the child is suffering, or at risk of, significant harm and that informing parents/guardians would not be in the child's interest.
- Meanwhile, 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 Lead. (See 'Secure, confidential record-keeping' below.) As far as possible what a child has said should be recorded in their own words, as these could be used in court.
- In England and Wales we understand that we may need to make a Serious Incident Report to the Charity Commission: bttps://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity. The Charity Commission have stated that it is always better to report than not
- UK charities insured by the Buddhist Insurance Scheme should report to the broker, Clive Adams. (See page 1.)

NB These last two reports involve describing briefly the type of incident/concern and what is being done to address it. They do not need to include any personal details about those involved.

We will consult with Triratna's ECA Safeguarding Consultant if necessary: safeguarding@triratna.community or with external advisers such as Thirtyone:eight.

Who else needs to know?

We understand that confidentiality, sharing information only on a need-to-know basis, is very important. Under data protection legislation nobody has a right to know about the matter – except, for Safeguarding purposes, those in a position to prevent further harm, and our Chair, who holds ultimate responsibility for the governance of the charity. For example, where there is a criminal allegation against a Mitra it could be justifiable for the Safeguarding Lead, Safeguarding trustee, Chair and Mitra convenor to know about it.

This is not a matter of concealment but is intended to protect all concerned from further harm. It will also protect our sangha from fear, rumour and disharmony which will make it much harder to deal with the matter effectively without causing further harm.

Where a person is believed/has been found to pose a risk to children it is often thought that parents have a right to know. However, this is not the case. Proper implementation of our Safeguarding policy and procedures will ensure that our sangha's children are as safe from such a person as they are from any others who pose a risk but have not been identified as such.

What to do if a sangha member discloses a criminal act against a child

We understand that the law does not protect confidentiality where criminal acts are disclosed in the context of Buddhist confession. If in the course of our charity's activities, or of an activity which takes place on our premises, a Friend, Mitra or Order member discloses (whether or not in a formal confession) that they have physically or sexually abused a child, or have viewed indecent images of children online, the person receiving this disclosure or confession must inform our Safeguarding Lead immediately. The Safeguarding Lead will immediately work out appropriate next steps, which could include meeting with the person who has confessed, consulting with ECA Safeguarding Consultant or ThirtyOne:Eight, or reporting the matter to the local police. This applies whether the behaviour disclosed is recent or historic.

If a child may be in immediate danger the Safeguarding Lead, Chair, Safeguarding trustee or person receiving the disclosure will phone the police and Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) at our local social services straight away. A telephone referral will be confirmed in writing within 24 hours.

If necessary, our Safeguarding Lead will contact Triratna's ECA Safeguarding Consultant for advice: safeguarding@triratna.community

Secure, confidential record-keeping

We understand our responsibility for secure and careful record-keeping. Our Safeguarding Lead will keep a detailed log of all Safeguarding-related incidents as well as conversations, actions and the reasoning behind them. These should not be kept on any computer, but in a secure cloud service such as Proton Drive or Google Drive. Any memory sticks, hard drives and paper copies will be stored in a locked cabinet, box or drawer accessible only to the Safeguarding Lead and one or two others approved by our trustees, eg the Chair and Safeguarding trustee.

We also understand that under data protection law we need to word our records in a form we would be happy for the subjects to read if they ask to, as is their legal right. This means notes should be factual and respectful, free of interpretations and value-judgements.

Keeping confidential records

We understand that because many abuse cases come to light 30 or more years later we should keep our records for up to 50 years. This is important in order to address historical cases effectively but also for insurance purposes.

If our charity closes down, we will give our records to another Triratna Buddhist centre/charity to keep with their own confidential Safeguarding logs.

Reviewing our policies annually

This document was adopted by the trustees of Manchester Buddhist Centre as recorded in the minutes of: 17/1/25

This document will be reviewed and updated by our Safeguarding Lead and trustees on or before January 2026

Signed:

Manchester Buddhist Centre
Chair: Lokeshvara (Jeremy Bristol)

Safeguarding Lead: Vishangka (Keith Green)

Date

This Manchester Buddhist Centre *Child Protection Policy 2025 is to be read in conjunction with the:*

Manchester Buddhist Centre Child Protection Code of Conduct 2025
Manchester Buddhist Centre Adult Safeguarding policy 2025
Manchester Buddhist Centre Ethical Guidelines 2025
Caring for Teenagers in Triratna 2025
Managing Those who Pose a Risk 2025
Online Safety in Triratna 2025
Safeguarding and Data Protection 2025

Appendices

Appendix 1: What is child abuse?

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.”

Appendix 2: Defining child abuse

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. A person may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults or another child or children. Child protection legislation throughout the UK is based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Each nation within the UK has incorporated the convention within its legislation and guidance.
The four definitions (and a few additional categories) of abuse below operate in England, based on the government guidance ‘Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)’.
Outside England you may wish to use this material or replace with locally applicable material.

Definitions of abuse and neglect

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a child. Somebody may abuse or neglect a child by inflicting harm, or by failing to act to prevent harm. Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting, by those known to them or, more rarely, by a stranger for example, via the internet. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children.

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces, illness in a child.

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child’s emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the child opportunities to express their views, deliberately silencing them or ‘making fun’ of what they say or how they communicate. It may feature age or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child’s

developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of another. It may involve serious bullying (including cyberbullying), causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, not necessarily involving a high level of violence, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact, including assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. They may also include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a child in preparation for abuse (including via the internet). Sexual abuse is not solely perpetrated by adult males. Women can also commit acts of sexual abuse, as can other children.

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to:

- provide adequate food, clothing and shelter (including exclusion from home or abandonment)
- protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger
- ensure adequate supervision (including the use of inadequate care-givers); or
- ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment

It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.
Child sexual exploitation is a form of child sexual abuse. It occurs where an individual or group takes advantage of an imbalance of power to coerce, manipulate or deceive a child or young person under the age of 18 into sexual activity (a) in exchange for something the victim needs or wants, and/or (b) for the financial advantage or increased status of the perpetrator or facilitator. The victim may have been sexually exploited even if the sexual activity appears consensual. Child sexual exploitation does not always involve physical contact; it can also occur through the use of technology

Extremism goes beyond terrorism and includes people who target the vulnerable – including the young – by seeking to sow division between communities on the basis of race, faith or denomination; justify discrimination towards women and girls; persuade others that minorities are inferior; or argue against the primacy of democracy and the rule of law in our society.

Appendix 3: Signs of abuse in children

The following signs could be indicators that abuse has taken place but should be considered in the context of the child's whole life.

Physical

- Injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Injuries that occur in places not normally exposed to falls, rough games, etc
- Injuries that have not received medical attention
- Reluctance to change for, or participate in, games or swimming
- Repeated urinary infections or unexplained tummy pains
- Bruises on babies, bites, burns, fractures etc which do not have an accidental explanation*
- Cuts / scratches / substance abuse*

Sexual

- Any allegations made concerning sexual abuse
- Excessive preoccupation with sexual matters and detailed knowledge of adult sexual behaviour
- Age-inappropriate sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Behaving in a sexually provocative or seductive manner with adults
- Inappropriate bed-sharing arrangements at home
- Severe sleep disturbances with fears, phobias, vivid dreams or nightmares, sometimes with overt or veiled sexual connotations
- Eating disorders - anorexia, bulimia (These indicate the possibility that a child or young person is self-harming)

Emotional

- Changes or regression in mood or behaviour, particularly where a child withdraws or becomes clinging.
- Depression, aggression, extreme anxiety.
- Nervousness, frozen watchfulness
- Obsessions or phobias
- Sudden under-achievement or lack of concentration
- Inappropriate relationships with peers and / or adults
- Attention-seeking behaviour
- Persistent tiredness
- Running away / stealing / lying

Neglect

- Under nourishment, failure to grow, constant hunger, stealing or gorging food, untreated illnesses, inadequate care, etc

This information was used with permission from Thirtyone:eight, external specialists in Safeguarding for UK faith organisations. www.thirtyoneeight.org