Online safety in Triratna 2025

This is a guidance document for you to refer to, not a policy to be adopted. Based on law and best practice in the UK, it should be read together with the documents listed at the end.

This guidance is a response to the Safeguarding requirements of the Charity Commission for England and Wales, expressed in brief here, under 'Operating online': https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties- for-charity-trustees

Triratna bodies in other jurisdictions will need to consider local requirements, but it's hoped that this guidance will be useful to everyone.

Your charity's websites and social media channels

Trustees of a charity are responsible for everything which appears on any website or social media channel run by their charity, including comment and discussion uploaded by users. Any such online space belongs to the trustees and expresses their values, just like any other of the charity's activities. Trustees therefore have a legal duty to ensure that users of their charity's sites and channels are protected from harm, including bullying and discrimination.

Therefore it's important that trustees

1. entrust the administration of such sites and channels to those they trust such that there is minimal risk of losing control of their sites/channels
2. do not permit any individual/s to run any privately-run site or channel in the name of the charity.
3. ensure that the charity has the resources to administer/moderate any site or channel run by the charity.
4. have a take-down policy which expresses the trustees' ethical values and provides clear guidance for administrators/moderators responsible for promptly removing material which is illegal or not in accordance with the trustees' values and/or the charity's aims.

Safeguarding in online teaching with adults

Where most of the participants are unknown to each other and the team

Avoid pairs In classes and activities where most of the participants are unknown to each other and the team, avoid dividing people up into pairs. Put people in groups of at least three instead. If a teenager happens to take part in a class intended for adults put them in a group of at least three including a team member.

Classes may include people whose behaviour others may find difficult or threatening. Pairs in a real room together are protected by the presence of each other and the team; pairing up in a virtual breakout group with a stranger offers more opportunity for chatting up, inappropriate

disclosures, attention-seeking behaviours, pressure to swap phone numbers etc. It could be difficult to find yourself alone with someone online whom you find threatening. If you really do want pairs the tech host could explain at the start how to leave a breakout room/ask for help from the host. This means the host will join their breakout room.

Avoid buddying

Again, people in a room together can get a sense of who they'd be comfortable to buddy up with and be left to make private arrangements with people they feel comfortable with, if they wish. Working online, you'll have to do this for them, which means your trustees being held responsible for your pairing up people you may hardly know. Our external Safeguarding advisers Thirtyone:eight said they had no experience of how to do online buddying safely and could therefore not advise it. If you have found an easy, safe way to arrange buddying online in a class where people don't already know each other, get in touch.

Email the ECA Safeguarding Consultant: safeguarding@triratna.community

Safeguarding yourself and others in online work with under-18s

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

Fifteen is a recommended lower age limit for teenagers taking part in Triratna group activities unaccompanied by a parent/guardian, in person or online. If a teenager 15+ happens to take part in a class intended for adults, if you are having breakout groups put them in a group of at least three including a team member. If you have more than one teenager put them in the same group, with a team member - or another participant close in age.

If you are running online activities specifically intended and advertised for (or to include) those under 18 you will need to ensure the team has the appropriate DBS security checks, as with in-person activities. Please discuss this with an external provider such as Thirtyone:eight. www.thirtyoneeight.org

You may be contacted by under 18s asking about Buddhism or who turn up at online events aimed at a general audience. This is great but we need to know how to include them safely.

Be aware of the risk of allegations of online grooming or sexual activity against which you would be powerless to defend yourself. *Being alone with an under-18 on Zoom etc carries the same risk of allegations as risk being physically alone in a room with them.*

Talking online to a group of people under 18 is safer than engaging with a single under-18 online. Where contacted by an under-18 you may wish to ask them to ask their teacher to arrange an online meeting for their class.

Where engaging with a young person online, protect yourself and them:
a) Using the centre's email account will mean you have a record of the correspondence and cannot be accused of engaging in personal correspondence for the wrong reasons.

b) Where you talk on phone, Zoom or WhatsApp etc, ensure that at least one other adult is physically in the room with you, or that you can see that the child/young person has an adult in the room with them.

Anyone engaging with children in these ways should tell their centre Safeguarding Lead so they can keep a secure record.

For further advice contact our external Safeguarding advisers Thirtyone:eight.
www.thirtyoneeight.org

This document is to be read in conjunction with:

Model Child Protection Code of Conduct 2025

Model Child Protection Policy 2025

Model Adult Safeguarding Policy 2025

Model Ethical Guidelines 2025

Caring for Teenagers in Triratna 2025

Online Safety in Triratna 2025

Safeguarding and Data protection 2025

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