

Padmaloka Child protection policy 2019

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<https://www.padmaloka.org.uk>
Registered charity no: 273850

The purpose of this policy

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

It aims to provide

- protection for children (anyone under 18) who visit or receive Padmaloka 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

Although we do not run activities specifically for children, we recognise that they may happen to visit from time to time...

The trustees of the Padmaloka recognise their responsibility to ensure the welfare of all those aged under 18 visiting or involved in Buddhist Centre activities.

Prajnahridaya is our Safeguarding officer. He is responsible for coordinating the protection of children and adults who may be at risk at Padmaloka (See also our Safeguarding Adults policy.)

Manjusiha is our Safeguarding Trustee. He is responsible for making sure Safeguarding is taken seriously by the trustees and appears regularly on their agendas, 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 community members, charity trustees and volunteers, and anyone else working on behalf of Padmaloka, 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 community members and volunteers.
- recruiting volunteers safely, ensuring checks are made where necessary.
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents, community members and volunteers.
- sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.
- providing effective management for volunteers through supervision, support and training.

Who is a “child”?

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

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.”

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 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, including 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 bear in mind:

- 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

Welcoming school visits safely

Schools and other youth groups occasionally 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 teachers should not leave children unsupervised at any time while here or leave them to be supervised by a Padmaloka team member.

DBS checks

The Charity Commission expects that anyone working for a charity, paid or volunteering, including trustees, will be DBS checked wherever they are eligible. Since the rules on eligibility are complicated and change from time to time, our Safeguarding officer will check at least annually with external Safeguarding experts such as Thirtyone:eight (www.thirtyoneeight.org) and ensure everyone eligible for a DBS check has been checked within the previous five years.

We understand that if Padmaloka was to run activities or events specifically intended for those under 18, or activities or events not specifically targeted at those under 18 where a child aged 15-17 could attend unaccompanied by a parent or guardian:

a) the core team (Mitras or Order members, paid or voluntary) must be DBS checked and

b) the trustees must also be DBS checked, even if they have no direct involvement in the activity.

c) Anyone helping with such activities (paid or voluntary) who has not been DBS checked will be supervised at all times by someone who is DBS checked.

a), b) and c) do not apply to general activities at which someone under 18 may happen to attend unexpectedly.

This is because we understand that children are most at risk in classes and other events specifically provided for them (especially regular, repeated events), or more general activities

where it is known in advance that a child is likely to be attending; because those who wish to gain access to children look for opportunities to become a familiar and trusted figure to a child or children, for instance seeking to join the team running children's activities.

DBS checks for trustees We are aware that the Charity Commission requires that where an event is targeted at unaccompanied 16-17 year olds or a wider age range of people including anyone under 18, *who are not accompanied by parents or guardians*, the trustees of the charity must be DBS checked even if they have no involvement in the event, whether or not it is residential.

(This does not apply to school group visits to our centre, which are under the legal supervision of their own teachers. However, this means that the Buddhist teacher/leader must ensure they are never left alone with a child, which means ensuring schools bring enough adults to supervise the entire group at all times.)

Since Padmaloka does not at present run activities or events specifically intended for those under 18, or activities or events not specifically targeted at those under 18 where a child aged 15-17 could attend unaccompanied by a parent or guardian, enhanced DBS checks are not at present required for the trustees of the charity or for the team leaders that run Padmaloka retreats and events. This will be reviewed on a yearly basis.

See also the guidance document 'Caring for teenagers in Triratna', currently being drafted.

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 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 officer to negotiate a behaviour contract setting out the terms of their continued participation in Padmaloka activities within agreed boundaries. (See the document 'Managing those who pose a risk'.)

Such a person cannot be asked to sign the Child Protection Code of Conduct as it would conflict with the terms of their 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.

See also the guidance document 'Caring for teenagers in Triratna', currently being drafted.

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.

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 agree with them 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. 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 are not the Safeguarding officer, the first thing you should do is to tell the Safeguarding officer. However, if this is not possible and 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 and data protection legislation; therefore, if possible, you should get the consent of the child's parent or guardian to share the information they have given you.
- However, it may be necessary, and therefore legally justifiable, to report without parental consent, if you 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.
- If you are not the Safeguarding officer, the first thing you should do is to tell the Safeguarding officer only. They will co-ordinate the handling of the matter on behalf of the charity's trustees. However, if this is not possible and 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. If necessary, The Safeguarding officer

should contact the Triratna Safeguarding team for advice as to what to do next:
safeguarding@triratna.community

- Meanwhile, make detailed factual notes about the conversation/concern/incident as soon as possible, including time, date and location. Give them to the Safeguarding officer. (See 'Secure, confidential record-keeping' below.)
- No sangha member should 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.

Finally, if the allegation may be criminal, without giving personal details of those involved you should email the Charity Commission that there has been a serious Safeguarding incident, that your charity has addressed it according to your Safeguarding policies and that the police have been informed. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity>

Who else needs to know?

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, with those in a position to prevent further harm, and your Chair, who holds ultimate responsibility for the governance of the charity. For example, where there is a criminal allegation against a Mitra it would be justifiable for the Safeguarding officer, 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 your 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 Safeguarding policy and procedures will ensure that your 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.

Secure, confidential record-keeping

We understand our responsibility for secure and careful record-keeping. Our Safeguarding officer will keep a detailed log of all Safeguarding-related incidents as well as conversations, actions and the reasoning behind them. These will be stored on the charity's computer, in a password protected section accessible only to the Safeguarding officer and one or two others approved by our trustees. If this is not practicable, they will be written on a computer, printed out and the paper copies stored in a locked cabinet, box or drawer accessible only to the Safeguarding officer and one or two others approved by our trustees. In this case the computer files must be deleted promptly. We understand that such records must not be stored on individuals' own private computers.

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 for at least 50 years

We understand that because many abuse cases come to light 30 or more years later our insurers may require us to keep our logs for up to 50 years. (This is a requirement of the UK's Buddhist Insurance Scheme.)

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

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

Padmaloka Retreat Centre

Chair's name and email address

Dh. Sanghanistha chairman@padmaloka.org.uk

Chair's signature

Sanghanistha

Safeguarding officer's name and email address

Dh. Prajnahridaya manager@padmaloka.org.uk

Safeguarding officer's signature

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Date 18/10/19

This document is to be read in conjunction with the accompanying Padmaloka Child protection code of conduct and the guidance document 'Caring for teenagers in Triratna', currently being drafted.

This policy is adapted by Prajnahridaya, the Padmaloka safeguarding officer, based on a model document published June 2019 by the Triratna Safeguarding team, part of the Triratna Ethics Kula. safeguarding@triratna.community

