

Sheffield Buddhist Centre

Policy on Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults

The purpose of this document

This document is for Friends, Mitras and Order Members involved in Sheffield Buddhist Centre activities as employees, volunteers, leaders, teachers or parents. It is aimed at protecting both children and vulnerable adults attending Sheffield Buddhist Centre activities, and Friends, Mitras and Order Members working with them.

It sets out :

- practices and procedures contributing to the prevention of abuse of children and vulnerable adults.
- a course of action to be followed if abuse is suspected.

Our values

The trustees of Sheffield Buddhist Centre recognise their responsibility to safeguard the welfare of everyone involved in Centre activities and commit to ensuring protection for those who are most vulnerable – children and vulnerable adults.

We are committed to:

- 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 appropriate agencies and involving parents and children as appropriate.
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

Definitions:

A **child** is a person aged under 16 years.

A **vulnerable adult** is any person aged between 16 and 18, or anyone over that age who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness, and who is, or may be, unable to take care of him/herself, or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or exploitation.

A vulnerable adult may be a person who:

- has a physical or sensory disability
- is physically frail or has a chronic illness
- has a mental illness or dementia
- has a learning disability
- is old and frail
- misuses drugs and/or alcohol
- has social or emotional problems
- exhibits challenging behaviour.

Whether or not a person is vulnerable in these cases will vary according to circumstances. Each case must be judged on its own merits.

Abuse is the harming of a person 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.

The harm may be physical, psychological or emotional, or it may exploit the vulnerability of the victim in more subtle ways.

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’.

Harm includes:

- Physical abuse including slapping, hitting or pushing.
- Sexual abuse including involving someone (or threatening to involve them) in inappropriate sexual activities, exposing them to pornographic material and sexual harassment.
- Emotional abuse including rejection, humiliation, threatening to harm, intimidation, coercion, bullying, harassment and exposure to violence (e.g. domestic violence).

What we do as an organisation

Dharmacharini Satyajyoti is our Safeguarding Officer, responsible for the protection of children and vulnerable adults at Sheffield Buddhist Centre. She is responsible for ensuring our protection policy is implemented and for taking action if any abuse is reported.

We are members of the **Churches’ Child Protection Advisory Service (CCPAS)**, a charity dedicated to helping all religious organisations protect the young and vulnerable.

We minimise the risk of abuse occurring by **ensuring that children are accompanied** by a parent or responsible adult whenever possible:

- For educational visits we require teachers to accompany children at all times.
- For Families Group meetings we require parents to be present with their children at all times.
- When a person under 16 wishes to attend an Introductory Course or Buddhist activities, we require them to bring along an accompanying adult.

We have 4 levels of safeguarding checking:

	DBS checked	Safeguarding training	References taken	Read & sign safeguarding policy	Code of conduct Briefing
Working directly with children	√	√	√	√	√
Working with children under the supervision of DBS checked people or an accompanying teacher			√	√	√
Teaching adult classes at Centre				√	√
Supporting adult classes at Centre					√

1. Those with regular direct contact with children are DBS checked and will be asked to attend Safeguarding training.
2. We take references for those who only work with children occasionally and we ensure that they are accompanied at all times by someone who has been DBS checked or an accompanying teacher.
3. We ask all Order Members teaching at the Centre to read and sign our safeguarding policy
4. We have a code of conduct which we talk through with Introductory Course Support Team members.

vetting those who have contact with children and vulnerable people:

We run **DBS checks** for :

- the person appointed as our Safeguarding Officer
- all team members of Still Learning, our education service
- anyone regularly leading Families Groups events.

For those working with children on an occasional basis we ask for character **references**, specifically enquiring about their suitability for this contact. The Safeguarding Officer co-ordinates the taking of references and has a template reference request. This applies to:

- occasional Still Learning volunteer helpers
- occasional helpers with Families Group meetings and retreats.

For one-off activities such as the summer fair, we make it clear that responsibility for children or vulnerable adults rests with the adults who brought them to the event.

We do not allow someone who is likely to pose a risk to children to have contact with them (ie a known sex offender or someone who has disclosed a sexual interest in children). Such a person will be asked to negotiate a behaviour contract setting out the terms of their continued participation in Sheffield Buddhist Centre activities within agreed boundaries.

What we expect individual sangha members to do

Protect children and yourself

- If working with a school or other children's group, advise their staff that their teachers/leaders must be present at all times.
- If working with children of sangha members, ask that parents be present unless you have been DBS checked.
- Do not be alone with a child where other adults or children cannot see you.
- Treat all children, young people and vulnerable people with respect and dignity.
- Do not invade privacy when people are showering, changing or using the toilet.
- Do not engage in intrusive touching and be aware that any physical contact can be misinterpreted.
- Do not tease or joke in ways that may be misunderstood and cause hurt.
- Do not share sleeping accommodation with children.
- Do not invite a child to your home on their own. Always invite a group and ensure a suitable adult is in the house. Make sure the parents know where the child is.
- Do not give lifts to children on their own and if you have to give a lone child a lift they must sit in the back of the car.
- If you are concerned about anything, check with the people involved and, if you remain unhappy, contact the Safeguarding Officer.

If you become aware of abuse

All reports or suspicions about abuse must be treated seriously and action taken to protect the vulnerable person. Please act if :

- you see something that could be abusive
- you are told something by someone else
- you hear rumours about a person's behaviour
- you see a child or vulnerable adult acting in a way that causes you concern
- a child or vulnerable adult discloses something to you .

If a child or vulnerable adult reports abuse to you, please do:

- stay calm and listen patiently
- reassure the person they are doing the right thing by telling you
- accept what they say without judgement
- clarify issues of confidentiality early on. Make it clear that you will have to pass on their concerns to the Safeguarding Officer to keep them safe.

Do not:

- appear shocked, horrified, disgusted or angry
- ask leading questions
- press the individual for more details they are ready to tell you
- suggest they are wrong or mistaken
- make comments or judgments other than to show concern
- promise to keep secrets
- tell anyone other than the Safeguarding Officer what has happened
- confront the abuser.

What to do next

1. Ensure the safety of the individual concerned,
2. **Tell Sheffield Buddhist Centre's Safeguarding officer named above or, in their absence, to the Chair.**
3. Write a factual account of what you have seen and heard immediately; date and sign this and pass it to the Safeguarding Officer or, in their absence, to the Chair.
4. **Do not be tempted to investigate yourself and don't discuss the matter with anyone else.** (This could prejudice a court case and put the child in danger.)

What the Safeguarding Officer will do if abuse is reported

For a Child, the Safeguarding Officer will decide on appropriate action which may include:

- contacting Social Services (Child Protection Officer) who will discuss what to do next including notifying the police, school and parents

For a Vulnerable Adult the Safeguarding Officer will consider the same courses of action as for children.

Where a vulnerable adult expresses a wish for concerns not to be pursued, this should be respected wherever possible. Their consent to refer the matter to others must be obtained *except* where:

- they lack the mental capacity to make a decision, and a risk assessment indicates that referral would be in their best interests
- others may be at risk
- a crime has been committed.

In any incident of reported abuse, the Safeguarding Officer will ensure a record is kept for future reference.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Safeguarding Officer and representatives of Still Learning and the Families Group. Changes will be referred to the Council for approval.

Last approved/reviewed on:

Chair's name: Dharmacharini Suryamati

Chair's signature _____ Date _____

Safeguarding Officer's name Dharmacharini Satyajyoti

Safeguarding Officer's signature _____ Date _____

