

Sheffield Buddhist Centre

Child Protection Policy 2026

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Introduction

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.

Our charity is part of Triratna, a worldwide network of friends practicing the Buddhist life. This is for many of us a source of great richness, support and strength. However, there is a risk that we may fail to

notice, question or act on behaviours of concern. This may be out of naivety, loyalty to friends, lack of awareness, or an assumption that “it couldn’t happen here” or “they would never do a thing like that.”

The purpose of this policy

This document is for Friends, Mitras and Order members involved in Sheffield 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 Sheffield Buddhist Centre or take part in its activities 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 in the course of Sheffield 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 values

The Centre currently hosts a Families Group which is run and supported by parents of infants and young children. At present all events take place at the Centre and parents are responsible during these meetings for their own children.

Beyond the Families Group, we do not run activities specifically for children, although we recognise that they may happen to visit from time to time or a teenager under 18 may wish to attend our activities with a parent or guardian.

We do host school visits where teachers and other school staff may bring children into the Buddhist Centre to learn more about Buddhism. During these visits we provide an introduction to Buddhism and a tour of the Centre. During these visits, children are the responsibility of teachers and their school.

The trustees of Sheffield Buddhist Centre recognise their responsibility to Safeguard those aged under 18 visiting or involved in Sheffield Buddhist Centre activities, as set out by the Charity Commission in its latest guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees>

Dayaloka is our Safeguarding lead. He is responsible for coordinating the Safeguarding of children and adults in all the activities of Sheffield Buddhist Centre (See also our Safeguarding Adults policy).

Bodhinaga is the Centre Chair and together with Dayaloka and Prajnasri (Safeguarding Trustee), they are 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 staff, including the centre team and trustees, paid staff, volunteers, parents and anyone else working on behalf of Sheffield 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 requiring all staff and volunteers engaged with children to have read and signed this policy).
- 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 (for instance this policy, related policies and our leaders' code of conduct).
- 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 in any particular jurisdiction.

What is child abuse?

Please see appendix 1.

Recognising signs of abuse

Please see appendix 2.

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, and we will not offer car lifts to anyone under 18.

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 tea room area or a room with the door open.

See also the guidance document 'Caring for teenagers in Triratna 2022'.

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 schoolwork 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 only engage with those 15-17 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 2026’.

DBS checks / Background security checks

If in any doubt about the requirements for DBS checks our Safeguarding officer will check with 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.

We understand that

- A) The Charity Commission states that wherever there is a legal entitlement to a DBS check in respect of a trustee, employee or volunteer, a DBS check should be carried out.
- B) In detail, this means that anyone employed by or volunteering for our charity in any capacity is eligible for a **Basic DBS check**. We are free to request these of any such person, but where a charity has a great many volunteers and staff and it is impracticable to DBS check all of them we must be able to demonstrate that for those who are unchecked other measures are in place to ensure the safety of all beneficiaries. This means we may decide to focus on obtaining Basic checks for those with responsibilities which render them *likely to be seen by others* as holding some degree of authority; for example:
 - our Chair and trustees
 - those working with our charity’s money and finances
 - Those who are financially supported by the centre.
 - our Safeguarding lead
 - those who are on the centre team. Centre team members take primary responsibility for the teaching at the centre.

No DBS checks are 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.

The Sheffield Buddhist Centre does not run any activities intended for or intended to include those under 18. A self-organised families group does use the centre to meet with their children, however this is never for more than 3 days in a 30 day period. Consequently, none of our staff, volunteers or trustees are eligible for an **Enhanced DBS check** (see appendix 4). Parents are always present during the families group and children remain the responsibility of their parents when attending this. We also have a children’s area during our summer Garden Party. The

Garden Party welcomes visitors to the Centre from the local community. A separate risk assessment is undertaken for the Garden Party and this includes safeguarding for the event and for the children's area.

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 2026'.

Where parents are not present

We understand that if under 18s turn up at a Sheffield Buddhist Centre event, if parents are not present at all, we will explain to them that they must attend with a parent (if 15-17). The Safeguarding lead must make contact with their parent/guardian to ensure they know they have come to the Buddhist Centre, 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 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 lead to agree a behaviour contract setting out the terms of their continued participation in Sheffield Buddhist Centre activities within agreed boundaries and based on a risk assessment carried out by an Order member with professional experience in risk assessment. If our Safeguarding lead is not qualified to do this we will ask for help from the ECA Safeguarding team or another professionally qualified Order member.

(See the document 'Managing those who pose a risk 2026.)

Such a person cannot be asked to sign the Child Protection Code of Conduct 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.

See also the guidance document 'Caring for teenagers in Triratna 2026'.

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: School visits (run by Still Learning), family group socials, bodywork classes.

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 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. chapter meetings and GFR meetings.

Where any organisation or individual rents space in our premises we will provide a link to our Safeguarding policies and inform them that by using our space we are assuming that they will agree to abide by those policies, 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.

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 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.
- pressing the child for details.
- making comments or judgments other than to show concern. Our responsibility is to take them seriously, not to decide whether what they are saying is true.
- 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 coordinate 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 team for advice: safeguarding@triratna.community

If you need urgent police assistance call 999.

- 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.
- Finally, in England and Wales we understand that we may need to make a Serious Incident Report to the Charity Commission: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity>. If necessary we will consult the ECA Safeguarding team for guidance on this: safeguarding@triratna.community. UK charities insured by the Buddhist Insurance Scheme should report to the broker. (See page 1.)

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.

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 the behaviour is historic and/or there is no immediate danger to a child, then the Safeguarding lead will either help the person report their own actions to the police and/or contact Triratna's ECA Safeguarding team for advice about what would be best to do next: 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 either on an external hard drive or memory stick or on an encrypted cloud based store. To guard against loss in case the files, hard drive or memory stick become corrupted these will be backed up to a secure encrypted cloud storage drive (from December 2025 these files will be uploaded to our secure encrypted 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, e.g. 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 and 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 Sheffield Buddhist Centre on 30th January 2026 and will be reviewed and updated by the Safeguarding lead and trustees of the Sheffield Buddhist Centre, on or before January 2027.

Sheffield Buddhist Centre

Chair's name, legal name and email address

Bodhinaga (Allan Kirkman: bodhinaga@sheffieldbuddhistcentre.org)

Safeguarding Trustee's Order name and legal name: Prajnasri (Tracey Dibble)

Email address: safeguardingsbc@protonmail.com

Safeguarding lead's name and email: Dayaloka (Peter Wells)

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This Sheffield Buddhist Centre Child protection policy 2026 is to be read in conjunction with

Sheffield Buddhist Centre Adult Safeguarding policy 2026

Triratna guidance document 'Caring for teenagers in Triratna 2026 and

Triratna guidance document 'Managing those who pose a risk 2026'

Leaders' Code of Conduct 2026 (in draft)

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

Appendix 4 DBS Checks

We understand that the following will have DBS checks:

- A. The Chair, Trustees, Centre Team, Office Team (which includes the Safeguarding Trustee and Safeguarding Lead)
- B. those running *non-residential* activities or events specifically intended for, or intended to include, those under 18 can and must obtain an **Enhanced DBS check with check of the Children's Barred List**, *but only* if they work with children, for our charity, on *more than 3 days in a 30-day period*.
- C. if any of our staff and volunteers is working with children in *non-residential* activities on *more than 3 days in a 30-day period*, as described in C) all our trustees can and must have an **Enhanced DBS check (without check of the Children's Barred List)**. This applies even if a trustee has no personal involvement in the activities including children.
- D. Where a person who is a trustee is also running *non-residential* activities involving children on *more than 3 days in a 30-day period*, or managing someone who is running activities involving children on *more than 3 days in a 30-day period*, it may be that that trustee can and therefore must obtain, an **Enhanced DBS check with a check of the Children's Barred List**.
- E. Where under-18s stay overnight in the course of *residential* activities, without their parents or guardians present, any volunteer or employee who cares for, supervises, teaches, leads or advises those children (other than their own) with the opportunity for face to face contact – *even if only on one occasion* – can and must have an **Enhanced DBS check with a check of the Children's Barred List** and
- F. DBS certificates apply to roles rather than persons and are not transferrable from another role elsewhere
- G. It is regarded as good practice that any DBS certificate should be less than **three** years old.