

Croydon Buddhist Centre Vulnerable Adults policy 2023-24

What to do if I have a concern

See the document [“I have a concern”](#)

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.

The purpose of this policy

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

It aims to provide

- Protection for all adults attending our charity’s activities, including those who may be at risk of harm or have care and support needs, and
- Protection for Friends, Mitras and Order members working with them.

It sets out

Information and practices contributing to the prevention of harm to adults.

- What to do if harm is suspected.

Our values

As the trustees of Croydon Buddhist Centre we wish all adults who come into contact with our charity in any way to flourish through their engagement with the Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

We recognise an ethical duty to prevent or address harm to adults in the course of our activities, including adults who may be at risk of harm or have care and support needs, as set out by the Charity Commission in its latest guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees>

The types of harm we have a duty to prevent and address are listed in [Appendix 3 Definitions of harm in adults](#); they apply by law to the care of adults who are deemed formally vulnerable or ‘at risk’. However, this list also provides a guide as to the types of harm we must be alert to prevent or address in the case of all adults.

Prajnanandi is our Safeguarding officer. She is responsible for co-ordinating the safeguarding of children and adults in all the activities at Croydon Buddhist Centre. (See also our Croydon Buddhist Centre Child Protection Policy 2022-2023.) Prajnanandi can be contacted on the Croydon Buddhist Centre's secure email system croydonsafeguarding@gmail.com

Kalyananara 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. Kalyananara can be contacted on kalyananara.cbc@gmail.com

Who is an adult who is vulnerable or “at risk”?

For the purposes of this policy an “adult” is a person who has passed their 18th birthday regardless of the legal age of majority in any jurisdiction.

Who is an “adult at risk of harm” or with “care and support needs”?

The UK Care Act 2014 defines such a person as “any person who is aged 18 years or over and at risk of abuse or neglect because of their needs for care and or support”; ie, they need care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs); and is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and as a result of those care and support needs, is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect”.

Adults who may be formally ‘at risk’ may also include those who

- have dementia
- have learning disabilities
- have drug, alcohol or substance dependency
- have physical or sensory disabilities
- Are suffering from bereavement, grief and loss
- through age or illness are dependent on other people to help them
- live with domestic abuse
- are homeless
- are refugees or asylum seekers and
- for any reason may be considered not to have ‘mental capacity’. (See below.)
- have mental health problems

Whether or not a person is “vulnerable” or “at risk” and/or has “care and support needs in these cases will vary according to circumstances, and it should be noted that a person with a physical disability is not necessarily vulnerable or at risk, though they could be. Each case must be judged on its own merits.

Definitions of abuse in adults

See [Appendix 3 “Types of abuse in adults”](#).

Signs of abuse in adults

See [Appendix 4 “Signs of abuse in adults”](#).

What is ‘mental capacity’?

See [Appendix 5 “What is mental capacity”](#).

Vulnerability can be variable

Vulnerability and resilience can vary throughout a person’s life. Many people who are generally emotionally and psychologically stable in most aspects of their lives and would not be formally classified as vulnerable or ‘at risk’ on occasion they may find themselves in a more vulnerable position, e.g. after a bereavement, serious illness, or breakdown of a relationship. They may be new to the practice of meditation and their practice may make them more sensitive.

For example, we will bear in mind that a person who is emotionally vulnerable for any reason may not be able to make balanced decisions regarding giving money or becoming more involved with Triratna, or entering into intimate relationships, whether friendship or relationships which are more romantic or sexual in nature. We will take great care to help each other avoid exploiting people in such everyday situations of vulnerability.

Protecting those with psychological disorders

We are aware that those attending our centre and activities include adults experiencing psychological disorders ranging from mild to severe.

We recognise that as Buddhists we do not have the professional skills to diagnose or help people with psychological disorders and that they may not be helped solely by the kindness of Buddhists. In such cases we may need to advise them to seek professional help.

We are aware that for people with serious psychological disorders traditional Buddhist practices involving recognition of the illusion of self could be dangerous. We may need to encourage them in traditional Buddhist practices involving the calming of body and mind, or to avoid meditation - altogether, or during periods of relapse.

Where we believe a person to be at risk of self harm or suicide we will encourage them to contact their GP, mental health team or to go to the accident and emergency department of the local hospital. If necessary we will make the contact on their behalf, with their permission. We will consult with Triratna’s ECA Safeguarding Officer if necessary, safeguarding@triratna.community or with external advisers such as Thirtyone:eight.

Where we consider there is **immediate danger** of a person harming themselves or others we will contact emergency services, without their permission if necessary.

Protecting those with psychological disorders - online

Buddhism and meditation are increasingly taught using online media. In person, it is relatively easy to notice where a person may have compromised mental health; online it is much more difficult.

We recognise that among those seeking individual online guidance from members of the Triratna Buddhist Order there may be some reporting meditation experiences which are an indication of serious psychological disorder.

In engaging in individual guidance online by email, blog, social media or text we will take great care at the start to establish with local Order members the identity, location and suitability of the participant, and which local Order members are available locally to support them in person and gaining permission to contact those Order members if we believe they are at risk. (This does not apply where the participant is an Order member and therefore well known to us.)

Responding to children online. See Croydon Buddhist Centre Child Protection Policy 2023-2024.

For information about DBS checks please see the file [DBS information](#).

Managing those who pose a risk to others

There may be cases where it is known that a person attending our activities is likely to pose a risk to others (for example, a person who is known to have a previous criminal conviction for sexual or other violent offences, who is on the UK Sex Offender Register, or someone who is under investigation for possible sexual or other violent offences).

Such a person will be asked by the Safeguarding officer to agree a behaviour contract setting out the terms of their continued participation in Croydon 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 officer is not qualified to do this we will ask for help from the ECA Safeguarding team or another professionally qualified Order member.

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.

Where necessary we will consult the ECA Safeguarding team: safeguarding@triratna.community

Lettings/room use

Our charity rents or lends premises for the following activities which are not activities of our charity, even if they are led or run by a member of our sangha or members of our sangha take part: yoga classes, therapy, Play for Progress, 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 which are not seen as activities run by the charity; eg 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.

What is 'abuse'?

'Abuse' is not a legal term, but covers a number of ways in which a person may be deliberately harmed (legally or illegally), 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; for example by a Friend, Mitra or Order member who is helping to run Croydon Buddhist Centre activities for those newer to such activities. The harm may be physical, psychological or emotional, or it may exploit the vulnerability of the person in more subtle ways.

However, harm can also occur less consciously, through naivety, idealism or lack of awareness.

For further information see:

[Appendix 3 “Types of abuse in adults”](#).

[Appendix 4 “Signs of abuse in adults”](#).

If you have a concern

All allegations or suspicions should be taken seriously and reported to Croydon Buddhist Centre’s Safeguarding officer: Prajnanandi, croydonsafeguarding@gmail.com

Follow the procedures outlined in the [“what if I have a concern” document](#).

If a person over 18 alleges abuse

We understand that we need to

- stay calm.
- listen patiently.
- reassure the person they are doing the right thing by telling you.
- clarify issues of confidentiality early on. We will make it clear we may have to discuss their concerns with others, on a strictly need-to-know basis, if at all possible with their permission. (See below.)
- explain what we are going to do.
- write a factual account of what we have seen and heard, immediately.

We will do our best to avoid

- appearing shocked, horrified, disgusted or angry.
- pressing the individual 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 the 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 this person and that we must not be distracted from this by loyalty to the person who has been accused or a desire to maintain the good name of Triratna or our charity.
- If you are not the Safeguarding officer, tell the Safeguarding officer, Prajnanandi **only**. Prajnanandi can be contacted on croydonsafeguarding@gmail.com. Prajnanandi will co-ordinate the handling of the matter on behalf of the charity's trustees. However, if the Safeguarding officer is not immediately available the matter should be communicated to Vajragupta, the Chair of the charity, thesecretdiamond@gmail.com or Kalyananara, the Safeguarding trustee. kalyananara.cbc@gmail.com

We understand that every person has a legal right to privacy under the International Convention on Human Rights and data protection legislation; therefore if possible we need to get the person's consent to share the information they have given us, within the limits described here and below.

If the adult alleging abuse is not formally vulnerable or 'at risk' and their complaint may be criminal, it is up to them to report to the police if they wish to; though we will offer them help and support to do this.

If the person is formally vulnerable or 'at risk' we may report on their behalf, though with their permission if possible.

Whether or not formally vulnerable or 'at risk', if the person may be in immediate danger the Safeguarding officer, Chair, Safeguarding trustee or person receiving the disclosure will phone social services or police straight away. A telephone referral will be confirmed in writing within 24 hours.

If necessary, our Safeguarding officer will contact the Triratna Safeguarding team for advice: safeguarding@triratna.community

It may be necessary, and therefore legally 'reasonable', to pass on information without their consent if a child is at risk of harm, the adult is at immediate risk of harm once they leave your company and/or a crime has been or is about to be committed.

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 officer. (See 'Secure, confidential record-keeping' below.) As far as possible what the person has said should be recorded in their own words, as these could be used in court.

We understand that no sangha member should attempt to investigate a criminal allegation, that this is the job of the police and that to attempt this could prejudice a court case and put the parties in danger.

Finally, we may need to make external reports.

In England and Wales 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>

We will report to our insurers any situation or incident that we consider might lead to a claim under our insurance policy. If necessary we will consult the ECA Safeguarding team for guidance on this: safeguarding@triratna.community.

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 a case - except, for safeguarding purposes, those in a position to prevent further harm, and the Croydon Buddhist Centre 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, 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.

Secure, confidential record-keeping

Please see the file "[Secure confidential record keeping](#)"

Reviewing our policies annually

Date:

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

This Croydon Buddhist Centre Adult Safeguarding policy is to be read in conjunction with the

- Croydon Buddhist Centre Child protection policy 2023-2024
- Croydon Buddhist Centre Child protection code of conduct 2023-2024