

Safeguarding Policy for Vulnerable Adults

Oxford Buddha Vihara

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MANAGE THE RISKS

Protecting people and safeguarding responsibilities should be a governance priority for all charities. It is a fundamental part of operating as a charity for the public benefit. As part of fulfilling your trustee duties, you must take reasonable steps to protect from harm people who come into contact with your charity.

This includes:

- people who benefit from our charity's work
- volunteers
- other people who come into contact with our charity through its work

The Charity Commission will hold trustees to account if things go wrong and will check that trustees followed this guidance and the law. Trustees are expected to take responsibility for putting things right.

Trustees should promote a fair, open and positive culture and ensure all involved feel able to report concerns, confident that they will be heard and responded to.

We expect all trustees to make sure our charity:

- has appropriate policies and procedures in place, which are followed by all trustees and volunteers
- checks that people are suitable to act in their roles
- knows how to spot and handle concerns in a full and open manner
- has a clear system of referring or reporting to relevant organisations as soon as concerns are suspected or identified
- sets out risks and how we will be managed in a risk register which is regularly reviewed
- follows statutory guidance, good practice guidance and legislation relevant to our charity: this guidance links to the main sources of information
- is quick to respond to concerns and carry out appropriate investigations
- does not ignore harm or downplay failures
- has a balanced trustee board and does not let one trustee dominate its work – trustees should work together
- makes sure protecting people from harm is central to its culture
- has enough resources, including trained staff/volunteers/trustees for safeguarding and protecting people
- conducts periodic reviews of safeguarding policies, procedures and practice

According to the Government's guidance, our charity's policies and procedures for protecting people and where appropriate, safeguarding should be:

- put into practice
- responsive to change
- reviewed as necessary, always following a serious incident and at least once a year
- available to the public

We have to make all trustees, and volunteers aware of our policies. They all need to know how to apply them when required.

In the policies, we make clear how we will:

- protect people from harm
- make sure people can raise safeguarding concerns
- handle allegations or incidents
- respond, including reporting to the relevant authorities
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- respond, including reporting to the relevant authorities

PRINCIPLES

The purpose of this policies

This policy sets out the approach to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children when they are in contact with the Oxford Buddha Vihara (OBV). It applies to all aspects of our work and to everyone involved in the activities of the OBV.

It aims to provide protection for adults attending

- OBV activities who may be “at risk” or vulnerable, and
- Protection for Friends, Mitras and Order members working with them.

It sets out:

- Information and practices contributing to the prevention of harm of ‘adults at risk’, previously known as ‘vulnerable adults’
- A course of action to be followed if harm is suspected.

Our values

The trustees of the OBV recognise their responsibility to safeguard adults who may be deemed to be “at risk” when visiting or involved in Buddhist Centre activities.

Our activities include classes that take place within Meditation Classes and Retreats, which offer Mindfulness Based Approaches to promote health and well-being. These classes help for those who have difficulties with depression, addiction and stress. They could help these people not to relapse back into depression, return to their addictive behaviour or high levels of stress. They aim to give them an approach and techniques for managing their own mental health moving into the future. We recognise that people who book on these classes/ retreats may be vulnerable. We recognize that after some times, they may take part in the life of our Sangha/Community.

Definitions

In the United Kingdom an “adult” is a person who has passed their 18th birthday. - The term “adult at risk” is not currently well defined. Here is one widely used definition:

An ‘**adult at risk**’ is a person aged 18 or over who:

- Has need for 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 with care and support needs' could include people who:

- Have dementia
- Have learning disabilities
- Have mental health problems
- Have drug, alcohol or substance dependency
- Have physical or sensory disabilities
- Have been bereaved, suffered grief and loss
- Have 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'.

Whether or not a person is "at risk" or "vulnerable" in these cases will vary according to circumstances. It should be noted that a person with a physical disability is not necessarily vulnerable or at risk, though they could be. Also people who are generally emotionally and psychologically stable in most aspects of their lives may on occasion find themselves vulnerable or at risk, for example when they have been bereaved or suffered grief and loss.

Each case must be judged on its own merits.

What is 'mental capacity'?

Whether a person has mental capacity is a matter of specialist assessment. However, it may be useful to know something about it. Mental capacity is the ability to make a particular decision. An adult may be at risk if they are unable to make a decision due to illness, disability, poor mental health, dementia, a learning disability or something else that may impair their judgment.

A person may be deemed to be 'without capacity' if they cannot:

- Understand the decision
- Retain the information
- Weigh up the information
- Communicate their decision

About matters such as

- Finance
- Social care
- Medical treatment

It is recognised that people who meet one or more of the criteria above may not be vulnerable at all, or all of the time. However, until the OBV has direct contact with people on an individual basis, it may be impossible to identify whether vulnerability exists in relation to an activity or event involving adults that they are planning.

Therefore, in order to support in identifying and managing potential risks of harm to people effectively, and for the purposes of this policy only, a vulnerable adult should be identified (for the purposes of this policy only) as a person aged 18 or over who meets one or more of the criteria listed above.

POLICY GUIDANCE

Protecting ourselves and others in relationships

Harm can occur in our dealings with others in classes and other formal face-to-face activities; it may not be deliberate. It can also occur in personal friendships, especially where one may be seen by the other to be in a position of trust and authority because of their greater experience of Buddhism. We recognise that this may happen even where the more experienced person does not see her/himself as in a position of authority. Though it is natural that some of our relationships will be sexual, we will take great care in starting sexual relationships where there is a considerable difference in level of Buddhist experience between the partners, particularly between Order members and those not ordained.

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. 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 suicide or self-harm, or to pose a risk to others, we will alert our centre Safeguarding officer, who will refer to local mental health services and/or the police as appropriate, and consult with the OBV Safeguarding Team if necessary.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks

We will ensure that the core team (Mitras or Order members, paid or voluntary) running any OBV activities or events specifically intended for those clearly at risk (for example, those with addictions, depression or chronic pain and illness) have been security checked by the Disclosure and Barring Service, and that anyone else helping with such activities (paid or voluntary) who has not been DBS checked is supervised at all times by someone who is DBS checked. This does not apply to general activities, which people with mental health difficulties may happen to attend.

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 OBV 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.

People who might abuse

Abuse may happen anywhere and may be carried out by anyone, e.g:

- Order members, Mitras and Friends, whether financially supported or volunteering
- Parents
- People you consider good and trusted friends
- Informal carers, family, friends, neighbours
- Other users or tenants of the OBV
- Strangers or visitors to OBV

What to do if you have a concern

All allegations or suspicions should be taken seriously and reported to the OBV Safeguarding Officers:

1. Dr Ninithet Than Hlaing: ninithet.hlaing@oxfordbuddhavihara.org.uk
2. Dr Nang Hnin Nu Nu Kyi: NangHninNuNu.Kyi@oxfordbuddhavihara.org.uk

PROCEDURES

Guarding against abuse

- All the Trustees of the OBV and teachers of breathing space events will be DBS checked and given the OBV Safeguarding Adults Policy to read.
 - All OBV teachers will be given the OBV's Safeguarding Adults Policy to read.
 - All team members for Breathing Space activities will be given the OBV's Safeguarding to read.
 - The OBV will consciously cultivate a culture where all Order Members, Mitras and Friends will take great care to help each other to avoid exploiting people who are vulnerable, consciously or unconsciously
- What to do if an adult alleges abuse

Do

- Stay calm.
- Listen patiently.
- Reassure the person they are doing the right thing by telling you.
- Clarify issues of confidentiality early on. Make it clear that you 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 you are going to do.
- Write a factual account of what you have seen and heard immediately.

Do not

- Appear shocked, horrified, disgusted or angry.
- Press the individual for details.
- Make comments or judgments other than to show concern. Your responsibility is to take them seriously, not to decide whether what they are saying is true.
- Promise to keep secrets.
- Confront the alleged perpetrator.
- 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.

What to do next

- Your first concern is the safety and well-being of the person bringing the allegation. Do not be distracted from this by loyalty to the person who has been accused or your desire to maintain the good name of your centre. It is important to maintain objectivity.
- If you think the person 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; therefore, if possible, you need to get the person's consent to share the information they have given you, within the limits described here. However, if necessary, it is legal to pass on information without their consent if you believe they are at risk of significant harm.
- Tell the OBV's Safeguarding officers only. They bear overall responsibility for the future handling of the matter on behalf of the charity. The Safeguarding officers should contact the Triratna Safeguarding team.
- Make detailed factual notes about the discussion as soon as possible, including time, date and location. Give them to the Safeguarding officers. The Safeguarding officers only will keep them either locked away or password-protected. Don't tell anyone else as confidentiality is very important. This is not a matter of concealment but is intended to protect all concerned. It will also protect your sangha from fear, rumour and disharmony which will make it harder to deal with the matter effectively without causing further harm.
- Do not 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.

OBV Procedures

Criminal Allegations

The Safeguarding Officers will report criminal allegations to the police. The Safeguarding Officer will report the allegation also to the Charity Commission. They will report that there has been a Safeguarding incident, that the OBV has addressed it according to its Safeguarding policies and the police have been informed. Secure, confidential record-keeping The OBV understands its responsibility for secure and careful record-keeping.

The Safeguarding officer will keep a detailed log of all Safeguarding-related incidents as well as conversations and actions related to them. These are kept either in a locked cabinet or safe or in a password-protected electronic file on our computer system.

Access to these records is only for the Safeguarding officers and one or two others approved by the OBV's Trustees. Keeping confidential records for at least 50 years The OBV understands that many abuse cases come to light 30 or more years later, so the Centre is required to keep its Safeguarding records safe for at least 50 years. This will include relevant documents and related correspondence. All such documents will be securely retained. If the OBV closes down, it will give its Safeguarding records to another OBV to keep with their own past confidential records.

Reviewing our policies annually

All our Safeguarding policies will be reviewed by the Safeguarding officers annually and the review recorded in the minutes of trustees' meetings. This document is to be read in conjunction with the accompanying OBV's safeguarding children protection code of conduct.

Oxford Buddha Vihara

Chair: Ven.K.Dhammasami@oxfordbuddhavihara.org.uk

Chair's signature: Ven.KDhammasami

Safeguarding officer: ninithet.hlaing@oxfordbuddhavihara.org.uk

Safeguarding officer's signature: NinithetThanHlaing

Safeguarding officer: NangHninNuNu.Kyi@oxfordbuddhavihara.org.uk

Safeguarding officer's signature: NangHninNuNuKyi

Date: 14 February 2022

Appendix

Types of abuse

The 2014 Care Act identifies nine types of abuse, all of which have a psychological/emotional aspect.

1. Physical abuse
2. Sexual abuse
3. Neglect and acts of omission
4. Organisational abuse
5. Self-neglect
6. Modern slavery
7. Domestic abuse
8. Discriminatory abuse
9. Financial or material abuse

Types and signs of abuse, in more detail

Physical

- Bodily assaults resulting in injuries e.g. hitting, slapping, pushing, kicking, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate sanctions.
- Medical/healthcare maltreatment Signs of physical abuse NB: Ageing processes can cause changes, which are hard to distinguish from some aspects of physical assault e.g. skin bruising can occur due to blood vessels becoming fragile.
- A history of unexplained falls or minor injuries
- Bruising in well-protected areas, or clustered from repeated striking
- Finger marks
- Burns of unusual location or type
- Injuries found at different states of healing
- Injury shape similar to an object
- Injuries to head/face/scalp
- History of moving from doctor to doctor, or between social care agencies; reluctance to seek help
- Accounts which vary with time or are inconsistent with physical evidence
- Weight loss due to malnutrition; or rapid weight gain
- Ulcers, bed sores and being left in wet clothing
- Drowsiness due to too much medication; or lack of medication causing recurring crises/hospital admissions
- Bodily impairment e.g. malnutrition, dehydration, failure to thrive

Sexual

- Rape, incest, acts of indecency, sexual assault
- Sexual harassment or sexual acts to which the person has not consented, or could not consent or to which they were pressured into consenting.
- Sexual abuse might also include exposure to pornographic materials, being made to witness sexual acts; also sexual harassment, with or without physical contact.
- Sexual contact of any kind with anyone under 16 is a crime. In the case of Order members “position of trust” law means sexual contact of any kind with anyone under 18 could be considered a crime.

Signs of sexual abuse

- Disclosure or partial disclosure (use of phrases such as ‘It’s a secret’)
- Medical signs, e.g. genital infections, pregnancy, difficulty walking or sitting
- Disturbed behaviour e.g. depression, sudden withdrawal from activities, loss of previous skills, sleeplessness or nightmares, self-injury, showing fear or aggression to one particular person, inappropriately seductive behaviour, loss of appetite or difficulty in keeping food down.
- Unusual circumstances, such as, for example, two people found in a toilet/bathroom area, one of them distressed Abuse through neglect
- Ignoring medical or physical care needs
- Failure to provide access to appropriate health, social care or educational service
- The withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating

Organisational abuse

- Neglect or abuse within an institution (e.g..hospital/care home) or care provided in own home either as a one-off incident or continuing ill-treatment
- Poor professional practice, policies or structure of an organization

Self-neglect

- Alcohol abuse
- Hoarding
- Drug abuse

Signs of neglect

- Poor physical condition
- Clothing in poor condition
- Inadequate diet
- Untreated injuries or medical problems
- Failure to be given prescribed medication
- Poor personal hygiene

Modern slavery

- Examples could include: people working as housemaids, in brothels, cannabis farms, nail bars and agriculture against their will and/or unpaid

Some possible signs of modern slavery

- Isolation, not being allowed to travel alone; restricted freedom of movement.
- Poor living conditions, few possessions, no ID documents
- Unusual travel times – being dropped off early morning or late at night
- Inappropriate clothing *Modern Slavery Helpline (UK) 0800 0121 700*

Domestic abuse

- Physical, psychological, sexual and financial abuse involving intimate partner or family member
- 'Honour'-based violence or forced marriage
- Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)
- 16-year-olds can be defined as suffering domestic abuse.

Some signs and symptoms of domestic abuse

- Visible injuries or unexplained marks, scars or injuries
- Making 'excuses' for injuries
- Controlling and/or threatening relationships Psychological/emotional abuse
- Threats of harm, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, enforced isolation or withdrawal from services or supportive networks.
- Humiliation
- Bullying, shouting or swearing

Financial or material abuse

- Misuse or theft of money
- Exploitation, pressure in connection with wills, property or inheritance
- Unexplained withdrawal of large sums of money
- Personal possessions going missing from home Signs of financial or material abuse
- Unexplained or sudden inability to pay bills
- Unexplained or sudden withdrawal of money from accounts
- Disparity between assets and satisfactory living conditions
- Unusual level of interest by family members and other people in the vulnerable person's financial assets

Discriminatory abuse

Language or treatment, which is discriminatory because of a person's

- Race/ethnicity
- Sex
- Disability
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Religion Signs of discrimination
- Lack of respect shown to an individual
- Substandard service offered to an individual
- Exclusion from rights afforded to others, such as health, education, criminal justice

Other signs of abuse

- Controlling relationships
- Inappropriate use of restraint
- Sensory deprivation e.g. deprivation of spectacles or hearing aid
- Denial of visitors or phone calls
- Failure to ensure privacy or personal dignity
- Lack of personal clothing or possessions

Signs of psychological or emotional vulnerability

- Isolation
- Unkempt, unwashed appearance; smell

- Over meticulousness
- Inappropriate dress
- Withdrawnness, agitation, anxiety; not wanting to be touched
- Change in appetite
- Insomnia or need for excessive sleep
- Tearfulness
- Unexplained paranoia; excessive fears
- Low self-esteem
- Confusion

REFERENE

[Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) (access on 25 January 2021)

[SD8: Office of the Public Guardian safeguarding policy \(web version\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) (access on 25 January 2021)

[Care and support statutory guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) (access on 25 January 2021)