

Ethical guidelines

Norwich Buddhist Centre and Gt. Yarmouth Buddhist Group

2019

Introduction

These model guidelines are offered as a suggestion for those in Triratna running and supporting activities for the general public, such as classes in meditation or Buddhism, study groups, yoga classes or therapeutic interventions such as mindfulness classes.

The Safeguarding and reporting duties mentioned here follow UK requirements. Each Triratna Centre is free to adapt or adopt these documents (or replace them with others) in accordance with local conditions, recognising that while each is legally separate and responsible for deciding upon and implementing its own policies, the actions of any Centre will reflect upon Triratna worldwide.

These model Guidelines follow the framework of the Buddha's five ethical precepts - widely known throughout the Buddhist world - offering a general principle for each and one or two specific applications.

The precepts can be applied to all areas of human behaviour. These guidelines are mainly intended to offer guidance in one key area: where Order members, or other experienced members of the Triratna community, are presenting and communicating Buddhist principles to those who are new or less experienced, especially in public situations, where a particular duty of care is owed.

The model guidelines

These ethical guidelines, adopted by the trustees of The Norwich Buddhist Centre and Gt. Yarmouth Buddhist Group should be read in conjunction with The Norwich Buddhist Centre and Gt. Yarmouth Buddhist Group policies for Safeguarding children and adults, and its Child protection code of conduct, as well as the following Triratna documents (or local equivalent):

- The 2017 College 'Statement about sexual relationships between preceptors and those they ordain' <https://thebuddhistcentre.com/preceptors/statement-about-sex-between-preceptors-and-those-they-ordain-preceptors-college>
- "Changes to data protection: guidance for Triratna Buddhist centres in Europe"
- "Safeguarding and data protection: UK Triratna charities and the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and General Data Protection Regulation 2018"

We note that the following documents are under development but not yet ready when the 2018 Triratna Model Ethical Guidelines were published.

- Safeguarding teenagers in Triratna 2018
- 'Limits to confidentiality' 2018
- "Preventing harm: Triratna guidance on the confession/disclosure of criminal activity and other harmful behaviours".

I.

***I undertake the training principle of abstention from harming living beings.
With deeds of loving-kindness I purify my body.***

In principle all Triratna activities aim to support the awakening of the individual for the benefit of all beings. In all our dealings with one another we aspire to behave in a spirit of kindness, expressing *kalyanamitrata*, which we translate as 'spiritual friendship'.

Our spiritual community has been defined by its founder, Sangharakshita, as a 'free association of

individuals'. While respecting this principle, it is important that individuals in positions of trust and authority as members of Triratna do not misuse their trusted position or authority – real or perceived - for their own benefit or to influence others inappropriately.

Wishing to minimise the harm we do to living beings, we affirm that physical violence and strong expressions of anger have no place among us.

Norwich Buddhist Centre is vegetarian and vegan-friendly.

We will work within our community, and with other like-minded groups, to reduce and minimise our impact on the environmental, locally and internationally.

2.

***I undertake the training principle of abstention from taking the not given.
With open-handed generosity, I purify my body.***

We wish to offer the Buddha's teachings in a spirit of generosity, making them accessible to all.

We aspire to express generosity by caring for our community and those who work and practise within it, finding ways to support those who undertake particular responsibilities in teaching and administration or serving as trustees or council members.

Those of us who handle money, property or other resources for a Triratna Buddhist Centre, Group or enterprise will take care of them and avoid their deliberate misuse or misappropriation. If misuse is suspected, we will report this to our Safeguarding officer or the Triratna Safeguarding team. safeguarding@triratnadevelopment.org

3

***I undertake the training principle of abstention from sexual misconduct.
With stillness, simplicity and contentment I purify my body.***

Triratna is a community of people practising the Buddha's teachings together with a strong emphasis on spiritual friendship. It is natural that close relationships should develop between us, and that some of these may be sexual relationships.

We encourage all members of our community to conduct their sexual relationships ethically, with awareness and kindness.

Those of us in teaching roles, supporting roles or with other positions of responsibility within the sangha have a particular responsibility in this area, particularly to those new to Triratna. We have a duty of care in respect to our conduct and position and to have due regard both for our precepts and to the requirements of our policies for Safeguarding adults (in the UK) or local equivalent in other countries.

We are aware that as a person starts to explore the liberation that Dharma practice can provide, it is easy to confuse strength of feeling for the Dharma with an attraction to the individual serving as their main point of contact with Triratna and to the Buddhist tradition more generally.

As such, we recognise that is highly inadvisable for those leading Buddhist activities, or in positions of leadership, responsibility or spiritual mentoring, to enter into sexual relationships with those new to Triratna.

Even where there is clear mutual attraction and wish to enter a relationship we will wait until the more experienced Buddhist is no longer a primary teacher/mentor to the person with less experience of Triratna, and until that person has formed other friendships in our sangha.

We ask that a proposed relationship between an Order member in a teaching role (or who may be perceived as being in any position of authority) and someone less experienced in Triratna should be discussed openly with other Order members; usually with the Order member's chapter and/or their preceptor and kalyana mitras. We suggest also that such discussions be minuted by the chapter convenor, preceptor or kalayanamitras for the benefit of all concerned should questions later arise.

See also the 2017 College "Statement about relationships between preceptors and those they ordain" (attached) and the Norwich Buddhist Centre and Gt. Yarmouth Buddhist Group Safeguarding adults policy.

4

***I undertake the training principle of abstention from false speech.
With truthful communication, I purify my speech.***

In all our dealings with those we teach we are committed to truthful, meaningful, helpful and harmonious communication, written or spoken.

We wish to create an atmosphere of friendliness, co-operation and trust. We will share information carefully, motivated by desire for the wellbeing and spiritual progress of those we discuss and taking note of data protection legislation.

We will encourage ethical reflection and disclosure in our community, taking care to emphasise that this happens in its own time and at its own pace.

We note that confession offers no protection from UK law, though this may differ from country to country. Illegal activity involving physical or sexual violence, or behaviours entailing harm or risk of harm to self or others, past or present, must be reported to the Safeguarding officer of Norwich Buddhist Centre who will consider what action is appropriate in the circumstances, in consultation with the Triratna Safeguarding team.

5

***I undertake the training principle of abstention from intoxication.
With mindfulness clear and radiant I purify my mind.***

The Triratna Buddhist Community aims to provide support for the development of wisdom and compassion through deepening awareness.

We aspire to engage with our practice and with each other with as much mindfulness as possible.

We aim to provide supportive environments for those wishing to live without intoxicants. We will not serve alcohol or other intoxicants at Triratna Buddhist centres or events.

Smoking and e-cigarettes/vaping are not permitted on our premises.

If you have concerns

If you have any concerns about the ethical behaviour of sangha members or a person you believe to be at risk, please contact the Chair, the Safeguarding officer or Safeguarding trustee. Though we will take your concerns seriously, we cannot offer absolute confidentiality. In accordance with the requirements of Safeguarding and data protection law, we keep secure, confidential

Safeguarding records and will share information only with those few who need to know in order to address the matter effectively and keep you and others safe from harm.

Where you are over 18 and we believe you or anyone else over 18 may be at risk, we have a duty to report to social services or the police, with your/their consent *if possible*. Where you are under 18 and we believe you or anyone else under 18 may be at risk, we have a duty to report, with or without consent.

Agreed by the trustees of Norwich Buddhist Centre and Gt. Yarmouth Buddhist Group.

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Sabbe satta sukhi hontu
May all beings be well and happy