

Vajraloka Buddhist Retreat Centre Child protection policy 2016

Vajraloka Buddhist Retreat Centre
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The purpose of this document

This document is for Friends, Mitras and Order members involved in Vajraloka Buddhist Retreat Centre activities as employees, volunteers, leaders, teachers or parents.

It aims to provide

- protection for children under 18 who visit or receive [x Buddhist Centre] services 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.

It sets out

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

Our values

Vajraloka Buddhist Retreat Centre is a Buddhist charity run by members of the Triratna Buddhist Order and Community. Some of its activities may involve children and young people, either by arrangement, for example school visits or family activities, or as casual visitors.

The trustees of Vajraloka Buddhist Retreat Centre recognise their responsibility to ensure the welfare of all children aged under 18 visiting or involved in Buddhist Centre activities, and are committed to their protection.

Prajnapriya/Peter Cohen is our Safeguarding officer, responsible for the protection of children and vulnerable adults at Vajraloka Buddhist Retreat Centre (See also our Vulnerable adults policy.)

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 Vajraloka Buddhist Retreat, whether as a Friend, Mitra or Order member. It also applies to visiting retreatants and retreat leaders.

We will seek to safeguard children and young people by:

- valuing them, listening to and respecting them.
- adopting child protection guidelines and a code of conduct for staff and volunteers.
- 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 agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately.
- providing effective management for staff and volunteers through supervision, support and training.

This policy is an expression of our commitment to the Five Precepts taught by the Buddha:

Behaviour to avoid

harming living beings
taking the not-given
sexual misconduct
false speech
taking intoxicants that cloud the mind

Behaviour to develop

loving-kindness
generosity
stillness, simplicity and contentment
truthful speech
mindfulness; awareness

Who is a “child”?

A “child” is a person aged under 18 years.

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.”

Types of cruelty

- Physical abuse** including hurting or injuring a child, inflicting pain, poisoning, drowning, or smothering.
- Sexual abuse** including direct or indirect sexual exploitation or corruption of children by involving them (or threatening to involve them) in inappropriate sexual activities.
- Emotional abuse** Repeatedly rejecting children, humiliating them or denying their worth and rights as human beings.

- Neglect** The persistent lack of appropriate care of children, including love, stimulation, safety, nourishment, warmth, education, and medical attention.

A child who is being abused may experience more than one type of cruelty. Discrimination, harassment, and bullying are also abusive and can harm a child, both physically and emotionally.

Signs of abuse

These are many and varied. Some have perfectly acceptable explanations. It is useful to bear in mind:

- Any injuries that cannot be explained
- Injuries not consistent with falls or rough games
- Malnourishment
- Any allegations made by children concerning abuse
- Sexual activity through words, play or drawing
- Self harm
- Eating disorders

Reporting abuse

All reports or suspicions about abuse must be treated seriously. They may include

- Something you see
- Something you are told by someone else
- Rumours about a person's previous behaviour
- Behaviour you observe in a child
- Disclosure from a child directly.

What to do if a child reports abuse

- 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.
- Accept what the child says without judgment.
- Look directly at the child.
- Be honest. Do not promise confidentiality; let them know you will have to tell someone else.
- Be aware the child may have been threatened and may be very afraid.
- Never push for information or question the child. Let them tell you as much as they are ready to tell you.
- Never suggest that the child may be wrong or mistaken.

What to do next

- Ensure the safety of the child. This may involve phoning social services or police straight away.
- If you make a referral by telephone, confirm it in writing within 24 hours.

- Make notes about the discussion including time, date, location. Record as accurately as possible and keep the notes safe.
- Do not be tempted to investigate yourself.
- Tell the Vajraloka Buddhist Retreat Centre's Safeguarding officer named at the start of this document, the Chair and the President.**
- Do not discuss the matter with anyone else.** This could prejudice a court case and put the child in danger.
- Contact social services or the police and ask for the Child protection officer.

How to protect children and yourself

See the Vajraloka Buddhist Retreat Centre protection code of conduct which accompanies this policy.

- If working with a school or other body working with children (for example the Scouts) advise their staff that their teachers/leaders must be present at all times during the visit/joint activities.
- Do not be alone with a child where other adults or children cannot see you.
- Treat all children and young people with respect and dignity.
- Do not invade the privacy of children when they are showering, changing or using the toilet.
- Do not engage in intrusive touching.
- Do not tease or joke in away that might be misunderstood by the child and cause hurt.
- Do not share sleeping accommodation with children.
- Do not invite a child to your home on their own. Invite a group or ensure someone else is in the house. Make sure the parents know where the child is.
- Do not give lifts to children on their own, other than for very short journeys. If they are alone, ask them to sit in the back of the car.
- Do not allow someone who is likely to pose a risk to children to have contact with children (ie a known sex offender or someone who has disclosed a sexual interest in children).
- Such a person should be asked to negotiate a behaviour contract setting out the terms of their continued participation in Vajraloka Buddhist Retreat Centre activities within agreed boundaries. (See the document 'Managing a sex offender'.)

Reviewing this document

This document and the accompanying Vajraloka Buddhist Retreat Centre Child protection code of conduct and Vulnerable adults policy will be reviewed annually on or around the date below.

Vajraloka Buddhist Retreat Centre

This document is to be read in conjunction with the accompanying Vajraloka Buddhist Retreat Centre Child protection code of conduct.

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