

Telford Buddhist Priory

Child Protection Policy

Telford Buddhist Priory
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Introduction

Telford Buddhist Priory provides a place of refuge and teaching for local Buddhists who practice within the Serene Reflection (Soto Zen) tradition, as taught by the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives (OBC). [A group meets at the Priory, regularly, to take part in meditation and other activities.](#) This is for many of us a source of great richness, support and strength. However, it also carries a risk that we may fail to notice, question or act on behaviours of concern, out of naivety, loyalty to friends or lack of awareness; or an assumption that “it couldn’t happen here” or “they would never do a thing like that.” Children attend activities at Telford Buddhist Priory (the Priory) very infrequently; even so, it is important to acknowledge that infrequency does not preclude the need for a well-managed Safeguarding strategy.

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 our jurisdiction.

As trustees we recognise our responsibility to Safeguard those aged under 18 visiting or involved in our organisation's activities, as set out by the Charity Commission in its latest guidance: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees>

The Purpose of this Policy

The purpose of this policy is to inform people who take part in the activities and services provided by Telford Buddhist Priory, either at the Priory itself or any offsite activity arranged by us, of the measures we have in place, to protect both children and those who engage with them, as part of our congregation.

It aims to provide

- protection for children (anyone under 18) who visit us or take part in our activities, including children of Buddhists and other users of our premises and
- protection for all who may have contact with children in the course of our activities.

It sets out

- practices and procedures contributing to the prevention of abuse of children.
- what to do if abuse is suspected.

Our Values

Telford Buddhist Priory is a charitable incorporated organization, which exists to both develop people's knowledge of the Buddhist religion and provide a place of refuge for people wishing train in Buddhism. Therefore, from time to time, children visit us, usually accompanied by their parents/guardian or, in the case of a school visit, with their teacher. As part of our educational aims, the resident priest, or one of the lay ministers, periodically visits schools to deliver talks and assemblies. Ensuring the sexual, physical and psychological safety of children involved in the activities and services we provide is an expression of the wisdom and compassion taught by the Buddha.

Karen Richards is our Safeguarding Officer. She is responsible for co-ordinating the Safeguarding of children and adults in all our activities. (See also our Safeguarding Adults policy.)

Rev Mugo White is our Safeguarding Trustee. She is responsible for supporting our Safeguarding officer, making sure Safeguarding is taken seriously by the trustees and appears regularly on their agendas; generally 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 trustees, paid staff, volunteers, parents and anyone else working on behalf of this organisation, whether 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 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.

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 any particular jurisdiction.

What is Child Abuse?

Please see appendix.

Recognising Signs of Abuse

Please see appendix.

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.

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 reception area or a room with the door open.

Where it is agreed that (in connection with any of our charity’s activities) one of our volunteers may give a lift to a person under 18 (with or without anyone else in the car):

- our Safeguarding officer must ensure that the driver is well known to us, has read our Child Protection Code of Conduct and Child Protection Policy and signed to confirm they will abide by them.
- Our Safeguarding officer must have the written agreement of the child’s parent/carer for the child to travel in the car of this named driver.
- The driver must be over 18, have a full driving licence, adequate insurance and a vehicle which is roadworthy.
- The child must sit in the back seat.

If we do not feel able to implement these criteria we will require that no volunteer offers lifts to those under 18 in connection with our charity’s activities.

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 school work 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 engage with those 15-17 only with the written permission of a parent/guardian, by email or letter, which will be stored by our Safeguarding officer.

DBS Checks / Background Security 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 a free advice line and online DBS service.

We understand that DBS certificates apply to roles rather than persons and are not transferrable from another role elsewhere; also that any DBS certificate should be less than **three** years old.

Welcoming School Visits Safely

Where school groups and other youth groups visit us, 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.

Our Safeguarding officer will check with external Safeguarding experts such as Thirtyone:eight as to which DBS checks are necessary for those welcoming school visits – or visiting schools.

Safer Recruitment More Generally

DBS checks are only one aspect of safer recruitment.

- We do not employ staff or use volunteers, in the traditional sense. Many of our congregation members who may offer their time, have been known to us over many years and have been seen to live by the Buddhist precepts over an extended period of time. In the unlikely event that someone new to our congregation is involved with working with anyone under the age of 18, we will seek references, even if they have been DBS checked or will be supervised by people who have been DBS checked.
- Anyone seeking to work with those under 18 in the course of our activities must read and sign our Child Protection Policy and Code of conduct, even if only helping on a one-off occasion.

Where Parents are Not Present

We understand that where under 18s attend an event, if parents are not present at all, or are elsewhere on the premises, the Safeguarding officer must make contact with their parent/guardian to ensure they know this is happening, 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 officer to sign a Safeguarding agreement setting out the terms of their continued participation in our activities within agreed boundaries. This

should be based on a risk assessment from a probation officer, police officer or other professional supervising this person.

Such a person cannot be asked to sign our Child Protection Code of Conduct as it would conflict with the terms of their Safeguarding agreement 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 our 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.

Lettings / Hireouts / Room-use

We do not let, hire or use rooms, within the Priory building, for any purpose other those stated in our Introduction.

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 understand that

- We need to be aware the child may have been threatened and may be very afraid.
- We need to look directly at the child.
- 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 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.
- 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 our charity or Buddhist tradition.
- If the person receiving the disclosure is not our Safeguarding officer, they must tell the Safeguarding officer *only*, who 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 the Chair of the charity, or the Safeguarding trustee. If the child may be in immediate danger the Safeguarding officer, 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. The Safeguarding officer should contact Telford Family Connect on: 01952 385385 or 01952 676500 (out of hours) or online at www.familyconnecttelford.co.uk.
- 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 officer. (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.
- Where the Safeguarding officer and trustee consider that the incident is such that it could lead to a claim on our insurance at some point in the future we will inform our insurers, without naming those involved.
- Finally, in England and Wales we understand that we may need to make a Serious Incident Report to the Charity Commission, without naming those involved: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity>.
- If necessary, our Safeguarding officer will consult external experts in Safeguarding, such as Thirtyone:eight

Who else needs to know?

We understand that confidentiality, including 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 only, those few in a position to prevent further harm, and those who have a 'reasonable need to know' in order to carry out their duties.

This is not a matter of concealment but is intended to protect all concerned from further harm. It will also protect our community/tradition 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 to pose, or has posed, 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 community'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 Person 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 person 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 officer immediately, who must report to our local police immediately. This applies whether the behaviour disclosed is recent or historic.

If a child may be in immediate danger, the Safeguarding officer, 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. See contact details under *What we will do next*, above.

If necessary, our Safeguarding officer will consult external experts in Safeguarding, such as Thirtyone:eight.

Secure, Confidential Record-keeping

We understand our responsibility for secure and careful record-keeping. Our Safeguarding officer 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 on an external hard drive or memory stick. To guard against loss in case the files, hard drive or memory stick become corrupted these will be backed up to another hard drive or memory stick and/or printed. Any memory sticks, hard drives and paper copies will be stored in a locked cabinet, box or drawer accessible only to the Safeguarding officer and one or two others approved by our trustees, eg 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 many years later, our insurers require us to keep our records for up to 50 years, such that it is possible to address historical cases effectively.

If our charity closes down, we will give our records to another Buddhist charity to keep with their own confidential Safeguarding logs.

Telford Buddhist Priory

Prior's name and email address: Rev. Mugo White at tbpriorymail@gmail.com

Prior's signature

Safeguarding officer's name and email address: Karen Richards at kydj5255@gmail.com

Safeguarding officer's signature

Date:

This Child Protection Policy is to be read in conjunction with the Priory's

- *Child Protection Code of Conduct*
- *Adult Safeguarding Policy*

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)'.

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

Adoption and Review

Version 5.0 of this Adult Safeguarding Policy was adopted by the trustees of the Priory on 22 January 2025. It is reviewed by the trustees annually and updated as required.

File: Child Safeguarding Policy v5.0.pdf