

The councils of Triratna Centres in the Netherlands declare they have established and live in accordance with these “ethical guidelines and safeguarding”.

## **Ethical guidelines**

How do we want to interact with each other at Triratna Centres?

The following ethical guidelines, established by the councils of Triratna Centres in the Netherlands, are intended as a basis for interaction with anyone, within or outside our centres. The guidelines apply to all of our activities. They are based on the ethical values as taught by the Buddha and are observed by Triratna as well as most Buddhist traditions.

1. I undertake to abstain from harming living beings.  
With deeds of loving kindness I purify my body.

All activities within Triratna are principally oriented towards supporting the individual awakening. In all our interactions we strive to be kind and exemplify ‘kalyana mitrata’; or ‘spiritual friendship’. Our spiritual movement is described by our founder Sangharakshita as ‘a free association of individuals’. We respect this principle.

It is important that anyone in a position of trust or authority does not abuse their position to benefit themselves or influence others in a unseemly manner.

Because we wish to minimise any harm we may cause to other living beings, we reject any physical violence and strong outbursts of anger. Within our community and together with like minded communities we strive to lessen any negative effects on the environment, local and global, and keep it to a minimum.

2. I undertake to abstain from taking the not given  
With open-handed generosity I purify my body

We aim to convey the Buddha’s teaching in a spirit of generosity to make it accessible for anyone. We strive to express generosity through caring for people who work and practise within our community and to find resources to support those who have taken on specific responsibilities such as management, teaching or administrative tasks.

Anyone who manages money or possessions on behalf of Triratna needs to do this diligently and to avoid intentional misuse or embezzlement. In case of suspected abuse we will investigate and take appropriate measures immediately.

3. I undertake to abstain from sexual misconduct  
With stillness, simplicity and contentment, I purify my body

Triratna is a community of people who follow the teaching of the Buddha and put it into practice. Close friendships may sometimes develop into relationships of a sexual nature. We encourage everyone within the Triratna community to conduct themselves in an ethical manner within these relationships, with kindness and awareness. Those who teach or hold a similar role have a particular responsibility, specifically towards people who are new to Triratna.

We are aware that an initial contact with the Dharma can give rise to feelings of liberation. This may be confusing; the attraction of the Dharma must not be confused with the attraction to the person teaching or through whom a first connection with Triratna is established.

This is why we advise against sexual relationships for those in a teaching role with anyone for whom they are the principle connection with Buddhism and Triratna, even when there is mutual attraction and a mutual wish to embark on such a relationship.

We ask them to wait until the less experienced person has formed effective friendships with others within our community. We expect anyone who is in a teaching role considering a possible sexual relationship with a less experienced person to discuss this openly beforehand within the context of the Order. Generally this means their chapter, their preceptor and their Kalyana Mitras.

#### 4. I undertake to abstain from false speech

With truthful communication, I purify my speech

At the point of ordination, members of the Triratna Order receive ten precepts they take on to practise. Four of these precepts are concerned with speech. In all our contacts with people we teach, we endeavour to communicate honestly, helpfully, meaningfully and harmoniously, verbally as well as in writing. We aim to create an atmosphere of friendliness, cooperation and trust.

We are careful when sharing information, mindful this may serve to contribute to the wellbeing and spiritual growth of the people we speak of. We encourage ethical reflection and openheartedness amongst people connected to Triratna, but expressly take care this is allowed to happen at a pace and time appropriate for the person concerned. If anyone within the context of a retreat and/or the daily running of our centres confides in us and imparts information that is in breach with Dutch law we encourage the person concerned to report to the appropriate authority.

#### 5. I undertake to abstain from taking intoxicants

With mindfulness clear and radiant I purify my mind

The Buddhist movement of Triratna aims to support the development of wisdom and compassion through the deepening of awareness. We strive to be as attentive and aware as possible in our practice and in our interaction with one another. We aim to create a supportive environment for people choosing to live without intoxicating substances. Triratna centres or events organised by Triratna do not serve alcohol, nor do we provide any other intoxicating substances.

## **Safeguarding**

### **Introduction**

This document is intended for friends, mitras and order members who are involved in activities of Triratna centres in the Netherlands as paid workers, volunteers, managers, teachers or parents. It outlines courses of action and procedures that will contribute to prevention of abuse of adults 'at risk', previously known as 'vulnerable adults'. It also describes how to act in case of suspected abuse. The document aims to protect adults involved in activities of Triratna Centres in the Netherlands, including those 'at risk' or who are deemed vulnerable *and* to protect friends, mitras and order members working alongside them.

Triratna is a world-wide network of friends in the Buddhist life. For many of us this is a source of riches, resource and strength. However, it carries a risk; when observing dubious behaviour we may not pay close attention, nor question it or act on it, from a place of naivety or a sense of loyalty, lack of awareness or assumptions that 'these things do not happen here' or 'they would never do that'.

Our policy is an expression of the first ethical guideline taught by the Buddha: To avoid harming other living beings.

Although we do not organize activities specifically aimed at people with mental health issues or suffering from addictions, it is quite possible that anyone vulnerable in this way could be involved in activities and belong to our sangha.

This document contains information and practical points aimed at preventing harm of vulnerable adults and guidelines on how to act when harm is suspected.

The councils of Triratna Centers in the Netherlands acknowledge their responsibility to protect any adults, including those considered 'at risk' or 'vulnerable', who visit a Triratna centre in the Netherlands or are involved in its activities. The council has the responsibility to support volunteers who are dealing with people at risk or deemed vulnerable.

Gunabhadri and Dhammapitika are our safeguarding officers. It is their responsibility to coordinate protective measures for children and adults who are at risk within Triratna Centres in the Netherlands. Please check our child protection policy which can be requested through the safeguarding officer: [<vertrouwenspersoon.triratna@protonmail.com>](mailto:<vertrouwenspersoon.triratna@protonmail.com>)

Every centre has a committee member who will see to it that protection of vulnerable adults is taken seriously by the council and that this topic features regularly on the agenda so council members can fulfil their obligations in this, as required by the Buddhist Union Netherlands (BUN).

### **What is a vulnerable adult?**

There currently exists no clear definition of this but here is a more general definition:

A person of 18 years of age or above who requires professional help, or may require this, on grounds of a mental or physical limitation, disability or illness, who is unable, or may not be able to take responsibility for their own wellbeing and protection or who is unable to take necessary steps against affliction of substantial harm or exploitation. We have a general duty of care to prevent or take action in case of harm inflicted on adults during our activities.

A vulnerable adult can be someone who:

- has a physical or sensory disability
- is physically weak or suffers from a chronic illness
- suffers from dementia or a mental or psychiatric disorder
- has learning difficulties
- has suffered a serious loss and is in a grieving process
- is dependent on others because of old age or weakness
- is a victim of domestic violence
- is homeless
- is a refugee or asylum seeker
- is addicted to alcohol and/or drugs
- has social and emotional problems or
- manifests challenging behaviour

Whether a person in any of the above mentioned scenarios is actually vulnerable may vary, depending on the circumstances. Each case needs to be assessed individually.

### **Vulnerability may vary**

We recognize that many people who are usually emotionally and psychologically robust in most areas of their lives may be vulnerable or at risk in certain circumstances; through illness, the end of a

relationship or loss of a loved one, or because practicing meditation and Buddhism has made them more aware and sensitive, especially if Buddhism is new to them.

For instance, we take into account that a person may, for whatever reason, be emotionally vulnerable and possibly unable to make a considered decision regarding the donation of money or the wish to become more involved in Triratna, or to embark on intimate relationships, romantic or sexual.

We will be diligent in helping each other avoid exploiting any of these forms of vulnerability.

### **Protecting ourselves and others in relationships**

People may get hurt or harmed, intentionally or unintentionally, during interaction with others at group activities and when two people meet. This may happen in personal friendships, particularly between two individuals where one is more experienced in Buddhist practice and is regarded by the other as a trustworthy person in a position of authority.

We accept this may also occur in situations where the more experienced person is not aware of the trust and authority thrust upon them.

Although sexual relationships occur, we shall reject or hold back from starting a sexual relationship if there is a difference in regards of experience in Buddhist practice, especially if one person is an order member and the other is not. Please refer to our ethical guidelines at the beginning of this document.

### **Protecting people with mental health problems.**

We are aware there may be visitors at our centres who suffer with mental health issues; ranging from mild to more severe. We are also aware that as Buddhists we do not have the professional capacity to make a diagnosis and help those with mental health problems, and that being a kind Buddhist is not sufficient to help them. In these situations we are well advised to suggest these individuals seek professional help. We are aware that certain aspects of traditional Buddhist practice such as acknowledging the illusion of a self can be quite dangerous.

It may be more appropriate to suggest specific Buddhist practices that focus on calming body and mind or to advise against the practice of meditation completely or while there is a relapse in mental health.

When we encounter someone who we suspect may harm themselves or who is suicidal or who may pose a danger to others, we inform our safeguarding officer who will contact the Triratna safeguarding team and if necessary will contact the local mental health services and/or the police.

### **Protection of people with mental health problems when teaching online.**

Buddhism and meditation are increasingly taught online. When having contact in person it is relatively easy to notice when someone shows signs of unstable mental health. However, this is more difficult to ascertain online. If someone seeks advice *individually* from a member of the Triratna Buddhist Order, their account of specific meditation experiences may indicate serious mental health issues.

When we support people online *individually* through email, blog, social media or text, we will initially take care to try and establish their identity, location and suitability for practice, with support from available local order members who may give support *individually* and in person.

We ask this order member for permission to contact the person in question if we consider them to be at risk. (This does not apply to someone who is a member of the order and is well known to the order.)

Where children under 18 are concerned, we do not communicate online or via social media, except in situations that are carefully demarcated. Please refer to the Triratna Model Child protection policy 2020.

### **Declaration of conduct**

Triratna Centres in the Netherlands have concluded it is not compulsory to submit a **Declaration of Conduct** because every activity will be attended by at least two order members or an order member and a mitra and any other activities involving children will exclusively take place in the presence of parents and/or teachers. Our policy will be adjusted should this change in future.

### **Managing people who may pose a danger to others.**

This could be someone who is known to have served time in prison for sexual or violent crimes or someone who is under suspicion of sexual and violent crimes and due in court. When we believe a Triratna centre in the Netherlands is not able to manage such a person safely, we reserve the right to ask this person not to partake in our activities.

### **External hire**

The following rules apply to the hire of Triratna centres of any part thereof for activities that are not organised by the centre itself, even if they are facilitated by a member of the sangha such as yoga classes, massage, 12-step meetings.

We assume that the centre and anyone who hires our spaces or makes use of them carry joint responsibility to guarantee the safety of children and adults who take part in these activities.

The council carries responsibility for ensuring the person or organisation hiring the space is aware and subscribes to our policy of safety and ethical guidelines. This is why we ask an organisation or person using our space to sign an agreement/ hire contract listing our policy on safety and ethical guidelines.

### **What constitutes abuse?**

Abuse is: to harm another person. Usually the perpetrator is someone in a position power or trust in relation to the person who is harmed, or someone who is regarded as having power and/or having a relationship built on trust with the person harmed. This may be a friend, mitra or order member who contributes to activities at Triratna Centres in The Netherlands, in relation to someone less experienced in these activities. The harm caused may be physical, psychological or emotional, or the vulnerability of the victim may be exploited in more subtle ways. Harm may also be caused as a result of insufficient awareness, through ignorance, idealism or lack of observation.

Different kinds of abuse and signs of abuse: please refer to the attachment at the end of the document.

## **Who can be guilty of abuse?**

Abuse can happen anywhere and anyone can be a perpetrator.

For example:

- Order members, mitras and friends, in a financially supported or voluntary position.
- Anyone using or hiring space in Triratna Centres in the Netherlands
- Strangers or visitors at Triratna Centres in the Netherlands
- In the private sphere:
  - Parents
  - Carers, family members, friends, neighbours
  - People who you believe to be good and trustworthy friends

## **Reporting abuse**

- All accusations or suspicions must be taken seriously. Any form of abuse is unacceptable.
- Sometimes abuse is a crime that must be reported to the police as soon as possible.
- The primary responsibility of an employee or a volunteer means: protecting a vulnerable adult at risk.
- It is mandatory for every employee or volunteer to act in such situations.

## **How should you respond when a vulnerable adult tells you they are being abused?**

### **You must:**

- Take any reports seriously and inform the safeguarding officer.
- Stay calm
- Listen patiently
- Reassure the person by saying they are right to tell you.
- Do not leave the person in any doubt about the confidentiality of their report, right from the start.
- Make clear you will need to discuss the problem relayed to you with a third party.
- Explain how you will act.
- Write a factual report immediately after what you have heard and seen.

### **You must not:**

- React with anger or shock or disgust.
- Press the person for more details
- Comment or give opinions that go beyond showing care.
- Promise to keep secrets
- Confront the perpetrator with their abuse
- Run the risk to invalidate evidence.

## **What do you need to do next?**

- Your first concern must be regarding the well-being of the person making accusations. Do not get side tracked by loyalty towards the accused or the desire to protect the reputation of Triratna or your centre.

- If you are not the safeguarding officer, report it only to the safeguarding officer.. They will coordinate a response on behalf of the council of the Charity. However, if this is not an option and you consider the person to be in immediate danger, contact Social Services and the police directly. Any referral by telephone must be confirmed in writing within 24 hours. The safeguarding officer may, if necessary, contact the Tiratna Safeguarding team for advice about next steps: [safeguarding@triratnacomunity](mailto:safeguarding@triratnacomunity)
- If required, it is legal to pass on information without permission if you think the person is at risk of serious harm.
- Write a detailed and factual report, including date/time and location as soon as possible. Pass this report on to the safeguarding officer. If you are the safeguarding officer, make your own notes and store it safely.
- No sangha member should try to investigate any accusations of a crime. The police is tasked with this and attempts to do so may interfere with any court case and may endanger the person concerned.
- Finally: If the accusation is about a crime, you should inform the safeguarding officer, without divulging details, that your centre is dealing with of a Matter of Safeguarding in accordance with the safeguarding procedures and the police are informed.
- Precise and confidential reporting.

### **Does anyone else need to be informed?**

It is extremely important that confidential information is shared only on a need-to-know basis. Privacy legislation dictates no one has a right to know, except if necessary in order to guarantee safety. In this case people may only be informed if they are in a position to prevent any further harm, besides the Chair of a centre or retreat centre. The Chair is ultimately responsible for the council of the Tiratna centre. For example: if a mitra is accused of having committed a crime, to inform the person of trust, the chair and the mitra convenor is justified.

Usually it is illegal to share someone's information without written permission. However, from a safety point of view it may be necessary and legally justified to submit a report without permission in order to prevent further harm.

This is designed to protect all involved from further harm. It also protects the Sangha against rumours, fear and disharmony, which would make effective dealing with the issue more difficult without causing further harm.

### **Safe and confidential reporting**

We are conscious of our responsibility regarding accurate and detailed reporting.

Our safeguarding officers will keep detailed records of any safety related incidents as well as any associated discussions and actions plus relevant responsibilities.

Digital storage of these must be in a password protected secure file of the centre's computer only.

Access is exclusively for the safeguarding officer and one or two other council appointed individuals.

If this is not practical, we will store information on an external hard drive or memory stick.

To prevent loss or in the case of damage to files, hard drive or memory stick, a copy may be kept on another hard drive or memory stick or they may be printed out. These memory sticks, hard drives and paper copies must be stored in a locked cupboard, box or drawer which is accessible only to the trusted persons and one other council appointed individual.

We are conscious these reports must not be stored on personal computers. We realise, in line with privacy laws, reports must be formulated in such a way that it enables the people involved to read it without any difficulties should they ask for it, as this is their legal right. This implies that all notes must be based on facts, are respectful and must be devoid of interpretations or value judgments.

**Confidential reports are stored for a minimum of 50 years.**

We are aware that cases of abuse may sometimes not come to light for 30 years or more. For this reason it is mandatory we file our reports for a minimum of 50 years. We need to file this at an independent institution. If a Triratna centre closes down, any reports must be transferred to another Triratna centre.

**Annual review of policy**

All our policy files regarding safeguarding will be reviewed annually by the confidential mediators and the council.

1 September 2020

<digital version, signed>

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This document will be reviewed annually by the safeguarding officers and the councils of Triratna centres in the Netherlands.

*Established by the Councils of Triratna Centres in the Netherlands.*

Published by the Councils of Triratna Centres, August 2020.

*Friends, mitras and order members involved with activities at Triratna Centres in the Netherlands, paid workers, volunteers, managers, teachers and parents to be informed in September 2020.*

1 September 2020

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Dhammapitika

Gunabhadri

**Safeguarding officer:** [vertrouwenspersoon.triratna@protonmail.com](mailto:vertrouwenspersoon.triratna@protonmail.com)>

## **Attachment**

### **When is someone 'mentally able'?**

It is not down to us to judge someone's 'mental ability'; a mental health expert would need to establish this. However, it can be helpful to have more information about it.

Mental ability is the ability to make certain decisions. An adult is considered vulnerable if they cannot make decisions in areas such as health care, disability, mental health, dementia, learning difficulties or anything else that may influence decision making.

A person may not be mentally able if they cannot do any of the following:

- Understand a decision
- Process information
- Understand the information
- Share their decisions with others regarding:
  - Finance
  - Social service support
  - Medical treatments

Vulnerability can vary, as illustrated in the paragraph about people in a grieving process. We recognise that many people who are normally emotionally and psychologically stable in most areas of their lives, may be vulnerable at certain points in their lives and as such pose a risk. This may manifest through illness, relationship troubles, or because practising meditation and Buddhism has made them more sensitive and aware, especially if they are new to Buddhist practice. We need to help each other prevent abusing this vulnerability, whether consciously or unconsciously done.

## **Different kinds of abuse**

### **Physical**

- Physical abuse which results in wounding, for example hitting, pushing, kicking, abuse of medication, constriction of freedom or inappropriate sanctions.
- Physical damage, for example under nourishment, dehydration, looking unwell
- Abuse by doctors or medical staff

### **Sexual**

- Rape, incest, inappropriate sexual behaviour, sexual assault.
- Sexual intimidation or sexual acts without consent from the vulnerable adult or consent given under pressure.
- Sexual abuse also extends to: being exposed to pornography, forced to witness sexual acts, sexual intimidation with or without physical contact.
- Sexual contact of any kind with a person under 16 is a crime. Order members are seen to be in a position of trust and for them any sexual contact with a person under 18 is considered a crime.

### **Psychological / emotional**

- Threatening, controlling behaviour, intimidation, force, bullying, verbal violence, enforced isolation or withholding aid or access to supportive networks.
- Humiliation
- Swearing, shouting or name calling. (Refer to the Triratna model policy on bullying and harassment, 'Living with dignity')
- Neglect
- Neglecting the need for medical or physical care, not providing access to appropriate health care or social or educational services, withholding basic necessities such as medication, nourishment and heating.

### **Financial / Material**

- Theft, fraud
- Exploitation or exerting pressure in relation to wills, property or inheritance, or in relation to financial transactions, abuse or embezzlement of property, possessions or benefits.

### **Discrimination**

Racist and sexist language or discriminating language regarding disability, gender or sexual orientation etc.

### **Signs of abuse**

#### **Physical abuse**

Note: the ageing process may cause changes which can be difficult to distinguish from certain aspects of physical violence. For example, bruising can be the result of thin veins.

- making an unhealthy impression
- a history of unexplained falls or small wounds
- Bruises on well covered parts of the body or various bruises as a result of repeated blows.
- Imprints of fingers on the skin
- Burns in unusual places or unusual in nature
- Wounds at different stages of healing
- Wounds imprinted by an object
- Head wounds
- History of frequently changing doctors and social services, unwillingness to seek help
- Weight loss as a result of malnourishment or rapid weight gain
- Sores, bed sores and wet clothing that is not changed
- Drowsiness from a surplus of medication, or lack of medication, resulting in repeated crises and/or hospital admissions.

#### **Signs of sexual abuse**

- Revealing or partially revealing (use of phrases like 'I'm not supposed to say this but..')
- Medical issues, for example genital infections, pregnancy, difficulty walking or sitting.
- Disturbing behaviour; for example depression, a sudden ceasing of activities, loss of skills, insomnia or nightmares, self harm, fear of aggression from a specific person, inappropriate seductive behaviour, loss of appetite or trouble keeping food down.
- Unusual circumstances, for example two people in a bathroom or toilet with one of them upset.

#### **Signs of psychological or emotional vulnerability**

- Isolation
- Unkempt hair, unwashed clothes, smelling unclean.
- Obsessive attention to detail
- Inappropriate clothing

- Being withdrawn, anxious, fearful, not wanting to be touched.
- Change in appetite
- Insomnia or the need to sleep a lot
- Crying often
- Unexplained mistrust, excessive fears
- Low self esteem
- Feeling confused

### **Signs of neglect**

- Poor physical condition
- Dishevelled clothes
- Poor diet
- Untreated wounds or medical problems
- Not taking or giving prescribed medication
- Poor personal hygiene

### **Signs of financial or material vulnerability**

- Unexplained or sudden inability to pay bills
- Unexplained or sudden money withdrawal from banks
- Living conditions that do not conform with available financial means
- Unusual interest from family members and others in regards to the financial means of the vulnerable person

### **Signs of discrimination**

- Lack of respect for the person concerned
- Insufficient help from medical or social services for the person concerned
- Denial of rights to the person concerned which other people do have a right to, such as the right to health care, education and justice

### **Other signs of abuse**

- Relationships where too much power or force is in play
- Inflicting inappropriate constrictions
- Sense deprivation, for example not providing glasses or hearing aids
- Refusing entry to visitors, not passing on phone calls
- No respect for privacy or personal dignity
- Not enough clothes or possessions.

