

# Auckland Buddhist Centre Child Protection Policy 2021

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## Introduction

Triratna is a worldwide network of friends in the Buddhist life. 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, lack of awareness or an assumption that “it couldn’t happen here” or “they would never do a thing like that”.

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.

## The purpose of this policy

This document is for Friends, Mitras and Order members involved in Auckland Buddhist Centre activities (and those of any outreach groups run by this charity) as employees, volunteers, leaders, teachers or parents.

It aims to provide

- protection for children (anyone under 18) who visit Auckland Buddhist Centre or take part in its activities including children of Buddhists and other users of the Auckland Buddhist Centre and
- protection for Friends, Mitras and Order members who may have contact with children in the course of Auckland Buddhist Centre activities.

It sets out

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

## Our values

Our activities include children in various ways, regularly or from time to time. Vajrajyoti and Vasudhara **are our Safeguarding Officers**. They are responsible for co-ordinating the protection of children and adults who may be at risk at Auckland Buddhist Centre. (See also our Safeguarding Adults policy.)

This policy applies to all staff, including the centre team and trustees, paid staff, volunteers, parents and anyone else working on behalf of Auckland Buddhist Centre, whether as a Friend, Mitra or Order member, 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 in any particular jurisdiction.

## **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.”

## **Recognising 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?

- 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.

## 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 one of the Auckland Buddhist Centre Safeguarding Officers named at the start of this document or the Chair.**
- Do not discuss with anyone else. This could prejudice a court case and put the child in danger.

## Engaging safely with children in person

*See the Auckland Buddhist Centre's 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 changing or using the toilet.
- Do not engage in intrusive touching.
- Do not tease or joke in a way 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 (i.e., 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 Auckland Buddhist Centre activities within agreed boundaries.

## **Reviewing this document**

This document and the accompanying Auckland Buddhist Centre Child protection code of conduct and Adult Safeguarding Policy, will be reviewed annually on or around the date below.

## **Auckland Buddhist Centre**

**Chair's name and email address**

**Dh Suvarnadhī, [info@aucklandbuddhistcentre.org](mailto:info@aucklandbuddhistcentre.org)**

**Chair's signature**

**Safeguarding officer's name and email address**

**Vasudhara and Vajrajyoti, [safeguarding@aucklandbuddhistcentre.org](mailto:safeguarding@aucklandbuddhistcentre.org)**

**Safeguarding officers' signatures**

## **Date**

*This Auckland Buddhist Centre Child Protection Policy 2021 is to be read in conjunction with*

- *Auckland Buddhist Centre Child Protection Code of Conduct 2021*
- *Auckland Buddhist Centre Adult Safeguarding policy 2021*
- *Auckland Buddhist Centre guidance document 'Caring for teenagers in Triratna 2021' and*
- *Auckland Buddhist Centre guidance document 'Managing those who pose a risk 2021'*