

Triratna Model ethical guidelines 2025 for Triratna Buddhist Centres and enterprises

Introduction

Triratna's Model Ethical Guidelines were first published in 2016 at the initiative of Triratna's International Council, in response to requests from some Triratna centres.

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. They are complementary to the Triratna Model Safeguarding Policies and guidance documents listed at the end.

These model guidelines are optional; however Triratna charities in England and Wales should be aware that the Charity Commission now expects all charities to adopt a Code of Conduct, which in Triratna terms equates to these Triratna Model Ethical Guidelines or similar.

The Safeguarding and reporting duties mentioned at the end follow UK requirements. Each Triratna centre/enterprise is free to adapt and translate these guidelines (or replace them with others) in accordance with local conditions, recognising that while each is legally separate and responsible for 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

1. 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.

[Name of Centre, Group or enterprise] 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 environment, 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. Although misuse of charity funds is not a Safeguarding matter, such concerns may be reported to our Safeguarding Lead or the ECA Safeguarding team at safeguarding@triratna.community, who will ensure that they are passed to be addressed as appropriate.

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 kalyanamitras for the benefit of all concerned should questions later arise.

See also the 2017 College "Statement about relationships between preceptors and those they ordain"

<https://thebuddhistcentre.com/preceptors/statement-about-sex-between-preceptors-and-those-they-ordain-preceptors-college> and the [Name of Centre, Group or enterprise] 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 Buddhist confession offers no protection from UK law, though this may differ from country to country. Disclosures or confessions of seriously harmful behaviours against adults or children, historic or recent (such as, for example, sexual and

violent criminal offences, including the viewing of indecent images of children online, domestic violence and stalking) should be passed to the Safeguarding Lead of [x Buddhist Centre/Group/enterprise], who will consider what action must be taken, in consultation with Triratna's ECA Safeguarding Consultant and the Order ethics convenor.

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 [name], Safeguarding Lead for [X Buddhist Centre + email address]. They will consider carefully whether your concern is a Safeguarding matter or a matter of more general ethical concern and consult with you as to how it should be addressed.

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 of harm, 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 of harm, we have a duty to report, with or without consent.

Agreed by the trustees of [Name of Triratna Buddhist centre/charity/enterprise] as recorded in the minutes of [insert date of trustee meeting 2025].

[Delete this from your policy: the sentence above, recording the date of adoption recorded in your trustee minutes, is intended to remove the need for a paper copy with signatures.]

Date:

Review date: [on or before same date 2026]

Sabbe satta sukhi hontu

May all beings be well and happy!

These [name of Triratna Buddhist centre/enterprise] Ethical Guidelines 2025 are to be read in conjunction with

- *The [name of Triratna Buddhist centre/enterprise] Child Protection Code of Conduct 2025*
- *The [name of Triratna Buddhist centre/enterprise] Child Protection Policy 2025*
- *The [name of Triratna Buddhist centre/enterprise] Adult Safeguarding Policy 2025*
- *The Triratna guidance document 'Caring for teenagers in Triratna 2025' and*
- *The Triratna guidance document 'Managing those who pose a risk 2025'*
- *The Triratna guidance document 'Online safety in Triratna 2025'*

Contact Triratna's ECA Safeguarding Consultant: safeguarding@triratna.community