

Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory

Safeguarding Children Policy

The purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to inform people who take part in the activities and services provided by Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory of the measures we have in place to protect both children and those in our organisation who engage with them. This document relates both to activities at the priory itself and to any off-site activity arranged by us.

It aims to provide

- protection for children under 18
- protection for adults 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.

This document is to be read in conjunction with Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory's Child Protection Code of Conduct.

Our values

Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory is a registered charity whose aims include teaching meditation and Buddhist practice and providing a place of refuge for people wishing to train in Buddhism. As part of this work children sometimes visit the priory, either accompanied by their parent/guardian or, in the case of a school visit, by their teacher. In addition, the prior sometimes visits schools to give talks and assemblies.

Like all organisations, Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory has a duty to safeguard any children with whom we have contact. We take this responsibility very seriously, and are committed to the safeguarding of all who come to the priory. Ensuring the physical, psychological and sexual safety of children involved in the activities and services we provide is an expression of the wisdom and compassion taught by the Buddha.

The trustees recognise their responsibility to ensure the welfare of children aged under 18, and are committed to their protection. (See also our Safeguarding Adults Policy.)

Practical Steps related to Safeguarding

The priory doesn't hold any events that are specifically for children, other than visits to and from school groups which are supervised by teaching staff.

Children may only visit the priory when accompanied by a parent or guardian. The prior, or person hosting the visit, will take care never to be alone with a child where the parent/guardian cannot see them. The parent or guardian will be advised that they must also not leave a child alone with other visitors to the priory.

Visits from children are unusual, however, and don't happen with sufficient frequency to be "regulated activity" as defined in the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006 (SVGA), as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012 (PoFA).

The priory's Safeguarding Officer is: Chris Loukes
email: safeguarding.nzbp@gmail.com

We recognise that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children, regardless of age, disability, gender, ethnicity, religious belief, sexual orientation or gender 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 anyone acting on behalf of Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory.

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 our congregation and representatives
- ensuring checks are made, where necessary, on volunteers (including monks) who represent Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory during on-site and off-site activities involving children
- sharing information about child protection and good practice with children, parents and volunteers
- sharing information about concerns with agencies who need to know, and involving parents and children appropriately
- providing effective management for volunteers through supervision, support and training.

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 that they 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 straightaway.
- 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 yourself be tempted to investigate.
- **Tell the temple's Safeguarding Officer named in this document, and also Rev. Leoma Hague, the Prior.**
- **Do not discuss the matter with anyone else.** This could prejudice a court case and put the child in danger.
- Contact: Norfolk County Council's Customer Services on 0344 800 8020 and ask for the Children's Advice and Duty Service, or else contact the police on 101.
- In an emergency, dial 999 and ask for the Child Protection Officer.

How to protect children and yourself

See also the *Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory Child 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 a way that might be misunderstood by the child and cause hurt.
- Do not share sleeping accommodation with children.
- Do not invite a child into 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 (e.g. 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 Norwich Zen Buddhist Priory activities within agreed boundaries.

Complaints and whistle-blowing procedures

- You can talk about your concern to the Prior, who is required to follow the procedures described above.
- Anyone can email the priory via our contact page with their concern and we will follow the procedures described above: <https://norwichzen.org.uk/contact-us/>
- The Safeguarding Officer **Chris Loukes** is available by emailing: safeguarding.nzbp@gmail.com
- Please also see the priory's Complaints Policy.
- It is recognized that some people may find it difficult to pass on information to either the Prior or a member of the local Lay Sangha, and so we also have volunteer contacts from our wider congregation and non-resident monks. If anyone wishes to raise concerns about ethical issues or misconduct (including issues involving children and young people), their details are publicly available on the OBC website: <https://obcon.org/about-us/our-ethical-intentions-and-resolving-a-concern/contact-for-ethical-concern-united-kingdom> and their names and contact details are as follows:

Rev. Master Elinore Agnew
Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey
Tel: 01434 345204

Rev. Master Roland Watson
Throssel Hole Buddhist Abbey
Tel: 01434 345204

Neil Rothwell
OBC Lay Minister
Tel: 0843 713 0076

Mo Henderson
OBC Lay Minister
033 296 84 87 59

**Responsibility for the Policy**

Overall responsibility for this policy and its implementation lies with the board of trustees. The trustees may have recourse to creating and consulting a group outside of the body of trustees for independent advice.

Review

This policy is reviewed regularly and updated as required.

Adopted on:

Amended on:

Last reviewed: