

Safeguarding Policy

Being Peace Practice Centre

Policy Statement Summary

Protect All Beings: We are committed to creating safe enough conditions for practice for all, where people are protected from harm and can flourish.

Prevent and Respond: We actively work to prevent abuse, respond promptly and compassionately to concerns, and support those affected by harm.

Practice with Integrity: Safeguarding is an expression of our deepest aspiration to reduce suffering and embodies the Five Mindfulness Trainings in action.

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1. Introduction

"We have to learn to build safety with our in-breath and our out-breath. We have to learn to build safety with our steps, with our way of acting and reacting, with our words and our efforts to build communication."

Thich Nhat Hanh , Fear, Essential Wisdom for Getting Through the Storm.

1.1 Who We Are

The Being Peace Practice Centre supports mindfulness practice in the Plum Village tradition of Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh through residential retreats, family programmes, community days, and visiting teacher events across our site in Gloucestershire.

This policy draws upon:

- The Five Mindfulness Trainings
- UK safeguarding law and charity governance requirements

1.2 The Five Mindfulness Trainings

The Five Mindfulness Trainings guide our practice and remind us to protect life, cultivate true love, speak truthfully with loving speech, nourish compassion, and avoid causing harm. These Trainings form the ethical foundation of this policy:

- **Reverence for Life:** Protecting the physical and emotional safety of all participants
- **True Happiness:** Cultivating environments free from exploitation, abuse, or coercion
- **True Love:** Maintaining healthy boundaries, deep respect, and non-harming relationships
- **Loving Speech & Deep Listening:** Creating conditions where concerns can be shared safely
- **Nourishment & Healing:** Supporting survivors with compassion and wise action

1.3 Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is compliant with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and aligns with:

- Children Act 1989 & 2004

- Working Together to Safeguard Children Statutory Guidance 2026
 - Care Act 2014
 - Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Act 2006
 - Mental Capacity Act 2005
 - Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023
 - Equality Act 2010
 - Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
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2. Safeguarding Commitment

2.1 Our Commitment

Being Peace is dedicated to cultivating mindfulness, compassion, and ethical living in the Plum Village tradition. **Safeguarding is an expression of our deepest aspiration to reduce suffering and to protect all beings.** We acknowledge that, despite best intentions, harm can occur. We are committed to preventing harm and addressing it promptly and compassionately.

We commit to creating safe conditions for practice by:

1. **Ensuring respectful, inclusive environments** for all retreatants, staff, volunteers, and community members
2. **Preventing abuse, neglect, exploitation, and discrimination** through safe recruitment, training, and clear boundaries
3. **Responding promptly, compassionately, and lawfully** to all safeguarding concerns
4. **Supporting those affected by harm** with appropriate pastoral care and access to professional services
5. **Modelling mindfulness, kindness, and integrity** in all our interactions and relationships
6. **Creating a culture of openness** where people feel safe to raise concerns without fear of reprisal

2.2 Who This Policy Applies To

This policy applies to all who serve or participate at Being Peace Practice Centre:

- Employed staff (residential and non-residential)
- Religious workers (Resident Community Members)
- Visiting teachers, monastics and dharma facilitators

- Volunteers (Work Retreatants and ad hoc volunteers)
- Trustees
- Retreatants
- Contractors and Visitors

2.3 What This Policy Covers

This policy covers conduct:

- On Centre premises (including residential accommodation and camping areas)
- During Centre-related activities off-site
- In one-to-one consultations or dharma interviews
- When representing the Centre publicly

This policy applies to everyone who uses our services but we need to pay heightened attention to children and adults at risk as they may be less able to protect themselves from abuse or neglect and may have difficulty reporting concerns.

3. Legal Definitions and Scope

3.1 Legal Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, a **child** is anyone under 18 years old. An **adult at risk** (previously termed "vulnerable adult") is defined under the Care Act 2014 as a person aged 18 years or older who:

- Has care and support needs, AND
- Is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect, AND
- As a result of their care and support needs is unable to protect themselves from abuse or neglect or the risk of it

3.2 What is Abuse?

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by any other person or persons. It may consist of single or repeated acts.

See Appendix B for detailed definitions and indicators of abuse.

3.3 What is a Safeguarding Concern?

A safeguarding concern is:

- Any disclosure, observation, allegation, or information suggesting that a child or adult may be experiencing or at risk of harm
 - Behaviour by anyone listed in point 2.2 that may pose a risk of harm to others
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4. Governance and Leadership

4.1 Trustee Responsibility

The Board of Trustees has ultimate responsibility for safeguarding within Being Peace Practice Centre, including:

- Ensuring this policy is implemented and regularly reviewed
- Providing adequate resources for safeguarding
- Creating a culture of safety, openness, and accountability
- Reporting serious safeguarding incidents to the Charity Commission
- Ensuring all trustees receive safeguarding training
- Holding the organisation accountable to its safeguarding commitments

4.2 Safeguarding Leadership Structure

Safeguarding Lead (Centre Director)

- Responsibilities:
 - Operational lead for safeguarding
 - Liaison with statutory agencies and Charity Commission
 - Serious incident reporting to Trustees
 - First point of escalation for complex cases
 - Support for Safeguarding Officers
 - Regular reporting to Trustees
 - Dealing with any concerns regarding the Safeguarding Officers
 - Ensuring staff and volunteers are trained
 - Safer recruitment oversight
 - Liaison with Safeguarding Officers
 - Ensuring all personnel have relevant DBS checks

Safeguarding Officers (Community Practice Mentors)

Responsibilities:

- First point of contact for safeguarding concerns at the Centre (outside of retreat times and always for Community and staff team members)
- Receiving and recording disclosures

- Making referrals to statutory agencies
- Supporting staff and volunteers with safeguarding matters
- Liaison with Safeguarding Lead
- Day-to-day safeguarding culture at Centre

Retreat Leader

Responsibilities:

- Key point of contact for safeguarding concerns during retreats
- Liaison with Safeguarding Officers

4.3 Charity Commission Reporting

We recognise our responsibility to report serious safeguarding incidents to the Charity Commission for England and Wales as required under charity law.

Reportable incidents include:

- Allegations of abuse carried out by anyone in point 2.2
- Serious safeguarding failures
- Incidents that result in or risk significant harm
- Incidents that generate significant media or public interest
- Involvement of police or statutory safeguarding services

The Safeguarding Lead is responsible for determining whether incidents meet the threshold for reporting and liaising with the Trustee Safeguarding Lead to submit reports via: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/report-serious-wrongdoing-at-a-charity>

5. Prevention

5.1 Safer Recruitment

We are committed to safe recruitment practices for all staff, volunteers and trustees. All appointments will include:

1. **Written role description** clearly outlining responsibilities and safeguarding expectations
2. **Application form** including employment history and gaps
3. **Interview** where safeguarding is discussed
4. **Written references** (minimum two) followed up where appropriate
5. **Self-declaration form** regarding criminal convictions, cautions, and safeguarding concerns
6. **Verification of identity** and relevant qualifications

7. **DBS check** where required
8. **Safeguarding induction** including this policy and Code of Conduct
9. **Probationary period** (for employed staff and longer-term volunteers)
10. Sign the **Code of Conduct**

5.2 Visiting Teachers and Monastics

All visiting teachers and monastics must:

- Read and agree to abide by the Code of Conduct
- Undertake a safeguarding induction prior to the any retreat they are leading to understand their responsibilities under this policy, including when to discuss or report any concerns with the Safeguarding Officers or Safeguarding Lead
- Complete a Safeguarding debriefing with the Safeguarding Officers or Lead at the end of any retreat they are leading to ensure that any concerns raised have been addressed and appropriately dealt with.

5.3 Safeguarding Training

We have a clear induction and training strategy with clear job descriptions and responsibilities and all relevant procedures. All new staff, paid and unpaid, will receive induction training as soon as possible and sign to record they have:

- Received and understood this policy.
- Been given any additional relevant resources
- Understood our commitment to ongoing safeguarding training

Safeguarding Officers and Safeguarding Lead will receive:

- **Advanced safeguarding training** appropriate to their role
- **Refresher training** every three years minimum
- Specialist training to support their role

Trustees will receive:

- **Safeguarding training for trustees** covering governance responsibilities
- **Refresher training** every three years minimum

Additional training will be provided as needed on topics such as:

- Supporting adults with mental health needs
- Recognising and preventing sexual harassment
- Online safety
- Domestic abuse awareness
- Trauma-informed practice

Training Records

The Safeguarding Lead will maintain records of all safeguarding training, including:

- Who has been trained
- Date and type of training
- When refresher training is due

5.4 Information for Participants

We will ensure that all participants are provided with clear information about safeguarding at the Being Peace Practice Centre, the Code of Conduct and details of who to speak to if they have concerns. This information will be:

- Displayed on noticeboards
- Available on our website

6. Awareness of Power Dynamics as Safeguarding

6.1 Power in spiritual community

The Being Peace Practice Centre isn't just a retreat centre, it is a spiritual community and as such, we acknowledge that power dynamics, whether explicit or implicit, exist in many relationships within our tradition.

6.2 Relationships where power imbalances may exist

There are a number of relationships where power balances may exist, these include:

- Dharma Teachers and sangha members
- Retreat Leaders and retreatants
- Trustees and employees, volunteers, or sangha members
- Order of Interbeing Mentors and Aspirants
- Experienced practitioners and new practitioners
- Monastics and sangha members
- Community Practice Mentors and those seeking guidance
- Being Peace Centre Director and staff/volunteers

6.3 Guidelines for Those in Positions of Trust

In alignment with the Third Mindfulness Training (True Love), those in positions of trust should:

- Understand the power this position gives them over those they care for
- Recognise the responsibility that comes with this relationship
- Maintain professional and appropriate boundaries at all times

Maintain clear boundaries:

- Be aware of potential for blurred boundaries in spiritual/teaching relationships
- Keep personal and professional relationships distinct
- Do not undertake any exclusive or secretive relationships
- Be especially careful during periods when others are vulnerable (bereavement, crisis, life transitions, new to practice)

Practice transparency:

- Engage in open communication about intentions and boundaries
- Encourage feedback and dialogue
- Avoid situations that could be misinterpreted
- Ensure one-to-one meetings are appropriately conducted (see Section 10.1)

Seek guidance:

- If unsure about appropriateness of a relationship or interaction, seek guidance from the Safeguarding Lead
- Be open to feedback about boundary concerns

Be accountable:

- Take responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries
- Be prepared to address concerns or allegations openly
- Engage in regular self-reflection about relationships and power dynamics
- Report any conflicts of interest

Prioritise wellbeing of others:

- In all relationships, prioritise wellbeing, safety, and dignity of the other person
- Be mindful of any vulnerability (temporary or long-term)
- Create a supportive environment where everyone feels valued and respected
- Never exploit vulnerability for personal, sexual, financial, or emotional gain

Romantic and sexual relationships:

Because of the inherent risk of coercion, harm, or perceived pressure, whether intended or not, and in light of the history of abuses of power within Buddhist organisations, Being Peace strongly discourages romantic or sexual relationships where a power imbalance exists.

- See [Sexual Harassment Policy](#) and [Guidance on Romantic Relationships](#) for detailed guidance
- Three month rule applies to relationships with retreatants: No romantic/sexual relationships with retreatants for three months after their retreat
- Extra care required for any relationship where power differential exists: If feelings arise in the context of a power-differentiated relationship, individuals are expected to pause and not act on them, and to bring the matter to a Safeguarding Officer or Safeguarding Lead for guidance and support. In most cases, a romantic relationship should not proceed unless the power imbalance has clearly ended and sufficient time and reflection have taken place.

7. Parental supervision

The Being Peace Practice Centre does not work with those under the age of 18. We do however run family retreats where adults may bring their children with them on retreat. Parents and guardians are responsible for supervising their children at all times during retreats. We will communicate this clearly in all pre-retreat information.

8. Mental Health and Wellbeing

Mindfulness as practiced in the Plum Village tradition and on our retreats is a huge support for many people. However, we acknowledge that retreats could be a difficult experience for people who are experiencing mental health conditions. We also recognise that vulnerability and resilience can vary throughout a person's life. Many people who are generally emotionally and psychologically stable may find themselves in temporarily vulnerable positions, for example:

- After bereavement, serious illness, or breakdown of relationship
- During life transitions or crises
- When new to meditation practice (practice may increase sensitivity initially)
- Following trauma or significant stress.

We make clear that our retreats and this practice are not therapy or counselling. Some individuals will require support beyond what we can offer. We therefore include a robust assessment form in our booking process to help make it more likely that only people for whom a retreat is appropriate attend.

8.1 Pre Assessment procedure

- Include compulsory questions about mental health and support needs in the booking form
- Have confidential conversations with participants where appropriate
- Where relevant and with the participant's consent, request written confirmation from a qualified mental health professional (e.g. therapist, psychologist, psychiatrist) that the individual is currently stable enough to participate safely in a retreat setting
- Assess whether our retreat environment is suitable and safe for the individual
- Signpost to appropriate mental health services where needed
- Respect individual autonomy while being clear about our limitations

8.2 During retreats

We acknowledge that even with these processes in place, attending retreatants can become vulnerable and therefore at risk. To support individuals in these circumstances we:

- Create opportunities for participants to speak privately with retreat leaders
- Train staff to be attentive to signs of distress or crisis
- Have emergency protocols in place
- Know how to access local mental health crisis services
- Encourage appropriate practices based on individual needs

If someone goes beyond their 'window of tolerance' during a retreat we will encourage them to speak to the Retreat Leader or Safeguarding Officer who can:

- Offer appropriate pastoral care while recognising we are not therapists
- Make reasonable adjustments to enable continued participation in sangha/retreats where appropriate and safe
- Signpost to specialist support services

8.3 Risk of harm to self or others

In rare instances individuals may react during retreats in ways that could be challenging or potentially harmful to themselves or others.

8.3.1 Self-harm or suicide

If we believe a person is at risk of self-harm or suicide, we will:

1. Not leave them alone on site
2. Encourage them to contact their GP, mental health team, or to go to A&E

3. Make contact with their emergency contact and arrange for them to safely leave the site.
4. Where we consider there is immediate danger of an adult harming themselves, we will contact emergency services without their consent.

8.3.2. Risk to others

If we believe someone is a risk to the physical or mental well-being of others, we will:

1. Remove them immediately from the retreat. Not leave them alone on site
2. Encourage them to contact their GP, mental health team, or to go to A&E
3. Make contact with their emergency contact and arrange for them to safely leave the site.
4. Where we consider there is any risk of an adult harming another, we will immediately contact the emergency services.

9. Risk Assessments

We will conduct written risk assessments for:

- All retreat programmes
- Any off-site activities
- Camping and outdoor activities
- Volunteer activities
- Any new activities or significant changes

Risk assessments will:

- Identify potential hazards and harms
- Assess likelihood and severity
- Identify control measures
- Be reviewed regularly and after incidents
- Be accessible to relevant staff and volunteers

10. One-to-One Consultations and Dharma Interviews

One-to-one consultations, dharma interviews, or spiritual direction sessions may be offered by:

- Retreat Leaders
- Community Practice Mentors

- Visiting teachers
- Experienced monastics

10.1 Safeguards for one-to-one sessions

- Sessions should take place in an appropriate space (quiet but visible, e.g., room with window in door)
- Another person should know the session is taking place
- Times and duration should be agreed in advance
- Participants should be informed of confidentiality limits (i.e., safeguarding concerns must be reported)
- Clear boundaries should be maintained
- Physical contact should be avoided except in culturally appropriate greeting (e.g., brief handshake, bow)
- Those conducting sessions should receive appropriate training and supervision

10.2 If concerning information is disclosed

- Follow the disclosure procedure
- Do not promise absolute confidentiality
- Offer appropriate support

11. Accommodation

- Dormitory arrangements will be single-sex and age-appropriate, with single rooms offered to those who may need a private room (trans/non-binary retreatants)
- On any family retreat, families will be accommodated together. Children must share a room with the supervising parent and children will not be accommodated in rooms with unrelated adults.
- Clear protocols for entering private rooms (staff should knock and wait, enter only with permission or in emergency)

12. Photography, Filming, and Social Media

12.1. Consent

- Verbal consent should always be sought from any individual involved before photographing or filming, stating clearly how and where the footage is likely to be used
- Written consent must be obtained, via a consent form, before photographing or filming any children
- Participants can withdraw consent at any time

12.2. Best Practice

- Focus on activities rather than individuals where possible
- Never share images that could bring people into disrepute
- Do not include full names of any retreatants on public websites
- Store images securely

12.3. Social Media

- No-one should contact any retreatants via personal social media
 - Participants should not be "tagged" in photos without consent
 - Participants should be discouraged from photographing others during retreats
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13. Transport

Where staff or volunteers transport participants:

- Children should always be transported with their parents
 - For full transport policies please see our Health & Safety Policy
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14. What to Do if You Have a Safeguarding Concern

14.1 Everyone's Responsibility

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. All staff, volunteers, teachers, trustees, and participants have a duty to:

- Be alert to signs of abuse or neglect
- Report concerns promptly
- Not investigate concerns themselves
- Maintain appropriate confidentiality

14.2 If a Child or Adult Discloses Abuse to You

DO:

- Listen carefully and attentively
- Take what they say seriously
- Reassure them they have done the right thing
- Explain you need to share the information to keep them safe
- Record what they said in their own words as soon as possible
- Report to the Safeguarding Officer immediately

DON'T:

- Promise to keep it secret
- Ask leading questions or press for details
- Investigate yourself
- Contact the alleged abuser
- Share the information with anyone except Safeguarding Leads and Officers and statutory agencies

See Appendix E for detailed Disclosure Response Protocol

14.3 Safeguarding Referral Flowchart

We ensure and emphasise that everyone in our organisation understands and knows how to share any safeguarding concern. Everyone, including Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Officers, will deal with concerns using the following:

Step One:

If you are have a safeguarding concern and are worried someone has been abused because:

- you have seen something
- someone says they have been abused
- somebody else has told you they are concerned
- there has been an allegation against a colleague
- there has been an anonymous allegation
- an adult has disclosed that they were abused as a child
- a child, young person or adult say they are abusing someone else.

Step Two:

Check this safeguarding policy for guidance. Talk to the Safeguarding Lead or a Safeguarding Officer without delay. If they are implicated, then talk to the Chair of Trustees

**CONSULT,
MONITOR
AND RECORD**
Sign/Date/Time
*Include name
and job role*

Step Three:

The Lead or Officer should refer the concern to the relevant adult's or children's social care service and/or the Police and follow up the referral in writing within 24 hours.

In cases of allegations against a "person of trust" with a "duty of care" towards a child, the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) will co-ordinate the next procedural steps.

Under "whistle blowing", anyone can refer directly to the Police, social care services, the LADO for personnel child abuse allegations, relevant regulatory authorities, or the NSPCC (child concerns only) and also the charity Protect for support when they are concerned the organisation is not managing safeguarding concerns appropriately.

Any consultations should not delay a referral.
In an emergency do not delay: dial 999

14.4 Referral to Statutory Agencies

We will refer concerns to statutory agencies when:

For Children:

- A child has disclosed abuse
- There are signs or indicators of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse
- A child is being neglected
- A child is at risk of significant harm
- An allegation is made against any of the team working with children
- We are uncertain whether the threshold for referral is met

For Adults:

- An adult discloses abuse
- There are signs of abuse or neglect
- An adult is unable to protect themselves from harm
- An allegation is made against any of the team
- We are uncertain whether safeguarding threshold is met

With regards to our internal disciplinary and grievance procedures, we will inform our strategy through liaison with social care services and / or the police, (the LADO, with regards to children England and Wales only).

15. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

- Information will be shared on a **need-to-know basis** only
- We will **not promise absolute confidentiality** to someone making a disclosure
- Information will be shared with statutory agencies where safeguarding requires it
- We will comply with **data protection law** while prioritising safeguarding
- Records will be stored securely and accessed only by Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Officers

16. Record Keeping

All safeguarding concerns and actions will be recorded including:

- Date and time of concern/disclosure
- Details of what was said/observed (in person's own words)
- Action taken and by whom

- Decisions made and rationale
- Outcome and any ongoing actions

Records will be:

- Factual, accurate, and detailed
- Worded respectfully and professionally (individuals have the right to request their records under data protection law)
- Free from interpretations and value judgements
- Stored securely (see below)
- Accessible only to Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Officer
- Retained in accordance with requirements (see below)

16.1 Secure Storage Protocols:

To ensure maximum security and prevent unauthorized access:

- All **Electronic files** containing safeguarding information will be password protected
- **Physical storage:** All paper copies will be stored in a locked cabinet.
- **Access:** Only accessible to Safeguarding Lead, Safeguarding Officers and up to two others approved by trustees
- **Backup discipline:** Regular backup schedule to protect against data corruption or loss

16.2 Retention Periods:

- **Safeguarding records** will be kept for **50 years** minimum (insurer requirement to address historical cases effectively)
- This extended retention period is necessary because many abuse cases come to light decades after the events
- **Other HR records:** 6 years after employment/volunteering ends
- **Accident records:** 3 years from date of incident (or until age 21 if incident involved a child)

If Being Peace Practice Centre ceases operations: All safeguarding records will be transferred to the Trustees of the Community of Interbeing UK (organisation that is responsible for the Being Peace Practice Centre) to keep with their confidential safeguarding logs.

16.3 Data Protection Compliance

While maintaining secure records, we recognise:

- Every person has legal right to privacy under Human Rights and data protection legislation
- Individuals have right to request access to records about themselves
- We must word records in a way we would be comfortable showing the subject
- We only share information on a **need-to-know basis**
- Unnecessary disclosure can prevent effective safeguarding by creating rumour, fear, and disharmony

17. Learning & Development in Safeguarding

Being Peace Practice Centre is keen to ensure that we are always learning from any incidents. Where a complaint or allegation has been made with regards to any inappropriate behaviour or poor practice, the Safeguarding Lead or Safeguarding Officers will, where required, discuss the situation with social care services (the LADO with regards to children England and Wales only) and / or the police before making an open decision about the best way forward.

In the case where the Safeguarding Lead is implicated, the Trustee Safeguarding Lead will be informed. In the exceptional circumstances that both are involved, the person concerned will inform the chair of Trustees. If there is a belief that the concern has not been taken seriously or acted upon then any one can “Whistleblow”.

If an investigation concludes that abuse did not occur:

- **Support all parties** involved
- **Learn lessons** from the situation
- **Review procedures** if needed
- **Address any reputational damage** fairly
- **Restore relationships** where possible

Anyone who raised a concern in good faith will be treated as per our Whistleblowing Policy.

18. External Support Services

We will maintain an up-to-date list of support services which will be provided to Retreat Leaders at the start of retreats including:

- **Gloucestershire Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre (GRASAC):** 01452 526770

- **Survivors UK** (male survivors): 020 3322 1860
 - **NAPAC** (adult survivors of childhood abuse): 0808 801 0331
 - **Samaritans**: 116 123
 - **Victim Support**: 0808 168 9111
 - **National Domestic Abuse Helpline**: 0808 2000 247
 - **MIND** (mental health): 0300 123 3393
 - **Childline**: 0800 1111 (for children and young people)
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This Policy should be read in conjunction with:

- **Bullying and Harassment Policy**
- **Grievance Policy**, including **disciplinary procedures**
- **Whistleblowing Policy**
- **Sexual Harassment Policy**
- **Guidance on Romantic Relationships**