

COMMUNITY OF INTERBEING UK – ADULT SAFEGUARDING POLICY 2023-24

Note, July 2026: we are expecting this policy to be updated by September / October 2026

Responsible People and Contact Details

Name of Organisation - The 'Community of Interbeing UK' (COI) which also uses the working name, 'Plum Village UK'.

Safeguarding contact

Name: Allison Fraser (Chair of Trustees), supported by a safeguarding team

Email: safeguarding@plumvillage.uk

Charity Number:1096680

Company Number:4623280

Insurance Company: Ecclesiastical

Specialist support to COI:

'Thirty-one:eight', An independent Christian charity which helps individuals, organisations, charities, faith and community groups to protect vulnerable people from abuse. Contact Telephone: 0303 003 1111

Section 1 - Introduction

The Community of Interbeing UK (the "COI"), also referred to as 'Plum Village UK', seeks to:

- Advance, support and encourage the study and practice of Buddhism and mindful living in accordance with the teachings of meditation master Thich Nhat Hanh, in the United Kingdom and overseas, in keeping with the five Buddhist Mindfulness Trainings and the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings of the Order of Interbeing (Tiep Hien).
- Assist and encourage the formation and activities of regional and local groups having this common purpose.

The COI's activities include but are not limited to supporting a growing network of practice groups, organising retreats, running courses, and facilitating outreach work to offer the Plum Village practices in appropriate forms to groups in need.

The community is committed to observing the Five Mindfulness Trainings¹, which represent the Buddhist vision for a global spirituality and ethic. These trainings and the Fourteen Mindfulness Trainings² of the Order of Interbeing, guide our actions and inform our approach to safeguarding and child protection. We strive to cultivate a safe and supportive environment that reflects the principles of the Mindfulness Trainings in all aspects of our community's activities.

The COI is committed in its activities to cultivating responsibility and learning ways to protect the safety and integrity of individuals, couples, families, and society, in alignment with the Five Mindfulness Trainings. We will do everything in our power to protect children from sexual abuse and to prevent couples and families from being broken by sexual misconduct.

This policy is based on law and good practice in England and Wales.

The trustees recognise their responsibility to safeguard all adults visiting or involved in our organisation's activities, whether online or in person, as set out by the Charity Commission in its latest guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees>

¹ <https://plumvillage.org/mindfulness/the-5-mindfulness-trainings/>

² <https://plumvillage.org/mindfulness/the-14-mindfulness-trainings/>

Section 2 – Purpose and Scope

This document is for all involved in our charity's activities (and those of local groups formally associated with our charity) as trustees, facilitators, retreat organisers, dharma teachers, Order Members, volunteers, mentors and aspirants, and individual sangha members in the UK.

It aims to provide:

- Protection for all adults attending our activities, including those who may be at risk of harm or have care and support needs, and
- Protection for employees, volunteers, facilitators, or teachers working with them.

It sets out:

- information and practices contributing to the prevention of harm to adults.
- what to do if harm is suspected.

We will seek to develop our safeguarding by:

- Integrating the principles of the Five Mindfulness Trainings (5MT) into our safeguarding practices, promoting a culture of compassion, responsibility, and non-harm.
- Fostering open and compassionate communication through loving speech and deep listening, enabling members of our community to feel heard and respected in all interactions.

We recognise an ethical duty to prevent or address harm to all adults in the course of our activities, including adults who may be at risk of harm or have care and support needs, as set out by the Charity Commission in its latest guidance:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees>

The types of harm we have a duty to prevent and address are listed in Appendix A; they apply by law to the care of adults who are deemed formally vulnerable or 'at risk'. However, this list also provides a guide as to the types of harm we must be alert to prevent or address in the case of all adults. When identifying and addressing potential harm, we integrate the principles of the Five Mindfulness Trainings into our approach, such as:

- **Reverence for life** (First Mindfulness Training): Ensuring that our community is free from violence, abuse, and neglect, and promoting a culture of non-violence and respect for all living beings.
- **True happiness** (Second Mindfulness Training): Identifying and addressing instances of exploitation, social injustice, and oppression, and working to cultivate a sense of shared responsibility for the well-being of all members.
- **True love** (Third Mindfulness Training): Preventing and addressing sexual misconduct and promoting healthy, consensual relationships built on mutual trust and respect.
- **Loving speech and deep listening** (Fourth Mindfulness Training): Encouraging open, compassionate communication and active listening to prevent misunderstandings, resolve conflicts, and support those experiencing harm or at risk.
- **Nourishment and healing (Fifth Mindfulness Training):** Encouraging healthy practices for the well-being of body, mind, and society by cultivating mindful consumption in all aspects of life, including food, the many different forms of media we consume, and our conversations with others.

In our safeguarding we recognise the importance of offering choices for individuals to approach or be represented by People of Colour, people of all genders, or people who are trusted due to their understanding and appreciation of diverse experiences and backgrounds.

Our spiritual community is dedicated to creating a welcoming and supportive environment that embraces the diverse experiences shared by members. We are committed to developing awareness and understanding of the unique challenges that friends may face. These challenges can include racism, discrimination, exclusion, stigmatisation, and ableism, affecting People of Colour, LGBTQIA+ people, and people with mental health conditions, neurodiversity, and physical disabilities.

Sanghas such as Colours of Compassion Sangha and Rainbow Sangha provide spaces where friends can connect, share their experiences, and practise in a caring environment. We encourage participation and emphasise the importance of sensitivity and care when guiding or referring individuals to Sanghas, fostering active inclusion within the wider community, and listening deeply when difficulties or experiences of harm in broader settings are expressed. In our efforts to build an inclusive community, we are committed to addressing any difficulties or concerns raised and using signposting as supportive options rather than solutions.

We collaborate with friends from diverse backgrounds to provide tailored resources like the adapted 'Be Calm Be Happy' mindfulness course, designed to address the specific needs of individuals with ADHD and other neurodiverse conditions. Additionally, we support meetings for neurodivergent individuals, those facing mental health challenges, and individuals with physical disabilities, creating spaces for sharing from the heart and deep listening while addressing stigmatisation and ableism.

We emphasise the importance of respecting the privacy and confidentiality of Sangha members and their discussions, striving to create a space where friends feel comfortable sharing their experiences.

This document provides guidance on procedures that should be adopted in the event someone suspects a person may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm.

Trustees undertake:

- to endorse and follow all national and local safeguarding legislation and procedures, in addition to relevant international conventions.

- to provide safeguarding training as required.
- to support the Charity Safeguarding Officer and Safeguarding Coordinators in their work and in any action they may need to take in order to protect children and adults with care and support needs.
- to integrate the values of the Five Mindfulness Trainings within the safeguarding policy and procedures, ensuring that the trustees consistently apply these principles in their decision-making process and actions related to safeguarding.

Allison Fraser is our Chair of Trustees. She is responsible for making sure Safeguarding is taken seriously by the trustees and appears regularly on their agendas, ensuring the trustees comply with their Safeguarding obligations as required by the Charity Commission.

The chair is supported by a Safeguarding Team consisting of both Trustees and others with relevant expertise.

Guidance on Procedures for Suspected Harm:

This document provides guidance on procedures that should be adopted in the event someone suspects a person may be experiencing, or be at risk of, harm. When communicating concerns and suspicions, we encourage individuals to practice the Fourth Mindfulness Training, which focuses on loving speech and deep listening. Address concerns with compassion, understanding, and empathy, and actively listen to those who may be experiencing harm or are at risk.

Promoting a Culture of Mindfulness:

To foster a safe and supportive environment within our spiritual community, we encourage all members to apply the Five Mindfulness Trainings in their interactions with one another. By practicing mindfulness and cultivating awareness, understanding, and compassion for those who may be vulnerable or at risk, we can help prevent harm and create a nurturing space for personal and collective growth.

Who is an adult?

For the purposes of this policy an “adult” is a person who has passed their 18th birthday regardless of the legal age of majority in any jurisdiction.

Who is an adult who is vulnerable or “at risk”?

The UK Care Act 2014 defines such a person as “any person who is aged 18 years or over and at risk of abuse or neglect because of their needs for care and or support”; ie, they need care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs); and “Is experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and as a result of those care and support needs, is unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of, abuse or neglect”.

Adults who may be formally ‘at risk’ may also include those who

- have dementia
- have learning disabilities
- have mental health problems
- have drug, alcohol or substance dependency
- have physical or sensory disabilities
- have been bereaved, suffered grief and loss
- through age or illness are dependent on other people to help them
- live with domestic abuse
- are homeless
- are refugees or asylum seekers or
- for any reason may be considered not to have ‘mental capacity’.

(See below.)

Whether or not a person is “vulnerable” or “at risk” in these cases will vary according to circumstances, and it should be noted that a person with a physical disability is not necessarily at risk, though they could be. Each case must be judged on its own merits.

Definitions of abuse in adults

See Appendix A.

Signs of abuse in adults

See Appendix B.

In line with the First Mindfulness Training, Reverence for Life, it is crucial for all members of the community to be vigilant in recognising signs of abuse. We must approach this responsibility with sensitivity, understanding, and a genuine concern for the well-being of all individuals involved.

What is 'mental capacity'?

See Appendix C.

Vulnerability can be variable

Vulnerability and resilience can vary throughout a person's life. Many people who are generally emotionally and psychologically stable in most aspects of their lives and would not be formally classified as vulnerable or 'at risk' may on occasion find themselves in a more vulnerable position, e.g. after a bereavement, serious illness, or breakdown of a relationship. They may be new to the practice of meditation and their practice may make them more sensitive. It is essential to recognise that vulnerability is not a fixed state and that our community should remain flexible and responsive to the changing needs of individuals.

In line with the Third Mindfulness Training, community members should cultivate true love and responsibility in all relationships, including those with individuals who may be temporarily vulnerable. We will take great care to help each other avoid exploiting people in such everyday situations of vulnerability. Community members should be aware of potential power imbalances in relationships and strive to create an environment where everyone feels supported, valued, and respected.

Protecting those with psychological disorders

We are aware that those attending our retreats and activities may include adults experiencing psychological disorders ranging from mild to severe. It is crucial to create a supportive environment where individuals can feel safe, understood, and encouraged to seek help when needed.

Incorporating the Fourth Mindfulness Training, we encourage community members to practice loving speech and deep listening when interacting with individuals experiencing psychological disorders. This includes being mindful of the words used, avoiding judgment or stigma, and being open to understanding the experiences and suffering of others. Providing a non-judgmental space for open communication can help individuals feel more comfortable discussing their challenges and seeking appropriate support.

We recognise that as a community we do not have the specific professional skills to diagnose or help people with psychological disorders and that they may not be helped solely by the kindness of our community. In such cases we may need to advise them to seek professional help.

We are aware that for people with serious psychological disorders, traditional Buddhist practices involving development of Insight can surface strong emotions and people may react in ways that can be dangerous. We may need to encourage them in Mindfulness practices involving the calming of body and mind, or to avoid meditation altogether during periods of relapse.

Where we believe a person to be at risk of self-harm or suicide, we will encourage them to contact their GP, mental health team, or to go to the accident and emergency department of the local hospital. If necessary, we will make the contact on their behalf, with their consent. If necessary, our Safeguarding officer will consult external experts in Safeguarding, such as Thirtyone:eight.

Where we consider there is immediate danger of an adult harming themselves or others we will contact emergency services, without their consent if necessary.

Responding to children online

See our Child Protection Policy.

DBS checks /security checks

Those engaged in community activities should be trained, supported, and supervised in accordance with good practice. If in any doubt about the requirements for DBS checks our Safeguarding officer and DBS Administrator will check with external Safeguarding experts such as Thirtyone:eight (www.thirtyoneeight.org) to ensure that anyone required to have a DBS check has been checked, and to the correct level. Thirtyone:eight provide an advice line and online DBS service.

We understand that DBS certificates apply to roles rather than persons and are not transferable from another role elsewhere; also that any DBS certificate should be less than three years old.

Safeguarding Guidelines

Trustees will ensure that those engaged in community activities receive support and supervision where appropriate. We wish to promote good working practice and, in this regard, Safeguarding Guidelines are attached to this policy as appendices:

- Appendix D - Guidelines for retreats organised by the COI
- Appendix E – Guidelines for local sanghas
- Appendix F – Relationships where one person has a position of trust

Note:

- Under no circumstances should a Sangha (community) member carry out their own investigation into a Safeguarding allegation or suspicion of abuse.
- All allegations should be referred to the Charity Safeguarding Officer.
- Records of Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks are to be kept centrally with the Charity Safeguarding Officer.

These guidelines provide clear procedures and expectations for community members in various settings, ensuring consistent and effective safeguarding practices across all activities. Regular updates should be provided to all community members involved in organising and leading events, promoting continuous improvement and awareness of safeguarding best practices.

In our Safeguarding Guidelines, we encourage community members to be mindful of their consumption of media and information, following the Fifth Mindfulness Training. This includes considering how their media consumption may affect their interactions with vulnerable individuals and consuming information that promotes understanding, empathy, and compassion for others. By cultivating a mindful approach to media consumption, community members can foster an environment that supports the well-being of all individuals.

Managing those who pose a risk to others

In alignment with the First Mindfulness Training, which emphasises reverence for life, our spiritual community is dedicated to protecting the lives and well-being of all individuals involved in our activities. We are committed to cultivating understanding, compassion, and non-discrimination to create a safe and nurturing environment for all.

There may be cases where it is known that a person attending our activities is likely to pose a risk to others (for example, a person who is known to have a previous criminal conviction for sexual or other violent offences, who is on the UK Sex Offender Register, or someone who is under investigation for possible sexual or other violent offences).

Such a person will be asked by our Charity Safeguarding Officer to agree a behaviour contract setting out the terms of their continued participation in our activities within agreed boundaries, which should explicitly include those the individual should not have contact with. This should be based on a risk assessment from a probation officer, police officer or other professional supervising this person.

Where it is felt that the charity does not have the resources to manage this relationship safely, we reserve the right to ask the person not to attend our activities.

If necessary, our Charity Safeguarding Officer will consult external experts in Safeguarding, such as Thirtyone:eight

What is 'abuse'?

'Abuse' is not a legal term, but covers a number of ways in which a person may be deliberately harmed (legally or illegally), usually by someone who is in a position of power, trust or authority over them, or who may be perceived by that person to be in a position of power, trust or authority over them; for example by a volunteer who is helping to run activities for people new to our activities. The harm may be physical, psychological, or emotional, or it may exploit the vulnerability of the person in more subtle ways.

However, harm can also occur less consciously, through naivety, idealism, or lack of awareness. This type of harm, although unintended, can still have a significant impact on the affected individual. Recognising the importance of addressing both intentional and unintentional harm, our spiritual community is committed to incorporating the Five Mindfulness Trainings into our safeguarding policies and practices.

Examples of how the Five Mindfulness Trainings can apply to addressing abuse in the context of safeguarding include:

Reverence For Life

Members are encouraged to be aware of situations where their actions or inaction may put someone at risk of harm. For example, a volunteer may unintentionally leave a child unsupervised during an activity, creating a situation in which the child could be at risk of harm. Members should be vigilant and proactive in preventing such scenarios.

True Love

This training emphasises the importance of protecting the safety and integrity of all individuals, particularly vulnerable groups like children. In a situation where a member observes an adult exhibiting potentially harmful behaviour towards a child, such as inappropriate physical contact or suggestive language, the member should report the incident to the appropriate authority within the community to ensure the well-being of the child and the accountability of the adult involved.

Loving Speech and Deep Listening

Members should practice compassionate listening and mindful speech, even when discussing challenging topics. For example, if there is a disagreement within the community, members are encouraged to approach the situation with openness and understanding, avoiding harsh language or judgment that may unintentionally harm others.

Nourishment and Healing

By being mindful of their consumption of various forms of nutriment, members can become more aware of how their actions may inadvertently contribute to harm. For instance, sharing a gossip-laden article within the community might cause unnecessary distress and conflict, even if the sharer didn't intend to cause harm.

To address the implications of harm occurring through naivety, idealism, or lack of awareness, the community should regularly support its members to help them develop their understanding and skills in line with the Five Mindfulness Trainings. This might include workshops, discussions, and regular reminders about the importance of considering the impact of our actions on others. Through this approach, we strive to prevent and address any harm, whether intentional or unintentional, and create a safe, inclusive, and nurturing community for everyone.

Definitions of abuse

See Appendix A.

Signs of abuse

See Appendix B.

If you have a concern

All allegations or suspicions should be taken seriously and reported to our Safeguarding Team: safeguarding@plumvillage.uk

In accordance with the Fourth Mindfulness Training, which promotes loving speech and deep listening, our community encourages compassionate communication and active listening when addressing concerns, ensuring confidentiality and respect for the individual's privacy.

If a person over 18 alleges abuse

We understand that we need to

- stay calm.
- listen patiently.
- reassure the person they are doing the right thing by speaking up.
- clarify issues of confidentiality early on. We will make it clear we may have to discuss their concerns with others, on a strictly need-to-know basis, if at all possible with their permission. (See below.)
- explain what we are going to do.
- write a factual account of what we have seen and heard, immediately.

We will do our best to avoid

- appearing shocked, horrified, disgusted or angry.
- pressing the individual for details.
- making comments or judgments other than to show concern. Our responsibility is to take them seriously, not to decide whether what they are saying is true.
- promising to keep secrets.
- confronting any alleged perpetrator.
- risking contaminating the evidence by investigating matters ourselves.

Our community is committed to practicing loving speech when communicating with the affected individual and providing them with understanding, support, and care.

What we will do next

- We understand that our first concern must be the safety and wellbeing of this person and that we must not be distracted from this by loyalty to the person who has been accused or a desire to maintain the good name of our charity or Buddhist tradition.
- If the person receiving the disclosure is not our Safeguarding officer, they must tell the Charity Safeguarding Officer only, who will co-ordinate the handling of the matter on behalf of the charity's trustees. However, if the Charity Safeguarding Officer is not immediately available the matter should be communicated to the Chair of Trustees.

- We understand that every person has a legal right to privacy under the International Convention on Human Rights and data protection legislation; therefore if possible we need to get the person's consent to share the information they have given us, within the limits described here and below.
- If the adult alleging abuse is not formally vulnerable or 'at risk' and their complaint may be criminal, it is up to them to report to the police if they wish to; though we will offer them help and support to do this.
- If the person is formally vulnerable or 'at risk' we may report on their behalf, though with their permission if possible.
- Whether or not formally vulnerable or 'at risk', if the person may be in immediate danger the Charity Safeguarding Officer, Chair of Trustees, or person receiving the disclosure, will phone social services or police straight away. A telephone referral will be confirmed in writing within 24 hours.

If necessary, our Charity Safeguarding Officer will consult external experts in Safeguarding, such as Thirtyone:eight

- It may be necessary, and therefore legally 'reasonable', to pass on information without the adult's consent if they may be at immediate risk of harm once they leave your company and/or a crime has been or is about to be committed; also if what is disclosed indicates that there is also a risk of harm to a child.
- The person receiving the disclosure will make detailed factual notes about the conversation/concern/incident as soon as possible, including time, date and location, and pass them to the Charity Safeguarding Officer. (See 'Secure, confidential record-keeping' below.) As far as possible what the person has said should be recorded in their own words, as these could be used in court.
- We understand that no member should attempt to investigate a criminal allegation, that this is the job of the police and that to attempt this could prejudice a court case and put the parties in danger.

Finally, we may need to make external reports:

- In England and Wales we may need to make a Serious Incident Report to the Charity Commission:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity>

- We will report to our insurers any situation or incident that we consider might lead to a claim under our insurance policy.

If necessary, our Safeguarding Team will consult external experts in Safeguarding, such as Thirtyone:eight

Who else needs to know?

We understand that confidentiality, sharing information only on a need-to-know basis, is very important. Under data protection legislation nobody has a right to know about a case – except, for Safeguarding purposes, those in a position to prevent further harm, and our Chair, who holds ultimate responsibility for the governance of the charity.

This is not a matter of concealment but is intended to protect all concerned from further harm. It will also protect our community from fear, rumour and disharmony which will make it much harder to deal with the matter effectively without causing further harm.

In our communication regarding safeguarding issues, we commit to practicing loving speech and deep listening to foster a compassionate and understanding environment. We will avoid spreading rumours while addressing safeguarding concerns.

Secure, confidential record-keeping

We understand our responsibility for secure and careful record-keeping. Our Safeguarding Team will keep a detailed log of all Safeguarding-related incidents as well as conversations, actions, and the reasoning behind them. These should not be stored on any computer, but on an external hard drive or memory stick. To guard against loss in case the files, hard drive or memory stick become corrupted these will be backed up to another hard drive or memory stick and/or printed off. Any memory sticks, hard drives and paper copies will be stored in a locked cabinet, box or drawer accessible only to the Safeguarding Team and one or two others approved by our trustees, eg the Chair of Trustees.

We also understand that under data protection law we need to word our records in a form we would be happy for the subjects to read if they ask to,

as is their legal right. This means notes should be factual and respectful, free of interpretations and value-judgements.

We recognise that mindful consumption of information is essential for the well-being of our community. Therefore, we are committed to ensuring that our record-keeping practices promote the nourishment and healing of our community by carefully managing access to sensitive information and safeguarding the privacy of those involved in safeguarding incidents.

Keeping confidential records

We understand that because many abuse cases come to light many years later our insurers require us to keep our records for up to 50 years, such that it is possible to address historical cases effectively.

If our charity closes, we will give our records to another Buddhist charity to keep with their own confidential Safeguarding logs.

Reviewing our policies annually

This document was adopted by the trustees of the Community of Interbeing UK on 10 May 23 and will be reviewed and updated by our Charity Safeguarding Officer and trustees, on or before 10 May 2024.

As part of our annual review, we will reassess the ways in which our safeguarding policy reflects the Five Mindfulness Trainings and consider any necessary adjustments to embody these principles in our approach to safeguarding.

Adoption of the policy

By adopting a culture of awareness and responsibility, we can ensure that our community remains a place where everyone feels valued, respected, and cared for. It is the responsibility of all community members to be vigilant, compassionate, and proactive in implementing these safeguarding measures and fostering an environment that promotes the well-being of all.

This policy has been agreed by trustees and will be reviewed annually.

Signed by:

Position: Chair of Trustees

Signed by:

Position: Safeguarding Officer

Date: 10 May 2023

A copy of this policy is also available on our website, plumvillage.uk

This Adult Safeguarding policy is to be read in conjunction with our:

- Child Protection Policy 2023
- Child Protection Code of Conduct 2023

Appendix A - Definitions of abuse in adults

In the UK we have a legal duty to prevent or address the following types of harm to adults who may be vulnerable or 'at risk'.

The list below also provides a guide as to the types of harm we should be alert to prevent or address in the case of all adults, as does the list at this link, from the Charity Commission for England and Wales

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees>

As defined in the UK Care Act 2014, Safeguarding duties apply to an adult who is defined as vulnerable or 'at risk' because they

- have need for care and support (whether or not the local authority is meeting any of those needs) and;
- are experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- as a result of those care and support needs are unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect.

Physical abuse – including assault, hitting, slapping, pushing, misuse of medication, restraint or inappropriate physical sanctions.

Domestic violence – including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called 'honour-based' violence.

Sexual abuse – including rape, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, inappropriate looking or touching, sexual teasing or innuendo, sexual photography, subjection to pornography or witnessing sexual acts, indecent exposure and sexual assault or sexual acts to which the adult has not consented or was pressured into consenting.

Psychological abuse – including emotional abuse, threats of harm or abandonment, deprivation of contact, humiliation, blaming, controlling, intimidation, coercion, harassment, verbal abuse, cyber bullying, isolation or unreasonable and unjustified withdrawal of services or supportive networks.

Financial or material abuse – including theft, fraud, internet scamming, coercion in relation to an adult's financial affairs or arrangements, including in connection with wills, property, inheritance or financial transactions, or the misuse or misappropriation of property, possessions or benefits.

Modern slavery – encompasses slavery, human trafficking, forced labour and domestic servitude. Traffickers and slave masters use whatever means they have at their disposal to coerce, deceive and force individuals into a life of abuse, servitude and inhumane treatment.

Discriminatory abuse – including forms of harassment, slurs or similar treatment; because of race, gender and gender identity, age, disability, sexual orientation or religion.

Organisational abuse – including neglect and poor care practice within an Institution or specific care setting such as a hospital or care home, for example, or in relation to care provided in one's own home. This may range from one off incidents to on-going ill-treatment. It can be through neglect or poor professional practice as a result of the structure, policies, processes and practices within an organisation.

Neglect and acts of omission – including ignoring medical, emotional or physical care needs, failure to provide access to appropriate health, care and support or educational services, the withholding of the necessities of life, such as medication, adequate nutrition and heating.

Self-neglect – this covers a wide range of behaviour neglecting to care for one's personal hygiene, health or surroundings and includes behaviour such as hoarding. Incidents of abuse may be one-off or multiple, and affect one person or more.

Appendix B - Signs of abuse in adults

Physical abuse

- History of unexplained falls, fractures, bruises, burns, minor injuries.
- Signs of under or over use of medication and/or medical problems left unattended.
- Any injuries not consistent with the explanation given for them
- Bruising and discolouration - particularly if there is a lot of bruising of different ages and in places not normally exposed to falls, rough games etc.
- Recurring injuries without plausible explanation
- Loss of hair, loss of weight and change of appetite
- Person flinches at physical contact &/or keeps fully covered, even in hot weather;
- Person appears frightened or subdued in the presence of a particular person or people

Domestic violence

- Unexplained injuries or 'excuses' for marks or scars
- Controlling and/or threatening relationship including psychological, physical, sexual, financial, emotional abuse; so called 'honour-based' violence and Female Genital Mutilation.

Sexual abuse

- People who are pregnant who lack mental capacity or are unable to consent to sexual intercourse
- Unexplained change in behaviour or sexually explicit behaviour
- Torn, stained or bloody underwear and/or unusual difficulty in walking or sitting
- Infections or sexually transmitted diseases
- Full or partial disclosures or hints of sexual abuse:
- Self-harming
- Emotional distress
- Mood changes
- Disturbed sleep patterns

- Psychological abuse
- Alteration in psychological state e.g. withdrawn, agitated, anxious, tearful
- Intimidated or subdued in the presence of a carer
- Fearful, flinching or frightened of making choices or expressing wishes
- Unexplained paranoia
- Changes in mood, attitude and behaviour, excessive fear or anxiety
- Changes in sleep pattern or persistent tiredness
- Loss of appetite
- Helplessness or passivity
- Confusion or disorientation
- Implausible stories and attention seeking behaviour
- Low self-esteem

Financial or material abuse

- Disparity between assets and living conditions
- Unexplained withdrawals from accounts or disappearance of financial documents or loss of money
- Sudden inability to pay bills, getting into debt
- Carers or professionals fail to account for expenses incurred on a person's behalf
- Recent changes of deeds or title to property
- Missing personal belongings
- Inappropriate granting and / or use of Power of Attorney

Modern slavery

- Physical appearance; unkempt, inappropriate clothing, malnourished
- Movement monitored, rarely alone, travel early or late at night to facilitate working hours
- Few personal possessions or ID documents
- Fear of seeking help or trusting people

Discriminatory abuse

- Inappropriate remarks, comments or lack of respect
- Poor quality, or avoidance of, care

- Low self-esteem
- Withdrawn
- Anger
- Person puts themselves down in terms of their gender or sexuality
- Abuse may be observed in conversations or reports by the person of how they perceive themselves

Institutional Abuse

- Low self-esteem
- Withdrawn
- Anger
- Person puts themselves down in terms of their gender or sexuality
- Abuse may be observed in conversations or reports by the person of how they perceive themselves
- No confidence in complaints procedures for staff or service users.
- Neglectful or poor professional practice.

Neglect and acts of omission

- Deteriorating despite apparent care
- Poor home conditions, clothing or care and support.
- Lack of medication or medical intervention

Self-neglect

- Hoarding inside or outside a property
- Neglecting personal hygiene or medical needs
- Person looking unkempt or dirty and has poor personal hygiene
- Person is malnourished, has sudden or continuous weight loss and is dehydrated – constant hunger, stealing or gorging on food
- Person is dressed inappropriately for the weather conditions
- Dirt, urine or faecal smells
- Home environment does not meet basic needs (for example heating or lighting)
- Depression

Appendix C - What is 'mental capacity'?

Whether a person has mental capacity is a matter of specialist assessment by social and mental health services. However, it may be useful to know something about it.

Mental capacity is the ability to make a particular decision. An adult may be at risk if they are unable to make a decision due to illness, disability, poor mental health, dementia, a learning disability or something else that may impair their judgment.

A person may be deemed to be 'without capacity' if they cannot:

- understand a decision
- retain information
- weigh up information
- communicate their decision

About matters such as

- finance
- social care
- medical treatment

Appendix D - Guidelines for retreats organised by the COI

In line with the Plum Village tradition and the Five Mindfulness Trainings, the COI is committed to creating a safe and nurturing environment for all participants during our events. Safeguarding and child protection are essential aspects of our practice, and these guidelines aim to integrate the principles of the Trainings to ensure the well-being and safety of everyone involved.

Activities covered by these guidelines include any activities organised by the COI, and Sangha groups formally affiliated to the COI, which may involve:

- Young Adults (Wake-up) Programme Organiser/s organising young adults' activities (includes 16-18 year olds);
- Teens/Children's Programme Organiser/s organising programmes;
- Teens/Children's Programme Leader/s, being the responsible adult on a session/activity; and
- Volunteers – other adults, including parents and carers, helping at a session/activity.

All organisers, Programme Leaders, and volunteers will receive access to training opportunities that incorporate Safeguarding and the Five Mindfulness Trainings. Through discussions, workshops, and other activities, we will explore the connection between mindfulness practices and our safeguarding responsibilities, ensuring that our community upholds the values and principles of the Plum Village tradition.

Key information

Safeguarding Trustee: This is a named trustee who will be legally responsible for dealing with any safeguarding matters. They may delegate the work to a Charity Safeguarding Officer and Named Safeguarding Coordinators for retreats/local sangha activities but will retain overall legal responsibility for the COI charity.

Charity Safeguarding Officer: This is a named person who has been nominated by the Safeguarding Trustee to carry out work relating to this policy. Their work can include ensuring that: DBS checks are administered; COI events have a Named Safeguarding Coordinator; investigating any concerns raised.

DBS Administrator: This is a named person whose work can include ensuring that: DBS checks are completed and recorded; COI events have a Named Safeguarding Coordinator; supporting investigation of any concerns raised.

Named Safeguarding Coordinator: For each event organised in the name of the COI, an organiser must be named as responsible and accountable for Safeguarding and must make themselves known to the Charity Safeguarding Officer.

Under 18s programme organiser/s: Any programme involving under 18s must be organised and led by two adults with Enhanced DBS Certificates who are members of the COI and have formally 'received' (committed to observe), the Five Mindfulness Trainings. These organisers are responsible for ensuring that all adults working on the programmes are aware of, and adhere to, COI Safeguarding and Child Protection policies and procedures.

Programme Organiser/s are expected to embody the principles of the Five Mindfulness Trainings in their interactions with children and young people, promoting a compassionate, respectful, and supportive environment that fosters growth and well-being.

Implementing Policy: The Five Mindfulness Trainings serve as a guiding framework for implementing our safeguarding policy. Anyone organising events in the name of the COI will be expected to accept responsibility for implementing the policy and is responsible to Trustees and the whole membership. The retreat organisers and Charity Safeguarding Officer, liaising with the Safeguarding Trustee, are responsible for ensuring that the necessary paperwork and procedures are in place.

Booking Information: Organisers should make clear in booking information that the COI has a safeguarding policy, which must be available to read.

Risk assessments: The programme organisers have the duty to carry out appropriate risk assessments for any activities and this work must be copied to the retreat organisers.

Code of Conduct. We have established a code of conduct for all organisers, Programme Leaders, and volunteers, rooted in the principles of the Five Mindfulness Trainings. This code sets clear expectations for behaviour and interactions with children and young people, ensuring that our community remains a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment for all.

Role of parents and caregivers. We recognise the essential role that parents and caregivers play in supporting the well-being and growth of children and young people. To assist them, we will provide resources and guidance on integrating the Five Mindfulness Trainings into their daily lives, and on supporting their children's participation in COI events and activities.

Monastics: Visiting international monastics may work with children and young people provided there is always at least one other person from the COI in attendance who has an Enhanced DBS Certificate in a relevant work role. Monastics must be familiar with and adhere to, COI Safeguarding and Child Protection policies and procedures.

16–18 year olds and Young Adults (Wake up): As 16-18 year olds fall under Child Protection policies, permission from a parent/carer is required for those wishing to participate in Young Adults (Wake Up) activities.

Unaccompanied under 16s: Children aged under 16 are not allowed to attend residential COI retreats unless accompanied by a named parent / carer / responsible adult.

Alcohol and intoxicants: In keeping with the Fifth Mindfulness Training (Nourishment and Healing) and the Third Mindfulness Training (True Love), alcohol or other intoxicants are not permitted at COI events. This helps maintain a responsible and respectful environment that safeguards the integrity and well-being of all individuals within the community.

Additional needs: Parents and carers have a duty to inform the organisers of any vulnerabilities or special needs that their dependents may have.

Physical/verbal abuse: Physical or verbal abuse is not tolerated. In accordance with the Fourth Mindfulness Training, we are committed to fostering a culture of loving speech and deep listening in our community. This includes promoting respectful communication and resolving conflicts mindfully. Parents have the right to discipline their own children, but organisers have a responsibility to question and intervene where discipline appears excessive. Organisers should always promote an atmosphere of understanding, reconciliation, and peace through mindful communication.

Photography policy: A photography policy must be in place for COI retreats and events. We are committed to protecting the privacy of individuals and obtaining informed consent before capturing and sharing images. Parents / carers' consent must be requested for the organisation to take and use photos of any young people/children participating in organised activities. For many important reasons, it is good practice to give all participants, including adults, the opportunity to decline being photographed, for instance by telling them a section of the room that will not be included in photography.

Data Protection Policy: Personal information will be safeguarded in line with the COI's Data Protection Policy (Further information available from Retreat Organisers).

PROCESS

When reporting and handling safeguarding concerns, it is essential to approach the matter with the principles of the Five Mindfulness Trainings in mind, particularly the First Mindfulness Training (Reverence for Life), the Third Mindfulness Training (True Love), and the Fourth Mindfulness Training (Loving Speech and Deep Listening). This encourages a compassionate and non-judgmental attitude when dealing with such issues.

Under no circumstances should a sangha member carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. The following procedures should be adopted as below:

If an allegation is made to you or you have a suspicion of abuse

- Stay calm, listen carefully, and offer understanding and support if relevant.

- Check your understanding of the situation without being investigative. It is not your responsibility to investigate.
- Do not promise confidentiality. If the person making the disclosure asks you not to tell anyone about it, you should explain that you might have to tell another person when there is a safeguarding concern.
- You should raise your concern to the Named Safeguarding Coordinator at the event as soon as possible.
- The role of the Named Safeguarding Coordinator is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information on to statutory agencies who have a legal duty to investigate if appropriate.
- Ensure all details are recorded, within 24 hours, including name, age and address of the person at risk and the date and time of the concern about harm. This should include what the person has said using their own words as far as you can remember where relevant.
- The Named Safeguarding Coordinator may first ring the Charity Safeguarding Officer or the thirtyone:eight helpline for advice.
- If the person at risk is in immediate danger or has sustained a serious injury, the Named Safeguarding Coordinator may contact the Emergency Services, disclosing relevant information to them.
- The Named Safeguarding Coordinator may seek medical help if needed urgently, disclosing relevant information to clinicians.
- The Named Safeguarding Coordinator may need to inform others depending on the circumstances and/or nature of the concern, including the Safeguarding Trustee who may need to liaise with the COI's insurers or the charity commission to report a serious incident.
- If the suspicions in any way involve the Named Safeguarding Coordinator, then the report should be made directly to the Charity Safeguarding Officer.

- The Charity Safeguarding Officer should be notified of any reports as soon as possible.
- Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above.
- If an individual feels that the concern hasn't been dealt with appropriately, they are welcome to contact an outside agency directly and to make a complaint to the Charity Safeguarding Officer in the first instance and then the COI trustees if they feel it hasn't been resolved.

Appendix E – Guidelines for local sanghas

Activities covered by these guidelines include any activities organised by local sangha groups affiliated to the COI and may involve:

- In-person and online meetings,
- Days of Mindfulness,
- Sangha retreats, and
- Volunteers – other adults, including parents and carers, helping at a session/activity.

Key information

Safeguarding Trustee: This is a named trustee who will be legally responsible for dealing with any safeguarding matters. They may delegate the work to a Charity Safeguarding Officer and Named Safeguarding Coordinator for local sangha activity but will retain overall legal responsibility for the COI charity.

Charity Safeguarding Officer: This is a named person who has been nominated by the Safeguarding Trustee to carry out work relating to this policy. Work can include ensuring that: DBS checks are completed and recorded; COI events have a Named Safeguarding Coordinator; investigating any concerns raised.

DBS Administrator: This is a named person whose work can include ensuring that: DBS checks are completed and recorded; COI events have a Named Safeguarding Coordinator; supporting investigation of any concerns raised.

Named Safeguarding Coordinator: Every local Sangha affiliated to the COI should have an organiser named as responsible and accountable for Safeguarding, who must make themselves known to the Charity Safeguarding Officer.

Under 18s programme organiser/s: Any programme involving under 18s must be organised and led by two adults with Enhanced DBS Certificates who are members of the COI and have formally 'received' (committed to observe), the Five Mindfulness Trainings. These organisers are responsible for ensuring that all adults working on the programmes are aware of, and adhere to, COI Safeguarding and Child Protection policies and procedures.

Implementing Policy: Local and regional Sangha groups affiliated to the COI are expected to implement the Safeguarding policy in practice and are responsible to the Trustees and whole membership. Sangha organisers and Named Safeguarding Coordinators are responsible for ensuring that the necessary paperwork and procedures are in place. They should contact the Charity Safeguarding Officer or Safeguarding Trustee when in need of support or advice.

Booking Information: Local Sangha organisers should make clear in booking information that they have a safeguarding policy which must be available to read.

Risk assessments: Local Sangha organisers have a duty to carry out appropriate risk assessments for any activities and copies must be kept.

Monastics: Visiting international monastics may work with children and young people at local Sangha events provided there is always at least one other person from the COI in attendance who has an Enhanced DBS Certificate in a relevant work role. Monastics must be familiar with, and adhere to, COI Safeguarding and Child Protection policies and procedures.

16–18 year olds and Young Adults (Wake up): As 16-18 year olds fall under Child Protection policies, permission from a parent/carer is required for those wishing to participate in Young Adults (Wake Up) activities.

Unaccompanied Minors Under 16: Standard procedure dictates that children under 16 are not permitted to attend any COI events unless accompanied by a designated parent or guardian. However, following NSPCC guidelines, exceptions may be made for young individuals under 16 to attend with parental or guardian consent. Event organisers have the discretion to allow attendance, provided that the person overseeing the Local Sangha activity holds a valid Enhanced DBS certificate for their role.

Alcohol and intoxicants: In keeping with the commitments of the Fifth Mindfulness Training (Nourishment and Healing), alcohol or other intoxicants are not permitted at COI events.

Additional needs: Parents and carers have a duty to inform the organisers of any vulnerabilities or special needs that their dependents may have.

Physical/verbal abuse: Physical or verbal abuse will not be tolerated. Parents have the right to discipline their own children, but Local Sangha organisers have a responsibility to question and intervene where discipline appears excessive.

Photography policy: A photography policy must be in place for Local Sangha events and parents/carers' consent must be requested for the organisation to take and use photos of any young people/children participating in organised activities. For many important reasons it is good practice to give all participants, including adults, the opportunity to decline being photographed, for instance by telling them a section of the room that will not be included in photography.

Data Protection Policy: Personal information will be safeguarded in line with the COI's Data Protection Policy (Further information available from Retreat Organisers).

PROCESS

Under no circumstances should a local sangha member carry out their own investigation into an allegation or suspicion of abuse. The following procedures should be adopted:

If an allegation is made to you or you have a suspicion of abuse

- Stay calm, listen carefully and offer understanding and support if relevant.
- Check your understanding of the situation without being investigative. It is not your responsibility to investigate.
- Do not promise confidentiality. If the person making the disclosure asks you not to tell anyone about it, you should explain that you might have to tell another person if there is a safeguarding concern.

- You should raise your concern to the Named Safeguarding Coordinator in your Sangha as soon as possible.
- The role of the Named Safeguarding Coordinator is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information to statutory agencies who have a legal duty to investigate if appropriate.
- Ensure all details are recorded, within 24 hours, including name, age and address of the person at risk and the date and time of the concern about harm. This should include what the person has said using their own words as far as you can remember where relevant.
- The Named Safeguarding Coordinator may first ring the thirtyone:eight helpline for advice.
- If the person at risk is in immediate danger or has sustained a serious injury, the Named Safeguarding Coordinator may contact the Emergency Services, disclosing relevant information to them.
- The Named Safeguarding Coordinator may seek medical help if needed urgently, disclosing relevant information to clinicians.
- The Named Safeguarding Coordinator may need to inform others depending on the circumstances and/or nature of the concern, including the Safeguarding Trustee who may need to liaise with the COI's insurers or the charity commission to report a serious incident.
- Details must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above.
- If an individual feels that the concern hasn't been dealt with appropriately, they are free to contact an outside agency directly and to make a complaint to the Charity Safeguarding Officer in the first instance, and then the COI trustees if they feel it hasn't been resolved.

Appendix F – Relationships where one person has a position of trust

Relationships covered by these guidelines include any relationships where one person is more experienced and acting in a position of trust on behalf of the COI and it may involve:

- Dharma Teacher and sangha member
- Trustee and employee, volunteer, or sangha member
- Order of Interbeing Mentor and Aspirant
- Monastic and sangha member.

In relationships where one person has a position of trust, it is essential for community members to adhere to the Third Mindfulness Training. They should practice true love, responsibility, and avoid exploiting the vulnerability of others in their relationships. Community members in positions of trust should be aware of potential power imbalances and act with integrity, ensuring that they do not take advantage of their position or exploit the trust placed in them by others.

Key information

Safeguarding Trustee: This is a named trustee who will be legally responsible for dealing with any safeguarding matters. They may delegate the work to a Charity Safeguarding Officer and Named Safeguarding Coordinator for retreat activity but will retain overall legal responsibility for the COI charity.

Charity Safeguarding Officer: This is a named person who has been nominated by the Safeguarding Trustee to carry out work relating to this policy. Work can include ensuring that: DBS checks are completed and recorded; COI events have a Named Safeguarding Coordinator; investigating any concerns raised.

Data Protection Policy: Personal information will be safeguarded in line with the COI's Data Protection Policy (Further information available from the website)

Position of trust: A position of trust involves a person in a position of authority over another person. Anyone in such a position acting on behalf of the COI must be members of the COI and have formally 'received' (committed to observe), the Five Mindfulness Trainings, in front of the community.

Guidance: To support healthy relationships within our community, we recommend the following guidelines for those in positions of trust:

- **Maintain clear boundaries:** Be aware of the potential for blurred boundaries in relationships where one person has a position of trust. Ensure that personal and professional boundaries are maintained to prevent any abuse of power or manipulation.
- **Practice transparency:** Engage in open communication and be transparent about your intentions in relationships. Encourage feedback and dialogue to ensure all parties feel heard and understood.
- **Seek guidance:** If you are unsure about the appropriateness of a relationship or interaction, seek guidance from a mentor, peer, or friend to ensure that you are acting responsibly and ethically.
- **Be accountable:** Take responsibility for your actions and be prepared to address any concerns or allegations of misconduct. Engage in regular self-reflection to assess your behaviour and relationships.
- **Prioritise the well-being of others:** In all relationships, prioritise the well-being, safety, and dignity of the other person. Be mindful of their vulnerability and strive to create a supportive environment where everyone feels valued and respected.

By adhering to these guidelines and practicing mindfulness in relationships, community members in positions of trust can foster an environment that promotes the well-being and safety of all individuals.

Allegations of abuse of trust

If you have an allegation or suspicion of abuse of trust, the following procedures should be adopted:

If an allegation is made to you or you have a suspicion of abuse

- Stay calm, listen carefully and offer understanding and support if relevant.
- Check your understanding of the situation without being investigative. It is not your responsibility to investigate.
- Do not promise confidentiality. If the person making the disclosure asks you not to tell anyone about it, you should explain that you might have to tell another person.

- You should raise your concern to the Charity Safeguarding Officer as soon as possible.
- The role of the Charity Safeguarding Officer is to collate and clarify the precise details of the allegation or suspicion and pass this information on to statutory agencies who have a legal duty to investigate if appropriate.
- Ensure all details are recorded, within 24 hours, including name, age and address of the person at risk and the date and time of the concern about harm. This should include what the person has said using their own words as far as you can remember where relevant.
- The Charity Safeguarding Officer may first ring the Thirtyone:eight helpline for advice.
- The Charity Safeguarding Officer may need to inform others depending on the circumstances and/or nature of the concern, including the Safeguarding Trustee who may need to liaise with the COI's insurers or the charity commission, to report a serious incident.
- Suspicions must not be discussed with anyone other than those nominated above.
- If an individual feels that the concern hasn't been dealt with appropriately, they are free to contact an outside agency directly and to make a complaint to the trustees.