



# DZOGCHEN BEARA

BUDDHIST MEDITATION CENTRE

## Safeguarding Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults

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### 1. Safeguarding Statement

Dzogchen Beara is committed to safeguarding our visitors, guests, and community\*. Safeguarding means ensuring everyone can live safely, free from abuse or neglect and that their choices are heard and respected. It is expected that everyone at Dzogchen Beara should show respect and understanding for the rights and welfare of others and in this spirit that everybody present at Dzogchen Beara should feel safe at all times.

### 2. Safeguarding Policy Introduction

This policy focuses on our commitment to creating safe environments for those at Dzogchen Beara who are most at risk; children and vulnerable adults. It emphasises the unique circumstances of each person. The policy complies with the laws and regulatory requirements relevant to Dzogchen Beara Trust. For the general purpose of safeguarding, we have implemented procedures covering;

- 2.1. Appointment of (1) a Safeguarding Lead and (2) a Safeguarding Officer.
- 2.2. Recruitment and selecting of staff and volunteers.
- 2.3. Managing, training and supervising staff and volunteers.
- 2.4. Allegations of misconduct or abuse.

### 3. Related Documents

Other policy documents, governing conduct of community and visiting teachers; complaints procedures and disciplinary measures; and health and safety include;

- 3.1. Dzogchen Beara Health and Safety Statement
- 3.2. Dzogchen Beara Employee Handbook
- 3.3. Dzogchen Beara Code of Conduct
- 3.4. Shared Values and Guidelines of the Rigpa Community
- 3.5. Dzogchen Beara Complaints Procedure.

\*Community refers to all staff, volunteers and sangha

This policy will be reviewed on October 1 st 2024

Signed: Kathryn O'Flaherty Date 23/09/2023

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## **4. What is abuse?**

4.1. A person may be guilty of abuse by inflicting harm or failing to prevent harm.

Abuse can constitute physical, emotional, sexual, or financial maltreatment or neglect. Acts of abuse may be one-off or multiple. The lack of appropriate action can also be a form of abuse, such as in cases of neglect or omission.

4.2. Physical abuse is any form of non-accidental injury or injury which results from wilful or neglectful failure to protect. Examples include hurting or injuring someone, inflicting pain, poisoning, shaking or otherwise causing physical harm.

4.3. Emotional abuse is normally to be found in the relationship with a caregiver. It occurs when a child's or vulnerable adult's need for affection, consistency and security are not met by the caregiver who, for example, repeatedly rejects or humiliates them, frightens them, or denies their worth and rights as human beings.

4.4. Neglect is defined as the persistent failure to meet someone's basic needs. This can be defined in terms of an omission, where their health, development or welfare is impaired by being deprived of food, clothing, warmth, hygiene, intellectual stimulation, supervision and safety, affection, or medical care.

4.5. Sexual abuse occurs when someone is used for the sexual gratification or arousal of another. This includes direct or indirect sexual exploitation or corruption of children or vulnerable adults by involving them in inappropriate sexual activities.

4.6. Financial abuse occurs when someone uses money as a means of controlling another and is designed to isolate the victim into a state of dependence.

## **5. Children**

5.1. In general, retreats, workshops and courses at Dzogchen Beara are restricted to adults. In rare situations a child may be permitted to attend an event with a parent or guardian, who agrees to supervise them for the duration. Such an exception must be approved by a Director.

5.2. Children who stay in Dzogchen Beara accommodation with a family must always be supervised by their parents or responsible adults: This is emphasised and agreed upon during the booking process.

5.3. Events for school or youth groups—guided meditation classes or residential programmes— are offered on the precondition that children are always under the supervision of their teachers or their responsible adults.

5.4. Children aged between 16-18 who are working or volunteering in Dzogchen Beara may attend the following if they have completed the parent/guardian consent form and agreed to the code of conduct agreement; Instructor-led Daily Meditation practice Instructor-led Daily Loving Kindness Practice Instructor-led Teaching Sessions for Work-Exchange Volunteers



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## **6. Vulnerable adults**

A vulnerable person is described in the HSE safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse Policy and Procedures (P.3) as: “an adult who may be restricted in capacity to guard himself/herself against harm or exploitation or to report such harm or exploitation”.

The Spiritual Care Centre provides one-to-one support for people who have life-limiting illness, their families and loved ones and people going through bereavement. Some of our guests and visitors may have restricted mobility, disability, or experience intense emotional states and as such can be described as vulnerable adults.

## **7. Display of Safeguarding Statement and Complaints Procedure**

The Dzogchen Beara Safeguarding Statement and Complaints Procedure will be displayed in prominent places with contact details for the Safeguarding Lead.

## **8. Staff and volunteers will adhere to the following guidelines when interacting with or vulnerable adults.**

8.1. In addition to abiding by the Dzogchen Beara Code of Conduct staff and volunteers will have sensitivity around children and vulnerable adults ensuring that they:

8.1.1. Respect vulnerable adults' and children's rights to appropriate privacy.

8.1.2. Are aware of the procedures for reporting concerns about abuse or about incidents of abuse to management or the Safeguarding Officer.

8.1.3. Make other members of staff aware if he/she finds himself or herself the subject of inappropriate affection or attention from a child or young people or vulnerable adults.

8.2. Regarding any interaction with children or vulnerable adults, staff and volunteers should not:

8.2.1. Spend excessive amounts of time alone with children, or vulnerable adults. Individual meetings with children and vulnerable adults should be avoided or take place within sight of others. If privacy is needed, the door should remain open and other staff or volunteers should be aware of the meeting.

8.2.2. Make unnecessary physical contact with children or vulnerable adults. On occasions when physical contact is unavoidable, such as providing comfort at times of distress, contact should only take place with consent.

8.2.3. Take children or vulnerable adults alone in a car, however short the journey. Where this is unavoidable, it should be with the full knowledge and consent of the parents or guardians and the manager in charge of the event/activity through which the child or vulnerable adult has contact with Dzogchen Beara.

8.2.4. Meet children or vulnerable adults outside of organised activities, unless it is with the knowledge and consent of the parents or guardian or the Manager in charge of the event/activity.

8.2.5. Start an investigation or question anyone after a concern has been raised. This is the job of the authorities. You should just record the facts and report these to the Safeguarding Officer or Safeguarding Lead.

8.2.6. (Even in fun) Initiate or engage in sexually provocative conversations or activity.

8.2.7. Allow the use of inappropriate language to go unchallenged.

8.2.8. Do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults that they can do themselves.



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8.2.9. Allow any allegations made by a child or vulnerable adult go without being reported and addressed or trivialise or exaggerate abuse issues.

8.2.10. Make promises about confidentiality or keep any disclosure confidential from your manager or relevant authorities.

## **9. Recognition of abuse.**

Dzogchen Beara acknowledges that some individuals seek to use voluntary and community organisations to gain access to children or vulnerable adults, and that it is necessary to have an open mind when the possibility arises that a member of staff or volunteer is suspected of abuse or inappropriate activity.

The recognition of such abuse is not always easy, and Dzogchen Beara acknowledges that its staff/volunteers are not experienced in this area and will not easily know whether abuse is taking place. Experts in this field ultimately take this decision. However, it is our responsibility to act on any concerns about abuse taking place to safeguard the welfare of the child or vulnerable adult.

## **10. Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Officer**

10.1. The Policy Director has overall responsibility for safeguarding and with the other Directors nominates a Safeguarding Lead and a Safeguarding Officer. These appointees are chosen based on their personal qualities, interest and life experience fitting to the tasks involved. They should also have completed a safeguarding training course.

10.2. The responsibilities of the Safeguarding Lead and the Safeguarding Officer are:

10.2.1. To promote awareness of our safeguarding policies to staff, volunteers and anyone associated with Dzogchen Beara events or activities who will come into contact with children or vulnerable adults and to facilitate basic training in this area.

10.2.2. To ensure that staff and the public are aware of this Safeguarding Policy (which will be publicly displayed) and have ready access to contact details for the Safeguarding Officer.

10.2.3. To log incidents or other records related to the Safeguarding Policy in secure storage.

10.2.4. To discuss appropriate action with the Policy Director in the event of allegations of staff or volunteer involvement in child or vulnerable adult abuse.

10.2.5. To facilitate adults from outside Dzogchen Beara bringing an allegation or suspicion of child or vulnerable adult abuse to the attention of the appropriate authorities, should they wish to have such support.

10.3. The Safeguarding Lead and the Safeguarding Officer do not deal with reported abuse themselves, but refer it to the appropriate authorities according to these procedures.

## **11. Disclosures, suspicions and allegations of abuse.**

11.1. A disclosure is when a specific allegation is made indicating abuse in relation to an individual.

11.2. A suspicion is when a concern is expressed about possible abuse that may have taken place already or that may possibly take place in the future.



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411.3. An allegation, suspicion or witnessing of abuse, includes staff and volunteers being aware of allegations and suspicions arising through reporting or disclosure of abuse, whether the alleged abuse took place at Dzogchen Beara or not.

12. Actions following disclosures, suspicions or allegations of abuse.

12.1. The safety and protection of the child or vulnerable adult should be the paramount concern.

12.2. In every case an incident report should be completed as soon as possible as per the Health and Safety Statement.

12.3. If there is deemed to be a high risk, such as an imminent danger/risk to an alleged victim's health/safety then an immediate 999 call should be made to the Gardaí.

12.4. Otherwise, staff members/volunteers should alert their manager and seek the advice of the Safeguarding Officer or Safeguarding Lead who will follow statutory regulations and refer the complaint to Tusla—the Child Protection Agency – (021 2373774), or to the Gardaí.

## 13. Whistleblowing

13.1. Where an allegation concerns the actions of a colleague or community member it is the duty of all those concerned to report the matter. When it comes to raising abuse concerns no distinction should be made between these and other persons: The wellbeing of the person at risk is always paramount.

13.2. It is important to ensure that the action taken:

13.2.1. Protects the rights and wishes of the alleged victim.

13.2.2. Protects the rights of the accused person.

13.2.3. Enables Trustees to take appropriate action on behalf of the person at risk or against the accused person where appropriate (as outlined in the Employee Handbook).

13.2.4. Does not compromise any criminal investigation.

## 14. Record Keeping

Appropriate and accurate record-keeping is vital following any disclosure of abuse or suspected abuse, beginning with an incident report.

14.1. The Safeguarding Lead is responsible for keeping records related to this Safeguarding Policy in secure storage, such as:

14.1.1. Any disclosures, concerns or allegations of abuse.

14.1.2. The follow up to any complaints, disclosure, concerns or allegations, including informal advice from the relevant authorities or agencies, official reports and the minutes of any meetings in relation to reports.

14.1.3. Signed acceptance forms of the Dzogchen Beara Safeguarding Policy by staff and volunteers.

14.1.4. Signed Declarations Of Suitability to Work with Children and Vulnerable Adults and Acceptances of Dzogchen Beara's Protection Policy for Children and Vulnerable Adults.

14.1.5. National Vetting Forms and related correspondence.

14.2. Dzogchen Beara Directors, the Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Officer, Managers and Trustees may access files as appropriate to their role.

14.3. Incident reports are attached as appendices to report on



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disclosures/incidents/suspensions of abuse.

14.4. Records must include:

14.4.1. Date and time of disclosure / observation.

14.4.2. A full, factual description of the signs of abuse or reasons for suspicion.

14.4.3. A description of who was present and what was said at the time of disclosure/observation.

14.4.4. Names of other employees/agencies informed.

14.4.5. Details of any action taken.

14.5. Numbers of incidents and complaints will be reviewed in line with the Health and Safety Statement.

## 15. Sharing Information

Dzogchen Beara aims to balance confidentiality with sharing of information necessary to make an effective response to allegations of abuse or actual abuse.

15.1. Information is only shared on a “need to know basis”, when it is in the best interests of the person believed to be at risk.

15.2. Informed consent is obtained, wherever and whenever possible. If it is not possible and other adults are at risk and/or a crime has been committed, it may be necessary to override this requirement.

15.3. Information is shared only as necessary for the purpose for which it is being shared, is accurate and up to date, is shared in a timely fashion, and is shared securely.

15.4. Care is taken to ensure the quality of the information shared, e.g. names, addresses and dates of birth are accurately recorded as there could be instances where this information is relied on in a court of law.

15.5. The requisite time period for holding records is 50 years as specified in our Privacy and Data Retention Policy.

## 16. Confidentiality Statement

In relation to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults we undertake that:

16.1. Any information regarding safeguarding for children and vulnerable adults will be stored in a secure place and with access limited to the Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Officer or Managers, Directors and Trustees as necessary.

16.2. Information relating to any disclosures, suspicions or allegations of abuse will be passed to the Gardaí, Tusla (Child Protection Agency) or other relevant agency only.

16.3. Concerns relating to safeguarding which have not been referred to an external body will be retained in a secure location by the Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Officer, for a period of 50 years.

16.4. Members of Dzogchen Beara staff and volunteers are expected to follow the procedures laid out in this policy. Dzogchen Beara will support and protect those staff and volunteers who, in good faith and without malicious intent, report suspicions of abuse or concerns about colleagues and their actions.

16.5. Images of a child/vulnerable adult will not be used for any reason without the consent of the parent/carer/individual. (While we cannot guarantee that cameras will not be used at public events, we will always alert attendees and give them the opportunity to opt-out).



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## **17. Recruiting, selection and training of staff and volunteers**

Dzogchen Beara will ensure that staff and volunteers working with children and/or vulnerable adults are carefully selected by observing the following principles:

17.1. Roles and responsibilities will be clearly defined for all jobs whether paid or voluntary.

17.2. Such positions will be advertised widely in accordance with legislation to ensure the selection of the most suitably qualified personnel.

17.3. Two recent, relevant, independent and verbally confirmed references will be required.

17.4. No person deemed to constitute a risk will be employed.

17.5. Restrictions on recruitment will be based on:

17.5.1. Child or vulnerable adult-related convictions.

17.5.2. Refusal to sign a declaration form.

17.5.3. Insufficient documentary evidence of identification.

17.5.4. Concealing information on one's suitability to work with children or vulnerable adults.

17.5.5. Full-time or long-term employment/volunteers will require a relevant probationary period, typically six months.

17.5.6. All staff who will have direct contact with children or vulnerable adults will be subject to vetting by the National Vetting Bureau.

17.6. Staff and volunteer induction will include induction on our code of conduct and on safeguarding as appropriate .

17.7. Suitable in-house training will be offered, and records of training will be kept.