

CHILD OR VULNERABLE ADULT PROTECTION POLICY

Policy statement

STAT recognises that all children and vulnerable adults, whatever their age, culture, disability, gender, language, racial origin religious beliefs and/or sexual identity have the right to protection from abuse.

STAT will seek to ensure the safety and protection of all children or vulnerable adults involved in learning the Alexander Technique from Teachers by distributing a copy of this Policy to all Teachers and further by making it a requirement of continued membership of STAT that each Teacher confirm acceptance of and adherence to the Policy.

Policy aims

The aim of the STAT Child or Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy is to promote good practice:

- Providing children or vulnerable adults with appropriate safety and protection whilst being taught by Teachers
- Allowing all Teachers to make informed and confident responses to specific child or adult protection issues.

Definitions

For the purposes of this document, the following terms have the following meanings:

“child” or “children” means children less than 16 years of age and young people aged 16-18 years;

“Teachers” means UK teachers and/or Third Year UK students who are registered members of STAT;

“vulnerable adults” means people over the age of 18 who may need access to particular services such as Community Care services.

STAT Strategy

A Lead Director of STAT will be designated by Council to have responsibility for implementing the Child or Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy (“CVAPP”). There will be clear lines of accountability and feedback including an annual report to STAT Council to review the effectiveness of the policy.

All existing and future Teachers will be required to sign and complete a personal self declaration form (in the format approved by Council) as a condition of membership. The disclosure will be viewed by the Lead Director of STAT for the CVAPP and kept within confidential and secure storage. Should any information provided on this form give cause for concern, an *ad hoc* STAT sub committee will consider the issues and provide Council with a recommendation on how to proceed.

Should STAT receive an allegation of abusive behaviour by or against any of its Teachers, then STAT will treat the allegation as possible criminal activity, conduct an internal investigation and, unless the allegation is of an obvious vexatious nature, report it to the appropriate local authority.

All members of STAT Council will be informed and are authorized to take prompt action in consultation with the Lead Director to:

- Support the protection of the child/vulnerable adult from further abusive behavior;
- Examine ways of working with the alleged perpetrator (if a member) and of supporting them where necessary;
- Form a complaints sub-committee to investigate;
- Protect the good name of the Society.

A 'whistle-blowing policy' and an 'anti-bullying policy' that are consistent with the CVAPP will be approved by STAT Council and copies provided to all existing members and thereafter to all persons applying for membership.

Allegations of abuse will be recorded within a standard framework and all relevant STAT records will be signed, dated and kept under confidential and secure conditions.

Member and staff development policies will include appropriate knowledge and skills training in relation to protecting children and safeguarding vulnerable adults.

This policy document will be accessible to members of the public via STAT's website.

Recruitment of Office staff

STAT recognises that anyone may have the potential to abuse children or vulnerable adults in some way and that all reasonable steps should be taken to ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with a child or vulnerable adult.

When undertaking pre-selection checks the following should be included:

- All potential office staff should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about an applicant's past and a self-disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent should be obtained from an applicant to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau.
- Two confidential references must be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact. Evidence of identity (Passport or driving licence with photo should be obtained).

Promoting Good Practice with Young People

Introduction

Child or vulnerable adult abuse, particularly sexual abuse, can arouse strong emotions in those facing such a situation. It is important to understand these feelings and not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take. Abuse can occur within many situations including the home, school and the teaching environment. Some individuals will actively seek employment or voluntary work with young people or adults in order to harm them. A teacher, official or volunteer may have regular contact with young people and be an important link in identifying cases where a young person needs protection. All suspicious cases of poor practice should be reported, following the guidelines in this document.

Good Practice Guidelines

All Teachers are encouraged to demonstrate exemplary behaviour in order to protect themselves from false allegations. The following are common sense examples of good practice:

- Always working in an open way with a child or vulnerable adult (e.g. avoiding unobserved situations when teaching children or young people;
- Treating all young people with respect and dignity;
- Always putting the welfare of each child or vulnerable adult first;
- Maintaining a safe and appropriate distance with participants (e.g. it is not appropriate to have an intimate relationship with a child or vulnerable adult pupil);
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust which empower children/ vulnerable adults to share in the decision-making process;
- Ensuring that any form of manual/physical support is provided openly and according to guidelines provided by STAT. Children and vulnerable adults should always be consulted and their agreement gained. Some parents are sensitive about manual support and their views should always be carefully considered in relation to their children receiving lessons in the Alexander Technique;
- Keeping up to date with the technical skills, qualifications and insurance issues;
- Involving parents/carers wherever possible (e.g. for the responsibility of their child in the teaching room). If groups have to be supervised in the teaching rooms, always ensure where possible that teachers and assistants work in pairs;
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of children and vulnerable adults and not pushing them against their will;
- Securing parental consent in writing to *act in loco parentis*, if the need arises to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid and/or other medical treatment;
- Keeping a written record of any injury or accident that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given.

Practice to be avoided

The following should be **avoided** except in emergencies. If cases arise where these situations are unavoidable they should only occur with the full knowledge and consent of someone in charge or the child's parents or in some instances the carer of certain adults. For example, a pupil sustains an injury and needs to go to hospital, or a parent fails to arrive to collect a child or vulnerable adult at the end of a session:

- Avoid spending excessive amounts of time alone with a child or vulnerable adult away from others.

Practice never to be sanctioned

The following should **never** be sanctioned. You should never:

- Engage in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay;
- Allow or engage in any form of inappropriate touching;
- Allow children or vulnerable adults to use inappropriate language unchallenged;
- Make sexually suggestive comments to a child or vulnerable adult, even in fun;
- Reduce a child or vulnerable adult to tears as a form of control;
- Allow allegations made by a child or vulnerable adult to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon;
- Do things of a personal nature for children or vulnerable adults, that they can do for themselves.

If any of the following occur you should report this immediately to one of the STAT Lead Directors and record the incident:

- If you accidentally hurt a pupil;
- If he/she seems distressed in any manner;
- If a participant appears to be sexually aroused by your actions;
- If a participant misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done to the extent that they believe that they have been abused.

You should also ensure the parents of the child or the appropriate carers or relative of the vulnerable adult are informed.

Guidelines for Use of Photographic Filming Equipment

There is evidence that some people may use the teaching environment as an opportunity to take inappropriate photographs or film footage of young and disabled people in vulnerable positions. It is advisable that all teachers be vigilant with any concerns to be reported to the STAT Lead Director.

There is no intention to prevent teachers using video equipment as a legitimate teaching aid. However, pupils and their parents/carers should be aware that this is part of the teaching programme and care should be taken in the storing of such films.

Responding to suspicions or allegations

It is not the responsibility of any member or officer of STAT in a paid or unpaid capacity to take responsibility or to decide whether child or vulnerable adult abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the appropriate authorities.

STAT will fully support and protect anyone, who in good faith reports his or her concern that a colleague is, or may be, abusing a child or vulnerable adult.

Where there is a complaint against a member of STAT or an officer or employee of STAT there may be three types of investigation

- A criminal investigation
- A child or vulnerable adult protection investigation
- A disciplinary or misconduct investigation

The results of the police and child or vulnerable adult protection investigation may well influence the disciplinary investigation, but not necessarily.

Action if there are concerns

The following action should be taken if there are concerns:

Poor Practice

- If, following consideration, the allegation is clearly about poor practice, the STAT Lead Director will deal with it as a misconduct issue.

- If the allegation is about poor practice by the STAT Lead Director or if the matter has been handled inadequately and concerns remain, it should be reported to the STAT *Council* who will decide how to deal with the allegation and whether or not to initiate disciplinary proceedings.

Suspected Abuse

- Any suspicion that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused by either a Teacher, officer or employee of STAT should be reported to the STAT Lead Director who will take such steps as considered necessary to ensure the safety of the child or vulnerable adult in question and any other child or vulnerable adult who may be at risk.
- The STAT Lead Director will refer the allegation to the social services department who may involve the police, or go directly to the police if out-of-hours.
- The parents or carers of the child or vulnerable adult will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department.
- The STAT Lead Director should also notify the relevant STAT officer who will deal with any media enquiries.
- If the STAT Lead Director is the subject of the suspicion/allegation, the report must be made to the Chair of STAT who will refer the allegation to Social Services.
- Should any member of STAT Council be subject to an allegation of abuse then the Lead Director for the CVAPP must be consulted and a way forward agreed with Council members who are not subject to an allegation.

Information to be Obtained

Information passed to the social services or the police must be as helpful as possible, hence the necessity for making a detailed record at the time of the disclosure/concern. Information should include the following:

- Name of child or vulnerable adult
- Age of child or vulnerable adult and date of birth
- Home address and telephone number
- Is the person making the report expressing their own concerns or those of someone else?
- What is the nature of the allegation? Include dates, times, any special factors and other relevant information. Make a clear distinction between what is fact, opinion or hearsay.
- A description of any visible bruising or other injuries, behavioural signs or indirect signs.
- Details of any witnesses to the incident(s).
- The child or vulnerable adult's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising or other injuries occurred.
- Whether the parents/carers been contacted.
- If so, what has been said?
- Has anyone else been consulted? If so, record details.
- If it is not the child or vulnerable adult making the report, has the child or vulnerable adult concerned been spoken to? If so, what was said?
- Has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record details.

Confidentiality

Every effort should be made to ensure that confidentiality is maintained for all concerned. Information should be handled and disseminated on a ***need to know basis*** only. This includes the following people:

- The STAT Lead Director
- The parents of the person who is alleged to have been abused
- The person making the allegation
- Social services/police
- The STAT Chair
- The alleged abuser (and parents/carer if the alleged abuser is a child or vulnerable adult)- seek social services advice on who should approach alleged abuser

Information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws (e.g. that information is accurate, regularly updated, relevant and secure).

Internal Enquiries and Suspension

The STAT Lead Director will make an immediate decision in consultation with the Chair (or in their absence another member of STAT Council) about whether any individual accused of abuse should have their membership of STAT temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries.

Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the STAT Disciplinary Committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether a Teacher should be permanently expelled (or re-instated following temporary expulsion) or a member of staff's contract of employment terminated, and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision, particularly where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases, the STAT Disciplinary Committee must decide whether, on the basis of the available information, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the children or vulnerable adults should always remain paramount.

Support to Deal with the Aftermath

Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to children or adults, parents and members of staff. Use of Helplines, support groups and open meetings will maintain an open culture and help the healing process. The British Association of Counselling Directory may be a useful resource (**The British Association for Counselling Directory** is available from The British Association for Counselling, 1 Regent Place, Rugby CV21 2PJ, Tel: 01788 550899, Fax: 01788 562189, E-mail: bac@bac.co.uk, Internet: www.bac.co.uk). Consideration should be given about what support may be appropriate to the alleged perpetrator of the abuse.

Allegations of Previous Abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event (e.g. by an adult who was abused as a child. Where such an allegation is made, STAT will follow the procedures as detailed above and report the matter to the social services or the police. This is because other children or vulnerable adults may be at risk from the alleged abuser. Anyone who has a previous criminal conviction for offences related to abuse is automatically excluded from working with children or vulnerable adults.