



Child and
Vulnerable Adult
Protection Policy

A large, light blue graphic in the background. It consists of the word "Active" in a large, sans-serif font, with a stylized human figure silhouette to its right. A thick, light blue arc is positioned above the text.

1 Child Protection Policy

1.1 Introduction

Every member of the Active therapy Foundation, hereafter referred to as ATF, is entitled to do so in an enjoyable and safe environment. The ATF have a moral and legal obligation to ensure that, when given responsibility for young people, they provide them with the highest possible standard of care.

The ATF is committed to devising and implementing policies so that everyone accepts their responsibilities to safeguard children and vulnerable adults from harm and abuse. This means to follow procedures to protect those members and report any concerns about their welfare the ATF welfare officer and to appropriate authorities.

The aim of the policy is to promote good practice, providing children and vulnerable adults with appropriate safety/protection whilst in the care of ATF and to allow staff and volunteers to make informed and confident responses to specific child protection issues.

A child/young person is defined as a person under the age of 18

A vulnerable adult is defined as a person who is, or may be, in need of community services due to age, illness or a mental or physical disability

1.2 Policy Statement

The ATF is committed to the following:

- the welfare of its members is paramount
- all members, whatever their age, culture, ability, gender, language, racial origin, religious belief and/or sexual identity should be able to participate in a safe environment
- taking all reasonable steps to protect members from harm, discrimination and degrading treatment and to respect their rights, wishes and feelings
- all suspicions and allegations of poor practice or abuse will be taken seriously and responded to swiftly and appropriately
- all ATF employees who work with children and vulnerable adults will be recruited with regard to their suitability for that responsibility, and will be provided with guidance and/or training in good practice and child protection procedures
- working in partnership with parents and children is essential for the protection of children

1.3 Monitor and review the policy and procedures

The implementation of procedures should be regularly monitored and reviewed. The welfare officer should regularly report progress, challenges, difficulties, achievements gaps and areas where changes are required to the management committee.

The policy should be reviewed every 3 years or whenever there is a major change in the organisation or in relevant legislation.

2 Promoting Good Practice

2.1 Introduction

To provide members with the best possible experience and opportunities everyone must operate within an accepted ethical framework as detailed in the Active therapy Foundation's Code of Conduct for Active therapists and staff.

It is not always easy to distinguish poor practice from abuse. It is therefore NOT the responsibility of employees or participants to make judgements about whether or not abuse is taking place. It is however their responsibility to identify poor practice and possible abuse and act if they have concerns about the welfare of the member, as explained in section 4.

This section will help you identify what is meant by good practice and poor practice.

2.2 Good Practice

All personnel should adhere to the following principles and action:

- always work in an open environment (e.g. where possible, avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication with no secrets)
- treat all young people equally and with respect and dignity
- always put the welfare of the young person first
- maintain a safe and appropriate distance with members
- Avoid unnecessary physical contact with young people. Where manual/physical support is required it should be provided openly and with the consent of the young person and/or Parent. Handling should be in accordance with the ATF Handling Policy and should be fully explained to Parents and/or young person before hand.
- Involve parents/cares wherever possible, e.g. where young people need to be supervised in changing rooms, encourage parents to take responsibility for their own child. If groups have to be supervised in changing rooms always ensure parents, therapists etc. work in pairs
- request written parental consent if ATF officials are required to transport young people in their cars
- gain written parental consent for any significant travel arrangements e.g. overnight stays
- ensure that if members are taken away, they should always be accompanied by a male and female member of staff
- be an excellent role model, this includes not smoking or drinking alcohol in the company of young people
- always give enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism
- recognising the developmental needs and capacity of the young person and do not risk sacrificing welfare in a desire for personal achievements.
- secure written parental consent for the ATF to act in loco parentis, to give permission for the administration of emergency first aid or other medical treatment if the need arises
- keep a written record of any injury or excessive handling that occurs, along with details of any treatment given

2.3 Poor Practice

The following are regarded as poor practice and should be avoided by all personnel:

- unnecessarily spending excessive amounts of time alone with young people away from others
- taking young people to your home where they will be alone with you
- sharing a room with a young person without prior risk assessment and assessment of the young persons needs.
- engaging in rough, physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay
- allow or engage in inappropriate touching of any form
- allowing young people to use inappropriate language unchallenged
- making sexually suggestive comments to a young person, even in fun
- reducing a young person to tears as a form of control
- allow allegations made by a young person to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon
- do things of a personal nature that the young person can do for themselves

When a case arises where it is impractical/impossible to avoid certain situation e.g. transporting a young person on you car, the tasks should only be carried out with the full understanding and consent of the parent/care and the young person involved.

If during your care you accidentally hurt a young person, the young person seems distressed in any manner, appears to be sexually aroused by your actions and/or if the young person misunderstands or misinterprets something you have done, report any such incidents as soon as possible to another colleague and make a written note of it. Parents should also be informed of the incident.

3 Responding to Suspicions and Allegations

3.1 Introduction

It is not the responsibility of anyone working in ATF in a paid or unpaid capacity to decide whether or not child abuse has taken place. However there is a responsibility to act on any concerns through contact with the ATF welfare officer and appropriate authorities so that they can then make inquiries and take necessary action to protect the young person. This applies BOTH to allegations/suspicions of abuse occurring within ATF and to allegations/suspicions that abuse is taking place elsewhere.

This section explains how to respond to allegations/suspicions.

3.2 Receiving Evidence of Possible Abuse

We may become aware of possible abuse in various ways. We may see it happening, we may suspect it happening because of signs such as those listed in section 3 of this document, it may be reported to us by someone else or directly by the young person affected.

In the last of these cases, it is particularly important to respond appropriately. If a young person says or indicates that they are being abused, you should:

- **stay calm** so as not to frighten the young person
- **reassure** the child that they are not to blame and that it was right to tell
- **listen** to the child, showing that you are taking them seriously
- **keep questions to a minimum** so that there is a clear and accurate understanding of what has been said. The law is very strict and child abuse cases have been dismissed where it is felt that the child has been led or words and ideas have been suggested during questioning.

Only ask questions to clarify:

- **inform** the child that you have to inform other people about what they have told you. Tell the child this is to help stop the abuse continuing.
- **safety of the child** is paramount. If the child needs urgent medical attention call an ambulance, inform the doctors of the concern and ensure they are made aware that this is a child protection issue
- **record** all information
- **report** the incident to the ATF welfare officer

In all cases if you are not sure what to do you can gain help from the NSPCC 24 hour help line



3.3 Recording Information

To ensure that information is as helpful as possible, a detailed record should always be made at the time of the disclosure/concern. In recording you should confine yourself to the facts and distinguish what is your personal knowledge and what others have told you. Do not include your own opinions.

Information should include the following:

- the child's name, age and date of birth
- the child's home address and telephone number
- whether or not the person making the report is expressing their concern or some one else's
- the nature of the allegation, including dates, times and any other relevant information
- a description of any visible bruising or injury, location, size etc. Also any indirect signs, such as behavioural changes
- details of witnesses to the incidents
- the child's account, if it can be given, of what has happened and how any bruising/injuries occurred
- have the parents been contacted? If so what has been said?
- has anyone else been consulted? If so record details
- has anyone been alleged to be the abuser? Record detail

3.4 Reporting the Concern

All suspicions and allegations **MUST** be reported appropriately. It is recognised that strong emotions can be aroused particularly in cases where sexual abuse is suspected or where there is misplaced loyalty to a colleague. It is important to understand these feelings but not allow them to interfere with your judgement about any action to take.

The ATF expects it's members and staff to discuss any concerns they may have about the welfare of a child immediately with the person in charge and subsequently to check that appropriate action has been taken.

If the nominated club welfare officer is not available you should take responsibility and seek advice from the NSPCC helpline, the duty officer at your local social services department or the police. Telephone numbers can be found in your local directory.

Where there is a complaint against an employee or volunteer, there may be three types of investigation.

- **Criminal** in which case the police are immediately involved
- **Child protection** in which case the social services (and possibly) the police will be involved
- **Disciplinary** or misconduct in which case ATF will be involved

As mentioned previously in this document the ATF are not child protection experts and it is not their responsibility to determine whether or not abuse has taken place. All suspicions and allegations must be shared with professional agencies that are responsible for child protection.

Social services have a legal responsibility under The Children Act 1989 to investigate all child protection referrals by talking to the child and family (where appropriate), gathering information from other people who know the child and making inquiries jointly with the police.

NB: If there is any doubt, you must report the incident: it may be just one of a series of other incidences which together cause concern

Any suspicion that a child has been abused by an employee or a volunteer should be reported to the ATF who will take appropriate steps to ensure the safety of the child in question and any other child who may be at risk. This will include the following:

- ATF will refer the matter to social services department
- the parent/carer of the child will be contacted as soon as possible following advice from the social services department
- the chair person of the ATF should be notified to decide who will deal with any media inquiries and implement any immediate disciplinary proceedings
- the ATF welfare officer should also notify
- if the welfare officer is the subject of the suspicion/allegation the report must be made to the appropriate manager who will refer the matter to social services

Allegations of abuse are sometimes made sometime after the event. Where such allegation is made, you should follow the same procedures and have the matter reported to social services. This is because other children in the sport or outside it may be at risk from the alleged abuser. Anyone who has a previous conviction for offences related to abuse against children is automatically excluded from working with children.

3.5 Concerns outside the immediate Environment (e.g. a parent or carer)

- Report your concerns to the ATF welfare officer
- If the ATF welfare officer is not available, the person being told or discovering the abuse should contact their local social services department or the police immediately
- Social Services and the ATF welfare officer will decide how to inform the parents/carers
- The ATF welfare officer should also report the incident to the ATF Governing Body. The Governing Body should ascertain whether or not the person/s involved in the incident play a role in the foundation and act accordingly
- Maintain confidentiality on a need to know basis

3.6 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 ATF Welfare Officer
- The parents of the child
- The person making the allegation
- Social Services/police
- The alleged abuser (and parents if the alleged abuser is a child)

Seek social services advice on who should approach the alleged abuser.

All information should be stored in a secure place with limited access to designated people, in line with data protection laws.

3.7 Internal Inquiries and Suspension

- The ATF welfare officer will make an immediate decision about whether any individual accused of abuse should be temporarily suspended pending further police and social services inquiries
- Irrespective of the findings of the social services or police inquiries the ATF Disciplinary Committee will assess all individual cases to decide whether a member of staff or volunteer can be reinstated and how this can be sensitively handled. This may be a difficult decision; especially where there is insufficient evidence to uphold any action by the police. In such cases the ATF Disciplinary Committee must reach a decision based upon the available information which could suggest that on the balance of probability, it is more likely than not that the allegation is true. The welfare of the child should remain of paramount importance throughout.

4 Recruiting and Selecting Personnel with Children and Vulnerable Adults

4.1 Introduction

It is important that all reasonable steps are taken to prevent unsuitable people from working with children and vulnerable adults. This applies equally to paid staff and volunteers, both full and part time. To ensure unsuitable people are prevented from working with members the following steps should be taken when recruiting.

4.2 Controlling Access to Children

- All staff and volunteers should complete an application form. The application form will elicit information about the applicants past and a self disclosure about any criminal record.
- Consent should be obtained from the applicant to seek information from the Criminal Records Bureau.
- Two confidential references, including one regarding previous work with children and vulnerable adults should be obtained. These references **MUST** be taken up and confirmed through telephone contact.
- Evidence of identity (passport or driving licence with photo)

4.3 Interview and Induction

All employees and volunteers will be required to undertake an interview carried out to acceptable protocol and recommendations. All employees and volunteers should receive formal or informal induction during which:

- A check should be made that the application form has been completed in full, including sections on criminal records and self disclosures
- Their qualifications should be substantiated
- The job requirements and responsibilities should be clarified
- They should sign up to the foundation's Code of Ethics and Conduct
- Child Protection Procedures are explained and training needs identified e.g. basic child protection awareness

4.4 Training

In addition to pre-selection checks, the safeguarding process includes training after recruitment to help staff and volunteers to:

- Analyse their own practice against what is deemed good practice, and to ensure their practice is likely to protect them from false allegations
- Recognise their responsibilities and report any concerns about suspected poor practice and/or abuse
- Respond to concerns expressed by a child
- Work safely and effectively with children

ATF requires:

- All staff and volunteers who have access to children and vulnerable adults to undergo a CRB check
- All employees, volunteers, coaches, welfare officers and team managers to undertake relevant child protection training or undertake a form of home study, to ensure their practice is exemplary and to facilitate the development of positive culture towards good practice and child protection
- All staff and volunteers to receive advisory information outlining good/bad practice and informing them what to do if they have concerns about the behaviour of an adult towards a young person
- All therapists and trainee therapists should have an up to date first aid qualification



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