

ASSOCIATE CAPABILITY POLICY



Updated 01 December 2025

Purpose of the Policy

Stoke Lane Stables is committed to ensuring that all self-employed associates¹ engaged to work with our horses, clients, and staff are suitably skilled, qualified, and competent to deliver safe, professional, and high-quality equestrian services. This policy outlines how capability is assessed, maintained, and managed where concerns arise.

Scope

This policy applies to all self-employed associates, including but not limited to:

- Freelance riding instructors and coaches
- Grooms and yard workers
- Exercise riders
- Therapists and specialists working with horses or clients

Associates are not employees. They are engaged under a contract for services and are responsible for their own professional compliance.

1. Responsibilities

The Associate is responsible for:

- Holding appropriate qualifications relevant to their role (e.g., BHS, UKCC, coaching awards).
- Maintaining public liability and professional indemnity insurance.
- Working within their competence and insurance cover.
- Following all yard safety rules, safeguarding procedures, and animal welfare standards.
- Maintaining up-to-date first aid and safeguarding training where required.
- Reporting any circumstances that may affect their ability to work safely (injury, investigation, restrictions, etc.).
- Taking responsibility for their own CPD and professional development.

Stoke Lane Stables is responsible for:

- Verifying suitability before engagement.
- Providing clear expectations and site-specific safety procedures.
- Monitoring performance and safety.
- Addressing any capability concerns promptly and fairly.
- Protecting clients, horses, and staff at all times.

2. Initial Capability Checks

Before engagement, the following may be required:

- Proof of identity and right to work
- Relevant qualifications and certifications
- Proof of valid insurance
- References
- DBS check (where working with children/vulnerable adults)
- Assessment of practical riding, teaching, or yard skills
- Confirmation of safeguarding knowledge

3. Ongoing Capability Monitoring

Capability will be monitored through:

- Client and management feedback
- Observation of practical work
- Incident and accident reports
- Complaints
- Periodic contract and performance reviews

4. Managing Capability Concerns

Where concerns arise regarding an associate's capability, conduct, or safety:

1. The concern will be raised as soon as reasonably practicable.
2. The associate will be given the opportunity to respond.
3. Where appropriate, support may include:
 - Additional supervision
 - Restricted duties
 - Additional training or assessment
4. A review period will be agreed where appropriate.
5. If concerns are not resolved, the contract may be suspended or terminated in accordance with contract terms.

Immediate suspension may occur where there is a serious risk to rider safety, horse welfare,

safeguarding, or the reputation of the riding school.

5. Training and Development

As a self-employed associate, responsibility for training and CPD lies with the individual unless otherwise contractually agreed. Associates must:

- Maintain professional competence
- Keep records of training
- Provide evidence of CPD upon request

6. Health & Safety and Horse Welfare

All associates must:

- Follow all yard safety, risk assessments, and emergency procedures
- Use appropriate PPE
- Handle horses in accordance with welfare legislation and best practice
- Immediately report accidents, near misses, or welfare concerns

Failure to comply may result in immediate suspension of services.

7. Safeguarding

Associates working with children or vulnerable adults must:

- Comply with the riding school's Safeguarding Policy
- Maintain appropriate DBS clearance where required
- Undertake safeguarding training at appropriate intervals

Any safeguarding concern will be dealt with under safeguarding procedures and may result in immediate termination of contract.

8. Termination Related to Capability

Where an associate:

- Fails to meet required standards
- Presents an ongoing safety risk
- Breaches welfare, safeguarding, or conduct expectations

Stoke Lane Stables reserves the right to terminate the contract without notice where permitted by the terms of engagement.

9. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or following any significant change to legislation, insurance requirements, or operational practice.

¹ **Associate** - A self-employed individual engaged by Stoke Lane Stables to provide professional services, including instructors. Associates are not employees, and this term does not create an employment relationship.