

Policy on Child Protection and the Protection of Vulnerable Adults

1. Statement

Croydon Astronomical Society (the Society) is committed to fulfilling its duty of care to children, young people and vulnerable adults with whom it comes into contact.

As a Society we regularly come into contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults during Society events which are held at the Norman Fisher Observatory. These would include pre-arranged group visits and public openings on Saturdays.

- We may also occasionally welcome children (including from the Trinity School) and vulnerable adults to our Friday talks.

We will satisfy our duty of care by promoting, creating and maintaining a culture and environment that safeguards the safety and welfare of young people and vulnerable adults.

The Society recognises its duty to comply with legislative requirements to work with the appropriate agencies in protecting children and vulnerable adults and to ensure that any suspicions or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously and responded to in a swift, appropriate and confidential manner.

Any member of the Society who has concerns about the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult, and which may indicate physical, emotional and sexual abuse or neglect, is required to report such concerns to the named person responsible for protection issues. The named person (see section 5) is currently Graham Cluer.

Those members of the Society who come into contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults at Society events at the Observatory will be made aware of this policy. Those who come into regular contact with children, young people and vulnerable adults will also be encouraged to obtain an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.

However, it is the nature of the work of the Society that children under the age of 16 and vulnerable adults do not attend activities at the Observatory without the supervision of a parent, guardian, teacher or other appropriate adult. Croydon Astronomical Society Committee members and volunteer members should not be responsible for looking after children and should not therefore find themselves in a situation where they are alone with a child. Furthermore, children do not attend on a regular basis, thereby reducing the risks of abuse from regular contact.

It is not therefore necessary for Society Committee and volunteer members to be checked with the DBS as a matter of course. However we encourage those running activities to obtain an enhanced DBS check.

2. Definitions of Child and Vulnerable Adult

2.1. Child

A child is defined as any person aged under the age of 18.

2.2. Vulnerable Adult

A vulnerable adult is an individual who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age or illness and includes those who may be unable to either take care of themselves or protect themselves against harm or exploitation.

People with learning disabilities, mental health problems, older people and disabled people may fall within the definition of “vulnerable adult” particularly when their situation is complicated by additional factors such as:

- Physical frailty
- Chronic illness
- Sensory impairment
- Challenging behaviour
- Social problems
- Emotional problems
- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Substance abuse

3. Types of Abuse

3.1. Physical - Where a person receives physical hurt or injury that is not accidental

3.2. Sexual - Where a person is the basis of sexual gratification from people exploiting the vulnerability of children or vulnerable adults

3.3. Emotional/Psychological - Where a person is adversely affected by persistent or severe rejection or lack of affection, or persistent taunts or threats

3.4. Neglect - Where a serious impairment to personal health or development is caused by lack of care and attention and exposure to any kind of danger

3.5. Financial Abuse - This includes theft, fraud, pressure around wills, property or inheritance, misuse or misappropriation of benefit.

3.6. Racial and Homophobic Motivated Abuse - Whilst not classified as an individual category of abuse, racially motivated abuse can take any of these forms and this needs to be noted additionally in situations when the victim perceives abuse to have been racist in its intent. Homophobic incidents are usually motivated by hatred or fear of homosexuality.

3.7. Domestic Abuse - Domestic abuse is a serious crime which must be treated as seriously as any other crime. Victims of domestic abuse may also be vulnerable adults as defined in this policy.

4. Responsibilities of Individual Members

Members in contact with children or vulnerable adults must:

- Ensure all children and vulnerable adults are treated with respect and are encouraged to speak up if they have any concerns.
- Ensure that if a child or vulnerable adult is not accompanied by a parent, guardian, carer or teacher acting in loco parentis, that the consent of the parent, guardian or carer has been given for any activity which is supervised by a member of the Society.
- Ensure that, in addition to the member, there is at least one adult present during activities with children/vulnerable adults.
- Never give a child/vulnerable adult a lift in their car and never take a child/vulnerable adult to their (the member's) home.
- Be aware that physical contact with a child or vulnerable adult may be misinterpreted.

When operating a telescope talk to them and consider pointing out the relevant controls using a red torch. Always ask permission before touching someone (with the exception where it is necessary to prevent injury and is proportionate to that requirement).

It is tempting to lift a small child up to the eyepiece of a telescope if the child is struggling to reach it, but this may be done ONLY by a parent, guardian or teacher acting in loco parentis.

- Not engage in physical games, horseplay, or touch a child/vulnerable adult in an intrusive or sexual manner.
- Not make sexually suggestive remarks to a child or vulnerable adult, even as a joke.
- Be prepared to challenge unacceptable behaviour and ensure that any suspicions or allegations of abuse are recorded and reported to the named person responsible for dealing with protection issues.
- Declare that there is no reason why they should not work with children and vulnerable adults.
- Declare any past criminal convictions or pending cases and any complaints of abuse made against them.
- Have a criminal records check if they come into connection with children on a regular and unsupervised basis in the course of the activities for the Society.

5. Role of the Named Person

- To receive information from volunteers, children, young people, vulnerable adults, parents or carers who have protection concerns and record it.
- Assess information promptly and carefully, clarifying or obtaining more information about the matter as appropriate.
- Consult with a statutory or child protection agency (local authority children's services, or the NSPCC help line), to test out any doubts or uncertainty about the concerns.
- Make a formal referral to a statutory Protection agency or the Police.
- The named person will inform the Committee of any allegations made and the action taken.

It is NOT the role of the named person to decide whether a child has been abused or not.

6. Policy Review

The Committee will review this policy bi-annually and update and amend as necessary.

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