

North Essex Astronomical Society



Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Guidelines

Review date: April 2024 (or earlier if there are any statutory changes)

North Essex Astronomical Society

Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Guidelines

Position Statement

The North Essex Astronomical Society is committed to protecting children/vulnerable adults and ensuring that when children/vulnerable adults pursue an interest in astronomy those children/vulnerable adults are safe from abuse.

We take our advice from the Federation of Astronomical Societies who provide practical assistance regarding the information and guidance on Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection for its affiliated member societies¹.

Purpose of Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Guidelines

To update the societies guidelines in light of changing legislation and the general raising of awareness of Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection and Safeguarding issues within the society.

To provide all members and committee members with guidance on procedures that they must adopt by law.

The guidelines also provide all society members with guidance on what to do in the event that the society may suspect that a Child or Vulnerable Adult may be experiencing harm, or where they reasonably consider a Child or Vulnerable Adult may be at risk of harm.

Introduction

The purpose of the guideline is to protect all members, of all ages, of the society and the public with whom the society interacts. Allowing all to enjoy the wonders of astronomy in a safe and fun manner.

The guidelines are not designed to breed a culture of fear or to inadvertently discourage children/vulnerable adults from joining the society.

This will outline the facts and the current regulation to inform all of our members, should anyone in the society should have any concerns at all they should contact the society's Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Officer (CPO): Clare Lauwerys, the Secretary. However, it should be noted that children/vulnerable adults quite often gain cuts, bruises and grazes from a multitude of reasons – with the vast majority being from innocent reasons and would not indicate signs of abuse, members should avoid coming up with their own conclusions and once again should refer any concerns to the CPO.

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²NSPCC Child Protection Factsheet – *The definitions and signs of child abuse (2009)*.

³UK Government document – *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2006)*.

Abuse

Abuse and neglect are forms of maltreatment of a Child & Vulnerable Adult. Somebody may abuse or neglect a Child & Vulnerable Adult either directly by inflicting harm, or indirectly, by failing to act to prevent harm.

Children may be abused in a family or in an institutional or community setting; by those known to them; or, more rarely, by a stranger. They may be abused by an adult or adults, or another child or children².

There are five types of child abuse. They are defined as follows³:

Physical abuse

Physical abuse may involve hitting, shaking, throwing, poisoning, burning or scalding, drowning, suffocating, or otherwise causing physical harm to a child or failing to protect a child from that harm. Physical harm may also be caused when a parent or carer fabricates the symptoms of, or deliberately induces illness in a child.

Emotional Abuse

Emotional abuse is the persistent emotional maltreatment of a child such as to cause severe and persistent adverse effects on the child's emotional development. It may involve conveying to children that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only insofar as they meet the needs of another person. It may feature age- or developmentally inappropriate expectations being imposed on children. These may include interactions that are beyond the child's developmental capability, as well as overprotection and limitation of exploration and learning, or preventing the child participating in normal social interaction. It may involve seeing or hearing the ill-treatment of Child protection fact sheet Definitions and signs of child abuse © NSPCC 2009 2 another. It may involve serious bullying causing children frequently to feel frightened or in danger, or the exploitation or corruption of children. Some level of emotional abuse is involved in all types of maltreatment of a child, though it may occur alone.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse involves forcing or enticing a child or young person to take part in sexual activities, including prostitution, whether or not the child is aware of what is happening. The activities may involve physical contact including either penetrative or non-penetrative acts such as kissing, touching or fondling the child's genitals or breasts, vaginal or anal intercourse or oral sex. They may include non-contact activities, such as involving children in looking at, or in the production of, pornographic material or watching sexual activities, or encouraging children to behave in sexually inappropriate ways.

Neglect

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse. Once a child is born, neglect may involve a parent or carer failing to provide adequate food and clothing; shelter,

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including exclusion from home or abandonment; failing to protect a child from physical and emotional harm or danger; failure to ensure adequate supervision including the use of inadequate caretakers; or the failure to ensure access to appropriate medical care or treatment. It may also include neglect of, or unresponsiveness to, a child's basic emotional needs.

Bullying

Bullying may be defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It can take many forms, but the three main types are physical (e.g. hitting, kicking, theft), verbal (e.g. racist or homophobic remarks, threats, name calling) and emotional (e.g. isolating an individual from the activities and social acceptance of their peer group).

Members' Behaviour

Common sense should prevail in all circumstances regarding behaviour around children/vulnerable adults, if a situation feels uncomfortable then remove yourself or avoid the situation.

If a Society member's behaviour gives a cause for concern, their behaviour will be discussed openly with that member and witnessed. If obvious abuse is taking place then this will be reported to the relevant authorities, which are referred in the section '*Reporting a Concern*'.

Although it is impossible to describe all appropriate and inappropriate behaviours, the below are some examples that would need the application of common sense.

Examples of behaviours to avoid

- Engaging in rough physical or sexually provocative games, including horseplay.
- Allowing or engaging in any form of inappropriate touching.
- Allowing children to use inappropriate language unchallenged.
- Making sexually suggestive comments to a child, even in fun.
- Reducing a child to tears as a form of control.
- Allow allegations made by a child to go unchallenged, unrecorded or not acted upon.
- Doing things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves.
- Inviting or allowing children/vulnerable adults to stay with you at your home or other venue for 'private' stargazing etc...
- Taking on a care giving or supervisory role without formal processes being put in place first (see definition on Regulated Activity).

Examples of good practice

- When attending externally organised events (Scouts/Guides groups etc.) we will always stipulate that the external group itself must provide the DBS checked adults and they must be present at all times.
- Ensuring parents/carers take responsibility for their own children.
- Always putting the welfare of each young person first.

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- Always working in an open environment avoiding private or unobserved situations and encouraging open communication.
- Treating all young people equally with respect and dignity.
- Building balanced relationships based on mutual trust and empowering children to share in decision making.
- Making astronomy fun and enjoyable.
- Being an excellent role model.
- Giving enthusiastic and constructive feedback rather than negative criticism.
- Recognising the developmental needs and capacity of young people and not 'pushing' them against their will.
- Keeping a written record of any injury that occurs, along with details of any treatment given.

Administration of First Aid

Once again common sense prevails here, in the first instance this should be the responsibility of the organising body e.g. the organisation that has booked the NEAS. However, if you feel comfortable to do so you can administer First Aid with permission from the organisation's supervisor and the child. Never put yourself in a situation where you would be alone with the child/vulnerable adult, ensure that another adult is present or the First Aid is administered in a public area.

Protection of Children/vulnerable adults from harm

It is deemed reasonable to 'touch' a child/vulnerable adult, if in doing so you would be preventing the child/vulnerable adult from coming in contact with further harm or to prevent harm entirely. An example would be to physically block a child/vulnerable adult from running into the path of an oncoming vehicle.

Responsibilities of the Child Protection Officer

The Lead for Child Protection will be decided by the Chair and Committee. If no-one is appointed the position will default to the Chairperson of the society. Currently the Child Protection Officer/DSL is Clare Lauwerys, a former school governor safeguarding lead.

Responsibilities include:

- Ensure that the society is compliant with regulations regarding the protection of children as described in these guidelines and to act as a point of contact for an issues regarding Child Protection.
- To be aware of statutory changes in the law.
- Implementation of the guidelines in this document.

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- To identify and apply training if necessary to members of the society
- Sharing information when necessary to relevant authorities and know how to contact these agencies.

Member responsibilities

Individual members are well within their rights to report any suspected harm to children/vulnerable adults directly to the Police or the Local Authority Children's Service. In this instance they should make the CPO/DSL aware.

All members of the society have a responsibility to report any suspected harm to a child/vulnerable adult, both minor and serious, to the CPO/DSL as soon as reasonably possible and this could relate to the section below '*Reporting a concern*' and may need a committee decision relating to a member.

Reporting a concern

If the child/vulnerable adult is in immediate harm, they should be removed from that situation and for it to be reported to the parents (assuming they are not the abusers), the the Lead for Child Protection and the police.

The society will take immediate action should this be the case in any society meeting or event.

No leading questions should be asked of the child/vulnerable adult and where possible it should be the 'Lead' collating the necessary information. It is important the child/vulnerable adult's words are written verbatim and not an interpretation by the recorder. It is not the job of anyone in the society to 'investigate' the matter, this will be done by the authorities.

In the event that the alleged perpetrator is a society member, their membership will be suspended immediately and an imposed ban on all meeting spaces including Henry Dixon Hall, the observatory and any outreach. This will of course be reviewed by the outcome of any criminal procedures, this is particularly important if the child/vulnerable adult will be attending meetings.

If the known alleged perpetrator is a member of a neighbouring society, then the society will be informed of the facts and actions taken, no speculation will be reported.

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Vetting of Members

Whilst many of the members of the society have DBS checks relating to their employment. The North Essex Astronomical Society will not require members to have a DBS check to conduct outreach. All organisations are informed of the fact that our members do not have DBS checks and there is an expectation that the organisation supply members of staff/volunteers with DBS checks and conduct a risk assessment for the involvement of the NEAS.

NEAS members will refuse to be in a situation where they are left alone with children/vulnerable adults or in a circumstance where they would be expected to be without support from the outreach organisation.

Exceptions

Should the society or any member find themselves in exceptional circumstance (including a situation that would require further clarification) they should seek the advice of the CPO as soon as possible. If the CPO is unable to answer these questions they will endeavour to find out the required information from the Local Authority's Children Services.

Review of guidelines

The North Essex Astronomical Guidelines are only in effect for the current governmental statutory guidelines and are due to be reviewed every 2 years or as and when the statutory guidelines change or in light of any new regulations. When this occurs clarification will be sought from the Federation of Astronomical Societies or the Local Authorities Children's services.

Contact numbers

NSPCC Child Protection Helpline: 0808 800 5000

Childline: 0800 1111

Essex Police (non-emergency): 101 or 01245 491491

Clare Lauwerys Secretary/CPO/DSL: 07710 494445

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Declaration

On the behalf of the **North Essex Astronomical Society** we, the undersigned will oversee the implementation of the Child & Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy and take all necessary steps to ensure it is adhered to.

Name (Print):**Name (Print):****Chairman:****Outreach Officer:****Date:****Date:**

Document History			
Version	Amendment Detail	Amendment date	Effective date
6.0	Update	April 2023	April 2023
5.1	Amendment to include 'Vulnerable Adults' including Children	August 2016	September 2016
5.0	Re-write	July 2015	August 2015
4.0	Re-write	August 2008	August 2008

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