

# North Essex Astronomical Society



## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

Version 1

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## Document History

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## 1. Our Commitment

At North Essex Astronomical Society, we believe that the night sky belongs to everyone.

We are committed to treating all people fairly and with respect, and to creating an environment where members, volunteers, and visitors feel welcome, valued, and able to participate fully.

We take discrimination, harassment, and bullying seriously and will act proportionately if issues arise.

## 2. Scope

This policy applies to:

- All members (of any grade)
- Volunteers and committee members
- Visitors, guests, and outreach participants
- Society events (including meetings, observing sessions, and online spaces)

## 3. Legal Framework

This policy is informed by the principles of the Equality Act 2010, which protects individuals from discrimination based on protected characteristics.

These include:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race (including ethnic or national origin)
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

We aim to go beyond legal minimums by promoting inclusion and respect for all individuals, regardless of background or personal circumstances.

## 4. Our Key Principles

### Inclusive Environment

We aim to provide a safe, respectful, and welcoming atmosphere.

We do not accept behaviour that intimidates, excludes, or demeans others.

### Fair Access to Participation

We aim to ensure that all members have a fair opportunity to take part in society activities, events, and informal leadership roles.



## Welcoming New Members

We welcome anyone with an interest in astronomy and strive to ensure the society does not feel exclusive or unapproachable.

## Supporting Participation

We will take reasonable, proportionate steps to reduce barriers to participation, including making adjustments where practical.

## Fair and Transparent Involvement

Opportunities to contribute (e.g. committee roles or helping at events) will be offered in an open and inclusive way.

# 5. Accessibility and Inclusion

We recognise that barriers to participation may be physical, social, financial, or environmental. Where reasonably possible, we will:

- Consider accessibility when choosing venues and observing sites
- Provide clear communication and instructions
- Offer flexibility in how people participate (e.g. sharing materials digitally)
- Be mindful of cost barriers where possible

# 6. Hidden Disabilities

We recognise that many disabilities are not visible, including:

- Neurodivergence (e.g. autism, ADHD)
- Mental health conditions
- Chronic illness or pain
- Hearing or visual impairments

Our approach:

- **No assumptions:** We do not judge ability based on appearance
- **Respect requests:** We take people at their word when they ask for support
- **Reasonable adjustments:** Small changes (e.g. seating, clear instructions, written materials) can make a significant difference

# 7. Expected Behaviour

All participants are expected to:

- Treat others with dignity and respect
- Avoid language or behaviour that could reasonably make others feel unwelcome, intimidated, or excluded
- Be mindful that humour or “banter” can affect people differently
- Respect personal boundaries and equipment
- Follow guidance from event organisers, especially in dark or remote locations



This applies to in-person events and online communication (e.g. email, forums, messaging groups).

## 8. Respectful Discussion

Members and visitors may hold a wide range of personal views and opinions expressed in good faith. The society does not seek to regulate lawful personal beliefs.

What matters is that people treat one another respectfully and behave appropriately during society activities and communications.

Disagreement is acceptable; harassment, intimidation, or personal hostility is not.

## 9. Practical Guidance for Volunteers

### Communication

- Explain technical terms clearly for newcomers
- Listen and respond respectfully to concerns
- Avoid assumptions about knowledge or ability

### Observing Sessions

- Ensure people feel safe and included, particularly at remote or dark sites
- Avoid leaving individuals isolated
- Ask before intervening with someone's equipment
- Speak clearly; consider visibility needs when giving instructions in low light

### Meetings and Events

- Vary meeting formats or times where possible
- Make an effort to welcome new attendees
- Encourage participation without pressure

## 10. When Things Go Wrong

### What to Do

If inappropriate behaviour occurs:

- Where appropriate, address it informally (e.g. a polite correction)
- Report concerns to a committee member

Reports can be made to:

- The Chair
- Any committee member
- A designated welfare/EDI contact (if appointed)

If the concern involves the Chair, members should approach another committee member.



## **11. How Issues Are Handled**

We will:

- Take concerns seriously
- Handle them sensitively and, where possible, confidentially
- Consider appropriate action based on the circumstances

This may include:

- Informal discussion or mediation
- A request to change behaviour
- Restricting participation
- Withdrawing membership from an individual

No one will be treated unfairly for raising a concern in good faith. Any sanctions will be in line with our Code of Conduct.

## **12. Safeguarding**

Where activities involve children or vulnerable adults, this policy must be read alongside the society's safeguarding policies.

## **13. Data and Privacy**

Any personal information shared in relation to this policy will be handled in line with data protection principles, including the UK GDPR.

## **14. Responsibility and Review**

The society committee is responsible for implementing and monitoring this policy.

This document will be reviewed annually and updated as needed.