

Safeguarding Policy and Procedure



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Policy:

Mansfield and Sutton Astronomical Society is committed to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, be they society members, guests or members of the public that we meet through the course of the society's activities.

We recognise that:

- the welfare of the child or vulnerable adult is paramount
- all children and vulnerable adults, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation have a right to equal protection from all types of harm or abuse
- some children and vulnerable adults are additionally vulnerable because of the impact of previous experiences, their level of dependency, communication needs or other issues

This policy and accompanying procedures are written to safeguard all children and vulnerable adults that our members may come into contact with during our activities including public events that the society attends. This policy and procedure also provide guidance to all society members on what safeguarding is, who it applies to, how concerns should be reported, confidentiality, record keeping and supporting any society member involved in raising a safeguarding concern. There is also guidance on responsibilities when in contact with children or vulnerable adults during the course of society activities.

What is safeguarding?

Safeguarding is the term used by statutory services such as social services and the NHS, it means to prevent harm or further harm happening to those who are vulnerable due to being a child (under the age of 18) or by ability, for example, someone over the age of 18 with care needs. In simple terms this means that if we have a concern about the treatment or wellbeing of someone deemed vulnerable then members have a duty to report their concern appropriately within the society to the safeguarding lead who in turn may then report the concern to the local safeguarding board.

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What is a safeguarding concern?

A concern is just that; a sense that something is not right in the welfare of a child or vulnerable adult, it could be based on observation, something that is disclosed or the behaviour of the child or vulnerable adult. Concerns don't have to be anything more, no member should wait to report a concern until they are certain or because they feel they don't have 'evidence'. The purpose of raising a concern with the safeguarding lead is to ensure that an appropriate referral, if needed, is made to the local safeguarding boards and that the person reporting is given support over their concerns.

Who do we safeguard?

Vulnerable adults and children as defined below:

Child – anyone under the age of 18, this is the definition used in law.

Vulnerable adult – A vulnerable adult as defined by statutory services:

"...someone aged 18 or over: Who is, or may be, in need of community services due to age, illness or a mental or physical disability. Who is, or may be, unable to take care of him/herself, or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or exploitation."

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What are we safeguarding vulnerable adults and children from?

There are 7 different types of abuse recognised within legal guidance and national policy:

1. Physical abuse
2. Sexual abuse
3. Psychological / Emotional abuse
4. Financial abuse
5. Neglect and acts of omission
6. Discriminatory abuse
7. Institutional (statutory service providers) abuse and a failure to act by professionals with a duty of care

Our safeguarding policy requires you to:

- Ensure your own safety
- Involve the emergency services if there is a risk of immediate and serious harm to anyone
- Report any concerns to your volunteer supervisor, a trustee or the safeguarding lead no matter how minor
- Act on your concerns in a timely manner – don't wait until you feel there is 'proof'

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Our safeguarding policy requires the committee to ensure:

- that all concerns are handled appropriately and sensitively
- there are at least two society volunteers suitably trained via the local safeguarding boards in safeguarding
- that appropriate support is given to anyone raising a concern
- that suitable records are held confidentially by the society of any concerns raised and subsequent actions by the society including any decision not to report

So what happens if a safeguarding referral is made?

Safeguarding boards understandably do not receive feedback on 'what happened next' in the event of making a referral but there are a range of possible outcomes that local safeguarding boards use; it may be that no action is required, or there may be a range of support measures put in place to assist the families or carers of the young person or vulnerable adult. Safeguarding boards in all but gross abuse aim to support and maintain families and the care networks of children and vulnerable adults whilst keeping people safe. However, a safeguarding referral can be the information which leads to someone who is vulnerable and in dire need being protected from abuse or neglect. It could be that raising your concern results in a lifesaving intervention.

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Procedure for working with children and vulnerable adults in the course of society activities:

Current guidance from the Disclosure and Barring Service states we are not eligible to request DBS checks on our volunteers, due to the nature of our activities.

- Always work in an open environment, where possible, avoiding private or unobserved situations and encourage open communication
- treat everyone equally with respect and dignity
- always put the welfare of each child or vulnerable adult first
- maintain a safe and appropriate distance with children and vulnerable adults (e.g. it is not appropriate for volunteers to have an intimate relationship with a child or vulnerable adult)
- recognise the developmental needs and capacity of young people, including any special educational needs or learning disabilities
- keep a written record of any injury that occurs, along with the details of any treatment given in the society's accident book

Safeguarding Procedures:

For society members:

- Reporting: If you have a safeguarding concern that does not involve an immediate risk of harm to the person you are concerned about, you need to report your concern to the society's safeguarding lead at the earliest opportunity. To report to the safeguarding lead if they are not present at the time, please email

safeguarding@sherwood-observatory.org.uk

stating that you need to discuss a safeguarding concern, giving your name and ideally providing a phone number. The safeguarding lead will contact you at the first opportunity and arrange to discuss your concerns promptly. It is the responsibility of the safeguarding lead to make any referrals to the local safeguarding board if required. Please do not send any details regarding your concern or the identity of the young person or vulnerable adult in the email.

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- Confidentiality: As part of handling a safeguarding concern appropriately we need to handle things confidentially. This means only discussing the details of your concerns with the safeguarding lead or a nominated volunteer in their absence. It also means not discussing or sharing information relating to the concern or the individual who you have concerns about with other members or people outside of the society (beyond professionals who have safeguarding duties). We ask this because oversharing concerns can further endanger a child or vulnerable adult and maintaining the safety and dignity of children and vulnerable adults is paramount.
- Support: Being party to something which gives you cause for concern about an individual's welfare is often distressing especially if you are not sure what to do with your concerns. The safeguarding lead or a nominated volunteer will provide initial support and, if you wish, signposting to services which can provide you with longer term support. as well as handling any further action to safeguard a child or vulnerable adult.

For the committee:

- Safeguarding is important; it can be life saving for those at risk of harm and organisations can ultimately face criminal investigations if it transpires that they failed to act when aware of safeguarding concerns or incidences of abuse.
- Training: It is important that at least two volunteers hold up to date certificates in safeguarding from the local safeguarding boards, all trustees and volunteers are encouraged to access free safeguarding training via both the local adult and children's safeguarding boards.
- Record keeping: Simple but accurate records should be kept of concerns raised, the date any observations were made or conversations had and the date that the information was recorded, the name and contact details of the person raising the concern, the detail of their concerns and any actions taken by the person reporting or the committee subsequently, as well as any identifying details of the individual the concerns relate to. Be

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aware these records can be accessed by a court via the police (but only if they are in possession of an appropriate court order). These records must be kept in strict confidence; the details, beyond assurance that the concern is being handled appropriately, are not for discussion or distribution at committee meetings, society meetings or in any other format beyond appropriate safeguarding referrals. Information should not be shared or stored electronically due to the risk of data breaches and written records should be kept within a locked room within a locked box or cupboard only accessible by the current officers in the roles of safeguarding lead, chair and secretary. Records of safeguarding concerns need to be kept for 25 years.

- Reporting concerns externally: It is the role of the safeguarding lead to make referrals via local safeguarding teams via either 0300 500 80 80 or in an emergency outside of office hours please call the emergency duty team on tel: 0300 456 4546. In the absence of the safeguarding lead an appropriately trained volunteer or the trustees must make the safeguarding referral. If in doubt, refer! Please remember you will need to be able to provide some identifying details of the individual the concerns relate to e.g. a name and sufficient identifying information about the child or vulnerable adult. Identifying information could be all or some of the individuals address, their school or any visiting group they are known to be a member of.
- Support: we have a duty to ensure our members are supported in the event of raising a safeguarding concern. They may feel uncomfortable about raising a concern or be distressed by the information they have become party to. We need to respond with care in a calm, confidential and considered manner. It may be appropriate to check in with the member more than once after your initial conversation, in a considerate and confidential manner. If someone appears to need longer term, ongoing support the it may be appropriate to signpost them back to their own GP or any other health services they are already engaged with.
- Discussing concerns: In any discussions regarding safeguarding concerns make sure they are undertaken in a confidential space where

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you are not likely to be disturbed. Please ensure you accurately record the information that is given to you and it is both stored appropriately and shared with the local safeguarding board in a timely manner. Do not worry if you or the member reporting are unsure of the importance or potential impact of the concern or information shared; pass it on to the safeguarding board and they will be able to decide. Be honest to the person raising the concern with you that we will not receive an update if a referral is made but the information passed on could be the piece in the puzzle that leads to an end to abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult.

- Support for trustees handling a safeguarding concern in lieu of the safeguarding lead; please ensure you handover to the safeguarding lead and gain support on their return.

Supporting legislation and guidance:

This policy and accompanying procedures reflect the Care Act 2014, guidance from the NSPCC, the police, the Disclosure and Barring Service and local safeguarding boards.

Key society policies to be read in conjunction with this document:

- Codes of conduct
- Settling differences & member conduct
- Equality, Dignity and Diversity
- Volunteer policy