**HIGHLANDS ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY**

**CHILD PROTECTION POLICY STATEMENT**

May 2019

It is an aim of the Society to inform and educate young people and we welcome their input across our activity.

Highlands Astronomical Society (HAS) fully supports the aims of the Highland Child Protection Committee (HCPC), and commits to ensuring the wellbeing and safety of children and vulnerable adults. References to ‘young persons’ (young persons are those under the age of 18) in this document also be applied to any vulnerable member of society, irrespective of age.

HAS also commits to follow all relevant recommendations contained within the Policy Guidelines issued by the HCPC and will do the following:

* We accept that it is our responsibility as a group to check that all adults in positions requiring disclosure checks are members of the appropriate Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVG check) and have been appropriately vetted.
* We will ensure we have a record of personal details for each volunteer
* We will ensure we have carried out necessary checks in relation to anyone working with children and young people, including requesting references where appropriate
* We will interview prospective volunteers
* We will notify Disclosure Scotland if anyone on the Disqualified from Working with Children List applies to volunteer with our group
* We will ensure that all volunteers are given Codes of Practice to work to
* We will remove any volunteer whom we know or suspect to have caused harm to a child or to have placed a child at risk of harm and we will notify Disclosure Scotland of our actions and the reasons for them, even if that person has left our group

All volunteers will share concerns with the group’s Child Protection Lead who shall be **Pauline Macrae**. If the situation is urgent, the child is too frightened to go home or we have very serious doubts about the child’s safety, we will contact Social Work or Police immediately.

If our concerns about a child’s welfare are more general, then we will discuss these with our group’s Child protection Lead, who would then make a referral to an appropriate professional for assessment of the child’s needs.

Volunteers must:

* Upon the receipt of any information from a child or if there are any suspicions, it is necessary to make an accurate and detailed written record of what they have seen, heard or know, at the time the event occured
* Share their concerns with the Child protection Lead and agree what action to take
* Avoid asking any more questions than are necessary to clarify whether there is a concern. Always REFER to statutory services to undertake in-depth investigation of any suspicions or allegations about abuse.

All volunteers who come into contact with children should read the *Child Protection Guidance and Toolkit for Community Groups in Highland,* in particular ‘Tool 10’: Good Practice for Staff and Volunteers, and undertake any training appropriate to roles and responsibilities – further information can be obtained from [www.hcpc.scot](http://www.hcpc.scot)

**HAS Monthly Meetings**

Children between the ages of 8 and 14 may attend the YoungStars’ group held before each monthly meeting. Those members who run the group will be fully disclosed.

Visits by young people to the talks are welcome, as it is the stated aim of the Society to inform and educate. It is the preferred option for a parent or guardian to accompany any young person wishing to attend, but occasions may arise when a young person or persons, arrive on their own under arrangements made by a responsible person. In such an event, those members who are disclosed will ensure that the young people are seated where they can be easily monitored, and also that they are not left in a position of being in a one-to-one situation with an adult, either during the talk or during the break. If possible, they should also be seen to the door to ensure that they leave safely and without undue attention.

*If any Committee member or Society member has any reservations or suspicions of any adult’s contact with a young person during a meeting, they should raise it with the designated lead or another Committee member as soon as possible.*

**Public Events - daytime**

Outreach days: HAS will ensure that a minimum of three adults (including one who has been disclosed) will man the stands/equipment, and will take care that any young person volunteering will not be left in any one-to-one situations.

Solar observing: Any visit to the Observatory for solar observing by a young person, even if a member, must be accompanied by a parent or responsible adult.

*As above, any concerns should be brought to the attention of the designated lead or a Committee member.*

**Public and Members’ Viewing Events** – **hours of darkness** (e.g. observing sessions at the Observatory, school/youth groups, etc., visits)

HAS will ensure that a minimum of two adults (one being the evening Supervisor) will be present at such events. All will have been briefed on the requirements relating to young people.

**All young people should be accompanied by a responsible adult unless special arrangements have been made between the responsible adult and the evening Supervisor.**

Because such events take place in darkness, HAS Supervisors and assistants will be briefed to take extra care to ensure physical contact is minimised, as such actions could be misconstrued.

All visits by schools and youth groups must be accompanied by sufficient parent helpers and responsible adults to ensure each small group has a minimum of two responsible adults.

*Again, as above, any concerns/suspicions should be advised to the designated lead or a Committee member.*

The Child protection lead will be required to read the *HCPC Guidelines (interim update July 2017)* which will be kept in the Document Library on our website. Copies of the *Child Protection Guidance and Toolkit for Community Groups in Highland* will be kept for reference in the Society’s official papers and in the Document Library on our website (www.spacegeazer.com), as will copies of this statement.

**Contacts**

Designated Lead **01463 220305**

Police **101 or 999**

Out of hours Social Work Emergencies **08457 697284**

Highland Child Protection Committee **01463 644465**

Highland Child Protection Committee website <http://hcpc.scot>