



# Highlands Astronomical Society (HAS) Child Protection Policy

Approved: 13 March 2025 Next Review Date: 13 March 2026

## 1. Policy Statement

The Highlands Astronomical Society (HAS) fully supports the aims of the **Highland Child Protection Committee (HCPC)** and is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of children and vulnerable individuals who interact with the Society. HAS adheres to all relevant safeguarding guidelines issued by **Disclosure Scotland** and the HCPC.

This policy applies to all members, volunteers, and visitors involved in activities where children or vulnerable individuals may be present.

The Society's **Designated Safeguarding Lead** is **Lisa Pattenden**, who will report to the Committee.

## 2. Safeguarding Responsibilities

### 2.1 Membership & PVG Scheme

- All HAS members engaged in **regulated work** with children (e.g., leading youth groups, supervising observatory visits) **must be members of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme**.
- The Society will ensure that all individuals in such roles complete the necessary **PVG checks** before engaging in activities.
- Volunteers and members will receive **training on safeguarding** best practices where appropriate.

### 2.2 Reporting Concerns

If any HAS member, volunteer, or attendee has **concerns about a child's welfare** or suspects inappropriate behavior, they must follow this reporting process:

1. **Immediately report** concerns to the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (Lisa Pattenden)**.
2. If the Safeguarding Lead is unavailable, concerns should be reported to a **HAS Committee Member**.
3. **Confidentiality must be maintained** – concerns should not be discussed informally.



4. If a child discloses any information of concern, listen carefully but do **not** ask leading questions. **Do not promise confidentiality**; explain that information may need to be shared for their safety.
5. In urgent cases where a child is at immediate risk, contact:
  - **Police Scotland**: 101 (or 999 in an emergency)
  - **Highland Child Protection Committee**: 01463 703483
  - **Social Work Department (Raigmore)**: 01463 704204
  - **Out-of-Hours Social Work Emergencies**: 08457 697284
6. Document the concern in a **Child Protection Incident Report Form** and submit it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

## 3. Safeguarding Measures at HAS Events

### 3.1 Monthly Meetings & YoungStars Group

- Children aged **8-14** may attend the **YoungStars Group** before monthly meetings.
- Volunteers leading these sessions **must be PVG Scheme members**.
- Any child attending without a parent/guardian must be seated where they can be easily monitored.
- **One-on-one situations between adults and children should be avoided.**
- At the end of the session, children should be escorted to the exit to ensure safe departure.

### 3.2 Public Outreach & Daytime Events

- A **minimum of two adults**, including **at least one PVG Scheme member**, must be present at all outreach events.
- Young volunteers must never be left in **one-on-one situations** with an adult.
- **Solar Observing Sessions**:
  - The **Session Supervisor must be a PVG Scheme member** if they may interact one-on-one with children.
  - An additional adult should be present where possible.
  - We also require that a parent or guardian must be present when their child is attending HAS events.

### 3.3 Evening & Observatory Events

- All evening events (e.g., school visits, public observing nights) require **at least two adult supervisors**, one of whom must be a **PVG Scheme member**.
- **Young attendees must be accompanied by a responsible adult** unless prior arrangements have been made with the event supervisor.
- Supervisors will take extra care to **minimize physical contact** during events held in darkness to prevent misunderstandings.



- All children in attendance must have a parent or guardian present for the time they are attending the events.

## 3.4 Online Safety

- HAS members must **not** engage in private, one-on-one online communication with young attendees.
- The Society's **social media pages and communication platforms** must be monitored to prevent inappropriate interactions.
- Any concerns about online interactions must be reported following the **standard reporting procedure**.

## 4. Policy Compliance & Review

- All PVG Scheme members are required to **read and acknowledge** this policy.
- Copies of this policy and safeguarding guidance will be available in the Society's **Document Library** at [www.spacegazer.com](http://www.spacegazer.com).
- This policy will be reviewed **annually or sooner if safeguarding legislation changes**.

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