

## The Orpington Astronomical Society

### Child Protection Policy

**This Policy applies in its entirety to all members whatever their society status. Everyone has a responsibility for protecting children and young people. Every child should find astronomy safe, fun, enjoyable and informative.**

The Orpington Astronomical Society (OAS) has the stated Constitutional object of:

*“The education of the inhabitants of Orpington and the surrounding areas in Astronomy and the provision of facilities for active participation in astronomical observation”*

In achieving this object, society members will come into contact with children (legally defined as ~ “a child is anyone who has not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday”) either accidentally, for instance at a society meeting, or intentionally, probably through an organised activity within the society or as an Outreach Group event. There is a need therefore to establish a ‘Child Protection Policy’ for the information, advice and guidance of members.

It should be remembered that a ‘common sense’ approach is appropriate when considering child protection and this is indicated by the way that government guidance has changed since the original regulations were brought in; this reflects the way in which correct and appropriate interaction with children should be encouraged as much as inappropriate interest should be discouraged.

For instance, as an example, it would be considered inappropriate to touch a child in a rough, physical or provocative way; engage in any form of inappropriate touching; make sexual comments (even in fun); or to invite a child for ‘private’ stargazing. However, it would be appropriate to touch a child when in doing so you prevent them from injury or harm; in some ways there is a duty of care to do so. Similarly, perhaps at an outreach event, it would be reasonable to assist a child view through a telescope once you have asked them and gained their permission, the permission of a class teacher or the permission of a parent and it is provided openly. These are only examples and the difference should be obvious and clear when using a ‘common sense’ baseline.

The current and anticipated type(s) of contact between OAS members and children are ‘Non-Regulated Activity’ and likely to fall within three (3) categories:

- a] Mutually Agreed Contact<sup>1</sup>;
- b] Incidental Contact<sup>2</sup>; and
- c] Supervised Contact<sup>3</sup>.

The above types of contact do not currently require a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. However, the welfare of children attending OAS society meetings, events or who may be encountered at any outside OAS activity should be considered of paramount importance.

The Lead Member for Child Protection matters within the society is the current Chair (Designated Child Protection Officer).

Relevant Contact details regarding these matters are:

Chair of the Society ~ Miriam Harries ~ 07539069756

London Borough of Bromley Child Protection:

Daytime: 02084617373/7379/7404/7309/7026

Out of Hours: 02084644848.

Otherwise: Police non-emergency number: 101.

Nothing in this document prevents individual members of the society from reporting a concern directly to the Local Authority's Children Services or the Police; however, as the concern would relate to the society's activities, the concern should also be brought to the attention of the society Chair as soon as possible. Indeed, it is the responsibility of the member to raise any concern, whether serious or minor, to the Chair or Committee in order that they may take decisions regarding any action or member.

To assist members the following guidance should be noted:

1] This Child Protection Policy should be reviewed at regular intervals by the Committee; the interval between reviews should be no longer than three (3) years in order to take account of potential legal changes.

2] The current and anticipated contact between OAS members and children does not require that OAS members involved be DBS checked. However, if a member at any time considers that they or the type of contact may fall within the requirements for a DBS check, that member MUST inform the Committee as a matter of urgency.

3] A barred person may NOT be involved in society or Outreach Group activities representing or on behalf of the society (see Rule 24 of the OAS Constitution). Any member who considers that they fall within the category of a 'Barred Person'<sup>4</sup> MUST inform the society Committee as a matter of urgency.

With regard to [a] above;

4] Parents, guardians, or carers with children under the age of 18 years wishing them to attend meetings and/or observing evenings unaccompanied are advised that they need to give written consent allowing the named child/children to participate in these regular events organised by the Orpington Astronomical Society.

5] This consent needs to be regularly updated on renewal of annual subscriptions and should also be specifically given for special events (e.g. trips to museums and observatories). The parent, guardian or carer MUST accompany a child to and from the event/meeting or make appropriate arrangements to deliver and collect the child.

6] When a child or children does attend a society meeting or event, with consent by their parent or guardian, the Committee Members will then be responsible for the safety and well being of that child.

7] Copies of any agreement relating to children under the age of 18 years should be held within the society's records and signed by at least two (2) Committee Members.

8] Members who have made private arrangements, independent of the society, to bring a child, not being their own relation, may wish to advise the Committee that they are doing so.

9] The Committee may rescind or temporarily remove agreements covered by paragraphs 4, 5 and 6 at their discretion when they consider the need for parent, guardian or carer presence to be necessary or when they consider that the appropriate level of society support cannot be provided effectively.

With regard to [a, b and c] above:

10] Any single photos or group photos of any child or group of children under age 18 years taken at society events must not be published in any form without first obtaining the written permission from a parent or guardian unless that photo is already within the public domain (i.e. a school photo which may already be on the school website and therefore within the public domain).

11] Members should avoid being alone with a child or group of children and endeavour to always have at least one other member present. Ideally children should remain with the main body of the group at all times. Where members give talks and/or demonstrations to youth groups or school children, the youth leader or teacher must be present with the group at all times or an appropriate alternative arrangement made.

12] When liaising with potential Outreach contacts, the Outreach Group should proactively identify the existence of this policy at an early point and work constructively with the contact to ensure that this policy sits alongside any existing contact Child Protection Policy for that event.

In conclusion, this policy reflects a 'Protection' rather than 'Safeguarding' standard in that it seeks to address instances which might occur under the banner of the 'Society's' interests. It is not a 'proactive' policy in actively seeking to resolve or identify domestic cases unless they become obvious during the time the child is within the society's purview.

Chair

Orpington Astronomical Society ~ February 2014

<sup>1</sup>: Mutually Agreed Contact ~ Mutually agreed and responsible arrangements made between parents and friends for the care of their children.

<sup>2</sup>: Incidental Contact ~ The activity is not being provided for children and the presence of a child or children is unforeseen; is open to all; attractive to a wide cross-section of society or where attendance is discretionary.

<sup>3</sup>: Supervised ~ Supervision can be given by a person [*other than a society member unless DBS checked*] who is in a regulated activity themselves (thus subject to a DBS check) and must be engaged in that regulated activity on a regular or on a day to day basis [for example, a teacher].

<sup>4</sup>: Barred Person ~ Someone placed on the list by the Secretary of State.