

The Federation of Astronomical Societies



Safeguarding Adults at Risk

Template Policy

Version 1

April 2026



Document History

Date	Author(s)	Version	Comments
April 2026	Clare Lauwerys	1	Document Created to mirror new Safeguarding Children & Young People document



Contents

1. Don't Panic!	3
2. Important Legal Disclaimer	3
3. Plain English Summary.....	3
4. Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy	4
Appendix A – Safeguarding Implementation Checklist	10
Appendix B – Member Safeguarding Summary (2-Page Version)	11
Appendix C – DSL Guidance Sheet (Internal)	12
Appendix D - Confidential Safeguarding Incident Form	14

1. Don't Panic!

This document may seem long but it contains useful appendices as well as the policy template.

2. Important Legal Disclaimer

This document is a general safeguarding template for information and guidance only. It is **not** legal advice.

The Federation of Astronomical Societies is not a law firm, safeguarding authority, regulated professional body, or statutory agency. Safeguarding duties vary depending on an organisation's legal structure, activities, jurisdiction, and risk profile. This template does not guarantee compliance with:

- Applicable legislation
- Statutory guidance
- Charity law
- Local authority safeguarding procedures
- Regulatory reporting obligations

Each adopting organisation is solely responsible for:

- Reviewing and adapting this template
- Obtaining independent professional advice where appropriate
- Ensuring compliance with relevant law
- Implementing safeguarding procedures effectively

Use of this template is entirely at the adopting organisation's own risk. To the fullest extent permitted by law, the issuing organisation disclaims all liability arising from reliance on this document.

Organisations are strongly advised to seek independent advice, particularly if they:

- Are registered charities
- Engage in regulated activity
- Employ staff or volunteers in safeguarding roles
- Are responding to a safeguarding incident

Although voluntary associations are not statutory bodies, they owe a duty of care to participants and must take reasonable steps to prevent foreseeable harm.

3. Plain English Summary

This is guidance, not legal advice.

You must adapt it to your organisation.

If unsure - especially if you are a charity or dealing with a safeguarding concern - seek professional advice.



4. Safeguarding Adults at Risk Policy

[Society Name]

Version:

Effective Date:

Review Date:

Purpose

[Society Name] is an unincorporated association run by its elected committee. We recognise that safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and that we owe a duty of care to all members, visitors, and participants. This duty of care is particularly important in astronomy activities, which often take place in low-light, remote, or isolated environments.

We are committed to promoting wellbeing and protecting adults at risk through a person-centred, proportionate approach.

Safeguarding responses will always be proportionate to the level of risk and the wishes of the adult concerned.

This policy is informed by:

- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Care Act 2014 principles
- Mental Capacity Act 2005

Scope

This policy applies to:

- Committee members
- Members and volunteers
- Representatives of the Society
- Society activities including meetings, observing sessions, star camps, trips, outreach events
- Online platforms, messaging groups, and digital communication. This policy applies to all Society-run digital spaces, including messaging groups, forums, and social media channels, whether moderated or unmoderated.
- One-to-one contact arising from Society activity

This includes activities in dark or remote locations, transport to events, and overnight stays.

Definition: Adult at Risk

An adult (18+) who:

- Has care and support needs
- Is experiencing or at risk of abuse or neglect
- Is unable to protect themselves because of those needs

This definition is taken from the Care Act 2014.

Safeguarding Principles

We act in accordance with:

- Empowerment — supporting choice and control
- Prevention — taking action before harm occurs
- Proportionality — least intrusive response appropriate to risk
- Protection — supporting those in greatest need
- Partnership — working with statutory agencies
- Accountability — clear roles and transparent decision-making

These principles apply equally to in-person and online interactions.

Types of Abuse

Abuse may be deliberate or unintentional, single or repeated. It includes:

- Physical
- Sexual
- Emotional or psychological
- Financial or material
- Neglect
- Self-neglect
- Domestic abuse
- Discriminatory abuse
- Organisational abuse
- Modern slavery
- Cyber or online abuse
- Mate crime (where someone befriends a vulnerable adult to exploit them)
- Coercive control

Safeguarding in Astronomy Contexts

Astronomy societies operate in environments with risks, including:

- Low-light and isolated observing locations
- Lone observers or small groups in remote areas
- Transport and lift-sharing arrangements
- Overnight star camps
- Mixed-experience groups, including new or vulnerable members



- Online discussion spaces with varied moderation

These factors require additional awareness and proportionate risk management.

Governance (Unincorporated Association)

The committee is collectively responsible for safeguarding oversight. This includes:

- Appointing a Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- Ensuring the DSL has authority to seek advice and make referrals. The DSL must have access to supervision or external advice if needed.
- Regulated Activity: The committee will assess which roles involve "regulated activity" (e.g., frequent or overnight unsupervised contact with children or adults at risk).
- Vetting: Anyone in regulated activity must undergo an Enhanced DBS check before starting their role.
- Acting promptly on concerns
- Reviewing safeguarding risks at events
- Maintaining secure safeguarding records
- Reviewing this policy annually
- Ensuring appropriate insurance arrangements
- Ensuring safeguarding is a standing agenda item at least quarterly

Committee members may bear personal responsibility if safeguarding is handled negligently.

New committee members will receive a safeguarding briefing as part of their induction.

Charity Note:

In a registered charity, safeguarding oversight is a trustee duty and may require reporting to the Charity Commission.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

DSL: [Insert Name & Contact]

Deputy DSL: [Insert Name & Contact]

Responsibilities:

- Receive and record safeguarding concerns
- Assess immediate risk
- Seek advice from Adult Social Care
- Consider whether the concern meets the threshold for a Section 42 enquiry
- Make referrals where appropriate
- Maintain confidential safeguarding records
- Brief the committee on safeguarding matters (without breaching confidentiality)
- Must keep a decision log for all safeguarding actions.
- Escalate significant concerns to the Chair



If a concern involves the DSL, report to the Chair.

The DSL has delegated authority to contact statutory services without committee approval.

The DSL should not be overruled on safeguarding decisions except by the Chair. The Chair must seek professional advice in such incidences. If the Chair is unavailable or implicated other senior members of the committee may step in.

Reporting Procedure

Recognise – Record – Report

Immediate danger: Call 999.

Record:

- Exact words used
- Observations (fact vs opinion)
- Date, time, and your name
- Any immediate actions taken

Report:

- Inform the DSL as soon as possible and within 24 hours
- Do not investigate
- Do not promise secrecy

Not all concerns require statutory referral. Lower-level concerns may be recorded and monitored. Patterns may trigger escalation.

If in doubt, report to the DSL. Do not wait for certainty. Concerns must be reported within 24 hours, sooner if possible.

Consent & Capacity

Adults with capacity should normally consent to referral.

Information may be shared without consent if:

- There is a risk of serious harm
- Others may be at risk
- A serious crime is suspected
- The person lacks capacity

Capacity is decision-specific and time-specific.

Where capacity fluctuates, the DSL should record the basis for the capacity judgement at the time of decision.

Allegations Against Members or Committee

Where concerns involve a member or committee member:



- Precautionary suspension may be applied
- Suspension is a neutral safeguarding measure
- Internal investigation will not replace statutory processes
- The Society may restrict participation in events while concerns are assessed, even if no formal suspension is applied.
- The DSL will consult Adult Social Care or the police as appropriate

Confidentiality & Records

Safeguarding information must be:

- Shared only on a need-to-know basis
- Stored securely and separately from general records and kept separately from general membership records
- Digital records must be password-protected and access limited to the DSL and Chair.
- Retained for 7 years, unless ongoing concerns require longer. Data is processed under the "Substantial Public Interest" condition (specifically for the "Safeguarding of individuals and of individuals at risk")
- Low-level concerns (which do not meet the referral threshold) will be reviewed annually to identify patterns. This ensures that minor, recurring issues—often key in identifying grooming—are not simply filed and forgotten.
- Destroyed securely when no longer required

Statement of Lawful Basis for Processing Safeguarding Data

The Society processes personal data relating to safeguarding concerns, including special category data and data relating to criminal convictions or allegations, under the '**Substantial Public Interest**' condition as defined in **Paragraph 18, Schedule 1 of the Data Protection Act 2018** (Safeguarding of children and of individuals at risk).

This processing is necessary for the purposes of:

- Protecting the physical, mental, or emotional well-being of an individual.
- Identifying and preventing abuse, neglect, or harm.
- Fulfilling our duty of care and legal obligations to report serious concerns to statutory agencies.

Safeguarding records are kept separate from general membership files, are stored securely with restricted access, and are retained in accordance with our defined retention schedule (7 years for adults, or until age 25 for children) to ensure accountability for future enquiries

Safer Working Practices

The Society will:

- Provide safeguarding awareness to committee members
- Include safeguarding in event risk assessments

- Avoid unnecessary one-to-one situations
- Ensure appropriate supervision at events
- Consider environmental risks at night-time or remote locations
- Moderate online spaces and set clear behaviour expectations
- Manage transport and lift-sharing safely
- Committee members should avoid transporting members alone unless unavoidable, risk-assessed, and recorded. Recording can be simple (e.g., minuted risk assessment, not formal document per journey)
- Have a mandatory “Buddy system” or “digital check-in” for members visiting society-own sites alone
- A lone-working protocol must be used for remote site visits

Online Safety

Online platforms must be used responsibly. The Society will:

- Set clear rules for messaging groups
- Discourage unsolicited private messaging
- Remove inappropriate content promptly
- Restrict or remove access for members who breach conduct expectations
- Record safeguarding concerns arising online
- Admins may suspend or remove access for members who repeatedly breach online conduct expectations for safeguarding reasons.
- Screenshots of concerning online behaviour should be captured and stored as evidence.
- All society-sanctioned digital communication platforms (e.g., WhatsApp groups, Discord servers) must have at least two administrators who are committee members to ensure transparency and oversight

Whistleblowing

No one will face adverse consequences for raising concerns in good faith.

Malicious or bad-faith allegations may be addressed under the Society’s conduct procedures.

Monitoring & Review

This policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if:

- Legislation changes
- An incident indicates improvement is required
- Society activities significantly change

The DSL must present an annual safeguarding summary to the committee (with no personal data).



Appendix A – Safeguarding Implementation Checklist

Governance

- DSL appointed
- Deputy DSL appointed
- Policy reviewed and minuted
- Duty of care understood by committee
- Safeguarding added as a standing agenda item, with actions recorded in the minutes
- DSL has access to external safeguarding advice if needed

Training

- Committee received safeguarding briefing
- DSL aware of referral process
- Online safety guidance reviewed

Risk Management

- Safeguarding included in event risk assessments
- Remote/night-time risks considered
- Transport/lift-sharing guidance in place
- Online platforms moderated

Records

- Secure storage agreed
- Retention period understood
- Access restricted to DSL/Chair

Insurance

- Public liability insurance active
- Insurer notified of safeguarding arrangements if required

Charity Only (if applicable)

- Trustees aware of safeguarding duties
- Serious Incident reporting process understood



Appendix B – Member Safeguarding Summary (2-Page Version)

Our Commitment

We are committed to creating a safe, respectful environment for everyone.

If you feel unsafe at an event, you may approach any committee member.

If Someone Is in Immediate Danger

Call **999**.

If You Have a Concern

- Listen calmly
- Do not promise secrecy
- Report immediately

DSL Contact:

[Insert]

If concern involves the DSL:

[Insert alternative contact]

Types of Abuse

Includes physical, sexual, emotional, financial, neglect, discriminatory, domestic, and online abuse.

Respect

All members must:

- Treat others with dignity
- Follow event guidance
- Use online spaces responsibly
- Raise concerns promptly

If in doubt, report it.

Appendix C – DSL Guidance Sheet (Internal)

Immediate Assessment

- Immediate danger? → 999
- Others at risk?
- Serious crime suspected?
- Capacity considerations?

Section 42 Consideration

Does it meet the three-part adult at risk test?

If unsure, consult Adult Social Care.

Record Keeping

Include:

- Date/time
- Who reported
- Exact words
- Observations
- Actions taken
- Record whether the adult is aware a referral may be made
- Record whether any patterns of behaviour have been identified

Store separately from general committee records.

Allegations Against Committee

- Consider precautionary suspension
- Do not conduct parallel investigations
- Refer appropriately

Annual DSL Review

- Contacts up to date
- Policy reviewed
- Records secure
- Committee briefed

DSL Capacity & Consent Checklist

Step 1: The Three-Part "Adult at Risk" Test

According to the Care Act 2014, does the individual meet all three criteria?

1. **Care and Support Needs:** Does the adult have needs for care and support (regardless of whether the local authority is meeting any of those needs)?
2. **Risk of Harm:** Is the adult experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect?
3. **Inability to Protect:** As a result of those care and support needs, is the adult unable to protect themselves from either the experience or the risk of abuse or neglect?

Step 2: Capacity Assessment (Decision-Specific)

Capacity is not "all or nothing"; it is specific to the decision being made at that particular time.

- **Understanding:** Does the person understand what a "safeguarding referral" is and why it is being suggested?
- **Retention:** Can they hold that information in their mind long enough to make a choice?
- **Reasoning:** Can they weigh the pros and cons of making a report (e.g., the benefit of protection vs. the desire for privacy)?
- **Communication:** Are they able to communicate their decision clearly?

Step 3: Justification for Sharing Without Consent

While adults with capacity should normally consent to a referral, the DSL can override a lack of consent if:

- **Serious Harm:** There is an immediate or high risk of serious harm to the individual.
- **Public Interest:** Other people, members, or the wider public may also be at risk.
- **Criminality:** A serious crime is suspected or has occurred.
- **Lack of Capacity:** The individual is assessed as lacking the capacity to make this specific decision.

DSL Decision Record

- **Does the individual consent to the referral?** [Yes / No]
- **If 'No', what is the justification for proceeding?** (e.g., "Risk to other members at the star camp" or "Suspected serious financial crime").
- **DSL Signature:** _____
- **Date:** _____



Appendix D - Confidential Safeguarding Incident Form

Strictly Confidential: This form must be stored securely and separately from general society records. Information should only be shared on a "need-to-know" basis.

1. Reporter Details

- **Name of person completing this form:** [Insert Name]
- **Date and Time of report:** [Insert Date/Time]
- **Role within Society:** (e.g., Member, Volunteer, Committee)

2. Incident Details

- **Date and Time of incident/disclosure:** [Insert Date/Time]
- **Location:** (e.g., Observing site, online platform, star camp)
- **Name of Adult at Risk:** [Insert Name]
- **Risk Level** (Low / Medium / High) For DSL completion if unsure
- **Other witnesses**
- **Evidence collected** (e.g., screenshots, photos, messages)

3. The Concern

- **Exact words used:** (If a disclosure was made, record the person's words verbatim. Do not interpret).
- **Observations (Facts):** (Describe physical marks, behaviour, or environment witnessed).
- **Observations (Opinion):** (Distinguish clearly from facts; e.g., "The individual seemed more withdrawn than usual").

4. Immediate Action

- **Actions taken:** (e.g., Called 999, separated parties, provided first aid).
- **Were any other agencies contacted?** (e.g., Police, Adult Social Care).

5. Submission

- **Reported to DSL:** [Insert DSL Name]
- **Date/Time reported to DSL:** (Must be within 24 hours of the concern).



Quick Reminder for the Reporter

- **Do not investigate:** Your role is to record, not to prove.
- **Do not promise secrecy:** Explain that you must pass this information to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to ensure their safety.
- **Secure Storage:** Once completed, this form must be handed directly to the DSL or stored in the agreed secure location.

Risk Level Guidance

- **Low Risk**
Concern involves inappropriate behaviour, boundary issues, or welfare concerns with no immediate risk of harm.
No crime suspected. Monitor and refer to DSL.
- **Medium Risk**
Adult may be experiencing abuse or neglect, but no immediate danger at the time of reporting.
Possible pattern of behaviour, coercion, or escalating concern. DSL assessment required.
- **High Risk**
Immediate risk of serious harm, ongoing abuse, or serious crime suspected.
Emergency services may need to be contacted (999).

