

Safeguarding and Protecting Members, Visitors, Volunteers and Staff and Associated Risks

1. Overview

Protecting and safeguarding all people with any connection to the British Astronomical Association is a priority. We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and adults at risk. All Trustees, staff and volunteers must take reasonable steps to prevent harm to those with whom they come into contact and to themselves. Anyone who interacts with any staff, volunteers, members, visitors or beneficiaries of the Association is instructed to follow these protocols and guidelines. Everyone has the right to protection from abuse regardless of gender, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion/ beliefs, pregnancy/ maternity and gender reassignment. This policy document is approved and endorsed by the Board of Trustees and applies to all trustees, staff and volunteers. All concerns and allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by trustees, staff and volunteers and responded to appropriately. This policy is based on the principles, legislation and guidance set out by the Charity Commission. All trustees, staff and volunteers must understand safeguarding issues and the BAA's safeguarding policies and procedures as appropriate to their roles and responsibilities.

2. Reporting

Concerns about well-being and safety should be reported to one or more of: President, Vice-President, Business Secretary, the Office Administrator and, if financial issues could potentially arise, the Treasurer. Investigations may be initiated by any of the above and should be considered at the next Board of Trustees meeting where a response will be formulated and any further investigation arranged. The President shall take the lead in investigations with the Vice-President acting as deputy.

3. Risks

Risks are described and documented in the risk register, appended to this policy document. This register should be updated as a consequence of any event, if any new circumstances arise to operational procedures, if a key policy changes, or if someone identifies a potential hazard. Note that the BAA could be subject to legal challenges if adverse events happen and the law was not followed. The Business Secretary is responsible for annually ensuring that any new members of the Board and Council are aware of this BAA policy document. The Board will review the document annually and determine any changes to risk. The document will also be reviewed after any safeguarding incident.

4. Policies

The following policies should be observed to minimise risks:

- The BAA has a commitment to safe recruitment, selection and vetting of staff, trustees and volunteers including, where applicable, use of standard application forms, face-to-face interviews for all candidates, taking up appropriate personal and professional references, verification of qualifications and checking identification using up-to-date documents such as photo driving licences and Equifax statements.

- If the premises we use are unstaffed, no member of staff or volunteer should work there alone.
- Staff and volunteers working at any site on behalf of the BAA should know: all possible escape routes, first aid contacts, the location and use of fire alarms and extinguishers.
- Children below the age of 16 must be accompanied to all meetings by an adult known to them.
- All persons or organisations in receipt of any financial award, prize, bursary, grant or donation from the BAA should be assessed to determine whether they are suitable.
- Specialist equipment, such as ramps, should be available for disabled access.
- A plan for the evacuation of any building used for meetings must encompass wheelchair users.
- Adults identified as being at-risk should be accompanied to all meetings by a nominated and approved carer.
- Solitary visitors to any location used by the BAA should be escorted in and out by a member of staff or volunteer.
- Permission to inspect BAA documents must be obtained from one of the Archivists or other persons approved by the Board.
- No member of staff or volunteer should engage in lifting or moving heavy items either in an office or off-site. Specialist removers should be called in to move any large, cumbersome or heavy objects. This applies to those working at home.
- Any member of staff or volunteer should consider whether an item to be moved at any location requires extra help or equipment. If so, then the item to be moved should remain in situ until extra help or equipment is available.
- Any person should state if they do not wish to be alone with any other person(s), named or unnamed.
- Immediate medical advice should be sought for any person involved in any accident where there is bodily injury, head trauma or loss of blood. Minor accident victims should be monitored. All accidents should be logged in the accident book.
- Any member of staff or volunteer travelling overseas on BAA business should determine: i) whether the country is safe to visit through Foreign Office guidelines, ii) whether inoculations against endemic diseases are required and, iii) whether quarantine restrictions will apply on arrival and on return to the UK.
- In time of infection Government guidelines will be reviewed prior to the resumption of any live meetings.
- If any person accuses another member, staff, volunteer, or officer of inappropriate behaviour as described in the risk register, an appropriate response should be considered at the next available Board meeting. No action should be taken until the accused has made a statement to the Board. If the Board does not uphold the complaint, the complainant should be notified. If the Board upholds the complaint, censure or expulsion from the Association are available. If a member of staff is found to be at fault, internal disciplinary procedures should be initiated. The complaint and Board decision must be recorded in the *Processes* manual.
- If any person accuses another member, staff, volunteer, or officer of illegal behaviour the matter should be reported to the police.

- If any member of staff or volunteer experiences bullying or harassment from any other person in the Association, they should report the incident(s) to any member described in **Reporting** above. The issues will be considered by the Board.
- If any member of staff or volunteer identifies a potential act of wrongdoing by another, they should be encouraged to report it as described in **Reporting**, above. The issues will be considered by the Board or, if accusations involve criminal activity, passed to the police.
- Trustees, staff and volunteers should be aware of the risks and dangers associated with bullying, health and safety, protection on-line and use of astronomical or other equipment. Any offences should be reported as described in **Reporting**, above.
- There will be no retribution for anyone making a report of malfeasance, suspected fraud, arson, sexual misconduct, paedophilia, bullying, indecency, abusive behaviour- verbal, physical or gestural, sarcasm, bathos, persiflage, time-wasting or other offence, who acts in good faith with reasonable suspicion.
- Protection of the alleged victim is paramount; information shall at all times be treated with confidentiality and will not be passed beyond the confines of the Board of Trustees, witnesses, complainant and law enforcement agencies.
- Breaching the code may result in disciplinary procedures.
- In all cases the Board should assess whether to inform the Charity Commission using the criteria specified in *How to report a serious incident in your charity* (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-report-a-serious-incident-in-your-charity>).

5. Code of conduct

The culture of the BAA is one of openness to anyone interested in Astronomy. There is no discrimination based on any human attribute or belief. We expect all those involved to be polite, honest, truthful, respectful and mindful of any disabilities in others.

Members of staff and volunteers interacting with members of the public should read the charity Commission's document *Charity Governance Code for Small charities*.

<https://www.charitygovernancecode.org/en/pdf>

They must also have read the BAA's *Health and Safety Policy*. Actions to be undertaken in the event of fire, terrorist attack, earthquake, tsunami and building collapse should be clearly stated to all attendees before any meeting begins. These should include escape routes and assembly points.

Office staff should be aware of digital safety policies and potential cyber-threats. IT support and the website administrator can provide guidance.

6. Related documents

Information not covered in this document is available in:

BAA Memorandum of Association, Articles of Association and By-laws.

BAA Health and Safety Policy.

Guide to charity trustees' responsibilities (<https://www.wrighthassall.co.uk/knowledge/legal-guides/2015/09/03/guide-charity-trustees-responsibilities/>).

Safeguarding and protecting people for charities and trustees
(<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/safeguarding-duties-for-charity-trustees>).

Risk register

Risks all relevant parties should be aware of include:

- sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation
- physical or emotional abuse
- bullying or harassment
- health and safety
- commercial exploitation
- discrimination on any of the grounds in the Equality Act 2010
- an awareness that people may target our charity for financial gain or to obtain confidential data
- an awareness that a charity's culture may allow poor behaviour
- an awareness that people may abuse a position of trust they hold
- transmission of potentially lethal contagion.

The correct response to any such risks is given under **Reporting** and described in **Policies**.

2022 February