

Governors of the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium: Armagh Planetarium Child Protection Policy

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51.1 Introduction

Every year many children and young people visit the Planetarium as part of organized groups, with family and friends and on occasions as employees or as agency staff on short-term contracts. The Governors of the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium wish to ensure that, as well as enjoying the learning experiences provided, all children are safe and protected from harm whilst visiting the premises and grounds of the Armagh Planetarium.

The following Child Protection Policy outlines the systems and procedures in place at the Planetarium in order to achieve this aim. A child for the purposes of this Policy is a person under 18 years of age or a vulnerable adult.

51.2 Child Protection Policy

The Armagh Planetarium seeks to ensure that all children visiting the Planetarium or its grounds are protected from physical, sexual and emotional harm.

In order to achieve this the Armagh Planetarium will:

- Make sure that our staff and volunteers (hereinafter referred to as staff) are carefully selected, trained in issues of Child Protection and regularly supervised.
- Ensure that staff are aware of the Child Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Give staff, parents, group leaders and any other interested parties information on the Armagh Planetarium's procedures regarding the safety of children while visiting the premises and grounds.
- Provide information to parents, group leaders and any other interested parties about the Armagh Planetarium's expectations about their Child Protection responsibilities while visiting the premises and grounds.
- Make the Armagh Planetarium complaints procedures accessible to all visitors.
- Review the Child Protection Policy and Procedures from time to time to ensure that it remains effective and modify the provisions where necessary.

51.2.1 Code of Conduct

It is impossible and inappropriate to lay down hard and fast rules to cover all circumstances in which staff interrelate with children or where opportunities for their conduct to be misconstrued might occur. In all circumstances, the professional judgement of staff has to be exercised and for the vast majority of staff this Code of Conduct will serve only to confirm what has always been their practice.

From time to time, however, it is prudent for all staff to reappraise their working styles, relationships with children and their manner and approach to individual children to ensure that they give no grounds for doubt about their intentions, in the minds of their colleagues, of children or their parents or group leaders.

Where an allegation against a member of staff over his or her conduct has occurred, an investigation will be carried out in accordance with the Code of Conduct of the Armagh Observatory and Planetarium. If the investigation finds that the member of staff has acted inappropriately or not acted in the best interests of the child, the disciplinary procedure will be invoked.

All actions concerning children must uphold the best interest of the child as a primary consideration. Staff must always be mindful of the fact that they hold a position of trust, and that their behaviour towards the children in their charge must be above reproach. This Code of Conduct is not intended to

detract from the enriching experiences children gain from a positive interaction with staff. It is intended to assist staff in respect of the complex issue of child abuse by drawing attention to the areas of risk for staff and by offering guidance on prudent conduct.

Physical Contact with Children

As a general principle, staff are advised not to make unnecessary physical contact with children. The child, parent or other casual observer may misconstrue such physical contact. It is unrealistic and unnecessary, however, to suggest that staff should touch children only in emergencies. In particular, a distressed child, especially a younger child, may need reassurance involving physical comforting, as a caring parent would provide. Staff should not feel inhibited from providing this. The main principles of touch are:

1. Touch should always be in response to the child's need.
2. Touch should always be appropriate to the age and stage of development of the child.
3. Staff should not physically restrain a child unless the restraint is to:
 - Prevent physical injury to the child, other children, visitors or to staff.
 - Prevent damage to any property.
 - Prevent or stop the commission of a criminal offence.

In all circumstances physical constraint must be appropriate and reasonable, otherwise your action can be defined as assault.

4. Staff who administer first-aid to a child should ensure wherever possible that this is done in the presence of other children or another adult. However, no member of staff should hesitate to provide first-aid in an emergency simply because another person is not present.
5. Staff should not engage in rough, physical games including horseplay with children, make sexually suggestive comments to or within earshot of a child or do things of a personal nature for children that they can do for themselves or that their parent/ group leader can do for them.

Relationships and Attitudes Staff should ensure that their relationships with children are appropriate to the age, maturity and gender of the children, taking care that their conduct does not give rise to comment or speculation. Attitudes, demeanour and language all require care and thought.

Spending time alone with children In general staff should avoid:

- spending time alone with children unless he or she can be clearly seen by others.
- having children on their own in a vehicle unless in an emergency. In such circumstances you should ensure that another member of staff or other adult is aware of the circumstances and knows where you are going.
- going into a toilet with children unless another adult is present or is aware of the circumstances and knows where you are going.

51.2.2 Selection, Training and Supervision

Selection The Armagh Planetarium has developed clearly defined recruitment and selection procedures for staff. The procedures contains the following main elements:

- The role, duties, key skills and experience of any new employee or volunteer is clearly defined and set out in job information sheets supplied with application forms.
- Posts available are advertised as widely as possible.
- Application forms have to be filled in by all applicants for posts. The application form is designed to allow applicants to provide all relevant details including personal information, education, work experience, suitability for the post and referees. All applicants are required to declare any past criminal convictions against them.
- A selection committee, comprising of at least three members and selected from different community backgrounds and genders wherever practicable, is appointed to short-list and interview candidates for posts. Short-listing and interview criteria are drawn up and candidates ranked accordingly.

- Reference forms have to be completed by referees for short-listed candidates. This is followed up orally if necessary.
- A criminal history check is required for the selected applicant for a post which has regulated activities as defined by the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (Northern Ireland) Order 2007.
- All successful candidates are supplied with copies of all employment related policies and procedures including the Child Protection Policy and Procedure when they first join the Armagh Planetarium.

Training The Armagh Planetarium will provide and explain the content of the Child Protection Policies and Procedures to all members of staff during their induction period.

Training to enable effective implementation of the Child Protection Policy and Procedures and ensure awareness of the issues involved will be provided to all staff.

Supervision The Director of the Armagh Planetarium will be responsible for ensuring that staff are made aware of and adhere to the Child Protection Policy and Procedures as appropriate to the staff job roles.

51.2.3 Suspected or Alleged Child Abuse

Suspected or alleged child abuse is a serious matter which should always be followed up with immediate action. The sooner action is taken, the more likely it is that the abuse will stop and the child will recover from his or her experiences.

Staff have a primary responsibility to report any suspected abuse to either of the two Designated Officers, the Director and the Administrator. Try to have the following important information available:

- the name and address of any child you are concerned about;
- the nature of any injury;
- the need for medical attention (if any);
- the reason for suspicion of abuse;
- what has already been done;
- any practical information you may have, such as the name of the child's doctor or General Practitioner, school etc.; and
- information as to whether or not the person against whom a suspicion, complaint or allegation exists, has any children of his or her own.

51.2.4 Designated Officers

The Designated Officers are the Director and the Administrator; their main duties are to:

- Record a disclosure of abuse made by a child to a member of staff or the suspicions a member of staff has about a child being abused.
- Seek advice from the relevant statutory agencies that have been established and are recognised as providing Child Protection and Welfare.
- Record all actions taken.
- Ensure that all written records in relation to Child Protection issues are securely and confidentially filed.
- Keep up to date with relevant Child Protection legislation and best practice.
- Co-ordinate training of staff in Child Protection.

51.2.5 Confidentiality

Staff must ensure that every effort is made to keep any information received confidential and communicate the information on a “need to know” basis. Staff should follow the following guidelines:

- Do not discuss the information reported with other members of staff who are not directly involved.
- Do not make promises to keep secrets to anyone passing on information. The general legal principle is that “the welfare of the child is paramount” and considerations of confidentiality should not be allowed to override the right of children to be protected from harm.
- Pass any information to the Designated Officers. Leave it to them to take any further action.
- Do not make direct contact with the family of a child whom the relevant statutory agencies have deemed to have been abused.

51.2.6 Lost/Found Children

Lost Children

If someone reports to you that a child in their care is missing:

- Obtain as full details as possible of the child’s name, age, name of parent or person responsible for the child, address/name of school, contact telephone and physical description of child (height, colour of hair, clothing etc.)
- On receipt of this information ask another member of staff to conduct a search. In addition announce the child’s name over the public address system asking him or her to return to reception.
- Reassure the person who reported the missing child that action is being taken to locate the child.
- Where the search does not locate the child inform the person who reported the matter and contact the local police at 028-3752-3311.

Found Children

If a child who is lost comes to you:

- Reassure the child.
- If anyone else is with the child ask them to remain with you or ask another member of staff to stay with you. If this is not practicable ensure that you are in a public area where you can be seen or heard.
- Obtain the all relevant details of the child as listed under ‘Lost Children’ above.
- Try to locate parents/person in charge. Use the public address system if necessary or ask another member of staff to locate parents/person in charge.
- If you cannot contact the parents or person in charge telephone the home or school or other contact address.
- In the event that the parent or person in charge of the child cannot be contacted telephone the local police at 028-3752-3311.
- Complete a written record of children lost/found including the action taken and send the report to the Designated Officer.

51.2.7 Health and Safety

As part of the overall duty to protect children from harm, staff must be fully aware of the procedures to be followed in the event of an emergency evacuation, outbreak of fire or an accident. These procedures are included in the Armagh Planetarium Health and Safety Policy.

In addition, the following particular arrangements are in place to ensure the health and safety of children working in the Planetarium:

Arrival the supervisor of the child will ensure that, on arrival, a copy of the Health and Safety Policy is provided and the young person will meet with the Health and Safety Officer. As well as demonstrating

the main health and safety procedures, the Health and Safety Officer will draw particular attention to the obligations of staff towards health and safety in the workplace.

Supervision the supervisor will ensure that the appropriate level of supervision is provided, taking into account the young person's lack of experience in the working environment.

Power Tools Young persons are not permitted, under any circumstances, to operate power tools or to assist in electrical work requiring technical knowledge and experience.

51.2.8 Responsibilities of Parents/Leaders in charge of Children

Whilst the Armagh Planetarium will make every effort to ensure that children visiting the premises and grounds are protected from harm, the primary responsibility for the welfare of children rests with parents/group leaders in charge. In particular parents and group leaders should ensure that:

Age of Children	Ratio of adults to children
0-2 years	1 adult to 3 children
2-3 years	1 adult to 4 children
3-7 years	1 adult to 8 children
7 years +	2 adults (preferably one of each gender) for up to 20 children and one additional staff member for every additional 10 children

- They have adequate supervision in accordance with current requirements.
- Ensure that they supervise children at all times.
- In the case of an accident contact a member of staff who will follow accident procedures.
- Refrain from having possession of or consuming alcoholic beverages or using proscribed drugs on the Armagh Planetarium premises and grounds.
- Refrain from verbally or physically abusing a child.
- Ensure that there is adequate insurance cover for a group and its leaders.
- Ensure that they carry any necessary medicine for children.
- Inform their group of the standards of behaviour expected of all visitors to the Armagh Planetarium.

51.2.9 Standards of Behaviour for all Visitors

All visitors are expected to display courtesy and respect for others while visiting the premises and grounds of the Armagh Planetarium. In particular visitors should not:

- Make any sectarian, sexist, racist or other offensive remarks to any other person or groups.
- Vandalise property of the Armagh Planetarium.
- Enter areas of the premises or grounds which are not for public access.
- Use bad language.
- Smoke.
- Consume alcohol or use proscribed drugs.
- Bully others (verbally or physically).
- Use threatening, abusive or violent behaviour.

In the event that any of the above are not followed the Armagh Planetarium reserves the right to refuse admission and/or ask the persons or groups to leave.

51.2.10 Dissemination of the Child Protection Policy

The Armagh Planetarium will advise visitors that the organisation operates a Child Protection Policy.

Every effort will be made to ensure that groups are advised of the provisions of the Policy and Procedures prior to their visit.

Copies of the Child Protection Policy and Procedures will be kept at entrance points for distribution on request.