

Thinking about a visit

This is an aide memoire to planning a visit and refers to sections and information included later in the full guidance document

The planning process

Depending on the nature of the visit this process will take place over weeks, months or even years. The quality of this process will not only determine safety but also the quality of the experience for young people. It is not meant to be arduous but must be thorough.

The outline plan

Outline plans are often useful to EVCs, and will give immediate feedback on your initial ideas, before you expend lots of energy, only to have ideas rejected. Speak to your EVC at an early stage. There should be clear links between the activities on a visit and the normal work of the school/centre. When these are clear then huge benefits to both young people and staff are realised and outcomes are successful.

When a visit has clear aims and objectives it starts to ensure safe practices.

In your school/centre there will be a clear process for approval off site visits. This is most likely to be led by the Educational Visits Co-ordinator who has been specifically trained to approve and co-ordinate visits. They may give approval or work with the Headteacher/Centre Head/Governing Body on the visit approval process. This approval process has links to the LEA.

Many EVCs will have a wide experience of visits and will be an obvious starting point for advice and information. Within your staff groups, there will be staff who have run similar visits, they may be able to offer practical guidance.

The LEA employs an Outdoor Education Adviser, who gives particular advice about outdoor education but can also offer guidance on issues relating to other visits.

Transport

As part of the planning process you will need to decide how you are going to transport your group of young people.

Public transport can be a very cost effective method of moving young people and if available should be encouraged. The use of buses and trains require planning but can show to young people that the visit can be repeated by themselves with parents/carers at a later date especially if they have no access to a car.

When booking transport, such as a coach or school minibus please follow the guidelines in Section 6. Ask your EVC/other schools for recommendations of different coach providers. If you are using a self-drive minibus then an ordinary car licence may not be adequate. Some staff may require a different license. Please see Section 6 for the current situation.

For small groups, or as a lower cost alternative, the use of taxis, with a reputable company, may be an option to consider.

Your programme

You need to consider whether the planned activities allow you to meet your aims and objectives. They should also be appropriate to the age and ability of the group.

You should consider whether you could deliver the programme with school or centre staff (and volunteers). If you do not have the necessary skills/expertise/qualifications then you will need to employ/hire appropriate staff.

Finance

The finances for an educational visit will vary depending on the visits complexity. They are an important aspect to any visit and visit leaders should plan accordingly. You will need to consider issues such as costs involved in delivering and staffing the programme, providing transport and for overnights, appropriate accommodation.

Within the programme you may have to consider the costs of entry fees or clothing/equipment hire. Transport costs will depend upon group size and form of transport required.

Whilst accommodation costs will depend on the standard and on the level of catering required, youth hostels, bunkhouses, camping and self-catering offer cheaper alternatives and often an extra dimension to a visit.

Risk management

Managing risks is not solely about completing a risk assessment form. Each visit has a number of elements and phases in the preparation and execution of the visit, when at key moments risks can be reduced. Equally, if these opportunities are missed then risks may continue unmanaged.

Section 2 contains information about key elements on how to create a good visit risk management system and advice on how to complete a risk assessment as part of this system.

Talking to young people / parents

Young people and parents need to be given information about the visit and for you to collect information such as medical and dietary requirements.

Parents will need to be informed about the financial details, which should include payment dates, insurance cover and the emergency procedures in case of a late return or accident. Parental consent must be obtained for all visits.

As inadequate clothing and equipment can have a major impact on a visit, young people's clothing and footwear should be appropriate for the time of year, the terrain and the expected weather conditions. In some cases specialist equipment will be required to ensure the success of the visit.

Involving young people in planning processes

It is good practice to involve young people in the planning process of a visit. It often means that they are better prepared and risks are reduced.

The approval process

In Cambridgeshire, visits that involve outdoor activities and visits abroad **MUST** be notified to the LEA. All other visits, local, day, residential are approved at EVC level and countersigned by the headteacher/centre manager.

The EVC plays an important role and it is, therefore, crucial that you have an early dialogue with your local EVC.

On the visit

Staffing

The LEA has clear guidance on staffing for visits and also specific adventurous activities. This also includes details on the use of volunteers. When choosing staff for a visit their ability to undertake the leadership role required must be considered.

Visit and group leaders who accept responsibility for pupils on a visit have a common law duty of care towards young people in their care. The Legal Section (Section 8) explains this more fully and how staff are protected against cases of alleged negligence.

Each visit should have a visit leader who plans and prepares the visit. They will also be responsible for briefing the group leaders and defining roles and responsibilities.

Staff acting as group leaders should be competent to undertake tasks, which have been defined by the visit leader. Working with young people is not an exact science and must be seen as an on going learning process. To support this the LEA offers a Group Leaders Course delivered by the Outdoor Education Adviser.

For certain activities there are clearly defined qualifications that leaders require. These are validated by National Governing Bodies (NGBs) for specific activities, and training courses are available through the Outdoor Education Adviser.

The programme

Deliver the programme according to the plans made. However, you may need to make changes to your original plans and update your risk assessment. You should be prepared to make adjustments. Always think about it as a dynamic process.

If things start to go wrong

Your planning and risk assessments should consider alternative plans to cope with weather changes, activities not possible or dealing with emergencies.

The LEA requires each visit to take a fully stocked first aid kit. The level of first aid knowledge required will depend upon the remoteness of the location.

Emergency procedures

If there is an accident or someone has an injury you will need to activate your emergency procedures. You should have a 24-hour accessible phone number at your school/centre that can put into action the LEA Critical Incident Plan. It is recommended that the person answering that telephone call is a senior member of staff.

Visits of a special nature

Residential

Residential require more planning time, the choice between self-led programme or using a provider to supply you with a fully inclusive package. Cambridgeshire County Council has three centres offering a residential experience and through Grafham Water centre a campsite in the Peak District.

Visits abroad

This advice covers everything from day visits to multi day expeditions. These require a longer planning phase, in some cases this may be over 12 months (eg Skiing Courses or Expeditions).

Adventurous activities

There are two options : self-programming - with the teacher/youth worker having the necessary qualifications or using an external provider to lead and teach the activity. The Outdoor Education Adviser will give specific advice on activities or providers if required.

Using an outside organisation

For some schools this may be the only option open to them.

LEA centres

LEAs often run one or more day and residential centres. These are often for sole use of their LEA but some offer space to outside groups. Normally the quality of the learning experience is some of the best available.

Cambridgeshire has three centres, which are staffed by LEA employees. The LEA also has several day centres offering a variety of experiences.

If you wish to use another LEA centre, details can be found on the Association of Heads of Centres website www.ahoec.org The Association also shares good practice.

Commercial / charitable organisations

If you are using a non LEA organisation you need to ensure that they are able to meet the educational aims and objectives of your visit. It is good practice to receive a number of quotations to ensure that you are getting best value for your visit.

Farm visits

The DfES has specific advice for farm visits in the hand book for group leaders. (DfES 2002). Also see Section 4, Para 19.

THIS SECTION GIVES PROSPECTIVE LEADERS AN INSIGHT INTO EDUCATIONAL VISITS. IF YOU DECIDE TO GO AHEAD WITH A VISIT, IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU NOW READ SECTION 2 "HOW TO ORGANISE A VISIT"



