

Chapter 7 - Selection and suitability of accommodation or venue to be visited

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS – see rest of chapter below for full details

- As part of the overall risk assessment process, and in keeping with their legal duty of care, **the Overall Group Leader must take reasonable steps to check that any accommodation used, and any venues that the group plans to visit, are suitable, satisfactory, and acceptably safe.**
- **Evidence of the standard and safety of services provided can be obtained by using one or more of the following means:**
 - **check the provider's website** for relevant information and assurances
 - **check any literature** that has been provided by the organisation for visiting groups
 - **check if the provider has a Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge.** It is not usually necessary to ask for further assurances regarding safety standards if the provider has already been inspected and awarded an LOtC Badge, but it might still be useful to visit the venue or request other information as part of the visit planning.
 - **email/write to the manager** of the organisation to request information and assurances
 - **ask the manager of the company/organisation to complete a Provider Statement Form (EV2)** – see appendix VGA 7.1;
 - **carry out a pre- visit inspection;**
 - **carry out an on-site visual inspection on arrival,** and ongoing checks during the visit;
 - **use experience from previous visits by the same leader;**
 - **use experience from previous visits by other groups** or other leaders from the same school/establishment.
- **It is important to obtain written assurances that:**
 - **third party providers have adequate liability insurance;**
 - **accommodation or venues visited are managed safely and are suitable for the group;**
 - **activities are led by staff who are appropriately qualified and competent, and that adventure activities are safely managed and correctly licensed (if applicable);**
 - **third party providers have carried out appropriate risk assessments.** It is not normally necessary to ask external providers to send copies of their own risk assessments. However, it may be helpful for the visit organiser to read through relevant sections of the organisation's risk assessments to inform their own risk assessment. Many providers provide an information pack for visiting group leaders to assist them with their planning, and this might provide sufficient information and assurances regarding the standard of services. If any activity will be delivered by the visit leaders themselves, all significant risks must be identified and assessed, with appropriate control measures implemented.
- **Wherever reasonably possible, the Visit Organiser (and, perhaps other group leaders too) should undertake an exploratory visit to inspect and familiarise themselves with the accommodation to be used and venues to be visited.** If it is not reasonably practicable for an exploratory visit to be undertaken beforehand (e.g. for some overseas visits), Group Leaders should obtain adequate information and assurances from the travel company/tour operator/provider regarding the safety and suitability of the planned accommodation and travel arrangements (the EV2 Provider Statement form can sometimes be used for this purpose and it may also be valuable to seek impartial advice and guidance from previous users of the accommodation/venue). Leaders should be particularly alert to hazards that become apparent at venues that they have not been able to visit or check beforehand.
- Leaders should be aware that residential visits normally involve a greater degree of planning and preparation by virtue of their extended nature, and the broader implications of welfare issues. **A record of the address and contact details of any residential accommodation used should be left with the Emergency Home Contact(s),** and this information should also be recorded and accessible, via EVOLVE online, to the Headteacher/Manager, Governors, and Local Authority.
- **For further information, see also the Outdoor Education Adviser Panel national guidance via the webpage:**
<https://www.oeapng.info>

7. Selection and suitability of accommodation or venue to be visited

7.1 Who is responsible for checking the safety and suitability of accommodation or venues to be visited?

- As part of the overall risk assessment process, and in keeping with their legal duty of care, the Overall Group Leader must take reasonable steps to check that any accommodation (e.g. youth hostel) that is used, and any venues (e.g. castles or museums) that the group plans to visit, are suitable, satisfactory, and acceptably safe.
- All those responsible for the assessment and approval of a visit (e.g. EVC, Headteacher/Manager, Governors, and Local Authority) need to be satisfied that adequate checks have been carried out and appropriate precautions taken.
- In the event of an accident, it is possible that the Overall Group Leader might be deemed negligent if appropriate and reasonable steps were not taken, during the planning and course of the visit, to check the safety of the services provided - for example, if blocked fire exits in a hotel caused the injury or death of a pupil, a degree of liability could potentially be placed upon the leader in charge for failing either to check beforehand if the hotel had a fire certificate, or check after arrival that the fire exits were clear.

7.2 Which accommodation/venues should be checked?

- Leaders can only be expected to make checks that are reasonable, and proportionate to the circumstances. Hence, it might be sensible to check the main accommodation providers and venues where the group will spend a significant amount of time, or sites that are unfamiliar, or where unusual significant hazards may be present, but it would be impractical and unreasonable to make prior checks on every service station that the group might stop at en route.

7.3 What needs to be checked?

- The Overall Group Leader should normally check and, wherever possible, obtain written assurances that the activity or accommodation provider or venue, for example:
 - has a satisfactory health and safety policy;
 - complies with Health and Safety legal regulations and requirements;
 - has recorded written risk assessments and that significant risks have been identified and controlled adequately;
 - has adequate accident and emergency procedures;
 - communicates and liaises effectively with group leaders;
 - maintains vehicles to recognise standards and meet with statutory requirements;
 - carries out adequate checks regarding the suitability of staff to work with young people;
 - has sufficient public liability insurance;
 - has no previous or outstanding claims for negligence against them;
 - can provide the name of past users of service, who can give impartial references;
 - has completed adequate fire risk assessments;
 - has been inspected and approved by the environmental health officer;
 - provides adequate security arrangements (especially overnight);
 - provides adequate and appropriate sleeping arrangements.
 - provides activities that are led by staff who are suitably vetted and appropriately qualified and competent, and that adventure activities are safely managed and correctly licensed (if applicable). If any activity will be delivered by the visit leaders themselves, all significant risks must be identified and assessed, with appropriate control measures implemented.

7.4 How can services be checked?

- Evidence of the standard and safety of services provided can be obtained by using one or more of the following means:
 - check the provider's website for relevant information and assurances
 - check any literature that has been provided by the organisation for visiting groups
 - check if the provider has a Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge. The LOtC Quality Badge is a nationally recognised accreditation scheme which aims to assist schools in identifying providers who deliver good quality teaching and learning experiences and manage risk effectively. Badge holders usually display the logo on their website and advertising literature. Further information about the LOtC Badge, and a complete list of all

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badge holders is available via the website www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk. It is not usually necessary to ask for further assurances regarding safety standards if the provider has already been inspected and awarded an LOfC Badge, but nonetheless it might still be useful to visit the venue or request other specific information as part of the visit planning process.

- email or write to the manager of the organisation to request information and assurances
- ask the senior manager of the company/organisation to complete a Provider Statement Form (EV2) – see appendix VGA 7.1;
- carry out a pre- visit inspection;
- carry out an on-site visual inspection on arrival, and ongoing checks during the visit;
- use experience from previous visits by the same leader;
- use experience from previous visits by other groups or other leaders from the same school/establishment.
- A combination of these methods will normally be required.

7.5 What is the Service Provider Assurance Form (EV2) for? – see appendix VGA 7.1

- The Service Provider form is just one tool that may be useful for checking the services and safety of a provider, and should be used only when sufficient information and assurances cannot be obtained from other sources (such as the provider's website).
- The Provider Statement form (EV2) can be sent to the manager of a place of accommodation or a venue to be visited, requesting signed, written assurances regarding the venue/accommodation's safety management systems and operating procedures. This includes assurances that any planned activities are led by staff who are suitably vetted and appropriately qualified and competent, and that providers of adventure activities are correctly managed and licensed (if applicable).
- A leader cannot reasonably be expected to carry out detailed checks of a venue's safety management systems (e.g. testing the fire extinguishers) – that is the responsibility of technical experts who are specifically qualified and trained to carry out such tasks. However, it is reasonable to ask the manager who is responsible for the accommodation/venue to confirm that these checks have been carried out, and to provide evidence by means of signed, written assurances.
- To avoid unnecessary administration time and paperwork, and the need for repetition on future occasions, managers of accommodation/venues are encouraged to place and maintain current statements of safe practice and quality assurance (together with details of their risk assessments and safety management systems, if available) on their own website. This ensures that up-to-date information is always available and accessible to potential users of the service.
- In such circumstances, it should be sufficient for the Overall Group Leader to check these assurances via the website (a printed copy is not necessarily required, because, in the event of an investigation, an audit trail should establish that such assurances were present).
- It is not necessary to request a provider's risk assessments, as these are primarily for the provider's own use. However, it is important to obtain written assurances that the provider has carried out appropriate risk assessments, and it might be helpful for the visit organiser to read through the organisation's risk assessments to inform their own risk assessment. Many providers provide an information pack for visiting group leaders to assist them with their planning, and this might provide sufficient information and assurances regarding the standard of services.
- The Overall Group Leader should check the completed form or website, and ensure that the assurances given are satisfactory and adequate, and address any concerns, as necessary.
- Users who have obtained a Provider Statement from an organisation should not normally need to request this again for subsequent visits – only if a significant time period (perhaps 5 years) has elapsed, or if there has been a change in management or services provided, or if concerns have been raised by other users.

7.6 Pre visit inspection

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- Wherever reasonably possible, the Visit Organiser (and, perhaps other group leaders too) should undertake an exploratory visit to inspect and familiarise themselves with the accommodation to be used and venues to be visited.
- This enables the Leaders to:
 - check that the venue is suitable to meet the aims of the visit, and to agree how the visit objectives can best be fulfilled;
 - ensure, at first hand, that the venue is reasonably safe,
 - confirm that the venue is suitable and can cater for the needs of all group members (particular consideration may need to be given to access issues for any disabled members of the group);
 - identify potential hazards, assess levels of risk, and seek appropriate risk management solutions;
 - discuss and resolve any areas of concern with the venue manager;
 - become familiar with the venue and surrounding area before the planned visit.
- If it is not reasonably practicable for an exploratory visit to be undertaken beforehand (e.g. for some overseas visits), Group Leaders should obtain adequate information and assurances from the travel company/tour operator/provider regarding the safety and suitability of the planned accommodation and travel arrangements (the EV2 Provider Statement form can sometimes be used for this purpose and it may also be valuable to seek impartial advice and guidance from previous users of the accommodation/venue). In these circumstances, the Group Leaders should also carefully assess the safety and suitability of the venue (e.g. fire exits, smoke alarms, overnight security, balconies, swimming pools) on arrival, and then manage the risks (including briefing group members) accordingly – if the venue is considered unsuitable or unsafe, the visit organiser might require changes to be made, or even a change of venue.
- For an independently organised visit abroad (i.e. no travel company involved), a pre-visit inspection of the accommodation and venues to be visited is recommended. However, if this is not feasible, the Visit Organiser should obtain sufficient information to make a reasonable and acceptable risk assessment – this information may be obtained from the venue itself (the EV2 form may need to be translated into the local language), from other groups that have recently visited it, and from local organisations, such as tourist boards. It may be impractical to organise pre-visits to less developed countries, and information about providers may not be readily available by other means.

7.7 On-site visual inspections on arrival, and ongoing risk assessment during the visit

- The leaders should be made aware of the need to always maintain an ongoing risk assessment during the visit, even if the accommodation or venue has been pre-visited, or checked by means of a completed EV2 form. Circumstances and conditions may have changed since earlier inspection visits, and additional unforeseen hazards may be present. Leaders should be particularly alert to hazards that become apparent at venues that they have not been able to visit or check beforehand.

7.8 Using experience from previous visits

- For groups that return regularly to the same accommodation or venues, there is usually no need to conduct pre-visit inspections or to send an EV2 form on every occasion, but Visit Organisers should beware of complacency, and check carefully with the manager of the accommodation/venue to see if significant changes have occurred, and what impact they might have upon the group's visit.
- The Overall Group Leader should ensure that any new leaders involved are suitably briefed and given time to familiarise themselves.
- Using past experience from other groups that have used the accommodation or visited the venue before may be helpful, but it is seldom sufficient to complete an accurate and effective risk assessment of the location, and to fully assess its suitability for your own group.
- Leaders should be particularly wary of using previous experience that is not very recent, as conditions and circumstances change.

7.9 Residential Visits

- Leaders should be aware that residential visits normally involve a greater degree of planning and preparation by virtue of their extended nature, and the broader implications of welfare issues.
- A record of the address and contact details of any residential accommodation used should be left with the Emergency Home Contact(s), and this information should also be recorded and accessible, via EVOLVE online, to the Headteacher/Manager, Governors, and Local Authority.
- The Overall Group Leader must ensure that:
 - the whole team of Assistant Leaders and Volunteer Leaders are well prepared and understand the strong commitment involved to extended supervision and general care;
 - the accommodation is suitable for the particular group members and accompanying adults (in particular, check the suitability of fire doors/escapes, smoke/fire alarms, security arrangements - especially overnight, windows, balconies, stairs/lifts, grounds, recreation rooms, parking/nearby roads).
 - all group members are made aware of security arrangements and emergency evacuation procedures. It is good practice, wherever possible, to carry out a practice fire evacuation procedure shortly after arrival.

OFFSITE / EDUCATIONAL VISITS SERVICE PROVIDER ENQUIRY FORM EV2

This form is NOT normally required for providers that hold a valid Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge. Details of the badge and a list of badge holders can be found at www.lotcqualitybadge.org.uk

Information requested by (name of visit organiser): Position:
 Name of establishment (school/service).....
 Address.....
 Telephone number..... Email address:.....
 Proposed date(s) of visit:.....

To the Director/Senior Manager.....(Company Name)

Please answer the questions below to provide assurances regarding the safety and quality of services you provide. Complete those sections that are relevant to your organisation. State "Yes", "No", or "N/A" or comment as applicable.

DETAILS OF ORGANISATION/COMPANY THAT IS PROVIDING A SERVICE	
Name of organisation (external service provider or tour operator)	
Address of organisation:	
Telephone Number:	Email address:
Website address:	

SECTION A - ALL VISITS (to be completed by ALL providers)

Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge

1. Do you hold a current and valid Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge?

N.B. If yes, you need only complete Section A and the confirmation

Health, Safety and Emergency Policies

2. Do you comply with relevant health and safety regulations, including the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and associated regulations?
3. Do you have a health and safety policy, and recorded risk assessments which are available, if requested, for inspection?
4. Do you have clear accident and emergency procedures and records that are available, if requested, for inspection?

Communications and Liaison

4. Will you ensure that all essential information is communicated to the Visit Organiser before and during the visit, and that there are regular opportunities for liaison with the Visit Organiser regarding the group's needs?

Vehicles, Staffing and Insurance

5. Are all vehicles to be used by groups maintained in a roadworthy condition, and do they comply with all relevant statutory requirements, including any regulations on passenger seats and seat restraints?
6. Are staff who have access to young people checked for relevant criminal history and their suitability for work with young people?
7. Do you hold public liability insurance for at least £5 million which will be current during the proposed visit, and which covers all directly provided and sub-contracted activities? If < £5 million, state indemnity level:

Allegations, Claims and Investigations

8. Have there been any successful claims for negligence made against your organisation in the past 10 years? – if so, give details:
9. Are there any outstanding investigations into claims of negligence? – if so, give details:

References

10. If possible, please give contact details below of the leader of one school or other young people's group that has used your organisation's services recently, and has agreed to give impartial feedback about the service provided, if requested:

SECTION B – TOUR OPERATORS (to be completed only by tour operators)

Where a tour operator delivers services to schools using other providers e.g. using ski schools, transport operators or accommodation, the tour operator must ensure that each provider meets the relevant specifications outlined above and that these providers operate to standards which meet the relevant regulations which apply to the country of operation.

1. Have all the relevant parts of sections A, C and D been completed to show that suitable and sufficient checks have been made of services that you use or provide, and records of which are available for inspection?
2. Do you comply with Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992 and the Foreign Package Holidays Order 2001, including bonding to safeguard customers' monies?
3. Please provide ATOL, ABTA or other bonding names and numbers below:

SECTION C - ACCOMMODATION (to be completed only by providers of residential accommodation)

Fire Safety, Environmental Health and Security

1. (In UK) Does your accommodation comply with current fire regulation requirements and recommendations and is there an up to date fire risk assessment?
2. (Overseas) Does any accommodation to be used comply with the legal, fire, health and safety regulations which apply in the country concerned, and are those standards comparable to those in the EU?
3. Are there security arrangements in place to prevent unauthorised persons entering the accommodation?
4. Are separate male and female sleeping accommodation and washing facilities provided, and is staff accommodation sufficiently close to the young peoples' accommodation for adequate supervision?

SECTION D – ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES AND FIELD STUDIES IN OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENTS

(to be completed only by providers of adventurous or hazardous activities)

Licensing and Accreditation and Operating Procedures

1. Does the organisation hold a current, valid licence from the Adventure Activities Licensing Service for all the activities to be undertaken that require licensing?
2. The AALS Licence number is:
3. Name any other accreditation that the organisation holds for non licensable activities (e.g. BAHA, ROSPA):

4. Does the organisation maintain written risk assessments and operating procedures for activities which are consistent with relevant NGB guidelines and/or, if abroad, the relevant regulations of the country concerned?
5. Where there is no National Governing Body for an activity, are operating procedures and staff training and assessment requirements clearly explained in the organisation's code of practice?

Activity Programme and Equipment

6. Within the programme, are there activities that the visiting staff will be responsible for leading, and for which they might need to carry out a specific risk assessment? - (if "yes", details should be given separately)
7. Are the details of any special/medical needs requested of all the participants, and is all relevant information passed on to the instructors of activities?
8. Is the programme flexible, and are there suitable contingency plans in place to take account of changes in circumstances e.g. weather conditions?
9. Are the responsibilities of service provider and visiting staff (e.g. regarding supervision and welfare of participants) clearly outlined in advance of a visit?
10. Does all activity equipment conform to recognised standards, and is it maintained in accordance with statutory requirements and current good practice, with appropriate records kept of maintenance checks?

Staff Qualifications, Training and Competence

11. Is there a suitably qualified person, such as a chief instructor, identified as the key person responsible for the supervision of staff leading activities?
12. Does the organisation operate a policy for staff recruitment, training and assessment which ensures that all staff with a responsibility for participants are competent and qualified to undertake their duties?
13. Are staff competences confirmed by appropriate NGB qualifications for the activities to be undertaken, and/or have staff had their competences confirmed by an appropriately experienced and qualified technical adviser?
14. Will participants have access at all times to a person with a current first aid qualification and who is practised and competent in accident and emergency procedures?

SECTION E - FURTHER INFORMATION (to be completed by any provider with additional information)

1. If any of the above specifications cannot be met or are not applicable, please explain and give details below:
2. Please state below details of any other accreditation with national governing bodies, tourist boards etc:

SECTION F - CONFIRMATION	
Name of Senior Manager who has completed form:	Job Title/Position of the above within the organisation:
"I confirm that the details given above are correct and that our organisation will give prior notification of any significant changes that might adversely affect the safety and well being of user groups".	
Signature of Senior Manager who has completed this form:	
Date when this form was completed or last amended:	

Thank you for completing this form – please return to the Visit Organiser (see address at top of page)

For further assistance, contact the East Riding of Yorkshire LA Educational Visits Officer (Tel. 01482 392417)