

Chapter 15 - Briefing and Preparation of Group Members**SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS – see rest of chapter below for full details**

- **The Overall Group Leader should ensure that all group members are fully briefed, and understand key information about the visit or activity (for example, the planned transport, accommodation, activity, and supervision arrangements) – see checklist at end of chapter.**
- **It is good practice, wherever possible, to involve young people (whatever their age) in the planning and organisation of a visit, and for them to understand the aims and objectives of the visit.**
- **The Visit Leaders should ensure that any activities during the visit are suitable and appropriate for the individuals involved, and that group members understand what will be involved so that they are fully prepared.**
- **Group members should be informed what clothing and equipment they should or should not bring with them.**
- **Visit Leaders should ensure that group members bring any personal medication that they might need, and that suitable arrangements are made to administer it.**
- **It is important for young people to learn how to recognise hazards and to manage risks sensibly and responsibly so that they become “risk aware” rather than “risk averse”. It is important therefore to involve group members in the risk assessment process, so that they become skilled in identifying hazards and managing risks themselves.**
- **During any time that remote supervision takes place the visit leader should ensure that group members are aware of the supervision and emergency contact arrangements, and that they have the necessary skills, maturity, responsibility, knowledge and equipment to operate safely as an independent individual/group.**
- **Group members should be clearly briefed what to do if an emergency occurs, especially if they have become separated from the group, or if an accident occurs during a period of remote supervision.**
- **Group members should know how to contact the Visit Leaders at all times, and there should be clear rules regarding the use of mobile phones during a visit.**
- **Group members should be aware of the planned travel arrangements and of basic safety rules for using transport – for example, the use of seat belts on coaches.**
- **Group members on visits should understand and accept the need for sensible and responsible behaviour. Leaders must therefore ensure that group members clearly understand what will be considered unacceptable behaviour or conduct, and the consequences of non-compliance. Leaders might ask group members to sign an agreed code of conduct and behaviour.**
- **Visit leaders should explain clearly any set boundaries, and ensure that group members fully understand the location of any significant hazards and any places where they are not allowed to go.**
- **“Buddy systems” are an effective means of promoting safety and welfare within the group.**

15.1 Involving young people in planning and preparation

- It is good practice, wherever possible, to involve young people (whatever their age) in the planning and organisation of a visit.
- It provides an important and valuable means for young people to learn about:
 - ✓ teamwork
 - ✓ leadership
 - ✓ problem solving
 - ✓ planning
 - ✓ risk assessment and management
- As a consequence, young people are likely to be:
 - ✓ better prepared and equipped
 - ✓ more understanding of and responsive to leaders' decisions
 - ✓ more responsible
 - ✓ better able to make informed decisions and judgements
 - ✓ less at risk.
- For residential and overseas visits, it is particularly valuable to establish good leader-group relationships, based upon trust and respect, during the preparations for the visit.
- A series of pre-visit meetings and training sessions may be appropriate to build up an effective, cooperative team spirit.
- For overseas visits, pre-visit briefings can also be an invaluable means of developing an understanding of the language and an appreciation of the culture of the country(ies) to be visited.
- All of these factors can have a significant impact upon the success and safety of a visit.
- It is also valuable to involve group members in any post-visit evaluation and review, so that feedback can be shared, and appropriate lessons can be learned (see also chapter VG 20 "Post visit review and evaluation").

15.2 Ensuring activities are suitable

- The Overall Group Leader should ensure that any activities during the visit are suitable and appropriate for the individuals involved.
- It is important therefore for the leaders to have a good knowledge and understanding of each group members' character, and of their individual abilities, strengths, and weaknesses (for example, whether they are confident and competent swimmers).
- Group members should be capable of undertaking the proposed activity with respect to their:
 - ✓ age
 - ✓ size
 - ✓ ability
 - ✓ maturity
 - ✓ strength and fitness
 - ✓ attitude and motivation
- Young people may be encouraged to take on appropriate challenges, but they should not be pressured into activities of which they have a genuine fear, or for which they are physically or emotionally unsuited.

15.3 Providing information to group members

- Providing relevant information and guidance to group members is an important part of preparing for an offsite visit.
- A suggested checklist is available in appendix VGA 15.1 (at the end of this chapter)
- The Overall Group Leader should ensure that all group members are fully briefed, and understand key information about the visit or activity, including:
 - group members/numbers
 - the aims of the visit/activity;
 - what leaders are responsible for the overall group and each sub-group;
 - background information about the venue/dates/activities;
 - travel arrangements/times etc.;
 - accommodation arrangements;

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- activity leadership/supervision arrangements (if appropriate);
 - buddy systems (in which group members are give specific responsibilities to look out for and care for each other);
 - any specific dangers/concerns, and what safety precautions should be taken (and why);
 - any rules and procedures that need to be followed (and why);
 - expected standard of behaviour (and why);
 - consequences of unacceptable behaviour;
 - specific individual responsibilities;
 - what items of clothing, equipment, or personal medication should/should not be taken;
 - what food/drink should/should not be taken;
 - purchase and use of drugs/alcohol/tobacco
 - what pocket money should be taken, and how/when it should be stored/accessed/carried/used;
 - rendezvous procedures;
 - what to do if separated from the group;
 - what to do if approached by a stranger;
 - emergency procedures;
 - parent contact arrangements;
 - use of personal mobile phones and cameras and social network sites (such as Facebook);
 - drop off/pick up arrangements;
 - contingencies in case of delayed departure/return;
 - basic foreign words and relevant foreign culture (if abroad);
 - homestay/exchange arrangements (if appropriate).
- If group members are not able to attend briefing meetings, the relevant information should be made available to them at another time. It is therefore sensible to complete a register of attendance, and to provide written information sheets for all, with an outline of the key issues raised.
 - It might be appropriate in some cases to establish an agreed code of conduct and behaviour which group members are required to sign. Again, this is often more effective if group members themselves are involved in the discussions and decision-making process.
 - If there is a change to the planned programme, group members should be informed and provided with relevant information.

15.4 Involving group members in the assessment of risks and benefits

- As indicated above, group members who are involved in a visit's planning and organisation, will be better prepared, and are likely to be at less risk. It is therefore good practice to involve group members appropriately in the risk assessment and management process.
- This involvement might be:
 - during the initial planning stage, as part of their teambuilding and leadership training;
 - when the group are briefed, shortly before departure, or on arrival at the destination;
 - an ongoing process during the visit, as new situations arise (e.g. "What do you think are the potential dangers here?" "Is it safe to continue?" "What can we do to reduce/manage the risks?").
- It is important for young people to learn how to recognise hazards and to manage risks sensibly and responsibly so that they become "risk aware" rather than "risk averse". It is also important for young people to learn to value challenges and to enjoy the satisfaction of overcoming difficulties. Young people should therefore be encouraged to consider both the risks involved and the potential value and benefits of an activity before deciding whether to continue.
- Adventure activities in particular provide excellent opportunities to learn practical risk assessment and management skills, which are often relevant and transferable to other aspects of life.

15.5 Preparing group members for remote supervision (see also sections VG 8.2 and VG 6.12)

- Remote supervision may be integral to some visits or activities, especially those involving older groups, or where teaching independence and self-reliance forms part of the visit objectives (e.g. Duke of Edinburgh Award expeditions). At such times, Group Leaders still

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remain responsible for the health, safety, and welfare of young people, and must follow the normal planning and approval procedures.

- During any time that remote supervision takes place the visit leader should ensure that group members are aware of the supervision and emergency contact arrangements, and that they have the necessary skills, maturity, responsibility, knowledge and equipment to operate safely as an independent individual/group.
- The Overall Group Leader should ensure that group members have:
 - ✓ the knowledge, experience and competence to act safely and independently in a particular situation;
 - ✓ knowledge and understanding of agreed rules, boundaries and procedures;
 - ✓ a designated leader within the group, with clearly defined responsibilities;
 - ✓ emergency first aid guidance, training and equipment as appropriate to the activity;
 - ✓ maps, route plans, directions and any other navigational information;
 - ✓ written details of the drop off/pick up times/places and all other arranged rendezvous times/places;
 - ✓ written details of emergency procedures and contact details(group (see Appendix VGA 15.2 - Personal I.D. and Emergency Contact card).
 - ✓ mobile phone (or in some cases perhaps a 2-way radio);
 - ✓ suitable clothing, equipment, food and personal medication.
- It is important that group members are instructed to remain in their allocated groups (normally a minimum of 3, depending upon the group, the location and the activity). The group must be told not split up, unless in an emergency, and even then not to go alone.
- The group members must be given clear instructions about permitted activities and unacceptable behaviour.

15.6 Briefing group members regarding emergency procedures

- Group members should be clearly briefed what to do if an emergency occurs, especially if they have become separated from the group, or if an accident occurs during a period of remote supervision.
- Whilst many group members may own mobile phones, leaders must consider carefully if these should be permitted on a visit, as they might have potential drawbacks, as well as benefits.
- If mobile phones are permitted, however, group members should be given clear instructions regarding what circumstances they can and cannot be used.
- It is often helpful for each group member to be given a personal I.D. or Emergency Contact Card to carry in case they become separated from the rest of the group (see Appendix VGA 15.2 - Personal I.D. and Emergency Contact card). This particularly applies to certain types of visit – for example, involving:
 - overseas travel
 - foreign exchanges
 - remote supervision
 - large towns/cities
 - large complex sites (e.g. theme parks) where group members may easily get lost
 - residential accommodation
 - younger aged group members
- For overseas visits, it may helpful to include a section that has been translated into the local language to enable locals to understand immediately what is required if the young person is separated from the group or is involved in an accident.
- Depending upon the visit, it might be useful to provide group members with the following information :
 - address and telephone number of the accommodation base
 - mobile telephone number(s) of the leaders' work phones
 - address of an arranged meeting point
 - telephone number of Consulate
 - contact details of the British Embassy
- Briefing group members on transport arrangements - group members should be aware of basic safety rules for using transport, including:
 - arrive on time and wait in a safe place;

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- do not rush towards the vehicle as it arrives;
- wear seatbelts and stay seated during journey;
- luggage must be stored safely and securely so that it does not obstruct aisles or exits;
- do not attempt to get on or off a moving vehicle;
- do not lean out of or throw things from vehicle windows;
- do not throw things within the vehicle;
- do not tamper with vehicle windows, safety equipment or emergency exits;
- do not get off vehicle stopped at traffic lights or in traffic;
- do not get on or off the vehicle until instructed to do so by the driver or leader;
- do not distract or disturb the driver or impede the driver's vision;
- stay clear of doors after boarding or leaving the vehicle;
- after leaving the vehicle, always wait for it to move away before crossing the road;
- if you feel unwell during the journey inform a group leader
- when overseas, comply with any specific traffic laws and procedures that apply in foreign countries (see section on "Transport Abroad" in chapter VG 12 "Transport").
- The visit leader should ensure that group members know what to do if they miss the scheduled departure time, or if the return is delayed.
- If a vehicle, in which the group is travelling, breaks down or is involved in an accident, group members must be given clear instructions in order to safeguard them from injury. Wherever possible and safe to do so, passengers should exit the vehicle and remain in a suitable safe place off the road (preferably beyond a safety barrier) until help arrives.

15.7 Briefing group members regarding conduct and behaviour

- Group members on visits should understand and accept the need for sensible and responsible behaviour. Leaders should therefore ensure that group members clearly understand what will be considered unacceptable behaviour or conduct, and the consequences of non-compliance.
- Group members should understand that if they behave in a manner that is likely to put the health, safety or welfare of themselves or others at risk, it may result in them being sent home, or being stopped from joining a visit or activity. In the event of this happening during a visit or activity, appropriate arrangements should be made to return them to the school/establishment or home.
- Although staying up late may be seen as an integral element of residential visits, leaders and group members must be made aware of, and should not underestimate, the possible implications for safety if group members are overtired, especially if staff are involved in driving or leading adventurous/hazardous activities.
- In some situations, it might be appropriate to clarify specific behaviour requirements, by establishing a written code of conduct, and requiring group members to give their signed agreement to it. This may be particularly relevant for older groups.
- Particular areas of concern that may need addressing include:
 - smoking
 - alcohol/drugs/"legal highs"
 - bedtime/lights out
 - remaining in bedrooms
 - sexual relations
 - fire alarms
 - windows/balconies
 - language/swearing
- Group members should be made aware that any consumption of alcohol or use of drugs might well invalidate their insurance cover.

15.8 Briefing group members regarding their responsibilities

- Group members should be made aware that they have a responsibility to:
 - ✓ behave sensibly and responsibly at all times;
 - ✓ follow the instructions of the Group Leaders and other supervising adults, including those at any venue;
 - ✓ comply with established "buddy systems" throughout the duration of the visit (see below for details);

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- ✓ comply with the instructions and procedures provided by any external service providers (e.g. coach company, residential accommodation or activity centre);
- ✓ report anything that may harm anyone to the Group Leaders;
- ✓ dress as appropriate, and bring recommended clothing and equipment, as requested;
- ✓ be sensitive to local codes and customs, especially abroad;
- ✗ not take unnecessary risks that might affect the health and safety of themselves or other members of the group;
- ✗ not take or consume any alcohol or other substance that might jeopardize the health and safety of themselves or other members of the group;
- ✗ not carry or take any personal medication without the prior consent of their parents/guardians/carers, and without first informing the Overall Group Leader;
- ✗ not to bring knives or other dangerous items that might affect the health and safety of themselves or other members of the group;

15.9 Operating “buddy systems”

- “Buddy systems” are an effective means of promoting safety and welfare within the group. Group members are divided into “buddy groups”, usually of 4 to 5 young people, with the aim that they remain together and look after each other throughout the visit (including whilst travelling and during rest stops)
- Staff might want to insist that groups are of mixed age, so that older group members can provide additional support and supervision for younger ones.
- An adult Group Leader is usually designated to supervise and be responsible for each buddy group.
- Group members should report any concerns or problems to their adult supervisor.

Suggested checklist for briefing of group members

- Aims of the visit/activity
- Group members/numbers/ages and buddy groups
- Leaders responsible for the overall group/sub-groups
- Venue/activities/dates/times
- Travel arrangements/times
- Accommodation arrangements
- Activity leadership/supervision arrangements, including any periods of remote supervision (if appropriate);
- Specific dangers/concerns, and safety precautions
- Rules, boundaries, and procedures
- Expected code of conduct and standards of behaviour
- Consequences of unacceptable behaviour
- Use of alcohol/cigarettes/drugs/legal highs
- Specific individual responsibilities
- Clothing, equipment, or personal medication that should/should not be taken
- Food/drink that should/should not be taken
- Pocket money - how much, and how/when it should be stored/accessed/carried/used
- Rendezvous procedures
- What to do if separated from the group
- What to do if approached by a stranger
- Emergency procedures
- Parent contact arrangements
- Use of personal mobile phones/cameras/internet/social network sites
- Drop off/pick up arrangements
- Contingencies in case of delayed departure/return
- Basic foreign words and relevant foreign culture (if abroad)
- Homestay/exchange/passport/visa arrangements (if appropriate)

Personal I.D. and Emergency Contact Cards (photocopiable templates)

FRONT OF CARD

IDENTIFICATION CARD	
Name:	_____
Establishment:	_____
Group Leader:	_____
Emergency Phone:	_____
Establishment Phone:	_____
Accommodation:	_____

BACK OF CARD

VISIT INFORMATION	
Meeting Point:	_____
Meeting Time:	_____ am/pm
Coach Company:	_____
Coach Driver:	_____
If separated from the group:	

ALTERNATIVE BACK OF CARD FOR SKI VISITS

SKI TRIP DAILY CHECKS	
Before ski sessions, all pupils show to Group Leader:	
◆	Ski pass, ID card, insurance, EHIC card
◆	Sunglasses/goggles
◆	Sun cream/lip cream
◆	Gloves and hat (and spares)
◆	Correct skis/poles/boots
During the day	
◆	Refresh sun cream at least every 2 hours
◆	Lips may need cover more often
◆	Remember to drink plenty of liquid

Model Code of Conduct for Group Members during Offsite Visits

Visit Leaders should adapt and edit the model below so that it suits the needs of each visit before it is discussed with parents or young people. Where the text is inappropriate it should be deleted. If there is a need for inserting extra bullet points, they should be added. It can be useful to involve young people in the drafting process.

General Expectations

For the visit to be both beneficial and enjoyable for all, you will be expected to:

- behave responsibly and show consideration for others.
- comply with instructions.
- take responsibility for your own possessions.
- keep all facilities clean, tidy and undamaged.
- abide by any host facility rules and regulations.
- be aware of all emergency procedures.
- in the event of an emergency, follow emergency procedure instructions.
- understand and follow the rules about the purchase, possession and consumption of alcohol.
- understand and follow the rules about the purchase, possession and use of tobacco.
- understand that the possession and use of non-prescribed drugs and/or illegal substances is strictly forbidden.
- inform staff of any relevant medical conditions or injuries.
- inform a member of staff if you have any concerns about safety or security.
- report any damaged or unsafe equipment.
- wear appropriate clothing.
- return all borrowed equipment in the same condition in which you received it.
- safeguard personal belongings and borrowed equipment.

On a coach or minibus

- remain in your seat, unless given permission to do otherwise.
- wear your seat belt.
- stow luggage on the luggage rack or under the seat. Luggage should not block the aisle
- put litter in the bags provided.
- do not distract the driver – no shouting out, no flash photography etc.
- if you begin to feel travel sick, inform a member of staff.
- when disembarking, be aware of traffic movement and direction.

Motorway service stops

- follow instructions from staff about where you are allowed go and how long you may spend in the service station.
- stay inside the service area for the duration of the stop.
- be back on the coach at the given time.

On a ferry, at an airport and at a railway station

- understand the importance of remaining in your group at these busy locations.
- understand that timings are vital.
- understand security arrangements and limitations.
- follow instructions from transport operator staff.
- follow all instructions about being on boat decks.
- visit shops in groups - never alone.
- stay back from the edge of railway platforms.
- remember where the group is based and how to locate staff.

Staying in overnight accommodation

- read all notices and understand all instructions about fire and safety procedures.
- understand the location of duty staff.
- understand and comply with any instructions about permission to leave the accommodation.
- understand any instructions which limit your access to parts of the accommodation or grounds.

- understand the dangers of balconies and any instructions about access to them.
- understand all instructions about access to other people's bedrooms.
- arrive on time for meals and meetings.
- understand and comply with any restrictions on the use of mobile telephones, taking pictures, internet access, social media, and viewing videos and DVDs.

Excursions

- remain in your designated group.
- know which member of staff is your nominated leader.
- when unaccompanied by staff, ensure that you understand any instructions and limitations.
- always carry your emergency contact card.

Failure to comply with this Code of Conduct may result in the implementation of the following sanctions:

Insert possible sanctions, including expectations of parental involvement ...