



***RULES AND GUIDANCE  
FOR OFF-SITE EXCURSIONS  
INCLUDING ADVENTUROUS  
ACTIVITIES***

***Guidance for:***

**Moray  
Education  
Establishments**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This document is designed to support and advise all those involved in the planning, delivery and management of Excursions and Outdoor Learning including Adventurous Activities under the auspices of Moray Council's Education and Social Care Service. It should be seen as an essential source of information and readily available to all those involved. The Council recognises the benefits of well-planned excursions and outdoor activities that provide learning opportunities outside the normal boundaries of the establishment. The Council supports those valued activities that are promoted by its establishments and services. The Council also continues to encourage the use of approved external providers of adventurous activities for the provision of valuable learning opportunities out of doors.

All excursions, adventurous or otherwise, are managed through Evolve.

The guidance is underpinned by the Scottish Government framework document "Going Out There" which establishes the tone and spirit for the delivery of outdoor learning and outdoor education. The guidance embraces the principles of sensible risk management by seeking a balanced view that considers both the benefits and risks associated with visits and activities.

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## PART 1 – OFF SITE EXCURSIONS

### SECTION 1: CONTEXT AND PRINCIPLES

#### BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE DOCUMENT

This document is designed to provide **rules and guidance** for the organisation and management of all excursions away from council premises, including those involved in adventurous activities. It is also designed to incorporate the national guidance on the safe management of outdoor activities in the Scottish Government publication ['Going Out There'](#).

These rules and guidance are aimed at appropriately trained council employees (paid or voluntary) who will be supervising or leading activities in the context of their employment with the Council.

#### Aims of Off Site and Outdoor Learning in Moray

To support and promote the four capacities underpinning the [Curriculum for Excellence](#), namely 'successful learners', 'confident individuals', 'responsible citizens' and 'effective contributors'.

To promote living, journeying and working together out of doors through a range of activities which provide learning, experience, adventure, challenge and enjoyment.

To actively promote a greater awareness of the environment and sustainability issues, both local and further afield, through educational activities and visits to a variety of natural environments and through taking part in and understanding the impacts of off-site and outdoor activities.

To promote health and wellbeing through experiencing activity in the outdoors.

This supports Our Vision for Moray's children:

It is our vision that Moray will be:

- a place where children and young people thrive
- a place where they have a voice, have opportunities, learn and can get around
- a place where they have a home, feel secure, healthy and nurtured
- a place where they are able to reach their full potential

## **FORMAT AND SCOPE OF THE DOCUMENT**

What follows is a mixture of **rules** and **guidance** and should be viewed within the context of Moray Council's broader culture of safety and good practice. It seeks to define current best practice and informs of the arrangements within The Council's management systems for the consistent assurance of that best practice. The rules and guidance within the document apply equally to activities provided in-house and contracted to **Approved External Providers**.

### Inclusion

Moray Council is committed to increasing participation in outdoor activities across our culture and community. Inclusive practices recognise and value the richness of diversity which exists in our community and develops appropriate responses to meet the needs of all. These procedures have been developed to support staff in the planning and delivery of off-site excursions by emphasising risk assessment and facilitating this approach to identify and delivery inclusive services. The focus on achieving successful outcomes for all children and young people is in line with the Scottish Government's priorities (Getting it Right for Every Child and Curriculum for Excellence).

### Child Protection

Our responsibility to protect children extends beyond the boundary of the school or establishment. In preparing for off-site excursions and considering the risk assessment for the excursion, our child protection responsibility must be included. Consideration must be given to how those in our care will be protected when we are outside our usual operational environment. This can be discussed with the Child Protection Coordinator for the establishment, who will advise you on your plans and any child protection concerns.

Consideration also needs to be given to known child protection issues and situations which are current for children and young people in your establishment and how the excursion might impact on them. Will the risk for these children be increased and how is that to be addressed?

### Additional Support Needs

Where additional support needs exist, the levels of supervision should be appropriate to these needs. In some cases the format of activity and its venue may need to be adjusted to suit the individuals involved and in some cases it may not be possible to safely include an individual in the activity even after "reasonable adjustment" has been made.

If further advice or clarification is sought then the QIO for the school should be contacted.

Equipment and other resources deployed may need particular consideration.

The number of staff and the range of expertise and competencies should be determined by the needs of the individuals within the group and the nature of the activity. While particular competencies may be required to support participants with additional support needs, it is desirable that, with participant and parental consent, relevant information is shared with the group. This will enable group members to participate as fully as possible and be mutually supportive

## **SECTION 2: PLANNING EXCURSIONS**

Whether an excursion is to the local park, a canoe expedition or a residential overseas trip, it is essential that formal planning takes place and that it begins far enough in advance of departure. This chapter provides guidance on the planning process and a number of related issues that may need to be considered.

All documentation for planning a trip is on the Outdoor Learning section of the Moray Council website.

### **AUTHORISATION**

There are **THREE STEPS** to gaining authorisation for an excursion:

#### **STEP 1 - Initial Approval: Head of Establishment**

In the first instance staff planning excursions **must** seek authorisation in principle from their Head of Establishment. At this early stage, details may be limited but should include:

- Objectives of the excursion
- Likely dates, duration and venue
- Size and type of group (ensuring that people with disabilities are not being discriminated against)
- Staffing requirements
- Staff experience and competencies
- Other resources
- Estimate of costs, including additional costs associated with the support of those with additional support needs
- Initial risk assessment planning

#### **STEP 2 - Detailed Planning and Notification**

The party leader carries out detailed planning and risk assessments for the excursion. The risk assessment is recorded. Information about the support requirements of people with additional needs will be useful at this stage.

#### **STEP 3 - Notification and Authorisation**

Decide whether the excursion is **notifiable or not** based on the criteria that determine whether 'adventurous activities' are included in the itinerary.

If so, the Adventurous Activity box should be ticked on Evolve which ensures AS Training is involved in authorisation processes.

AS Training then offers recommendations to the Head of Establishment if appropriate, and may liaise with the event organiser before doing so prior to authorisation.

If it is **NOT notifiable**, the party leader completes an authorisation request form and submits it, along with a copy of the risk assessment directly to the Head of Establishment. Generic risk assessments for each activity can be found on the Moray Council intranet Outdoor Learning page and within the document storage section on Evolve.

The Head of Establishment approves the excursion. Final planning is completed and the excursion goes ahead.



## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

On any excursion, the safety of participants and employees must be a primary objective. **Participants must not be put into a position that exposes them to an unreasonable level of risk.** A written risk assessment **must** be in place prior to each event or series of events.

The purpose of a risk assessment is to identify:

- Hazards likely to be encountered
- Those who are at risk
- How risks can be minimised and managed at an acceptable level by implementing suitable control measures.
- Appropriate supervision ratios

**The person carrying out the risk assessment should record it and give copies to all leaders and supervisors on the excursion and to the Head of Establishment for approval.**

### **Forms of Risk Assessment**

Risk assessments for an excursion should be as comprehensive as is necessary. The best way to achieve this may be to gather the staff team together to brainstorm a list of potential hazards. From here risks can be identified and appropriate control measures put in place. Where certain specialised activities entail particular hazards, or where medical or special needs of participants exacerbate hazards, the Head of Establishment **must** ensure that the hazard is managed appropriately.

It is good practice to involve participants as much as possible in the risk assessment process. This will help to put agreed control measures into context and actively involve participants in the management of their own and each other's safety.

Where people with additional support needs are participating, it is essential that appropriate advice is taken on what reasonable adjustments are required and how they can be made. It is recognised that such adjustments cannot always be made and that a person with additional support needs cannot always be safely included in the trip.

## FORMS OF RISK ASSESSMENT

There are three common forms of risk assessment:

- 1 **Generic risk assessment for adventurous activities** - these can be useful in identifying generic risks attached to certain activities or excursions. For example there are generic risks attached to visiting large cities regardless of whether the city is London, Manchester or Barcelona.

Generic risk assessments for the more common adventure activities are provided on The Moray Council's Outdoor Learning web site. These should be used as the basis for the risk assessment process and additional hazards specific to the event added as required.

- 2 **Site-specific risk assessments** should be used **in addition to** generic risk assessments to evaluate risks that are particular to your planned activity or excursion. The composition of the party will usually influence a site specific risk assessment especially if there are medical issues and/or special needs. Transport arrangements are another key factor.

A site specific risk assessment should be appended to the generic one.

- 3 **Dynamic risk assessment** - generic and site-specific risk assessments are always carried out prior to the excursion. A dynamic risk assessment should be a continuous process throughout the excursion. They are less likely to be recorded but are a product of continuous monitoring and vigilance by staff and participants. In simple terms dynamic risk assessment is the result of continually asking the question, "**What if...?**" Decisions taken as a result are best arrived at and shared in discussion with other staff and participants when appropriate. Regardless of how decisions are made all those potentially affected need to be clearly briefed.

### Repeated Events

Where an excursion is one of a series of similar events (e.g. regular 'away' sports fixtures or outdoor learning events) it may not be necessary to carry out written risk assessments for every occasion. Provided that the safety management arrangements and the composition of the party does not significantly change and no additional hazards are identified one document will suffice. Where minor adjustments are required to the risk assessment a "variation sheet" should be used.

Notwithstanding this it is important not to become complacent and a continual process of dynamic risk assessment should take place in order to monitor safety.

This can be entered on Evolve as a recurring event.

### **Residual Risk**

It is not possible for all risk to be eliminated from an excursion or event. The risk that remains having carried out a risk assessment and implemented control measures is called the “**Residual Risk**”. It is important that all those involved, including parents are aware and acknowledge that residual risk exists.

### **Exploratory visits**

Wherever possible the party leader should undertake an exploratory visit. This will not only assist in carrying out a more comprehensive and meaningful risk assessment, but should ascertain the suitability of the venue for meeting the excursion’s objectives and the needs of people with additional support needs. This will enable staff to better orientate themselves prior to visiting the site with a group.

If an exploratory visit is not possible then other sources of information must be sought in order to effectively assess risks. These might include:

- Other organisations that have used the same venue.
- Tourist authorities
- Management of the venue

## Volunteers and Parents as Leaders of Off Site School Excursions

Schools are frequently invited to become involved in local, regional and national events with pupils selected to attend and represent their schools. These may take place during or out-with the normal school day.

Where circumstances prevent school staff supervising and accompanying pupils, it may be appropriate to use competent volunteers and parents. Supervisor volunteers must be PVG scheme members and be registered in the Council's Volunteer Scheme, prior to the event. This is not necessary where a parent is only supervising their own child.

Visit assistants, including volunteers, parents/carers supporting visits as well as volunteers working for service providers, have an important role in supporting and enabling outdoor learning experiences and off-site visits. They can help with the running of an activity and be part of the supervision ratio, where competent to do so (often in adventurous activity settings leaders/assistants/volunteers need to be included in the operational ratios). Visit assistants should be carefully selected and be prepared for their supervision role by the Head of Establishment.

Even where they are not physically supervising a part of the visit, the Head of Establishment must be aware that they remain responsible for the safety of the group. Visit assistants should be clear about their roles and responsibilities which includes an:

- understanding of how they can ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group
- understanding that they will only be left in sole charge of participants where it has been previously agreed as part of the risk assessment
- agreement to follow the instructions of the Head of Establishment/visit leader and help with control and discipline
- understanding of the need to inform the visit leader/event organizer if concerned about the health or safety of participants at any time during the visit
- understanding if instructing/coaching an activity that requires a qualification then they must be properly qualified to do so
- understanding that if transporting pupils other than their own children in their private cars then they must possess appropriate insurance cover

The risk assessment will consider the event, the size of the party, the destination, how emergencies will be dealt with, behaviour issues and the duration of the off site excursion, in addition to the usual risk assessment considerations.

Parental views will need to be considered as part of the risk assessment.

This will help the Head of Establishment with the decision on whether this is an appropriate way of arranging supervising for this excursion.

This approach to excursion supervision should not normally be adopted for excursions outwith the UK.

It is the responsibility of the Head of Establishment to check that everything required is in place before authorizing an off-site activity with visit assistants, such as volunteers, in charge of a group of pupils on an off site excursion.

### Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Checks

The PVG scheme replaced the Enhanced Disclosure for staff working with vulnerable groups.

Staff - Teaching and Non-Teaching staff from schools may:

- Already have been PVG checked by Moray Council to do regulated work with children. For this group of staff, their existing PVG check will cover them to work with children on off-site activities.

### Volunteers/Helpers

In considering if a volunteer requires a PVG check the following questions should be considered:

- Will the volunteer have the opportunity to have unsupervised access to children to whom they are not related or to whom they have no family relationship?
- Will the volunteer be in sole charge of children?
- Will the volunteer's usual duties involve caring for children or teaching, instructing or supervising the children?
- Will the volunteer's usual duties include providing advice or guidance to children?
- If the answer to any of these questions is yes then consideration should be given to whether the volunteer is helping out on a regular basis rather than being used in an emergency, for example, to cover for someone who is ill and cannot attend at short notice.

If the answer indicates that this is emergency cover only then a PVG check may not be required.

If the answer is that this helping role is part of regular duties then a PVG check will be required.

## **EXTERNAL PROVIDERS/CONTRACTORS**

**NON-NOTIFIABLE EXCURSIONS:** Where elements of the planned programme are contracted out to one or more external provider, and where the provider accepts a duty of care for group members, the group leader must satisfy him/herself that the provider:

- Is reputable
- Has carried out a satisfactory risk assessment.
- Has competent staff
- Has appropriate public liability insurance (see below)
- Has complied with child protection requirements (see below)
- Has been given full information as to the age, ability and make up of the group

### **Public liability insurance**

It is a council requirement that any company or other external organisation to which excursion services are contracted must provide proof of current public liability insurance cover with an indemnity limit of at least **Five Million Pounds**.

### **Protecting Vulnerable Groups**

External providers who accept a duty of care for young people should be required to sign a declaration confirming that all of their staff who will have access to group members have been disclosed for criminal records at an enhanced level.

If the provider is on Moray Council list of Approved Providers, the above will have been undertaken. This list of providers can be found at Moray Council's Outdoor Learning section of the webpage.

## **INFORMING PARENTS AND OBTAINING THEIR CONSENT**

The prior written consent of a parent of children or of those vulnerable adults who require it must be obtained. A Parental Consent Form should be used for this purpose.

In certain cases it would be acceptable to seek 'blanket consent' to cover a number of different excursions, provided that the excursions conform to ALL of the following:

- They are local
- They are not notifiable (i.e. include no adventurous activity)
- They take place entirely within a single working day and participants will not be unusually late back.
- They are provided for participants at no charge.

Any such blanket consent should cover a **maximum period of one year**.

It is imperative that parents are sent, along with a consent form, detailed information about planned excursions as early as possible in the planning process. The information provided must be sufficient to enable parents to make an informed decision about their child's participation.

Versions of the standard parental consent form can be made available via Moray Council in a number of different languages and these should be obtained and sent to parents who may have difficulty reading an English language version.

## **FIRST AID PROVISION**

As a general principal the risk assessment will inform the first-aid cover that is required. Approved Providers of Adventurous Activities will have appropriate first-aid cover in place.

A travelling first aid kit should be taken and should be readily accessible throughout the excursion. The first aid kit will normally be kept in the care of the qualified first aid person.

The party leader should be aware and have taken account of any existing medical conditions and/or special needs that group members may have. This information will normally be sought on parental consent forms or the school's '**Supporting pupils with medical needs**' forms. Party leaders must carry clear written instructions relating to the administering of any medication required to party members.

Where first aid has been administered, normal recording and reporting procedures must be followed.

There are **2 designations** recognised by The Moray Council. Party leaders should consider the appropriate level of first aid cover for their particular excursion:

**Appointed Person:** No formal first aid training but the individual with identified responsibility for calling for assistance when required. This would be appropriate only in circumstances where outside first aid and/or medical assistance would be readily available throughout the excursion.

e.g. a member(s) of staff or parent(s) taking pupils within a town location or in rural situations close to the school or accessible route. Help can easily and quickly be summoned by use of a mobile phone.

**Appointed Person:** Someone who has been trained in emergency aid and basic resuscitation. Training is at least 6 hours duration. This would be appropriate in circumstances where the group may be remote from immediate assistance for part or all of the excursion but where medical assistance could reasonably be expected to be on the scene within 15-20 mins

Please note all buses carry first aid kits and bus drivers are trained in basic first aid.



## **INSURANCE**

The Moray Council's Public Liability policy will cover any injury or loss incurred by individuals due to the negligence of The Council or its employees (including volunteers who are working under the instructions of The Council).

The Council strongly recommends, especially where activities and trips are of longer than one day's duration that establishments ensure that participants and supervisors have appropriate travel insurance to include personal accident, loss or damage to luggage/money and cancellation/curtailment cover. For overseas trips cover should include medical expenses and repatriation cover.

Personal accident and/or travel insurance for young people remains the responsibility of parents. If the purchase of travel insurance is to be left to individual parents and supervisors then they should be informed of this requirement. Alternatively party leaders may consider purchasing group cover. One option available would be "School Journey Insurance" available from Moray Council's insurer, Zurich Municipal.

Further information about insurance issues advice can be sought from The Council's Insurance section within the Education and Social Care Service.

## **FINANCIAL PLANNING**

The party leader should ensure that parents have early written information about:

- The costs of the excursion
- What proportion of the overall cost they will be expected to pay.
- The timetable for payments
- How any residual monies left after the excursion or event will be used or distributed.

Financial accounting procedures should be agreed with the Head of Establishment and in line with Council policy. Financial records must be kept and should be available for inspection by parents on request.

Establishments need to consider how any additional cost will be funded (e.g. extra staffing) that may arise from the inclusion of participants with additional support needs. It is the responsibility of the school to cover additional costs which may be incurred and sound financial planning for this should be in place.

## **European Package Travel Regulations**

This legislation was introduced primarily to protect consumers who pay monies up front for package travel from the risk of tour operators becoming insolvent. If your excursion or event will be more than 24hrs duration and includes the provision of transportation and accommodation in exchange for payment then the regulations usually apply.

If your excursion has been booked through a tour operator or travel agent then these agencies will normally to the regulations and provide the appropriate protection.

This protection can, under the regulations, be provided in one of three ways:

- Bonding: e.g. ATOL or ABTA
- Insurance
- Trust funds

If party leaders are making travel arrangements themselves on behalf of the group then care must be taken to ensure that the regulations are complied with. A fact sheet on the regulations can be found on the DTI web site: <http://www.dti.gov.uk/ccp/topics1/guide/packtravel.htm>

## **SECTION 3 - TRANSPORT**

### **Where transport is provided by the establishment**

Transport is likely to be by a council owned minibus or private hire vehicles.

Only persons who have completed The Moray Council minibus training are permitted to drive council or establishment owned minibuses when carrying passengers.

### **Self-drive hire minibuses**

The Head of Establishment should satisfy him/herself that staff members who intend to drive minibuses have the required competencies to do so and are adequately insured. Competence implies an experienced driver who has prior experience of driving minibuses.

Regardless of other responsibilities and status, responsibility for the conduct of passengers and the safety and integrity of any load, both carried or towed, lies with the driver of the vehicle.

All passengers should have a forward or rearward facing seat and all seats should be fitted with approved seatbelts. It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that seat belts are worn where fitted.

For participants with additional support needs, the establishment must ensure that transport arrangements are appropriate and, where necessary, provide an escort (passenger assistant).

All those driving council vehicles must hold a relevant, valid licence, together with the appropriate insurance.

On long journeys due consideration must be given to driver hours required and the length of the driver's day. (*The Highway Code suggests a 15 minute break in every 2 hours driving.*)

The limitations imposed by the European Work Time Directive should also be taken into account.

It should be recognised that **driver fatigue** is a very high contributory factor to road traffic accidents and this should be taken account of as part of the risk assessment process.

All staff members are expected to follow the relevant road traffic legislation.

Luggage should be carried so as not to obstruct aisles or exits. There are specific rules related to towing trailers with minibuses. Good advice can be

obtained from the Community Transport Association.

Drivers are expected to:

- Inspect the vehicle before use
- Never use a faulty vehicle. Use an alternative vehicle or make alternative arrangements if a fault is found.
- Report all faults relating to council vehicles

Staff should take careful account of weather and road conditions. On no account should staff place themselves or passengers at unnecessary risk.

When setting down passengers from a mini bus the vehicle exit door should be kerbside, so that passengers do not have to enter the carriageway. This may not be possible when travelling abroad and extra care should be exercised.

Vehicles should where possible be parked on the same side of the carriageway as the activity to minimise the need for persons to cross the carriageway.

### **Where transport is contracted to a carrier**

Only reputable operators should be used. Operators must hold a current PSV Operators License. They should be asked to provide evidence of:

- A current operator's license
- Competence of their drivers
- Appropriate insurance cover

Party leaders should ensure that for long journeys, particularly to mainland Europe or beyond, there are sufficient drivers available to prevent driver hours being exceeded. Drivers on 'down time' should be encouraged to get proper rest, with sleeping arrangements as appropriate, and NOT fulfil the role of co- driver that requires them to remain alert. The responsibility for the driver is the contractors; however, the party leader has a duty of care for the party and a responsibility to intervene if they consider the party is being placed at risk.

### **Supervision of passengers**

Whilst the driver can be held accountable for unruly behaviour on his/her bus it should NOT be left to the driver to impose the discipline required to maintain acceptable behaviour. In practice it is not possible to supervise young passengers and concentrate on driving at the same time. Responsibility for the conduct of passengers needs to be accepted by the party leader. This also implies that where establishments provide their own transport, the risk assessment should identify where additional supervision is required. Where participants have additional support needs it is

important to refer to any support plans they may have to check on particular access requirements. Support plans should be checked in conjunction with transportation in order to ensure that access requirements can be met

For further advice and assistance contact Moray Council's Public Transport Unit.

### **Transport by Staff and Parents on School Organised Trips**

**This guidance is for the use of schools arranging school-organised trips only. Schools do not have responsibility for arrangements when activities or trips are organised by parents. Parents should therefore be aware that they may have to consider some of the points, below, if making arrangements themselves.**

In order to make local visits within our school catchment areas and within Moray financially viable, it is often necessary to make use of staff and parent cars for transporting pupils to and from events.

Transport arrangements for these visits are explained in a letter to parents for each visit. Within the permission slip, which is attached to each letter, parents are asked to confirm they understand the arrangements for the visit and that they agree to their child travelling by staff or parent car (depending on the particular arrangements in place). Pupils must have this permission signed by a parent/guardian in order to travel to the activity/event.

Pupils, where possible, are also grouped to travel with their own parents or adults they are already very familiar with. No parent should be asked to take a pupil whom they do not wish to.

**In addition, schools must check that the following actions have been undertaken/information gathered in advance of any school-organised trip:**

- Members of staff/parents driving pupils have provided the following evidence to the school and signed the checklist document to confirm that:
  - o they are legally qualified and medically fit to drive;
  - o their vehicle has a current MOT and is road taxed;
  - o they use car seats appropriate for each pupil's height and weight; and
  - o they are fully insured to drive the vehicle they are using.

- *Parents* must have made contact with their insurance provider to ensure that they have appropriate cover to transport pupils during a school day.
  - *Teachers* must have business insurance in order to transport children in their own vehicles and so must have made appropriate checks with their insurance provider to check this is in place and what will be covered.
- 
- Parents and members of staff transporting pupils in their cars have been informed that while those pupils are in their car, they will owe them a duty of care and could be potentially liable in law for any breach of this duty.
  - The Council has undertaken a PVG check of any person who will be transporting pupils in their own vehicle.
  - If a pupil with Additional Support Needs is attending a trip outwith school and is to be transported by car, that child's specific needs have been considered and assessed fully well in advance of the trip. The pupil's needs should have been discussed with their parent/guardian.
  - Any necessary reasonable adjustments have been made to allow any pupil with a disability, as defined under the Equality Act 2010, to be transported to, and participate in, the school excursion.

## SECTION 4 - SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

### Swimming in the sea or other natural waters

Swimming and paddling or otherwise entering the waters of river, canal, sea or loch should never be allowed as an impromptu activity. In-water activities should take place only when a proper risk assessment has been completed and proper measures put in place to control the risks.

Any planned swimming activity that takes place in areas that are **NOT** specifically designated for bathing and do not have lifeguard surveillance in place should be regarded as an **Adventurous Activity** and therefore **notifiable**. The rules and procedures for **Swimming in Natural Waters** can be found in the Guidance section of Combined Rock and Water Activities.

### Excursions involving overnight stays

Residential stays put additional demands upon staff in both the planning and supervision of excursions.

At the planning stage party leaders must ensure that:

- The accommodation has adequate security measures in place. Group accommodation should be lockable but leaders must have access at all times.
- The organisation that owns or manages the accommodation has checked all staff who works there for their suitability to work with young people.
- The accommodation complies with local fire regulations and that adequate fire alarm and evacuation procedures are in place, taking account of any participants with additional support needs. This may require a written statement from the provider.
- The accommodation has adequate security measures in place. Group accommodation should be lockable but leaders must have access at all times.

Where the accommodation provider is an **Approved External Provider of Adventurous Activities** the above checks will have been made as part of The Council's vetting process and may be assumed.

In all cases the party leader must ensure that:

- Staffing ratios and supervision rotas allow for effective supervision 24 hrs per day and have built-in flexibility in the event of a participant requiring a high level of supervision
- For mixed gender groups there are both male and female leaders and that the accommodation provides separate male and female sleeping/bathroom facilities
- The group will have exclusive use of the immediate accommodation allocated to them
- Staff accommodation (at least those on duty) is adjacent to the group's accommodation
- Fire and emergency evacuation procedures take account of any participants with additional support needs. This may require a written statement from the provider
- The accommodation is able to cater for participants with additional support needs including disabled access, and dietary, cultural or religious requirements
- Measures are in place to provide first aid and for the seeking of outside medical help
- Where the accommodation provider is also an activity provider and supervision responsibilities are shared between the provider's staff and accompanying establishment staff, the party leader must ensure that there will be a clearly agreed handover of responsibility from one to the other

Early in the visit the party leader must:

- Orientate participants to the accommodation layout
- Brief participants on the fire alarm, evacuation procedures and muster stations in the event of a fire
- Ensure that participants are briefed on what's expected of them, any rules that are to be imposed and the mutual responsibilities everyone has in regard to communal living



## **SECTION 4 - EXCURSIONS ABROAD**

Since it is usually implicit that excursions abroad have a residential element, it should be assumed that all of the above applies. In addition, party leaders should give further consideration to the following:

**Staffing ratios:** are there particular supervision issues relating to being abroad that will require more favourable ratios?

**Language differences:** participants should be encouraged to communicate and consideration should be given to providing participants with some common words and phrases. At least one of the leaders should be reasonably fluent in the local language when appropriate.

**Cultural differences:** participants should be briefed about local conventions, codes of conduct, laws, dress codes and attitudes to gender.

**Food and drink:** any dangers attached to local foods or drinking water.

**Urban safety and security:** some towns and cities may be intrinsically more dangerous than participant's home environment and a careful briefing would be required.

**Wildlife:** In the UK we are not used to wildlife that presents a real threat to life. This may not be the case overseas.

**Currency:** provide advice on security, exchange rates and forms in which to carry money.

**Vaccination:** establish whether vaccinations are required in the countries to be visited and ensure these are carried out in good time. Guidance should be sought from a General Practitioner. The publication: *'Health Advice for Travellers anywhere in the World'* will be a useful source of reference and is available at Post Offices.

**Travel Insurance:** all group members must have travel insurance that includes medical treatment abroad and repatriation.

**Visas/Passports:** ensure that all participants have valid passports and visas if required at an early stage in planning. This is particularly important where any member of the party holds a passport which is not a UK passport. It is recommended that the party leader retains a photocopy of passports/visas for emergency use.

**Medical help:** For travel in the EU, participants should carry an EHIC Card, available from Post Offices and completed by their parent. This is a certificate of entitlement to free or reduced cost treatment. It is still advisable to have a substantial contingency fund available to pay for

treatment if required. Payment can be reclaimed later through travel insurance.

**Emergencies:** Party leaders should know how to contact the nearest British Embassy or Consulate. They should know how to contact the emergency services.

**Climate:** Party leaders need to be fully aware of additional precautions required. These could include sun screening, monitoring fluid intake to prevent dehydration, or additional clothing for extreme cold.

**If booking through a travel agent or tour operator:**

Ensure that they are appropriately bonded providing security against insolvency. The form of bonding should be approved by the Department of Trade and Industry. (Refer to European Package Travel regulations)

Ensure that, where air travel is involved, the tour operator is ATOL Licensed.

**If organising your own trip:**

Ensure that you comply with the European Package Travel Directive

Ensure that your vehicle conforms with local traffic regulations and that you are insured for business overseas travel.

Special regulations apply to taking minibuses abroad and advice should be sought from the appropriate Department of Transport.

## **Foreign Exchange Visits**

Foreign exchange visits can provide valuable and often unique experiences for young people to become immersed in other cultures, develop new friendships and broaden their horizons and knowledge. Staying with a host family gives young people a first-hand opportunity to use their language skills in a real context.

In the context of international exchanges, all schools and youth services have a statutory duty to ensure that such experiences are carried out with maximum child protection safeguards in place and mechanisms to promote and ensure the welfare of the young people involved. By following national best practice and guidelines it should be possible to establish, manage and maintain safe and productive twinning and exchange visits.

This guidance must be read in conjunction with The Moray Council's Procedures for all Off-Site Excursions.

- Expectations and assurances, especially Protection of Vulnerable Group (PVG) checks or equivalent, must be established for all teachers, support staff and host families on both sides of any exchange and these must be fair and reciprocal as far as is reasonably practicable. At a very basic level this may simply be assurances from the host school
- Specific guidance must be provided for host families about your expectations regarding activities undertaken with the family. This is particularly important where adventurous activities are being undertaken. This may require a definition of such activities to be provided
- Specific guidance should be provided for students covering personal safety in all the foreseen and potentially dangerous contexts that they may find themselves in
- It must be borne in mind and clearly explained to parents that exchange visits differ from other visits in that students may not be directly supervised by Moray Council staff whilst they are with host families. Exchanges thus require thorough and carefully planned risk management that addresses the issues relating to all aspects of indirect supervision
- Careful matching of exchange partners and host families is central to a successful visit
- All exchange visits must be approved by the Head of Establishment with details of the exchange briefed to the Head of Establishment's line manager for information and comment

## **Risk Assessments for Foreign Exchange Visits**

It is essential that all leaders are involved in this process. In addition to assessing risks inherent in any educational visit, there are additional risks relating to exchange visits that will require extra consideration.

The following issues should be considered by leaders and staff when planning an exchange visit:

- Are families and young people carefully matched with regard to issues such as gender, diet, religious belief, special needs etc ?
- Are families known to the host establishment and have they been confirmed as suitable?
- Are contingency plans in place to allow a young person to be moved at short notice?
- Has consideration been given to the safety and well-being of the young people during travel, and does this include appropriate drivers and transport whilst with the host family?
- Are young people and host families aware of emergency procedures including access to a 24 hour contact number?
- Do leaders have daily contact with all young people?
- Will young people have access to a phone and/or can they use a mobile phone to call or text messages if necessary to staff?
- Have the young people been briefed about personal safety?
- Have acceptable and unacceptable activities on 'family days' been discussed and has parent/carer agreement been sought prior to the visit if necessary?

## **Emergency Procedures**

- Schools/youth service hosts must have an emergency plan for the visits
- This plan must outline actions to be followed in case of emergencies including the following:
  - Contacting staff back, including holiday periods, weekends
  - Whole group evacuation/repatriation
  - Contingency funding arrangements
- Group leaders must establish the names and contact details of Authority personnel who will act as a 'critical incident response team' and who will provide support in times of trauma
- Prior to the exchange visit, the critical incident response team should consider exercising the school's emergency plan
- An emergency plan for the visit should consider the actions in case a member of staff or a young person becomes incapacitated or has to leave the visit. If the country visited requires a visa, a back up member of staff must have prior possession of a visa

- Visit leaders should ensure that 24 hour access is available to a competent person that has all necessary background knowledge of the host culture.
- Contingency plans should include alternative back-up accommodation arrangements, in the event that it becomes necessary to move a young person from their host family

### **Monitoring of Arrangements**

Careful matching of exchange partners is central to successful visits and host families should be confirmed as suitable by the host establishment. Factors to consider include:

- Code of conduct
- House rules
- Home visit checks
- Sleeping arrangements
- Family activities
- Transportation including drivers
- Providing information to, and receiving information from host families

Disclosure checks, or equivalents if they exist overseas may help to supplement this process but should not be used to replace it.

Have acceptable and unacceptable activities on 'family days' been discussed and has parental agreement been sought prior to the visit if necessary? For example is there an opportunity to participate in what may be classified as adventurous activities, eg a visit to a beach and thus swimming would be included in this. For all activities, full parental understanding and consent is required on both sides of the Exchange.

Exchange visits differ from other visits in that young people spend most of their time with host families and are, therefore, not always under the direct supervision of council staff. Expectations and assurances should be established for all parties involved (young people, teachers/youth workers, host families and establishments).

If the host establishment or placing agency does not have appropriate measures in place for carrying out checks to ensure the health, safety and welfare of young people on the exchange, the Visit Leader should seek further assurances and/or reconsider whether the visit should take place.

## Checklists

### Headteachers, Youth Service Managers

As the senior member of staff with ultimate responsibility are you sure that:

- The appropriate risk assessments have been completed, understood and the visit formally approved and notified?
- The trip has been carefully planned by a competent staff team and all arrangements comply with the Moray Council policies and guidance?
- Appropriate numbers of teachers/youth workers/group leaders/supervisors will accompany the party providing ratios that reflect the risk assessments?
- A person has been designated as 24 hour home contact who will have immediate access to all the information relating to students and to the trip? Are all staff are aware of this?
- All staff and volunteers are specifically competent, appropriately vetted and Disclosed?
- All host families have been checked, Disclosed or equivalent and assurances provided from the host school or appropriate Authority that they are suitable hosts and homes?
- All group members and students have been fully briefed and are clear about their roles and responsibilities during the visit?
- Appropriate training has been given to relevant staff including in particular issues relating to child protection?
- All group members and leaders are equipped to deal with unforeseen contingencies, emergencies, sensitive issues and initiate appropriate emergency procedures?
- All relevant documentation including a list of group member's names and full profiles, together with their host families' address and contact number is lodged in a designated place that allows 24/7 access.
- Parents and guardians of young people involved in the trip have full details of where their son/daughter is staying, a full itinerary of the trip and emergency telephone numbers?
- Appropriate training/briefing has been provided for staff, pupils and parents?
- The group leader has sufficient funds and an effective means of communication in case of an emergency?
- Staff and young people are suitably and sufficiently aware of the cultural and legal differences and sensitivities of the host country?
- A review/debrief will take place on return?

## **Visit Leader/Organiser**

As the party leader are you sure that:

- All group members are adequately briefed about their responsibilities during the visit and know what actions to take in case of emergencies?
- All staff, supervisors, parents and volunteers have been briefed as to their specific roles and responsibilities?
- Host families have names and contact numbers in case problems arise?
- Host families are aware that teachers/youth leaders may home visit to check on welfare of guests and this applies to both sides of the exchange?
- All staff have been involved at every stage of this visit and that the visit arrangements follow both the schools/youth services policies and meets national best practice?
- The Child Protection officer for the Authority and the appropriate staff in the establishment has been consulted in respect of this exchange and that any recommendations made have been followed?
- Details of the 24 hour contacts and emergency arrangements at both ends of the exchange have been shared with all staff?
- Copies have been made of all relevant documents, passports etc and these are kept in a safe location and separate to the originals?
- You have organised sufficient contingency funds should the need arise for extra expenditure?
- Parental consent forms, medical details and contact details have been copied and shared with relevant staff and host families?
- My contact person/partner with the equivalent role to me in the exchange has met our expectations relating to assuring the health, safety and well-being of the young people involved?
- I am satisfied that my counterpart in the host country is fully appraised regarding the details and arrangements for this exchange?

## **Young People**

The young people should be given an opportunity to consider the following questions:

- Do I know who my host family will be?
- Do I know the address and telephone number of where I will be staying?
- Have my parents/guardian been given this information?
- Do I have a valid passport and photocopies of these?
- Do I know the 24-hour emergency contact number for my group leader in case of a problem?
- Do I know how to alert the group leader if I am not happy?
- Do I know who will be responsible for me on the journey and on the visit?
- Do I know where I will be sleeping and who I will be sharing a bedroom with?

- Do I know what to do if I get lost?
- Do I know of any legal and cultural differences or sensitivities of the visiting countries?
- Do I understand all necessary safety issues? Including those applying to an adventurous activity eg the wearing of life jackets, eg the wearing of skiing helmets
- Do I know what is expected of me with regards to my behaviour and the implication of me agreeing to the code of conduct/contract?

### **Parents/Guardians**

As parents/guardians have I ensured that:

- I have completed all the requested documentation, including medical details?
- My son/daughter fully understands his/her responsibilities while abroad?
- I have full contact details and know who to contact if there is an emergency?
- I have a complete itinerary and timetable of the visit and understand the purpose of the visit?
- I know of all the activities my son/daughter will participate in and have given appropriate consent?
- I know and have agreed to the Code of Conduct, which applies to the visit?
- I understand my responsibilities in relation to the code of conduct including my specific in the case of the early return of my son/daughter?
- My son/daughter is fully prepared to participate in the trip?
- I had the opportunity to attend a parents' meeting and have all my questions answered?
- I am contactable throughout the duration of the visit and when necessary I will be available to support the code of conduct?



## **SECTION 6 - MANAGEMENT OF EXCURSIONS**

This chapter considers the administrative and managerial requirements for the organisation and management of excursions. It identifies a number of **key individuals** that will have a role in most excursions. Depending on the size of the excursion and/or size of the establishment, several of the key roles may be carried out by a single key individual.

It is essential that all those involved understand their responsibilities and that there are clear channels of communication through the management system, from policy makers to participants and parents.

### **ACCOUNTABILITY WITHIN THE COUNCIL'S SERVICES**

#### **Corporate Director**

The Corporate Directors have responsibility for all matters of safety within their service departments including excursions and for ensuring that appropriate policies are provided and effectively communicated to senior officers, managers and heads of establishments.

#### **Senior Officers, Managers and Heads of Service**

Senior officers or central management have the responsibility for communicating policies to establishments and for providing support to heads of establishments in the implementation of these policies. They have no direct role in the provision of excursions but are responsible to the directorate for a general oversight of good practice and application of council policies. They need to be aware of the legal implications for themselves and for The Council in the management of excursions.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES AT ESTABLISHMENT LEVEL**

### **Head of Establishment**

The Head of Establishment has responsibility for ensuring safe practice and for the implementation of The Moray Council's safety policy.

### **A Member of the School Senior Management or Leadership Team**

Within larger establishments many of the functions relating to the management and co-ordination of external visits are delegated to a member of the SMT/SLT.

In either case special care should be taken to ensure that:

- The proposed event has appropriate, achievable and well defined aims
- All employees and volunteers have appropriate experience and training
- Party leaders are allowed sufficient time to organise excursions properly
- Party size, group size and ratios of staff/volunteers to participants conform to the guidelines
- Appropriate information is provided to participants and parents or guardians
- Parental consents are sought and received where necessary.
- A risk assessment has been carried out.
- Transport arrangements are appropriate and conform to council policy
- Child protection procedures are in place and will be followed
- Contingency arrangements are in place
- The financial and insurance arrangements are adequate
- The particular requirements of those with additional support needs are considered, including arrangements for medication
- Adequate first aid arrangements will be in place
- A **party leader** has been designated for the event and he/she has a clear understanding of his/her roles and responsibilities
- A **base contact person** is appointed and identified to the party leader, and where necessary to parents (e.g, out of school term time)
- Contact arrangements are sufficient for all eventualities and will enable a co-ordinated response to any incident that may occur.
- Staff and volunteers involved understand their respective roles and responsibilities
- 'Checking out' and 'checking in' procedures at the beginning and end of the activity/event are in place

In all cases the responsibility to approve each event rests with the Head of Establishment.

## **Delegated Members of staff**

Some or all of the above responsibilities may be delegated to other appropriate staff in an establishment. In such cases the responsibilities must be clearly stated and understood by all concerned. The responsibility for the excursion remains with the Head of Establishment.

## **Party Leader**

The party leader is the person in whom the Head of Establishment has placed responsibility for the leadership and safe conduct of the excursion. Some appropriate share of these responsibilities is assumed by others who may be colleagues from the establishment or staff from other agencies.

The party leader has overall responsibility for the safety of individuals and the group at all times. In particular he/she will be responsible for:

- Ensuring the implementation of The Moray Council's Off-Site Excursions policy
- Ensuring that all participants in their care are adequately briefed
- Ensuring that all participants are suitably prepared and equipped
- Effective liaison with other staff involved in the programme
- Ensuring that the base contact person has all the information they require to fulfil their role
- Taking account of any additional support needs
- Making arrangements for any medical or dietary requirements
- Ensuring there is adequate first aid provision
- Ensuring a risk assessment has been carried out and that other staff/adults are appropriately informed
- Checking the group out at the beginning and checking them in at the end
- Abandoning or curtailing the excursion or activities if, in his/her judgement the health and safety of participants is unacceptably compromised
- Briefing and giving appropriate information to the base contact person

The nominated party leader will often be the most experienced member of the staff team and should retain overall control of the event regardless of his/her status within the day to day management structure of the establishment.

## **Leaders**

Other adults accompanying excursions and who are given supervisory responsibility, whether paid or voluntary, act as employees of the council.

Supervisory staff should:

- Assist and support the party leader in carrying out his/her responsibilities and respect the fact that final responsibility for decision making during the excursion lies with the party leader
- Take responsibility for the safety and well-being of participants as delegated by the party leader
- Consider stopping the activity or excursion and notifying the party leader if they believe the health and safety of those in their care is compromised

**Specialist staff** may be involved to provide instruction or coaching in activities. Such staff may be the party leader, other members of staff/volunteers or external providers.

They have responsibility to ensure that:

- All equipment is checked for suitability and safe condition
- They operate within The Council's safety policy
- Where appropriate they adhere to other relevant codes of practice
- They act within the scope of their experience and training
- They are appropriately insured
- Acceptable supervision ratios are maintained

## **Base Contact Person**

This person has a crucial role in the safety management system and will normally be a senior member of staff. The designated person should be appointed by the Head of Establishment/authorising officer and will remain 'back at base' and be contactable 24hrs a day throughout the duration of the excursion or event.

He/she is responsible for:

- Ensuring they obtain sufficient information from the party leader
- Acting as an emergency contact between the party leader, the establishment and parents
- Initiating the 'overdue return' plan

The base contact person will stand down once the group have returned to base.

## **Participants**

All participants should, as far as is reasonably practicable, take responsibility for ensuring that:

- The activity suits their needs and abilities
- They conform to any instructions or guidance on matters of safety and good order given by the party leader or other members of staff before or during the activity
- Any distress, concern, or discomfort arising during, or resulting from, the activity is drawn to the immediate attention of the party leader or their immediate supervisor
- Keep a lookout for anything that may harm either themselves or anyone else in the group and tell the party leader or their supervisor about it

**The responsibilities of parents and guardians in re-enforcing and encouraging responsible attitudes in their young people must be recognised and accepted.**

## **Parents**

Parents must be able to make an informed decision on whether their child should go on an excursion. Parents should be given sufficient information in writing and should be invited to attend any briefing sessions.

Parents should:

- Be informed as to how best to prepare their child for the excursion by reinforcing the notified code of conduct
- Be aware of and agree to arrangements for sending participants home early if necessary and to meet the costs incurred
- Provide the party leader with emergency contact information as requested
- Disclose to the party leader all relevant information about their child's psychological and physical health that may be relevant to their participation. This would normally be done via the consent form. Refer to Supporting Medical Needs Policy

## **CHANGES OF PLAN**

On the day, all may not go according to plan. An important contributing factor to safety lies in there being enough flexibility to change or modify the nature of the planned activity in the face of adverse factors such as weather, road conditions, group numbers and ill-preparedness of individuals for the planned activity.

A decision to change the plan may be made either by the party leader on the basis of his/her own recognised experience and technical expertise, or on the advice of another member of the staff team delegated with

responsibility for the conduct of the activity.

In either case, if the changes made involve the activity taking place in a different location or is likely to result in a delayed return, **the party leader must notify the base contact person prior to commencement of the activity.**

## **SUPERVISION RATIOS**

Adequate supervision of parties on excursions is a crucial element of safety management. Party leaders should consider supervision requirements as part of the risk assessment process. This should then inform the appropriate ratios and competencies of supervisors.

Supervision **must** be such that it is adequate throughout the excursion or event.

**Staffing ratios must reflect the needs of the group of participants and not simply the activity.** It is important to evaluate the composition of any group and give careful consideration to the needs of the individuals within that group. Only then can a realistic estimate be made of the requirements for staffing, staff expertise and resources to enable the objectives to be achieved.

### **Due consideration should be given to gender balance**

It is recommended that there are at least TWO staff accompanying excursions except in circumstances where the activities are closely akin to normal day to day living, or there is a very small number of participants.

It is acknowledged that there will be circumstances where it will be appropriate and beneficial to use senior pupils to assist with the supervision of younger children. Senior pupils must always be managed in this role by a member of establishment staff and must never be left in sole charge of young people.

### **Supervision ratios for Excursions NOT involving Adventurous Activities**

Notwithstanding the above, the table below gives guidance on acceptable supervision ratios. Should normally be regarded as a maximum but should be related to risk assessment.

## Supervision ratios

Group	Visit local to the school / establishment	Non local visit with transport. Below low hills threshold	UK Excursion including overnight stay. Without adventurous activities	Foreign Excursion Without adventurous activities
Nursery Under 5	1:6	1:4	Not allowed	Not allowed
P1-3	1:10	1:10	Not allowed	Not allowed
P4-7	1:15	1:15	1:10	1:8
S1 – S3	1:20	1:20	1:10	1:10
S4 – S6	1:30	1:30	1:12	1:10
Post school	At the discretion of the group leader			

Competent leaders will recognise when the number of young people per leader should be reduced (e.g. if group members have particular behavioural or physical needs or if weather conditions are not favourable on the day).

Where leaders operate alone, the group should be trained/briefed in actions to take in the event of leader incapacitation. An assistant leader, able to look after the group and raise the alarm, should be present if the group would be at significant risk were the leader incapacitated.

In normal circumstances at least 50% of the adult numbers should be employees of the establishment (e.g. teachers, youth leaders or learning support assistants). The balance of adult numbers will normally be made up of disclosed volunteers or parents approved by the HT/EVC/Party Leader.

Party leaders should be aware that small parties with minimum staffing are vulnerable if staff are ill or have an accident during the visit. This eventuality needs consideration at the early planning stage.

Visit leaders should bear in mind that the longer a visit lasts, the more important it is to consider the need for additional staffing. The constant duty of care can be very demanding and coupled with other functions such as minibus driving may reduce the necessary degree of concentration and alertness.

## **Exemplification**

### Primary School

Small groups of pupils going to a competition e.g. a team of four going to library quiz.

Parents may be the only adults but they must be PVG checked.

Be made aware they have sole responsibility. All parents of the group must be aware that it will be a parent(s) who will be responsible.

A permission slip should be obtained from the parents of all participants stating that they understand and agree to the supervision.

### Football/Hockey/Sporting Activities after school and on weekends.

Again it may be that staff are not involved in supervision of these events but all participants' parents should be made aware of who is supervising and the supervising parents must be PVG checked.



## **Staff fatigue**

Leading excursions, particularly those involving a residential stay can be both physically and emotionally demanding. Groups should normally be accompanied by at least TWO adults and due consideration should be given to sharing tasks and responsibilities.

It may sometimes be the case that the leader or instructor is the only member of field staff present. Consideration should therefore be given to providing a support member of staff who can share the driving and other appropriate tasks. Where relevant the issue of potential staff fatigue should be considered in the risk assessment process.

The European Working Time Directive 1998 provides work practice regulations designed to protect employees and those in their charge from the hazards associated with excessive fatigue.

## **Child Protection**

All adults with a supervisory responsibility should have undergone PVG. It is acknowledged that this may not be possible for staff employed by organisations operating overseas and all reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that such staff have at least been screened by their employer.

## **SECTION 5:       RESPONSE TO EMERGENCIES**

Emergency situations can occur despite the best precautions and therefore contingency planning and consideration of emergency procedures are necessary. Planning for emergencies should help to ensure that the consequences of an incident are handled efficiently and sensitively and do not progress arbitrarily.

### **EXTERNAL PROVIDERS**

Organisations providing accommodation, activities or other services involving the acceptance of a duty of care should have their own emergency response procedures with which group leaders and other staff should normally co-operate fully. In addition group leaders must familiarise themselves with the procedures outlined in this section to enable them to fulfil any additional responsibilities and make prompt and appropriate notifications.

### **PLANNING FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS**

The principles outlined provide a format for response and communication for council groups encountering misfortune whilst away from their normal base. These principles do not attempt to provide details for all possible situations. They should however be used as a framework around which establishments develop their own more detailed plans to suit their particular situation.

The effectiveness of all such plans depends heavily upon the staff concerned being familiar with their specific duties and responsibilities. The role of each individual must be understood by all concerned. Lines of communication must be confirmed or established for each planned excursion. A list of key individuals is shown in Section 6 - **Management of Excursions**

The flow chart identifies the different **Levels of Emergency** and represents the required channels of communication during the containment phase. The subsequent investigation procedures are an entirely separate but essential process.

## **EMERGENCY RESPONSE CARD**

An Emergency Response Card provides party leaders and their assistants with a summary of prioritised actions in the immediate aftermath of an accident or other emergency.

Party leaders **must** take with them a laminated copy of the emergency response card when they leave the establishment. The card must be kept close at hand for easy reference throughout the duration of the excursion. Both the flow chart and the emergency response card are schematic. Common-sense should prevail in the preparation of plans and in subsequent actions.

## **PREPARATION OF PLANS - ESTABLISHMENT AND AREA**

Detailed arrangements will need to be made by each establishment. These will reflect the nature and size of the establishment and the nature of the activities planned or anticipated. The use of previously prepared Action Cards should be considered.

Individual roles need to be carefully considered, especially in very small establishments (e.g. one or two teacher primary schools). Frequently a member of staff may find that they are undertaking two or more roles e.g. the Head of Establishment may also be the party leader, with the base contact role performed by their depute or another member of staff or, in some cases a spouse or a parent.

Where the base contact role is undertaken by a person who is not a member of staff the function will be limited to the relaying of information in a predetermined manner.

**It must be recognised that many events will take place out of normal office hours. Planned emergency contact arrangements must take account of this.**

## Part 2 – Adventurous Activities

The **ACTIVITY CENTRES (YOUNG PEOPLE'S SAFETY) ACT of 1995** imposed certain statutory obligations upon providers of adventurous activities. The UK government's appointed inspectorate is the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) which is now a function of the HSE. AALA comprises a group of inspectors who carry out regular inspections of licensed providers. Moray Council is a licensed provider of adventurous activities, therefore much of what follows here in the rules and guidance related to adventurous activities not only reflects current best practice but is required to ensure that Moray Council and its employees meet their legal obligations in respect of the above act.

For further information about AALA go to:  
**<http://www.hse.gov.uk/aala/index.htm>**

It must be remembered that the Adventurous Activities section must be selected and approved for any adventurous activity.

The planning, organisation and participation on trips may often be voluntary and outwith contracted work time but wherever such trips are organised they must comply with these guidelines. They also require to be notified to Adventure Scotland using the OE01 form prior to approval by the head of establishment.

For excursions involving adventurous activities additional guidance is provided in the form of **STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES** within the Outdoor Learning section of The Moray Council's website.

Where the provision of adventurous activities is contracted to an **APPROVED EXTERNAL PROVIDER**, then the provider's own safety management system will apply and their own operating procedures will be followed. For a list of **Approved External Providers** go to the Moray Council website, Outdoor Learning section.

## **ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES**

Activities with a level of perceived risk and for which specialist training and/or qualifications would normally be required to lead them. More specifically this includes:

- Upland, hill and mountain activities on foot, horseback, bicycle, ski or snowboard
- All watersports – kayaking, open canoeing, sailing, wind surfing, surfing, water ski-ing, fishing, boat fishing and swimming in natural waters
- Underground activities – caving, mine exploration
- Airborne activities
- Any other activities of an adventurous nature where participants are likely to be more than 1 metre above the ground or over water and where specialist equipment would normally be required to safeguard progress

Adventurous activities are normally notifiable during the planning stage.

A list of some of the most common notifiable activities can be found provided in the ***Outdoor Learning pages*** though it should be noted that this list is not necessarily exhaustive.

Inevitably there will sometimes be a **grey area** at the boundary between what is notifiable and what is not. In cases where staff are **either** uncertain as to whether notification is required **or** simply seek additional reassurance from the notification process then they are advised to **NOTIFY ANYWAY.**

## **PRINCIPLES OF SAFETY MANAGEMENT**

Safety on excursions should not be considered in isolation but should be seen in the context of the council's broader culture of safety. Staff should be familiar with those aspects of Moray Council's Health and Safety Policy that are relevant to the content of their planned programme.

**Duty of Care** is a legal obligation owed by anyone who takes responsibility for the safety of others. This applies equally to associated aspects of safe practice such as use of minibuses, fire and domestic safety, safety in built-up areas and provision of appropriate insurance. The duty of care owed to a participant is heightened if the person is a child or has physical or learning difficulties.

Safety has as its basis a sound framework of planning and organisation, coupled with the competence of those members of staff responsible for delivery and supervision. Competence in itself relies upon an appropriate mix of experience and training.

An intrinsic feature of outdoor learning is that everything may not always go according to plan. This implies a need for safety systems that are adaptable and flexible within the overall safety framework.

Only well trained and experienced staff will be able to apply the sound judgement required in such circumstances.

There are a number of **KEY ELEMENTS** that will identify good and safe practice. These are identified below and expanded upon later in the document.

### **Well Defined Objectives**

The objectives for the particular programme or event must be clearly stated and understood by all concerned.

### **Risk Assessment**

A written risk assessment must be in place prior to each event or series of events. The risk assessment can only be completed once the proposed composition of the party is known since the ability of the group and the additional support needs of individuals are relevant factors. The person carrying out the risk assessment should ensure the Head of Establishment has viewed and accepted the risk assessment as suitable, record the assessment and give copies to all leaders and supervisors, with details of the measures they should take to avoid or reduce the risks. Further guidance on generic and site specific risk assessments can be found at:

[http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray\\_standard/page\\_49488.html](http://www.moray.gov.uk/moray_standard/page_49488.html)

### **Staff Competence**

Competent leadership is the most important safety factor of all. Enthusiasm by itself is generally not enough. Appropriate supervision ratios along with the required competencies and experience of leaders should be identified as part of the risk assessment process.

**It is a requirement of the Adventure Activity Licensing Authority that updated evidence of staff competences/qualifications relating to adventurous/outdoor activities be kept on file within each establishment. A photocopy of documentation should be entered into Evolve to support approval of trips with adventurous activities.**

Detailed information on the required technical competencies and minimum supervision ratios required for the leadership of adventurous activities can be found within the guidance sections of the relevant activities.

### **Training of Staff**

Leaders need to be able to safeguard the physical and psychological health of the people, and especially young people, in their care. It is important that staff receive appropriate training for the organisation, leadership and supervision of off-site activities.

### **First Aid Provision**

**Provision for first aid must be considered an essential aspect of any adventurous activity that takes place, regardless of its nature or location.** One of the leaders must have undertaken a first aid course appropriate to the activity.

### **Clearly defined roles**

It is essential that all those involved in the planning and delivery of programmes understand their roles and responsibilities.

### **Good Communication**

Effective communication during all stages of the planned event is crucial. Usually it will be sufficient to communicate verbally but it may be necessary to provide written instruction on occasions. Mobile phones can be of great help and their use should be considered but not totally relied upon. Satellite phones may need to be considered by groups visiting more remote regions.

For school pupils, further details of any communication needs may be found in individual pupils' education support plans.

## **Planning and Preparation**

All aspects of the proposed activity should be carefully planned. It is strongly recommended that organisers use a form of **Planning Checklist** (see document pack). Useful additional advice is contained within the Scottish Government document [“Going Out There”](#)

Consideration must also be given to ensuring that appropriate contingency arrangements are in place.

## **Monitoring**

It is a vital link in the safety management chain that managers satisfy themselves through a monitoring process that the guidance and good practice that is outlined in this document is being implemented ‘on the ground’.

## **Evaluation**

It is important to evaluate the outcomes of a particular event in order to learn from the experience. The evaluation process will inform the planning for all future programmes.

**The reporting of potentially hazardous occurrences allows for the evaluation of trends within the organisation overall as a part of the continuous improvement of best practice.**



## **NOTIFIABLE EXCURSIONS (ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES)**

ONLY those providers approved by Moray Council may be used to provide adventurous activities for council groups. The Moray Council maintains a Register of Approved External Providers of Adventurous Activities. Registered providers will have satisfied the council as to the standards of their safety management systems and the quality of their provision. Individual establishments should not request copies of safety management documentation from providers. It is intended that the register remains dynamic. Heads of Establishments or party leaders wishing to use non-registered providers should, in the first instance notify the Adventurous Activities Consultant (AS Training) **before any booking commitments are made**. This will initiate an invitation to register along with a process of scrutiny.

**Provision for first aid must be considered an essential aspect of any adventurous activity that takes place, regardless of its nature or location.**

As activities become more technical and as the locations used become more remote from outside assistance, the need for staff to be well trained in first aid becomes increasingly important.

Where staff are leading or supervising adventure activities, the technical qualifications they require to hold in order to do so will in turn require them to hold appropriate and current first aid qualifications in order to maintain the validity of their technical award.

All holders of The Moray Council's 'in-house' awards must also hold a valid first aid certificate if they wish to use their award/s to supervise groups in that capacity.

A number of first aid providers offer training that is specifically designed for remote or wilderness environments. (e.g. [BASP](#), [Outwardly Mobile](#) etc.) This type of first aid training is strongly recommended for staff who are likely to be operating in these environments.

Where **adventurous activities** are included in the itinerary, party leaders should advise parents or adult participants to ensure that the travel insurance policy they purchase provides appropriate cover for the activities to be undertaken. There are a number of insurers who specialise in adventure activity travel insurance.

## **ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES CONSULTANT**

Moray Council has engaged the services of a Consultant for Adventurous Activities in the form of AS Training. They are acknowledged experts in the field and will provide specialist advice on safety and other operational issues. They have responsibility for:

- Advising the council on policy issues relating to outdoor learning
- Advising senior officers and heads of establishment on operational aspects of outdoor learning
- Providing support to staff in establishments for the implementation and interpretation of policies
- Checking of Evolve entries for adventurous activities and advising trip leaders and heads of establishments
- Checking Duke of Edinburgh Award expedition plans
- Checking particular procedures where appropriate with external providers
- Carrying out monitoring visits from time to time on activities taking place
- Providing in-service training for council staff and volunteers relating to adventurous activities

## **COMPETENCE OF STAFF**

It is part of the Head of Establishment's responsibilities to ensure that staff have the appropriate competencies to lead excursions. Competence is derived from a blend of **experience and training**.

It is a fundamental requirement of Health and Safety law that employees are given appropriate training to carry out the tasks required of them. It is the employee's responsibility not to operate outside the scope of their competence. This applies even more so in circumstances where a duty of care for others has been accepted.

## **THE TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

The technical qualifications required by employees/volunteers for the supervision of adventurous activities and the role and limitations of these are detailed in the guidance sections for each activity. Many employees/volunteers may be operating on the basis of qualifications that they already hold and/or have acquired through their own efforts and resources. It is essential that the currency of these qualifications is maintained if they are to continue to operate. Simply holding a certificate does not constitute a 'qualification' in its own right. Certification needs to be backed up by regular current practice and by regular revalidation of the award held.

If a **Head of Establishment** is left in any doubt about the currency or validity of qualifications held by members of staff/volunteers in this context then they should seek advice from the Adventurous Activities Consultant.

A database of technical competencies and qualifications of council staff is managed by the Adventurous Activities Consultant in line with the requirements of the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations. In addition to this, **photo-copy evidence of technical competencies and/or qualifications held by staff must be kept available for inspection by AALA Inspectors within each establishment's administrative system.**

The Head of Establishment will allocate or agree the tasks that staff/volunteers will undertake based on informed judgement of the competence of the member of staff/volunteer in relation to the task concerned. In the context of outdoor learning the competencies that need to be evaluated fall within two broad categories.

- Personal skills (often referred to as soft skills) are those attributes of judgement, leadership, organisation skills, and interpersonal skills that are essential to any learning activity
- Technical skills (often referred to as hard skills) are those that pertain to the particular activity

### **National Governing Body (NGB) Awards**

The National Governing Bodies of all outdoor sports and adventurous activities administer schemes of training for coaches, instructors, and leaders. In virtually all cases these schemes provide the preferred form of training for staff/volunteers undertaking those activities. Lists of schemes are included under each activity.

NGB awards tend to focus on the more technical aspects of coaching, instructing and teaching and do not normally presume to evaluate the personal and interpersonal skills of candidates. Most (if not all) NGB Awards require the holder to also hold a first aid certificate. The award becomes invalid if the required first aid certificate is allowed to expire.

### **In-House Training**

In cases where **either** an activity has no appropriate NGB **or** there are perceived gaps in an NGB scheme of training and awards, it would be normal for an employer to develop its own in-house training schemes.

Moray Council operates in-house training schemes for:

- Low Hills
- Rock wall Climbing
- Cycling
- Pool kayaking

These schemes are managed by the council's Adventurous Activities Consultants. Training courses are usually also delivered by the Adventure Activities Consultant. Where such training is delivered by others then this must firstly be accredited by the Adventure Activities Consultant to ensure that it meets the required standard of content, delivery and assessment.

### **Water Safety & Rescue Training**

As with first aid the need for currency water-based rescue skills for staff/volunteers involved with watersports is recognised. The form of safety & rescue skills required may be specific to each water activity and are specified within the guidance for each activity. Awards should be updated at the frequency required by the awarding body. See in particular the Moray Council Standard Operating Practices for guidance.

### **Supervision Ratios for Adventurous Activities/Outdoor Learning**

**Rules and guidance for** the supervision of adventurous activities are included within the guidance sections for the relevant activities.

### **Larger parties**

There are particular difficulties in safely managing large parties and reliance on staffing ratios alone is not enough. **For the duration of the event each leader should assume separate responsibility for an appropriately sized group of named participants within acceptable ratios.**

### **Buddy systems**

Staff supervision can be effectively complemented by the use of a buddy system. Participants are teamed up with one or maybe two 'buddies' and each regularly checks on the other(s). Buddy systems are also useful for encouraging and developing responsibility and a sense of community.

### **Group Management**

It is vital that **head counts** are done at regular intervals and at least prior to and at the end of each group movement from one location to another. Keeping account of large groups is made easier by individual supervisors each accepting responsibility for a small manageable team and reporting directly to the party leader that their team is present and correct.

It is good practice for supervisors to:

- Carry a names list of all participants and accompanying adults at all times
- Make sure that all participants know a rendezvous points if they become separated

Consideration could be given to:

- Ensuring participants are easily identifiable through the use of coloured T-shirts, baseball caps or school uniform
- Providing participants with badges or cards containing details of their hotel and an emergency contact number. For overseas visits consider a note written in the local language

### **Remote Supervision and ‘Down Time’**

Supervision of participants must be maintained 24hrs throughout the excursion. There are different levels of supervision:

- **Close supervision** – the normal level of supervision within the active or programmed phases of the excursion
- **Remote supervision** – where activity is not directly supervised but participants are operating in groups within clearly stated and understood parameters. Supervisors are present but not necessarily within sight. Their whereabouts are known to participants and vice-versa
- **‘Down time’** – the time outside programmed activity. May involve different levels of supervision from close supervision of organised recreational activity through remote supervision of ‘free time’ to being ‘on call’ during sleep time.

**It is essential that everyone involved in the excursion (staff and participants) understands the supervision arrangements and the expectations upon them.**

### **Additional support needs**

Where additional support needs exist, the levels of supervision should be appropriate to these needs.

It would not be possible in a general document like this one to provide specific advice relevant to all activities and all needs. The judgement of staff/volunteers skilled both in meeting additional support needs and the principles of good practice contained throughout this document should be relied upon.

In some cases the format of activity and its venue may need to be

adjusted to suit the individuals involved and in some cases it may not be possible to safely include an individual in the activity even after “reasonable adjustment” has been made.

Equipment and other resources deployed may need particular consideration.

The number of staff/volunteers and the range of expertise and competencies should be determined by the needs of the individuals within the group and the nature of the activity. While particular competencies may be required to support participants with additional support needs, it is desirable that, with participant and parental consent, relevant information is shared with the group. This will enable group members to participate as fully as possible and be mutually supportive.

**WHEN A GROUP ARE OVERDUE THEIR SCHEDULED RETURN TIME**

It is important that a systematic approach is adopted in responding to the late return of groups. This should ensure there is no dramatic over-reaction to simple unavoidable delay but should equally ensure a prompt response in circumstances where the overdue return may be the result of a serious incident.

**The party leader must make every effort to inform the base contact of**

**ADVENTUROUS**

<b>Group overdue by:</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Actions &amp; Response</b>
No More than 1 Hour	Heightened awareness	General awareness raised – looking out for safe return Re-assure any concerned relatives Telephone party leader or to last known point if possible
No More than 2 Hours	Low key search	Initiate a low key search of general area where group are expected to be. Include expected location of vehicle. Use local people/knowledge where possible. Have they been seen? Treat as <b>Level 2</b> incident
No More than 4 Hours	Full scale response	Notify police and initiate full scale search Treat as <b>Level 3</b> incident until further details are known

**Safe return of the group MUST always be reported as soon as possible.**

**Travel Time:**

Where groups are operating in relatively remote locations and there is significant travel time (more than 30mins) between the activity venue (where the vehicle is parked) and base, expected time of return should be based on the time of expected return to the vehicle and not to base. This will prevent unnecessary time loss in initiating an appropriate response.

**The group leader MUST contact the base contact person by telephone as soon as possible after returning to their vehicle.**

A timely phone call to base should forestall an unnecessarily vigorous response to a delayed return when young people are missing.



## INVESTIGATION OF INCIDENTS

Although the response to an emergency and any subsequent investigation have common threads, they should always be regarded as entirely separate management functions.

Investigation procedures must be designed to cater for various levels of incident and to allow sensitive handling of situations arising from unplanned circumstances. Fig 4 below provides guidance on the designations of staff that should be involved for the various levels of incident.

**Figure 4 – Investigation of Incidents**

Level of Incident	Investigating Officer	Investigation Contributors	Circulation of Report
Levels 1 & 2 inc. Near misses	Head of Establishment	Relevant Establishment staff. Participants.	Grants & AA Officer. AA Consultant Principal H&S
Level 3	Principal Health and Safety Adviser	Head of Establishment & relevant Staff. Participants. AA Consultant	All above PLUS Head of Service
Level 4	QIO in conjunction with the Principal Health and Safety Adviser	Head of Service. Head of Establishment & relevant Staff Participants AA Officer	All above PLUS Head of Service. Director Chief Executive

The investigation should be an information gathering exercise. As such it should be carried out in a reasonably informal and non-judgemental manner. The intent is to seek the causes of incidents in order to inform the ongoing development of good practice.

**Investigation does not automatically imply incompetence or negligence.**

Where, as a result of the investigation, there is a possibility of disciplinary or other action being followed the investigating officer must exercise caution to ensure that one process does not compromise another. Advice from Senior Officers and/or Personnel Services should be sought before proceeding with the investigation of the incident.

**Near misses** must be investigated as low level incidents by the Head of

Establishment.

The investigating officer will draw upon the observations of staff and participants in a form they feel appropriate.

## **ADVENTURE ACTIVITY EQUIPMENT HELD IN ESTABLISHMENTS**

All technical equipment used in the delivery of Adventurous Activities must be designated as 'Fit for Purpose' by an appropriately qualified **'technical advisor'** appointed by The Moray Council. In addition, technical equipment including **Personal Protective Equipment** (PPE) must be:

- Used and stored in accordance with the manufacturers recommendations
- Visually condition checked by a qualified instructor on each occasion they are used
- Their use monitored and recorded in accordance with the recommendations of the appropriate Governing Body and/or the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations
- Subject to periodic testing in accordance with the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations

Proper records relating to equipment stocks must be maintained. These records should include for each separate item:

- Date of purchase
- Discard date (shelf or usage life as per manufacturers guidelines)
- Checking and testing policy
- Checking & testing records
- Name and signature of employees carrying out checks & tests

Employees/volunteers delegated with responsibility for storing, maintaining and issuing specialist equipment must have received appropriate training.

Clear policies must be in place to ensure that specialist equipment is only issued to those who are appropriately qualified to use it.

### **Hired Equipment: Licensed Providers**

Where equipment is hired from AALA Licensed providers, all of the above may be assumed and no further action is required.

### **Other Equipment: Unlicensed Suppliers**

Where technical equipment is being hired or loaned from unlicensed suppliers, it **MUST** be assessed and designated as 'Fit for Purpose' by an appropriately qualified technical advisor appointed by Moray Council.