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Residential visits

Residential visits create powerful learning opportunities for young people, which can lead to step changes in an individual's personal development and confidence. This document gives guidance on the residential element of a visit, as this introduces specific additional management issues. It should be read in conjunction with '*Group Management and Supervision*' in section 4 of this guidance.

Types of residential experience

While the types of residential visit and accommodation vary, the choice should:

- Be suitable for the age of the group and accessible to the range of abilities and disabilities.
- Support the learning objectives of the visit e.g. choosing a small local hotel or hostel outside the main tourist area to give students more opportunity to use their language.
- Support a cost effective learning opportunity.

The variety of residential visits may be categorised as follows – each one becoming progressively more complex to manage:

1. Accommodation as part of a package at a residential education centre

- You should check standards as part of the provider selection process (Note that accommodation arranged through a Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badged provider will have been deemed appropriate for educational visits for young people).
- Where there is support from provider staff, you should agree clear areas of responsibility beforehand.
- Where the centre is being shared by other users, you should liaise with the other users to agree expectations, including behaviour.

2. Sole occupancy of a building

- The standard of the building should be checked during the selection process or at a pre-visit (see 1 above).
- Security may be easier to manage as well as potential fire hazards.
- Buildings not designed for sleeping in (school or village hall etc) may require more thoughtful planning than a specific accommodation facility.

3. Shared use of a public facility

You can often eliminate or reduce the potential issues through careful selection of the right accommodation, taking into account the points set out below and liaising with management over room allocation and group needs.

4. Self catering

Self-catering introduces further considerations:

- Food hygiene - purchasing, storage, preparation, cooking and serving.
- Involvement of young people (a valuable learning process) – particularly in aspects such as menu choices, hygiene, knives, spillages leading to slips and falls, burns.
- Washing up and utensil storage and cleanliness.

Many of these issues can be simplified by sensible menu choices and preparation and training of staff and young people.

5. Accommodation that does not conform to accepted UK standards

Overseas visits with residential stays may involve accommodation that does not meet expected UK/European standards and so might require additional controls:

- consider taking smoke alarm(s), carbon monoxide alarm(s), personal door locks or door wedges.
- It is essential to make an initial assessment of the hazards of the accommodation and the immediate surroundings to brief the young people about the safety aspects.

6. Camping/bivouacs

Apart from the necessary equipment, camping in fine weather may not introduce any greater complexity than self-catering. Camping in foul weather can be a more demanding undertaking. Camping with groups can be made less arduous by preparation and progression in stages (for example camping in the school grounds, then a nearby location, then further afield).

7. Home Stays

For specific information on this type of residential, see the document '*Exchanges and home stays*' in section 7 of this guidance.

Generic considerations

For further information on researching the suitability of accommodation see the document '*Using external providers and facilities*' in section 4 of this guidance.

Irrespective of the type of residential experience, there are some generic issues to recognise and manage:

1. Fire safety.

- Check fire safety standards as part of the accommodation selection process.

- From a fire rescue perspective it may be better not to sleep above the sixth or seventh floor (the limit of external rescue by the fire services) so as to make evacuating the building easier.
- On arrival, check fire escape routes to ensure they are properly signed and clear of obstructions.
- Know what the fire alarm sounds like.
- Ensure everyone knows the emergency procedures, fire escape routes and assembly points.
- Ensure there is an appropriate Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) for any adult or young person who may need one.
- Many fires are started by electrical faults. Be aware of electrical appliances fitted in rooms (kettles, hairdryers, heaters, fridge) and ensure young people are briefed about any issues about these and electrical items they may carry (hair appliances, mobile phone chargers etc).
- Consider whether there is a danger from young people smoking in rooms and how this will be managed.

2. Group safety and security.

As identified in '*Group Management and Supervision*' in section 4 of this guidance, ensure that a leadership team duty system operates so that groups continue to be appropriately supervised at all times. The security of young people with specific needs while on overseas visits is covered in '*Overseas visits*' in section 7 of this guidance.

It may not be possible or appropriate that all of the following are fully met but Visit Leaders must either be confident that the risks of the accommodation can be managed or they should change location:

- Consider the nature and location of the accommodation and the hazards of the immediate surroundings during the selection process. The internet can provide very useful information if a pre-visit is not feasible.
- The sleeping accommodation is exclusively for the group's use or rooms are located next to each other, ideally on the same floor.
- Leaders have sleeping accommodation providing easy access to their group. Consider location of leaders when young people's rooms are not in close proximity to each other.
- Consider the most appropriate allocation of young people to rooms.
- Where shower and toilet facilities are not en-suite consider arrangements for managing the use of shared facilities.
- Better security may be provided by avoiding ground floor rooms.
- Consider how secure the buildings can be made against intrusion and if there is 24 hour staffing of reception.
- Confirm that rooms can be secured but leaders have access to a master key.
- Environmental hazards to be managed include:
 - Balconies:
 - Does the structure appear solid? Consider the maturity and likely behaviour of the young people along with the height of railings (UK building regulations require 1.1m, so if it is less than this a judgement must be made about suitability).

- Design of railings – do they allow or encourage people to climb on them and lean over? Do they have big gaps?
- Swimming pools – no unsupervised use of the pool – see the '*Swimming Pools*' document in section 7 of this guidance.
- Bars and public spaces – access is managed to allow young people the benefits of meeting with strangers while protecting them from harm.
- Access to alcohol - remember you can get room service in hotels stopped and mini bars emptied.
- Buddy pairs or teams, where appropriate, are used for indirectly or remotely supervised time around the accommodation.
- Group behaviour expectations are clear and understood – see the '*Model code of conduct*' document in section 8 of this guidance.

3. Drinking and drugs, including smoking

Some young people may perceive residential visits as offering an opportunity for use of alcohol and drugs (other than prescribed medicines). Managing this perception, and preventing the use of alcohol and drugs, including smoking, by the young people has two key aspects:

- Before departure it is best to develop and agree the visit code of conduct in discussion with the young people, and to set expectations at that stage. Drinking and drugs, including smoking and e-cigarettes, are an aspect of the code and will reflect the establishment's policy. The policy will include procedures for managing unauthorised use, which may need to be adapted to the context of a visit. Before departure there should be absolute clarity by everyone about use and consequences.
- During the visit, opportunities for unauthorised use are most likely to occur outside the structured activities. While these times may be 'off programme' they are not exempt from the establishment's responsibility for supervision. Knowing their group, Visit Leaders will agree geographical boundaries and use their judgement to decide the appropriate level of supervision.

The school policy may also include expectations of teachers' use of alcohol during visits. Where the establishment decides that responsible drinking of alcohol is permissible, there must always be sufficient staff who are alcohol free to provide effective supervision including during an emergency. DfE and ACPO drug advice for schools can be found at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drugs-advice-for-schools>

4. Appropriate relationships

Visit Leaders will be aware that close relationships can develop during a residential visit and, taking into account the age and maturity of the group, may include discussion about appropriate relationships as part of the agreed code of conduct.

Visit Leader accommodation arrival checklist

- The accommodation is as expected/booked
- Check what the fire alarm sounds like and where the assembly point is
- Make an initial assessment of the hazards of the accommodation and the immediate surroundings to brief the young people about the safety aspects
- Allocate rooms appropriately and keep a list of who is where
- Check toilet and shower areas
- Check fire exit routes are signed, clear and working
- Do you have/can you get access to a master key for rooms?
- Check the security of the building overnight
- Assess the immediate area around the accommodation – is it as expected?
- Assess public areas and decide how these will be managed

Check each room for:

- Breakages, damage or missing items – record and report these
- Windows and balconies
- Door security
- Electrical hazards
- Fire/smoke detectors
- Carbon monoxide sources
- Routes to fire exits
- Mini bar

Brief everyone (either a group briefing or room by room) on:

- Any room hazards (slips, trips, electrics, balconies etc)
- Use of toilets and showers where these are not en-suite
- Emergency evacuation procedure (consider a fire drill if appropriate)
- Location of leaders overnight
- Boundaries – where they can go
- Behaviour and conduct around the accommodation
- Timings and meeting places

Fire safety – group briefing sheet – high rise buildings

- Be aware of the building evacuation plan. Make sure everyone knows what to do if the fire alarm sounds. Plan and practise your escape plan together.
- Know what the fire alarm will sound like.
- Do not panic

If the door is warm to the touch:

- Before opening the door, feel it with the back of your hand. If the door feels warm to the touch, do not attempt to open it. Stay in your room.
- Stuff the cracks around the door with towels, rags, bedding or tape and cover vents to keep smoke out.
- If there is a phone to hand, call the visit leader, reception or the fire service and tell them exactly where you are trapped. Do this even if you can see the fire services in the street below.
- Wait at a window and signal for help with a torch or by waving a sheet or other visible item.
- If possible, open the window at the top and bottom, but do not break it; you may need to close it again if smoke rushes in.
- Be patient. Rescuing all occupants of a high-rise building can take several hours.

If the door is not warm to the touch:

- When you open the door, brace your body against it while staying low to the floor. Slowly open it to no more than a crack to check for the presence of smoke or fire in the hallway.
- If there is no smoke in the hallway or stairwell, follow your evacuation plan.
- If you do not hear the building's fire alarm, activate it yourself while exiting the floor.
- If you encounter smoke or flames on your way out, seek an alternative escape route if available or immediately return to your room.