



National
Guidance

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Approval of Leaders

Employers should have clear processes for approving Leaders to lead visits or activities. This should ensure that Leaders are **accountable, confident** and **competent** to lead the specific visits or activities for which they are approved.

Being **accountable** means that the Leader has been engaged through an appropriate recruitment process, which includes vetting and induction into the establishment's policies and procedures. The details of this process may depend upon whether the Leader is employed, contracted or acts as a volunteer, but in all cases should be thorough. Regardless of a Leader's employment status, they should understand the chain of accountability, what is expected of them, and the establishment's policies and procedures.

Being **confident** includes Leaders having the ability to take charge of a situation while being aware of, and understanding, their abilities, as well as their limitations.

Being **competent** means that the Leader has demonstrated the ability to operate effectively, and has sufficient relevant experience and knowledge of the activities, the group, and the environments in which the visit will take place.

Competence is a combination of skills, knowledge, awareness, judgement, training and experience. It is not necessarily related to age or position within the establishment. It is situational – a leader who is competent in one activity or environment may not be so in another, and it involves breadth as well as depth. Relevant experience is not necessarily gained by repeating the same thing several times, but by experiencing a range of different activities and environments.

For adventure activity leaders, competence is best demonstrated through:

- Holding a National Governing Body leadership/coaching award at an appropriate level, or
- Being "signed off" by a suitably-qualified Technical Adviser appointed by the employer.

For further information about appropriate technical qualifications, to lead or advise on specific adventure activities, see the qualifications matrices produced by the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA) in AALA guidance note 5.18 available at:

<http://webcommunities.hse.gov.uk/connect.ti/adventureactivitiesnetwork/view?objectId=582565>

Approval should never be assumed but must involve professional judgement. The Head/Manager or EVC (when the responsibility is delegated) must make a judgement about the suitability of that person to lead that group on that visit/activity in that environment.

There are various ways to help make an informed judgement about a colleague's competence, including:

- observations of their group management and supervision skills within their day to day work in the establishment.
- evidence of relevant experience – e.g. assisting on visits or leading visits in a previous establishment.
- Their personal interests and experience relevant to the proposed activities and environments.
- evidence of having undertaken appropriate training.
- evidence of relevant qualifications, including any specific qualification required by the law, the employer or the establishment (e.g. in First Aid).

Any approval to lead off-site visits must also include a judgement about how an individual will react in a crisis, without the immediate support of the establishment around them. Will they remain calm and take control of the situation or will they let the situation control them?

It is good practice to keep evidence of Leader approval as well as records of experience (visits led or assisted on). These may, for example, be captured as part of an electronic visit approval system.

