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Outdoor Education Adviser

Outdoor learning, off-site visits and Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) can have a profound effect on children and young people and their well-being; positively influencing behaviour and relationships, developing self-confidence and raising achievement. In an educational setting, 'real' experiences make learning more engaging, relevant, enjoyable and memorable and should be integral to the establishment's work.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 places overall responsibility for health and safety with the employer.

- All employers have a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare of all employees and others who may be harmed by their activities.
- Schools have a responsibility to ensure that arrangements for supporting pupils with medical conditions conform to Section 100 of the Children and Families Act 2014.
- Local authorities have a duty to improve the well-being of, and to safeguard and promote the welfare of, all young people for whom they are responsible under the Children Act 2004.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers to appoint competent persons to assist them in meeting these responsibilities. It is therefore good practice for an employer that provides outdoor learning, off-site visits or LOtC to appoint a competent **Outdoor Education Adviser**. This may be an employee or an external contractor or consultant, and they may have a different job title, but it is essential that the employer ensures that the adviser is specifically competent and that the number of people appointed, the time available for them to fulfil their functions and the resources at their disposal are adequate, taking into account the size of the organisation and the nature of the activities provided by its establishments.

In appointing an Outdoor Education Adviser, the employer should ensure that the adviser has sufficient knowledge, training, experience, sound judgement, and the ability to influence practice across the organisation effectively. Employers should carry out checks to verify these. The Outdoor Education Advisers Panel (OEAP) Secretary (secretary@oeap.info) can provide further information and support to employers who feel they need help with the appointment of an Outdoor Education Adviser or consultant.

The adviser should have:

- Sufficient knowledge of the legal responsibilities and powers of the employer (and the local authority if this is relevant) to ensure these are correctly applied in their area of work.
- Experience of leading/managing a broad range of outdoor learning activities and off-site visits.
- Understanding of the contribution that outdoor learning, off-site visits and LOtC can make to learning and development, and to fulfilling the aims and ethos of establishments. Where the employer is responsible for schools, this should include knowledge of the ways in which outdoor learning, off-site visits and LOtC can be embedded in the curriculum and normal to teaching and learning.
- A practical understanding of the difficulties involved in the supervision and management of groups of young people and vulnerable adults in a wide range of venues and environments.
- Competence in sensible and proportionate assessment of risk and its management in a variety of relevant contexts.
- The ability to interpret, refine and present National Guidance at a local level.
- The ability to organise, facilitate and/or deliver effective training of Educational Visit Coordinators (EVCs) and Visit Leaders.
- Knowledge of when and how to access technical experts when specialist advice beyond their own competence is required.

The OEAP has membership criteria and an accreditation process that means that an Accredited Member of OEAP has demonstrated that they have all of these competences.

A job description for an Outdoor Education Adviser (or equivalent) should include the following key responsibilities:

- Advising about compliance with the legal framework within which outdoor learning, off-site visits and LOtC are delivered. You can find further guidance in document 3.2a "Underpinning Legal Framework".
- Interpreting, refining and presenting OEAP National Guidance at a local level.
- Providing advice, support and monitoring in relation to developing high quality outdoor learning, off-site visits and LOtC.
- Active engagement with appropriate networks and organisations including OEAP.
- Maintaining and sharing knowledge of national requirements and initiatives.
- Providing practical guidance and support on proportionate risk management.
- Establishing suitable and proportionate monitoring of visits.
- Developing suitable systems to ensure that establishment training needs are identified and met.
- Ensuring that establishment heads/managers and EVCs understand that all leaders involved in visits require access to training to support their role.
- Developing practical and effective policies and systems for visit notification and approval.
- Directing and/or delivering effective training for EVCs and leaders that meet OEAP standards.

- Establishing clear guidance defining leader competence for all types of outdoor learning, off-site visits and LOTC and how the competence may be assessed.
- Advising on the role of national quality assurance schemes (e.g. LOTC Quality Badge, national governing body accreditation schemes, AALA licensing).

