



<http://oeapng.info>

Visit or Activity Leader

Outdoor learning and off site visits 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 Visit Leader has overall responsibility for the learning, development and supervision of the participants and the safety of all, including the rest of the leadership team.

The Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 places overall responsibility for health and safety with the employer. Employees are required to take reasonable care and to cooperate with their employer by complying with the employer's policy and guidance.

The key requirements for leaders are that they must be, competent to lead, confident and accountable, not that they hold a particular post, title or job description. There should always be a single designated leader and, if this role changes, there should be a clear handover.

Being **competent** means that the leader has demonstrated the ability to lead to the level demanded by the visit, and has sufficient relevant experience and knowledge of the activities, the group, and the environments they will operate in.

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 from the HSE website. You may need to copy and paste the link into your browser:

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

Being **confident** includes the leader's capacity to take charge of a situation in an emergency and their awareness of their abilities as well as their limitations.

Being **accountable** means that the leader has been engaged through a clear process which includes vetting and appropriate induction into the establishment's policies and procedures. Regardless of employment status, Leaders must be clear about the chain of accountability and what is expected of them.

If you are designated as the Leader, you should:

- Be specifically competent.
- Be approved to carry out the lead role for the specific activity.
- Be able to use the chosen environment or venue(s) to provide a wide range of learning or development outcomes.
- Liaise with your establishment's Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC) to ensure that visits have clear aims and are planned to appropriately balance benefits and risks.
- Ensure that there is effective supervision.
- Take a lead on risk management. It is good practice to involve all the visit leadership team to ensure wide understanding and to give clarity about what they need **to do**. It is also good practice to involve young people wherever appropriate.
- Define the roles and responsibilities of other leaders (and participants) to ensure effective supervision, appointing a deputy wherever possible.
- Ensure that child protection issues are addressed (e.g. good safeguarding practice is followed and adults are appropriately vetted and checked).
- Provide relevant information to other leaders including the aims and how they can contribute to achieving these, the location, the participants (age, health information, capabilities, special needs, safeguarding and behavioural issues)
- Ensure that informed parental consent has been obtained as necessary.
- Provide relevant information to parents and participants, and arrange pre-visit information meetings where appropriate.
- Make sure there is access to first aid at an appropriate level.
- Ensure that if the visit leadership team includes someone with a close relationship to a member of the group, this is managed to avoid any possible compromise of effective supervision.
- Ensure that all leaders and any third party providers have access to emergency contact and emergency procedure details.
- Evaluate all aspects, both during and after the event.
- Report any accidents, incidents or near misses.

When working with third-party activity providers it is essential to avoid 'grey areas'. There should be a clear handover before and after any activity led by a provider. Should a provider run an activity in a way that causes concern, the accompanying leaders should consider stopping the activity at the first appropriate moment. Such an intervention should be done with sensitivity and discretion to ensure that it does not result in young people being put at greater risk.

