



National
Guidance

Off-Site Visit Emergencies: The Establishment's Role

Many incidents that happen on off-site visits will be dealt with by the Visit Leadership Team, perhaps with some telephone support from the establishment. However, some of these incidents may become Emergencies or Critical Incidents and require support from the Establishment and/or the Employer.

Emergencies requiring support:

- 1) An incident where a group member:
 - has suffered a life threatening injury or fatality;
 - is at serious risk; or
 - has gone missing for a significant and unacceptable period.
- 2) Any incident that is beyond the normal coping mechanisms of the Visit Leadership Team.

Critical Incidents

An Emergency becomes a Critical incident, requiring support from the Employer, when it:

- a. meets any criteria laid down by the Employer
- b. goes beyond the ability of the Establishment to cope.

Small Establishments, for example small primary schools, may find it useful to explore working with nearby schools to increase their resilience and capacity to deal with Off-Site Visit emergencies.

Roles and Responsibilities

Establishments that also have the role of the Employer (e.g. Foundation, Voluntary Aided and Independent Schools, Academies, and many voluntary sector organisations) should also follow the advice in document 4.1a in this guidance, '*Off-Site Visit Critical Incident Response: The Employer's Role*'. Establishments that do not have the role of the Employer (e.g. Community Schools) must follow guidance provided in their Employer's Critical Incident Plan.

An Establishment should know what level of support can be provided by their Employer.

Principles and Priorities

- To meet the needs of the group in crisis.
- To meet and support the needs of the Establishment community, parents, relatives and friends.
- To respond to the needs of other agencies.
- To respond to media demands.

Overview

Your Employer should have a Critical Incident Plan for Off-Site Visits. It should comprise an action plan that can be adapted to deal with any given Critical Incident. Your Establishment should consider the extent to which your Employer's plan provides sufficient detail about managing any Emergencies that may occur in the course of outdoor learning, offsite visits and learning outside the classroom.

In most cases, Employer (e.g. local authority) Critical Incident Plans will not provide the level of detail required for Emergencies that may arise in outdoor learning, offsite visits and learning outside the classroom. Your Establishment should therefore consider what additional detail is required, consulting your Employer's emergency planning officer as appropriate, and develop an Establishment-level Emergency Plan.

Developing Your Off-Site Visits Emergency Plan

Your Establishment plan should be comprehensive, clarifying the roles and responsibilities of all those who may have to contribute to the management of an Emergency. It will require a pre-planned response system to set it in motion, that is fully understood by all visit leaders and their staff.

When developing your plan, it is good practice to:

- Recognise that a climate of support and trust among staff will strengthen the response at a time of crisis.
- Devote a staff meeting or part of a staff development session to the plan. This should happen in the initial stages and again once the plan is complete. Consider the need for staff to be trained in bereavement counselling.
- Identify key staff. Being involved in an emergency can be very demanding, and it is important to ensure that the staff selected for this role are competent. Ensuring competence could involve any of the following: choosing the right person (someone able to function and make sound decisions in an unexpected and stressful situation); having opportunities to work through scenarios and how to react to them; crib cards; training.
- Recognise the importance of the need for support and of identifying ways of obtaining it. In addition to assistance from their Employer (where applicable), Establishments may need to develop links with other local establishments and with other agencies (for example the emergency services).
- Keep up-to-date lists of contact telephone numbers and addresses readily accessible in more than one place (e.g. in the office, at home, on your smart phone) and keep them in hard copy as well as electronically. These may include contact details of members of staff who have specific functions within

the plan, as well as of young people's parents. Have a record of where lists are kept so that any changes are made to all copies.

- Consider whether there are outside organisations/agencies whom you may need to contact (e.g. insurance, legal advice, counselling) and include their contact numbers on your list.
- Consider the possibility that you will need alternative/additional telephone lines during an Emergency.
- Provide guidance for any member of staff who may act as the Establishment Emergency Contact during a Visit.

Once the plan is operational, you should nominate a member of staff to regularly review and update its details. The plan should never be just a document on the shelf. Its purpose is to ensure that staff move automatically into emergency mode when an incident occurs.

To assist with keeping the plan, and all those it may affect, up to date it is good practice to:

- Ensure that emergency planning and response is discussed as part of the planning for all off-site visits.
- Include scenario-based training on Off-Site Visit Emergencies within the Establishment's annual training programme.
- Involve young people.

Alerting and Activating your Plan

Where the Establishment is not the Employer, the Head of Establishment should agree with the Employer whether Visit Leaders should contact the Employer or the Establishment in the event of an Emergency.

The contact telephone number(s) should be available to all those that may be required to use them, including:

- All members of the Visit Leadership Team.
- Heads/Managers and management teams.
- EVCs.

All members of Visit Leadership Teams should be advised to carry the number(s) at all times during off-site activities, along with an Emergency Procedures crib-card (preferably laminated to ensure that it can be used in difficult environmental conditions).

For the planned telephone communications to remain effective, it is strongly recommended that under no circumstances should anyone make these telephone numbers available to Parents – who might otherwise over-burden and compromise the system.

Media Considerations

Experience suggests that there is likely to be intense pressure from the media. This may be directed at the Establishment itself, the Employer, and the group.

It is strongly recommended that there is control over indiscriminate and potentially damaging use of mobile phones by group members.

It is essential from the outset that press reports from the scene of an incident should contain accurate information under the control of the Employer's Media/Communications Officer.

Heads of Establishment should:

- Nominate a person (either a governor or member of staff) who can be called upon to assist in responding to the media.
- Instruct all other staff not to give interviews or comment on any written or printed material, and make it clear no such material should be handed out to the media.
- Make sure staff know that in the early stages of an incident (until the arrival of the Employer's press and PR support), they should direct any media requests to the Head of the Establishment, or their nominee.

Responding to a Critical Incident

- The Visit Leadership Team should stabilise the situation as far as possible.
- The Visit Leadership Team should alert the Establishment Emergency Contact.
- The Establishment Emergency Contact should decide the level of response required and, when necessary, initiate the Establishment's Emergency Plan and alert the Employer's Emergency Contact.
- The Employer's Emergency Contact should initiate the Employer's Critical Incident Plan for Off-Site Visits.

Saving Lives

Basic first aid is not at all complicated and many lives could be saved each year if more people knew how to open an airway, place a casualty into a safe airway position and deal with major bleeding/shock. Good practical first aid training is an excellent way to provide young people with a useful life skill while enhancing their self-esteem and self-confidence. It is also an excellent team building/group work activity.

It is, therefore, good practice for Establishments to provide some form of first aid training to all students/young people and staff (whether certificated or not).

Further Information

Further information on emergency planning for schools can be found on the website of the Department for Education at:

<http://education.gov.uk/b00231504/emergencies-in-school> .

You may also find the School Emergencies website helpful:

<http://www.schoolemergencies.co.uk/>.

