National Guidance

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Group Management and Supervision

Roles and Responsibilities

All leaders and helpers have a duty of care for participants and for each other during a visit. It is important for effective group management that they fully understand their roles and responsibilities at all times during a visit. Whenever there is a change in who is responsible for any aspect of the visit, there should be a clear handover. Lack of clarity or poor communication can put participants and colleagues at risk.

Visit Leader

The Visit Leader is responsible for the overall leadership of the visit on behalf of their employer. This includes:

- Putting into practice the employer's duty of care for all visit staff and participants, including the supervision and welfare support of participants;
- Informing and motivating staff and participants about the purpose of the visit;
- Tuition - i.e. facilitating participants' learning and development through teaching, instruction, coaching, training etc.

You can find further guidance about the duty of care in document 3.2a "Underpinning Legal framework and Duty of Care".

Supervision of participants means watching them (directly, indirectly or remotely) and making certain that everything is done as required or agreed, including what is needed at the time for their health and safety. For more detail, see the section about supervision below and document 4.3b "Ratios and Effective Supervision".

Welfare support is providing what participants need beyond their immediate health and safety: e.g. learning support, behavioural support, discipline, privacy, security, personal care, medication, emotional support, counselling, first aid, emergency care. Aspects of this are sometimes referred to as 'pastoral care'.

Activity Leader

In different organisations, and in different contexts, this role is known by various names, such as 'group leader', 'instructor', 'assistant leader' and 'supervisor'. For clarity and consistency, the term Activity Leader is used throughout National Guidance.

Visits should be regarded as comprising a number of consecutive and interdependent activities. For example, a visit to the local town might be regarded

as comprising six activities: travel to museum; museum visit; lunch; walk to theatre; theatre visit; travel back to base. Supervision for each activity might be organised differently. For each activity there should be an Activity Leader responsible for the group.

The Visit Leader can themselves act as an Activity Leader (while retaining overall responsibility for the visit), or can delegate the role to another approved leader, who then becomes responsible for the supervision, welfare support and tuition of the group.

If the group splits into sub-groups, the Visit Leader should allocate an Activity Leader to each sub-group. If there is a change in Activity Leader, for example at the end of an activity, there must be a clear handover so that both the leaders and the participants know who is the Activity Leader at any particular time.

The Activity Leader should remain in overall charge of the supervision of their group, but may delegate specific supervisory tasks, as well as other aspects of group leadership (including welfare support and tuition) to suitable approved assistant leaders or helpers.

One or More Leaders

When there is more than one leader involved in an activity, one of them must be clearly nominated as the Activity Leader, and the respective roles of the other leader(s) must be clear. If this is not the case, then there may be a risk of confusion or conflict in decision-making, or of one leader falsely assuming that another is managing a situation.

In some cases, there may be only one leader on a visit or a specific activity during a visit. If this is the case, the participants should be judged competent to manage in the event of the leader being taken ill or injured and should know what to do to contact the establishment and get support. If a leader is to work alone away from the group for any significant time, you will need to consider what arrangements will be necessary in order to respond to anything that might occur.

Parent as Leader

If a leader is the parent of a young person taking part in a visit, there is the potential for them to be distracted by the needs of their own child, rather than looking to the needs of the whole group. This could compromise group management, particularly if there is a serious incident. The potential to be distracted can be avoided if a parent is not allocated a leadership role with direct responsibility for their own child. Sometimes this may not be possible (e.g. when a class teacher has their own child in their class). In this case consideration should be given to other ways to manage the risk, for example by ensuring that other leaders are available.

Further Guidance about Roles and Responsibilities

For more guidance about the roles, see documents 3.4k "Visit or Activity Leader", 3.4l "Assistant Leader" and 3.4m "Helper".

For guidance on selecting Visit Leaders and Activity Leaders, see documents 3.2d "Approval of Leaders" and 3.2g "Vetting and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks".

If you are considering handing over any leadership responsibilities to an external provider, see document 4.4h "Using External Providers and Facilities".

Good Practice in Group Management

In delegating supervisory roles, it is good practice for the Visit Leader to:

- Arrange the party into small and easily managed sub-groups;
- Ensure that each leader knows which sub-group and which participants they are responsible for;
- Ensure that each young person knows which leader is responsible for them;
- Ensure that all leaders understand that they are responsible to the Visit Leader for the supervision of the participants assigned to them;
- Ensure that all leaders and participants are aware of the expected standards of behaviour.

It is good practice for each Activity Leader to:

- Have a reasonable prior knowledge of the participants, including any special educational needs, medical needs or disabilities;
- Be involved in carrying out the visit risk assessment, and be aware of any significant risks and control measures that it identifies;
- Be aware of any current guidance about epidemics (such as coronavirus – see document 4.4k "Coronavirus") and related control measures;
- Have the support of an assistant leader or helper, unless the activity and group are suitable for a single leader;
- Delegate tasks to any assistant leader or helper as necessary, while retaining overall control of supervision;
- Carry a list/register of all group members;
- Apply the appropriate type of supervision (see "Supervision" section below), as required by or agreed with the Visit Leader;
- Regularly check that the entire group is present (see "Headcounts or Rollcalls" below);
- Have a clear idea of the activity to be undertaken, including its aims, objectives and desired learning outcomes;
- Have the means to contact the Visit Leader or other leaders if needing help;
- Have prior knowledge of the venue (see document 4.4h "Using External Providers and Facilities");
- Be alert for and recognise unforeseen hazards and respond accordingly;
- Monitor the activity, including the physical and mental condition and abilities of the group members and the suitability of the prevailing conditions;
- Be competent in techniques of group management;

- Ensure that participants and any assistant leaders or helpers abide by the agreed standards of behaviour;
- Clearly understand the emergency procedures and be able to carry them out;
- Know how to access first aid.

Each participant should:
- Be involved, at an appropriate level, in the risk assessment for the visit and understand what they need to do as a result;
- Know who their leader is at any given time and how to contact him or her;
- Make sure that they have understood instructions;
- Make sure they are not isolated from the group;
- Know who their fellow group members are;
- Alert the leader if someone is missing or in difficulties;
- Make sure they are aware of any designated meeting place;
- Make sure they understand the action they should take if they become lost or separated;
- Understand and accept the expected standards of behaviour.

Headcounts or Rollcalls

Regular headcounts or rollcalls of young people should take place throughout all off-site activities. The frequency should be increased at certain points such as crowded public areas, getting on and off transport, and when arriving at or leaving a location or near a significant hazard (such as water). A headcount or rollcall should always be part of any initial response to an incident or emergency. It is easier to monitor and count smaller groups and clusters.

It is good practice to:
- Double-check numbers before departing from a venue;
- Carry a list/register of all young people and adults involved in the visit at all times;
- Ensure that younger children are readily identifiable, especially if the visit is to a densely populated area, e.g. brightly coloured caps, T-shirts or a school uniform can help identify group members more easily (but avoid inappropriate or potentially embarrassing items);
- Avoid identification that could put young people at risk e.g. name badges;
- Provide extra safeguards for very young children, or for those with special needs, such as providing laminated cards displaying the name of the group or hotel and an emergency contact number (this could be appropriate for all visits abroad, with a translation of the information into the relevant language(s));
- Ensure that everyone is aware of rendezvous points;
- Ensure that everyone knows what to do if they become separated from the group;
- Make everyone aware of their destination e.g. the tube station where the plan requires them to get off.

Supervision

The responsibility for supervision is continuous, 24 hours a day. It is important that care and supervision are maintained during periods outside structured activities, as well as during the activities themselves. This does not mean that young people need necessarily to be constantly watched, but rather that leaders should achieve a sensible balance of activities and supervision methods.

Time for young people to be with their peers, away from a close adult presence, can be an important part of visits, particularly of residentials, and brings many additional learning opportunities. This is equally true for structured learning time as it is for recreational time on longer visits. However, too much unstructured time can allow opportunities for mischief, bullying, homesickness and wandering off, so the time needs to be appropriately managed. Opportunities for such time should be built into the visit plan with appropriate levels of supervision, be included in information to parents (and their consent) and be covered by the risk-benefit assessment.

It is good practice to:
- Take care with the use of terms such as 'free time' and 'down time' so that they do not suggest to leaders or participants that supervision will not be in place;
- Ensure that all leaders and young people understand the standards of behaviour that apply at all times, not just during activities;
- Ensure that a leader duty system operates so that groups continue to be appropriately supervised at all times, and that any handover of responsibility is made clear;
- Have strict guidelines for behaviour in bedrooms and dormitories.

Supervision can be direct, indirect (within clear boundaries), or remote. In practice, these three types of supervision form a continuum ranging from, for example, physically holding the hand of a child to a group of competent young people checking in with supervisors perhaps once a day during their self-managed expedition or exchange visit. The three types described here are illustrative of the range:

Direct Supervision occurs when the group remains within sight and contact of a leader.

Indirect Supervision (supervision within clear boundaries) occurs when a group is given the freedom to explore an environment or engage in an activity away from direct supervision but within clearly identified and agreed boundaries, for example:
- Small group or individual work within a gallery, museum, cultural or historic site or city;
- Time between more structured activities during a residential visit.

This should be set up so that, in an emergency or changed circumstances, it should not be a difficult or lengthy process to re-establish direct supervision.

Keys to indirect supervision (supervision within clear boundaries) include:
- Identifying clear geographical boundaries within a suitable area and ensuring everyone is aware of these;
- Setting a time limit by which all are to be back at an agreed location;
- Ensuring young people are in small 'buddy' groups and know to stay together;

- Briefing participants as to the location of leaders during the activity: some leaders could be in a fixed position and others roaming the agreed area;
- If participants get lost, they know not to wander aimlessly but to stay together and wait for a leader to find them;
- If abroad, ensuring participants carry a small briefing card in the local language;
- On a residential visit, ensuring students know the location of their accommodation (e.g. carrying a card from a hotel's reception).

So, for example:

> On a visit to Europe one of your aims is for a group of young people to have a cultural experience and an opportunity to practise language skills in the local market. You choose an appropriate market with an easily defined boundary and no major traffic hazards. You split the young people into small groups who know to stay together. Each group has a card in the local language with details about the group and giving an emergency contact number. The young people are shown the geographical boundaries within which they can roam, and the rendezvous point where there will always be a leader and where they are to meet by a certain time. Some leaders sit at the local café (the rallying point) while the others walk round the market. This is a good example of a sensible risk-benefit assessment – the educational benefits are clear and powerful while the risks are appropriately managed.

Remote Supervision occurs when a group works at such a distance that direct supervision would take some time to be re-established (e.g.: during a remotely supervised adventure walk; young people travelling independently to a venue; an orienteering activity; a Duke of Edinburgh Award expedition). For this form of supervision to be appropriate a decision must be made that the participants no longer need an adult leader but are capable of operating independently.

Supervision in this context is more of a monitoring and emergency response role. Although the supervisor is not physically present, they should be able to intervene or assist within a reasonable time when contacted or if there is a cause for concern ('reasonable' in this context depends on the age, maturity and competence of the group, the activity and the environment). For this to be effective, the group must know how to contact a remote supervisor.

When supervision is remote:

- Groups should be sufficiently trained and assessed as competent for the level of activity to be undertaken, including first aid and emergency procedures (remote supervision will often be most appropriate in the final stages of a phased development programme);
- Participants should be familiar with the environment or similar environments, and have details of the meeting points and the times of rendezvous;
- Clear and understandable guidelines should be set for the group, including physical and behavioural parameters;
- Parents should be made aware of the nature of supervision and the level of responsibility and independence expected of young people;
- There must be clear lines of communication between the group, the supervisor and the establishment;
- Mobile phones should not be regarded as a failsafe method of maintaining communication;

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- The Activity Leader should monitor the group's progress at appropriate intervals;
- There should be defined time limits between contacts - exceeding these limits should activate an agreed emergency procedure;
- There should be a recognisable point at which the activity is completed;
- There should be clear arrangements for the abandonment of the activity where it cannot be completed without compromising safety.

Supervision problems are most likely to occur when groups stray into a type of supervision that is less closely controlled than that which was planned. For example: the leader intends to exercise indirect supervision but sets such wide and vague boundaries that the group is really being remotely supervised without this being properly planned or prepared for.

The Visit Leader should select the type of supervision to maximise the educational benefits while appropriately managing the risks. Clearly the SAGE variables (Staff, Activity, Group, Environment) all need to be considered before moving away from direct supervision.

It is essential that everyone involved in the activity, including parents/guardians, understands the supervision arrangements and expectations.

'Buddy' Systems

Minimum sub-group size for indirect and remote supervision depends on the age and maturity of the participants as well as the activity and the nature of the venue or environment. While individual or pair work may be appropriate indoors or with older participants, groups of at least three are sensible for younger children or less tightly-contained locations.

Rearranging Groups

Participants can become detached when groups are rearranged. For example:
- When a large group is split into smaller groups for specific activities;
- When groups transfer from one activity to another and change Activity Leader;
- During periods between activities (such periods should be regarded as activities themselves);
- When small groups re-form into a large group.

It is therefore crucial that each Activity Leader:
- Makes it clear at which point they are taking on leadership responsibility for the group they are allocated and when their part of the programme begins;
- Ensures that all group members are aware of the changeover;
- Clearly passes on responsibility for the group when their part of the programme is concluded, together with any relevant information;
- Conducts a headcount or rollcall as part of the changeover.

Night-Time Supervision

You can find further guidance on managing residential visits in document .

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

- The sleeping accommodation is exclusively for the group's use or rooms are located next to each other (ideally on the same floor), or if the accommodation is being shared with another group, the expectations of leaders and participants are shared and agreed;
- Leaders have sleeping accommodation providing easy access to their group, and that the location of leaders has been considered when participants' rooms are not in close proximity to each other;
- Consider the most appropriate allocation of participants to rooms;
- Where shower and toilet facilities are not en-suite, consider arrangements for managing the use of shared or adjacent facilities;
- 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;
- Ensure everyone knows the emergency procedures, fire escape routes and assembly points;
- Fire escape routes have been checked to ensure that they are clear of obstruction;
- Ensure there is an appropriate Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) for any adult or young person who may need one.

Group Supervision when Travelling

The level of effective supervision necessary for the journey should be considered as part of the overall risk management plan. Lost person incidents are most likely to occur at rest stops, when changing transport or during transitions from one place to another. Positioning of leaders, meeting points, clear communication between subgroups and especially headcounts or rollcalls before continuing, are important tools at such points.