

OEAP National Guidance Statement of Principles and Philosophy

Why do we have guidance?

Well-planned and facilitated opportunities to learn in the real world, away from the classroom, and to experience adventure, help to improve the lives of young people. The National Guidance (NG) group's overriding aim is to help make such opportunities easier to plan and deliver.

Risk-Benefit

The benefits of outdoor learning and off-site visits include (but are not limited to):

- Opportunities for 'real world' learning.
- Involvement in activities leading to greater academic and vocational learning with improved achievement and attainment across the curriculum. Young people can be active participants, not passive consumers and a wide range of learning styles can flourish.
- Widening horizons.
- Enhanced social and emotional intelligence (including a greater awareness of their own needs and the needs of others).
- Increased sense of personal responsibility.
- Possibilities for genuine team working including enhanced communication skills.
- Improved appreciation, knowledge, awareness and understanding of communities, environments and sustainability.
- Physical skill acquisition and the development of a fit and healthy lifestyle.
- Increased risk management skills through opportunities for involvement in practical risk-benefit assessments ('what do we want to do and what do we need to do to make it safe enough?'). Giving learners the tools and experience to assess their own risks in a range of contexts.
- Opportunities to examine the components of challenge, i.e.:
 - chance of gain or benefit
 - risk of loss or harm
 - accurate goal setting and judgement
 - willingness and commitment
 - activity outside the physical and/or emotional comfort zone.
- Increased levels of trust and support, and opportunities to examine the concept of trust (adults in young people, young people in adults, young people in themselves and in each other) and the need for mutual support.

These benefits inform the writing of NG. The aim of this guidance is to aid and encourage establishments to find an appropriate balance between benefits and risks in order to maximise the learning for each participant while bringing the residual risk to an appropriate and tolerable level for each group and individual.

We cannot, nor should we try to, excise all risk from our lives or those of young people. The aim is not to make the learning environment as safe as possible but as safe as it needs to be.

What NG is (and is not)

NG is:

- A source of good practice for managing and delivering outdoor learning and off-site visits
- A resource for Employers, Managers, EVCs, Leaders, Participants and Parents
- An aide memoire
- A place to seek guidance on the application of relevant legislation
- The distilled wisdom of many experienced practitioners

NG is not:

- A 'how to do it' guide for those who are not yet competent
- A set of rules
- An accreditation tool
- The law, nor the only way to comply with the law
- A panacea

Key principles

- NG will seek to set out minimum acceptable standards, not to gold plate what is required.
- NG will always seek to enable and support, not limit activity.
- NG will be inclusive of the full range of provision for young people, including by schools, youth services, other formal and informal settings, and provision in the public, private, voluntary and charitable sectors.
- When faced with a choice, the NG group will always try to select the option giving the best outcome for young people.
- NG will make requirements only where these are essential to comply with the law or considered essential for the well being of young people or leaders.
- Documents will be as short as possible.
- Documents will be written in language that is as clear and direct as possible.
- Competent and appropriately experienced EVCs and leaders, in conjunction with their young people, are in the best place to decide what is appropriate in a given situation – not NG.
- NG will be continually improved and updated to reflect the developing understanding of good practice. It is therefore an online resource and is not intended to be printed as a static 'manual'.
- NG is a free resource and is openly available for use. However, its contents are the intellectual property of OEAP.
- NG is one part of an effective process for ensuring good management of outdoor learning and off-site visits. An effective process involves:
 - Employment / deployment of competent staff
 - Induction and initial / ongoing training
 - Agreed and regularly reviewed operating procedures and practices
 - Peer and management monitoring of delivery
 - Access to an experienced and competent adviser.
 - Awareness of and involvement in regional and national developments in delivery and management