



National  
Guidance  
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## Residential Visits

Residential visits create powerful learning opportunities for young people, which can lead to step changes in an individual's personal development and confidence. This document gives guidance on the residential element of a visit, as this introduces specific additional management issues.

### Coronavirus

The Welsh Government currently advises establishments in Wales against residential visits, with the exception of small group visits, such as Duke of Edinburgh's Award expeditions, using single household occupancy accommodation only. See [gov.wales/schools-coronavirus-guidance](http://gov.wales/schools-coronavirus-guidance).

The Department for Education (DfE) has stated that residential visits within the UK organised by establishments in England may go ahead. It has issued detailed guidance in documents that can be downloaded from the following weblinks.

Schools:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-for-schools-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak)

Early years and childcare providers:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-early-years-and-childcare-closures)

Special schools and other specialist settings:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-for-full-opening-special-schools-and-other-specialist-settings)

Further Education providers including sixth-form colleges:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-maintaining-further-education-provision)

Higher Education providers:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-reopening-buildings-and-campuses)

Providers of community activities, holiday or after-school clubs and other out-of-school settings:

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/protective-measures-for-holiday-or-after-school-clubs-and-other-out-of-school-settings-for-children-during-the-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak)

The guidance states that visits must be conducted in line with relevant Covid guidance and regulations in place at the time, including the system of controls described in the guidance, such as keeping participants within their consistent groups and the Covid-secure measures in place at the destination. More detail in Annex C of the document for schools and Annex B of the document for out of school settings.

Establishments in England planning a residential visit to a different country in the UK (Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland) should check current government guidance for that country. In particular, they should check the guidance for accommodation providers, as this may limit the type and size of groups that they can accommodate. The latest government advice and information about Coronavirus is available at:

[gov.wales/coronavirus](https://gov.wales/coronavirus) (Wales);

[www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance](https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance) (Scotland);

[www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19](https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-covid-19) (Northern Ireland).

UK Outdoors has published a Covid-Safe Charter and Covid-19-Secure Policy and Procedures for providers of accommodation for residential visits. These are available at [ukoutdoors.org.uk](https://ukoutdoors.org.uk). You should expect a provider to adhere to these standards, and seek assurances that they do so.

For further guidance on managing outdoor learning and off-site visits during the coronavirus pandemic, including on day visits, see OEAP National Guidance document [4.4k "Coronavirus"](#). See also [8r "Additional Provider Statement for Residentials During Coronavirus"](#).

## Types of Residential Experience

While the types of residential visit and accommodation vary, the choice should:

- be suitable for the age of the group and accessible to the range of abilities and disabilities;
- support the learning objectives of the visit (for example, by choosing a small local hotel or hostel outside the main tourist area to give students more opportunity to use their language);
- be cost-effective.

For advice on selecting a residential provider or facility, see OEAP National Guidance document [4.4g "Selecting External Providers and Facilities"](#).

The variety of residential visits can be categorised as follows – each one becoming progressively more complex to manage.

### **Accommodation as part of a package at a residential education centre**

You should check standards as part of the provider selection process.

Where there is support from provider staff, you should agree clearly who is responsible for what. See OEAP National Guidance document [4.4h "Using External Providers"](#).

Where the centre is being shared by other users, you should liaise with them to agree expectations, including about behaviour.

### **Sole occupancy of a building**

You should check the standard of the building during the selection process. Security and potential fire hazards may be easier to manage than in a shared building.

Buildings not designed for sleeping in (for example, a school or village hall) may require more detailed planning than a specific accommodation facility. You should carry out a fire and security risk assessment and consider informing the local fire service that a group will be sleeping there.

### **Shared use of a public facility**

You can often eliminate or reduce the potential issues through careful selection of the right accommodation, taking into account the general considerations set out below and liaising with management over room allocation and group needs.

### **Self-catering**

Self-catering introduces further considerations:

- food hygiene - purchasing, storage, preparation, cooking and handling;
- involvement of young people (a valuable learning process) – particularly in aspects such as menu choices, hygiene, use of knives, spillages leading to slips and falls, burns;
- washing up and utensil storage and cleanliness.

Many of these issues can be simplified by sensible menu choices and preparation and training of staff and young people.

### **Accommodation that does not conform to accepted UK standards**

Overseas visits with residential stays may involve accommodation that does not meet expected UK/European standards and so might require additional controls:

- consider taking smoke alarm(s), carbon monoxide alarm(s), personal door locks or door wedges;
- it is essential to make an initial assessment of the hazards of the accommodation and the immediate surroundings to brief the young people about the safety aspects.

### **Camping/bivouacs**

Apart from the necessary equipment, camping in fine weather may not introduce any greater complexity than self-catering. Camping in foul weather can be a more demanding undertaking. Camping with groups can be made less arduous by preparation and progression in stages (for example camping in the school grounds, then a nearby location, then further afield). Supervision may be made easier by careful planning of where tents are pitched.

While many of the general considerations below are about accommodation in buildings, the principles underlying them also apply to camping.

See OEAP National Guidance document [7L "Camping"](#).

## Homestays

For advice on this type of residential, see OEAP National Guidance document [7f "Exchanges and Homestays"](#).

## General Considerations

Irrespective of the type of residential experience, there are some general issues to recognise and manage, including fire safety, group safety and security, drinking and drugs (including smoking), gender issues and appropriate relationships, and epidemics and the risk of infection. These are considered below.

### Fire Safety

You should:

- check fire safety standards as part of the accommodation selection process;
- consider whether, from a fire rescue perspective, it may be better not to sleep above the sixth or seventh floor (the limit of external rescue by the fire services) so as to make evacuating the building easier;
- on arrival, check fire escape routes to ensure that they are properly signed and clear of obstructions;
- know what the fire alarm sounds like;
- ensure everyone knows the emergency procedures, fire escape routes and assembly points;
- ensure that there is a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) for any adult or young person who may need one;
- be aware that many fires are started by electrical faults - check electrical appliances fitted in rooms (such as kettles, hairdryers, heaters, fridges) and ensure young people are briefed about any issues with these and their own electrical items (such as hair appliances, mobile phones, chargers);
- consider whether there is a danger from young people smoking in rooms or tents, and how this will be managed.

### Group Safety and Security

Ensure that participants are appropriately supervised at all times – see OEAP National Guidance document [4.2a "Group Management and Supervision"](#). Buddy pairs or teams, where appropriate, can be a useful tool for indirectly or remotely supervised time around the accommodation.

It may not be possible for all of the following points to be fully met, but you should either be confident that, overall, the risks of the accommodation can be managed or change location.

You should consider:

- the nature and location of the accommodation and the hazards of the immediate surroundings during the selection process - the internet can provide very useful information if a pre-visit is not feasible;
- whether the sleeping accommodation is exclusively for the group's use or rooms are located next to each other, ideally on the same floor;

- whether leaders have sleeping accommodation providing easy access to their group – consider location of leaders when participants’ rooms are not in close proximity to each other;
- the most appropriate allocation of participants to rooms;
- arrangements for managing the use of shared facilities, where shower and toilet facilities are not ensuite;
- whether better security could be provided by avoiding ground floor rooms;
- how secure the buildings can be made against external intrusion;
- if the building is shared with other users, whether the group’s accommodation area needs to be made secure;
- if using a hotel or hostel, whether there is 24 hour staffing of reception;
- whether rooms can be secured if required and that leaders have access to a master key;
- how any environmental hazards are managed, such as:
  - balconies:
    - does the structure appear solid?
    - consider the maturity and likely behaviour of the young people;
    - check the height of railings (UK building regulations require 1.1m, so if it is less than this a judgement must be made about suitability);
    - check the design of railings (do they allow or encourage people to climb on them and lean over, or do they have big gaps?);
  - swimming pools – see OEAP National Guidance document [7x “Swimming Pools”](#);
  - bars and public spaces – access is managed to allow young people the benefits of meeting with strangers while protecting them from harm;
  - access to alcohol – remember that you can get room service in hotels stopped and minibars emptied;

Group behaviour expectations should be clear and understood – see OEAP National Guidance document [8i “Model code of conduct”](#);

Where there are only one or two leaders on a visit, young people should be familiar with the emergency procedures, or at least should know what to do and how to contact the establishment to get help.

In addition to the areas mentioned here, there may be additional factors to be considered, particularly during a visit overseas. For example, groups can be particularly vulnerable when arriving at their accommodation late at night or tired after a long journey. See OEAP National Guidance document [7r “Overseas Visits”](#).

### **Drinking and Drugs, including Smoking**

Some young people may perceive residential visits as offering an opportunity for use of alcohol and drugs (other than prescribed medicines). Managing this perception, and preventing the use of alcohol and drugs, including smoking, by the young people has two key aspects.

1. Before departure it is best to develop and agree the visit code of conduct in discussion with the young people, and to set expectations at that stage. Drinking and drugs, including smoking and e-cigarettes, should be an aspect of

the code and reflect the establishment's policy. The policy will include procedures for managing unauthorised use, which may need to be adapted to the context of a visit. Before departure there should be absolute clarity by everyone about use and consequences.

2. During the visit, opportunities for unauthorised use are most likely to occur outside the structured activities. While these times may be 'off programme' they are not exempt from the establishment's responsibility for supervision. Knowing their group, Visit Leaders should agree geographical boundaries and use their judgement to decide the appropriate level of supervision.

The establishment policy may also include expectations of leaders' use of alcohol during visits. Where the establishment decides that responsible drinking of alcohol is permissible, there must always be sufficient staff who are alcohol-free to provide effective supervision, including during an emergency.

See also OEAP National Guidance document [7p "Drinking, Drugs and Smoking"](#).

DfE and ACPO drug advice for schools can be found at:  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/drugs-advice-for-schools](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/drugs-advice-for-schools)

### **Gender Issues and Appropriate Relationships**

Close relationships can develop during a residential visit and, taking into account the age and maturity of the group, Visit Leaders should consider including a discussion about appropriate relationships as part of the agreed code of conduct.

The allocation of sleeping accommodation should take into account the age, gender and anticipated behaviour of the young people, and the needs of young people and staff for privacy and security. Consideration should be given to whether arrangements should be made to prevent young people, except in emergency, leaving their own or accessing each other's accommodation overnight.

Supervision arrangements for 'free time' should take into account any concerns about inappropriate behaviour.

If you know or suspect that young people are in, or are developing, a sexual relationship you should consider the legal and safeguarding issues involved, as well as considering the practical arrangements for accommodation and supervision, and the behaviour expectations that you set. See OEAP National Guidance document [4.4m "Young People in a Sexual Relationship"](#).

Guidance about working with transgender young people can be found in OEAP National Guidance document [4.4L "Transgender Young People and Visits"](#).

## Accommodation Arrival Checklist

- The accommodation and surroundings are as expected/booked
- Check what the fire alarm sounds like and where the assembly point is
- Assess any hazards in the accommodation and the immediate surroundings (slips, trips, electrics, balconies etc)
- Allocate rooms appropriately and keep a list of who is where
- Check toilet and shower areas
- Check fire exit routes are signed, clear and working
- Do you have/can you get access to a master key for rooms?
- Check the security of the building overnight, from both external intrusion and internal movement
- Assess public areas and decide how these will be managed

### Check each room for:

- Breakages, damage or missing items – record and report these
- Windows and balconies
- Door security
- Electrical hazards
- Fire/smoke detectors
- Carbon monoxide sources
- Routes to fire exits
- Minibar

### Brief everyone on:

- Any hazards in the rooms and elsewhere
- Use of toilets and showers where these are not ensuite
- Location of fire escapes
- Emergency evacuation procedure (and a fire drill if appropriate)
- Location of leaders overnight
- Boundaries – where they can go
- Behaviour and conduct around the accommodation
- Timings and meeting places

