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Frequently Asked Questions – Are there any special considerations when planning to visit a trampoline park?

Trampoline parks provide a relatively new but rapidly growing destination. Because they are open to the general public, Visit Leaders may be considering whether they are appropriate to visit and the implications of young people taking part in the activity.

Trampoline parks usually have multiple trampoline beds connected with solid padded sections between them but may also include other activities involving jumping into or onto padding. This is clearly different to trampolining as a gymnastic activity on an Olympic style trampoline, or to using a trampoline designed for home/garden use. However, in all cases trampolining is a physical activity with an inherent risk of injury requiring competent supervision – using a trampoline park does not change this.

There have been reports of serious accidents at trampoline parks. Unlike domestic trampolines where the majority of injuries occur from falling off, most trampoline park injuries occur on the trampoline surface through landing awkwardly or colliding with other users. Most injuries are soft tissue damage, fractured bones or dislocations but those needing hospital admission have included spinal cord injuries. It is important to recognise therefore that although the activity area may appear 'soft and padded', potential risks remain to be managed.

Associated with the rapid rise in the number of trampoline parks have been concerns, within the industry itself, about the quality of both their construction and operation. In addressing these concerns, the industry has been instrumental in developing a British Standard (BS PAS 5000:2017) covering the construction and operation of fixed indoor trampoline parks.

Your employer may have a policy for visiting trampoline parks, so you must always check with your employer or Outdoor Education Adviser first and follow their policy.

As with any visit, you will consider the benefits and associated risks in order to form the basis of your decision about whether to use a venue or undertake an activity. This risk-benefit analysis can be summarised as asking three questions:

- Why? (What are the benefits/learning outcomes?)
- What are the risks?
- Can the risks be managed in a way that achieves the benefits at an acceptable level of residual risk?

Bear in mind that the British Standard states, “When using the equipment within the rules and instructions for use, users can be exposed to a risk of injury regardless of a pre-existing medical condition. This is due to the impact forces generated as the user lands on the trampoline bed.”

The British Standard also states: “A risk acknowledgement and disclaimer to the extent permitted by law shall be held on every user using the trampoline park”. Before deciding to visit a trampoline park, you are advised to find out what kind of disclaimer you or the parents will be expected to sign. You should always check with your employer or Outdoor Education Adviser before signing any disclaimer on behalf of students. Some venues request photo consent, in which case this will need to be addressed before arrival.

In assessing the risks, you are advised to familiarise yourself with current AfPE (Association for Physical Education) guidance on trampolining. AfPE’s view is that trampolining is suitable for teaching in secondary schools only. It is seen as one of the higher risk activities, and as such, those teaching it must have undertaken specific trampolining qualifications. AfPE currently recommend that schools do not arrange visits for pupils to these centres.

The British Standard gives guidance on construction of trampoline parks and some useful advice on the assessment of risks and operating procedures, but does not cover supervision of young people using the parks. Park staff may be monitoring the users or coaching individuals, but you should not assume that they would be there to supervise your group. You should check with the park what the arrangements are for supervision, and be clear about who is responsible for what.

It is important also to recognise that Visit Leaders’ knowledge of the skills, abilities and prior experience of the individuals in their group, and their capacity to follow instructions and manage their own safety, are key to deciding whether to do the activity in the first place. This will also contribute to the decision about the kind of supervision needed.

Should you conclude that the assessment of risks and benefits for visiting a trampoline park with your group is justifiable, you are advised to consider the following as part of your planning:

- Seeking the advice of your Outdoor Education Adviser.
- Clear identification of the risks as part of the consent process.
- Any specific competence required of Visit Leaders to supervise the activity.
- Exclusive use – or where this is not possible, how interaction with others users will be managed.
- Where leaders will be placed to actively monitor their young people and the activity, including ‘cool down’, drinks areas and toilets.
- How leaders will communicate with park staff and their young people taking into account distance and noise.
- Confirmation of the level of insurance held by the park and their first aid and emergency response arrangements.
- Whether the selected park conforms to BS PAS 5000:2017 - to judge the construction and operation of the park.
- Safe practice is likely to involve the following:
 - One person – one trampoline bed.

- Vertical bouncing, on the spot, landing in the centre of the bed.
- No somersaults or gymnastic moves unless being coached by a qualified person.
- Anyone supervising a group cannot also coach an individual.

