



**COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR**  
**Roinn an Fhoghlaim**  
Department of Education

*Ag Amas air Adhartas - Aiming for Advancement*

**HEALTH AND SAFETY**  
**ON EDUCATIONAL VISITS**

**GUIDANCE NOTES AND FORMS**

## INTRODUCTION

Pupils can derive a good deal of educational benefit from taking part in visits with their school. In particular, they have the opportunity to undergo experiences not available in the classroom. Visits help to develop a pupil's investigative skills and longer visits in particular encourage greater independence.

Most school visits take place without incident and it is clear that teachers are already demonstrating a high level of safety awareness. However, following a number of tragic incidents involving schoolchildren in the last few years, there is growing concern among school staff and parents about further ensuring the safety of pupils on school visits. This guidance has been produced in response to that concern and is designed to help head teachers, teachers, and others to ensure that pupils stay safe and healthy on school visits.

The potential hazards, which the guidance refers to, should not discourage teachers. No amount of planning can guarantee that a visit will be totally incident free, but good planning and attention to safety measures can reduce the number of accidents and lessen the seriousness of any that do happen. Rather than trying to cover every eventuality, the guidance sets out principles and leaves it to teachers' professional and local judgment to apply those principles.

It should be noted that this is guidance only and should not be taken as an authoritative interpretation of the law. That is for the courts.

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. Employers are also under a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of anyone else on the premises or anyone who may be affected by their activities. This includes participants in off-site visits. For Western Isles schools, the employer is the Comhairle.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992, made under the 1974 Act, require employers to:

- assess the risks of activities (see **Risk assessment** in Section 2);
- introduce measures to control those risks;
- tell their employees about these measures.

Also under the Health and Safety legislation employees must:

- take reasonable care of their own and others' health and safety;
- co-operate with their employers over safety matters;
- carry out activities in accordance with training and instructions;
- inform the employer of any serious risks.

These duties apply to all school visits. Teachers and other staff in charge of pupils also have a common law duty to act as any reasonably prudent parent would do in the same circumstances.

## **SECTION 1- RESPONSIBILITY FOR VISITS**

### **HEAD TEACHERS**

- 1.1 Head Teachers should ensure that visits comply with regulations, this guidance and the school's own health and safety policy. They should ensure that the group leader is competent to monitor the risks throughout the visit. Head teachers should be clear about their role if taking part in the visit as a group member/supervisor. They should follow the instructions of the group leader who will have sole charge of the visit.
- 1.2 Head teachers should ensure that:
- adequate child protection procedures are in place;
  - all necessary actions have been completed before the visit begins;
  - risk assessments have been completed and appropriate safety measures are in place;
  - training needs have been assessed by a competent person and the needs of the staff and pupils have been considered;
  - the group leader has experience in supervising the age groups going on the visit and will organise the group effectively;
  - the group leader or another teacher is suitably competent to instruct the activity and is familiar with the location/centre where the activity will take place. (See **School-led adventure activities** in Section 8.)
  - group leaders are allowed sufficient time to organise visits properly;
  - non-teacher supervisors on the visit are appropriate people to supervise children. (See **Assessing suitability** in Section 3.)
  - the ratio of supervisors to pupils is appropriate. See **Ratios** in Section 3
  - the education department has approved the visit, if appropriate ie where the visit is to a non-Western Isles destination, or involves an overnight stay or hazardous activities;
  - parents have signed consent forms;
  - arrangements have been made for the medical needs and additional support needs of all the pupils;
  - adequate first-aid provision will be available;
  - the mode of travel is appropriate;
  - travel times out and back are known including pick-up and drop-off points;
  - there is adequate and relevant insurance cover. (See Section 7 **Insurance**);
  - they have the address and phone number of the visit's venue and have a contact name;
  - a school contact has been nominated (this may be the head teacher) and the group leader has details;
  - the group leader, group supervisors and nominated school contact have a copy of the agreed emergency procedures;
  - the group leader, group supervisors and nominated school contact have the names of all the adults and pupils travelling in the group, and the contact details of parents and the teachers' and other supervisors' next of kin;
  - the Comhairle's Faire Service have been given full details of the trip for emergency contact purposes where appropriate;
  - there is a contingency plan for any delays including a late return home.

### **GROUP LEADERS**

- 1.3 One teacher, the group leader, should have overall responsibility for the supervision and conduct of the visit and should have regard to the health and safety of the group. The group leader should have been appointed or approved by the head teacher.

1.4 The group leader should:

- obtain the head teacher's prior agreement before any off-site visit takes place;
- follow all relevant aspects of this guidance
- appoint a deputy;
- clearly define each group supervisor's role and ensure all tasks have been assigned;
- be able to control and lead pupils of the relevant age range;
- be suitably competent to instruct pupils in an activity and be familiar with the location/centre where the activity will take place. (See **School-led adventure activities** in Section 8.)
- be aware of child protection issues;
- ensure that adequate first-aid provision will be available;
- undertake and complete the planning and preparation of the visit including the briefing of group members and parents;
- undertake and complete a comprehensive risk assessment. (See **Risk assessment** in Section 2 and forms 3&4)
- review regularly undertaken visits/activities and advise the head teacher where adjustments may be necessary;
- ensure that teachers and other supervisors are fully aware of what the proposed visit involves;
- have enough information on the pupils proposed for the visit to assess their suitability or be satisfied that their suitability has been assessed and confirmed;
- ensure the ratio of supervisors to pupils is appropriate for the needs of the group. (See **Ratios** in Section 3)
- consider stopping the visit if the risk to the health or safety of the pupils is unacceptable and have in place procedures for such an eventuality;
- ensure that group supervisors have details of the school contact;
- ensure that group supervisors and the school contact have a copy of the emergency procedures;
- ensure that the group's teachers and other supervisors have the details of pupils' additional support or medical needs which will be necessary for them to carry out their tasks effectively;
- observe the guidance set out for teachers and other adults below.

## TEACHERS

- 1.5 Teachers on school-led visits act as employees of the Comhairle, whether the visit takes place within normal hours or outside those hours by agreement with the head teacher. Teachers must do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group and act as any reasonable parent would do in the same circumstances.

1.6 Teachers should:

- follow the instructions of the group leader and help with control and discipline;
- consider stopping the visit or the activity, or notifying the group leader, if they think the risk to the health or safety of the pupils in their charge is unacceptable.

### **NON TEACHER ADULTS**

1.7 Non teacher adults on the visit should be clear about their roles and responsibilities during the visit. Non-teacher adults acting as supervisors must:

- do their best to ensure the health and safety of everyone in the group;
- not be left in sole charge of pupils except where it has been previously agreed as part of the risk assessment;
- follow the instructions of the group leader and teacher supervisors and help with control and discipline;
- speak to the group leader or teacher supervisors if concerned about the health or safety of pupils at any time during the visit.

### **PUPILS**

1.8 The group leader should make it clear to pupils that they must:

- not take unnecessary risks;
- follow the instructions of the leader and other supervisors including those at the venue of the visit;
- dress and behave sensibly and responsibly;
- if abroad, be sensitive to local codes and customs;
- look out for anything that might hurt or threaten themselves or anyone in the group and tell the group leader or supervisor about it.

1.9 Any pupils whose behaviour may be considered to be a danger to themselves or to the group may be stopped from going on the visit. The curricular aims of the visit for these pupils should be fulfilled in other ways wherever possible.

### **PARENTS**

1.10 Parents should be able to make an informed decision on whether their child should go on the visit. The group leader should ensure that parents are given sufficient information in writing and are invited to any briefing sessions. The group leader should also tell parents how they could help prepare their child for the visit by, for example, reinforcing the visit's code of conduct. Parents should also be asked to agree the arrangements for sending a pupil home early and who will meet the cost.

1.11 Parents will need to:

- provide the group leader with emergency contact number(s);
- sign the consent form
- give the group leader information about their child's emotional, psychological and physical health which might be relevant to the visit (usually by means of the consent form).(See Section 5 **Communicating with Parents.**)

## **SECTION 2-PLANNING VISITS**

### **GENERAL**

- 2.1 Whether the visit is to a local beach, museum or swimming pool, or includes a residential stay in the UK or abroad, it is essential that formal planning takes place before setting off. This involves considering the dangers and difficulties which may arise and making plans to reduce them. In practice, the head teacher - who is responsible for planning visits - will often delegate the detailed planning to the organiser of the visit or the group leader. Head teachers must satisfy themselves that the person planning the visit is competent to do so and has the necessary relevant experience.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 2.2 In practice, risk assessments, which employers are legally required to complete (see the introduction) are usually carried out by the group leader. An assessment should be completed well before the visit, and should be approved by the head teacher.
- 2.3 A risk assessment for a visit need not be complex but it should be comprehensive. It does not generally require technical formulae or professional health and safety expertise. However specialised information for some visits may be necessary and head teachers should ensure that the person assessing the risks is competent to do so.
- 2.4 A formal assessment of the risks that might be met on a visit should have the aim of preventing the risks or reducing them. Pupils must not be placed in situations, which expose them to an unacceptable level of risk. Safety must always be the prime consideration. **If the risks cannot be contained then the visit must not take place.**
- 2.5 The risk assessment should be based on the following considerations:
- what are the hazards?
  - who might be affected by them?
  - what safety measures need to be in place to reduce risks to an acceptable level?
  - can the group leader put the safety measures in place?
  - what steps will be taken in an emergency?
- 2.6 The person carrying out the risk assessment should record it and give copies to all teachers/supervisors on the visit, with details of the measures they should take to avoid or reduce the risks. The education department and head teachers should also be given a copy so that approval, as necessary, can be given with a clear understanding that effective planning has taken place.
- 2.7 Frequent visits to local venues such as swimming pools may not need a risk assessment every time. Nevertheless, it is essential not to become complacent. A generic assessment of the risks of such visits should be made at regular intervals, and careful monitoring should take place.
- 2.8 The group leader and other supervisors should monitor the risks throughout the visit and take appropriate action as necessary.
- 2.9 Before booking a visit the group leader should obtain a written or documentary assurance that providers such as tour operators have themselves assessed the risks and have appropriate safety measures in place.

**For risk assessment forms see forms 3&4**

- 2.10 Detailed advice on risk assessment can be obtained from the Assistant Health and Safety Officer (Education) (tel: 01851 709302), and from the Health and Safety Executive, which has a booklet, *Five Steps to Risk Assessment*. Another version of the booklet includes references to outdoor education.
- 2.11 The group leader should take the following factors into consideration when assessing the risks:
- the type of visit/activity and the level at which it is being undertaken;
  - the location, routes and modes of transport;
  - the competence, experience and qualifications of supervisory staff;
  - the ratios of teachers and supervisory staff to pupils;
  - the group members' age, competence, fitness, temperament and the suitability of the activity;
  - the additional support or medical needs of pupils;
  - the quality and suitability of available equipment;
  - seasonal conditions, weather and timing;
  - emergency procedures;
  - how to cope when a pupil becomes unable or unwilling to continue;
  - the need to monitor the risks throughout the visit.

### EXPLORATORY VISIT

- 2.12 An exploratory visit should be made by any teacher who is to lead a group abroad or on a residential visit or who is to instruct or lead the group in an outdoor activity such as trekking in a location that is not familiar to them. In other cases the group leader should undertake an exploratory visit, wherever that is possible, to:
- ensure at first hand that the venue is suitable to meet the aims and objectives of the school visit;
  - obtain names and addresses of other schools who have used the venue;
  - obtain advice from the manager;
  - assess potential areas and levels of risk;
  - ensure that the venue can cater for the needs of the staff and pupils in the group;
  - become familiar with the area before taking a group of young people there.
- 2.13 If in the last resort an exploratory visit is not feasible then the group leader will need to consider how to complete an adequate assessment of the risks. A minimum measure would be to obtain specific information by letter from the venue, from other schools who have recently visited it, and from local organisations such as tourist boards.
- 2.14 Detailed advice on particular categories of visits, which carry specific risks, is provided in Section 8 **Types of Visit** and Section 9 **Visits Abroad**. Advice may also be sought from the Assistant Health and Safety Officer and from specialist bodies.
- 2.15 Many schools will take new groups of pupils to the same location each year. As some factors will change from year to year, it is prudent to re-assess the risks each time - even when the group leader stays the same. It may be useful to evaluate each completed visit and keep a record. **(See Form 5.)**

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

2.16 Other factors, which form part of the planning stage, include:

- the facilities/equipment the group will need to take on the visit;
- the facilities/equipment to be provided at the venue;
- staff training needs;
- the designation of someone to record the details of the visit and to carry accident forms
- transport arrangements;
- insurance arrangements;
- information to the provider;
- communication arrangements;
- supervision ratios;
- contingency measures for enforced changes of plan or late return;
- information to parents;
- preparing pupils;
- emergency arrangements;
- arrangements for sending pupils home early.

2.17 Further information on these issues is provided in subsequent pages.

## **FINANCIAL PLANNING**

2.18 The group leader should ensure that parents have early written information about the costs of the visit, how much will come from school funds, and how much each parent will be charged or asked to contribute. Parents should be given enough time to prepare financially for the visit. It may be useful to break the costs down into subheads such as travel, hostel, meals etc.

2.19 The head teacher should ensure that banking arrangements are in place to separate the visit's receipts from Comhairle budgets, other school funds where necessary, and from private accounts.

2.20 The head teacher/group leader should reach a pre-agreement with parents on whether any funds left surplus after the visit will be returned to parents or retained for another visit.

## **FIRST AID**

2.21 First aid should form part of the risk assessment. Before undertaking any off-site activities the head teacher or the group leader should assess what level of first aid might be needed. On any kind of visit the group leader should have a good working knowledge of first aid and ensure that an adequate first-aid box is taken. For adventurous activities, visits abroad or residential visits it is sensible for at least one of the group's teachers to be a fully trained first-aider. All adults in the group should know how to contact the emergency services.

2.22 The minimum first-aid provision for a visit is:

- a suitably stocked first-aid box;
- a person appointed to be in charge of first-aid arrangements.

2.23 Other considerations when considering first-aid needs should include:

- the numbers in the group and the nature of the activity;
- the likely injuries and how effective first aid would be;

- the distance to the nearest hospital.

2.24 First aid should be available and accessible at all times. The Health and Safety Executive recommends the following minimum contents for a travelling first aid box where no special risk has been identified:

- a leaflet giving general advice on first aid;
- six individually wrapped sterile adhesive dressings;
- one large sterile unmedicated wound dressing approximately 18 cm x 18 cm;
- two triangular bandages;
- two safety pins;
- individually wrapped moist cleansing wipes;
- one pair of disposable gloves;
- a resuscitator (for hygienic mouth to mouth resuscitation) would also be useful.

2.25 All minibuses are required by law to carry a first aid kit. (See Section 6 **Planning Transport**.)

### **Obtaining approval for the visit**

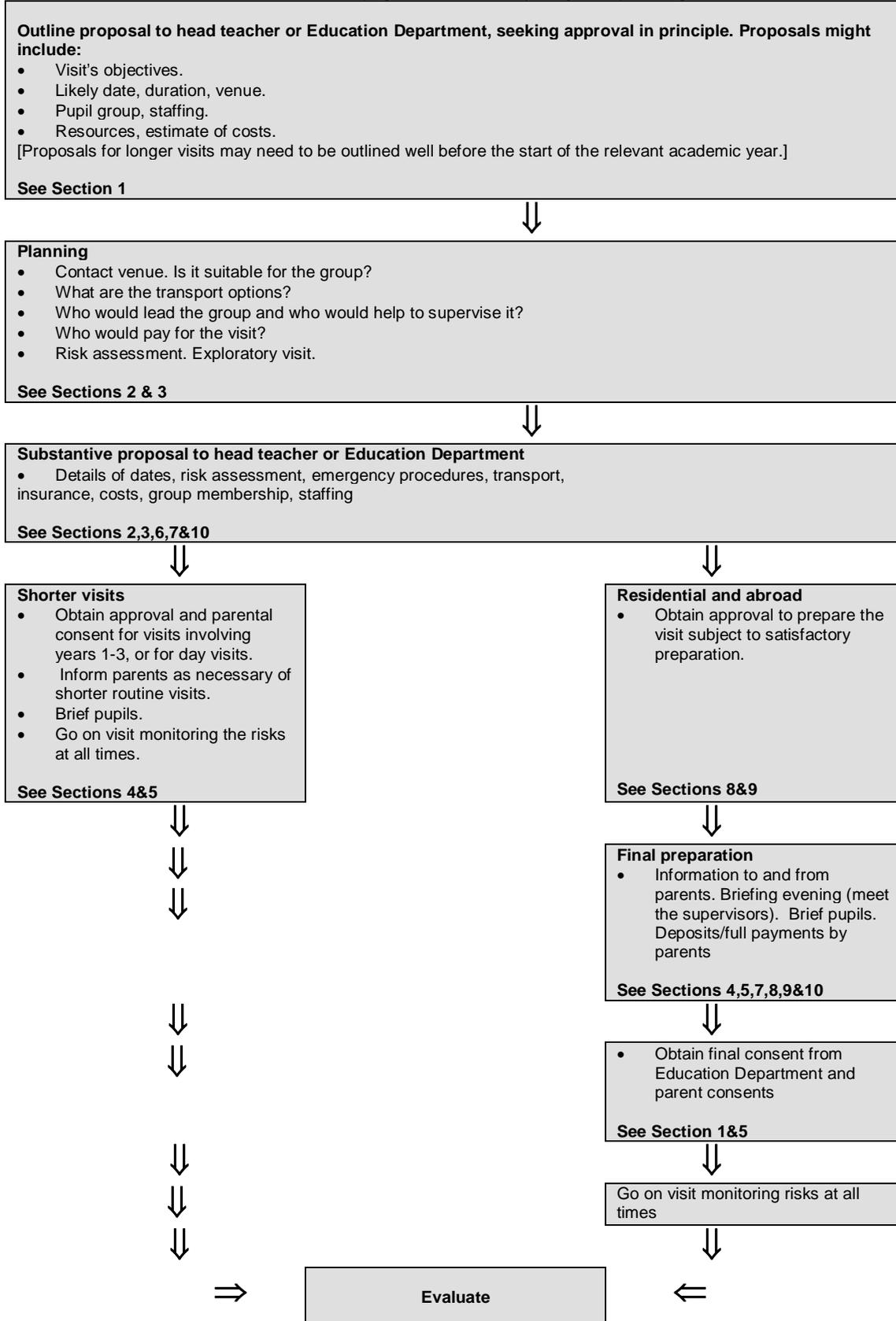
2.26 At an early stage, approval for the visit should be sought from:

- The Head Teacher: for visits which do not involve an overnight stay, travel to the mainland or abroad, or any potentially hazardous activities;
- The Head of Educational Resources: for visits which **do** involve an overnight stay, travel to the mainland or abroad, or potentially hazardous activities.

2.27 Final approval should be sought from the Head Teacher or the Head of Educational Resources as appropriate at the earliest possible stage and except in exceptional circumstances no later than 14 days before the date of the visit. No financial or other commitments should be made before final approval is obtained.

## PLANNING THE VISIT

This page charts the likely stages of planning a visit



## **SECTION 3-SUPERVISION**

### **RATIOS**

- 3.1 It is important to have a high enough ratio of adult supervisors to pupils for any visit. The factors to take into consideration include:
- the sex, age and ability of the group;
  - pupils with additional support or medical needs;
  - the nature of activities;
  - the experience of adults in off-site supervision;
  - the duration and nature of the journey;
  - the type of any accommodation;
  - the competence of staff, both general and on specific activities;
  - the requirements of the organisation/location to be visited;
  - the competence and behaviour of pupils;
  - first aid cover.
  - there should always be a minimum of two adults per trip.
- 3.2 Staffing ratios for visits are difficult to prescribe, as they will vary according to the activity, age, group, location and the efficient use of resources. However, a general guide for visits to local historical sites and museums or for local walks, in normal circumstances, might be:
- 1 adult for every 6 pupils under the age of 8 ;
  - 1 adult for every 10-15 pupils aged 9 to 12;
  - 1 adult for every 15-20 secondary pupils.
- 3.3 Staffing ratios for more demanding trips include:
- 1 adult to 10 group members for all trips abroad;
  - 1 adult for every 5 primary aged children for residential stays and trips abroad.
  - **there should always be a minimum of 2 adults for any trip.**
- 3.4 The above are examples only. Group leaders should assess the risks and consider an appropriate safe supervision level for their particular group. There should be a minimum of one teacher in charge and it is essential that there are always two members of staff/adults with any group. In addition to the teacher in charge there should be enough supervisors to cope effectively with an emergency. When visits are to remote areas or involve hazardous activities, the risks may be greater and supervision levels should be set accordingly. The same consideration should be given to visits abroad (see Section 9) or residential visits (see Section 8). Some non-residential visits with mixed groups may need a teacher from each sex.

### **PARENTS/VOLUNTEERS**

- 3.5 Where there is more than one teacher/supervisor a group leader should be appointed who has authority over the whole group. If more than one school is involved an overall group leader should be identified, usually the person with the most experience in leading such visits.
- 3.6 Where a high adult: pupil ratio is required, it is not always feasible to use school staff alone. Parents/volunteers may be used to supplement the supervision ratio. They should be carefully selected and ideally they should be well known to the school and the pupil group.



## **ASSESSING SUITABILITY OF PARENTS OR VOLUNTEERS**

- 3.7 The group leader needs to be clear about procedures for assessing the suitability of volunteers who wish to be supervisors or drivers, in particular for residential visits. The group leader and the head teacher should assess the suitability of potential supervisors at an early stage of the planning process. Where there is any doubt about suitability further investigations should be made and if any doubt remains the adult should not be allowed to help supervise the visit. Similar considerations should apply to adults who have no supervisory role but who wish to take part in the visit.
- 3.8 The Comhairle's policy is that parents and volunteers should be checked with Disclosure Scotland (on an "enhanced" disclosure basis) where they will or are likely to:
- Have one to one contact with children
  - be in an isolated situation with children
  - Have regular and on going contact (including group leaders)
  - be supervising children alone
  - be involved in activities where there is an overnight stay(s) away from home.
- 3.9 Anyone who has not had a Disclosure Scotland check should never be left in sole charge of pupils. Schools should also ensure that any necessary disclosures for parents or volunteers (see above) are obtained at an early stage. (Further guidance on this is contained in the Schools Administration Handbook Section M.)
- 3.10 Schools should also satisfy themselves that volunteers and staff employed by contractors used during the visit have received the appropriate checks (either with Disclosure Scotland or with the Criminal Records Bureau in England and Wales) if their contact with pupils is likely to fall into the categories noted above.
- 3.11 For the protection of both adults and pupils, all adult supervisors should ensure that they are not alone with a pupil wherever possible.

## **SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

- 3.12 All adult supervisors, including teachers and parent/volunteer helpers, must understand their roles and responsibilities at all times. It may be helpful to put this in writing. In particular, all supervisors should be aware of any pupils who may require closer supervision, such as those with additional support needs or those likely to cause trouble. Teachers retain responsibility for the group at all times.

## **COMPETENCIES IF LEADING AN ADVENTURE ACTIVITY**

- 3.13 If the school is leading an adventure activity, such as canoeing, the school should ensure that the group leader and other supervisors are suitably competent to lead or instruct pupils in the activity, bearing in mind that some pupils may be novices. Competencies should be demonstrated by holding the relevant National Governing Body (NGB) award where it exists. Further advice on competencies and on adventure activities generally can be obtained from the Comhairle's Outdoor Education Officer (tel 01851 707452)

## **HEAD COUNTS**

- 3.14 Whatever the length and nature of the visit, regular head counting of pupils should take place, particularly before leaving any venue. All supervisors should carry a list of all pupils and adults involved in the visit at all times. Pupils, particularly younger primary pupils, should be easily identifiable, especially if the visit is to a densely populated area. Brightly coloured

caps; T-shirts or a school uniform can help identify group members more easily. Pupils should not wear name badges but some schools find it useful to provide pupils with badges displaying the name of the school and its emergency contact number. The group leader should establish rendezvous points and tell pupils what to do if they become separated from the group.

### **REMOTE SUPERVISION**

- 3.15 The aim of visits for older pupils may be to encourage independence and investigative skills, and some of the time on visits such as trips abroad and fieldwork may be unsupervised. The group leader should establish during the planning stage of the visit whether the pupils are competent in remote supervision and should ensure parents have agreed this part of the visit. The group leader remains responsible for pupils even when not in direct contact with them.
- 3.16 Parents should be told, before the visit, whether any form of remote supervision will take place (see **Preparing pupils for remote supervision** in Section 4) and for **remote supervision during adventurous activities** (see Section 8 For **Supervision on transport** see Section 6.)

## **SECTION 4-PREPARING PUPILS**

### **GENERAL**

- 4.1 Pupils who are involved in a visit's planning and organisation, and who are well prepared, will make more informed decisions and will be less at risk. Providing information and guidance to pupils is an important part of preparing for a school visit. Pupils should clearly understand what is expected of them and what the visit will entail. Pupils must understand the standard of behaviour is expected of them and why rules must be followed. The lack of control and discipline can be a major cause of accidents. Pupils should also be told about any potential dangers and how they should act to ensure their own safety and that of others.
- 4.2 Pupils should also be involved in planning, implementing and evaluating their own curricular work and have opportunities to take different roles within an activity. This should include considering any health and safety issues.

### **PARTICIPATION**

- 4.3 The group leader should ensure that the pupils are capable of undertaking the proposed activity. Pupils should be encouraged to take on challenges during adventurous activities but should not be coerced into activities of which they have a genuine fear.
- 4.4 Pupils whose behaviour is such that the group leader is concerned for their safety, or for that of others, should be withdrawn from the activity. On residential visits the group leader should consider whether such pupils should be sent home early. Parents and pupils should be told in advance of the visit about the procedures for dealing with misbehaviour, how a pupil will be returned home safely and who will meet the cost.

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

- 4.5 Every effort should be made to ensure that school journeys and activities are available and accessible to all who wish to participate, irrespective of additional support or medical needs, ethnic origin, sex, religion etc. All young people should be encouraged to participate in as wide a range of activities as possible. If a visit is to cater for pupils with additional support needs, a suitable venue should be selected.

### **INFORMATION TO PUPILS**

- 4.6 The group leader should decide how information is provided, but must ensure that the pupils understand key safety information. For some pupils on overnight visits it will be their first experience away from home on their own and in the close company of other pupils.
- 4.7 Pupils should understand:
- the aims and objectives of the visit/activity;
  - the background information about the place to be visited;
  - basic foreign words where appropriate;
  - relevant foreign culture and customs (see Section 9 **Visits Abroad**);
  - how to avoid specific dangers and why they should follow rules;
  - why safety precautions are in place;
  - why special safety precautions are in place for anyone with disabilities;
  - what standard of behaviour is expected from pupils;
  - appropriate and inappropriate personal and social conduct including sexual activity;

- who is responsible for the group;
- what not to bring back either within the UK or from abroad such as drugs, knives etc;
- what to do if approached by anyone from outside the group;
- rendezvous procedures;
- what to do if separated from the group;
- emergency procedures.

4.8 For a checklist to give to pupils see Form 6.

4.9 For residential visits, all group members should carry the address and telephone number of the accommodation in case an individual becomes separated. This applies to exchange visits when pupils will also need to know about any ground rules agreed between the group leader and host family.

4.10 Where visits involve multiple activities with differing requirements, each activity will need to be assessed and separate information provided. Pupils should be aware of who is responsible in any instances where the group leader has delegated responsibility to another member of staff or instructor.

4.11 If at any time there is a change in the planned schedule, new activities should be assessed and pupils provided with the appropriate information.

### **PREPARING PUPILS FOR REMOTE SUPERVISION**

4.12 During any time that remote supervision takes place, the group leader must ensure that pupils are aware of the ground rules and are adequately equipped to be on their own in a group. The size of each group should also be considered. As a minimum pupils should have the following:

- telephone numbers and emergency contacts if they become lost;
- money;
- maps and plans and any other information for them to act effectively;
- the location of local telephones and the appropriate coins;
- a knowledge of how to summon help;
- a knowledge of out of bounds areas or activities;
- identity cards and a rendezvous point.

4.13 It is important that pupils are told not to go off on their own, are given clear instructions about permitted remote supervised activities and understand and accept the ground rules. (See Section 3 for **Remote supervision** and Section 8 for **Remote supervision during adventurous activities.**)

## **TRANSPORT AND PUPILS**

4.14 Pupils using transport on a visit should be made aware of basic safety rules including:

- arrive on time and wait for the transport in a safe place;
- do not rush towards the transport when it arrives;
- wear your seatbelt and stay seated whilst travelling on transport;
- never tamper with any of the vehicle's equipment or driving controls;
- bags must not block aisles or cause obstructions;
- never attempt to get on or off the moving transport;
- never lean out of or throw things from the window of the transport;
- never get off a vehicle held up by traffic lights or in traffic;
- never run about or pass someone on steps or stairs while transport is moving;
- never kneel or stand on seats;
- never distract or disturb the driver or impede the driver's vision;
- stay clear of doors after boarding or leaving the transport;
- after leaving the vehicle, always wait for it to move off before crossing the road;
- if you have to cross roads to get to the transport in the UK always use the Green Cross Code;
- if you feel unwell tell a teacher or supervisor.
- what to do if you miss the scheduled departure time.

## **PUPILS WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS INCLUDING MEDICAL NEEDS**

4.15 Head teachers should make every effort to include pupils with additional support needs including medical needs in school visits, whilst maintaining the safety of everyone in the group. Special attention should be given to appropriate supervision ratios and additional safety measures may need to be addressed at the planning stage.

## **PUPILS WITH MEDICAL NEEDS**

4.16 Additional safety measures to those already in place in the school may be necessary to support pupils with medical needs during visits. Arrangements for taking medication and ensuring sufficient supplies for residential visits may be required. All teachers supervising visits should be aware of a pupil's medical needs and any medical emergency procedures. Summary sheets held by all teachers, containing details of each pupil's needs and any other relevant information provided by parents, is one way of achieving this. If appropriate, a volunteer teacher should be trained in administering medication, if they have not already been so trained, and should take responsibility in a medical emergency. If the pupil's safety cannot be guaranteed, it may be appropriate to ask the parent or care assistant to accompany a particular pupil.

4.17 The group leader should discuss the pupil's individual needs with the parents. Parents should be asked to supply:

- details of medical conditions;
- emergency contact numbers;
- the child's GP's name, address and phone number;
- information on whether the pupil has spent a night away from home before and their ability to cope effectively;
- written details of any medication required (including instructions on dosage/times) and parental permission to administer;
- parental permission if the pupil needs to administer their own medication or agreement for a volunteer teacher to administer;
- information on any allergies/phobias;

- information on any special dietary requirements;
  - information on any toileting difficulties, special equipment or aids to daily living;
  - special transport needs for pupils who require help with mobility.
- 4.18 Enquiries should be made at an early stage about access and facilities for securing wheelchairs on transport and at residential centers etc, if appropriate. If ramps are not going to be available in certain places, the organiser may wish to arrange to take portable ramps with them. The group leader should, at an early stage, assess whether manual-handling skills will be needed and, if so, whether training should be sought.
- 4.19 All teachers supervising the visit should be given the opportunity to talk through any concerns they may have about their ability to support the child. Extra help should be requested if necessary, e.g. a care assistant.
- 4.20 If teachers are concerned about whether they can provide for a pupil's safety or the safety of other pupils on a trip because of a medical condition, they should seek general medical advice from the School Health Service or further information from the pupil's parents. The group leader should check that the insurance policy covers staff and pupils with pre-existing medical needs.

### **PUPILS WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS**

- 4.21 Schools will already be familiar with the nature of a pupil's additional support needs. Any limitations or problems the pupil may have should be taken into account at the planning stage and when carrying out the risk assessment. Off-site visits may pose additional difficulties for a pupil with additional needs and the behaviour of some pupils may prove challenging. The following factors should be taken into consideration:
- is the pupil capable of taking part in and benefiting from the activity?
  - can the activity be adapted to enable the pupil to participate at a suitable level?
  - will additional/different resources be necessary?
  - is the pupil able to understand and follow instructions?
  - will additional supervision be necessary?
- 4.22 It may be helpful to the pupil if one of the supervisors already knows them well and appreciates their needs fully. The group leader should discuss the visit with the parents of these pupils to ensure that suitable arrangements have been put in place to ensure their safety.

## **SECTION 5-COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS**

### **GENERAL**

- 5.1 Parents should be informed in writing of any offsite activity or visit unless it is a regular part of the school curriculum which parents have already been informed about through the school handbook or other means . Seeking annual consent for such routine visits may be appropriate.

### **INFORMATION TO PARENTS**

- 5.2 Before residential visits, or when the pupils are to travel abroad or engage in adventure activities, parents should be encouraged to attend a briefing meeting where written details of the proposed visit should also be provided. There should be alternative arrangements for parents who cannot attend or who have difficulty with communication in English.
- 5.3 Parents need to be aware that the teachers and other adult supervisors on the visit will be exercising the same care that a prudent parent would. The following information on matters that might affect pupil health and safety should be given to parents:
- the dates of the visit;
  - the visit's objectives;
  - times of departure and return - parents or an authorised adult must have agreed to meet their child on return;
  - the location where the pupils will be collected and returned;
  - the mode(s) of travel including the name of any travel company;
  - the size of the group and the level of supervision including any times when remote supervision may take place;
  - details of accommodation with security and supervisory arrangements on site;
  - details of provision for additional support or medical needs;
  - procedures for pupils who become ill;
  - the names of leader, of other staff and of other accompanying adults;
  - details of the activities planned and of how the assessed risks will be managed;
  - the standards of behaviour expected in respect of, for example, alcohol, sexual behaviour, smoking and general group discipline including prohibited items. This information may take the form of a code of conduct which parents should sign;
  - what pupils should not take on the visit or bring back;
  - details of insurance taken out for the group as a whole in respect of luggage, accident, cancellation, medical cover, any exceptions in the policy and whether parents need to arrange additional cover;
  - clothing and equipment to be taken;
  - money to be taken;
  - the information to be given by parents and what they will be asked to consent to;
  - on exchange visits, the details of the host families. For example, whether they have hosted any of the school's pupils before;
  - details on the cost of the visit. (See Section 2 for **Financial planning** )
  - details of emergency/contact procedures

### **PARENTAL CONSENT**

- 5.4 Head teachers or group leaders should seek consent for:
- non-routine visits involving pupils in Primary 1-3 (no matter how short the visit);
  - adventure activities;
  - visits abroad;

- other residential visits;
- remote supervision.

- 5.5 If parents withhold consent absolutely the pupil should not be taken on the visit but the curricular aims of the visit should be delivered to the pupil in some other way wherever possible. If the parents give a conditional consent the head teacher will need to consider whether the pupil may be taken on the visit or not.
- 5.6 A parental consent form should be completed for each pupil in the group. Besides conveying the parents' consent it could also form the basis for obtaining details required. If a tour operator is used it may be sensible to ask them what information to obtain. General issues to consider include:
- any allergies/phobias the pupil may have;
  - any medication the pupil is taking (if so what the dosage is and who is to administer it);
  - whether the pupil administers their own medication ;any contagious or infectious diseases suffered within the family during the preceding 4 weeks, and any other recent illnesses suffered by the pupil;
  - the name, address and phone number of the pupil's GP;
  - any special/medical dietary requirements;
  - whether the pupil suffers from travel sickness;
  - information on any toileting difficulties;
  - whether the pupil has any night time tendencies such as sleepwalking (for residential visits);
  - the pupil's ability to swim in the pool or sea and their level of safety awareness;
  - any other information which the parent thinks should be known;
  - the parental home and daytime phone numbers and addresses;
  - an alternative contact, with their phone number and address.
- 5.7 The contents of a consent form for a parent to sign will vary according to the type of visit. (See Form 6 **Parental consent for a school visit** and Form 10 **Consent for swimming activities.** )

### **MEDICAL CONSENT**

- 5.8 This should form part of the parental consent form. Parents should be asked to agree to the pupil's receiving emergency treatment, including anaesthetic or blood transfusion, as considered necessary by the medical authorities. If parents do not agree to these, head teachers may decide to withdraw the child from the visit - given the additional responsibility this would entail for the group leader.
- 5.9 Doctors can be expected to carry out necessary emergency treatment without parental consent but it is possible that a surgeon in another country might be reluctant to operate on a pupil unless assured that the group leader had parental authorisation to agree to such treatment. It is sensible to include a translation of the medical consent, as signed by the parent, in the relevant foreign language.

### **OTHER CONSENT**

- 5.10 Parental consent should be obtained specifically for the transporting of pupils in the private vehicle of a non-teacher adult or another pupil on the visit. Head teachers should consider whether consent should be obtained before pupils can be carried in a teacher's private vehicle.

### **EARLY RETURN**

- 5.11 The group leader should tell parents if they would be expected to fund the early return of a pupil whose conduct gave cause for concern on a visit. A written agreement may be necessary.

### **CONTACT WITH PARENTS DURING THE VISIT**

- 5.12 Head teachers should ensure that parents can contact their child via the school contact and the group leader in the event of a home emergency, and that they have a number to ring for information in the event of an incident during the visit or a late arrival home. Parents should therefore:

- know the destination details;
- be aware of the emergency contact arrangements at home (particularly important during holiday periods when the school may be closed) and at all the venues the group will visit;
- provide contact numbers for day and night use in an emergency. This is best done by means of the consent form.

### **PUPILS' CONTACT WITH PARENTS**

- 5.13 Group leaders should arrange for parents to be told by the school of the group's safe arrival. One way of doing this is by a 'telephone tree' whereby one parent contacts an agreed group of parents who then contact a further group. However pupils may wish to speak to their parents individually. Such arrangements should be agreed with parents and pupils before the visit takes place. Parents concerned after a phone call should contact the school contact.

## **SECTION 6-PLANNING TRANSPORT**

### **GENERAL**

- 6.1 The group leader must give careful thought to planning transport. Schools should follow the Comhairle's transport policies. The main factors to consider include:
- passenger safety;
  - the competence and training of the driver to drive the proposed vehicle and whether the driver holds the appropriate valid licence;
  - the number of driving hours required for the journey and length of the driver's day (including nondriving hours);
  - the capacity and experience of driver to maintain concentration - whether more than one driver is needed to avoid driver fatigue;
  - the type of journey - will the visit take place locally or will it include long distance driving ie motorways?
  - traffic conditions;
  - contingency funds and arrangements in case of breakdown/emergency;
  - appropriate insurance cover;
  - weather;
  - journey time and distance;
  - stopping points on long journeys for toilet and refreshments;
  - supervision.

### **LEGISLATION**

- 6.2 As the employer, the Comhairle's Education Department, should satisfy themselves that all travel arrangements, including the hire of private coaches or buses, are suitable for the nature of the visit. In practice head teachers will normally carry out these checks. The driver is responsible for the vehicle during the visit.
- 6.3 All minibuses and coaches, which carry groups of three or more children, aged between 3 and 15 years inclusive must be fitted with a seat belt for each child. The seats must face forward and seat restraints must comply with legal requirements.

### **SUPERVISION ON TRANSPORT**

- 6.4 The level of supervision necessary should be considered as part of the risk assessment for the journey. The group leader is responsible for the party at all times including maintaining good discipline.
- 6.5 The driver should not normally be responsible for supervision. Driver supervision may be sufficient if a small number of older children are being taken on a short journey. All group members should be made aware of the position of the emergency door and first aid and anti-fire equipment on transport. The group leader should also be aware of alternative routes or means of travel in the event of delay or cancellation.

6.6 Factors that the group leader should consider when planning supervision on transport include:

- the level of supervision that will be necessary on double decker buses/coaches - one supervisor on each deck should be appropriate in normal circumstances;
- safety when crossing roads as part of the journey
- the group leader should ensure that pupils know how to observe the safety rules set out in the Highway Code and the Green Cross Code. Pedestrian crossings and traffic lights or footbridges should be used to cross roads, whenever possible;
- safety on buses, trains, ferries and boats – the group leader should make clear to pupils how much or how little freedom they have to ‘roam’.
- misbehaviour is a main cause of accidents to children on such means of transport. Appropriate supervision and discipline should be maintained at all times. Pupils should also be made aware of what to do in an emergency and where emergency procedures are displayed;
- booking transport - the group leader should arrange for seats to be reserved well in advance to ensure that the party can travel together;
- safety of pupils whilst waiting at pick-up and drop-off points and when getting on or off transport, particularly when using UK vehicles abroad. Pupils should be made aware of safety rules and expected standards of behaviour.
- (See Section 4 for **Transport and pupils**)
- safety while on stops or rests during the journey - group leaders should plan with the driver sufficient stops at suitable areas to ensure the comfort and safety of all group members including the driver. Drivers of buses and coaches must comply with legislation covering maximum periods of driving and minimum rest periods;
- safety of the group in the event of an accident or breakdown - the group should remain under the direct supervision of the group leader or other teachers wherever possible;
- head counts, by the group leader or another delegated teacher or supervisor, should always be carried out when the group is getting off or onto transport;
- responsibility for checking that seat belts are fastened;
- consider whether a visible and easily recognisable article of clothing should be worn in common by pupils;
- pupils should be made aware that they are not allowed access to the driving area at any time;
- group members should be made aware that travel sickness tablets should only be administered to a pupil with previous authorisation from the parents;
- vetting non-teacher drivers. See Section 3 for Assessing **suitability**

### **HIRING COACHES AND BUSES**

6.7 The group leader is responsible for ensuring that coaches and buses are hired from a reputable company. Professional operators of buses and coaches are legally required to be licenced. Schools using operators to transport pupils should ensure that the operators have the appropriate public service vehicle (PSV) operators’ licence. When booking transport, the group leader should ensure that seat belts are available for pupils. Whilst seat belts must be fitted on coaches which carry groups of children, they are not legally required on buses. Buses where seat belts are not fitted are not normally appropriate for visits involving long journeys.

6.8 If any member of a group uses a wheelchair, the group leader should ensure that transport used has appropriate access and securing facilities. It may be appropriate to use portable ramps.

## LICENCES AND PERMITS

- 6.9 Schools running or hiring their own vehicles where any payment is made towards the cost of pupils being carried require a public service vehicle (PSV) licence. There are two types of licence - restricted (for up to two vehicles) and standard national (more than two vehicles). Local Traffic Commissioners can provide advice and application forms for PSV operator licences.
- 6.10 Schools can apply to the council for a permit issued under Section 19 of the Transport Act 1985. Permit holders are exempt from the need to hold a PSV operators' licence and, in certain circumstances, from meeting the entire driver licensing requirements. Section 19 Permits cannot be used outside the UK and separate rules exist for all those wishing to take minibuses abroad. DETR can provide advice - see Annex B for contact details. The law on driver licensing no longer permits car drivers who pass their test after 1 January 1997 to drive minibuses without passing a Passenger Carrying Vehicle (PCV) driving test or unless they are driving under a Section 19 Permit. This does not apply to existing licence holders who are over 21 years of age. Drivers of any vehicle must ensure that they have the correct entitlement on their licence.

## PRIVATE CARS

- 6.11 Teachers and others who drive pupils in their own car must ensure their passengers' safety, that the vehicle is roadworthy, and that they have appropriate licence and insurance cover for carrying the pupils. The school should carefully vet volunteers before they are permitted to drive pupils in their car. If necessary, assurances should be requested by the head teacher. See Section 3 for Assessing **suitability**.
- 6.12 The driver is responsible for making sure that pupils have a seat belt and use it at all times. Vehicles without seat belts should not be used
- 6.13 Head teachers or group leaders who wish to use parents, volunteers or other pupils to help transport pupils in their own cars, must ensure that they are aware of their legal responsibility for the safety of the pupils in their cars. Parents' agreement should be sought (on the consent form) for their children to be carried in other parents' cars. It is advisable that parents driving pupils are not put in a position where they are alone with a pupil. The group leader should arrange a central dropping point for all pupils rather than individual home drops.

## TRANSPORT IN A SCHOOL MINIBUS

- 6.14 Some schools use their own minibuses for short frequent journeys and sometimes for longer trips. Minibuses have a maximum capacity of 16 seated passengers plus the driver. They must comply with the various regulations about construction and fittings. A forward facing seat with seat belt must be provided for each child. Some important regulations are the *Minibus (Conditions of Fitness, Equipment and Use) Regulations 1977* and the *Road Vehicle (Construction and Use) Regulations 1996*.

## SCHOOL MINIBUS DRIVER

- 6.15 Although the head teacher is ultimately responsible for the school minibus, the driver is responsible for the vehicle during the visit. The minibus driver must be qualified to drive a minibus and have a valid and clean driving licence - see **Licences and permits** above. All those who may drive the school minibus must receive training in minibus driving and the management of passengers. The head teacher should ensure those teachers driving school

minibuses have a rest period before driving. Minibus drivers must always adhere to transport Regulations.

6.16 The minibus driver must:

- observe education authority and/or governing body guidance, where appropriate;
- not drive when taking medication or undergoing treatment that might affect their ability or judgment;
- know what to do in an emergency;
- know how to use fire fighting and first-aid equipment;
- avoid driving for long periods and ensure that rests are taken when needed;
- clarify and comply with transport regulations and the requirements of the vehicle's insurance cover;
- take into consideration the effects of teaching and the working day;
- have regular medical checks e.g. eyesight.

### **MAINTENANCE AND CHECKS OF THE SCHOOL MINIBUS**

6.17 The head teacher will usually be responsible for the school minibus. However, a head teacher may delegate to a willing member of staff responsibility for carrying out regular checks and ensuring that the minibus is maintained.

6.18 This member of staff should report to the head teacher, who is responsible, along with the education authority and other teachers, for ensuring the safety of pupils on school-organised journeys. The person responsible for maintaining the minibus should:

- check the vehicle's condition on a weekly basis;
- ensure proper servicing by a reputable garage;
- maintain the record-of-use book with the service history, insurance and other relevant documents;
- check with the head teacher before allowing anyone not so authorised to drive the vehicle;
- ensure that any teachers driving the minibus are competent and have undertaken suitable training to do so;
- always be informed before other teachers use the school minibus;
- ensure that drivers of the school minibus are aware that the vehicle should always be logged in and out.

(For **organising your own transport for visits abroad** see Section 9.)

## **SECTION 7-INSURANCE**

### **GENERAL**

- 7.1 The Comhairle operates a Youth Party Travel Policy which arranges insurance cover for schools and groups. All schools must inform the Insurance Section of any trips being undertaken and give details of destination, dates, number in party and activities in order for a premium to be charged. This would normally be charged to the school's cost centre or if they prefer paid out of a school fund account through the Council Cash Desk. If being paid by cheque through the Cash Desk, all payments should be coded to 01055441 and marked "Youth Party Travel".

### **COVER**

- 7.2 Details of the cover provided under the policy are as follows:

COVER FOR	AMOUNT
Personal Accident (death, loss of eyes/limbs or permanent total disablement)	£20,000
Death Benefit for persons under 18 years of age limited to	£7,500
Personal Money & Property (money limit £400, any one article or set of articles £250)	£1,500
Money (in the custody of a responsible adult)	£2,500
An excess of £15 applies to each claim.	

- 7.3 If additional cover is required, Head teachers or group leaders should contact the Comhairle's Insurance Section or another reputable broker to arrange. The costs of additional cover will usually form part of the costs of the trip.

### **INSURANCE AND PARENTS**

- 7.4 The group leader should write to the parents to tell them which responsibilities the school accepts and the scope of any insurance cover the school is to arrange. It is advisable to make copies of the insurance schedule available to parents as early as possible in the booking process.

### **INSURANCE COVER FOR VISITS**

- 7.5 Insurance policies are legal documents. They will impose conditions, limit the cover, and exclude certain people or activities. Insurance companies/travel firms can advise on particular types of insurance. However, the following are examples of cover, which may be appropriate to many types of school visit:

- employers liability;
- public liability;
- personal accident cover for teachers, other adults, and pupils;
- costs of medical treatment;

- specialised risk activities (often excluded from standard policies) and the costs of evacuation for medical reasons when abroad;
- damage to or loss of hired equipment (check the wording of the hire agreement);
- programmed and non-programmed activities;
- transport and accommodation expenses in case of emergency;
- compensation against cancellation or delay;
- compensation for loss of baggage and personal effects including money;
- legal assistance in the recovery of claims; and
- failure or bankruptcy of the centre or travel company.

7.6 Additional arrangements may be necessary to obtain insurance cover for activities abroad and activities of a potentially hazardous nature. The group leader should scrutinise carefully the list of exclusions in the policy. If there is any doubt about the cover the insurer should be asked for clarification. The group leader should ascertain the details of the insurance held by the tour operator. Additional cover may be necessary for participants with medical conditions. The group leader should check this with the insurance company before departure.

### **CANCELLATIONS**

7.7 Some parents may cancel their child's place in the visit. The group leader should forward any cancellations to the insurer/operator as soon as possible, in writing, if a replacement is not available. Delay in notification may incur cancellation charges.

### **TRANSPORT**

7.8 When hiring coaches etc the group leader should check that the company used has appropriate insurance.

7.9 Use of school/private vehicles: the group leader should check that the insurance policy for the school minibus is appropriate to the journey. Taking the school minibus abroad may require extra insurance.

7.10 The group leader should check that the teacher driving the school minibus abroad is appropriately insured and that their driving licence is valid for the countries to be visited or passed through en route. Teachers, other adults or pupils using their own cars to carry pupils on school visits should ensure that their vehicle is properly licenced and that the insurance covers use on school business.

**The Comhairle has third party cover for any claim which may be made against it as a result of transport provided in a private car. But this does not exempt the driver from taking out appropriate insurance**

## **SECTION 8-TYPES OF VISITS**

### **ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES USING LICENCED PROVIDERS**

- 8.1 When planning to use adventure activity facilities offered by a commercial company or by a local authority the group leader should check:
- whether the provider is legally required to hold a licence for the activities it offers and, if so,
  - that the provider actually holds a licence.
- 8.2 Over 900 providers currently hold a licence. The relevant legislation is the Activity Centres (Young Persons' Safety) Act 1995 and the associated Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996. A licenced provider does not necessarily have to hold a licence for all its activities. Other activities offered may be accredited under non-statutory schemes. The provider can give information on what activities are licenced.
- 8.3 It is illegal for a provider of licensable status to offer a licensable activity without a valid licence. The Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (website [www.aala.org.uk](http://www.aala.org.uk)) can check on the licence status of a provider but Comhairle schools can all **obtain further advice from the Comhairle's Outdoor Education Officer on 01851 707452.**
- 8.4 Many of the activities that pupils take part in will be covered by health and safety legislation alone. However the following activities - where undertaken by young people under 18 years unaccompanied by a parent - need a licence when commercial companies sell them, or when local authorities provide them with or without a charge:
- **caving:** the exploration of underground passages, disused mines, or natural caves which requires the use of special equipment or expertise;
  - **climbing:** climbing, sea-level traversing, abseiling or scrambling over natural terrain or certain man-made structures which requires the use of special rock-climbing or ice-climbing equipment or expertise;
  - **trekking:** going on foot, horse (pony), pedal cycle, skis, skates or sledges over moorland, or on ground over 600 metres above sea level when it would take 30 minutes to reach an accessible road or refuge. Off-piste skiing requires a licence;
  - **watersports:** this comprises sailing, canoeing, kayaking, rafting and windsurfing, on the sea, tidal waters, inland waters at a location where any part of those waters is more than 50 metres from the nearest land, and turbulent inland waters. Rowing is exempt.
- 8.5 Holding a licence means that a provider has been inspected and the Licensing Authority are satisfied that appropriate safety measures are in place for the provision of the specified licenced adventure activities. Other elements of the provision - such as catering and accommodation - are not covered by the licensing scheme. These should be checked separately by the group leader.

See Section 8 for **other issues to consider with all adventure activity providers and Residential visits.**

**Schools planning a visit which contains adventure activities element should contact the Comhairle's Outdoor Education Officer (tel 01851 707452) and be aware of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Outdoor Education Standard Operating Procedures, Risk Assessment and safety policy.**

## ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES USING NON-LICENSABLE PROVIDERS

- 8.6 Not all providers are required to hold a licence. Voluntary bodies and schools providing for their own members and pupils respectively are exempt. Commercial bodies and local authorities are also exempt if their activities fall outside the scope of the regulations. Not holding a licence does not imply a lack of safety. It might simply mean the provider or the activity is not licensable.
- 8.7 Many providers are accredited under non-statutory schemes run by, for example, the Wales Tourist Board, and certain National Governing Bodies (NGBs). Schools can contact these accreditors to ascertain a provider's management of safety. The British Activity Holiday Association can provide advice on accreditations.
- 8.8 If proposing to use a non-licensable provider, the group leader should seek the advice of the Comhairle's Outdoor Education Officer and obtain assurances in writing from the provider that:
- risks have been assessed and that the provider's staff are competent to instruct and lead pupils of the group's age range on the activity. Competence could be demonstrated by holding the relevant NGB award where it exists or through successful participation in an NGB approved in-house scheme;
  - the equipment is appropriate and that its safe condition is checked before each use;
  - operating procedures conform to the guidelines of the National Governing Body for the activity where this is appropriate;
  - clear management of safety systems is in place;
  - there is appropriate provision for first aid;
  - there are emergency procedures (including arrangements for informing next of kin and for alerting the group leader); that the provider's staff are competent in the procedures and will hold emergency phone numbers and addresses of the group members; and that the group will have a fire drill as soon as possible on arrival at the provider's base.
- 8.9 The group leader may wish to ask the provider for names of other schools who have recently used its facilities. (See also Section 8 for **Residential visits**)

## OTHER ISSUES TO CONSIDER WITH ALL ADVENTURE ACTIVITY PROVIDERS

- 8.10 The group leader should check and agree the provider's arrangements for supervision and recreation during the evenings and between adventure activities. The group leader should also provide any relevant information to the provider such as the group's age range, competence etc.
- 8.11 The group leader and teachers retain ultimate responsibility for pupils at all times during adventure activities, even when the group is under instruction by a member of the provider's staff. The provider is responsible for the safe running of an activity. Clear handover and handback procedures should be in place. Everyone, including the pupils, must have an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the school staff and the provider's staff.
- 8.12 The group leader and teachers should have sufficient information on what the activity involves before it takes place. They should approach the instructor at an appropriate safe interval if they are concerned that the pupils may be at unnecessary risk. Assurances may be sought that the provider has:
- checked the suitability of the staff, including temporary workers, to work with young people. See Assessing **suitability** in Section 3
  - clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of its staff;

- the appropriate security arrangements;
- appropriate public liability insurance.

### **SCHOOL-LED ADVENTURE ACTIVITIES**

- 8.13 If a member of the school staff is to organise, lead and instruct pupils on adventure activities they should complete the checks set out in this guidance under **Risk assessment** Section 2 and seek the advice of the Outdoor Education Officer. Full guidance in this area is set out in the Education intranet site under "Health and Safety/ Outdoor Risk Assessment."
- 8.14 The Comhairle education department will satisfy themselves that:
- the group leader and other supervisors are competent to act as leaders and/or instructors of pupils in the activity - bearing in mind that some of these pupils may be novices. Competences should be demonstrated by holding the relevant NGB award where it exists. The relevant NGB can advise on this.
  - the group leader is competent in safety procedures and the planning of adventurous visits;
  - an appropriate risk assessment has been completed
  - the supervision will be appropriate;
  - there is adequate first aid provision, expertise and equipment within the group;
  - the emergency procedures include activity specific measures and that supervisors are competent to carry them out;
  - the equipment is appropriate, safe and in good condition;
  - every pupil is suited to the activity and is properly prepared and equipped.

See Form 1 which sets out the Education Department's format for seeking approval of a visit.

### **EMPLOYMENT OF PROVIDERS**

- 8.15 Schools choosing to employ, rather than contract with, an unlicensed freelance provider of adventure activities - who would otherwise need a licence to trade - take full legal responsibility for all aspects of the activity. If the provider, in the employment of the school, provides licensable facilities to the pupils of another school, the employing school will need a licence.

### **REMOTE SUPERVISION DURING ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES**

- 8.16 Some adventurous activities - such as those under the Duke of Edinburgh Awards - require pupils to work in small groups without direct supervision. Particular attention needs to be given to the information provided to pupils before supervision can be withdrawn. The training given to pupils must be sound and thorough and should be assessed separately. The instructor should have the appropriate qualifications or experience to provide training in the activity. The group leader should be satisfied that the pupils have acquired the necessary skills and have the necessary experience, confidence, physical ability and judgement to be left without direct supervision.
- 8.17 The withdrawal of direct supervision should be a gradual four stage process:
- accompanying the group;
  - shadowing the group;
  - checking regularly at agreed locations;
  - checking occasionally at agreed locations.

- 8.18 Pupils should be familiar with all equipment used or taken without direct supervision and, in addition to training, an initial element of adult supervision in the use of equipment may be required. The condition and suitability of any equipment, particularly safety equipment, taken or used during these activities should be assessed separately.

(See Section 3 for **Supervision** and Section 4 **preparing pupils for remote supervision**)

## COASTAL VISITS

- 8.19 Group leaders and other teachers should be aware that many of the incidents affecting pupils have occurred by or in the sea. There are dangers on the coast quite apart from those incurred in swimming (for which see separate section below). The group leader should bear the following points in mind when assessing the risks of a coastal activity:
- tides, rip tides and sandbanks are potential hazards; timings and exit routes should be checked;
  - ensure group members are aware of warning signs and flags;
  - establish a base on the beach to which members of the group may return if separated;
  - Look out for hazards such as glass, barbed wire and sewage outflows etc;
  - some of a group's time on a beach may be recreational. Group leaders should consider which areas of the terrain and sea are out of bounds;
  - cliff tops can be highly dangerous for school groups even during daylight. The group should keep to the path at all times. Group leaders should consider whether it is safe or legal for pupils to ride mountain bikes on coastal paths.
- 8.20 The local coastguard, harbour master, lifeguard or tourist information office can provide information and advice on the nature and location of hazards.

## SWIMMING IN THE SEA OR OTHER NATURAL WATERS

- 8.21 Swimming and paddling in the sea or other natural waters are potentially dangerous activities for a school group. They should only be allowed as formal and supervised activities, preferably in recognised bathing areas, which have official surveillance i.e. qualified lifeguard cover. Nonetheless, pupils should always be in sight of their supervisors. One supervisor should always stay out of the water for better surveillance.
- 8.22 The group leader, or another designated teacher in the group, should hold a relevant life saving award, especially where lifeguard cover may not be available. For further advice contact the Comhairle's Outdoor Education Officer tel 01851 707452.
- 8.23 A ratio of 1 adult to 10 pupils is a minimum. The group leader should assess the risks and consider an appropriate safe supervision level for their particular group before the activity takes place.**
- 8.24 The group leader should:
- be aware that many children who drown are strong swimmers;
  - ascertain for themselves the level of the pupil's swimming ability;
  - be aware of the local conditions - such as currents, weeds, a shelving, uneven or unstable bottom - using local information from the lifeguard, coastguard, harbormaster, police or tourist information office;
  - designate a safe area of water for use by the group;
  - be aware of the dangerous effects of sudden immersion in cold water;
  - be aware of the dangers of paddling especially for young pupils
  - ensure that pupils have not eaten (at least half an hour) before swimming;

- ensure the activity is suitable for the pupils, especially any with disabilities;
- adopt and explain the signals of distress and recall.

## SWIMMING POOLS

8.25 Group leaders should follow the recommended safe supervision levels at the pool for their pupils. A minimum ratio should be 1 adult to 12 pupils from 8 to 10 and 1 adult to 20 for pupils aged 11 onwards. For younger pupils, the ratio should be higher. Teachers should monitor the risks of regular swimming activities and adjust supervision levels for their individual groups as necessary. If considering the use of a swimming pool not used before or monitoring the hazards of a regularly used pool it is advisable to observe and check the following:

- is there constant pool supervision by a sufficient number of qualified lifeguards?
- where there is no lifeguard the group leader should stay at the poolside at a raised location. In such circumstances, the group leader, or a designated teacher, should have a relevant life saving award and be accompanied by an appropriate number of supervisors;
- is the water temperature appropriate?
- is the water clear?
- are there signs clearly indicating the depth – is there a shallow end and is the water there shallow enough?
- does the pool cater for pupils with disabilities?
- does the deep end allow for safe diving?
- is there a poolside telephone?
- are there a resuscitator and other pieces of first aid and rescue equipment, and is there someone trained to use them?
- are the changing and showering facilities safe and hygienic?
- can clothes be stored securely?
- have the pupils been instructed how to behave in and around the water?

See Form 10 for **parental consent for swimming activities** and Form 9 for a **checklist on swimming safety**. Parental consent does not mean that group leaders should not check for themselves the level of a pupil's swimming ability.

## FARM VISITS

8.26 Farms can be dangerous even for the people who work on them. Taking children to a farm should be carefully planned. The risks to be assessed should include those arising from the misuse of farm machinery and the hazards associated with *E coli 0157* food poisoning and other infections.

8.27 Check that the farm is well managed; that it has a good reputation for safety standards and animal welfare; and that it maintains good washing facilities and clean grounds and public areas. Consider the merits of an exploratory visit.

8.28 These are some basic safety rules. Never let pupils:

- place their faces against the animals or put their hands in their own mouths after feeding the animals;
- eat until they have washed their hands;
- sample any animal foodstuffs;
- drink from farm taps (other than in designated public facilities);
- ride on tractors or other machines;
- play in the farm area.

## FIELD STUDIES

- 8.29 Field studies associated with a range of subjects including geography, biology, geology and history might take pupils to industrial sites and other urban areas as well as into the countryside and to the coast (see above, **Coastal visits**). The scope of field studies means that the group leaders, who will usually be subject specialists, should also be competent to lead and instruct their pupils within urban and non-urban environments at minimal risk.

## RESIDENTIAL VISITS

- 8.30 A good rule of thumb ratio is 1 teacher for every 10 pupils. Issues for the group leader to consider include the following:
- the group should ideally have adjoining rooms with teachers' quarters next to the pupils' – the leader should obtain a floor plan of the rooms reserved for the group's use in advance;
  - there should be at least one teacher from each sex for mixed groups;
  - there must be separate male and female sleeping/bathroom facilities for pupils and adults;
  - the immediate accommodation area should be exclusively for the group's use;
  - ensure there is appropriate and safe heating and ventilation;
  - ensure that the whole group are aware of the lay-out of the accommodation, its fire precautions/exits (are instructions in English or otherwise clear?), its regulations and routine, and that everyone can identify key personnel;
  - security arrangements - where the reception is not staffed 24 hours a day, security arrangements should be in force to stop unauthorised visitors;
  - the manager of the accommodation should be asked for assurances that the staff, including temporary workers, have been checked as suitable for work with young people. See also Assessing suitability **suitability** in Section 3;
  - locks on doors should work in the group's rooms but appropriate access should be available to teachers at all times;
  - there should be drying facilities;
  - there should be adequate space for storing clothes, luggage, equipment etc, and for the safe keeping of valuables;
  - adequate lighting - it is advisable to bring a torch;
  - there should be provision for pupils with additional support needs and those who fall sick;
  - balconies should be stable, windows secure, and electrical connections safe;
  - where possible pupils should not be lodged in ground floor rooms;
  - the fire alarm must be audible throughout the accommodation;
  - there should be recreational accommodation/facilities for the group;
  - there should be an appropriate number of group supervisors on standby duty during the night.
- 8.31 Before booking a hostel/hotel abroad, the group leader should confirm it has fire exits and lifts with inner doors and that it meets local regulations. After arrival at any accommodation it is advisable to carry out a fire drill as soon as possible.

## **SECTION 9-VISITS ABROAD**

### **GENERAL**

- 9.1 Travelling abroad can be hugely rewarding for pupils and adults alike, but it is important that careful preparation takes place. Much of the earlier guidance applies to visits abroad, but there are some additional factors that need to be considered, not least because the legislation may be different from that of the UK. Group leaders should always comply with the school/education authority guidance on visits abroad. School visits abroad can be made in a number of ways.

### **ORGANISING YOUR OWN VISIT**

- 9.2 A head teacher or group leader may decide to organise a package abroad without the help of an outside body. Package organisers have responsibilities under Directive 90/314/EEC. This is implemented in the UK by the Package Travel, Package Holidays and Package Tours Regulations 1992 (The Package Travel Regulations). These regulations apply to packages sold or offered for sale in the UK. They define a package as a combination of any two of accommodation, transport, or other tourist services not ancillary to transport. Most package arrangements come within scope of the regulations unless they are 'occasional' or part of an educational course programme as compared with a leisure activity such as skiing. **At the time of this guidance's production, the legal position of packages arranged as part of an educational course is subject to the effects of a future judgment in the European Court of Justice. Head teachers should be aware of these regulations in case they are in scope.**

### **ORGANISING YOUR OWN TRANSPORT**

- 9.3 Group leaders should ensure that drivers taking groups abroad are familiar with driving the coach or minibus in the countries being visited and those en route. EC regulations require the fitment and use of a tachograph and prescribe maximum limits on driving time and minimum requirements for breaks and rest periods. These regulations apply for most drivers of school passenger vehicles when undertaking an international journey. Different licence requirements would normally apply for driving abroad. Useful information on different countries can be found on the internet at [www.drivingabroad.co.uk](http://www.drivingabroad.co.uk).
- 9.4 Factors to consider when travelling abroad include:
- the need to be aware that different legislation and regulations may apply for drivers' hours and record keeping purposes, particularly in non-EU countries;
  - EU drivers' hours and tachograph regulations normally apply to any vehicle with 9 or more passenger seats on journeys through EU countries and some countries outside the EU. In other countries, drivers must observe the domestic rules of the countries being visited. Advice on domestic rules may be obtained from the relevant embassies of the countries concerned;
  - special documentation is required for minibuses taken abroad;
  - all group members should be aware of unfamiliar right-hand drive traffic. The passenger doors on UK minibuses and coaches may not open on the kerb side in countries where travel is on the right hand side of the road. Extra care will be necessary when the group is climbing in and out of the vehicle. Detours may be necessary to ensure safety;
  - carrying capacity and loading requirements;
  - DETR can provide information on legal requirements for travel abroad. See Annex A for publication details and Annex B for address details.

## **USING A TOUR OPERATOR**

- 9.5 Before using a tour operator group leaders should ensure it is reputable. Ascertaining this should form part of the risk assessment. The Civil Aviation Authority licences travel organisers and tour operators selling air seats or packages with an air transport element (Air Travel Organisers Licence or ATOL). The licence is a legal requirement and provides security against a licence holder going out of business.
- 9.6 A travel agent does not need to be an ATOL holder if acting only as an agent of an ATOL holder. But if so, the group leader must check whether or not the whole package being supplied is covered by the ATOL. If it is not, the organiser must show evidence of other forms of security to provide for the refund of advance payments and the costs of repatriation in the event of insolvency. There are seven bonding bodies approved by the Department of Trade and Industry:
- Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA)
  - Federation of Tour Operators Trust (FTOT)
  - Association of Independent Tour Operators Trust (AITOT)
  - Passenger Shipping Association (PSA)
  - The Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT)
  - Yacht Charter Association (YCA)
  - The Association of Bonded Travel Organisers Trust (ABTOT)

## **OPERATORS BASED ABROAD**

- 9.7 Directive 90/314/EEC (as referred to above) applies to all states of the European Economic Area (EEA). Group leaders may wish to use a package organiser based abroad in an EEA state. If so, they should check that it satisfies the requirements of the national legislation implementing the Directive. Details may be available from national tourist offices or embassies/consulates.

## **SOURCES OF FURTHER ADVICE FOR SCHOOL TRAVEL ABROAD**

- The Department of Trade and Industry - for the regulations governing tour operators;
- The Schools and Group Travel Association (SAGTA) is an independent association with a members' code of good conduct and safety rules. All its members are in ABTA;
- Alternatively, there are voluntary bodies established to promote school journeys, such as the School Journey Association;
- Head teachers or group leaders who decide to arrange travel independently may also seek the advice and help of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's (FCO) Travel Advice Unit. The Unit's purpose is to help intending travellers to avoid trouble abroad. It can provide information on threats to personal safety arising from political unrest, lawlessness, violence etc.  
Address details are provided in Annex B.

## PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- 9.8 It is good practice that an exploratory visit to the location should always be made. If this is not possible, the group leader should gather as much information as possible on the area to be visited/facilities from:
- the provider;
  - the Foreign & Commonwealth Office's Travel Advice Unit;
  - other schools who have used the facilities/been to the area;
  - the local authority/schools in the area to be visited;
  - national travel offices in the UK;
  - embassies/consulates;
  - travel agents/tour operators;
  - The Suzy Lamplugh Trust, a national charity for personal safety, which have produced guidance, including a book called *World Wise: Your Passport to Safer Travel*, a video of the same title, and information on the Internet. details and contact addresses;
  - the Internet, books and magazines.

## STAFFING THE VISIT

- 9.9 Staffing ratios for visits abroad are difficult to prescribe as they will vary according to the activity, the pupils' age and sex, the location, and the efficient use of resources. Schools should have a minimum ratio of 1 adult to 10 pupils and at least two of the adults should be teachers. There should be enough adults in the group to cover an emergency. Mixed gender groups should have at least one male teacher and one female teacher

## PREPARING PUPILS FOR VISITS

- 9.10 Factors to consider for visits abroad include:
- language - particularly common phrases;
  - culture eg body language, rules and regulations of behaviour, dress codes, local customs, attitudes to gender etc;
  - drugs, alcohol-usage;
  - food and drink - group members should be warned of the dangers of drinking tap water in certain countries. In some countries it is safer to drink bottled water, and care needs to be taken with raw vegetables, salads and unpeeled fruit, raw shellfish, underdone meat or fish;
  - money - how to carry money and valuables discreetly e.g. money belts, zip armllets. If larger amounts of money will be needed, it is advisable to take travelers checks;
  - how to use phones abroad, money required (a BT contact card allows calls to be charged to the home number) and the code for phoning home;
  - what to do in an emergency. See **Emergencies** Section 10.

## BRIEFING MEETING FOR PARENTS

- 9.11 It is particularly important that parents are given the opportunity to meet the teachers and others that will be taking the pupils overseas. See Section 5 **Communicating with Parents**.

## **VACCINATIONS**

- 9.12 The group leader should find out whether vaccination is necessary and ensure that all members of the group have received it in good time. Check whether the country to be visited requires proof of vaccination. The Department of Health gives advice on vaccination requirements in their publication, *Health Advice to Travellers Anywhere in the World*

## **INSURANCE**

- 9.13 The group leader must ensure that the group has comprehensive travel insurance. See Section 7 **Insurance**.

## **FOREIGN LEGISLATION**

- 9.14 The group leader needs to check relevant legislation; particularly on health and safety e.g. fire regulations.

## **LANGUAGE ABILITIES**

- 9.15 One of the adults with the group should be able to speak and read the language of the visited country. If not, it is strongly recommended that the leader or another adult learns enough of the language to hold a basic conversation and knows what to say in an emergency. It is also advisable that pupils have a basic knowledge of the local language before the visit.

## **VISAS/PASSPORTS**

- 9.16 The group leader should ensure that all members of the group have valid passports and visas (if appropriate) in the early stages of planning the trip. A “collective passport” can also be issued in lieu of individual standard passports to approved parties of students, scouts, guides and other recognised youth organizations, under 18 years of age, who are British nationals and traveling abroad as a group. Further information on this can be obtained at [www.passport.gov.uk](http://www.passport.gov.uk).
- 9.17 Photocopies of the group’s passports should be taken for emergency use. Otherwise there can be problems if someone other than the designated leader has to accompany an injured pupil back to the UK.

## **NATIONALITY**

- 9.18 If the group includes pupils whose national or immigration status or entitlement to a British passport is in doubt, it is advisable to make early enquiries of the Home Office’s Immigration and Nationality Directorate (see Annex B for address details) concerning the requirements of the immigration rules and the right of re-entry.
- 9.19 Pupils who are not nationals of any EU member state may need a visa to travel from the UK to another Member State. However, they may receive visa exemption if they are members of a school group. Details and forms are available from the Central Bureau for Educational Visits and Exchanges. Pupils other than EU nationals may require a separate passport and may need to use separate passport control channels from the rest of the group.

## **CARE ORDERS AND WARDS OF COURT**

- 9.20 If a child is subject to a care order, foster parents will need to ensure that the Social Services Department consents to any proposed trip. If a pupil is a ward of court, the head teacher should seek advice from the court in relation to school journeys and activities abroad well in advance.

## **EMERGENCY MEDICAL FACILITIES**

- 9.21 Some of these are available through reciprocal health care arrangements in European Community (EC) countries to EU Nationals. Form E111 from DSS is the certificate of entitlement to free or reduced cost treatment and must be completed by the child's parent. It is available from Post Offices or Freefone0800 555777.
- 9.22 It is advisable to take a contingency fund as sometimes treatment must be paid for in advance and money has to be claimed back later.

## **PAPERWORK**

- 9.23 The group leader should ensure that they obtain and take with them:
- travel tickets, passports and visas. It is also advisable to carry a separate list of the numbers of any travel documents/passports, and photocopies of all the group's documents in a sealed waterproof bag;
  - a copy of the contract with the centre/hotel etc, if appropriate;
  - medical papers eg form E111s and significant medical histories;
  - parental consent forms and permission for group leader to authorise emergency treatment on parental behalf;
  - the phone numbers and addresses, at home and in school, of the head teacher and of the school contact;
  - the names of parents and the addresses and telephone numbers at which they can be contacted (home and workplace);
  - copies of a list of group members and their details;
  - details of insurance arrangements and the company's telephone number;
  - the name, address and telephone number of the group's accommodation;
  - location of local hospital/medical services.
- 9.24 The group leader may wish to ask parents for passport size photographs of the pupils. It might be useful to have photographs of the adults in the group as well.

## **INFORMATION RETAINED AT THE SCHOOL**

- 9.25 Full details of the visit should be retained at school while the visit is in progress. This should include:
- the itinerary and contact telephone number/address of the group;
  - a list of group members and their details;
  - contact names, addresses, telephone numbers of the parents and next of kin;
  - copies of parental consent forms;
  - copies of travel documents, insurance documents, medical papers;
  - a copy of the contract with the centre/hotel etc, if appropriate; and
  - Comhairle Education Department and Faire emergency contact numbers.

- 9.26 It is the head teacher's responsibility to ensure this information is available at all times. This is particularly important if the visit takes place when the school is closed.

### **DURING THE VISIT**

- 9.27 It is advisable for pupils to carry a note in the relevant foreign language for use if they get lost, asking the reader to re-unite them with the group at the accommodation/meeting point, or to take them to the police station. They should also carry the group leader's name and the duty contact's phone number.
- 9.28 All group members should carry an appropriate amount of foreign currency at all times eg money for telephone (or a phone card).
- 9.29 It is important to be able to identify group members readily eg uniform, brightly coloured backpack, cap or item of clothing, badges. However, no student should display their name clearly on their clothing - this could result in their being isolated from the group by an apparently friendly, personal call.

### **EMERGENCIES**

- 9.30 The group leader must ensure that all members of the group know what action to take if there is a problem. The group leader and supervisors should know where the nearest British Embassy or Consulate is located and the telephone number. Depending on the age of the pupils, it may be appropriate to ensure that they have this information to hand.
- 9.31 Group leaders need to be aware that some diseases are more prevalent in some countries than in others and should know what action to take should a member of the group become infected.
- 9.32 Many of the health problems of pupils on longer visits are caused by lack of food, of liquid or of sleep. The group leader should take this into account at the planning stage and take measures to prevent these risks. If appropriate, parents should be asked to provide suitably factored sun protection creams and sun hats/glasses. Group members should be advised about the dangers of over-exertion in the heat and of dehydration, which can cause headache, dizziness and nausea. In warm climates it is important to keep fluid levels high, take extra salt and wear loose, lightweight clothing - preferably made of cotton or other natural fibres.

### **CONTACTS AT HOME**

- 9.33 It is advisable to have a teacher/contact at home, with a valid passport, who could go to the area being visited to provide support to the group in the event of an emergency.

### **TRAVEL BY AIR**

- 9.34 Taking a school group on an aircraft requires careful planning and preparation. The airline/travel agent will be able to advise on particular requirements. If the group includes any members with disabilities, it is advisable to check that the airline has a wheelchair service and lifting facility etc, if appropriate. The group leader should resist any attempt by the airline to split the group between different aircraft.

## **EXCHANGE VISITS**

- 9.35 The success of an exchange visit largely depends on good relationships and communications with the partner school. Individual school exchanges differ from other visits abroad in that pupils will spend most of their time with host families and are, therefore, not always under the direct supervision of school staff. Host families will not be subject to English law.
- 9.36 Pupils must be aware of the ground rules agreed between the group leader and the host family. Many of the considerations, which apply to residential and day trips also, apply here. In addition, the group leader should ensure the following:
- a good personal knowledge of the host school and counterpart;
  - satisfactory 'pairing' arrangements. The partner school should tell the host families of any special, medical or dietary needs of their guests, age and gender;
  - matches should be appropriate;
  - parents, pupils and the host school should be clear about the arrangements for collecting and distributing pupils to families, and for transporting pupils throughout the visit;
  - the head teacher should retain a list of all the children involved and their family names and addresses;
  - pupils living with host families should have easy access to their teachers, usually by telephone;
  - parents should be made aware that their children living with host families will not always be under direct teacher-supervision.

## **ASSESSING THE SUITABILITY OF HOST FAMILIES**

- 9.37 Exchange or home stay visits can be arranged through agencies, in which case the agency should have some responsibility for vetting the host families. Group leaders making their own arrangements need to be clear about procedures in the relevant country for vetting the suitability of host families including criminal background checks insofar as these are available.
- 9.38 If the host school or placing agency does not have appropriate measures in place for carrying out checks to ensure the health, safety and welfare of exchange or home stay pupils, the group leader should seek further assurances and/or reconsider whether the visit should take place.

## **10 - EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

### **GENERAL**

- 10.1 Teachers in charge of pupils during a visit have a duty of care to make sure that the pupils are safe and healthy. They also have a common law duty to act as a reasonably prudent parent would. Teachers should not hesitate to act in an emergency and to take lifesaving action in an extreme situation. Emergency procedures are an essential part of planning a school visit.
- 10.2 If an accident happens, the priorities are to:
- assess the situation;
  - safeguard the uninjured members of the group;
  - attend to the casualty;
  - inform the emergency services and everyone who needs to know of the incident.

### **WHO WILL TAKE CHARGE IN AN EMERGENCY?**

- 10.3 The group leader would usually take charge in an emergency and would need to ensure that emergency procedures are in place and that back up cover is arranged. The group leader should liaise with the representative of the tour operator if one is being used.
- 10.4 Pre-arranged school home contact. The school contact's main responsibility is to link the group with the school, the parents and the Comhairle and to provide assistance as necessary. The Comhairle's Community Alarm Service, Faire, have agreed to undertake this role for any schools who wish it. Faire, or a named person if the school does not wish to use Faire's services, should have all the necessary information about the visit. See Form 9 for the checklist to be given to Faire or the named person.

### **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FRAMEWORK**

- 10.5 All those involved in the school trip, including supervisors, pupils and their parents, should be informed who will take charge in an emergency, the named back up cover and what they are expected to do in an emergency.

### **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FRAMEWORK DURING THE VISIT**

- 10.6 If an emergency occurs on a school visit the main factors to consider include:
- establish the nature and extent of the emergency as quickly as possible;
  - ensure that all the group are safe and looked after;
  - establish the names of any casualties and get immediate medical attention for them;
  - ensure that all group members who need to know are aware of the incident and that all group members are following the emergency procedures;
  - ensure that a teacher accompanies casualties to hospital and that the rest of the group are adequately supervised at all times and kept together;
  - notify the police if necessary;
  - notify the British Embassy/Consulate if an emergency occurs abroad;
  - inform the school/home contact/Faire. (Faire is accessible at all times. Any other contact should also be accessible around the clock);

- details of the incident to pass on to the school/contact/Faire should include: nature, date and time of incident;
- location of incident; names of casualties and details of their injuries; names of others involved so that parents can be reassured; action taken so far; action yet to be taken (and by whom);
- notify insurers, especially if medical assistance is required (this may be done by the school contact);
- notify the provider/tour operator (this may be done by the school contact);
- ascertain telephone numbers for future calls. Mobile phones, though useful, are subject to technical difficulties, and should not replace usual communication procedures;
- write down accurately and as soon as possible all relevant facts and witness details and preserve any vital evidence;
- keep a written account of all events, times and contacts after the incident;
- complete an accident report form as soon as possible. Contact HSE or local authority inspector, if appropriate;
- no-one in the group should speak to the media. Names of those involved in the incident should not be given to the media as this could cause distress to their families. Media enquiries should be referred to the Comhairle's Press Officer or the Education Department if the Press Officer is not available;
- no-one in the group should discuss legal liability with other parties.

10.7 **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES FRAMEWORK FOR SCHOOL BASE: The Faire service will generally act as the contact and liaison point for groups and parents in the event of an emergency. Schools should ensure that they have early dialogue with Faire to agree broad procedures.** Prior to the visit, the name and school and home telephone numbers of a school contact should also be identified. It is advisable to arrange a second school contact as a reserve as contact lines may become busy in the event of an incident and alternative numbers to ring would be useful.

10.8 The main factors for Faire/ any other nominated contact to consider include:

- ensuring that the group leader is in control of the emergency and establishing if any assistance is required from the school base;
- contacting parents. Details of parents' contact numbers need to be available at all times while the group is on the visit. The contact should act as a link between the group and parents. Parents should be kept as well informed as possible at all stages of the emergency;
- liaison with the Education Department. The contact should act as a link between the group and LEA and/or chair of governors and arrange for the group to receive assistance, if necessary;
- liaison with media contact. If a serious incident occurs, the contact should liaise with the designated media contact as soon as possible;
- the reporting of the incident using appropriate forms, if necessary. Some incidents are reportable under the *Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995 (RIDDOR)*.

## **MEDIA CONTACT**

10.9 The Comhairle's media officer or a senior member of the Education Department will liaise with the nominated contact, the group leader and, where appropriate, the emergency services. In the event of an emergency all media enquiries should be referred to the media contact. The name of any casualty should not be given to the media.

## **AFTER A SERIOUS INCIDENT**

- 10.10 It is not always possible to assess whether group members not injured or directly involved in the incident have been traumatised or whether other pupils or staff in the school have been affected. In some cases reactions do not surface immediately. Schools in this situation should contact the relevant Head of Service to discuss obtaining professional advice on how to help individuals and the school as a whole cope with the effects of a tragedy.

