

6. RISK ASSESSMENT

6.01 Under the 1999 Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations Bracknell Forest Council and all VA Schools/Academies have a responsibility and duty to ensure, as far as reasonably possible, the health and safety of all staff and participants on all Offsite and Adventurous Activities.

For all Offsite or Adventurous activities staff must;

- Undertake specific risk assessment and implement measures to control those risks,
- Take reasonable care of their own and others health and safety through ongoing risk assessments and monitoring;
- Carry out activities in accordance with training and instructions;
- Inform employers of any serious risks identified.

6.02 Risk Assessment Process

It is a legal requirement to perform a formal risk assessment as part of the planning of any Offsite Activity and this procedure should be an integral part of the planning for all visits.

Risk Assessment for all visits can be completed via the the Bracknell Forest electronic monitoring and approval system. Additional external risk assessments can be uploaded into the online visits system as required.

6.03 Generic Risk Assessment

A generic risk assessment is one where the risks involved are assessed and which might remain the same for the all similar activities, e.g. swimming at Bracknell Leisure Centre. This can be used for each occasion provided that there are no significant changes for all such activities and that the risk assessment is reviewed at intervals.



6.04 On Going Risk Assessment

The Group Leader must be competent to conduct an ongoing risk assessment which is where the risk elements might change due to unforeseeable circumstances when the visit is in progress or where the risk assessment was carried out on a venue during the summer when the visit is actually taking place during the winter and therefore the weather conditions on the day might be very different to those experienced when the risk assessment was written.

Risk assessment assists leaders by directing attention to areas of significant concern and by aiding the process of arriving at an overall judgement on the safety of an activity and then implementing controls to possibly lower the risk element of the activity.

The process can be applied equally to particular activities that take place over a day or part of a day, and to events lasting a number of days that involve a range of activities.

If at any stage you find that you are identifying an activity or part of an activity as involving an unacceptable risk then that must not go ahead even if the overall score is reasonable.

6.05 Categories of Risk

Low Risk

A **low risk** activity is one in which the possibility and nature of an accident are not considered to be serious and are not substantially different to those encountered in every day experience.

Medium Risk

A **medium risk** activity is one in which the risks encountered are outside the group's experience but by adopting principles of safe practice should bring them down to an acceptable level and where any accident has a potential to be a minor one

High Risk

A high risk activity is one in which the risks encountered are well beyond the everyday experience of the group. Any accident could be very serious and could lead to serious repercussions

Unacceptable Risk

An activity in which the level of risk is unacceptable is one in which the risks encountered are far beyond the experience of the group and the Group Leader and could well result in very serious injuries or fatalities

Specific risk assessments must be undertaken in respect of:

- Each activity;
- Each mode of transport employed;
- The venue/location
- The accommodation

6.06 Repeated Activities

Where activities are repeated at termly or at annual intervals it is not necessary to conduct a new risk assessment but the risk assessment should be reviewed. If during any activity there is an accident or "near miss" the risk assessment should be reviewed. There should be evidence that the risk assessment has been reviewed e.g. by dating and signing at the review time.



6.07 Heightened security

The terrorism threat level has been at the same severe level in the UK since 2014 except for a short period at the end of May 2017 when the level was raised to critical. Groups visiting London or other large city areas that might be subject to terrorist activity are advised to be extra vigilant when visiting such areas. Groups should be kept under closer supervision when in areas which may be more subject to this type of activity such as museums, galleries and where the public are likely to congregate in large numbers such as popular squares e.g. Trafalgar Square, Covent Garden etc.



Group Leaders should have the means to be in contact with coach companies and coach drivers. They should be aware of where coaches will be parked up for the day while on the visit and have a street plan of the area they are visiting so that if necessary the group could walk to the coach park or some other area where they may be able to be met with transport.

If travelling by train it is advised to have a support plan in the event of rail travel being severely disrupted.

They should also ensure that they have the means to contact the necessary personnel at their establishment should any incident occur which might affect them. This can be achieved via mobile phone, text messaging and if possible email.

This should all be featured in the groups risk assessment. Please see Major Incident Risk Assessment (saved under forms)

For further guidance and information on terrorism please refer to:

- [School Emergency Plan](#). See the information in paragraph 3.26.
- [School Trips: Keeping Children Safe](#)

6.08 Alcohol

Alcohol can pose a substantial risk to the health and safety of adults and pupils resulting in behaviour change and impaired functioning for many hours after use has ceased. Judgement about what is an acceptable amount in terms of the consumption of alcohol is generally a subjective one and therefore is open to challenge especially where incidents occur following allegations of alcohol use.

Therefore it is the view of Bracknell Forest Council that staff and pupils should refrain from consuming alcohol while on visits and activities.

Where alcohol is readily obtainable during a visit its use or abuse by anyone involved should be considered during the planning and risk assessment stages and staff should be aware of the possible consequences resulting from any actions as a consequence of consuming alcohol while in the charge of pupils and young people.

Within the UK it is against the law to sell to or for any adult to purchase alcohol on behalf of persons who are below the legal age to consume alcohol.

However it is legal for someone under the age of 18 to drink alcohol in licensed premises provided that they are accompanied by an adult and that the child is 16 or 17 years old. However any such alcohol must be purchased by the accompanying adult.

It is strongly recommended that alcohol use is not permitted during any outdoor and or adventurous activity that requires reliance on others or the self for safety.



The use of alcohol by adults is also to be discouraged where they have a continuous responsibility for the welfare of a group and are in a position where they may have to respond to an emergency at any time. This 24 hour responsibility should be considered even when “downtime “ is allocated.

Group leaders and other staff who have a driving responsibility should not consume any alcohol up to 24 hours prior to driving, whilst driving or at any time or where it may be likely that they may be in a position where they may have to drive a vehicle to transport pupils and other staff.

Other countries may well have differing laws relating to the consumption and/or purchase of alcohol. However group leaders should view the situation as if they were within the UK.

6.09 Foreign Visits

In identifying and assessing risks with visits to foreign countries, these must be based on the foreign travel advice information provided on the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) website.

<https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>

The FCO website provides essential travel advice on issue such as :

- Safety and security
- Terrorism
- Local laws and customs
- Entry requirements
- Health



All foreign visits must comply with and be organised in accordance with the advice and guidance set out by the FCO.

6.10 Complex Visits

Complex visits are visits that require a higher level of planning and where the following may apply:

- Areas defined by the Foreign Office as having a high risk of terrorism
- Areas defined by the Foreign Office as having a high medical risk
- Remote and wilderness areas

- Areas with extreme climates e.g. Antartic, Sahara

The OVA should be notified as early as possible before committing any money. The OVA can give advise to migrate any issues.

The following process should be followed:

1. Schools should input the visit on the database ASAP.
2. Provisional approval by school on the system.
3. OVA would give tentative approval in the comments box.
4. The Director, CYPL would write to the school with comments, advice and guidance for the trip.
5. Once all the information has been uploaded on to the database the headteacher will give final approval.
6. OVA will give final approval
7. Director, CYPL will give final approval and write to school.

It is recommended that parents are included in the decision making and are kept up to date with parent meetings.

Due to the nature, location and cost of these trips they will go the Director of Children, Young People and Learning for final approval. Once the visit has been approved by the OVA the visit would go to the Director for approval.

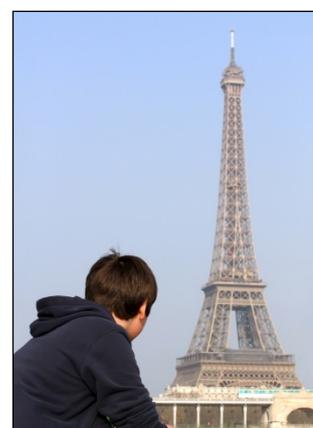
6.11 Exchange Visits

The success of exchange visits depends on good relationships and communications with the partner establishment.

Establishment exchanges differ from other visits abroad in that participants will spend most of their time with host families and are, therefore, not under the direct supervision of establishment staff.

Participants must be aware of the ground rules that have been agreed between the party leader and the host family. Many of the considerations, which apply to residential and day visits also, apply here. In addition, the party leader should ensure the following:

- a good personal knowledge of the host establishment and counterpart;
- has the host establishment confirmed the host family as suitable and is there a host agreement form that includes a question about criminal convictions or contra-indicators.
- satisfactory pairing arrangements. The partner establishment should inform the host families of any special medical or dietary needs of their guests; if the pupil has a specific health plan this should be known to the host family;



- participants should be paired with children and young people of similar age and gender;
- matches should be appropriate;
- the head of establishment/OVC and supervising staff should retain a list of all the children involved and their family names and addresses;
- participants living with host families should have easy access to their supervising staff and any information necessary such as telephone numbers;
- are there contingency plans in place to move pupils at short notice if this should be necessary;
- parents/carers, participants and the host establishment should be clear about the arrangements for collecting and distributing participants to families, and for transporting participants throughout the visit;
- have pupils been briefed about personal safety and have they been issued with any written guidance;
- If work experience features as a part of the exchange an assessment of any significant hazards that may be present should be made by an appropriately competent person;
- The host family should be made aware of what may be regarded as "acceptable" and "unacceptable" activities on family days and has any parental agreement that may be necessary been sought prior to the visit. Pupils may have the opportunity to engage in activities such as skiing, cycling, horse riding, swimming in a pool or on a beach, if so it should be ensured that appropriate precautions will be taken and appropriate safety equipment issued and where necessary the activity will be supervised by qualified instructors;
- **parents/carers should be made aware that their children living with host families will not always be under direct staff supervision.**

If the host establishment does not have appropriate measures in place for carrying out checks to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the exchange the party leader should consider whether the visit should take place.

6.12 Vetting Non UK Host Families

Non UK host families will not be subject to English law.

Group leaders need to be clear about procedures in the relevant country for vetting the suitability of host families including criminal background checks as far as these are possible.



The exact equivalent to DBS checks are unlikely to be available in all countries, therefore the visit leader in this case must ensure that the host school or agency has a vetting procedure in place to assess the suitability of home placements and obtain confirmation of this in writing.

6.13 Vetting UK Host Families

There is clearly a need to take every reasonable step to ensure the safety and well-being of visiting young people when they stay with families in our country. Vetting of host families is crucial to ensuring the safety and protection of young people.

The vetting of host families should include:

- **DBS Checks**

Where parents are looking after an exchange pupil in their own home alongside their own children without payment this is not regulated activity and as such no DBS check required.

Where parents are in receipt of financial payment to look after an exchange pupil this is regulated activity and a DBS check is required.

Where a DBS check is required, it should be completed for all those living in the accommodation, who are over the age of 18.

- Verification of family structure
- Code of Conduct
- House rules
- Home visit checks
- Information sharing and gathering
- Sleeping arrangements
- Family activities
- Transportation including drivers

6.14 Coastal Visits and Beach Activities

Party leaders and supervising adults should be aware that many serious incidents affecting adults and young people have occurred in proximity to or in the sea.

If the areas are not lifeguarded then the ability of the staff to summon or provide first aid should be risk assessed. In such circumstances it is advised that a qualified first aider is present.

There are dangers on the coast quite apart from those incurred in swimming.

The party leader should bear in mind the following points when assessing the risks of a coastal activity:

Party leaders should seek advice from local sources on the safety of the areas they are proposing to visit.

- Wave heights, tides, rip tides, sandbanks and mud banks are all potentially high risk hazards: timings and exit routes should be checked to ensure that they are safe;
- 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;
- Cliffs especially at the tops and at the bases can be dangerous for school group especially following periods of heavy or sustained rainfall and some coastal areas such as the Jurassic Coastline are notoriously unstable. The group should keep to safe recognised pathways and areas at all times;
- Party leaders should consider whether it is safe and/or legal to cycle on coastal paths.

6.15 Part of a group's time on a beach may be recreational therefore:

- Party leaders should consider which areas of the terrain and beach are out of bounds;
- If bathing is considered it should only be done from recognised safe bathing areas and qualified lifeguard supervision must be present. See the advice section on swimming and paddling in the sea.
- Party leaders need to consider how the area is to be supervised.

The local coastguard, harbourmaster, lifeguard or tourist information office can provide information and advice on the nature and location of hazards.