

Aberdeenshire
COUNCIL



***RULES AND GUIDANCE
FOR OFF-SITE
EXCURSIONS
INCLUDING
ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES***

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT

This document is addressed to all those involved in the planning, delivery and management of Excursions and Outdoor Learning including Adventurous Activities under the auspices of Aberdeenshire Council. It should be seen as an important source of information and made readily available to all those involved. The Council recognises the benefits of well planned excursions and outdoor activities that provide learning opportunities outside the normal confines of the establishment. It will support those valued activities that are promoted by its establishments and services. The council also continues to encourage the use of approved external providers of adventurous activities for the provision of valuable learning opportunities out of doors.

SECTION 1 CONTEXT AND PRINCIPLES

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE DOCUMENT

This document amalgamates the **rules and guidance** formerly provided by the two Aberdeenshire Council policy documents: “**Safety & Good Practice in Adventurous Activities 2003**” and “**Safety and Good Practice for Educational Excursions**”. In doing so it uses as a primary reference source, the Scottish Executive’s Document “Health and Safety on Educational Excursions” (HASEE) published Dec 2004. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/education/hsee-00.asp>

The **ACTIVITY CENTRES (YOUNG PEOPLE’S SAFETY) ACT of 1995** imposed certain legal obligations upon providers of Adventurous Activities. Following the act, the government appointed an inspectorate, now called the Adventure Activities Licensing Service (AALS) to inspect and license providers. Aberdeenshire Council is a licensed provider of Adventurous Activities. Therefore much of what follows here in the rules and guidance related to adventurous activities not only reflects current best practice but is required to ensure that the council meets its legal obligations in respect of the above act.

For further information about AALS go to:- www.aals.org.uk

For further information on the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations, heads of establishment and responsible individuals are referred to the HSE Document: “**Guidance from the Licensing Authority on the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 2004**”, ISBN 978-0-7176-6243-2, available from HSE Books.

www.hse.gov.uk

The planning, organisation and participation on trips is of a voluntary nature (unless there are contractual implications) but where such trips are organised they must comply with these guidelines.

“No amount of planning can guarantee that an excursion will be totally incident free, but good planning and attention to safety measures can reduce the number of accidents and lessen the seriousness of those that do happen.”

HASEE, Dec 2004

For excursions involving **ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES** additional guidance is provided for each activity within the ‘**Activities**’ section of the Outdoor Learning website.

These rules and guidance are aimed at appropriately trained council employees (paid or voluntary) who will be supervising or leading activities in the context of their employment with the council.

Where the provision of Adventure Activities is contracted to an [Approved External Provider](#), then the provider’s own safety management system will apply and their own operating procedures will be followed.

DEFINITIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

EXCURSIONS: For the purposes of this document an excursion is defined as any organised event where participants are taken away from their establishment and, by being so are removed from the normal day to day safety management arrangements that are in place at the establishment.

Categories of excursion:

All of the examples below would be regarded as excursions. They differ only in the levels and extent of the planning and organisation required to manage them appropriately:

- Core curricular work such as field work or visits to historical sites.
- Engaging with stimulating environments for art work or creative writing.
- Subject enrichment such as theatre visits, concerts and museum visits.
- Taking part in or watching sporting fixtures or other competitions.
- Cultural visits or exchanges.
- Residential stays
- Organised holidays
- Visits to countries outside the UK
- Adventurous activities / Outdoor Learning

- Expeditions.
- International exchanges

This is NOT a definitive list.

ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES:

Activities with a level of perceived risk and for which specialist training and/or qualifications would normally be required to lead them. This list can never be exhaustive but includes:

- All upland, hill and mountain activities on foot, horseback, bicycle, ski or snowboard.
- All climbing related activities such as rock climbing, deep water traversing, abseiling, improvised Tyrolean, bouldering, bridge swings, bungee jumping, rock hopping, coastal scrambling, etc.
- All watersports and water related activities such as kayaking, open canoeing, rafting, sailing, wind surfing, surfing, water ski-ing, wave boarding, inflatables, gorge walking, **coasteering**, fishing and swimming in natural waters.
- Underground activities – caving, mine exploration, pot holing.
- Mountain biking, all biking activities including low level trails.
- All horseback activities.
- Airborne activities such as kite surfing, snow kiting, hang gliding, paragliding, parachuting, parapenting .
- Any other activities of an adventurous nature where participants are likely to be more than 1metre above the ground or over water and where specialist equipment would normally be required to safeguard progress and where specialist training/qualifications are required to supervise.

Adventurous activities are normally notifiable during the planning stage. See: [notification pack](#)

Detailed information on the common adventurous activities can also be found provided in the [Activities section](#) though it should be noted that this list is not necessarily exhaustive.

Inevitably there will sometimes be a **grey area** at the boundary between what is considered to be an adventurous activity and what is not and therefore In cases where staff are uncertain as to whether notification is required the advice to Heads of Establishment is to notify as a precaution.

OUTDOOR LEARNING:

A more generic term to encompass many forms of experiential learning out of doors. Outdoor learning is defined as:

"Active learning through direct personal experience offering challenge, fun and adventure within a managed framework of safety."

AIMS OF OUTDOOR LEARNING IN ABERDEENSHIRE:

- To support and promote the four capacities underpinning the [Curriculum for Excellence](#), namely 'successful learners', 'confident individuals', 'responsible citizens' and 'effective contributors'.
- To promote living, journeying and working together out of doors through a range of activities which provide learning, experience, adventure, challenge and enjoyment.
- To actively promote a greater awareness of the environment and sustainability issues, both local and wide, through educational activities and visits to a variety of natural environments and through taking part in and understanding the impacts of outdoor activities.

HEAD OF ESTABLISHMENT

Throughout this document reference is made to the "Head of Establishment". In the context of the document the designation is not confined to the managers of facilities such as head teachers, recreation officers, managers of children's homes and managers of specialist facilities such as Alford Ski Centre and Huntly Nordic Centre, but also includes managers of community learning programmes (Community Learning and Development Workers) and managers of sports development projects/programmes (Sports Development Officers). He/she is the individual who carries direct responsibility for authorising the planned activity or event.

PARENTS AND LEGAL GUARDIANS

Throughout the documents the word '**parent**' will be used to refer to either natural parents or a person or persons appointed as legal guardian of a child or vulnerable adult for whom permissions may need to be sought.

FORMAT AND SCOPE OF THE DOCUMENT:

What follows is a mixture of **rules** and **guidance** and should be viewed within the context of the council's broader culture of safety and good practice. It seeks to define current best practice and informs of the arrangements within the council's management systems for the consistent assurance of that best practice. The rules and guidance within the document apply equally to activities provided in-house and contracted to [Approved External Providers](#).

MUST DO summary

At the end of each chapter is a summary of procedures that need to be seen as **rules** rather than guidance to good practice. These rules must be followed in order that excursions conform to Aberdeenshire Council's Health and Safety Policy, as they are legally obliged to do.

PRINCIPLES OF SAFETY MANAGEMENT

Safety on excursions should not be considered in isolation but should be seen in the context of the council's broader culture of safety. Staff should be familiar with those aspects of the Aberdeenshire Council's Health and Safety Policy that are relevant to the content of their planned programme.

Duty of Care is a legal obligation owed by anyone who takes responsibility for the safety of others. This applies equally to associated aspects of safe practice such as use of minibuses, fire and domestic safety, safety in built-up areas and provision of appropriate insurance. The duty of care owed to a participant is heightened if the person is a child or has physical or learning difficulties.

Safety has, as its basis a sound framework of planning and organisation, coupled with the competence of those members of staff responsible for delivery and supervision. Competence in itself relies upon an appropriate mix of experience and training.

An intrinsic feature of outdoor learning is that everything may not always go according to plan. This implies a need for safety systems that are adaptable and flexible within the overall safety framework. Only well trained and experienced staff will be able to apply the sound judgement required in such circumstances.

"To ensure the safety of participants, all reasonable precautions should be taken which are commensurate with the acceptance that complete safety might destroy the very reason for participation. "
[\(Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education\)](#).

There are a number of **KEY ELEMENTS** that will identify good and safe practice. These are identified below and expanded upon later in the document.

Well Defined Objectives

The objectives for the particular programme or event must be clearly stated and understood by all concerned.

Risk Assessment

A written Risk Assessment must be completed prior to each event or series of events. The Risk Assessment can only be completed once the proposed composition of the party is known since the ability of the group and the additional support needs of individuals are relevant factors. The person carrying out the risk assessment should ensure the Head of Establishment has viewed and accepted the risk assessment as suitable, record the assessment and give copies to all leaders and supervisors, with details of the measures they should take to avoid or reduce the risks. Generic

Staff Competence

Competent leadership is the most important safety factor of all. Enthusiasm by itself is generally not enough. Appropriate supervision ratios along with the required competences and experience of leaders should be identified as part of the risk assessment process.

It is a requirement of the Adventure Activity Licensing Service that updated evidence of staff competences/qualifications relating to adventurous/outdoor activities be kept on file within each establishment.

Detailed information on the required technical competences and minimum supervision ratios required for the leadership of adventurous activities can be found within the guidance sections of the relevant [activities](#).

Training of Staff

Leaders need to be able to safeguard the physical and psychological health of the people, and especially young people, in their care. It is important that staff receive appropriate training for the organisation, leadership and supervision of off-site activities.

Clearly defined roles

It is essential that all those involved in the planning and delivery of programmes understand their roles and responsibilities.

Good Communication

Effective communication during all stages of the planned event is crucial. Usually it will be sufficient to communicate verbally but it may be necessary to provide written instruction on occasions. Mobile phones can be of great help and their use should be considered but not totally relied upon. Satellite phones may need to be considered by groups visiting more remote regions.

For school pupils, further details of any communication needs may be found in education support plans.

Planning and Preparation

All aspects of the proposed activity should be carefully planned. It is strongly recommended that organisers use a form of **Planning Checklist**.

Consideration must also be given to ensuring that appropriate contingency arrangements are in place.

Monitoring

It is a vital link in the safety management chain that managers satisfy themselves through a monitoring process that the guidance and good practice that is outlined in this document is being implemented 'on the ground'.

Evaluation

It is important to evaluate the outcomes of a particular event in order to learn from the experience. The evaluation process will inform the planning for all future programmes.

The reporting of potentially hazardous occurrences allows for the evaluation of trends within the organisation overall as a part of the continuous improvement of best practice.

MUST DO:

- **All trips and excursions** must be officially sanctioned by the Head of Establishment and organised according to the guidance within this document. The council will not recognise or support any other form of trip. Any '**unofficial trips**' will not be covered by the council's insurers.
- Records of staff competences/qualifications must be kept on file within each establishment

SECTION 2: PLANNING EXCURSIONS

Whether an excursion is to the local park, a canoe expedition or a residential overseas trip, it is essential that formal planning takes place and that it begins far enough in advance of departure. This chapter provides guidance on the planning process and a number of related issues that may need to be considered.

AUTHORISATION

There are **THREE STEPS** to gaining authorisation for an excursion. (Ref Fig 1):

STEP 1. Initial Approval: Head of Establishment.

In the first instance staff planning excursions **must** seek authorisation in principle from their Head of Establishment. At this early stage, details may be limited but should include:

- Objectives of the excursion
- Likely dates, duration and venue
- Size and make-up of group (ensuring that people with disabilities are not being discriminated against)
- Staffing requirements
- Staff experience and competency
- Other resources
- Estimate of costs, including additional costs associated with the support of those with additional support needs

View a sample authorisation request form .

STEP 2. Detailed Planning and Notification

The party leader carries out detailed planning and risk assessments for the excursion. The risk assessment is recorded. Information about the support requirements of people with additional needs will be useful at this stage.

STEP 3. Notification and Authorisation

Determine whether 'adventurous activities' are included in the itinerary and hence if the excursion is **notifiable or not** based on the criteria.

If it is **notifiable**, the party leader completes Form OE/01 and sends it, along with supporting documentation to the [Adventure Activities Consultant \(AAC\)](#). The AAC then offers recommendations to the Head of Establishment, and may liaise with the event organiser before doing so.

If it is **NOT notifiable** the party leader completes an authorisation request form and submits it, along with a copy of the risk assessment directly to the Head of Establishment. Generic risk assessments for each activity can be found within the guidance sections for those activities.

GO:

The Head of Establishment approves the excursion. Final planning is completed and the excursion goes ahead.

RISK ASSESSMENT

On any excursion, the safety of participants and employees must be a primary objective. **Participants must not be put into a position that exposes them to an unreasonable level of risk.** A written risk assessment **must** be completed prior to each event or series of events.

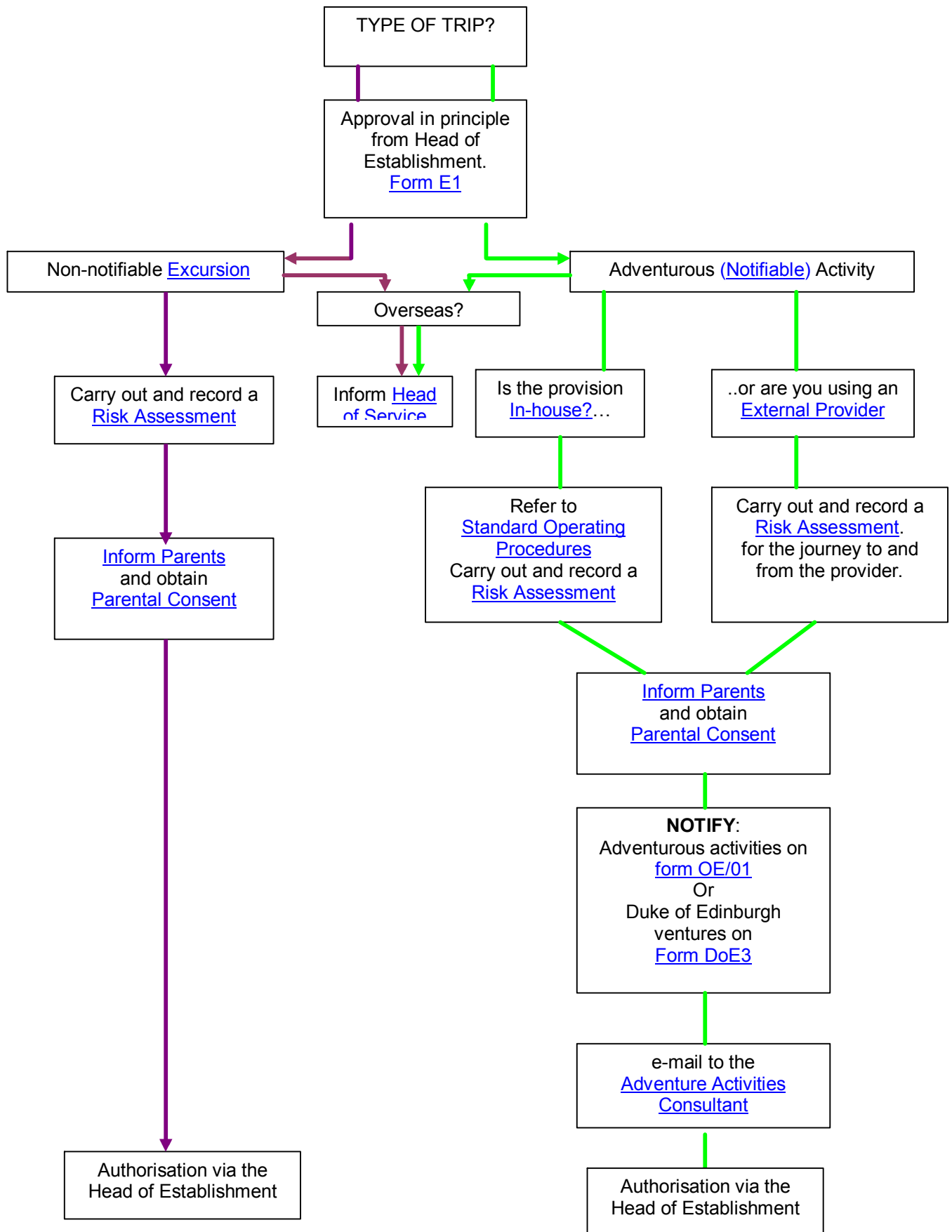
The purpose of a risk assessment is to:-

- identify the likely hazards to be encountered
- identify those who are at risk
- identify how risks can be minimised and managed at an acceptable level by implementing suitable control measures.
- establish appropriate supervision ratios

The person carrying out the risk assessment should record it and give copies to all leaders and supervisors on the excursion and to the Head of Establishment for approval.

Risk assessment templates are included within the guidance sections for each [activity](#)

Fig 1: Organising Excursions



Forms of Risk Assessment

Risk assessments for an excursion should be as comprehensive as is necessary. The best way to achieve this may be to gather the staff team together to brainstorm a list of potential hazards. From here risks can be identified and appropriate control measures put in place. Where certain specialised activities entail particular hazards, or where medical or special needs of participants exacerbate hazards the Head of Establishment **must** ensure that the hazard is managed appropriately.

It is good practice to involve participants as much as is possible in the risk assessment process. This will help to put agreed control measures into context and actively involve participants in the management of their own and each other's safety.

Where people with additional support needs are participating, it is essential that appropriate advice is taken on what reasonable adjustments are required and how they can be made. It is recognised that such adjustments cannot always be made and that a person with additional support needs cannot always be safely included in the trip.

There are three common forms of risk assessment:-

1. Generic risk assessment. These can be useful in identifying generic risks attached to certain activities or excursions. For example there are generic risks attached to visiting large cities regardless of whether the city is London, Manchester or Barcelona.

Sample generic [risk assessments](#) for the more common adventure activities are provided on the Outdoor Learning web site.

2. Site-specific risk assessments should be used **in addition to** generic risk assessments to evaluate risks that are particular to your planned activity or excursion. The composition of the party will usually influence a site specific risk assessment especially if there are medical issues and/or special needs. Transport arrangements are another key factor.

A site specific risk assessment should be appended to the generic one.

3. Dynamic risk assessment. Generic and site-specific risk assessments are always done prior to the excursion. A dynamic risk assessment should be a continuous process throughout the excursion. They are less likely to be recorded but are a product of continuous monitoring and vigilance by staff and participants. In simple terms dynamic risk assessment is the result of continually asking the question, "**What if.....?**". Decisions taken as a result are best arrived at and shared in discussion with other staff and participants when appropriate. Regardless of how decisions are made, all those potentially affected need to be clearly briefed.

Repeated Events

Where an excursion is one of a series of similar events (e.g. regular 'away' sports fixtures or outdoor learning events) it may not be necessary to carry out written risk assessments for every occasion. Provided that the safety management arrangements and the composition of the party does not significantly change and no additional hazards are identified one document would suffice. Where minor adjustments are required to the risk assessment a "variation sheet" should be used.

Notwithstanding this it is important not to become complacent and a continual process of dynamic risk assessment should take place in order to monitor safety.

Residual Risk

It is inconceivable that all risk will be eliminated from an excursion or event. The risk that remains having carried out a risk assessment and implemented control measures is called the "**Residual Risk**". It is important that all those involved, including parents are aware and acknowledge that residual risk exists.

Exploratory visits

Wherever possible the party leader should undertake an exploratory visit. This will not only assist in carrying out a more comprehensive and meaningful risk assessment, but should ascertain the suitability of the venue for meeting the excursion's objectives and the needs of people with additional support needs. This will enable staff to better orientate themselves prior to visiting the site with a group.

If an exploratory visit is not possible then other sources of information must be sought in order to effectively assess risks. These might include:-

- other organisations that have used the same venue.
- tourist authorities
- management of the venue
- the safety policy, risk assessment and operating procedures which may be already in place at the venue itself.

EXTERNAL PROVIDERS/CONTRACTORS

NON-NOTIFIABLE EXCURSIONS: Where elements of the planned programme are contracted out to one or more external provider, and where the provider accepts a duty of care for group members, the group leader must satisfy him/herself that the provider:-

- is reputable
- has carried out a satisfactory risk assessment.
- has competent staff
- has appropriate public liability insurance (see below)
- has complied with child protection requirements (see below)
- has been given full information as to the age, ability and make up of the group

NOTIFIABLE EXCURSIONS (ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES)

ONLY those providers approved by the council may be used to provide Adventurous Activities for council groups. The council maintains a '[Register of Approved External Providers of Adventurous Activities](#)'. Registered providers will have satisfied the Council as to the standards of their safety management systems and the quality of their provision. Individual establishments should not request copies of safety management documentation from providers. It is intended that the register remains dynamic. Heads of Establishments or party leaders wishing to use non-registered providers should, in the first instance notify the Adventurous Activities Consultant **before any booking commitments are made**. This will initiate an invitation to [register](#) along with a process of scrutiny.

Public liability insurance

It is a council requirement that any company or other external organisation to which excursion services are contracted must provide proof of current public liability insurance cover with an indemnity limit of at least **Five Million Pounds**

Criminal records disclosures (Child protection)

External providers who accept a duty of care for young people should be required to sign a declaration confirming that all of their staff who will have access to group members have been [disclosed for criminal records at enhanced level](#).

INFORMING PARENTS AND OBTAINING THEIR CONSENT

The prior written consent of a parent of children or of those vulnerable adults who require it must be obtained. A [Parental Consent Form](#) should be used for this purpose.

In certain cases it would be acceptable to seek 'blanket consent' to cover a number of different excursions, provided that the excursions conform to ALL of the following:-

- they are local
- they are not notifiable (i.e. include no adventurous activity)
- they take place entirely within a single working day and participants will not be unusually late back.
- they are provided for participants at no charge.

Any such blanket consent should cover a **maximum period of one year**.

It is imperative that parents are sent, along with a consent form, detailed information about planned excursions as early as possible in the planning process. The information provided must be sufficient to enable parents to make an informed decision about their child's participation. Please refer to the summary of essential information to be provided.

Versions of the standard parental consent form can be made available via the Authority in a number of different languages and these should be obtained and sent to parents who may have difficulty reading an English language version.

FIRST AID PROVISION

As a general principal the risk assessment will inform the first-aid cover that is required. Approved External Providers of Adventurous Activities will have appropriate first-aid cover in place.

Most excursions should be accompanied by a leader who is trained and current in first aid. Consideration should be given to more than one first aider for larger parties and in circumstances where the party may be split and in different locations.

A travelling first aid kit should be taken and should be readily accessible throughout the excursion. The first aid kit will normally be kept in the care of the qualified first aid person.

The party leader should be aware and have taken account of any existing medical conditions and/or special needs that group members may have. This information will normally be sought on parental consent forms or the school's '**Supporting pupils with medical needs**' forms. Party leaders must carry clear written instructions relating to the administering of any medication required to party members.

Where first aid has been administered, normal recording and reporting procedures must be followed.

There are **3 designations** recognised by the council. Party leaders should consider the appropriate level of first aid cover for their particular excursion:

1. **Appointed Person:** No formal first aid training but the individual with identified responsibility for calling for assistance when required. This would be appropriate only in circumstances where outside first aid and/or medical assistance would be readily available throughout the excursion.
2. **Appointed Person (Aberdeenshire Foundation First Aid course):** Someone who has been trained in emergency aid and basic resuscitation. Training is at least 6 hours duration. This would be appropriate in circumstances where the group may be remote from immediate assistance for part or all of the excursion but where medical assistance could reasonably be expected to be on scene within 15-20mins
3. **First Aider (HSE guidelines):** Someone who has undertaken a first aid course of at least 24hrs duration (usually 4 days training) and run to HSE guidelines. This would be appropriate in circumstances where there is a perceived high risk of injury and/or where the group are likely to be remote from medical assistance for significant periods.

Adventurous Activities are invariably undertaken "off-site" where both staff and participants are removed from the first aid arrangements that are maintained at the establishment.

Provision for First Aid must be considered an essential aspect of any adventurous activity that takes place, regardless of its nature or location. Except where activities are on-site (e.g. Rockwalls), there must always be at least one of Designations 2 or 3 present.

As activities become more technical and as the locations used become more remote from outside assistance, then the need for staff to be well trained in First Aid becomes increasingly important. Where staff are leading or supervising adventure activities, the technical qualifications they require to hold in order to do so will in turn require them to hold appropriate and current First Aid qualifications in order to maintain the validity of their technical award.

All holders of the council's 'in-house' awards must also hold a valid First Aid certificate if they wish to use their award/s to supervise groups in that capacity.

A number of First Aid Training Providers offer First Aid training that is specifically designed for remote or wilderness environments. (e.g. [BASP](#), [Outwardly Mobile](#) etc) This type of first aid training is strongly recommended for staff who are likely to be operating in these environments.

INSURANCE

The Council's Public Liability policy will cover any injury or loss incurred by individuals due to the negligence of the Council or its employees (including volunteers who are working under the instructions of the council). Refer to Aberdeenshire Council Volunteers Policy.

The Council strongly recommends, especially where activities and trips are of longer than one day's duration, that establishments ensure that participants and supervisors have appropriate travel insurance to include personal accident, loss or damage to luggage/money and cancellation/curtailment cover. For overseas trips cover should include medical expenses and repatriation cover.

Personal accident and/or travel insurance for young people remains the responsibility of parents. If the purchase of travel insurance is to be left to individual parents and supervisors then they should be informed of this requirement. Alternatively Party Leaders may consider purchasing group cover. One option available would be "School Journey Insurance" available from the Council's insurer, Zurich Municipal.

Where **adventurous activities** are included in the itinerary, party leaders should advise parents or adult participants to ensure that the travel insurance policy they purchase provides appropriate cover for the activities to be undertaken. There are a number of insurers who specialise in adventure activity travel insurance.

Further information about insurance issues advice can be sought from the Council's Insurance section within the Finance Dept.

FINANCIAL PLANNING

The party leader should ensure that parents have early written information about:

- the costs of the excursion
- what proportion of the overall cost they will be expected to pay.
- The timetable for payments
- The banking and accounting arrangements
- How any residual monies left after the excursion or event will be used or distributed.

Financial accounting procedures should be agreed with the Head of Establishment and in line with Council policy. They should be available for inspection by parents on request. A sample Financial records form

Establishments need to consider how any additional cost will be funded (e.g. extra staffing) that may arise from the inclusion of participants with additional support needs.

European Package Travel Regulations

This legislation was introduced primarily to protect consumers who pay monies up front for package travel, from the risk of tour operators becoming insolvent. If your excursion or event will be more than 24hrs duration and includes the provision of transportation and accommodation in exchange for payment then the regulations probably apply.

If your excursion has been booked through a tour operator or travel agent then these agencies should conform to the regulations and provide the appropriate protection.

This protection can, under the regulations, be provided in one of three ways:-

1. Bonding: e.g. ATOL or ABTA
2. Insurance
3. Trust funds

If party leaders are making travel arrangements themselves on behalf of the group then care must be taken to ensure that the regulations are complied with.

A fact sheet on the regulations can be found on the DTI web site:

<http://www.dti.gov.uk/ccp/topics1/guide/packtravel.htm>

TRANSPORT

Where transport is provided by the establishment.

Transport is likely to be by council owned minibus or in one or more member of staff's own private car.

Only persons who have completed the Aberdeenshire's minibus training are permitted to drive Aberdeenshire Council or establishment owned minibuses when carrying passengers.

Self-drive hire minibuses: The head of establishment should satisfy him/herself that staff members who intend to drive minibuses have the required competencies to do so and are adequately insured. Competence implies an experienced driver who has prior experience of driving minibuses.

Regardless of other responsibilities and status, responsibility for the conduct of passengers and the safety and integrity of any load, both carried or towed, lies with the driver of the vehicle.

All passengers should have a forward or rearward facing seat and all seats should be fitted with approved seatbelts. It is the driver's responsibility to ensure that seat belts are worn where fitted.

For participants with additional support needs, the establishment must ensure that transport arrangements are appropriate and, where necessary, provide an escort (passenger assistant).

If using their own private vehicle, staff must ensure they have a valid license and appropriate insurance cover for the activity. Where appropriate, staff should seek the advice of their insurer, informing them of the activities they intend to undertake for Aberdeenshire council.

All those driving council vehicles must hold a relevant, valid licence, together with the appropriate insurance.

On long journeys due consideration must be given to driver hours required and the length of the driver's day. (*The Highway Code suggests a 15 minute break in every 2 hours driving*) The limitations imposed by the [European Work Time Directive](#) should also be taken into account. It should be recognised that **driver fatigue** is a very high contributory factor to road traffic accidents and this should be taken account of as part of the risk assessment process.

All staff are expected to follow the relevant road traffic legislation.

Luggage should be carried so as not to obstruct aisles or exits. There are specific rules related to towing trailers with minibuses. Good advice can be obtained from the Community Transport Association

Drivers are expected to:

- Inspect the vehicle before use
- Never use a faulty vehicle. Use an alternative vehicle or make alternative arrangements if a fault is found.
- Report all faults on Aberdeenshire vehicles.

Staff should take careful account of weather and road conditions. On no account should staff place themselves or passengers at unnecessary risk.

When setting down passengers from a mini bus the vehicle exit door should be kerbside, so that passengers do not have to enter the carriageway. This may not be possible when travelling abroad and extra care should be exercised.

Vehicles should where possible be parked on the same side of the carriageway as the activity to minimise the need for persons to cross the carriageway.

Where transport is contracted to a carrier.

Only reputable operators should be used. Operators must hold a current [PSV Operators License](#). They should be asked to provide evidence of:

- A current operator's license

- Competence of their drivers
- Appropriate insurance cover

Party leaders should ensure that for long journeys, particularly to mainland Europe or beyond, that there are sufficient drivers available to prevent driver hours being exceeded. Drivers on 'down time' should be encouraged to get proper rest and NOT fulfil the role of co-driver that requires them to remain alert. The responsibility for the driver is the contractors however, the party leader has a duty of care for the party and a responsibility to intervene where they consider the party is being placed at risk.

Supervision of passengers

Whilst it is the driver that can be held accountable for unruly behaviour on his/her bus it should NOT be left to the driver to impose the discipline required to maintain acceptable behaviour. In practice it is not possible to supervise young passengers and concentrate on driving at the same time. Responsibility for the conduct of passengers needs to be accepted by the party leader. This also implies that where establishments provide their own transport, the risk assessment should identify where additional supervision is required. Where participants have additional support needs it is important to refer to any support plans they may have to check on particular access requirements.

For further advice and assistance contact the [Public Transport Unit](#).

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Swimming in the sea or other natural waters.

Swimming and paddling or otherwise entering the waters of river, canal, sea or loch should never be allowed as an impromptu activity. In-water activities should take place only when a proper risk assessment has been completed and proper measures put in place to control the risks.

Any planned swimming activity that takes place in areas that are **NOT** specifically designated for bathing and do not have lifeguard surveillance in place should be regarded as an **Adventurous Activity** and is **notifiable**. The rules and procedures for **Swimming in Natural Waters** can be found in the [Guidance](#) section of [Combined Rock and water Activities](#)

Excursions involving overnight stays.

Residential stays put additional demands upon staff in both the planning and supervision of excursions.

At the planning stage Party Leaders must ensure that:

- the accommodation has adequate security measures in place. Group accommodation should be lockable but leaders must have access at all times.
- the organisation that owns or manages the accommodation has checked all staff who work there for their suitability to work with young people.
- The accommodation complies with local fire regulations and that adequate fire alarm and evacuation procedures are in place, taking account of any participants with additional support needs. This may require a written statement from the provider.
- the accommodation has adequate security measures in place. Group accommodation should be lockable but leaders must have access at all times.

Where the accommodation provider is an [Approved External Provider of Adventurous Activities](#) the above checks will have been made as part of the council's vetting process and may be assumed.

In all cases the Party Leader must ensure that:

- staffing ratios and supervision rotas allow for effective supervision 24 hrs per day and have built-in flexibility in the event of a participant requiring a high level of supervision.
- for mixed gender groups there are both male and female leaders and that the accommodation provides separate male and female sleeping/bathroom facilities.
- the group will have exclusive use of the immediate accommodation allocated to them.
- staff accommodation (at least those on duty) is adjacent to the group's accommodation.

- Fire and emergency evacuation procedures take account of any participants with additional support needs. This may require a written statement from the provider.
- The accommodation is able to cater for participants with additional support needs including disabled access, and dietary, cultural or religious requirements.
- Measures are in place to provide first aid and for the seeking of outside medical help.

Where the accommodation provider is also an activity provider and supervision responsibilities are shared between the provider's staff and accompanying establishment staff, the Party Leader must ensure that there will be a clearly agreed handover of responsibility from one to the other.

Early in the visit the party leader must:

- Orientate participants to the accommodation layout.
- Brief participants on the fire alarm, evacuation procedures and muster stations in the event of a fire.
- Ensure that participants are briefed on what's expected of them, any rules that are to be imposed and the mutual responsibilities everyone has in regard to communal living.

Excursions Abroad

Since it is usually implicit that excursions abroad have a residential element, it should be assumed that all of the above applies. In addition, party leaders should give further consideration to the following:

- **Staffing ratios:** are there particular supervision issues relating to being abroad that will require more favourable ratios?
- **Language differences:** participants should be encouraged to communicate and consideration should be given to providing participants with some common words and phrases. At least one of the leaders should be reasonably fluent in the local language.
- **Cultural differences:** participants should be briefed about local conventions, codes of conduct, laws, dress codes and attitudes to gender.
- **Food and drink:** any dangers attached to local foods or drinking water.
- **Urban safety and security:** some towns and cities may be intrinsically more dangerous than participant's home environment and a careful briefing would be required.
- **Wildlife:** In the UK we are not used to wildlife that presents a real threat to life. This may not be the case overseas.
- **Currency:** provide advice on security, exchange rates and forms in which to carry money.
- **Vaccination:** establish whether vaccinations are required in the countries to be visited and ensure these are carried out in good time. Guidance should be sought from a General Practitioner. The publication: ['Health Advice for Travellers anywhere in the World'](#) will be a useful source of reference and is available at Post Offices
- **Travel Insurance:** all group members must have travel insurance that includes medical treatment abroad and repatriation.
- **Visas/Passports:** ensure that all participants have valid passports and visas if required at an early stage in planning. It is recommended that the party leader retains a photocopy of passports/visas for emergency use.
- **Medical help:** For travel in the EU, participants should carry an E111 Card, available from Post Offices and completed by their parent. This is a certificate of entitlement to free or reduced cost treatment. It is still advisable to have a substantial contingency fund available to pay for treatment if required. Payment can be reclaimed later through travel insurance.
- **Emergencies:** Party Leaders should know how to contact the nearest British Embassy or Consulate. They should know how to contact the emergency services.
- **Climate:** Party leaders need to be fully aware of additional precautions required. These could include sun screening, monitoring fluid intake to prevent dehydration, or additional clothing for extreme cold.

If booking through a travel agent or tour operator:

- ensure that they are appropriately bonded providing security against insolvency. The form of bonding should be approved by the Dept of Trade and Industry. (Refer to [European Package Travel regulations](#))
- ensure that, where air travel is involved, the tour operator is ATOL Licensed.

If organising your own trip:

- ensure that you comply with the European Package Travel Directive

- ensure that your vehicle conforms with local traffic regulations and that you are insured for overseas travel.
- special regulations apply to taking minibuses abroad and advice should be sought from the appropriate Department of Transport.

3.10.11 MUST DO SUMMARY:

- 1. Obtain authorisation from the Head of Establishment for the excursion.**
- 2. Prepare a written risk assessment for all aspects of the excursion (except those elements contracted to an approved external provider of adventurous activities)**
- 3. Inform parents and obtain their written consent using the standard consent form.**
- 4. Take account of any special needs, medical or dietary issues.**
- 5. Ensure all staff have been CR checked**
- 6. Ensure First Aid provision is in place if required.**
- 7. Ensure that transport arrangements conform to Council policy**
- 8. Give special consideration to residential visits and trips abroad.**
- 9. Ensure that Travel Insurance is in place where necessary.**

Chapter 4: MANAGEMENT OF EXCURSIONS

This chapter considers the administrative and managerial requirements for the organisation and management of excursions. It identifies a number of Key Individuals that will have a role in most excursions. Depending on the size of the excursion and/or size of the establishment, several of the key roles may be carried out by a single **key individual**

It is essential that all those involved understand their responsibilities and that there are clear channels of communication through the management system, from policy makers to participants and parents.

ACCOUNTABILITY WITHIN THE COUNCIL'S SERVICES.

▪ DIRECTOR OF SERVICE

The Directors of Services have responsibility for all matters of safety within their Department including excursions and for ensuring that appropriate policies are provided and effectively communicated to Senior Officers, Managers and Heads of Establishments.

▪ SENIOR OFFICERS, MANAGERS & HEADS OF SERVICE

Senior Officers or central management have the responsibility for communicating policies to establishments and for providing support to Heads of Establishments in the implementation of these policies. They have no direct role in the provision of excursions but are responsible to the Directorate for a general oversight of good practice and application of Council policies. They need to be aware of the legal implications for themselves and for the council in the management of excursions.

ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES CONSULTANT

Aberdeenshire Council has engaged the services of a [Safety Management Consultant for Adventurous Activities](#). They are acknowledged experts in the field and will provide specialist advice on safety and other operational issues. They have responsibility for:

- Advising the Council on policy issues relating to outdoor learning.
- Advising Senior Officers and Heads of Establishment on operational aspects of outdoor learning.
- Providing support to staff in establishments for the implementation and interpretation of policies.
- Checking of completed Notification (OE/01) forms and advising Heads of Establishments.
- Checking Duke of Edinburgh Award expedition plans.
- Checking particular procedures where appropriate with external providers.
- Carrying out monitoring visits from time to time on activities taking place.
- Providing in-service training for Council staff and Volunteers relating to Adventurous Activities.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES AT ESTABLISHMENT LEVEL

Head of Establishment

The Head of Establishment has responsibility for ensuring safe practice and for the implementation of the Council's safety policy relating to off-site excursions. Within larger establishments many of the functions relating to the management and co-ordination of external visits may be delegated to a senior member of staff.

In either case special care should be taken to ensure that:

- The proposed event has appropriate, achievable and well defined aims
- All employees and volunteers have appropriate experience and training
- Party leaders are allowed sufficient time to organise excursions properly
- Party size, group size and ratios of staff/volunteers to participants conform to the guidelines
- Appropriate information is provided to participants and parents or guardians
- Parental consents are sought and received where necessary.
- A risk assessment has been carried out.
- Transport arrangements are appropriate and conform to council policy
- Child protection procedures are in place and will be followed

- Contingency arrangements are in place
- The financial and insurance arrangements are adequate
- The particular requirements of those with additional support needs are considered, including arrangements for medication
- Adequate first aid arrangements will be in place
- A party leader has been designated for the event and he/she has a clear understanding of his/her roles and responsibilities
- A base contact person is appointed and identified to the party leader and to parents.
- Contact arrangements are sufficient for all eventualities and will enable a co-ordinated response to any incident that may occur.
- Staff and volunteers involved understand their respective roles and responsibilities
- 'Checking out' and 'checking in' procedures at the beginning and end of the activity/event are in place

Delegated Members of staff

Where some or all of the above responsibilities are delegated to a senior member of staff, the responsibilities must be clearly stated and understood by all concerned. In all cases the ultimate responsibility for the approval, conduct and management of excursions remains with the Head of Establishment.

Party Leader

The party leader is the person in whom the Head of Establishment has placed responsibility for the leadership and safe conduct of the excursion. Some appropriate share of these responsibilities is assumed by others who may be colleagues from the establishment or staff from other agencies.

The party leader has overall responsibility for the safety of individuals and the group at all times. In particular he/she will be responsible for:

- Ensuring the implementation of the Council's Educational Excursions policy
- Ensuring that all participants in their care are adequately briefed.
- Ensuring that all participants are suitably prepared and equipped.
- Effective liaison with other staff involved in the programme
- Ensuring that the Base Contact Person has all the information they require to fulfil their role
- Taking account of any additional support needs.
- Making arrangements for any medical or dietary requirements
- Ensuring there is adequate First Aid provision
- Ensuring a risk assessment has been carried out and that other staff are appropriately informed.
- Abandoning or curtailing the excursion or activities if, in his/her judgement the health and safety of participants is unacceptably compromised.
- Briefing and giving appropriate information to the Base Contact person.

The nominated party leader will often be the most experienced member of the staff team and should retain overall control of the event regardless of his/her status within the day to day management structure of the establishment.

Leaders

Other adults accompanying excursions and who are given supervisory responsibility, whether paid or voluntary, act as employees of the council.

Supervisory staff should:

- assist and support the Party Leader in carrying out his/her responsibilities and respect the fact that final responsibility for decision making during the excursion lies with the Party Leader.
- Take responsibility for the safety and well-being of participants as delegated by the party leader
- Consider stopping the activity or excursion and notifying the party leader if they believe the health and safety of those in their care is compromised

Specialist staff may be involved to provide instruction or coaching in activities. Such staff may be the party leader, other members of staff/volunteers or external providers.

They have responsibility to ensure that:

- All equipment is checked for suitability and safe condition.
- They operate within the Council's safety policy.
- Where appropriate they adhere to other relevant codes of practice.

- They act within the scope of their experience and training
- They are appropriately insured.
- Acceptable supervision ratios are maintained.

Base Contact Person

This person has a crucial role in the safety management system and will normally be a senior member of staff. The designated person should be appointed by the Head of Establishment/Authorising Officer and will remain 'back at base' and be contactable 24hrs a day throughout the duration of the excursion or event.

He/she is responsible for:

- Ensuring they obtain sufficient information from the party leader.
- Checking the group out at the beginning and checking them in at the end
- Acting as an emergency contact between the party leader, the establishment and parents
- Initiating the 'overdue return' plan

The Base Contact Person will stand down once the group have returned to base.

Participants

All participants should, as far as is reasonably practicable, take responsibility for ensuring that:

- The activity suits their needs and abilities.
- They conform to any instructions or guidance on matters of safety and good order given by the party leader or other members of staff before or during the activity.
- Any distress, concern, or discomfort arising during, or resulting from, the activity is drawn to the immediate attention of the party leader or their immediate supervisor.
- Keep a lookout for anything that may harm either themselves or anyone else in the group and tell the party leader or their supervisor about it.

The responsibilities of parents and guardians in re-enforcing and encouraging responsible attitudes in their young people must be recognised and accepted.

Parents

Parents must be able to make an informed decision on whether their child should go on an excursion. Parents should be given sufficient information in writing and should be invited to attend any briefing sessions.

Parents should:

- Be informed as to how best to prepare their child for the excursion by reinforcing the notified code of conduct.
- Be aware of and agree to arrangements for sending participants home early if necessary and to meet the costs incurred.
- Provide the party leader with emergency contact information as requested.
- Disclose to the party leader all relevant information about their child's psychological and physical health that may be relevant to their participation. This would normally be done via the consent form. Refer to Supporting Medical Needs Policy

CHANGES OF PLAN

On the day, all may not go according to plan. An important contributing factor to safety lies in there being enough flexibility to change or modify the nature of the planned activity in the face of adverse factors such as weather, road conditions, group numbers and ill-preparedness of individuals for the planned activity.

A decision to change the plan may be made either by the party leader on the basis of his/her own recognised experience and technical expertise, or on the advice of another member of the staff team delegated with responsibility for the conduct of the activity.

In either case, if the changes made involve the activity taking place in a different location or is likely to result in a delayed return, **the party leader must notify the Base Contact Person prior to commencement of the activity.**

COMPETENCE OF STAFF

It is part of the head of establishment's responsibility to ensure that staff have the appropriate competences to lead excursions. Competence is derived from a blend of **experience and training.**

It is a fundamental of Health and Safety law that employees are given appropriate training to carry out the tasks required of them. It is the employee's responsibility not to operate outside the scope of their competence. This applies even more so in circumstances where a duty of care for others has been accepted.

THE TRAINING AND QUALIFICATIONS OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

The technical qualifications required by employees/volunteers for the supervision of adventurous activities and the role and limitations of these are detailed in the guidance sections for each [activity](#). Many employees/volunteers may be operating on the basis of qualifications that they already hold and/or have acquired through their own efforts and resources. It is essential that the currency of these qualifications is maintained if they are to continue to operate. Simply holding a certificate does not constitute a 'qualification' in its own right. Certification needs to be backed up by regular current practice and by regular revalidation of the award held.

If **Heads of Establishments** are left in any doubt about the currency or validity of qualifications held by members of staff/volunteers in this context then they should seek advice from the Adventurous Activities Consultant.

A database of technical competencies and qualifications of council staff is managed by the Adventurous Activities Consultants in line with the requirements of the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations. In addition to this, **photo-copy evidence of technical competencies and/or qualifications held by staff must be kept available for inspection by [AALS](#) Inspectors within each establishment's administrative system.**

The Head of Establishment will allocate or agree the tasks that staff/volunteers will undertake based on informed judgement of the competence of the member of staff/volunteer in relation to the task concerned. In the context of outdoor learning the competencies that need to be evaluated fall within two broad categories.

1. Personal skills (often referred to as soft skills) are those attributes of judgement, leadership, organisation skills, and interpersonal skills that are essential to any learning activity.
2. Technical skills (often referred to as hard skills) are those that pertain to the particular activity.

National Governing Body (NGB) Awards

The National Governing Bodies of all outdoor sports and adventurous activities administer schemes of training for coaches, instructors, and leaders. In virtually all cases these schemes provide the preferred form of training for staff/volunteers undertaking those activities. Lists of schemes are included under each [activity](#).

NGB awards tend to focus on the more technical aspects of coaching, instructing and teaching and do not normally presume to evaluate the personal and interpersonal skills of candidates. Most (if not all) NGB Awards require the holder to also hold a first aid certificate. The award becomes invalid if the required first aid certificate is allowed to expire.

In-House Training

In cases where **either** an activity has no appropriate NGB **or** there are perceived gaps in an NGB scheme of training and awards, it would be normal for an employer to develop its own in-house training schemes.

Aberdeenshire Council operates in-house training schemes for:

- Low Hills – walking on upland, non-mountainous terrain.
- Rockwall Climbing
- Cycling
- Pool kayaking

These schemes are managed and training is provided by the Adventurous Activities Consultants.

Water Safety & Rescue Training

As with First Aid the need for currency water-based rescue skills for staff/volunteers involved with watersports is recognised. The form of safety & rescue skills required may be specific to each water activity and are specified within the guidance for each activity. Awards should be updated at the frequency required by the awarding body. See in particular "[Swimming in Natural Waters](#)".

SUPERVISION RATIOS

Adequate supervision of parties on excursions is a crucial element of safety management. Party leaders should consider supervision requirements as part of the risk assessment process. This should then inform the appropriate ratios and competences of supervisors.

Supervision **must** be such that it is adequate throughout the excursion or event.

Staffing ratios must reflect the needs of the group of participants and not simply the activity. It is important to evaluate the composition of any group and give careful consideration to the needs of the individuals within that group. Only then can a realistic estimate be made of the requirements for staffing, staff expertise and resources to enable the objectives to be achieved.

Due consideration should be given to gender balance.

It is recommended that there are always at least TWO staff accompanying excursions except in circumstances where the activities are closely akin to normal day to day living.

It is acknowledged that there will be circumstances where it will be appropriate and beneficial to use senior pupils to assist with the supervision of younger children. Senior pupils must always be managed in this role by a member of establishment staff and must never be left in sole charge of young people.

Supervision ratios for Excursions NOT involving Adventurous Activities

Notwithstanding the above, the table below gives guidance on acceptable supervision ratios. These ratios should be regarded as a **maximum** and **must not be exceeded** but may well need to be reduced.

Group	Visit local to the school / establishment	Non local visit with transport. Below low hills threshold	UK Excursion including overnight stay. Without adventurous activities	Foreign Excursion Without adventurous activities
Nursery Under 5	1:6	1:4	Not allowed	Not allowed
P1-2	1:8	1:6	Not allowed	Not allowed
P3-5	1:10	1:8	1:6	Not allowed
P6-7	1:10	1:8	1:6	Not allowed
S1 – S3	1:15	1:10	1:8	1:8
S1 – S6	1:20	1:15	1:10	1:10
Post school	1:20	1:20	1:15	1:15

Competent leaders will recognise when the number of young people per leader should be reduced (e.g. if group members have particular behavioural or physical needs or if weather conditions are not favourable on the day).

Where leaders operate alone, the group should be trained/briefed in actions to take in the event of leader incapacitation. An assistant leader, able to look after the group and raise the alarm, should be present if the group would be at significant risk were the leader incapacitated.

In normal circumstances at least 50% of the adult numbers should be employees of the establishment (e.g. teachers, youth leaders or learning support assistants). The balance of adult numbers will normally be made up of disclosed volunteers or parents approved by the HT/EVC/Party Leader.

Party leaders should be aware that small parties with minimum staffing are vulnerable if staff are ill or have an accident during the visit. This eventuality needs consideration at the early planning stage.

Visit leaders should bear in mind that the longer a visit lasts, the more important it is to consider the need for additional staffing. The constant duty of care can be very demanding and coupled with other functions such as minibus driving may reduce the necessary degree of concentration and alertness.

Supervision Ratios for Adventurous Activities/Outdoor Learning

Rules and guidance for the supervision of adventurous activities are included within the guidance sections for the relevant [activities](#).

Larger parties

There are particular difficulties in safely managing large parties and reliance on staffing ratios alone is not enough. **For the duration of the event each leader should assume separate responsibility for an appropriately sized group of named participants within acceptable ratios.**

Buddy systems

Staff supervision can be effectively complemented by the use of a buddy system. Participants are teamed up with one or maybe two 'buddies' and each regularly checks on the other(s). Buddy systems are also useful for encouraging and developing responsibility and a sense of community.

Group Management

It is vital that **head counts** are done at regular intervals and at least prior to and at the end of each group movement from one location to another. Keeping account of large groups is made easier by individual supervisors each accepting responsibility for a small manageable team and reporting directly to the party leader that their team is present and correct.

It is good practice for supervisors to:

- carry a names list of all participants and accompanying adults at all times
- make sure that all participants know a rendezvous points if they become separated

Consideration could be given to:

- ensuring participants are easily identifiable through the use of coloured T shirts, Baseball caps or school uniform.
- Providing participants with badges or cards containing details of their hotel and an emergency contact number. For overseas visits consider a note written in the local language.

Remote Supervision and Down Time

Supervision of participants must be maintained 24hrs throughout the excursion. There are different levels of supervision:-

- **Close supervision** – the normal level of supervision within the active or programmed phases of the excursion.
- **Remote supervision** – where activity is not directly supervised but participants are operating in groups within clearly stated and understood parameters. Supervisors are present but not necessarily within sight. Their whereabouts are known to participants and vice-versa.
- **Down time** – the time outside programmed activity. May involve different levels of supervision from close supervision of organised recreational activity through remote supervision of 'free time' to being 'on call' during sleep time.

It is essential that everyone involved in the excursion (staff and participants) understands the supervision arrangements and the expectations upon them.

Additional support needs

Where additional support needs exist, the levels of supervision should be appropriate to these needs. It would not be possible in a general document like this one to provide specific advice relevant to all activities and all needs. The judgement of staff/volunteers skilled both in meeting additional support needs and the principles of good practice contained throughout this document should be relied upon.

In some cases the format of activity and its venue may need to be adjusted to suit the individuals involved and in some cases it may not be possible to safely include an individual in the activity even after "reasonable adjustment" has been made.

Equipment and other resources deployed may need particular consideration.

The number of staff/volunteers and the range of expertise and competencies should be determined by the needs of the individuals within the group and the nature of the activity. While particular competencies may be required to support participants with additional support needs, it is desirable that,

with participant and parental consent, relevant information is shared with the group. This will enable group members to participate as fully as possible and be mutually supportive
(Refer to Appendix 6)

Staff fatigue

Leading excursions, particularly those involving a residential stay can be both physically and emotionally demanding. It should normally be the case that at least two adults accompany any one group and due consideration should be given to sharing tasks and responsibilities.

It may sometimes be the case that the leader or instructor is the only member of field staff present. Consideration should therefore be given to providing a support member of staff who can share the driving and other appropriate tasks. Where relevant the issue of potential staff fatigue should be considered in the risk assessment process.

The [European Working Time Directive 1998](#) provides work practice regulations designed to protect employees and those in their charge from the hazards associated with excessive fatigue.

Child Protection

All adults with a supervisory responsibility should have undergone criminal records disclosure checks. It is acknowledged that this may not be possible for staff employed by organisations operating overseas and all reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that such staff have at least been screened by their employer.

ADVENTURE ACTIVITY EQUIPMENT HELD ESTABLISHMENTS

All technical equipment used in the delivery of Adventurous Activities must be designated as 'Fit for Purpose' by an appropriately qualified **'technical advisor'** appointed by the Council. In addition, technical equipment including **Personal Protective Equipment** must be:

- Used and stored in accordance with the manufacturers recommendations
- Visually condition checked by a qualified instructor on each occasion they are used.
- Their use monitored and recorded in accordance with the recommendations of the appropriate Governing Body and/or the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations.
- Subject to periodic testing in accordance with the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations.

Proper records relating to equipment stocks must be maintained. These records should include for each separate item:

- Date of purchase
- Discard date (shelf or usage life as per manufacturers guidelines)
- Checking and testing policy
- Checking & testing records.
- Name and signature of employees carrying out checks & tests.

Employees/volunteers delegated with responsibility for storing, maintaining and issuing specialist equipment must have received appropriate training.

Clear policies must be in place to ensure that specialist equipment is only issued to those who are appropriately qualified to use it.

Hired Equipment: Licensed Providers

Where equipment is hired from AALA Licensed providers, all of the above may be assumed and no further action is required.

Other Equipment: Unlicensed Suppliers

Where technical equipment is being hired or loaned from unlicensed suppliers, it **MUST** be assessed and designated as 'Fit for Purpose' by an appropriately qualified technical advisor appointed by the Council.

4.7.19 MUST DO SUMMARY

- 1. Make sure that everyone involved is briefed and aware of their roles and responsibilities**
- 2. Maintain a process of dynamic risk assessment throughout the excursion.**
- 3. Ensure accurate head counts are made regularly**
- 4. Notify any changes of plan to the base contact as soon as possible.**

5. **Maintain supervision levels 24hrs and within recommended ratios.**
6. **Manage staff to ensure they carry out assigned roles and do not become over-fatigued.**
7. **Make proper provision for group members with additional support needs.**
8. **Evaluate the event.**
9. **Records of staff competences and qualifications to be held within each establishment.**
10. **Technical equipment to be used in accordance with manufacturers recommendations, and checked regularly by an appointed technical adviser**
11. **Records of technical equipment and it's usage to be maintained within each establishment**

Chapter 5: **RESPONSE TO EMERGENCIES**

Emergency situations can occur despite the best precautions and therefore contingency planning and consideration of emergency procedures are necessary. Planning for emergencies should help to ensure that the consequences of an incident are handled efficiently and sensitively and do not progress arbitrarily.

EXTERNAL PROVIDERS

Organisations providing accommodation, activities or other services involving the acceptance of a duty of care should have their own emergency response procedures with which group leaders and other staff should normally co-operate fully. In addition group leaders must familiarise themselves with the procedures outlined in this section to enable them to fulfil any additional responsibilities and make prompt and appropriate notifications.

PLANNING FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

The principles outlined provide a format for response and communication for Council groups encountering misfortune whilst away from their normal base. These principles do not attempt to provide details for all possible situations. They should however be used as a framework around which establishments develop their own more detailed plans to suit their particular situation.

The effectiveness of all such plans depends heavily upon the staff concerned being familiar with their specific duties and responsibilities. The role of each individual must be understood by all concerned. Lines of communication must be confirmed or established for each planned excursion. A list of key individuals is shown in Chapter 4 - **Management of Excursions**

The flow chart on **page 27** identifies the different **Levels of Emergency** and represents the required channels of communication during the containment phase. The subsequent investigation procedures are an entirely separate but essential process.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE CARD

An Emergency Response Card provides party leaders and their assistants with a summary of prioritised actions in the immediate aftermath of an accident or other emergency.

Party Leaders **must** take with them a laminated copy of the emergency response card when they leave the establishment. The card must be kept close at hand for easy reference throughout the duration of the excursion. Both the flow chart and the emergency response card are schematic. Common-sense should prevail in the preparation of plans and in subsequent actions.

PREPARATION OF PLANS - ESTABLISHMENT AND AREA

Detailed arrangements will need to be made by each establishment. These will reflect the nature and size of the establishment and the nature of the activities planned or anticipated. The use of previously prepared Action Cards should be considered.

Individual roles need to be carefully considered, especially in very small establishments (e.g. one or two teacher primary schools). Frequently a member of staff may find that they are undertaking two or more roles e.g. the Head of Establishment may also be the Party Leader, with the base contact role performed by their Depute or another member of staff or, in some cases a spouse or a parent.

Where the base contact role is undertaken by a person who is not a member of staff the function will be limited to the relaying of information in a predetermined manner.

It must be recognised that many events will take place out of normal office hours. Planned emergency contact arrangements must take account of this.

WHEN A GROUP ARE OVERDUE THEIR SCHEDULED RETURN TIME

It is important that a systematic approach is adopted in responding to the late return of groups. This should ensure there is no dramatic over-reaction to simple unavoidable delay but should equally ensure a prompt response in circumstances where the overdue return may be the result of a serious incident.

The party leader must make every effort to inform the base contact of any significant delay in order to circumvent unnecessary worry and response. Failing this the following procedures should be implemented:

Group overdue by:	Status	Actions & Response
More than 1 Hour	Heightened awareness	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. General awareness raised – looking out for safe return2. Re-assure any concerned relatives3. Telephone party leader or to last known point if possible
More than 2 Hours	Low key search	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Initiate a low key search of general area where group are expected to be. Include expected location of vehicle.2. Use local people/knowledge where possible. Have they been seen?3. Treat as Level 2 incident
More than 4 Hours	Full scale response	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Notify police and initiate full scale search2. Treat as Level 3 incident until further details are known

Safe return of the group MUST always be reported as soon as possible.

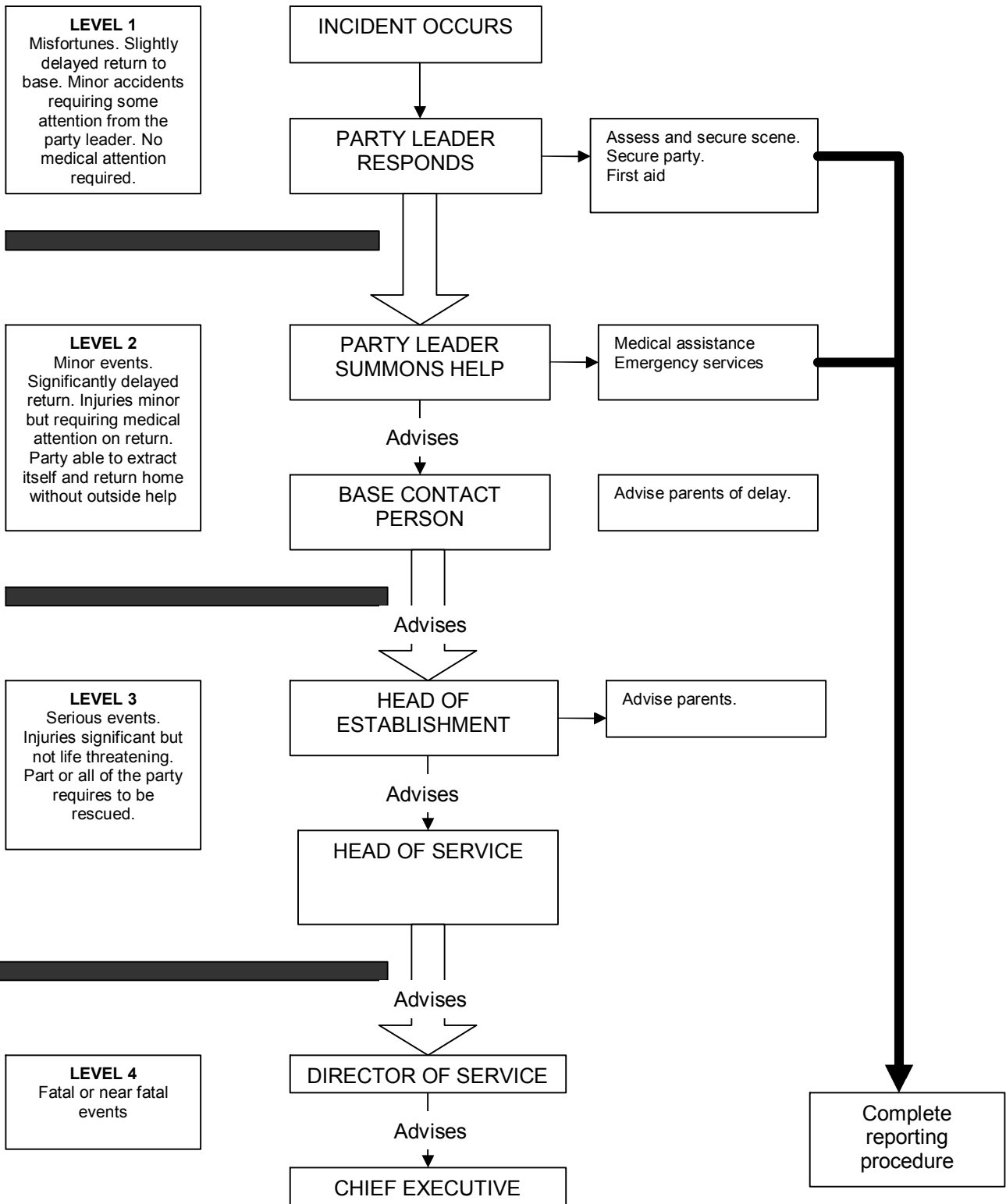
Travel Time:

Where groups are operating in relatively remote locations and there is significant travel time (more than 30mins) between the activity venue (where the vehicle is parked) and base, expected time of return should be based on the time of expected return to the vehicle and not to base. This will prevent unnecessary time loss in initiating an appropriate response.

The group leader MUST contact the Base Contact Person by telephone as soon as possible after returning to their vehicle.

A timely phone call to base should forestall an unnecessarily vigorous response to a delayed return.

Emergency Response Flow Chart



INVESTIGATION OF INCIDENTS

Although the response to an emergency and any subsequent investigation have common threads, they should always be regarded as entirely separate management functions.

Investigation procedures must be designed to cater for various levels of incident and to allow sensitive handling of situations arising from unplanned circumstances. Fig 2 below provides guidance on the designations of staff that should be involved for the various levels of incident.

Figure 2 – Investigation of Incidents

Level of Incident	Investigating Officer	Investigation Contributors	Circulation of Report
Levels 1 & 2 inc. Near misses	Head of Establishment	Relevant Establishment staff. Participants. AA Consultant	Grants & AA Officer. AA Consultant Principal H&S Adviser
Level 3	Principal Health and Safety Adviser	Head of Establishment & relevant Staff. Participants. AA Consultant	All above PLUS Head of Service
Level 4	Head of Resource Management in conjunction with the Principal Health and Safety Adviser	Head of Service. Head of Establishment & relevant Staff Participants Grants & AA Officer AA Consultant	All above PLUS Head of Service. Chief Executive

The investigation should be an information gathering exercise. As such it should be carried out in a reasonably informal and non-judgmental manner. The intent is to seek the causes of incidents in order to inform the ongoing development of good practice.

Investigation does not automatically imply incompetence or negligence.

Where, as a result of the investigation, there is a possibility of disciplinary or other action being followed the investigating officer must exercise caution to ensure that one process does not compromise another. Advice from Senior Officers and/or Personnel Services should be sought before proceeding with the investigation of the incident.

Near misses must be investigated as low level incidents by the Head of Establishment.

The investigating officer will draw upon the observations of staff and participants in a form they feel appropriate.

MUST DO SUMMARY

1. **Carry an emergency response card**
2. **Ensure reliable 24hr communication with the Base Contact**
3. **Ensure base contact has all the required information**
4. **Take clear charge of the situation in the immediate aftermath of an incident.**
5. **Carry out required reporting procedure**
6. **Co-operate fully with any investigation**