

INTRODUCTION

This document is addressed to all those involved in the delivery and management of Adventurous Outdoor Activities under the auspices of Aberdeenshire Council. The Council recognises the value of Outdoor Learning and will support the 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.

This document should be seen as an important source of information and made readily available to all those involved in the management, planning and delivery of adventurous activities.



OUTDOOR LEARNING

The term "Outdoor Learning" will be used throughout this document as an over-arching term to describe the use of activities, usually taking place out of doors and of an adventurous nature to achieve a number of required educational and/or recreational outcomes.

"Outdoor Activities" or "Outdoor Pursuits" usually refer to adventurous activities where the aims and justification for promoting them are focused mainly on enjoyment and the development of sports skills.

Outdoor Learning focuses on creating learning opportunities which are centred on the skills and challenge of living, travelling, learning and sharing together in the outdoor environment. Such opportunities, especially those that have a residential element, can have an important role in promoting the personal and social development of people of all ages and abilities as well as contributing to their understanding of environmental and developmental learning themes.

Traditionally a number of adventurous activities have been used as vehicles for Outdoor Learning and there are now an increasing number of derived or hybrid activities designed to facilitate different learning outcomes. The settings in which activities take place have also diversified. It can often be easier to bring the activity to the learner than to take the learner to the activity. This is partly due to the increasing cost of transport and the amount of time available. More importantly it has re-awakened the idea that the outdoors is all around us and that urban and rural environments can be just as valuable for meeting learning outcomes as remote and wilderness terrain.

The range of Outdoor Learning and the development of diverse activities creates a need for leaders to be flexible in their approach. Teaching and instructional styles now have a clear emphasis on the needs of the individual and of the group.

Activities will be used variously to approach different learning outcomes. Sometimes the focus of activities will be on the development of particular skills, at other times on the process by which learning occurs, or alternatively by the provision of opportunities for learning through direct experience.

Aberdeenshire Council has a statutory duty of care to those participating in adventurous activities under its auspices. Management systems must allow for a wide diversity both in the nature and the location of Outdoor Learning. This means that a prescriptive policy seeking to foresee every eventuality would be unworkable. Rather, this policy is underpinned by a number of key principles.

The keys to safe management in Outdoor Learning are firstly that all those working directly with people out of doors are adequately and appropriately trained, secondly that all those involved feel supported by an effective policy, and thirdly that the aims of the activity are clear.

THEME OF THE DOCUMENT

This document defines best practice and 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 promoted in-house and via contracted external providers.

These guidelines provide operational flexibility within accepted best practice. They do not stipulate actual content for adventurous activity sessions, but they do allow trained and experienced persons to make their own judgements in particular situations.



FORMAT OF THE DOCUMENT

The document has four sections.

Section A is concerned with the management of good and safe practice in adventurous activities. It is aimed primarily at those with management responsibilities.

Section B defines best working practice for specific land and water-based activities. Each activity chapter contains three sections:

- 1. General Information**
Designed primarily for the guidance of Heads of Establishments, Co-ordinators, Managers and parents who are themselves not practitioners.
- 2. Qualifying Awards**
Relevant national governing body awards are listed, together with the "remit" ascribed to the award holder.
- 3. Guidance for Leaders**
This guidance is written particularly for the less experienced leader. It covers such aspects as planning, limitations, equipment, clothing, group size, supervision, safety procedures, training and various recommendations.

Section C is directed to all concerned and provides information on a range of aspects common to all forms of activity. These aspects are key ingredients in the provision of a safe, enjoyable learning experience.

The importance of addressing environmental issues and concerns, as well as educating all those involved, is essential to the long term development and future of outdoor learning. Consequently this section also contains a chapter **Environmental Ethics** which is directed at all concerned.

The Appendices

These provide additional information which will enhance the knowledge of all those involved, as well as giving essential detail on various matters.

ACTIVITIES NOT COVERED

Whilst this document covers a range of activities it is by no means exhaustive and it is recognised that from time to time establishments will wish to organise and take part in a range of other adventurous activities.

Where there is no reference to a particular activity, Heads of Establishment and Local Managers should seek advice from the Council's appointed Adventurous Activities Consultant.

Reference to the Adventurous Activities Consultant should be made direct to:

Mr D HORROCKS
ADVENTURE SCOTLAND
INVERDRUIE HOUSE
INVERDRUIE
AVIEMORE
PH32 1QH
tel: 08702 402676
fax: 01479 811414
e-mail: daveh@adventure-scotland.com

ACTIVITY CENTRES (YOUNG PERSON'S SAFETY) ACT 1995

As a result of the above act and the subsequent licensing regulations, there is now a legal requirement for commercial providers of adventurous activities to young people to be licensed. It is the case that certain internal Council provision comes within scope of the act.

Aberdeenshire Council has obtained and will maintain an overarching license under the act in order to enable its establishments and services to operate within a legal framework when providing licensable activities.

The main areas of **activities** in scope of the regulations are:-

- Caving
- Climbing
- Trekking - on foot, on horse or pedal cycle
- Off-piste ski touring
- Watersports - canoeing & kayaking - river rafting - small boat sailing - windsurfing

The Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA), a government appointed inspectorate, have examined the Council's safety policy and safety management systems and have deemed them to be acceptable in regard to the licensing regulations.

The regulations are complex, and in a local authority context it is not always clear cut as to whether a particular provision is licensable or not. Therefore, provided that all activities conform to the requirements of this safety policy, the issue of whether an activity is in or out of scope becomes an irrelevance as all activities should meet the requirements of the licensing regulations.

For further information on the Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations Heads of Establishment are referred to Document **L77: Guidance to the Licensing Authority, ISBN 0-7176-1160-4**, available from HSE Books. Further clarification may be obtained from the Council's Adventurous Activities Consultant.

