

Adventure activities using licensed providers

157. When planning to use adventure activity facilities offered by a commercial company or by a local authority the group leader should follow the policy of the LEA or school and check:

- ▼ whether the provider is legally required to hold a licence for the activities it offers and, if so,
- ▼ that the provider actually holds a licence.

158. Over 900 providers currently hold a licence. The relevant legislation is the Activity Centres (Young Persons Safety) Act 1995 and the associated Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996.

159. A licensed provider does not necessarily have to hold a licence for all its activities. Other activities offered may be accredited under non-statutory schemes. The provider can give information on what activities are licensed.

160. It is illegal for a provider of licensable status to offer a licensable activity without a valid licence. The Adventure Activities Licensing Authority can check on the licence status of a provider. Their address is: Adventure Activities Licensing Authority, 17 Lambourne Crescent, Llanishen, Cardiff CF4 5GG. Tel 01222 755715. Fax: 01222 755757. Their Internet site is at: <http://www.aala.org>

161. A licensed provider does not necessarily have to hold a licence for all its activities. Many of the activities that pupils take part in will be covered by health and safety legislation alone. However the following activities - where undertaken by young people under 18 years unaccompanied by a parent - need a licence when commercial companies sell them, or when local authorities provide them with or without a charge:

- ▼ caving: the exploration of underground passages, disused mines, or natural caves which requires the use of special equipment or expertise;
- ▼ climbing: climbing, sea-level traversing,

abseiling or scrambling over natural terrain or certain man-made structures which requires the use of special rock-climbing or ice-climbing equipment or expertise;

- ▼ trekking: going on foot, horse (pony), pedal cycle, skis, skates or sledges over moorland, or on ground over 600 metres above sea level when it would take 30 minutes to reach an accessible road or refuge. Off-piste skiing requires a licence;
- ▼ watersports: this comprises sailing, canoeing, kayaking, rafting and windsurfing, on the sea, tidal waters, inland waters at a location where any part of those waters is more than 50 metres from the nearest land, and turbulent inland waters. Rowing is exempt.

162. Holding a licence means that a provider has been inspected and the Licensing Authority are satisfied that appropriate safety measures are in place for the provision of the specified licensed adventure activities. Other elements of the provision - such as catering and accommodation - are not covered by the licensing scheme. These should be checked separately by the group leader. See Other issues to consider with all adventure activity providers paragraphs 169 - 171 and Residential visits paragraphs 195 - 196.

Adventure activities using non-licensable providers

163. Not all providers are required to hold a licence. Voluntary bodies and schools providing for their own members and pupils respectively are exempt. Commercial bodies and local authorities are also exempt if their activities fall outside the scope of the regulations. Not holding a licence does not imply a lack of safety. It might simply mean the provider or the activity is not licensable.

164. Many providers are accredited under non-statutory schemes run by, for example, the Wales Tourist Board, and certain National Governing Bodies (NGBs). Schools/LEAs can contact these

accreditors to ascertain a provider's management of safety. The British Activity Holiday Association can provide advice on accreditations. A list of contacts is at Annex B.

165. Some LEAs have introduced rules along with specimen questionnaires which schools can use to carry out appropriate safety checks at the planning stage.

166. If proposing to use a non-licensable provider, the group leader should obtain assurances in writing from the provider that:

- ▼ risks have been assessed and that the provider's staff are competent to instruct and lead pupils of the group's age range on the activity. Competence could be demonstrated by holding the relevant NGB award where it exists or through successful participation in an NGB approved in-house scheme;
- ▼ the equipment is appropriate and that its safe condition is checked before each use;
- ▼ operating procedures conform to the guidelines of the National Governing Body for the activity where this is appropriate;
- ▼ clear management of safety systems is in place;
- ▼ there is appropriate provision for first aid;
- ▼ there are emergency procedures (including arrangements for informing next of kin and for alerting the group leader); that the provider's staff are competent in the procedures and will hold emergency phone numbers and addresses of the group members; and that the group will have a fire drill as soon as possible on arrival at the provider's base.

167. The group leader may wish to ask the provider for names of other schools who have recently used its facilities.

168. See also Residential visits paragraphs 195 - 196.

Other issues to consider with all adventure activity providers

169. The group leader should check and agree the provider's arrangements for supervision and recreation during the evenings and between adventure activities. The group leader should also provide any relevant information to the provider such as the group's age-range, competence etc.

170. The group leader and teachers retain ultimate responsibility for pupils at all times during adventure activities, even when the group is under instruction by a member of the provider's staff. The provider is responsible for the safe running of an activity. Clear handover and handback procedures should be in place. Everyone, including the pupils, must have an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the school staff and the provider's staff.

171. The group leader and teachers should have sufficient information on what the activity involves before it takes place. They should approach the instructor at an appropriate safe interval if they are concerned that the pupils may be at unnecessary risk. Assurances may be sought that the provider has:

- ▼ checked the suitability of the staff, including temporary workers, to work with young people. See Vetting suitability in Chapter 3 paragraphs 75 - 78;
- ▼ clearly defined the roles and responsibilities of its staff;
- ▼ the appropriate security arrangements;
- ▼ appropriate public liability insurance.

School-led adventure activities

172. If a member of the school staff is to organise, lead and instruct pupils on adventure activities they should complete the checks set out in this booklet

under Risk assessment in Chapter 2 paragraphs 37 - 46.

173. The LEA or governing body should satisfy themselves that:

- ▼ the group leader and other supervisors are competent to act as leaders and/or instructors of pupils in the activity - bearing in mind that some of these pupils may be novices. Competences should be demonstrated by holding the relevant NGB award where it exists. The relevant NGB can advise on this. See Annex B for contact details;
- ▼ the group leader is competent in safety procedures and the planning of adventurous visits;
- ▼ an appropriate risk assessment has been completed;
- ▼ the supervision will be appropriate;
- ▼ there is adequate first aid provision, expertise and equipment within the group;
- ▼ the emergency procedures include activity-specific measures and that supervisors are competent to carry them out;
- ▼ the equipment is appropriate, safe and in good condition;
- ▼ every pupil is suited to the activity and is properly prepared and equipped.

174. See Model Form 1 in Chapter 11 which sets out a format for seeking approval of a visit.

Employment of providers

175. Schools choosing to employ, rather than contract with, an unlicensed freelance provider of adventure activities - who would otherwise need a licence to trade - take full legal responsibility for all aspects of the activity. If the provider, in the employment of the

school, provides licensable facilities to the pupils of another school, the employing school will need a licence.

Remote supervision during adventurous activities

176. Some adventurous activities - such as those under the Duke of Edinburgh Awards - require pupils to work in small groups without direct supervision. Particular attention needs to be given to the information provided to pupils before supervision can be withdrawn.

177. The training given to pupils must be sound and thorough and should be assessed separately. The instructor should have the appropriate qualifications or experience to provide training in the activity. The group leader should be satisfied that the pupils have acquired the necessary skills and have the necessary experience, confidence, physical ability and judgement to be left without direct supervision.

178. The withdrawal of direct supervision should be a gradual four stage process:

- ▼ accompanying the group;
- ▼ shadowing the group;
- ▼ checking regularly at agreed locations;
- ▼ checking occasionally at agreed locations.

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

180. See Chapter 3 Supervision and Preparing pupils for remote supervision in Chapter 4 paragraphs 95 - 96.

Coastal visits

181. Group leaders and other teachers should be aware that many of the incidents affecting pupils have occurred by or in the sea. There are dangers on the coast quite apart from those incurred in swimming (for which see separate section below). The group leader should bear the following points in mind when assessing the risks of a coastal activity:

- ▼ tides, rip tides and sandbanks are potential hazards; timings and exit routes should be checked;
- ▼ ensure group members are aware of warning signs and flags;
- ▼ establish a base on the beach to which members of the group may return if separated;
- ▼ look out for hazards such as glass, barbed wire and sewage outflows etc;
- ▼ some of a group's time on a beach may be recreational. Group leaders should consider which areas of the terrain and sea are out of bounds;
- ▼ cliff tops can be highly dangerous for school groups even during daylight. The group should keep to the path at all times. Group leaders should consider whether it is safe or legal for pupils to ride mountain bikes on coastal paths.

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

Swimming in the sea or other natural waters

183. Swimming and paddling in the sea or other natural waters are potentially dangerous activities for a school group. They should only be allowed as formal and supervised activities, preferably in recognised bathing areas which have official surveillance i.e. qualified lifeguard cover. Nonetheless, pupils should always be in sight of their



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supervisors. One supervisor should always stay out of the water for better surveillance.

184. The group leader, or another designated teacher in the group, should hold a relevant life saving award, especially where lifeguard cover may not be available. For further advice contact the Royal Life Saving Society. See Annex B for address details.

185. Some LEAs advise their schools that a ratio of 1 adult to 10 pupils is a minimum. The group leader should assess the risks and consider an appropriate safe supervision level for their particular group before the activity takes place.

186. The group leader should:

- ▼ be aware that many children who drown are strong swimmers;
- ▼ ascertain for themselves the level of the pupil's swimming ability;
- ▼ be aware of the local conditions - such as currents, weeds, a shelving, uneven or unstable bottom - using local information from the lifeguard, coastguard, harbourmaster, police or tourist information office;
- ▼ designate a safe area of water for use by the group;
- ▼ be aware of the dangerous effects of sudden immersion in cold water;
- ▼ be aware of the dangers of paddling especially for young pupils;
- ▼ ensure that pupils have not eaten (at least half an hour) before swimming;

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

Swimming pools

187. Head teachers and LEA officers will be aware of their local swimming pool facilities for curricular activities. Group leaders should follow the recommended safe supervision levels at the pool for their pupils. A minimum ratio should be 1 adult to 12 pupils in school years 4 to 6, and 1 adult to 20 for school years 7 onwards. For pupils in school year 3 and below the ratio should be higher. Teachers should monitor the risks of regular swimming activities and adjust supervision levels for their individual groups as necessary.

188. If considering the use of a swimming pool not used before or monitoring the hazards of a regularly used pool it is advisable to observe and check the following:

- ▼ is there constant pool supervision by a sufficient number of qualified lifeguards?
- ▼ where there is no lifeguard the group leader should stay at the poolside at a raised location. In such circumstances, the group leader, or a designated teacher, should have a relevant life saving award and be accompanied by an appropriate number of supervisors;
- ▼ is the water temperature appropriate?
- ▼ is the water clear?
- ▼ are there signs clearly indicating the depth - is

there a shallow end and is the water there shallow enough?

- ▼ does the pool cater for pupils with disabilities?
- ▼ does the deep end allow for safe diving?
- ▼ is there a poolside telephone?
- ▼ are there a resuscitator and other pieces of first-aid and rescue equipment, and is there someone trained to use them?
- ▼ is there a changing room for each sex?
- ▼ does the pool cater for pupils with disabilities?
- ▼ does the pool cater for any particular religious or cultural factors?
- ▼ are the changing and showering facilities safe and hygienic?
- ▼ can clothes be stored securely?
- ▼ have the pupils been instructed how to behave in and around the water?

189. See Model Form 11 for parental consent for swimming activities and Model Form 10 for a checklist on swimming safety, in Chapter 11. Parental consent does not mean that group leaders should not check for themselves the level of a pupil's swimming ability.

Farm visits

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

191. Check that the farm is well-managed; that it has a good reputation for safety standards and animal welfare; and that it maintains good washing facilities

and clean grounds and public areas. Consider the merits of an exploratory visit.

192. There are some basic safety rules. Never let pupils:

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

193. Further advice is contained in the DfEE's letter dated 9 June 1997: Pupil Visits to Farms: Health Precautions and HSE's Avoiding ill health at open farms: Advice to teachers. See Annex A for further details.

Field studies

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

Residential visits

195. A good rule of thumb ratio is 1 teacher for every 10 pupils. Issues for the group leader to consider include the following:

- ▼ the group should ideally have adjoining rooms with teachers' quarters next to the pupils - the leader should obtain a floor plan of the rooms reserved for the group's use in advance;
 - ▼ there must be at least one teacher from each sex for mixed groups;
 - ▼ there must be separate male and female sleeping/bathroom facilities for pupils and adults;
 - ▼ the immediate accommodation area should be exclusively for the group's use;
 - ▼ ensure there is appropriate and safe heating and ventilation;
 - ▼ ensure that the whole group are aware of the lay-out of the accommodation, its fire precautions/exits (are instructions in English or otherwise clear?), its regulations and routine, and that everyone can identify key personnel;
 - ▼ security arrangements - where the reception is not staffed 24 hours a day, security arrangements should be in force to stop unauthorised visitors;
 - ▼ the manager of the accommodation should be asked for assurances that the staff, including temporary workers, have been checked as suitable for work with young people. See also Vetting suitability in Chapter 3 paragraphs 75 - 78;
 - ▼ locks on doors should work in the group's rooms but appropriate access should be available to teachers at all times;
 - ▼ there should be drying facilities;
 - ▼ there should be adequate space for storing clothes, luggage, equipment etc, and for the safe keeping of valuables;
 - ▼ adequate lighting - it is advisable to bring a torch;
 - ▼ there should be provision for pupils with special needs and those who fall sick;
 - ▼ balconies should be stable, windows secure, and electrical connections safe;
 - ▼ where possible pupils should not be lodged in ground floor rooms;
 - ▼ the fire alarm must be audible throughout the accommodation;
 - ▼ there should be recreational accommodation/facilities for the group;
 - ▼ the hotel/hostel should be able to meet any particular cultural or religious needs of the group;
 - ▼ there should be an appropriate number of group supervisors on standby duty during the night.
196. Before booking a hostel/hotel abroad, the group leader should confirm it has fire exits and lifts with inner doors and that it meets local regulations. After arrival at any accommodation it is advisable to carry out a fire drill as soon as possible.
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