

OEAP EG: EVC Role

It is a critical aspect of visit planning at all levels to ensure that there is proper understanding of the status of various visit guidance documents - which ones are useful and which ones must be followed because they will become the key point of reference in any legal proceedings. This understanding will set the expectations of good practice demanded by Employment and Health and Safety law.

The Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 places overall responsibility for health and safety with the employer. It is critical that employees understand "who is my employer" (Refer to "Basic Essentials MUST read –Remit and Rationale").

It is good practice for all establishments to have an Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC), and employer guidance may make this a requirement. Where an EVC is not nominated, by default this function rests with the head of establishment.

When appointing an EVC, establishments should ensure that the appointed person meets the criteria required or recommended by employer guidance. The DfES recommendation in the document "Standards for LEAS in Overseeing Educational Visits (2002) recommends:

The EVC should be specifically competent. The level of competence required can be judged in relation to the size of the establishment as well as the extent and nature of the visits planned. Evidence of competence may be through qualification, but more usually will be through the experience of practical leadership over many years of off-site education. Commonly, but not exclusively, such competence will be identified in a person on the senior management team of a school. Such a person should be an experienced visit leader with sufficient status within the establishment to guide the working practice of colleagues leading visits. This cannot be a purely administrative role.

Where the EVC is not selected on these criteria (as where the EVC role is attached to an administrative post or where a post holder is not an experienced Visit Leader) then the EVC will require structured access to and support from a designated colleague who fits the recommended criteria.

As an EVC, your key functions must be documented and clarified (e.g. within establishment's visit policy).

These should include:

- Ensuring that you have an understanding of how outdoor learning can support a wide range of learning outcomes and raise achievement;
- Ensuring that you have attended EVC Training as recommended or required by your employer;
- Ensuring that off-site activities and visits meet employer guidance requirements;
- Ensuring that establishment managers, visit leaders, assisting staff and voluntary helpers understand that all staff involved in visits require access to training at an appropriate level to ensure that employer guidance and establishment procedures are properly understood;
- Ensuring that you have an establishment visit policy. As a minimum, the policy will need to make a link between the establishment's procedures and employer guidance;
- Supporting the head / manager with approval and other decisions;
- Ensuring that activities and visits are led by competent and confident leaders. Employer guidance should define and set clear requirements regarding leader competence and these should be based on the expectations set out below.

The Visit Leader needs to be both accountable and competent. Being accountable implies being an employee and thus part of a chain of specified roles and responsibilities.

Being competent requires that the leader *can demonstrate the ability to operate to current standards of recognised good practice*, with:

- Appropriate knowledge and understanding of employer guidance, establishment procedures, the group, the staff, the activity and the venue. Structured and employer-approved training should reinforce this.
- Appropriate experience.
- A formally accredited qualification is often required to meet national expectations, as in First Aid.

- Where a leader or assistant leader wishes to lead an adventure activity, competence should be confirmed by an external and robust verification process, such as:
 1. holding a NGB leadership/coaching award at an appropriate level
 2. or to be working within the terms and conditions of an AALS licence,
 3. or by a "signing off" process by a Technical Adviser approved by the employer.
- Ensuring that Assistant Leaders are competent to carry out the tasks they are assigned;
- Monitoring of Visit Leader planning and sample monitoring of visits;
- Organising the training of Visit and Assistant Leaders (including Voluntary Helpers);
- Ensuring that where the accompanying staff includes someone with a close relationship to a group member, there are adequate safeguards to ensure that this will not compromise group management;
- Ensuring that CRB/ISA checks are in place as required;
- Ensuring that establishment policy provides sufficient guidance to Visit Leaders regarding information for parents and parental consent;
- Checking that there is a 24/7 emergency contact(s) with the base for each and every visit and that emergency arrangements are in place;
- Ensuring that medical and first aid issues are addressed;
- Ensuring that emergency arrangements include emergency contact access to all relevant visit records, including medical and next of kin information for all members of the party, including staff;
- Ensuring that individual visits are reviewed and evaluated and this process will include reporting of accidents, complying with Reporting Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations (RIDDOR) and reporting incidents.;
- Ensuring that visit policies and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis. A review should follow any serious incident or systems failure. Risk management documentation must be updated if necessary;
- Ensuring that there is an establishment Incident Book for recording "near accidents/near misses", including any resulting learning points and action;
- Ensuring that you keep up to date via EVC update processes and EVC Revalidation courses as recommended or required.