

OEAP EG: Visit or Activity Leader 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").

To ensure accountability and a clear audit trail, a sole Visit Leader should be appointed.

The Visit/Activity Leader will have the overall responsibility for supervision and conduct of the visit. They must be an employee and not a volunteer.

The key requirement for a Visit/Activity Leader is that they are competent, not that they hold a particular post, title or job description. Other employees (Instructors, Coaches, and Teaching Assistants etc) may function as a Visit Leader, providing they are competent to carry out this role.

The Activity/Visit Leader also needs to be accountable, this requires 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 1st Aid
- Where a leader or assistant leader wishes to lead an adventure activity, it is good practice for the generic definition of leader competence to 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.

If you are designated as the Activity/Visit Leader, you should:

- Be formally approved to carry out the visit;
- Be specifically competent;
- Plan and prepare for the visit, taking a lead on risk management. It is good practice to involve all staff in the planning and risk management process to ensure wider understanding. It is also good practice to involve young people in these processes wherever appropriate;
- Define the roles and responsibilities of other staff (and young people) to ensure effective supervision, appointing a deputy wherever possible;
- Make sure that where any accompanying staff includes someone with a close relationship to a member of the group, there are adequate safeguards to ensure that this will not compromise group management;
- Ensure that child protection issues are addressed. e.g. CRB and ISA checks;
- Disseminate relevant information to supporting staff;
- Make sure there is access to first aid at an appropriate level;
- Provide relevant information to parents and young people and arrange pre visit information meetings where appropriate;
- Collate and make available relevant information;

- Evaluate all aspects of the visit, both during and after the event;
- Ensure that staff and other supervisors have been appropriately briefed on:
 1. the young people making up the group, including age, health characteristics, capabilities, special educational needs, behaviour and any other information that seems relevant in the context of the planned activities.
 2. the nature and location of the activity.
- Ensure the visit is effectively supervised;
- The overarching duty of care remains with the accompanying establishment staff, even when partial responsibility is shared with a provider. Should the provider run the activity in a way that causes concern, the accompanying staff should consider stopping the activity at the first appropriate moment. Such an intervention will need to be used with great sensitivity and discretion to ensure that it does not result in young people being put at greater risk;
- Ensure that all staff and any third party providers have access to emergency contact and emergency procedure details.
- Ensure that you have a proper understanding of how the Activity/Visit Leader role relates to that of the EVC.

All Visit Leaders and their deputies are strongly recommended to undertake any employer-led Visit Leader training and should be aware that some employers make this a requirement.