

OEAP EG: Group Management and Supervision

The Activity/Visit Leader retains a "higher duty of care" for the group at all times. In delegating supervisory roles to other adults, it is good practice for the Visit Leader to:

- allocate supervisory responsibility to each adult for named young people;
- arrange the party into smaller and more easily managed sub-groups;
- ensure that each adult knows which sub group and which young people they are responsible for;
- ensure that each young person knows which adult is responsible for them;
- ensure that all adults understand that they are responsible to the visit leader for the supervision of the young people assigned to them;
- ensure that all adults and young people are aware of the expected standards of behaviour.

It is good practice for each Assistant Leader to:

- have a reasonable prior knowledge of the young people, including any special educational needs, medical needs or disabilities;
- carry a list/register of all group members;
- directly supervise the young people (except during remote supervision) - particularly important when they are mingling with the public and may not be easily identified;
- regularly check that the entire group is present;
- have a clear idea of the activity to be undertaken, including its aims, objectives and targeted learning outcomes;
- have the means to contact the Visit Leader/other adult supervisors if needing help;
- have prior knowledge of the venue from the Visit Leader; (see "*Preliminary visits*")
- recognise unforeseen hazards and respond accordingly;
- monitor the activity, including the physical and mental condition and abilities of the group members and the suitability of the prevailing conditions;
- be competent in the techniques of group management;
- ensure that young people abide by the agreed standards of behaviour;
- clearly understand the emergency procedures and be able to carry them out;
- know how to access First Aid;

Each young person should:

- know who their supervisor is at any given time and how to contact him or her;
- make sure that they have understood instructions;
- make sure they are not isolated from the group;
- know who their fellow sub group members are;
- alert the supervisor if someone is missing or in difficulties;

- make sure they are aware of any designated meeting place;
- make sure they understand the action they should take if they become lost or separated;
- understand and accept the expected standards of behaviour.

Head counts

Regular head counts of young people should take place throughout all off-site activities. The frequency will need to be increased at certain points such as crowded public areas, getting on and off transport, in poor visibility or adverse weather conditions etc. It is easier to monitor and count smaller groups and clusters.

It is good practice to:

- double check numbers before departing from a venue
- carry a list/register of all young people and adults involved in the visit at all times;
- ensure that younger children are readily identifiable, especially if the visit is to a densely populated area. e.g. brightly coloured caps, T-shirts or a school uniform can help identify group members more easily;
- avoid identification that could put young people at risk e.g. name badges
- provide extra safeguards for very young children, or for those with special needs, such as providing laminated cards displaying the name of the group or hotel and an emergency contact number. This would be appropriate for all visits abroad with a translation of the information into the language of the country being visited;
- ensure that all young people are aware of rendezvous points;
- ensure that all young people know what to do if they become separated from the group.
- make the staff and young people aware of their destination e.g. the tube station where the plan requires them to get off.

'Buddy' systems

A situation where one group member becomes lost or isolated from their allotted group should be avoided at all costs. The "bottom line" of sub-grouping should therefore be a buddy system with the smallest unit of not less than three, backed by clear instructions not to separate unless there is a need for help.

Remote Supervision

Supervision can be close or remote but is always 24/7:

- close supervision occurs when the group remain within sight and contact of the supervisor;
- remote supervision occurs when, as part of planned activities, a group works away from the supervisor but is subject to stated controls (e.g. during Duke of Edinburgh's Award expeditions or a visit to an exhibition). The supervisor may not be physically present but they should be managing the group in such a way that they can intervene or assist within a reasonable time. For this to be effective, the group must also know how to make contact with a remote supervisor;

- it is essential that everyone involved in the activity understands the supervision arrangements and expectations.

When supervision is remote:

- there should be specific parental consent;
- groups should be sufficiently trained and assessed as competent for the level of activity to be undertaken, including first aid and emergency procedures. Remote supervision will normally be the final stage of a phased development programme;
- young people should be familiar with the environment or similar environments and have details of the meeting points and the times of rendezvous;
- clear and understandable guidelines will be set for the group, including physical and behavioural parameters;
- there must be clear lines of communication between the group, the supervisor and the establishment;
- mobile phones should not be regarded as a failsafe method of maintaining communication;
- the supervisor should monitor the group's progress at appropriate intervals;
- there should be defined time limits between contacts. Exceeding these limits should activate an agreed emergency procedure;
- the supervisor will be in the expedition or activity area and able to reach the group reasonably promptly should the group need support in an emergency;
- there should be a recognisable point at which the activity is completed;
- there should be clear arrangements for the abandonment of the activity where it cannot be completed without compromising safety.

Rearranging Groups

Young people can become detached when groups are rearranged. For example:

- when a large group is split into smaller groups for specific activities;
- when groups transfer from one activity to another and change supervisor;
- during periods between activities;
- when small groups re-form into a large group.

It is therefore crucial that each supervisor:

- makes it clear at which point they are taking on leadership responsibility for the group they are allocated and when their part of the programme begins;
- makes sure that all group members are aware of the changeover;
- clearly passes on responsibility for the group when their part of the programme is concluded, together with any relevant information ensuring that the group members know who is their next leader.

N.B. It is important to understand that while responsibility for the leadership of an activity may have been delegated to a specialist provider, the "higher duty of care" remains with the Activity/Visit Leader and their Assistant Leaders.

Down Time

Down time, or recreation time, is that period before, between and after more structured activities, as in the half an hour leading up to the evening meal on a residential visit. Leaders should ensure that pupils continue to be appropriately supervised during downtime. A group occupied in structured activity is far safer than a group left to its own devices in an unfamiliar environment. Too much unstructured time in a residential programme can allow time for mischief, bullying, homesickness and wandering off from the body of the group. Accident records show a disproportionate number of incidents occurring in this period.

It is good practice to:

- avoid using the term 'free time';
- ensure that all staff and young people understand the standards of behaviour that apply at all times, not just during activities;
- ensure that a staff duty system operates so that groups continue to be appropriately supervised at all times;
- have strict guidelines for behaviour in bedrooms and dormitories.

Unstructured down time may be put to better use. Strategies include:

- briefing the group on the planned activities for the day to come, e.g. the planned learning outcomes, specific health and safety issues, meal and break times etc.;
- building in reviewing periods after activities, for both individual reflection on personal learning outcomes, and group discussion about the highs and lows of the day;
- occupying the group with recreational activities in the evening, e.g. preparing inter-group presentations, environmental activities, quizzes, team challenges, led-walks etc

Night Time Supervision

Leaders should ensure that:

- the group's immediate accommodation is exclusively for the group's use;
- leaders have sleeping accommodation providing easy access to their group;
- accommodation arrangements do not compromise child protection;
- in the absence of 24 hour staffing of reception, buildings can be made secure against intrusion;
- internal doors meet fire regulation requirements and allow staff access to the young peoples' accommodation at all times;
- where young peoples' doors can be locked, leaders must have access to a master key;

- in the event of a fire, all staff and young people know the emergency procedures and escape routes.

Group Supervision when traveling

The level of effective supervision necessary for the journey should be considered as part of the over-all risk management plan.

- Where keeping the group together will ease the problem of group supervision, the Visit Leader may need to arrange for seats to be reserved well in advance.
- Head counts should be carried out whenever the group is getting off or onto transport.
- Whether traveling on buses, trains, ferries or aircraft, the Visit Leader should set clear expectations regarding the amount of freedom to 'roam'. Inappropriate behaviour can be a major cause of accidents to young people when traveling;
- Double decker buses/coaches will require at least one supervisor on each deck. In any seating arrangements, thought should be given as to where it is best to place leaders, ensuring that the arrangements will support the management of discipline and adult proximity to emergency exits.
- In the event of an accident or breakdown, the group should remain under the direct supervision of the Visit Leader or Assistant Leaders. If the vehicle is in danger of being hit while broken down (e.g. if it is on the hard shoulder of a motorway or dual carriageway, or is partially blocking a road) the Visit Leader or driver should contact the police to provide safety support. Whether it is safer to keep the group on board the vehicle, or to disembark and wait elsewhere, is a matter that will need to be risk assessed on the basis of the specific circumstances. If the decision is to keep the group on board the vehicle, then it is recommended that the rear seats are vacated and the young people moved forward towards the front.
- Leaders should ensure that seat belts are fastened.

Supervision of Groups in Minibuses

The Activity/Visit leader should give proper consideration to issues of driver-distraction when considering what supervision is required for the specific group of young people being transported in a minibus. In determining the staffing ratio for effective supervision, leaders should carefully consider the factors that might influence the safety of the driver and passengers. These factors include:

- The length of the journey and time of day when it takes place.
- The route and the familiarity of the driver with this route.
- The nature of the group (e.g. age / maturity / special needs / behavioural issues) and the level of behaviour management or support they are likely to require during the journey. In any seating arrangements, thought should be given as to where it is best to place leaders, ensuring that the arrangements will support the management of discipline and adult proximity to emergency exits.
- The overall workload of the driver during the day (other responsibilities and duties undertaken or planned by drivers).

Based on an assessment of these factors, establishments should decide whether:

- A sole leader (who is also the driver) is sufficient e.g. short journey, small groups of YP who are unlikely to present any supervision issues;

Or

- Additional staff will be required to supervise young people and / or share driving duties during the journey.