



USE OF INDEPENDENT PROVIDERS

1. Introduction

1.1. It is imperative that appropriate checks are made before groups commit themselves to working with any external organisation. Visit Leaders are strongly advised to apply the following guidance that is relevant to all educational use of independent providers.

2. Responsibilities

2.1. Visit leaders should recognise that they have the primary responsibility, on behalf of their establishment, for ensuring that any provider to be used can meet acceptable standards in each of the following aspects:

- The quality and safety of any adventure activities provided and, in particular, qualifications of activity instructors
- Adequate and appropriate insurance cover
- The suitability and safety of domestic arrangements
- The educational merit of the experience
- The relationship between visit staff and any staff provided by the operator;
- The security of money paid to the operator

3. Adventure Activities Licensing Regulations 1996 (AALA)

3.1. Currently any provider offering, within the UK, any of the licensable activities for a fee to young persons under 18 years of age, is legally required to be inspected and licensed by the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority (AALA).

3.2. Visit leaders are required to ascertain whether a provider is legally required to hold a licence for the activities and that the provider holds a current licence.

3.3. Licensable activities are:

- Trekking - foot, cycle, horse or off-piste skiing in remote or high country
- Climbing - climbing, abseiling, scrambling except on purpose-designed walls
- Water sports - canoeing, sailing, rafting and related activities undertaken on 'specified waters'
- Caving - underground exploration in natural caves and mines (excluding show caves and mines open to the public)

3.4. A record of AALA accredited providers can be found at:

- www.aals.org.uk/aals/provider_search.php

4. Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge



4.1. The LOtC Quality Badge is a nationally recognised indicator of good quality educational provision combining the essential elements of learning and safety into a recognisable and trusted accreditation scheme. The scheme is managed and developed by the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom. Gloucestershire LA recommends the use of LOtC Quality Badge providers to all establishments.

4.2. A list of licensed providers can be found at:

- www.lotc.org.uk

5. Preliminary investigations & Risk Assessing

5.1. It is essential that initial assurances are sought from the prospective provider before commitment to the venture. If the provider has the Quality Badge, visit leaders can be assured that the standards and practices are good. For those that don't have the badge it is essential that visit leaders seek assurances.

5.2. An Independent Providers Questionnaire should form the basis of such enquiries. Bookings should only be made following the receipt of a satisfactorily completed Independent Providers' Questionnaire.

5.3. The visit leader has ultimate responsibility for pupils, even when the group is under instruction by the provider's staff. The provider is responsible for the safe operation of the activity.

5.4 It is particularly important to ensure that clear arrangements are in place for the effective hand-over of pupils from the leader to the activity instructor and vice versa and to establish when and where responsibility is shared with the provider.

5.5. Where the Company additionally offers personal accident cover, the suitability of such cover should be checked.

6. Who is Responsible for Carrying-out Risk Assessment?

6.1. Activity providers should be carrying out risk assessments for activities/services that they are responsible for. The visit leader will only be responsible for assessing activities that the provider is not responsible for, for example transport to and from the venue, overnight accommodation and any free time. The visit leader must clarify what activities/services the provider will take responsibility for during the visit and what the visit leader and his/her staff will be responsible for the visit leader must ensure they complete a risk assessment for all the areas they have responsibility for.

6.2. Visit leaders should seek written confirmation from the provider that risk assessments are in place for the activities/services they will provide. The independent providers questionnaire will provide this. There is no need to obtain copies of these risk assessments – written confirmation is sufficient.



7. The Final Decision

7.1. The final decision to proceed with the visit, based on all available information and advice, is the responsibility of the Harry Howells, (Headteacher), in conjunction with the appropriate directors, as required.

8. Policy Review

4.1. This Policy was last reviewed in May 2019. Next review is due by June 2020.