

The Highland Council and High Life Highland

Excursions Policy and Guidance

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This document supersedes 'The Highland Council Procedures and Guidance for Conducting all off Site Excursions' dated 1st December 2010 and The Highland Council 'Outdoor Education Safety Document' dated July 2007. It seeks to provide the staff and volunteers of The Highland Council and High Life Highland and other interested parties with an appropriate level of information on policy and guidance regarding all excursions and educational visits.
- 1.2. This document is supported by the [Outdoor Learning Strategy for Highland's Children and Young People 2012-2015](#) and [Going Out There](#) the Scottish Framework for Safe Practice in Off-site Visits, The Scottish Government 2013.
- 1.3. This document, along with [Going Out There](#), provides the necessary guidance that establishments (schools and groups) within the Highland Council and High Life Highland area of responsibility require to successfully and safely plan, manage and evaluate all off-site excursions and education visits.

2. Introduction

- 2.1. Educational visits, excursions and all off-site activities are an integral element of formal education as well as life in the Highland Council area. Such activities fully support the 'Outdoor Learning Strategy for Highland's Children and Young People 2012-2015' and the [Curriculum for Excellence](#) and the place of [Outdoor Learning](#) within the Curriculum.
- 2.2. This document aims to provide the structure whereby a balance is struck between effective risk management and successful outcomes. The employer (The Highland Council and High Life Highland) has a legal duty to ensure that, so far as is reasonable and practicable, the health, safety and welfare of those it has responsibility for is maintained. It does recognize though that there are enormous educational benefits from young people participating in excursions and educational visits. All staff shall therefore use this document and the guidance contained in [Going Out There](#) and are expected to adopt and maintain a pragmatic approach to planning and risk management of off-site excursions and educational visits.

3. Guidance

- 3.1. This document confirms that The Highland Council Department of Care and Learning and High Life Highland formally adopt [Going Out There](#) as the core guidance for safety management of off-site visits. Other resources are detailed below and provide valuable activity management information and links.
- 3.2. [Going Out There](#) which is web-based and accessible at www.goingoutthere.co.uk was written and produced by the Scottish Government, The Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education (SAPOE), the Health and Safety Executive, the Association of Directors of Education and Education Scotland.

- 3.3. The national guidance embraces the Health and Safety Executive's principles of sensible risk management by seeking a balanced view that considers both the benefits and risks associated with visits and activities. High Life Highland will work in partnership with the national agencies through SAPOE membership to keep this guidance up to date with new practices and lessons learned from incidents in Scotland and beyond.
- 3.4. Departmental establishments shall adopt this document in full and review and update local procedures to ensure that they reflect the guidance in both this document and [Going Out There](#). The Highland Council and High Life Highland use [EVOLVE](#), which is a web based excursions notification and approval system. Documents embedded within [EVOLVE](#) are therefore to be used rather than tools appended to [Going Out There](#). Establishments should strive to avoid placing any additional requirements for visit planning and approval on their staff or visit leaders. They can do so confident in the knowledge that they are following good practice that is shared across the whole of Scotland.
- 3.5. On the adoption of this document and [Going Out There](#) all previous guidance is replaced, specifically:
- Scottish Government – Health and Safety on Educational Excursions dated 22 December 2004
 - The Highland Council – Procedures and Guidance for Conducting all off Site Excursions dated 1st December 2010
 - The Highland Council – Outdoor Education Safety Document dated July 2007
- 3.6. In addition to this guidance and [Going Out There](#) other very valuable guidance can be found here:
- Links to all the above guidance and Outdoor Education specific support and guidance can be found on the [High Life Highland website](#).
 - The Highland Council and High Life Highland [EVOLVE](#) web pages.
 - Education Scotland's [Activity Specific Guidance](#) provides up to date and valuable activity management information and links.
 - The Adventure Activity Licensing Service ([AALS](#)) [guidance on activity group sizes](#) and risk assessment.
 - The Adventure Activity Licensing Service ([AALS](#)) [guidance on appropriate outdoor activity instructor qualifications](#) (pages 26 – 32).
 - The [Outdoor Education Advisors Panel](#) (OEAP) offers excellent advice for all off-site visits.
 - Driving & transport – [UK Government guidance](#)

4. Application of this Document

- 4.1. This document and the procedures and guidance contained are relevant where young people leave the establishment site / facility for any activity or visit under the governance of a Highland Council Department of Care and Learning or High Life Highland establishment.
- 4.2. The guidance in the remainder of this document supplements that provided by [Going Out There](#) and other relevant references.

5. Technical Advice and Guidance

5.1. Establishments must ensure that staff are competent to undertake their role in the excursion, whether it is planning, approving, supervision or leadership. Staff must seek technical advice or guidance from an appropriate person where this is considered necessary. In relation to adventurous activities and as detailed in [AALA Guidance L77](#) 2007 paragraphs 22 – 28, staff should possess the technical competences required which cannot be demonstrated by national qualifications; these can be demonstrated in one or a combination of the following ways and should be appropriate to the nature and level of the excursion:

- Hold an equivalent relevant qualification, for example one that is considered acceptable by an NGB.
- Completed in-house training / accreditation, for example 'Walking and Camping Leader'
- Possess an appropriate level of experience, with comprehensive evidence / summary. A Leader Approval Form (LAR) can be submitted through [EVOLVE](#) to evidence this.

5.2. Further technical advice and guidance is available through line management and the following:

- Insurance Department - 01463 702417
- Rural and Community Transport Office - 01463 252954
- Additional Support Needs – 01463 702876
- Equal Opportunities - 01463 702094
- Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team - 01463 703095
- Outdoor Education – 07733 110545

6. Excursions Management (Supported by EVOLVE)

6.1. [EVOLVE](#) is an online notification and approval system for educational excursions that is now in use in over 120 local authorities in England, Wales and Scotland. The Highland Council have used [EVOLVE](#) since 2011. All Highland Council children's services establishments and High Life Highland establishments must use the [EVOLVE](#) system where deploying young people. The system automatically sends notification of excursions required to be notified to the necessary approval staff within the establishment and where necessary elsewhere in Highland Council and High Life Highland.

6.2. All staff with responsibilities relating to off-site excursions are required to have an [EVOLVE](#) account. This can be set up by the establishment Educational Visits Coordinator (EVC).

6.3. Information contained on [EVOLVE](#) should be sufficient for new users (staff, EVC and Head of Establishment accounts) to 'self-learn' although any guidance / peer mentoring will speed up this process.

6.4. Much of the terminology and the procedures detailed in [Going Out There](#) are reflected in [EVOLVE](#). On completion of the sections of [EVOLVE](#) for a particular visit, a **Visit Plan** is generated which forms the minimum Visit Plan referred to in [Going Out There](#). Additional

documents can be attached to the Visit Plan such as parental informed consent, maps and risk assessments where necessary. Guidance on these attachments is contained in [EVOLVE](#).

7. Excursion Notification and Approval

7.1. The Visit Type categorization (below) is adopted, as detailed in [Going Out There](#). This will so far as is reasonably practicable ensure that approval is granted by those best placed to manage risk.

7.2. The timely submission of a Visit Plan provides relevant persons within the approval chain with sufficient information to make a judgment as to the viability and appropriate safety management of the proposed excursion.

7.3. An [EVOLVE](#) Visit Plan needs to be created and approved as follows:

Visit Type	Frequency
Regular excursions to known local venues (multiple local venues with associated risk assessments may be contained on a single Visit Plan)	Once a year
Forecast weekly / seasonal events such as sports fixtures or use of an indoor climbing wall on a regular basis	Once a session or term
All other situations	For each excursion; Where more guidance is required contact: outdoor.education@highlifehighland.com

Table 1.

7.4. Approval by the appropriate person is granted where there is a clear Visit Plan that provides adequate information to those with the duty and authority to approve that visit. Where insufficient information is provided, a facility within [EVOLVE](#) allows the Visit Plan to be returned to the applicant for amendment and re-submission.

7.5. Where visits are of a 'routine and expected' nature, local arrangements should be in place to ensure that the school office / establishment reception and when out of hours, the duty member of staff, is furnished with relevant information on that excursion. A simple 'booking out' sheet / book should be adequate and allow the duty members of staff to collect relevant information from the office / reception on closure. An example of such a booking out sheet can be found [here](#). The following minimum information should be recorded:

- [EVOLVE](#) name of excursion and reference number
- Names and contact details of staff
- Names of pupils (if differing from those listed in [EVOLVE](#))
- Departure and return time
- Summary of plan / activities

- Book out time and forecast book in time

7.6. Where the names of some staff and pupils is unclear in the planning stage, names added to [EVOLVE](#) must be accurate (as far as is possible) when the excursion takes place. If this is not possible details of all participants on the excursion must be left on the 'book out' sheet with the school office / establishment reception and when out of hours, the duty member of staff. Such staff should have access to parental contact details and higher guidance. In the event of an incident the 'book out' sheet will be required as part of the incident record.

7.7. Parents / guardians must be informed on the nature and the detail of the excursion. Parental / guardian 'informed' consent should be obtained for all activities. Such consent should also infer medical consent. As detailed in Table 2 below, the timing and content of this consent will depend upon the nature of the proposed activity. Useful worked examples of documents can be found in the 'Toolkit' section of [Going Out There](#).

Visit Type ¹	Information to Parents and Informed Consent ²	Medical Information	Endorsed by	Final Approval by	Notification Deadline ³ (working days)	Remarks
Routine and Expected visits ⁴	During induction / annual approval / school handbook	Annual update supplied by parents	EVC ⁵	Head ⁶	10	
Day visits	Specific information provided in writing	Annual update supplied by parents	EVC	Head	10	LA OEO ⁷ endorsement required for water margin activities ⁸
Residential visits	Specific information provided in writing with parents meeting if required	Provided as an integral part of the consent form	EVC LA OEO	Head	10	
Overseas visits	Specific information provided in writing with parents meeting if required	Provided as an integral part of the consent form	EVC Head LA OEO	EQIM ⁹ HLH Head of Service ¹⁰	ASAP (but min 20)	Initial notification to LA OEO by 'Add Note' in EVOLVE asap
Adventure activities ¹¹	Specific information provided in writing	Provided as determined by the nature of the activity/s	EVC LA OEO	Head	10	

Table 2 – Visit Consent and Approval Matrix

¹ In accordance with Going Out There categorisations

² 'Informed consent' means a parent is clear on what is taking place, when, where, with whom and provides consent to their son / daughter taking part.

³ To 'Final Approval' staff

⁴ Going Out There – 'Routine and Expected Visits' will generally be to local venues, involve easily managed activities, happen on a regular basis and be completed within the normal session times'.

⁵ Educational Visits Coordinator

⁶ Head of Establishment / HLH Area Sports Development Officer / HLH Youth Work Manager

⁷ Local Authority Outdoor Education Officer

⁸ Activities that involve interaction with coastal, lochside and riverside waters

⁹ Education Quality Improvement Manager

¹⁰ HLH Chief Executive notified of HLH overseas excursions

¹¹ Indoor or outdoor activity generally involving an element of physicality and generally involving a greater than normal level of risk due to a combination of the participants competence, activities to be undertaken and the environment within which the activity/s takes place.

8. Deploying Staff

- 8.1. The Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) requires employers to make training available for staff to perform their work safely. Employers will ensure that employees are provided with the necessary guidance, training and advice that is appropriate to the level of activity. Staff are expected to operate within their own experience and competence and are expected to seek guidance where this is not the case.
- 8.2. As previously referred to in this guidance (para 5.1), staff should be competent to fulfill a role. Where an adventurous activity is proposed by staff that are experienced but hold no relevant qualification they may submit a Leader Approval Request (LAR) via [EVOLVE](#) (available through 'Dashboard').
- 8.3. In addition to professional qualification and general risk management training, High Life Highland will provide training to **Educational Visit Coordinators** for those that require it. The EVC is central to an establishment's off campus excursion safety management system. EVCs have the following key roles:
- Promoting Outdoor Education and Learning
 - Managing establishment policy and procedures (supported by [EVOLVE](#))
 - Training and mentoring staff (excursion planning, risk management and [EVOLVE](#))
 - Monitoring and evaluating staff and activities
- 8.4. Staff competence to plan and lead excursions should also form part of mentoring and general professional review discussions with line managers as appropriate.
- 8.5. [EVOLVE](#) provides a staff history of all visits lead or assisted and can record relevant training or qualifications which should follow staff across Highland Council establishments. Managers are encouraged to use this visit history when deploying and mentoring staff.

9. Risk Assessment

- 9.1. The Highland Council has considered the general risks associated with a variety of excursions and identified appropriate control measures. This information is available to all staff as Generic Risk Assessments on the [EVOLVE](#) system, which will be reviewed annually by Outdoor Education staff.
- 9.2. Staff are expected to consider and consult with Generic Risk Assessments in order to create their 'Excursion Risk Assessment'. The Excursion Risk Assessment (pneumonic PEA!) should be attached to the [EVOLVE](#) Visit Plan and will take into account the following:
- **P**articipants (specific considerations could include age, competence, support needs, medical etc)
 - **E**nvironment within which activities will transit and take place (e.g. service station, mountain, ferry, accommodation, ski resort)
 - **A**ctivities (from departure to return and within own competence and with technical guidance as necessary)

- 9.3. Establishments would reasonably be expected to 'own' a bank of local area / regular excursion risk assessments which can be adapted to different groups. The principles of the Excursion Risk Assessment are ownership and relevance. Hazards and control measures should not be repeated from the generic risk assessment unless they are particularly significant.
- 9.4. Staff should only ever complete a risk assessment or seek guidance from one within their level of competence. Providers with specific competence will have their own risk assessments and where the activity is 'normal', or 'routine' there should be no requirement for staff to scrutinize these. The risk assessment process should be complete prior to an activity and should involve all parties with supervisory responsibilities. This means that the establishment staff must work with provider staff to ensure that both parties agree on appropriate risk management strategies.
- 9.5. When creating a risk assessment staff should use the template provided by Highland Council [here](#), the High Life Highland risk assessment template can be found [here](#) (page 6). Both can also be found on [EVOLVE](#) (Resources). Staff are not to use any other risk assessment template although the information in the [Going Out There](#) Toolkit examples may be useful.
- 9.6. Where an activity / service is being outsourced e.g. transport, accommodation, adventure activity, theatre visit etc, the Visit Leader may choose to consult with the provider to ensure that hazards are identified and control measures are put in place so far as is reasonable and practicable. Where an activity / service is outsourced there is a reasonable expectation of provider competence given evidence (see the previous section on 'Technical Advice and Guidance' and the later section on 'Using External Providers'). The Visit Leader on behalf of the Head of Establishment should seek reasonable assurances from external providers. Such assurances may be evidence of accreditation, licenses, insurance etc. If in any doubt the Visit Leader should seek appropriate guidance.
- 9.7. Any participants or staff with significant medical or support needs, that require additional management arrangements to ensure their own safety or that of others, should have their own specific risk assessment. This should be attached to the [EVOLVE](#) Visit Plan. The risk assessment and subsequent plan may require medical / specialist input as well as parental consultation and agreement. The Visit Plan should consider all aspects of the excursion including travel, facilities and evacuation. Insurance advice may be required in some cases.
- 9.8. Excursion staff should be in possession of all relevant details of the excursion and the people involved. Duplicate information should be accessible by the two 24/7 emergency contacts. This information may be hard copies or electronic. Local arrangements may vary.

10. Activity Specific Guidance

- 10.1. **General Guidance** – Education Scotland's [Activity Specific Guidance](#) provides up to date and valuable activity management information and links. Further guidance can be obtained from National Governing Body (NGB) websites, associations and clubs.
- 10.2. **Snowsport supervision** – as with other activities supervision must be carried out by staff that are competent, as detailed in in para 5.1. Where competence is demonstrated in extensive experience but no qualification and limited experience of managing groups undertaking snowsport activities, staff should attend the [Snowsport Supervisor](#) training.

- 10.3. **Snowsport, the wearing of helmets** – it is now common for insurance companies, resorts and establishments to require participants to wear a helmet when engaged in snowsport. The Highland Council and High Life Highland require that all young people wear a serviceable and correctly fitted snowsport helmet. All other participants are strongly encouraged to wear a snowsport helmet.
- 10.4. **Swimming & water margin activities** – A risk assessment will indicate the level of competence required to supervise such activities. As with other activities staff are to be able to demonstrate competence before supervising such activities and should refrain from unplanned water based / water margin activity until appropriate control measures are in place.
- 10.5. **Overseas excursions** – Establishments involved in such excursions are advised to start developing an [EVOLVE](#) visit plan at the earliest opportunity. By the 'add note' facility within the [EVOLVE](#) Visit Plan staff can gain planning approval in principal and raise awareness with management and Outdoor Education staff.

11. Supervision

- 11.1. [Going Out There](#) does not specify ratios for excursions as they are difficult to prescribe. Supervision ratios will vary according to the activity, age, group, location and the efficient use of resources. Ratios are identified after the risk assessment process has been carried out. However, a general guide for excursions would be;
- 1 adult for every 6 participants (max) up to 8 years of age (in school years P1 to P3)
 - Nursery classes should in most cases have a higher ratio
 - 1 adult for every 15 participants (max) for other excursions (minimum of two adults for all excursions)
 - Residential and overseas excursions will require at least 1 member of staff to 10 participants (max) (depending on the itinerary) with sufficient numbers of male and female staff in attendance for mixed gender groups.
 - Excursions involving 'homestays' should seek advice from senior management and Outdoor Education Officers as necessary as such experiences can be both highly beneficial, but can be unregulated. Excursion leaders should consider the following:
 - Competence, suitability and vetting of the host establishment and any host families
 - Full and informed consent of all parties
 - Arrangements for communications (with all parties), monitoring and supervision
 - Clear agreement with all parties in terms of rules and conduct

11.2. For excursions that involve adventure activities the staff delivering the activity or the provider used will be able to advise on the most suitable technical activity supervision ratios. Guidance on ratios can be found on the Adventure Activity Licensing Service document [here](#). Ratios will very much depend on factors which include:

- Age, attitude and competence of group
- Educational or medical support requirements
- Competence of staff, both general and on specific activities
- Experience of adults in off-site supervision
- Duration and nature of the journey and activities
- Nature of the environment (accommodation, transport, venue, local area, weather etc)

12. Using External Providers

12.1. An 'external provider' / 'provider' is any individual or organisation that is providing a service to an establishment. In the context of this document neither The Highland Council nor High Life Highland would be considered as an external provider to each other. Where using an external provider, such as a residential centre, transport provider, tour operator or an adventure activity provider, the provider must be registered on [EVOLVE](#). Establishments must be sufficiently assured that the provider is offering a suitable and appropriate service and that governance responsibilities are clear.

12.2. Where entering into a contract with a provider, establishments should be clear about obligations and responsibilities detailed in the provider's booking terms and conditions that relate to the establishment, participants, parents etc. Establishments should seek technical advice (see paragraph 5.2 for contact details).

12.3. Where a provider is offering adventurous activities they must be accredited / registered with one of the following:

12.3.1. Adventurous Activity Licensing Authority (AALA).

12.3.2. Possess a LOtC Quality Badge.

12.3.3. Licensed by the Maritime Coastal Agency (MCA).

They are to be registered on [EVOLVE](#) which will highlight their relevant accreditation. Providers, including sports clubs, that do not possess a previously mentioned accreditation / registration (involving third party inspection) will be required to complete a 'Provider Assurances' form. The provider will be asked to provide safety and standards compliance assurance such as; national accreditation, safety management, insurance etc. Any provider that is not subject to a credible external inspection by a national body will be visited by Outdoor Education staff or other staff as is appropriate.

12.4. Provider assurances made to High Life Highland Outdoor Education staff will be valid for a period of three years or when any provider makes 'major changes' to their operations. On

renewal the provider will be expected to complete a new Provider Assurances form – available from High Life Highland Outdoor Education.

12.5. Where an establishment is planning to use a provider of overseas services a greater level of due diligence should be applied when selecting the provider. Staff are advised to seek advice early in the planning process as necessary from line management and / or Outdoor Education Officers. Equally, staff should be satisfied with arrangements, including contingency plans put in place by such providers. Assurances from overseas providers could include:

- Licenses such as ATOL, Learning Outside of the Classroom Quality Badge or compliance with BS 8848.
- Association membership (requiring adherence to national / international standards) e.g. Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA), Expedition Providers Association (EPA), The Year Out Group, Young Explorers Trust (YET).
- A successful track record of working in a particular field / area.
- Positive and available references.
- In country provider assurances such as adherence to international standards, operating procedures, travel and accommodation standards, risk assessments and contingency plans.

13. Insurance

13.1. Guidance on insurance requirements can be found on the [EVOLVE](#) Visit Plan and via advice referred to in para 5.2. Establishment Heads should be assured of appropriate insurance cover for all off site activities. All stakeholders (including parents) should be informed of the level of insurance cover.

14. Emergency Procedures

14.1. Every establishment in The Highland Council and High Life Highland must possess a robust incident plan that details roles, responsibilities and guidance to establishment staff on incidents both on site and off site. A template for schools is available through Area Education Managers. The plan should cover all activities and periods i.e. 24/7 and during holiday periods where necessary. During weekends and holiday periods establishment 24/7 contacts must be confident of actions to be taken in the event of a significant incident.

14.2. The effectiveness of the plan will be reliant on all relevant staff being familiar with their responsibilities and having an effective and tested communication and response plan.

14.3. The Highland Council guidance on reporting accidents can be found [here](#). The High Life Highland guidance including the 'Trigger Matrix' can be found [here](#).