

# RULES AND GUIDANCE FOR OFF-SITE EXCURSIONS, INCLUDING ADVENTUROUS ACTIVITIES

## APPENDIX 5 – COMPILING RISK ASSESSMENTS

### Introduction

1. Risk Assessment is a systematic process for identifying and mitigating risk. It is good practice to use a collaborative approach when compiling risk assessments. All staff and volunteers should be able to contribute to identifying potential hazards, risks and mitigations. Where practicable participants should also be involved in the risk assessment process. This will help put agreed control measures into context and actively involve participants in the management of their own and each other's safety.

The assessment should be proportional to the type of visit and focus on real risks.

### Forms of Risk Assessment

2. There are three common types of risk assessment used for Outdoor Learning:

a. **Generic risk assessment.** Generic risk assessments are very useful in identifying generic risks attached to certain activities or excursions. For example there are generic risks attached to visiting large cities regardless of whether the city is London, Manchester or Barcelona.

Generic risk assessments for most activities can be found on Moray Council's Outdoor Learning web page and within the document storage section on EVOLVE.

These can be used as the basis for excursion risk assessments. For simple excursions such as a visit to a local park a generic risk assessment may suffice. For more complex excursions, such as a residential or an adventure activity, Visit Leaders will need to add details of any significant and foreseeable risks specific to their excursion.

b. **Site-specific risk assessments.** Site specific risk assessments should be used in addition to generic risk assessments to evaluate risks that are particular to your planned activity or excursion. Factors that will influence a site specific assessment include (this list is not exhaustive):

- Participants' age and experience.
- Participants' support needs, especially participants with additional support, educational or behavioural needs.
- Pre-existing medical conditions.
- Whether planned activities will need to be adapted to allow participants to take part.
- Experience of the leader and support staff.
- Location.
- Time of year or expected weather conditions.
- Transport arrangements.

c. **Dynamic risk assessment.** Generic and site-specific risk assessments are generally carried out prior to an excursion. They enable risks to be identified and mitigations to be put in place. Dynamic risk assessment is a continuous process throughout an excursion and is a product of constant monitoring and vigilance by staff and participants. In simple terms dynamic risk assessment is the result of continually asking the question, "What if...?". If the situation changes, does it present a new risk? and what actions need to be taken to reduce or eliminate the risk? Decisions taken as a result are best arrived at and shared in discussion with other staff and participants when appropriate. Regardless of how decisions are made all those potentially affected need to be clearly briefed. Dynamic risk assessments are much less likely to be recorded.

### **Compiling Risk Assessments**

3. Risk assessment is a step-by-step process. When carrying a risk assessment the Visit Leader must:

- a. Identify the significant hazards likely to be encountered.
- b. Assess the risks to identify who might be harmed by the hazard and how.
- c. Control the risk; work out how the risks can be minimised and managed at an acceptable level, identify what control measures are needed - for example; supervisor ratios, staff qualifications or experience, training for staff and participants, defining boundaries for the activity, etc.
- d. Record the findings by uploading completed risk assessments onto the EVOLVE visit request.
- e. Moray Council will carry out an annual review of Generic risk assessments.

4. Outdoor Learning Officers can advise on how to compile risk assessments.

### **Repeated Events**

5. Where an excursion is one of a series of similar events (for example regular outdoor learning events or 'away' sports fixtures) it may not be necessary to carry out a full written risk assessments for every occasion. Such excursions can be entered on EVOLVE as a **recurring event**. Provided that the safety management arrangements and the composition of the party do not change significantly and no additional hazards are identified one generic risk assessment document will suffice. Where minor adjustments are required to the risk assessment a variation sheet should be used.

### **Residual Risk**

6. Whilst every effort should be made to make excursions safe, it is not practicable for all risk to be eliminated from an excursion or activity. Indeed, removing all risk will limit the benefits of the activity in enabling decision making, building confidence and increasing resilience. For example; climbing is a hazardous activity, made safe through the use of protective equipment, well managed safety systems and good belay techniques. Nonetheless, there is a possibility that if a climber slips they will fall a short distance which could result in a minor injury.

7. The risk that remains after having carried out a risk assessment and implementing the necessary control measures is called the "Residual Risk". It is important that all those involved, including parents, are aware and acknowledge that residual risk exists.

### **Recording Risk Assessments**

8. There are a number of risk assessment formats that are being used in schools to record risk assessments. The Generic Risk Assessments on EVOLVE use a clear format for evaluating risk and mitigations. Importantly the format helps to track whether mitigations have been put in place before the excursion starts. Some risk assessment formats, such as Risk Balance Assessments, allow planning and risk analysis to be shown of the same form. Whichever format is used, it is important that all real risks are identified and recorded.