



Use of Medicine, Drugs, Alcohol and Tobacco when on Outdoor Education and External Visits

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The Outdoor Education & External Visits website is at <https://sccocea.org.uk/>

YOUNG PEOPLE’S USE OF MEDICINE/DRUGS/ALCOHOL/TOBACCO

Issues

As part of the planning process for an external visit, the visit leader should carefully consider a range of issues connected with drug use and substance abuse.

These issues include young people and adults responsible for the young people:

- Use of medicines
- Use of tobacco
- Consumption of alcohol including Safety & First Aid
- Use of illegal drugs
- Legal matters when abroad

This section poses a series of questions that should be considered as part of the planning of a visit, and some examples of how discussions may be carried out and agreement reached.

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Key Questions

What are the usual school/establishment rules concerning smoking tobacco, use of alcohol and illegal drugs?

Which sanctions are usually applied when these rules are broken?

Have parents been fully consulted and informed?

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Codes of Conduct and Informing Parents

It is good practice to agree the behaviour expected of young people before they leave, and to inform parents of this.

How will young people be involved in the decision making process?

A meeting is held with participating young people or their representatives. The responsibilities of the adults for ensuring young people's safety are described and agreed behaviour is outlined.

How will parental agreement be sought?

A contract explaining agreed behaviour is signed by the parents and young people prior to the visit.

What if the agreement is broken?

A minor infringement may result in removal of freedoms or privileges. More serious infringements may result in the young person being sent home at the parent's expense.

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Extent of School/Establishment Rules

Existing policies on drug related issues will normally apply to all visits organised and run by the school/ establishment.

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Legal Matters when Abroad

In some countries the legal position of drugs differs from the UK position. Details of these differences may be found at www.fco.gov.uk/travel. When travelling abroad, it is desirable that the visit leader is aware of these differences. However, these differences in legal status of drugs should only alter practice or behaviour expected from young peoples/adults where the country in question has stricter rules than the UK. For example:

Legal age to buy and consume Alcohol:

France - 16 years old – Outcome: UK rules apply

UK - 18 years old but 16 with a meal – Outcome: UK law/rules apply

Iceland - 20 years old – Outcome: Icelandic law applies

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Young People's Use – Medicines

Visit leaders should follow the school/establishment procedures for the recording of medical needs and storage and administration of medicines. If medicines are to be administered whilst on a trip or off-site activity, consent must be given by the child's parents and a responsible adult will be identified to manage and administer the medicine.

Are there young people in your party who have particular medical conditions requiring regular medication?

What additional staffing or provision will you require? How will you ensure that the health and safety of other young people and adults is not affected?

Is there a member of staff willing to administer this medication?

Staff members may or may not be willing to take on this responsibility. Staff could seek advice from their union if they wish to gain further information.

How will you ensure that the staff member has all the relevant information about the medication and its administration?

A specific time should be made to gather this information from the parents. The information should be included on the medical form and the container in which the medicines are supplied. A record should also be kept to document when medicines have been administered to avoid duplicate administering of medicines.

Does the medication require refrigeration?

Check that refrigeration facilities are available, including the journey. If not, seek medical/parental advice on alternatives.

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Young People's Use – Tobacco

Legal Position - Sale of tobacco to under 18's is illegal in the UK.

Somerset Council's smoking policy does not permit smoking on SC premises that are primarily provided to children, or permit staff/adults to smoke in the presence of children on or off site. The visit leader should therefore ensure that they and other staff do not encourage smoking in any way. However, if members of the group are over 18 years, visit leaders may adopt discretion to smoking requests, but it is not acceptable for staff or over 18 students to be accompanied by young people (under 18s) when smoking.

Example: A leader of a residential course was of the informed opinion that some young people (over 18) would not get through a 24 hour period without smoking. The visit leader established prior to the course a designated smoking area and agreed times where the young people could smoke that would not attract participants under the age of 18.

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Young People's Use – Alcohol

Legal Position - In most cases, sale of alcohol to under 18's is illegal in the UK.

It is legal for those over 16 to drink alcohol i.e. beer, cider and wine in a licensed premises if they are accompanied by an adult. It is NOT legal for an individual under 18 to purchase beer, cider or wine with a table meal.

It is legal for those over 5 years old to consume alcohol at home or in private premises.

Alcohol is a substance which can be abused, with significant and potentially dangerous consequences for young people and staff. Every effort should be made to prevent situations where young people are endangered through alcohol abuse. It is expected that single day visits will be alcohol free. However, residential visits may present different issues.

Over 18's

Does the visit involve any young people over 18?

The proportion of young people over 18 may affect the way you deal with this issue.

Will you allow over 18's to drink alcohol at certain times, outside organised activities?

If so, what boundaries will you set? Where will you allow them to drink? Will you allow over 18's to drink only under the direct or remote supervision of a staff member?

How will the under 18's in the group be monitored?

This is only an issue if there are different parameters for over 16's and over 18's. It may be fairer to decide on the same behaviour standards for all young people.

Over 16's and evening meals

Will you allow over 16's to drink alcohol with an evening meal?

If going abroad, check this is within the law of the country you are visiting.

Will you restrict the amount or type of alcohol they may drink?

You may allow over 16's to order one glass of beer, wine or cider with their evening meal.

Will you restrict drinking to group evening meals when staff members are present?

Young people and parents are clear about the sanctions for breaking the behaviour agreement.

How will you monitor those who do not have parental permission to drink alcohol during an evening meal?

Young people and parents are clear about the sanctions for breaking the behaviour agreement.

Foreign Exchange Visits for Under 16's

When young people are staying with families on an exchange visit will you allow them to drink alcohol?

Will the age of the young people affect your decision? You may decide that those over 14 may accept an alcoholic drink from their adult hosts.

Will young people be allowed to accept alcohol from their host families during an evening meal?

Young people will need to be prepared for different cultural expectations about alcohol. You may wish them only to accept beer, wine or cider.

Safety and First Aid

How will young people be reminded of personal safety messages?

The young people may only be allowed out of direct supervision in groups of 3 or more. Geographical boundaries and ground rules should be set for 'down time'.

What emergency procedures will be in place?

The young people must be aware of the action that is expected of them if too much alcohol is consumed. It should be emphasised that breaking the rules is a lesser consideration than individual safety. Young people should know how to summon help immediately, if they feel someone is ill or in danger.

Whatever decisions are made about alcohol use, these must be clearly communicated to young people, parents and host families. The sanctions must be made clear.

It is essential to discuss emergency plans beforehand and to emphasise that personal safety is a far greater consideration than the fear of reprimand.

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Young People's Use - Illegal Drugs

Legal Position - It is illegal to possess, use and supply Class A, B and C drugs. (For further information and confidential drugs advice visit the FRANK website at [www.talktofrank.com/.](http://www.talktofrank.com/))

Cannabis is a Class C drug and is illegal.

The use of solvents and 'poppers' (nitrites) is not illegal, but the course of action a school/establishment takes if young people are using these substances may be similar to the action taken in the case of illegal drug use/supply.

The expectation that there will be no use of illegal substances must be clearly made to young people before departing. The sanctions usually applied to illegal drug use may be transferred to a visit's setting; for example, a young person found in the possession of a single cannabis cigarette may have privileges withdrawn and parents be informed on their return, a young person supplying cannabis to others may be sent home. Parents should also be made aware that should a young person be sent home this will be at the parent's expense.

In the UK teachers/youth workers are not duty bound to inform the police of illegal drug taking, although they may choose to do so if they feel this in the best interests of the child. Visit leaders should ensure they act in accordance with the school/establishment drug policy when dealing with such issues.

Visit leaders should make themselves aware of the legal situation and policing arrangements that apply to the country they are visiting. When abroad, there may be other interpretations of concepts such as 'possession', 'intent' and 'criminal responsibility'.

Example: A primary school group were visiting a county-run residential site. A 10-year-old had lost an item and was being assisted in the search by a staff member. The staff member found a piece of cannabis resin in the child's bag. The child was not aware that cannabis was there. Observed by witnesses, the cannabis was placed in a sealed bag and locked away. The police were asked to collect the cannabis, but were not informed of the child's name.

Example: A 15-year-old on a visit in the UK was found smoking a cannabis cigarette she had brought with her. She had no previous history of illegal drug use on school premises. Her 'free time' was withdrawn for 2 days and her parents were informed. She was warned that a second offence on the trip would lead to her being sent home at her parent's expense.

In the UK, responses to possession, use or supply of illegal drugs should be in keeping with the school/establishment drug policy, taking account of the law and Child Protection considerations.

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STAFF USE OF MEDICINE/DRUGS/ALCOHOL/TOBACCO

Staff Use – Medicines

Visit leaders should ensure that they have relevant information about the medical needs of staff members. These records should be treated confidentially by the visit leader.

Staff members should ensure that their medicines are stored safely. It is expected that staff who use medication are aware of any effects on driving etc. and restrict their actions accordingly.

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Staff Use – Tobacco

The SC Smoking Policy must be adhered to whilst working for/representing the council. This would apply to a visit and also to voluntary employees.

Staff must be clear about the times and places where they may smoke. The rules or policy set by the school/establishment will usually be applied even on off-site visits. Staff/adults must also respect the smoking rules set by the location or facility where an off-site activity is taking place.

Staff should ensure that their behaviour does not encourage smoking.

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Staff Use – Alcohol

Staff alcohol consumption is an issue to be discussed and agreed in the planning stage of a residential/visit.

The key points are:

- The effect of alcohol on health and safety of self and other.
- The effect of alcohol on decision making ability.
- What constitutes being 'off duty'.
- Staff members being fit to return to duty.

It is expected that single day visits will be alcohol free.

Alcohol abuse (used at the wrong time or used to excess) will be considered a disciplinary matter.

Young people should always be supervised by alcohol-free staff, whether this is direct or remote supervision.

Considerations

What is the view of the Head/Senior Manager on staff use of alcohol on an external visit?

Is there a school/establishment policy consistent with the SC Policy on Alcohol, Drugs and Other Substances at Work?

What process will you use to consult staff about decisions and communicate these to staff members before you go?

A meeting may be held to discuss a wide range of issues relating to the visit.

Does the length of the visit affect the decision?

If the visit is short, staff may not wish to use alcohol.

Decision Making with Colleagues

Will there be any staff who will not be drinking alcohol during the trip?

How will you ensure that these staff members are not given additional, unexpected responsibilities?

How will you ensure that working relationships are not put under strain?

If staff are permitted to drink alcohol, how will supervisory responsibilities be organised?

A rota should be established, so that staff members have a clear understanding of when they are on and off duty and what their roles and responsibilities are. At all times, there should be the required levels of supervision by staff who are free from alcohol.

Is it acceptable to drink alcohol in front of young people? If so, what are the restrictions?

It may be decided that a glass of wine during a meal is acceptable. This may be interpreted as modelling sensible drinking.

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Staff Use - Illegal Drugs

Every school/establishment visit should be free from illegal drug use. Illegal drug use by staff will be considered a disciplinary matter.

A staff member must always be capable of fulfilling their duties. This is especially relevant when responsible for the pastoral care and health and safety of young people. Use of illegal substances whilst staffing an educational visit may also threaten the image of the school/establishment and the SC and adversely affect working relationships.

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