



**DRAFT ADMINISTRATIVE CIRCULAR**

**11 /2007**

**30 November 2007**

**HEALTH & SAFETY PROCEDURES - OFF-SITE EXCURSIONS GUIDELINES**

**HOME STAYS RISK ASSESSMENT GUIDANCE.**

This circular gives guidance on procedures to be implemented when organising residential trips involving 'Home Stays'.

It is essential that all staff are made aware of these procedures.

More information can be found in the 'Off-site Excursions Guidelines', the guidelines are accessible at the following link;

<http://www.highland.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/381D71D3-0179-4EBD-A2C3-530284B7E5AA/0/offsite.doc.pdf>

**Message from the Director of Education Culture and Sport**

You may be aware that I requested a review of how Councils across Scotland address the safety issues surrounding 'Home Stay' exchange visits. This guidance has been drawn up in light of that review. Please begin using the guidance for all exchanges from the 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008.

The aim of this guidance is to ensure that the 'proposer' (school/youth club/community group etc.) of a 'home stay' exchange visit, often a Secondary School, has taken steps to minimise any Health & Safety and Child Protection issues.

The guidance seeks to create a clear system that can be replicated by the exchange partner, whether in this country or elsewhere.

The guidance seeks to re-assure the 'proposer' and parents of children involved that all practical steps have been taken to ensure the health, safety and welfare needs of the participants.

Staff following the proposed policy and procedure will be complying with the expectations of the Highland Council and hence be fully supported by the Council.

Reference can be made to the Scottish Executive good practice guide "Health & Safety on Educational Excursions" if further guidance is required. The document is available on the Scottish Executive website: [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk)

Hugh Fraser  
Director of Education Culture and Sport.

## Appendix 1

### Vetting Host Accommodation

#### Guidance for Organisers

#### Notification to Parents

1. The establishment (school/youth group/community group) informs all parents of the decision to engage in an exchange visit that relies upon families volunteering to accommodate a child sent by the exchange partner.
2. The above letter will contain;
  - a. Dates of the exchange
  - b. Location of the exchange
  - c. Target year group/s
  - d. Maximum no. of participants sought
  - e. A request for parents to notify the establishment if they are interested in becoming involved with the exchange.
3. Upon receipt of noted interest, the establishment provides the following additional information by letter.
  - a. Highland Council values your offer to accommodate a young person from e.g. France, prior to the acceptance of this offer we would like to arrange a visit to your home to provide you with the opportunity to discuss the exchange in more detail and for 'your establishment e.g. Grantown Grammar School' to verify that the health, safety and welfare of the incoming participant during their stay with you will be satisfactory.
  - b. Highland Council is guided by the Scottish Executive document, Health and Safety on Education Excursions (HASEE). The following 2 passages are from that document.
  - c. Exploratory visit.
    - i. Wherever possible, the group leader should undertake an exploratory visit to:
      1. ensure at first hand that the venue is suitable to meet the aims and objectives of the excursion;
      2. assess potential areas and levels of risk;
      3. ensure that the venue can cater for the needs of the staff and participants in the group;

In some circumstances it is not possible for the group leaders involved in exchange visits between 2 distant establishments to undertake an exploratory visit, therefore an agreement between the exchange partners to carry out the following with regard to their proposed hosts is essential.

- d. Vetting host families.
  - i. Exchange or home stay visits can be arranged through agencies, in which case the agency should have some responsibility for vetting the host families (***The Highland Council expectation is that any agency contracted to organise such a trip would be expected to take responsibility for vetting host families and that we would need to be re-assured that this had been attended to***). Group leaders making their own arrangements need to be clear about procedures in the relevant country for vetting the suitability of host families including criminal background checks insofar as these are available (***The Highland Council expectation is that group leaders would liaise with the host group leader to establish whether it is practical to carry out the necessary checks***).
  - ii. If the host establishment or placing agency does not have appropriate measures in place for carrying out checks to ensure the health, safety and welfare of exchange or home stay participants, the group leader should seek further assurances and/or reconsider whether the visits should take place.

***The Highland Council expectation is that in all cases parents should be advised accordingly as to what checking procedures had been carried out.***

4. As a minimum the following accommodation has to be provided;
  - a. The young person should only be sharing a room with a person of the same sex.
    - i. Ideally, if there is to be room sharing, there should not be a large age gap between the children or young people concerned;
  - b. The young person should have his/her own bed (even if this is a fold up or temporary guest bed);
  - c. Access to night time bathroom facilities should not be via an adult's bedroom;
  - d. Access to a bedroom or other room used by adults or people of the opposite sex should not be via the young person's bedroom;
  - e. The child or young person should be provided with privacy for dressing or undressing.
5. After a successful exploratory visit on behalf of the exchange partner to the hosts' house in this country, a letter, including a pledge similar to the one below can be sent to the host family.
6. It should be made clear to all parents of children involved that all practical steps to ensure the health, safety and welfare of participants had been taken but that the Highland Council could not guarantee to have personal knowledge of each host family, for this we are reliant upon the rigour of checks by our host organisers.

## Appendix 2

### SAMPLE PLEDGE FOR HOST FAMILY

As a host parent/family I accept my responsibility to undertake the same care as that of a reasonably careful parent. I know of no reason why any member of my household could place a young person at risk by staying in our home.

I undertake to:

- take all necessary steps to ensure a safe and secure home environment for the visiting pupil
- ensure that the agreed code of conduct is observed and that the school is informed of any breaches of this
- inform the school of any problem of health/diet etc. affecting the visiting pupil
- provide suitable sleeping accommodation as witnessed during the visit to our house
- provide meals as indicated in the programme
- inform the school of any activities, such as those listed below, that are being arranged for our guests. Please tick the boxes that apply and add any others that are not covered;

Activity	Tick Box
Canoeing, river kayaking, rafting	
Sea kayaking, surfing, windsurfing	
Sailing, rowing	
Indoor rock climbing, outdoor rock climbing	
Abseiling	
Caving, weaseling	
Gorge walking, canyoning	
Off road cycling	
Skiing	
Hillwalking, scrambling, mountaineering	
Horse riding	
Sub aqua diving	
High ropes course	
Residential trip away from the main home	

Or others as specified;

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix 3**

### **SAMPLE LETTER FOR THE HOST FAMILY**

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Thank you for agreeing to be a host family for the forthcoming visit of our exchange partners from \_\_\_\_\_.

In order to ensure that the trip runs smoothly and safely, I would like to outline your responsibilities, as well as the support available to you in the unlikely event of a problem arising.

As a host family the expectation of Highland Council is that you will undertake the same care which would be expected of a reasonably careful parent.

As you are aware we have discussed and agreed a code of conduct for all participants, and this has been accepted by our exchange partner. It has also been stressed to participants that when your family is hosting them they will be subject to your 'house rules'.

Please ensure that your guest is clear about any house rules and that they find them acceptable.

If your visitor proves difficult and is reluctant to accept your house rules or breaches the code of conduct please do not hesitate to contact any of the staff in charge of the exchange. (Phone numbers attached)

It is important to raise awareness of any problem in the early stages in the hope that it can be dealt with before it becomes serious. If however a serious breach of the code of conduct or a similar breach of the 'house rules' arises (e.g. pupils leaving the house on their own without permission) it is essential that we are alerted immediately.

It has been our experience that the home - stay experience is an enjoyable one for both the host and guest. I hope that this will be the case for you but it is important that you feel confident that we will provide support if this is not the case.

I would be grateful if you would complete and return the attached agreement, confirming that you understand and accept your role as a host.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns regarding the visit, and I look forward to meeting with you when our guests arrive on \_\_\_\_\_.

Yours sincerely

Excursion Leader