



What do you need if you want to do off-site activities?

Once your group is up and running and you have a good established rapport and respect with the young people, you may want to start doing activities that require you to go off-site. Taking a group to an outdoor centre for example can be a hugely rewarding experience both for them and you, however off-site activities require some further planning and management for any trip to be successful.

- Planning and Preparation
- Managing the Group





Planning and Preparation - what else do you need to do for an off-site activity

Summary

So your weekly group sessions have been going well, the young people have requested a summer trip and so you agree. Then the reality hits - you are taking 15 young people away for a few days and you will be responsible for them. The key to any off-site activity whether it's two hours or five days is to ensure you have done your planning and preparation thoroughly. Remember the best way to deal with challenging circumstances is to try and prevent them happening in the first place.

Things to do/consider

- Not taking too many young people away at a time - up to 15 is manageable if this is your first time.
- Not travelling too far - anywhere between 30 mins and an hour is perfect for the first time. This means the young people won't know the area but you are near enough to home should things happen. Make sure that you know the route well and have identified possible stops for comfort breaks.
- Getting some training - you are responsible for the young people, someone will have signed a consent form that says this. This is not a holiday or fun break for you, you need to have some knowledge of what could happen and what you are responsible for.
- Talking to experienced youth workers about what to expect and how to avoid any pitfalls.
- Getting the young people involved in the planning - what activities do they want to do, how can they help write the risk assessments etc?

Useful links

- The NSPCC has guidance on supervision including ratios for different age groups – <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/safeguarding/recommended-adult-child-ratios-working-with-children-guidance/>
- Momentum runs a training course for people new to taking groups away.



Principles

- You will need to ensure you get special consent from parents/carers to do an off-site activity - make sure this includes details of all relevant information including medication and allergies, permission (or not) for photographs and filming, and details of an emergency contact at all times. You will also need to have pertinent details including emergency contact for all the adults.
- It is best practice to have all persons 18 years and over DBS Checked. Momentum recommends all DBS Checks are updated every three years.
- Visit where you are going so that you can talk to the relevant providers about your group and what you want to happen.
- Do the relevant risk assessments - this is why a pre-site visit is essential. This should include managing travel, mealtimes, bedtimes and showers (if staying overnight).
- Ensure you have the right adult to young person supervision ratios. From aged 13-18, there should be at least one adult to 10 young people, however there should always be at least two adults even if you only have 6 young people you are taking away. If it is a mixed group, then there should be both a male and a female worker.
- All the consent forms need to be copied and left with a suitable emergency contact who is not going on the trip. The original consent forms need to go with you and be on your person at all times.
- Some young people might need to take regular medication - details of which should be on their consent form. You may want to find out more details, such as what time they should take their medication, whether it should be taken with food and if they are confident taking it themselves. Remind them to bring at least enough for the whole stay.
- Ensure your insurance covers you for the trip and that if you are going to an activity provider, check they have appropriate insurance and safeguards in place.
- If the young people are paying, make sure all money is collected from young people prior to any important cancellation dates with the provider.
- If young people will be sharing rooms, it can be helpful to plan room allocations in advance so you don't have a 'free for all' when you get there. Think about young people's ages and personality types - the shyest member of the group probably won't want to share a room with three very loud and excitable young people.
- Do a timetable, know what you are going to do and when with the young people. Remember that if going to a provider, you will need to occupy the young people when the formal activities are not taking place. However, see the next sheet concerning managing the group.



Managing a Group - what difference does being off-site mean?

Summary

No matter how positive your relationship with your group is on a weekly basis, it is important to realise that you are having to start again when you take a group of young people away. There are basic group theories that illustrate this but it is enough to know that you are taking a group of young people away from home with all that this entails. You can be assured that the young people will be excited and a bit worried as they will be doing something new away from the glare of their parents/carers which may also lead to the belief that suddenly they are free from their normal obligations. It is your job to ensure that you maintain safe boundaries and expectations on behaviour so that everyone has a good time, hopefully trouble-free.

Things to do/consider

- How many adults are you taking? It is better to have too many so that when problems arise they can be dealt with safely and the rest of the group still managed well. A good number is 1 adult to 5 young people.
- Talking with your staff team, how you will all deal with specific problems that may arise. Consistency from all members of the team is really important.
- Getting some training to help you understand and deal with some of the scenarios that may happen.
- The routine – this becomes very important when managing a group of people. People generally like to know what they should be doing and when, this helps manage expectations and behaviours.

Useful links

Momentum run a training programme useful for taking groups of young people away -

<http://www.momentumnorfolk.org.uk/our-services/the-training-hub/course/details.asp?CourseId=406>



Principles

- You need to start preparing the group for what to expect prior to going away - talk about how things will be different, this is part of the experience, so learning to cope with the change is important.
- Work out a behaviour contract with the young people that includes acceptable bedtimes, use of mobile phones, mealtimes, things you are not allowed to bring and what happens if you do bring them e.g. alcohol and drugs.
- Remember if you notice the little things, it mitigates against future risks so praise helpful behaviour and challenge negative behaviour e.g. saying (or not) please and thank you.
- It is important to ensure that everyone is eating and drinking, as soon as people become hungry and/or thirsty behaviour problems can arise. However unless the consent form states otherwise, don't start trying to cater individual meals - you will end up with lots of problems. Remember not liking food is not the same as having an allergy or an eating disorder.
- Ensure girls and boys sleep in separate corridors/areas and that these are appropriately supervised by staff of the same gender.
- Ensure time is always supervised - it may say 'freetime' on the timetable but that does not apply to the adults. Put on informal activities when there are lulls and ensure you know where all your young people are at any point.
- Be flexible with the timetable, if something is not working don't be afraid to get it changed or do something completely different.
- You will be tired - understand this as you cannot be taking breaks whenever you feel like it - you are responsible for a group of young people.
- You will be dealing with lots of possible different problems that could include tiredness, homesickness, overheating, arguments etc - be prepared for this.
- Have fun - off site activities should be loads of fun for everyone.