**SAFETY & RISK ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW**

**FOR VISIT LEADERS**

**Introduction**

The following information has been developed by Sandwell Residential Education Service (SRES) to provide schools and other groups with relevant and appropriate information for visits to Edgmond Hall, the Frank Chapman Centre, Ingestre Hall and **Plas Gwynant**, in accordance with the OEAP National Guidance.

See: [**http://oeapng.info/**](http://oeapng.info/)

This visit information is required by individual schools and groups to assist the completion of their own risk assessments prior to undertaking a visit. It also enables the school to adopt necessary control measures in managing health and safety risks relating to pupils and staff while they are at the Centre.

The information provided is intended to:

* Give reassurance that Health and Safety is effectively managed, and;
* Assist in the reduction of unnecessary paperwork in the planning and permission needed to execute a visit from a school or youth group.

**Risk assessments and national guidance**

Please note that **Plas Gwynant OEC** holds the **Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge and an Adventurous Activity Licensing Authority license holder .**

National Guidance issued by the OEAP states:

***Q. “Do you ask to see a provider’s risk assessments?***

*A. Risk assessments tend to be technical documents.  Unless a visit leader is qualified to understand, assess and, if necessary, challenge them, there is little purpose in asking for copies. It makes much more sense to gain the information you need through a pre-visit or dialogue with the provider.*

*Nevertheless, providers tell us that they still get asked for copies of their risk assessments. We have therefore updated the documents*[*6a FAQ Asking for a provider’s risk assessments*](https://oeapng.info/downloads/download-info/6a-faqs-asking-for-providers-risk-assessments/)*and*[*4.4h Using external providers and facilities*](https://oeapng.info/downloads/download-info/4-4h-preliminary-visits-and-provider-assurances/)*to underline that there are more effective ways to gain the information that you need.* ***The easiest way to check that the quality and safety of most providers has been externally accredited is to look for the Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge.”***

Our full documentation is readily available **only** at the centres and visitors are welcome to inspect it at any time. However, due to the size and waste involved in the production of copies, it will not be copied or sent off site electronically as it is out of date once issued. Many of these documents are what is called ‘living’ and are regularly or continually under review. Dynamic or active risk assessments are constantly made by staff whilst running activities.

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| Safety Statement | Sandwell Residential Education Service fully accepts its responsibility under Health and Safety Legislation. A Health and Safety Policy for each centre is in place together with written risk assessments undertaken in respect of our legal duties relating to persons other than employees (i.e. visitors) coming to the centre and using our facilities.  Please be assured that your safety and health whilst at a SRES centre is of our utmost concern. We are owned and run by Sandwell Council, and work closely within their H&S framework. We take advice from professional bodies, including the Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centres, (AHOEC); the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom (CLOtC); Adventurous Activity Licensing Authority (AALA) and Sandwell’s Educational Visits Advisors, who are members of the Outdoor Education Advisors’ Panel (OEAP). We want to ensure that your visit is a fun, enjoyable learning experience, with excellent risk management.  We operate a policy for staff recruitment, induction, training and assessment, which ensures that all staff with a responsibility for the safety and welfare of visitors / participants are qualified to undertake the duties they are assigned.  Schools are informed of the following details that will aid the undertaking of your own school ‘educational visit’ risk assessment for the purposes of your visit. |

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| **Background** | |
| History | Plas Gwynant Outdoor Education Centre has been operating since 1958. |
| Venue Summary | Plas Gwynant OEC offers clients the opportunity of experiencing outdoor educational activities on residential courses as well as individual skills courses. |
| Visitor No. | In excess of 2000 per year |
| Suitability | The centre is suitable for pupils from Year 5 upwards, and courses can be tailored to suit the objectives of the clients and schools.  The centre offers programmes of adventure, curriculum-based study and environmental awareness. |
| Contact Information | We look forward to welcoming you; however, if you wish to discuss aspects of your visit or would like to arrange a pre-visit please do not hesitate to contact: -  Jeff Handley, Head of Centre; or Dan Jackson, Senior Tutor; both on 01766 890212.  This telephone number is also the emergency contact number for schools and parents if they should require emergency contact.  If, during or after your visit, you have any concerns or experienced any problems regarding the management of the centre or safety and health of members of your party, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss these with you.  A list of schools that have visited the venue is available upon request.  We would request that the group leader reports to the main office on arrival. |
| **General Information** | |
| Communication Systems | There is no mobile phone signal. The centre has Wi-Fi and phones available to visitors. |
| Staff background checks | All centre staff have been subject to enhanced DBS checks. |
| Equipment | All equipment is regularly checked to ensure it remains ‘fit for purpose’. Results of inspections are recorded in an equipment log. |
| Emergency Evacuation | Emergency evacuation procedures are in place. All centre staff are familiar with and regularly practice these.  On hearing the alarm, which is a continuous ringing siren, all visitors must make their way to the dedicated Assembly Point  Plas Gwynant – the bottom of the main carpark |
| Facilities for visitors with Special Needs | The centre tries to accommodate the requirements of visitors with special needs. Please contact us early to discuss these, and to help/inform specific risk assessments where required.  Schools and party leaders must ensure that suitable arrangements are in place in order that appropriate supervision and assistance is available to special needs pupils. |
| First Aid | The main First-Aid point is located in the staff room in the main building. Other kits are mobile or situated and signed around site.  All Centre staff are first aid qualified and hold a current certificate. A duty instructor is on call either onsite or locally based for staffed/catered residential courses.  On activities off-site instructors will be carrying appropriate first aid kits. |
| Centre Briefing | Soon after arrival all school groups will be given a detailed "centre briefing" covering fire, rules, emergency procedures and a wide variety of useful information to enable the visit to be safe, enjoyable and fun.  Any detailed medical or dietary needs will be discussed with the group leaders and appropriate provision made. |
| Insurance (Public Liability) | We have a public liability insurance of £5,000,000 and employer's liability of £5,000,000.  A copy of our insurance certificate can be provided on request. |
| Group supervision | On activities an instructor will be responsible for the technical instruction of the activity. A responsible adult group leader/teacher will pastorally supervise all groups and group discipline will be the responsibility of that leader – who has a higher duty of care throughout the stay.  Clear handovers at starts and ends of activities will be done by the staff to ensure everyone is clear where responsibility lies.  At other times there will be a "duty instructor" on site acting as first aid as well as being on call overnight for any emergency etc.  At times group members will have "free time" enabling them to explore the grounds and play. However, the centre briefing given on arrival at the centre will lay down the boundaries, rules and regulations.  As part of the outdoor experience, some activities and free time will involve young people "exploring" the centre grounds, e.g. orienteering where they will not be directly supervised by an adult. However, great care is taken in choosing the correct venue for remote supervision and a detailed activity briefing will be given to all participants. Boundaries are set and discussed with visiting staff. |
| Maximum Party Sizes | The main centre sleeps up to 54 children and 6 staff in a mix of different sized dormitories and 4 ensuite staff bedrooms |
| Medical Needs | The centre should be contacted by the school or party leader if any pupil is known to have any specific or serious medical condition / need. We also ask that Behavioural / Dietary / Learning information is passed to us two weeks in advance to ensure the safety of all participants. Parents are reminded to ensure the party leaders/school have the most up to date information.  We will, where it is safe to do so, aim to fully include pupils with specific or serious medical conditions within activities offered this may require extra pastoral staff supplied by the group leaders. |
| Covid-19 | The centre has in place operational procedures and risk assessments in line with the latest guidance on Covid-19. These are revised and updated as the guidance changes. This information will be shared with school/group leaders prior to the visit, as group numbers and routines may be different from previous visits. Group leaders will be required to ensure that groups comply with the revised procedures. |
| Harmful / Poisonous Plants | At certain times of the year some harmful plants and berries may be present on trees and shrubs within the grounds, and in areas visited. Group leaders should advise all children that berries should not be picked or eaten unless directed by an instructor |
| Required Visitor Conduct | Visitors must   * abide by the rules and regulations given at the centre briefing and on notice boards * follow the rules, regulations and safety guidelines given by instructors on activities * follow instructions given by teachers/group leaders/instructors |
| Bedrooms | A bedroom plan will be confirmed by the group leader for allocation of beds for the group prior to arrival. This forms part of the centres fire and emergency plan – changes must be notified to the centre immediately. |
| Site Inspections of Centre Facilities / Areas | Centre staff conduct regular inspections of the facilities and an internal reporting mechanism is in place for any safety hazards. Please help us by pointing out any faults so we can rectify them. |
| Site Staff Identification | All instructors will be introduced to the group at the earliest opportunity and whilst the "duty instructor" is in charge of the daily routine, any instructor can be approached at any time for assistance. |
| Vehicle Traffic | A site speed restriction, with appropriate signage of 10 m.p.h. is in place. Limited car parking is available. Space is available for parking of coaches, but this is loading and unloading only  . |
| Weather Protection / Sun Safety | The centre provides waterproofs, wellies, rucksacks, fleeces and walking boots along with any technical equipment that is needed. Participants can bring their own equipment; our staff will always check it’s suitable  Sun protection is principally down to the group leader though guidance will be given by centre staff on methods of protection from the sun. |
| Welfare Facilities | Toilets and showers are available for use by the groups at the centre either ensuite in dormitories or shared facilities.  The kitchen caters for a wide range of religious and dietary intolerances if informed in advance but does not provide a menu choice. |

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| **Areas of Higher Risk** | |
| Adventurous Activities | We are inspected by the following industry quality badge providers.  Adventurous Activity Licensing Authority  We offer a full range of adventurous activities, staff are fully qualified and experienced to lead these. More details of these activities are on our website  Learning outside the Classroom Quality Badge  Association of Heads of Outdoor Education Centre’s Gold Standard  AAIAC Adventure Mark  All the activities offered are subject to specific risk assessment based upon current legislation, best practice, guidance and information.  All activity leaders possess the necessary competence, qualifications (where applicable) and experience required for the discharge of their responsibility.  Decisions regarding the undertaking of activities are made at the time taking into account a number of factors including a risk benefit analysis and forecast weather conditions.  If a certain activity is postponed we will where possible arrange for an alternative activity to be undertaken, subject to the safety of the group. |
| Own Clothing | A kit list of recommended clothing to bring for the outdoor activity course is available on our website for schools and parents to look at. |
| Residential Accommodation | A fire risk assessment is in place and is regularly updated. Regular evacuation drills are practised and fire exits, fire extinguishers and automatic smoke detection systems are regularly inspected. Evacuation procedures are displayed throughout all buildings. The fire drill procedure is explained in detail to groups upon arrival at the centre.  Glazing within the main centre accommodation is of a safety, toughened or laminated standard.  All accommodation blocks can be locked by group leaders during the day when nobody is on the site.  There is provision for safe storage of luggage, clothes, rucksacks and other outdoor equipment. We have an excellent drying room to dry wet kit at the end of an adventurous day.  There is no provision for the keeping of valuables. All visitors are responsible for their own equipment and valuables. Any electrical equipment must be inspected on arrival before use is allowed.  Within the accommodation areas there are toilet blocks, each with hot and cold-water supply and each with WCs.  These are located in close proximity to sleeping areas. |

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| **Other Relevant Information** (including items not covered above (including general hazards) or where details of any of the above specifications cannot be met) | |
| Many control measures have been put in place to protect and ensure an enjoyable but safe visit, it must be borne in mind that the purposes and objectives of an outdoor education centre is to help participants experience a sense of adventure, perceived risk and develop a sense of personal responsibility with the hope that this will help them learn and grow as an individual.  Whilst parental responsibility is represented by the teacher or group leader; and the safety and skills are the centre instructor's responsibility; group members are likely to have a certain amount of freedom during their course, suitable to their age/ability. During this time, they are not directly supervised but are expected to obey the rules of the centre and to behave responsibly at all times. | |
| Signed |  |
| **Date** | 09.07.21 |
| **Name (In capitals)** | JEFF HANDLEY |
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