

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education, Culture and Sport
DATE	7 January 2010
DIRECTOR	Annette Bruton
TITLE OF REPORT	Aberdeen City Council Outdoor Learning and Educational Excursions policy and guidance
REPORT NUMBER:	ECS / 09 / 053

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To replace, update and combine two existing Council policies:

- a) Safety and Good Practice in Outdoor Education II
- b) Aberdeen City Council Educational Excursions Policy

To become “Aberdeen City Council Outdoor Learning and Educational Excursions Policy and Guidance”

A full copy of this document can be found on a link at the bottom of the **adventure aberdeen** webpage – www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/adventureaberdeen

The policy sets out best practice and procedure for the organisation and management of all excursions from establishments and learning centres. It also describes the policy and practice for the safety management of adventurous Outdoor Education activities for Council groups.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- a) That the Aberdeen City Council Outdoor Learning and Educational Excursions Policy and Guidance be adopted and implemented in all City Council educational establishments for excursions taking place after 1 April 2010.

- b) The Committee agree the policy statement that:

Aberdeen City Council believes that all children and young people should have experience of the outdoors and that, within the purposes and principles of Curriculum for Excellence, learning outside and excursions beyond learning establishments are key elements of the curriculum.

- c) That the City Council actively encourages educational establishments and learning providers to expand the amount of outdoor learning and educational excursions provided, taking account of available resources.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The policy and guidance will be introduced and operate within existing resources.

4. SERVICE & COMMUNITY IMPACT

A launch of an improved and enhanced excursions policy will enable schools and learning centres across all Council services to take part in learning out of doors more easily and with greater confidence.

This will have positive implications for all Aberdeen citizens but specifically for Early Years, school age children and young people. Taking learning out of doors contributes significantly to the values, purposes and principles of Curriculum for Excellence.

5. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Health and Safety legislation states that it is a statutory requirement of local authorities to manage their day to day activities ensuring measures are in place to safeguard the people in its care.

Without an up to date policy and associated administrative processes in place there is not the required legal and health and safety cover for activities being run from Aberdeen City Council establishments and services. The Council's Adventure Activities Licensing Authority license requires the Council to have up to date procedures to be in place to manage adventurous activities.

This policy provides a health and safety framework for outdoor learning and excursions. It details the required level of support and guidance to meet these requirements and addresses support structures to encourage and enable Council groups to take part in educational excursions and activities away from the learning establishment.

6. REPORT

Background

- 6.1 Aberdeen City Council's Safety Policy for Adventurous Activities "Safety and Good Practice in Outdoor Education II (1999)" has not been reviewed for 10 years and requires to be updated to reflect current best practice and developments in outdoor activities. As this review progressed it was apparent that updating and incorporating the Council's Educational Excursions Policy (2003) at the same time would be beneficial to remove longstanding confusion and duplication within the two policies.

- 6.2 During this process a document was published from the Welsh Assembly which encapsulated up-to-date thinking on all matters relating to excursions and adventurous outdoor activities. This document has been used in part as a template for the new policy, which now contains UK-wide, Scottish and Aberdeen City best practice.
- 6.3 Presently, the Scottish Parliament has commissioned the Outdoor Learning Scottish Advisory Group, (OLSAG), to make recommendations to Parliament as to how Scotland should support, resource and develop Outdoor Learning and Outdoor Education in the future. The Group has been asked to look at national entitlements for children and young people learning out of doors, including Outdoor Learning / Education, health and safety matters and barriers to participation, residential weeks and examples of best practice. Whilst these recommendations are not expected until Spring 2010, officers have taken account of many of the keys issues in developing the Policy and Guidance for the City Council.
- 6.4 It is widely recognised that outdoor learning and educational excursions can make a very positive contribution to young people's learning, with much research to back this up. There has nevertheless been a reduction in the amount of activity over recent years, due to a range of factors including concerns about Health and Safety; liability; and cost.
- 6.5 The new Policy aims to clearly advocate for the benefit of Outdoor Learning and Education Excursions, and the associated guidance provides positive support for staff and establishments, in order to help build staff confidence; to provide detailed advice and guidance; and to simplify the administrative process associated with running excursions. This will make it easier for establishments to provide activities and experiences away from the classroom, to broaden and enhance the learner's experience of the curriculum.
- 6.6 The following 2 appendices extracted from the policy and guidance document lay out the context, rationale and background for the need to update the existing policy relating to outdoor education and educational excursions.

Appendix 1

This is the draft introductory pages of the policy document and explains its purpose, aims and rationale.

Appendix 2

This is the draft contents pages of the policy and guidance document. As can be seen the document is large and comprehensive. It presently stands at 432 pages. During the consultation process this will be reduced.

7. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

Jonathan Kitching
jkitching@aberdeencitycouncil.gov.uk
adventure aberdeen
Tel (01224) 346191

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Safety and Good Practice in Outdoor Education II
Aberdeen City Council 1999.
- Educational Excursions Policy
Aberdeen City Council 2003
- Educational Visits - A safety guide for learning outside the classroom.
Welsh Assembly 2008

Appendix 1

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCILS OUTDOOR LEARNING AND EDUCATIONAL EXCURSIONS POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Council Statement

Aberdeen City Council believes that all children and young people should have experience of the outdoors and that, within the purposes and principles of Curriculum for Excellence, learning outside and excursions beyond learning establishments are key elements of the curriculum.

Introduction

The Scottish Government's national programme for education 'Curriculum for Excellence' aims to achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, enriched and more flexible curriculum from 3 to 18, firmly focused on the needs of the child and young person. It is a key element in the Single Outcome Agreement and the focus of development in schools, other learning establishments and beyond.

Curriculum for Excellence recognises that learning is embedded in experience. By taking learning outdoors we remove the barriers that the traditional classroom can put up between young people and first-hand, real-life experiences. Outdoor learning is hands-on and direct, and the knowledge that pupils gain from it is real, first-hand and unforgettable.

'In essence, [the curriculum] must be inclusive, be a stimulus for personal achievement and, through the broadening of pupils' experience of the world, be an encouragement towards informed and responsible citizenship.'
(A Curriculum for Excellence)

All excursions will have an educational context and in the following policy and guidance all outdoor learning and educational excursions will be referred to under the heading of excursions.

The Benefits of Outdoor Learning and Outdoor Education

Outdoor learning is an increasingly used term that refers to taking the learning process out of doors. This could be into the school area, the wider community or to sites beyond these. The curriculum for excellence is increasingly advocating the benefits of outdoor learning knowing that it enriches learning and accelerates the development of the learner.

Outdoor learning takes curricular study areas out of doors to make the learning process more alive. Real environments and sites used creatively and with exploratory and enquiry based techniques, or used to problem solve in small groups is widely recognised as a way of making learning more exiting and engaging for pupils and young people.

For Early Years this educational approach is proving to be highly effective, to the extent that it features prominently in the Early Years Framework.

Outdoor Education is a long established method for learning using the outdoors and adventurous activities. It involves active learning through direct personal

experience. Activities and opportunities focus on group work in the outdoors and the in the pursuit of predetermined educational objectives and outcomes.

The scope and nature of Outdoor Education opportunities are designed to meet the needs of the individuals and group taking part. Different groups will concentrate on different types of learning and outcome.

The Outdoor Education process requires many things of participants including the need to plan, assess risks, prepare, listen to instructions, work in small teams, exercise responsible and respectful behaviour rise and aspire to challenges, learn and develop new skills and promote positive attitudes to peers and the natural environment and goal set to improve / do better another time.

Outdoor Education in its truest sense will concentrate on developing the individual in a group setting through the medium of an activity in the natural environment. Quality Outdoor Education work can significantly contribute to an individual's capacity to learn, understanding of the present needs for healthy and active living, good citizenship and environmental stewardship.

The adventurous activities used to develop the learning process must be enveloped in a culture of safety and professional practice to make the Outdoor Education picture complete. The 'level' of activity must be designed to meet the age, ability and expectations of the individuals and group taking part. An inclusive approach allows for the needs of individuals to be taken into account whilst at the same time excluding nobody from the potential benefits and rewards to be gained.

The benefits of excursions

Excursions offer an invaluable opportunity to enrich peoples learning, raise their self esteem, increase their motivation and appetite for learning and raise levels of achievement in many aspects of their life and education.

Exploring new places and environments and taking part in new and challenging activities broadens peoples horizons and can deepen awareness of their own and others abilities and needs. Excursions can also improve understanding between excursion members and their leaders and this frequently results in improved working relationships on return to the establishment.

Excursions often provide some of the most enjoyable experiences and enduring memories. Residential excursions in particular offer unique opportunities to encounter the practical realities of living and working together away from home, family and familiar surroundings. They provide a powerful vehicle for developing self awareness and social skills

Excursions with an adventurous activity focus provide situations in which participants can gain personal fulfilment whilst developing the skills of co-operation, communication and teamwork, and developing the concepts of responsible and respectful behaviour. They can boost confidence and open the door to a lifetime of enjoyment and activity out of doors.

Excursions with cultural or field work focus provide opportunities to enrich curricula subjects and enhance the diversity of learning approaches. Increasingly the quality of the learning experience is being focused on by inspectors as the 3-18 curriculum is built and the principles of curriculum for excellence are developed in schools.

Illness and conditions associated with inactivity currently pose a serious threat to Scotland's health. Engaging people in healthy, fulfilling activity is vitally important if we are to tackle the rise in related health conditions such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes. Developing healthy lifestyles from an early age is regarded as one of the main keys to turning round the health of the nation.

We have a key role to play in creating opportunities for people to take part in activities that can provide them with the skills and experience for a wide range of opportunities and life chances. Hand in hand with this comes a responsibility to educate young people about the success story of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code promoting responsible and respectful access.

Excursions to demanding environments or involving adventure activities, also provide an effective means to develop the ability of young people to recognise and manage risk sensibly: to enjoy the outdoors while keeping themselves and others safe.

Research Evidence

While national policy might dictate that young people spending time outdoors is a good thing, and on an instinctive level we might agree, is there evidence to prove it? A wealth of research has been carried out around the world and the results are a resounding endorsement of the benefits of outdoor learning. The National Foundation for Educational Research review of 150 outdoor learning studies worldwide between 1993 and 2003¹ found evidence that outdoor learning offers an ideal framework for achieving the four capacities:

Successful learners:

- Outdoor learning develops knowledge and skills in ways that add value to learners' everyday experiences in the classroom.
- It has a positive impact on long-term memory.
- It reinforces links between the affective and the cognitive, with each influencing the other and providing a bridge to higher order learning.
- It fosters the development of specific academic skills, as well as improved engagement, achievement and stronger motivation to learn.

Confident individuals:

- Outdoor learning impacts positively on young people's attitudes, beliefs and self-perceptions, for example independence, confidence, self-esteem, locus of control, self-efficacy, personal effectiveness and coping strategies.
- It yields benefits in the promotion of positive behaviour and improved physical self-image and fitness.

Responsible citizens:

Outdoor learning has a positive effect on social development and greater community involvement.

¹ A review of research on outdoor learning, March 2004, NFER and King's College, London.

- It raises learners' attainment, improves attitudes towards the environment, and creates more positive relationships with each other, with teachers and with the wider community.
- It renews learners' pride in their community and fosters a greater sense of belonging and responsibility.

Effective contributors:

- Outdoor learning impacts positively on young people's interpersonal and social skills, such as social effectiveness, communication skills, group cohesion and team work.

Taken from the Learning and Teaching Scotland web pages on outdoor learning (<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/outdoorlearning/about/about.asp>)

Legal framework

Under the **Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974** employers are responsible for the health, safety and welfare at work of their employees. Employers are also under a duty to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of anyone else who may be affected by their activities. This includes participants on excursions.

The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992 (updated 1999), made under the 1974 Act, require employers to:

- assess the risks of activities (see Risk Management)
- ensure that measures to control those risks are adequate.

Suitable and sufficient risk assessments of the activities will be undertaken with specific consideration for the participants. The identified safety control measures must be clearly relayed to those involved, followed and enforced.

Due to the nature of the activities dynamic risk assessments will also be undertaken at regular intervals. 'In the field' monitoring will ensure that the risks and controls are continuously reviewed to ensure that they are appropriate, adequate and effective.

Also under the Health and Safety legislation employees must:

- take reasonable care of their own and others' health and safety
- co-operate with their employers over safety matters
- carry out activities in accordance with training and instructions
- inform the employer of any serious risks

These duties apply to all activities, including excursions. Teachers / youth workers and other staff in charge of under 16's and 16 -18 year olds also have a common law duty of care to act as any reasonably prudent parent would do in the same circumstances.

Appendix 2

Contents pages from the policy documents

Section A

Excursions Policy

- Introduction
- Legal framework
- Planning excursions
- Staffing excursions
- Selection and preparation of participants
- Communicating with parents/carers
- Organisation and supervision during the excursion
- After the excursion
- Advice on specific activities and excursions
- Establishment led adventure activities:
- Duke of Edinburgh's Award Expeditions
- Insurance, Selection, notification and approval
- Planning transport
- Emergency procedures
- Excursions abroad

Section A – Appendices

Appendix 1
Excursion forms

Appendix 2
Finance forms

Appendix 3
Risk assessment guidance

Appendix 4
Minibuses and driving

Appendix 5
Weather

Appendix 6
Duty of Care

Appendix 7
Health matters

Appendix 8
Access to land and water

Section B

Land Based Activities

Chapter

1. Walking: Low Level and Hill Walking
2. Climbing
3. Artificial Wall Climbing
4. Rock Scrambling
5. Camping
6. Expeditions
7. Orienteering
8. Mountain Biking
9. Horse Riding
10. Team Challenge Activities – Non-Technical
11. Team Challenge Activities – Technical

Water Based Activities

Chapter

1. Kayaking
2. Pool Kayaking
3. Canoeing
4. White Water Rafting
5. Surfing and Boogie Boarding
6. Dinghy Sailing and Windsurfing
7. Rowing
8. Fishing
9. Swimming in Natural Waters

Snow Based Activities

Chapter

1. Alpine
2. Nordic
3. Snowboarding
4. Artificial Slopes

Section B – Appendices

Section C

Use of providers of adventurous outdoor activities

Section C – Appendices

Appendix 1
Service Profile

Appendix 2
Adventure activities agreement

Appendix 3
Service schedule

Section D

Contents

Aberdeen City Council Outdoor Learning Framework

Section D of this policy and guidance will be produced during 2010. A local Outdoor Learning framework will be influenced by the National Outdoor Learning framework that is currently under development.

The National Outdoor Learning Framework will be influenced by both the recommendations from the Outdoor Learning Scottish Advisory Group (OLSAG) reporting in the spring of 2010 and the values, purposes and principles of Curriculum for Excellence.

This section of the policy and guidance will include;

- An overall framework for Aberdeen City articulate with the National framework,
- Examples of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes that can be delivered locally out of doors and other examples of learning in an outdoor context.
- Examples of local interesting practice in early years, primary, secondary and special sectors as well as in community learning and development / youth work settings.
- Other useful resources and references