

Emergency Planning for School Visits & Journeys Best Practice Guidance

June 2022



This document should be read in conjunction with the CBC Educational Visits & Journeys Policy (June 2022).

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Best Practice Guidance

Emergency Planning for Visits and journeys

In most instances, thorough planning of an Educational Visit or Journey will enable avoidance of any critical incidents. However, it is impossible to eliminate all risks. Accidents and even fatalities can happen on school visits, although the statistical likelihood of this happening is very low.

As a result of the horrific coach crash in France involving staff and pupils of Alvechurch School, Worcestershire County Council (WCC) conducted a thorough review of their emergency procedures in relation to visits and journeys. A number of recommendations were made at the time, many of which were adopted to improve our own practice here in Central Bedfordshire.

The main issue for Worcestershire County Council arising from the Alvechurch crash, was the delay in activating emergency response procedures. In this instance, there was one 'field file' on the coach held by the Group Leader who was unfortunately killed in the crash. In the aftermath, this paperwork was scattered throughout the coach because of the coach rolling down an embankment. This made it very difficult for the other leaders and Emergency services to identify quickly and accurately, those who were injured, and communicate this to the nominated Emergency contact back at school.

Arrangements in Central Bedfordshire:

- **School Emergency Contact** - This is usually a senior member of staff, Head Teacher or an Educational Visits Co-ordinator (EVC). For a residential visit they need to be available 24 / 7. Quite often the School Emergency Contact is a School Administrator or Heads PA/Office secretary for non residential visits of low complexity.
- **Field File** - All emergency contact information for both pupils and staff are held by the Group Leader. A copy of this file will also be held by the School Emergency Contact person.
- **Itinerary** - A copy of the itinerary is held by the School Emergency Contact and by the local Authority (via EVOLVE). This ensures that, as far as is possible, the exact location of the group at any given time is known.
- **Emergency Cards** - The Group Leader carries a copy of the Visit Leader Emergency Card (*Appendix M*). This provides a number of key prompts for dealing with emergency situations together with some key emergency numbers. The School Emergency Contact carries a similar card (*Appendix N*).
- **CBC Duty Emergency Planning Officer (DEPO)**. In instances where schools do not have the resources to deal with an emergency or where emergency services or other external agencies have become involved, then the school will contact the DEPO.

Further Recommendations;

- For complex visits, (e.g residential, overseas or adventurous) an 'Assistant Group Leader' will be designated from amongst the other supporting Supervisors on the visit. This assistant will also have a copy of the field file. Where the group is large enough to fill more than one coach, it is recommended that two copies of the Field File are carried on each coach.
- All adults on the visit will carry a phone number for the School Emergency Contact, the Central Bedfordshire Council DEPO as well as the mobile numbers for all of the other adults also accompanying the visit.
- EVC and Group Leader training organised by Central Bedfordshire Council includes specific training with regard to dealing with emergencies arising on school visits.
- School Emergency Contacts to be fully briefed regarding the role they are undertaking. They must:
 - be competent and confident to make difficult phone calls.
 - be able to advise the Group Leader in an emergency.
 - be familiar with their own establishment Emergency Plan.
 - understand when and how to contact the Central Bedfordshire Council Duty Emergency Planning Officer (DEPO)
 - have a copy of the field file.
 - be in contact with the premises key holder.

Emergency Scenario Training Exercise's:

- Coach breakdown on a motorway
- Health concerns on a residential visit
- A lost child on a visit abroad

It would be good practice for Group Leaders and School Emergency Contacts to sit down as a group and review these scenarios. This session could be led by the EVC. It is important for staff to know how to respond appropriately to a variety of emergencies and when to involve the CBC Duty Emergency Planning Officer. Whilst this list of 'emergencies' is far from exhaustive they do represent a range of problems, solutions for which are transferable to other situations.

Scenario 1: Coach Breakdown:

You are the designated Emergency Contact person for a party of 45 Year 6 pupils accompanied by 5 staff. They are visiting Alton Towers as an end of term 'rewards' visit.

It is approximately 6.25 pm. You have been phoned at home by the Group Leader. Apparently, the coach has broken down one mile south of junction 14 (Newport Pagnell).

- **What do you do / Who do you inform?**
- **What advice would you offer to the Group Leader?**
- **Would you contact the Central Bedfordshire Duty Emergency Planning Officer (DEPO)?**

Visit Emergency Contact Training Scenario 1: Coach Breakdown Debrief

The Basics:

- Activate your establishment's Emergency Plan for visits
- Begin making a record – using any pro-forma provided in your Emergency Plan
- Note the time of the incoming call
- Ensure that you note the telephone number of the Group Leader (GL)
- Get rapid access to your copy of the visit details that were lodged with you as the Emergency Contact
- Confirm the details of the problem as per recording template

Advice to the Group/Visit Leader :

- Confirm that the coach driver has established contact with the coach company to get a relief vehicle
- Ensure that the coach driver or the GL has contacted the Police to get a Traffic Police vehicle to the scene with a flashing blue lights to protect the vehicle
- Ensure that the GL knows that the generic advice for such a situation is to evacuate the coach with the group closely supervised on the verge, well-back from the hard shoulder until the Police recommend otherwise
- Ensure that the GL has briefed the group that they must not use their mobile phones
- Reassure the GL that you will look after the school end of the emergency in terms of briefing the Head/EVC as soon as possible and fielding the arrival of parents expecting the return to school at the original time
- Assure the GL that at the end of this call, you will contact the coach company to make sure things are moving
- Assure GL that you will phone them back within 15 minutes to update them on what is happening at the school end
- Instruct the GL to make any further telephone calls to a dedicated emergency call phone (give them the number) and assure them that this number will now be manned until further instructed

What next?/Action Plan:

- Alert key-holder/caretaker that the school will need to be kept open to host parents waiting for the group to return
- Ask the secretary to continue trying to contact the Head
- Phone the coach company to get an update
- Decide how and where you will brief parents of the group on what has happened, ensuring that it includes a request that they do **NOT** try and telephone their children
- Be prepared to keep the GL updated and reassured

This emergency does not have any characteristics that suggest that the Employer/LA should be contacted

Scenario 2: Health Issue

You are the designated Emergency Contact for a party of 30 Year 8 pupils (17 Boys and 13 Girls) accompanied by 4 staff. The Group are visiting Snowdonia and staying at the Blue Peris hostel in Llanberis. They left on Sunday morning and are due back to school on Friday afternoon.

Phone Call A: It is Tuesday at 10.30 and you receive a call from the Group Leader. 4 pupils and 1 member of staff are confined to bed. They all feel very weak and their symptoms include diarrhoea and sickness.

- **What advice would you offer to the Group Leader?**
- **What actions do you take in support?**
- **Do you inform anybody?**

Phone call B: It is now 18.00 hrs. The able members of the group have just returned from their day's activity. However, a further 8 pupils and 1 member of staff now appear to have caught the bug.

- **What advice would you offer to the Group Leader?**
- **What actions do you take in support?**
- **Do you inform anybody?**
- **Would you contact the Central Bedfordshire Duty Emergency Planning Officer (DEPO)?**

Visit Emergency Contact Training Scenario 2: Health Issue Debrief

The Basics:

- Activate your establishment's Emergency Plan for visits
- Begin making a record – use any pro-forma provided through the Emergency Plan
- Note the time of the incoming call
- Ensure that you note the telephone number of the Group Leader (GL)
- Get rapid access to your copy of the visit details that were lodged with you as the Emergency Contact
- Confirm the details of the problem as per recording template

Advice to the Group Leader:

- Get the GL to confirm the seriousness and extent of the problem. It seems to be bigger than a hostel-based group (with sick staff) can cope with
- Assure the GL that you will make every effort to find two replacement staff with the required competence to stand in for the sick staff
- Should that fail, the EVC will be asked to make all necessary arrangements to terminate the visit
- Advise the GL to make such adjustments to the planned programme (as consistent with the visit information given to parents) to get through the next day, by the end of which replacement staff will be with the team or an evacuation plan will have been implemented
- Arrange an update phone-call in an hour

What next/Action Plan:

- Phone the EVC to get an input on possible staff replacement and arrange who will contact those staff to sound the possibility of them joining the visit. Discuss whether this might be a governor or a parent
- Be prepared to consider whether this will have to be you?
- Phone the possible replacements
- Be prepared to keep the GL updated and reassured

This emergency does not have any characteristics that suggest that the Employer/LA should be contacted

Scenario 3: Lost Child

You are the designated Emergency Contact for a school visit to Paris. The group consists of 30 Year 7-9 pupils (14 boys and 16 girls) who are accompanied by 5 staff. The party flew to Paris on Monday morning and are due to return to school on Friday afternoon.

On Wednesday at 1.30pm (2.30pm French time) you receive a call from the Group Leader. A child has gone missing. According to the itinerary, the group were due to arrive at a restaurant near to the River Seine at 12.30pm before boarding a boat at 2.00pm. Due to heavy traffic, the group did not arrive at the restaurant until 1.10 pm. This resulted in a rushed departure from the restaurant in order to make the eagerly anticipated boat trip. A formal head count of all students was not taken until the group were on the boat and it was departing. Andrew was missing!

Staff have searched the boat and he has not been found. The Group Leader wants to know what they should do next.

- What advice would you give to the Group Leader?**
- Would you contact anybody else?**
- Are there any actions you would pursue in support?**
- Would you contact the Central Bedfordshire Duty Emergency Planning Officer (DEPO)?**

Visit Emergency Contact Training Scenario 3: Lost Child Debrief

The Basics:

- Activate your establishment's Critical Emergency Plan for visits
- Begin making a record – use any pro-forma provided through your Emergency Plan
- Note the time of the incoming call
- Ensure that you note the telephone number of the Group Leader (GL)
- Get rapid access to your copy of the visit details that were lodged with you as the Emergency Contact
- Confirm the details of the problem as per recording template

Advice to the Group Leader :

- Instruct the group that they must not use their mobile phones
- As soon as the boat docks, dispatch a member of staff (one who can communicate in French) to the lunch venue to pick up Andrew's trail
- Ask around the group as to whether Andrew is known to have a mobile phone. Number? Use it to contact Andrew
- Contact the French Police
- Request that the GL supplies half-hourly updates
- Instruct the GL to make any further telephone calls to a dedicated emergency call phone (give them the number) and assure them that this number will now be manned until instructed

What next?/Action Plan :

- Use the Duty Emergency Planning Officer (DEPO) number to alert the responding officer that there is an incident that they need to be aware of **because the French Police are now involved** and this may activate media interest
- Contact Andrew's parents
- Be prepared to keep the GL updated and reassured

This emergency DOES have characteristics that require informing and consulting with the LA.