

Visits and Outings



Visits and outings play an important part in the life of many organisations, giving people, both young and old, the opportunity to undertake activities away from their normal surroundings. Outings can range from a simple trip to the shops or park, to a day out, or holidays lasting up to a week or longer.

Whilst outings can be extremely beneficial, they must be carefully planned to ensure that all eventualities have been considered and things go smoothly and according to plan.

Risk assessment

Visits and outings are no different to any other activity and completing a risk assessment is the starting point to ensure that potential risks are identified and the necessary precautions put in place. In most cases, the findings of the risk assessment will need to be recorded and the procedures which are put in place monitored and adjusted as necessary, based on the actual experiences of the trip itself.

Areas to be considered when undertaking the risk assessment

When carrying out the risk assessment, the following areas are just some of the points that need to be considered. Some will apply in all cases, irrespective of the nature of the trip. For others however, the specific nature of the trip will need to be considered and additional precautions might be required.

Staff-volunteer ratios

It is important that there are sufficient numbers of employees and/or volunteers to cope with the numbers of persons on the trip, bearing in mind that as a general rule a higher ratio of staff to people may be required for trips away. Here, people will be unfamiliar with their surroundings, and additional staff may be required to deal with any emergency, while remaining staff look after everyone else.

Peoples' behaviour may also be affected by being away from their usual surroundings and consideration must be given to the needs of those with learning difficulties, or who may exhibit challenging behaviour.

The journey

Consideration must be given to the mode of transport and a decision taken as to the most appropriate, depending on the length of the journey. For short trips for a small number of people, private cars or coaches may be suitable, whereas for longer journeys the use of public transport will probably be required.

Checks need to be made that, where appropriate, vehicles are fitted with seat belts and that access is possible for wheelchair users. Luggage space on some trains is now limited and it is essential that checks are made that all equipment needed for the visit can be accommodated.

If private cars are used, it is essential to check that you have the correct motor insurance cover for the trip you are undertaking and that drivers are properly qualified i.e. have a valid driving licence.

The length of the journey, together with the need for refreshment and toilet breaks must be taken into account.

Food and drink availability - risk of allergic reaction or choking

Arrangements must be made that food of an appropriate quality, type, consistency (e.g. soft or liquid diets) are available for visits and outings and that enough suitably trained staff/volunteers are available to give appropriate assistance with eating, as required. Food must be kept covered and maintained at the correct temperature to prevent spoiling, contamination or risk of food poisoning. Care must be taken to ensure that the correct food is provided to meet the needs of each individual and to ensure that neither inappropriate foods, nor food in an inappropriate format, are offered as this could give rise to the risk of allergic reaction or choking.

Medication and first aid facilities

The length and nature of the trip must be taken into account when deciding the level of first aid skills required and the first aid equipment which needs to be carried. Medication will also need to be taken where appropriate and a safety factor should be built in, for example in case the return journey is delayed. As a basic rule, the party should be self-sufficient and should not have to rely on obtaining medical supplies en route.

Location

A review must be undertaken of the proposed destination, particularly bearing in mind those with physical disabilities, including wheelchair users. The presence of uneven surfaces, large numbers of steps and stairs, and difficult access for wheelchairs needs to be noted and avoided, if possible.

General hazards also need to be considered bearing in mind the particular group. This would include such features as busy roads and unprotected areas of water.

Contingency planning

You should have contingency plans in place in case of emergency or unavoidable changes. This could include vehicle breakdowns or trains being delayed. Alternative means of transport or means of looking after persons whilst delayed need to be considered.

It is essential that members of staff and volunteers have adequate means of communication, such as mobile phones and that there are members of staff remaining on your premises who can be contacted and asked to put emergency plans into operation.

Documentation

Following the risk assessment, detailed plans and procedures may need to be produced, noting exactly how the visit or outing is to be undertaken. This should include a checklist of all the items which will need to be taken, including medication, emergency supplies and contact names and telephone numbers etc.

Need to contact us?

For further advice Ecclesiastical customers can call our Risk Management Team on **01 619 0300** (Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm, excluding bank holidays)

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