



**Child Safety and
Youth Exchange Programmes**

guidelines

for Good Practice

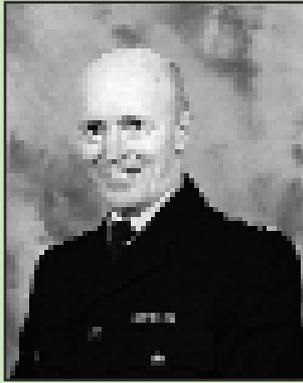


Setting the Scene...

Child protection in youth work has been a topical issue for a number of years now and most youth organisations have their own internal guidelines and policies to protect young people and the adults working with them. While youth organisations can be commended for taking the lead and developing comprehensive and professional policies, many in the absence of national guidelines, the area of travel abroad and youth exchange has been a difficult area to ensure standards and consistency.

It was against this background that youth workers and child safety experts from The Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Great Britain, Germany, Greece, France and Sweden came together in Ireland in February 2003 to agree Guidelines for Good Practice in Child Protection for youth exchange programmes and international youth work. This is the outcome of their work.

This is a practical tool which will help all youth exchange organisers identify good practice in relation to risk and safety issues. Checklists are provided in relation to good practice and sample forms and documentation are also included in the appendix.



AN INTRODUCTION

Chris Gould

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Every year a great number of young people take part in youth exchange visits abroad. Most of them enjoy the experience of staying in another country. But for some visitors and sometimes for their hosts, what should be fun, culturally enlightening and educational turns out to be an unpleasant and sometimes dangerous experience.

A Home Office grant in the UK in 1998 gave rise to research undertaken by myself and a colleague designed to identify the range and extent of child abuse on international visits, focussing primarily upon the European Union. The research demonstrated that:

There is a lack of understanding as to the extent and structure of international youth exchange activity and industry, as well as great complexity and diversity within it

The activity and business is to a large extent, totally unregulated with few, if any checks being made in respect of host families, agents or organisations

Crimes against children, particularly abuse, are either not being reported or, the information is suppressed.

This is not surprising given the absence of international consensus on what is acceptable for young people to experience on trips abroad. This is despite the commitment to child protection in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The good news part of this story is that the work I have been doing since 1998 has given me the opportunity to raise awareness of these issues with key stake-holders whenever and wherever I can. Attitudes and practices are slowly changing within this important area related to the provision of international educational, cultural and language youth exchange programmes, but there is still a very long way to go.

It is very encouraging to be writing the introduction to these Guidelines for Good Practice in Child Protection that have subsequently been formulated by the group of youth workers and child safety experts who met in Portlaoise, Ireland in February 2003.

By formulating Good Practice Guidelines such as these and more importantly by consistently putting them into practice, the small minority of people who may be intent on abusing children and young people will be discouraged, blocked or inhibited.

The checklists that comprise part of these Good Practice Guidelines constitute important practical tools for use at all stages of provision of the youth exchange experience. There are also sample forms and documents included in the appendices that cover important areas such as risk assessment, emergency contact procedures and parental consent. I recommend that these be directly utilised or adapted to enhance your own risk assessment procedures and action plans, emergency procedures, general child protection safeguards and the like.

I commend the people who have taken time as part of their busy schedules to make the issue of child protection one of prominence by way of producing this practice-based document. This is as it should be. That is, the issue of child protection is given particular priority within the important and valuable arena of youth exchange planning and direct provision. The focus of my charity "Child-Safe" is much the same, practised based 'reducing crimes against children...' Please visit the website for more information or even to share your experiences or discuss your needs. www.child-safe.org.uk

Finally, I suggest that a regular review be put in place as part of the process of publishing and distributing this first edition of Good Practice Guidelines in Child Protection. This is important in ensuring their continued relevance and effectiveness.

I wish you every success in your endeavours with youth exchange activities.

Chris Gould

The Good Practice Checklists

These checklists are the product of a series of workshops aimed at developing guidelines or 'pointers' for youth leaders and youth workers involved in youth exchange. The checklists are divided into three sections:

- *Preparing for the Exchange*
- *During the Exchange*
- *Evaluation and Monitoring*

Preparing for the exchange

In preparing for an exchange programme the following issues need to be addressed:

(1) Partner Finding; (2) Accommodation Arrangements; (3) Recruitment and Training; (4) Leadership; (5) The Programme; and (6) Emergency Procedures.

• *Partner finding*

- An Advance Planning Visit is strongly recommended. Be prepared to withdraw if you are not comfortable with your partners.
- Check out the legitimacy of the partner group
- Try to match interests and ethos of the two organisations
- Use a specimen 'common agreement' to help develop a contract or agreement between the two organisations – aims, objectives, activities, role of leaders etc. Agreement should include a commitment to the safety and welfare of the young people
- Have a 'risk assessment' checklist for the planning visit (include accommodation, activities, leaders etc)

• *Accommodation*

- In the planning stage check out the proposed sleeping arrangements for participants
- Check out health and safety issues in relation to accommodation
- Make sure host families are aware of organisation's child protection policy
- Screening for host families is essential (police checks if available). Visit the host family and get them to complete an application form.
- Give placement details to participant and their family at least four weeks in advance of exchange. This facilitates contact between the young person and the host family in advance of the visit.
- Provide a briefing for host families. Give a copy of the whole programme. Be clear on responsibilities. Give host families emergency contact details.
- Maintain and update database for host families
- In the case of non homestay accommodation, check out the accommodation centre on the planning visit and ensure that it is approved to acceptable standard.
- Single gender dormitories are essential for under 18
- Ensure that leader accommodation is appropriate
- All leaders to have a rooming list
- Have a clear contract with accommodation providers





• **Recruitment and Training**

- Where police checks are available and legal, they should be used for leaders and host families.
- Ensure the written approval of parents/guardians for those under 18.
- Ensure you have adequate and appropriate insurance for all stages of the activity – including planning visit.
- Participant details form – clarify level of information (especially medical) required. How will information be used? What level of confidentiality?
- Selection process for young people should be open and transparent.
- Ensure a good training and preparation programme for young people – should include the development and agreement of contract and ground rules for all participants. Training should also include information on cultural awareness, safety and well being, relationship building.
- Give participants an information pack including a 'help me' card.

• **Leadership**

- Appoint a key leader (the buck stops here!)
- Ensure that leaders are appropriately qualified for certain activities (rock climbing, water sports etc if these kinds of activities are included)
- If recruiting leaders from outside the organisation they must complete an application form. Screening and police check to be carried out.

- Ensure gender and age appropriate balance among leaders.
- All leaders to have child protection training
- Leaders to be given clear roles and responsibilities
- Leaders should understand and respect the participants
- Leaders to be made aware of their Duty to Care and what this means
- At least one leader should have first aid training

• **Programme**

- Plan de-briefing sessions daily with the young people and the participants
- For the unstructured programme – ensure there are some boundaries and that it is monitored
- Ensure that there is a clear schedule for leaders including responsibilities and time off

• **Emergency procedures**

- Have clear emergency plans to include 24/7 contact details for host and home country, emergency procedures if you need to evacuate, have an emergency fund, know where participants and leaders are at all times
- Have a back up plan if the programme needs to change for any reason
- Bring a medical kit with you

During the Exchange

During an exchange the following issues need to be addressed:

(1) Documents to bring with you; (2) putting a support system in place; (3) an orientation on arrival; (4) Leadership; (5) Handling Child Protection Issues; (6) Involving the participants; and (7) Accommodations.

• Documents to bring on the Exchange

- Details of Insurance
- Participant details (application forms)
- Copy of programme
- First Aid certificate (if a leader is qualified)
- Group contract
- Completed parental / guardian consent forms
- Contact details
- Tickets
- Accommodation details
- Child Protection policy (own country). Whichever country's policy is most stringent – go by that one

• Support system

- Have a clear system of support for participants
- Support system for leaders. Leaders supporting each other
- Sending and hosting organisations to each have a designated contact person in case of emergency
- Funding agency contact details if necessary

• Orientation on arrival

Host organisation to organise orientation meeting which will include the following:

- Welcome
- Practicalities and logistics
- Programme introduction
- Cultural information
- Contact details
- 'Help me' card
- Responsibilities
- Group contract
- Awareness and understanding of home sickness
- There should be one central information point for participants displaying information in both languages

- Tools for orientation
- Orientation pack
- Cultural ice breakers
- Information point/board
- 'Help me' card
- Group contract

• Leaders

- Leaders to have a common understanding and position on certain issues – particularly in emergency situations
- Leaders should meet daily
- Establish clear responsibilities for leaders
- Put in place support system for leaders
- Leaders should know where participants are at all times – even in free time
- Leaders need to have a good system for keeping records

Should have a good, open and ongoing relationship with the young people

Leaders should have adequate access to telephones for communication

• Handling Child Protection Issues

- Take it seriously
- Remove the child where appropriate
- Contact designated person
- Use emergency contact numbers of hosting and sending organisation
- Take recommended steps as per child protection policy (refer to policy in own country and host country)
- Keep participant informed
- Where appropriate, contact law enforcement agency
- Ensure support for leader dealing with issue



• *Involving the participants*

- There needs to be ongoing consultation and monitoring with participants
- Be clear around the ground rules and consequences if not adhered to
- Regular reports from participants about accommodation (host family, centre etc)
- Young people to keep a journal of the exchange – this can be shared with leaders

• *Accommodation*

- Meet host families regularly throughout the exchange. Visit participants in the host family
- Meet young people regularly and get a report on the hosting arrangements and if there are any difficulties
- In a situation of a serious difficulty arising in a homestay situation, remove the young person immediately.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To put an effective monitoring and evaluation system in place each of the following should be addressed:

- Systems for monitoring and evaluation should be developed prior to the exchange and agreed with the hosting organisation where appropriate
- Monitoring and evaluation should be carried out with the young people, the leaders, the hosting organisation and the host families
- If expectations and ground rules are clear at beginning, it is easier to monitor progress and difficulties
- There should be daily evaluations with the participants and the leaders
- Leaders should have daily meetings to review the programme
- Participants should keep a journal of the exchange
- Have an evaluation box where participants can post comments whenever they like
- Use creative forms of evaluation
- Carry out a full, final evaluation – ‘warts and all’. Evaluation should be a real exercise to learn from
- Make sure there is a system for keeping records and reports during the exchange.

APPENDICES

Risk Assessment Checklist for Group Leaders

Have I ensured that:

- all group members are adequately briefed about their responsibilities during the visit, fully understand their role within the group and are equipped to deal with emergencies?

- accompanying staff/volunteers have the knowledge and skills to ensure the safety of the young people in their care?

- all group members have completed necessary documentation for travel abroad?

- all group members have copies of their passports and visas (if necessary) kept separately from the original documentation?

- details of the nominated person(s) who will be available 24 hours a day in case of emergency have been passed to all host families and group members and a copy has been lodged with my organisation?

- a list of young peoples' names, together with their host family address and telephone number has been given to the nominated person?

- original copies of all parental consent forms have been given to the nominated person?

- copies of the parental consent forms for each young person have been passed to their host family and a copy has been lodged with my organisation?

- I have made host families aware that I may conduct impromptu or 'spot' checks during the visit? My partner/contact abroad has fully met my requirements to ensure the safety and welfare of the young people in my care?

- any drivers, couriers and staff/volunteers employed by me or provided by the partner organisation or tour operator have been thoroughly vetted?

- I fully understand the procedures to deal with emergencies in the country we are visiting?

- I have a 24 hour contact number for a senior member of staff in my home country should an emergency arise whilst we are abroad?

- I have sufficient funds to deal with an emergency?

- I have a list of contact details for all parents/guardians?

- I understand the details of our insurance cover and understand how to proceed in an emergency? Group members understand and agree to a code of conduct during our visit?

- group members are aware of road safety issues? (e.g. which side of road cars travel)

- arrangements have been made to ensure that children and young people do not carry large sums of money with them.

Risk Assessment Checklist for Children and Young People

- do I know who my host family will be?

- do I know the address and telephone number of where I will be staying?

- have my parents or guardians been given this information?

- do I have a valid passport (and visa if required) and photocopies of these with me?

- do I know the 24 hour emergency contact number for my group leader or supervisor in case I have a problem?

- do I have a copy of the emergency medical intervention form and curfew form signed by my parents?

- do I know who will be responsible for me on the journey to my host country?

- do I know who will be responsible for me when I am staying abroad?

- do I know who I will be able to talk to if I am worried or unhappy about anything when I am on my trip?

- am I ready for my trip? (or do I have any questions, worries or concerns to clear up before I leave?)



Risk Assessment Checklist in Relation to Activity Centres

- Have I asked to see a list of the centre staff and their qualifications?

- Am I happy that they are specially trained and qualified for all planned activities?

- Am I happy that the staff I have met during the pre-visit to the centre appear competent knowledgeable and approachable?

- Am I happy with the centre's staffing ratios - especially in relation to hazardous activities?

- Does the centre provide back-up staff in the event of an emergency?

- Will a competent First Aider be available at all times?

- Are all staff/volunteers aware of the centre's aims?

Activities/Programme

- Are the parents/guardians aware of the nature of all planned activities?

- Have I obtained parental consent for all planned activities?

- Have I informed our insurance company of the nature of all planned activities?

- Is the programme designed for young people with different levels of intellectual, physical, sensory and emotional development?

- Am I happy with group control and communication methods used by the centre staff?

Equipment

- Does the centre have properly checked equipment?

- What does the equipment store look like - is it clean and tidy?

- Have I made sure that the correct equipment/clothing is available for all activities, e.g. lifejackets or buoyancy aids should be worn for water-based activities such as canoeing, sailing, rowing, rafting, etc.?

- Does the equipment meet the EU standards?

If the answers to any of these questions give you a feeling of unease, dig deeper or don't make a booking!

Emergency Procedures

1 Information Required:

Youth exchange leaders should make sure they have the following to hand at all times:

- telephone number of your home emergency contact person (and fax if available)
- next of kin information for all group members
- parental consent forms (including consent to medical treatment)
- insurance policy details and telephone number of insurance company
- passport numbers for all participants
- address and telephone number of local Embassy (or Consulate) for your country
- medical kit
- emergency services contacts
- If any casualties require a visit to a hospital, ensure they are accompanied by one of the leaders. Arrange air evacuation home if necessary.
- Restrict access to telephones until you have made contact with your emergency contact person at home and until he/she has had time to contact those directly involved. Provide your emergency contact with the following information:
 - *your name*
 - *nature, date and local time of incident*
 - *location of incident*
 - *names of those involved*
 - *details of injuries*
 - *action taken so far*
 - *telephone numbers (and fax if available) for future communication*

2 Procedure for Leader(s):

- Establish the nature and extent of the emergency;
- If there are injuries, establish the names of those injured, the extent of their injuries and administer appropriate first aid;
- Ensure all other group members are accounted for and safe;
- Call whichever emergency services are required (the police will take any statements - police statements may be required for any insurance claims);
- Arrange for the remainder of the group to return to base;
- Do not discuss or admit legal liability (this may prejudice insurance cover);
- If the incident is serious (death or arrest), contact the local Embassy or Consulate for further advice and help with any special arrangements.
- Leaders should write down all relevant details as soon as possible whilst they are still fresh in the memory. Keep a record of the names and addresses of any witnesses. Any equipment should be kept in its original condition.
- Contact your insurers.





Procedure for Emergency Contact Person at Home Base:

Your responsibility is to act as a link between the group involved, your youth organisation's senior personnel and parents.

General Considerations:

- Ensure the group has your telephone number (and fax if one is available).
- Ensure you can be contacted 24 hrs a day whilst the group is away from home.
- Ensure you have obtained next of kin information and emergency telephone contact numbers for all group members' families as well as for senior personnel within your organisation. If people are likely to be away on holiday, ensure you have contact addresses and telephone numbers.

Procedure:

- If an emergency call comes through, take down the overseas telephone number as soon as possible in case you get cut off.
- Record full details carefully. Repeat them to check accuracy.
- Establish what further action, if any, is required at home e.g. arranging additional financial assistance, contacting insurers for advice regarding claims.
- As soon as notification of an emergency is received, alert senior personnel (e.g. Chief Officer, Chairperson, Principal Youth Officer etc.).
- Arrange contact with the parents/carers of those involved. For a serious incident contact the parents of all party members to minimise confusion, anxiety and misinformation.
- If the incident is serious and there is likely to be a lot of telephone activity, identify alternative phone numbers to prevent jamming of the line between you and the group - they must be able to contact you easily at all times.
- Designate someone to liaise with the media and to whom all questions should be directed. Initially this is likely to be an organisation's Chief Officer.

SAMPLE FORM

PARENTAL / GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

(Essential for participants aged under 18)

Name of participant: _____

Exchange visit to: _____

Start Date: _____ Finish Date: _____

The information contained in this Parental / Guardian Consent form will be kept confidential and only shared with personnel on a "need to know basis". If you do not fully understand any of the following questions, need further information or wish to discuss any of your answers it is most important that you contact the organiser of the exchange visit immediately.

These questions are not designed to exclude your son/daughter. Rather the intention is to ensure that parents/guardians, youth leaders and organisers are fully aware of the details of the programme, any special risks or concerns and any special supports that may need to be put in place. The top priority is to ensure the safety of all participants at all times and your full co-operation is essential in this regard.

Declarations:

1. I confirm that I have read the details about this youth exchange visit
2. I hereby give consent to my son/daughter/ward to take part in the above mentioned youth exchange / visit and to his / her participation in the activities described
3. I agree that he/she will be under the authority of, and responsible to, the youth exchange leaders and to the host family
4. I am aware of the rules of the exchange visit and accept the rules of the visit in relation to alcohol, drugs and sexual activity
5. My son/daughter/ward has the following special requirements (if none please specify none):

• Any special dietary Requirements: _____

• Which types of pain/flu relief medication your child may be given if necessary: _____

• If your child requires any medical treatment please give details: _____

- If your child has been receiving treatment/counselling for any physical or psychiatric conditions please specify (having a condition may not exclude your child from participation, but accurate information is necessary to ensure the safety and proper support for your child):

- To the best of your knowledge has your son/daughter/ward been in contact with any contagious or infectious diseases or suffered from anything in the last four weeks that may be contagious or infectious? YES / NO

If YES, please give details: _____

- Has your son / daughter / ward had any recent injuries, if so please give details?

- When did your son/daughter/ward last have a tetanus injection: _____

6. I undertake to inform the co-ordinators as soon as possible of any change in medical circumstances between the date signed and the commencement of the exchange visit.

7. I agree to my son/daughter/ward receiving medication as instructed and any emergency dental, medical or surgical treatment, including anaesthetic or blood transfusion, as considered necessary by the medical authorities present

8. I understand the extent and limitations of the insurance cover provided

9. Emergency Contact Details

My Home Telephone: _____ My Work Telephone: _____

My Mobile Telephone: _____

Alternative Emergency Contact (if for some reason you can not be reached)

Name: _____ Relationship to participant: _____

Home Telephone: _____ Work Telephone: _____

Mobile Telephone: _____

Name of Family Doctor: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

I declare that I have read each of the declarations above and completed each section to the best of my knowledge.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Name of Parent/Guardian (in block capitals): _____

Address: _____

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to each of the following organisations for sending participants to the seminar in Portlaoise in Ireland in February 2003 which developed these checklists:



A-net Youthforum (Sweden)

Boys and Girls Clubs of Northern Ireland

Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council (U.K.)

EIL Intercultural Learning (Ireland)

EIL U.K.

EIL Germany

Flintshire Youth Service (U.K.)

Forderverein Jugend e.V. (Germany)

Leargas – Irish National Agency

National Youth Council of Ireland

New Border Generation (Ireland)

North East Education and Library Board (Northern Ireland)

Praxis (Greece)

Scout Association of Ireland

Southern Education and Library Board (Northern Ireland)

UFCV Aquitaine (France)

Voluntary Service International (Ireland)

Youth Council of Northern Ireland - International Committee

The Seminar was supported by the Youth Programme of the European Union. The key co-ordinators of the project were EIL Intercultural Learning, The National Youth Council of Ireland and The International Committee of the Youth Council of Northern Ireland with support and encouragement from Leargas (The Irish National Agency for the Youth Programme).

Thanks also to Anna Gunning who acted as Rapporteur for the seminar and to Chief Supt Chris Gould (Avon and Somerset Police Constabulary), Helen Jones (Commonwealth Youth Exchange Council) and Bill Blake (City of Dublin Youth Service Board) for their specialist inputs.

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Youth Programme

www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/youth/youthprogram.html

