

Informing and Briefing Parents / Participants

For Exchange Visits and Home Stays, the process of informing parents and participants will need to start well in advance of the visit. In some instances, this may be one or two years prior to departure.

Information should be provided in writing as well as through briefing meetings – the following information should be made available, and Visit Leaders must decide how and when this information is provided.

In the initial planning stages, and prior to making a financial commitment, participants and parents should be provided with as much detail as possible to be able to make an informed decision.

Information should be provided on:

The Provider

There should be one clearly identified provider and overall leader.

Consider:

- Are there elements of the visit which will be provided by an external provider – do they have the appropriate accreditation? (see Section 11.3).
- Who is the parent contracting with – school or external provider?
- Whose policies and procedures will the visit comply with?
- Who has responsibility for managing risk at every stage of the visit?

Nature of an Exchange/Home Stay

The unique benefits and nature of homestays should be outlined. Details of the balance of time spent with hosts and the rest of the group should be provided.

Domestic and Sleeping Arrangements

Ensure that parents and participants are fully aware that a major part of the experience is living with a host and that this may be as an individual, a pair or small group. Provide information about the arrangements for selecting and vetting hosts. Provide detail about checks that will be made on suitability of sleeping accommodation (see [Checklist for Hosts](#))

Staff Experience

All Exchange Visits and Home Stays should be run by competent and experienced people. Inform parents about the relevant experience of accompanying staff including any external provider.

The Costs

The visit should be accurately costed from an early stage and any payment plan outlined. If there are unknown costs or costs that are likely to change (e.g. flights) this should be made clear. It should also be clear what is included and whether there are extra costs (e.g. food, certain activities, spending money, tips etc.)

Participation

- Who is the visit open to?
- Is it accessible to all?
- Minimum and maximum numbers – what are the implications of too few/many numbers?

The Purpose of the Visit, Proposed Dates and Possible Itinerary

This could include background information, details of previous visits, why this visit is being planned to include school links, voluntary work, team challenge, Duke of Edinburgh's Award Expedition etc. As much detail as possible about the proposed itinerary should be outlined including fitness / training requirements, activities, free time etc.

The Venue

- Where will the group be visiting?
- What will the climate be like?

Passport and Visa Arrangements

Clear information is needed at an early stage about passport and visa requirements such as how to apply for visas, time limits, cost of visas, relevant deadlines for applications etc.

Health Provision

- Outline any requirements for vaccinations or medical requirements – will parents be responsible for ensuring recommended vaccinations are obtained?
- What access will there be to health provision while on the visit?
- What standard of health provision can be expected?
- What procedures are in place for medical emergencies?
- Are staff competent to provide adequate first aid?
- What level of health cover / repatriation is provided through insurance?

Supervision Arrangements

- Who is overall in charge?
- How will the leaders ensure the participants wellbeing when staying with hosts?
- Who is responsible when participants are with the host?
- Do the participants have a means of contacting the leaders at all times?

Travel Arrangements

This should include all means of travel including getting there and back as well as any internal travel. If hosts will be an integral part of travel arrangements (e.g. picking up and dropping off) what checks on the hosts/their vehicles will be carried out? If going Overseas information should be clear where the standards are likely to differ from what would be expected in the UK, such as availability of seat belts on buses, and what measures will be in place to minimise risks. As far as possible all travel arrangements should be confirmed and checked in advance but parents should be made aware that plans may have to change and that alternative means of transport may be used.

Contact Arrangements

Make sure that participants and parents are clear about how and when communication will be possible / allowed. Ensure parents know how to make contact in an emergency. Ensure that everyone is clear about the emergency contact protocol.

Insurance Cover

- Who is covering the insurance, what does it include, what is the cost?
- There should be clear information about what may not be included and any excesses.

Behaviour

It is important at an early stage to set out the expectations of behaviour whilst on the visit and any code of conduct with which participants will be expected to agree.

A checklist that can be used to ensure participants are fully informed can be found in the Exchange Visit Toolkit along with a sample code of conduct.

A clear process about what action will be taken if behaviour is affecting the safety of any participant should be outlined including consequences and cost implications of return home early.