

Safety and protection of young
people under the Youth in
Action Programme
(2007-2013)

Guidelines
for Good Practice

INTRODUCTION

Protection and safety of young people involved in Youth in Action programme are becoming an important topic considering cultural and legal differences between Countries and the progressive need for the definition of the best practice in order to reduce risk.

Guidelines for Good Practice are the result of a working process which has brought together child safety experts and youth workers from Germany, Ireland, Greece, France, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The Guidelines were officially presented in spring 2004 especially thanks to valuable support of Irish National Agency.

This updated version of the Guidelines for Good Practice is meant as a practical tool to develop good practice in relation to risk and safety issues. They particularly focus on youth exchange activities but could also be a useful background document for all kinds of international youth activities organised under the other Actions of the Youth in Action Programme. Checklists are provided in relation to good practice and sample forms and documentation are also included in the appendix.

THE GOOD PRACTICE CHECKLISTS

These checklists are 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. 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 home stay 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

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.

Contact the National Agency of the sending country to find out if pre-departure trainings are offered or if training material can be made available. If this is the case, follow the training proposals.

Leadership

Appoint a key leader

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 permanent 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 all used 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

Be in contact with the National Agencies of both countries (sending and hosting)

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

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 home stay 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. 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 the contact addresses of the National Agencies of both countries (sending and hosting)
- 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?
- 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. life-jackets 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 leader 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

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;
- If any casualties require a visit to a hospital, ensure they are accompanied by one of the leaders. Arrange air evacuation home if necessary.
- Always contact the National Agencies of both countries (sending and hosting)
- 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
- 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.

3 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 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 the National Agency.
- 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.

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 will 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 accept that it may be necessary to send my son/daughter home in the following circumstances:
 - a. If they breach the rules of the exchange
 - b. If their behaviour is deemed to be inappropriate or offensive to the host community or if it endangers themselves or other people or causes damage to any property
 - c. If medical reasons require that they be sent home.In cases a and b above that may be at my responsibility and cost
7. 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.
8. 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
9. I understand the extent and limitations of the insurance cover provided

10. 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: _____

RISK ASSESSMENT ACTION PLAN

Programme Component/Activity	Hazard	Action Required	Target date

Assessment Action Plan prepared by: _____

Date: _____

Next Assessment due: _____

Signature: _____

Approved By: Name: _____

Signature: _____

PARTNER GROUP / ORGANISATION AGREEMENT FORM

Name of organisation / youth group: _____

Exchange visit to: _____

Exchange with: _____ (list partners)

Start date: _____ End date: _____

The information contained in this partner group / organisation agreement form is understood, agreed and will be adhered to by all parties directly involved in the above-mentioned exchange.

The top priority is to ensure the safety of all participants and the successful implementation of the programme. The purpose of this agreement is to ensure that partner organisations and youth leaders are fully aware and in agreement with the details of the programme, and that any special risks or concerns or special supports that may need to be put in place will have been communicated to all parties concerned.

The top priority is to ensure the safety of all participants at all times.

DECLARATIONS:

1. I/we confirm that I/we have read and agree the programme for this youth exchange.
2. I/we confirm that the programme, all special risks and concerns have been discussed and agreed by all partner organisations prior to the commencement of the youth exchange visit.
3. I/we confirm that risk assessment procedures have been carried out on the programme prior to departure and that any modifications in the programme will be subject to the same risk and safety procedures and agreed by all partner groups.
4. I/we confirm an awareness of the mission of all other groups, and consider, acknowledge and recognise the implications of there being cultural and legal differences.
5. I/we confirm that any disputes will be addressed immediately in consultation with all partner groups.
6. I/We confirm to the best of our knowledge that all leaders are competent and experienced and have an awareness of child safety issues.

Signed by Leader in Charge: _____ Date: _____

Signed by Legal Responsible: _____ Date: _____

HOST FAMILY SAFETY CHARTER

(Adopted at EIL¹ Local Co-ordinators Meeting on March 24th 2005)

Homestays are one of the possible ways to explore and get to know a new culture. The safety of homestay participants and host family members should always be a top priority. The Host Family Safety Charter will help ensure the safety and well being of all involved participants.

- 1) Each family is visited to ensure suitability of family members, house and property for a welcoming and safe hosting experience.
- 2) A record of all family members in each host family is maintained and updated.
- 3) Each host family will be asked to indicate that they have public liability and household insurance cover.
- 4) If there are any doubts about suitability that no placement is made with that family until further checks have taken place or a second person makes an inspection visit.
- 5) If it becomes known that any resident member of a family has a criminal record then that family will not be used as a host family.
- 6) Each host family will sign a document in which they are asked to certify that there are “no reasons why they are not suitable to host a foreign visitor”.
- 7) A single female is never placed in an all male household.
- 8) A single male under 18 is never placed in an all female household.
- 9) The co-ordinator or a named deputy has a 24 hour x 7 days emergency contact number in place during each homestay programme. This number is made available to the homestay participants.
- 10) An alternative homestay placement or accommodation arrangement will always be available in the event of an emergency.
- 11) The organisation should receive details of host family placements a minimum of one week before the student arrives. In the case of long term students this should include details of all family members and any other long term visitors or lodgers likely to be staying with the family.

¹ EIL Intercultural Learning; www.eilireland.org

- 12) Each host family must have a landline telephone number which will be given to the parents of the students. Where this is not possible the host family will assist the participant to get a mobile phone or a “pay as you go” phone as a matter of priority.
- 13) If there are any question marks, rumours or any doubts in relation to a host family and child protection risk issues then co-ordinator will not place students with that family or will immediately remove any student already staying with the family. This will be the case even where the allegation is unproven. It is not our responsibility to make judgements or to investigate allegations. It is our responsibility to exercise caution in the interests of the safety of the young people in our care.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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