

## 5.14 Home Hosting Annex

### 1. General and Definitions

1.1. This annex forms part of the STF code of practice and should be read in conjunction with the main body of the code.

1.2. Home Hosting is where visiting groups and individuals are accommodated as guests in the homes of local families. Host families and schools act as suppliers for the tour operator, which has legal liability for their actions.

Where hosting arrangements are made by the client school and not the tour operator this should be stated clearly in writing to ensure clear understanding of responsibilities.

1.3. Effective safeguarding should consider the various circumstances that may apply in home hosting and appropriate measures put in place. To assist such consideration it is useful to define the major categories of home hosting:

1.3.1. Short stay hosting is where accommodation is arranged for each pupil in a number of homes on a tour for one or two night's duration; it is on an unpaid basis and there is no expectation of reciprocal arrangements (this arrangement is sometimes referred to as 'billeting').

1.3.2. Longer stay and paid hosting (for example Exchange Visits and Work Experience) is defined as either where:

- Pupils are hosted by the same family for the whole or greater part of a visit and commonly there is an expectation that there will be a reciprocal nature to the visits.
- There is a payment made to the host family for the stay.

1.4. Providers will ensure their insurances cover all aspects of the visit, including anticipated free-time activities and other actions of the host families.

### 2. Selection, Allocation and Information Given to Hosts

2.1. In all cases the selection and allocation of host families should be done by a responsible person and be able to ensure the suitability of the match. To ensure clear understanding this responsibility will be agreed and clearly stated in writing. Factors that should be considered are:

2.1.1. Gender

2.1.2. Cultural issues

2.1.3. Medical needs & disabilities

2.1.4. Distance and facilities available

2.1.5. Unless by exception, accommodation should be in pairs or multiples. Prior confirmation should be obtained from the group leader before single accommodation arrangements are confirmed.

2.2. **Short stay hosting:** the short stay at each location will reduce some potential risk factors, such as unsupervised family days, but require more focus elsewhere.

It should be anticipated that the vetting and allocation of host families by the host organisation is more likely, therefore to enable them to provide suitable hosts it is important that the host organisation has sufficient information provided, which should include:

- Name, age and gender of pupils, plus any special requirements such as food, medical or cultural issues.
- Minimum standards of accommodation required.
- Information on the dynamic risk management process to ensure it can operate effectively.
- The visiting school's code of conduct.
- Contact numbers, including emergency contacts and medical insurance information.

- **Longer stay and paid hosting:** likewise the greater involvement in family life requires greater consideration of free time activities, but the greater reciprocal arrangements means that shared and remote vetting and allocation of host families is more practicable.

In addition to providing the above information being shared, the **Host Family Information Form** should be requested to be completed by all families and made available to the visiting group leader. This asks for information on:

- Verification of family structure
- References
- Confirmation of house rules
- Proposed family activities during visit
- Proposed transportation, including drivers
- Permission to share information between host families
- Permission for a home visit by trip organiser or competent person to confirm facts and ensure that obvious risks / hazards are identified, including, but not limited to, accommodation type and fire safety, security, electrical appliances and other utilities, general hygiene, structure of property and presence of internal individual gas heaters in property.

2.3. All host family arrangements in the UK will conform to the requirements of the local and national legislation designed to protect vulnerable groups.

2.4. Host families will receive the following information:

- Name, age and gender of charge, plus any dietary requirements or necessary medical or cultural information.
- Contact numbers, including emergency contacts and medical insurance information.
- Visiting school's code of conduct.

Information for host families overseas may need to be in the host language.

### 3. Visiting Group Preparation

3.1. It is important that informed decisions can be made by schools, parents and pupils.

3.2. Support for parents' evenings in the form of accurate written information or attendance will be provided.

3.3. Information required before booking:

- What the planned host family selection and allocation arrangements are.
- Details of the safeguards and dynamic risk management process whilst on tour.
- The visit code of conduct (in conjunction with the school).
- Personal safety guidance for pupils, linked to the dynamic risk management process.

3.3.1. Information required before departure:

- 3.3.1.1. Contact telephone numbers including 24 hr emergency number.
- 3.3.1.2. Sleeping and sharing arrangements.
- 3.3.1.3. Where available, host family information, the names of the responsible adult in the families and specific house rules.

### 4. Dynamic Risk Management

4.1. In all cases allocation arrangements should be known and agreed between the host and visiting organisations before arrival.

4.2. It is important that the visiting group leaders are able to manage exceptional and unacceptable circumstances locally; whilst in the field the tour operator will ensure the following safeguards are in place and/or viable for the group leaders to implement:

- 4.2.1. Contact numbers for local support, such as agents.
- 4.2.2. Accurate written information held by all leaders on location of pupils.
- 4.2.3. Information for pupils enabling 24hr contact for more than one leader.
- 4.2.4. Emergency 'visit at once' code between pupils and leaders.
- 4.2.5. Physical or telephone contact with all pupils within 2 hours of allocation.
- 4.2.6. A means by which group leaders can contact pupils every day (physical or telephone).
- 4.2.7. A means by which accommodation inspections can be undertaken on request.
- 4.2.8. A process and means to move pupils away from unsuitable accommodation or to a place of safety if necessary.

## **5. Monitoring**

- 5.1. Tour feedback should include a section for comment on the hosting arrangements by the visiting group leader.

## **6. Further information**

- 6.1. OEAP National Guidance - <http://oeapng.info/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/04/7f-Exchanges-and-Home-stays.pdf>
- 6.2. Child Safe are a charity based in Portishead that produces a number of guidance booklets that members may find useful - <http://www.child-safe.org.uk/products/books/>
- 6.3. The British Council has information on Youth Exchange - <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-ie-youth-exchange.htm>