**West Sussex – Practice Guidance**

IROs are qualified social workers with at least five years’ experience, and who have acquired the right skills to carry out this role.

**Holidays and School Trips**

* Where there is a proposal for a looked after child to go on holiday, the key worker or Registered Manager should provide the child's social worker with full information about the holiday. The child's social worker or Registered Manager should seek the views of the parent/persons who have Parental Responsibility as soon as practicable. If the parents’ consent, their consent must be obtained in writing.
* Where the social worker, parent and staff agree to the proposed holiday, the holiday can be approved and should be included in the child's Placement Plan.
* Children must not be taken on holiday during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances that would be approved by the Social Worker's Manager for the child and the Head of the school. This will be kept under review following a recent high court judgement.
* Requests must be made in writing. (Note that under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2013, the previous ability of head teachers to grant leave of absence for the purpose of a holiday during term time in ‘special circumstances’ of up to ten school days leave per year has been removed. The 2013 Regulations make clear that head teachers may not grant any leave of absence during term time unless there are ‘exceptional circumstances’.)

**Holidays away with children**

* Holidays, and time away from usual routines and environments are an important part of family life, and WSCC is committed to replicating this as much as possible in our role as corporate parents.
* Supporting children to enjoy holidays away from home are a great opportunity to try out new skills and experiences and can motivate and reward children.

**Planning and risk assessing holidays**

* ‘Holidays’ can be defined as any planned period of consecutive nights away from the child’s usual place of residence that is supported by paid staff and/or volunteers for the purpose of enjoyment and relaxation.
* ‘Residential trips’ refer to short breaks that tend to have an activity as the focus; i.e. outdoor pursuits and may have another provider co-ordinating and delivering the programme of events.
* Holidays may be taken overseas or in the UK; be self-catering or full board and take place in privately rented accommodation or holiday resorts. They may include travel by train, car or aeroplane and involve 1 or more children and accompanying staff.
* The Registered Manager is responsible for co-ordinating and overseeing all planning for a residential holiday for children who are looked after in the home. They will complete a thorough risk assessment of all aspects of the holiday and ensure any risks are managed as far as possible.
* Children will be actively involved in the selection, planning and co-ordination of the holiday in line with their age and understanding.
* Consent must be obtained from anyone holding parental responsibility for all children planning to attend and an itinerary must be shared in advance (focusing on travel arrangements and timings).
* All children who are Looked After must be supported to obtain a passport if they do not already have one. This must be done well in advance of any planned trip, and regularly checked to ensure it is still in date.

**Insurance**

* Staff who are responsible for co-ordinating a holiday with children in their care must ensure appropriate travel insurance is in place before any holiday is booked. This includes holidays in the UK and those involving travel abroad.
* Staff are advised to contact the WSCC Insurance team to discuss their insurance needs for holidays.  For holidays in the UK, staff may be advised to arrange their own cover with a reputable company ensuring sufficient arrangements are in place for any hazardous activities, pre-existing health conditions or additional levels of risk. Further guidance must be sought about purchasing insurance for holidays abroad.
* The cost of holiday insurance will be met by the home’s own budget.

**Staffing issues**

* The Registered Manager will inform staff what is expected of them in advance of the holiday which will include the following:

**Alcohol** – staff are permitted to consume small amounts of alcohol at mealtimes while on holiday with children. This helps to normalise drinking and prevent demonisation of alcohol use for children. However, staff are expected to act as positive role models at all times and drink in moderation ensuring that their ability to make decisions and maintain appropriate boundaries is not compromised. At least one member of staff must abstain from any alcohol consumption in order to be able to drive at all times. Any staff member becoming inebriated or unable to carry out reasonable duties will face disciplinary action.

Children who want to consume alcohol while on a holiday outside of the UK, where the legal age for drinking may be different, are permitted to do in small amounts in line with risk assessment processes. Staff should research and familiarise themselves with the legal age for drinking alcohol in the country they are visiting.

**Working hours and claiming time back** – all staff who agree to support children on holiday are agreeing to the following conditions:

* Overtime may be claimed at 2 hours per day of the holiday
* Time Off In Lieu (TOIL) may be booked for any rota’ed days off that staff work as part of the holiday
* Only one member of staff may claim a sleep-in enhancement per night

**Conduct and dress code** – Staff will be expected to maintain the usual high standards of personal conduct on holiday as when working within the children’s home. However there may be circumstances where the usual dress code for staff is not practical in a holiday environment. Staff may wear clothing that is suitable for the activity taking place; i.e. swimwear, but any issues arising from this will be addressed in the planning and risk assessment stage. Staff will be encouraged to exercise discretion in their clothing choices, taking reasonable efforts to avoid provocation and unnecessary exposure.

**Accommodation** – Staff and children/children will not share bedrooms. It may be practical for staff and children to share an adjoining bathroom but clear expectations must be outlined around locking doors and avoiding use of the facilities at the same time. Children may share a bedroom with other children where this is risk assessed and all parties are in agreement, although mixed gender accommodation is not permitted. Staff may share bedrooms with other staff where all parties are in agreement.

**Record keeping** – staff are not expected to maintain the same level of daily recording and record keeping while in a holiday environment. The exception to this is that any records relating to incidents (including safeguarding, missing, sanctions, physical interventions) and administration of medication, where full and accurate records must be completed as usual. An overview of the child’s week via a scrapbook/memory book can be a helpful way to share experiences and recognise progress with others on return from the holiday.

**Link to related resources:**

Staff Expectations

Smoking and Alcohol

Consents and Delegated Authority

Richard Pearce (Insurance Team Manager) tel: 0330 2222 721

<http://theintranet.westsussex.gov.uk/Library/Documents/insurance_guide.pdf>

healthandsafety@westsussex.gov.uk, or call on 01243 752025.

<http://theintranet.westsussex.gov.uk/Library/Documents/corporate_guidance-risk_assessment.pdf>