**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.

**Leisure and Activities**

*Please refer to the practice guidance on ‘Holidays and School Trips’ and ‘Social Visits and Overnight Stays’ for more detailed information.*

* Leisure activities and opportunities to play and learn new skills are essential for all children, and WSCC children’s homes support children to use their leisure time productively and purposefully in line with their Care Plans.
* Some children may have limited areas of interest, or have special interests in one particular activity and staff will use this to form a basis to gradually introduce new skills and interests where possible.
* Staff will discuss interests with all children and people who know them best, and aim to ensure that every child has regular access to an activity or resource they enjoy.
* The Registered Manager should ensure that children are offered a wide range of activities both inside and outside of the home and are encouraged to participate in those activities. Staff should support children to take part in trips, out of school and other clubs, volunteering and leisure activities.
* Staff should ensure that children understand what local leisure and other cultural or religious services are on offer for them, support them to access any relevant leisure passes and encourage them to participate in activities in the community and wider if appropriate.
* Many homes will operate a programme of planned sessions covering different areas of interest and activity; such as Art club, Photography, Drama or Music. See below.

**Pre-activity Planning and Authorisation**

* Once the Registered Manager has approved a planned activity, a lead person, or Group Leader should be identified who will co-ordinate the preparation and planning for the session. Other staff supporting the session should have clearly defined roles and responsibilities that support the work of the Group Leader. Tasks include:
* Completing a risk assessment for the activity including transport arrangements which must be signed off by the Registered Manager
* Preparing and producing a route, timetable or schedule for the activity, including dates, times of travel, vehicle(s) to be used, the location of planned breaks, places/locations to be visited and people to be visited.
* The Group Leader must identify the children who will be taking part in the activity and consider what arrangements or plans must be made, taking account of:
* Care Plan, Placement Plan, Education Health and Care Plan or other relevant plans;
* Recent/relevant events/incidents;
* Group dynamics, staff/child relationships;
* Safeguarding /Child Protection issues;
* Violent or other offending behaviour;
* Any healthcare or mental health needs of the children;
* Any concerns associated with drug/alcohol misuse;
* Level of disability and associated special needs.
* A list of staff or other responsible adults who are likely to take part must be drawn up. At least one member of staff should be known to the children taking part and there must be one member of staff from each gender for mixed groups.
* The Group Leader must ensure the child/staff ratios are adequate to meet the needs of the children and the risks posed. For example, where there is a risk of violence, hazardous activities are undertaken or remote locations are used.
* Where there is a risk of confrontation or violent behaviour, the Group Leader/manager must ensure that staff undertaking the activity are suitably trained and are familiar with procedures and guidelines contained in this manual relating to behaviour management, and the use of physical intervention.
* If necessary, the Group Leader must ensure that parent(s) have been consulted or informed and consents obtained.
* All staff must carry ID cards.

**Insurance**

* Adequate Public Liability Insurance must be obtained (this will usually already be in place - consult the manager).
* Hazardous activities may require additional insurance. In these circumstances, the Group Leader should consult the manager. When using public facilities e.g. leisure centre or hazardous activities staff should ask to see a valid copy of the current insurance certificate and record any findings on the relevant activity risk assessment.

**Preparing Children**

* As soon as practicable before the activity is due to start, children should be consulted and involved in the planning. They should be notified of the following; and this must be recorded.
* An explanation of the proposed activity, including its aims and objectives;
* Expectations about their behaviour and the implications of poor behaviour;
* Appropriate and inappropriate personal contact including sexual activity;
* Emergency procedures and safety precautions;
* Rendezvous procedures;
* Dangers e.g. coastal visits, mountain walking;
* What clothing they will require.

**Measuring outcomes**

* For sessions and activities that are planned in advance, the staff involved should be supported to evaluate the sessions regularly and aim to capture any progress the child has had. This is an important way to measure success, and also document the child’s involvement.

**Links to related resources:**

Holidays & School Trips

Social Visits & Overnight Stays

Richard Pearce (Manager of the Insurance Team) 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>

Insurance