



TAKING THEM AWAY

TAKING YOUNG PEOPLE AWAY ON A RESIDENTIAL WEEKEND OR HOLIDAY IS RECOGNISED AS AN IMPORTANT PART OF ANY PROGRAMME.

IT ENABLES RELATIONSHIPS TO DEVELOP AND GIVES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR LEARNING IN A VERY DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENT.

THE KEY QUESTION WE ADDRESS HERE IS HOW CAN WE MAKE SURE THAT OUR RESIDENTIALS ARE AN ESSENTIAL AND SAFE PART OF WORK WITH YOUNG PEOPLE?.

A PROPERLY PLANNED RESIDENTIAL CAN HAVE A HUGE IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE AND BE A SIGNIFICANT PART OF THEIR DEVELOPMENT. THEY ALSO TAKE A LOT OF WORK AND ORGANISATION!

PLANNING & PREPARATION

With any event that you are organising, you need start planning a long way before the date that it will actually take place. Allow several months for even simple short trips out. With a residential event draw up a detailed schedule of planning starting at least nine months ahead. Why so long? You need to be systematic! There will be a lot of details to arrange. Here is a check list of the sort of things that you will need to consider:

- Getting all the young people enthused and really having a sense of ownership. Don't short cut here if you force the issue because you think it is a good idea to run the event, you will often regret it later.
- Get other adults involved as early as you can to share the responsibility, the work and pool some expertise. They will also have a better ownership of the event if they are to accompany you.
- Don't assume commitment from young people until you have their money! Draw up a suitable budget allowing for the likelihood of some late cancellations.
- Get parental/guardian's permission and comments early on. Whilst doing this, check school dates carefully to make sure there are no exam clashes/other events planned. Think through all the details you will need to ask about (see box 'Information for Parents')
- Ensure that the event integrates with the on-going work that you are doing as much as possible. Don't run an event without seeing how it relates to your regular programme of activities.
- Are the abilities of the children/young people appropriate to the activity that you have planned? Do you have people with special needs, special diets or other restrictions?
- Do you have the expertise to carry out the event successfully and safely without bringing outside assistance?

Remember if you are not naturally an organised or administrative minded person then get someone to help you with the administration and organisation of the event. Draw a team round you. Don't go it alone!

It is important to remember that whilst trips need to be well organised and safe they also need to have some purpose. This will help you in deciding what are the important features of your particular event.

OBJECTIVES

Having a clear set of objectives for the event is crucially important. This ensures that:

- It integrates with the on going work you do
- It can be used to base your programme planning around, particularly when it comes to a major residential event.
- Look back to your objectives each time you plan part of the programme and ask yourself "Is it likely to achieve our overall objectives?". Don't add it to the programme unless it fits your criteria.

Clear objectives and goals will also help you evaluate the success of an event afterwards. Your objectives might be along the lines of - evangelistic, discipleship, help the group gel together, build relationships between adult helpers and children. Or they may be much more specific goals such as challenging the young people about the Christian response to Third World debt or learning about worshipping God. Writing these objectives down on paper particularly as an exercise with the other people who are going will help you in the planning process. They will then understand what you are trying to achieve.

With a group of older young people, look at how they can be involved in setting the objectives and be involved in the planning as an integral part to a team building event. It may be that the planning process can be as effective at achieving those objectives as the event itself.

Pray through these planning stages and objectives setting as a team of adult helpers. Seek God's leading at each stage.

And don't forget to consider how the event may also affect those in your regular group who may not be able to attend.

Programme carefully after the event to avoid cliques afterwards.

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

It is important that parents should have full information before giving consent.

This should include:

- Aims and objectives of the event or activity.
- Date of the event and its duration.
- Details of venue including arrangements for accommodation and supervision.
- Travel arrangements.
- Name of group leader and contact numbers.
- Information about financial, medical and insurance arrangements.
- It may be helpful to hold a briefing session for parents before the event.

INFORMATION PROVIDED BY:

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BUILDING YOUR TEAM

You are going to need the support of a group of other adults and should never take a group away without others being with you. You need to ensure that you have enough people to safely lead the event (See Guideline on Registration of Groups & Recommended Staffing Levels). You should also be covered by having, in a mixed group, at least one leader of each gender who have a current CRB disclosure.

If you are running any event that lasts more than half a day make sure you meet up together and have a clear set of goals for the meeting. Allow space for everyone to contribute. Try and build a sense of team. Perhaps have a meal together. Do some basic training and preparation with them. Ask each member of the adult team to draw up a list of their responsibilities and make sure that every area is covered. These may include issues such as:

- Visiting and booking the venue
- Arranging transport
- First aid
- Administration (collecting forms and money)
- Information for parents
- Catering arrangements (If self catering the person responsible for catering may need to have a Basic Food Hygiene Certificate).
- Preparing materials
- Planning activities

With a residential event an element of training is absolutely essential for the proper equipping of the team. In some areas it also fulfils your legal obligations. Make sure that you include in your budget the cost of any necessary training courses such as first aid or food hygiene.

You should have a robust selection procedure in place for recruitment of any helpers. Those under 18 should not be left in sole charge of children at any time. You are advised not to take on 'last minute ad hoc helpers.' As the leader, invest lots of time with the adult helpers beforehand – it will reap a good return in many areas of your ministry! Jesus spent a lot of time with just 12 people!

LINK PERSON

If the trip is to a distant place, a link person in the home area should be designated, even for more local trips this can be helpful.

The link person should:

- hold a copy of the group itinerary and programme.
- hold a copy of the list of children involved.
- hold copies of the parental consent forms with their contact details.
- be in touch with the group leader.
- inform parents in the event of an unforeseen delay or emergency.

With the use of mobile phones it is possible for the link person to update the parents, for example a trip abroad - text to say all have arrived safely, or for returning home to confirm that the group will arrive back within next hour. It builds confidence and develops trust in the leadership.

EVALUATION

It is important to evaluate the effectiveness of any event. Don't be content with evaluating by comments you get that say; "It was great". That may be one indicator that the event was successful, but you need to add more objectivity to it than that!

Evaluate every area of the programme and planning and don't be tempted to short circuit the areas that you know could have been improved. Take the criticism on the chin - it demonstrates to others that you are willing to learn and open to new ideas. But remember evaluation is about celebrating what was good as well as criticisms of the bad. Affirmation of your team is crucial. Ensure a realistic, sensible, Godly balance.

It's worth investing time in good evaluation – it stops you reinventing the wheel and it makes the next time you run the event a lot less work!

Evaluate:

- the teaching and activities;
- the team itself (how it operated and how this could be improved);
- the enjoyment of the young people;
- the venue;
- organisational issues;
- and finally your objectives.

Here are some tips to help:

- Have a feedback sheet at the end of the event. You can make this anonymous and you can make them fun. Integrate them into the last day as part of the reflective time. Use smiley faces for children's sheets.
- Meet together as an adult team on a regular basis during the event and afterwards to reflect on how the programme is working and any changes that need to be made.
- Ask the team beforehand to imagine a really successful event. Afterwards when you meet to evaluate, discuss whether or not people actually saw these things take place – changed lives, good conversations, young people becoming Christians etc..
- Feedback to the church/ supporting agency on your return and tell them how the event went. Encourage them to continue to pray for the young people. Write to any funders stating what was achieved with their money.

POINTS TO CONSIDER

The final sheet identifies some of the areas you need to give thought to as you prepare for an event away:

- Insurance
- PCC support
- Premises
- Accommodation
- Supervision
- Parental consent



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INSURANCE

Make sure that insurance is adequate for the activities planned, especially any hazardous activities.

PCC SUPPORT - PERMISSION FOR THE EVENT

A detailed description of the event should be presented to the PCC so that permission may be given and the event covered by the parish insurance. If there are to be any potentially hazardous activities undertaken this description must include an assessment of the risks involved.

PREMISES

You need to check with the person responsible for the premises you are using that they have adequate insurance cover for Public Liability as well as any for specific activities being undertaken. Also check about availability of a First Aid kit and fire precautions. Carry out the Health and Safety checklist included in the Health & Safety Guideline paper.

ACCOMMODATION

Depending on the type of residential, sleeping arrangements can be a challenge, eg on a canal boat or camping. Check out the guidelines on Sleep Overs for these type of situations. Most residential centres now provide accommodation that meets good practice guidelines which should allow you to:

- Have boys and girls in separate sleeping areas and washing facilities which are private to them.
- Adults should have separate accommodation but in close proximity to the young people.

As with any other youth activity mixed groups must have adults of both sexes involved.

Any other arrangements should be carefully explained to parents beforehand and their consent obtained in writing for the arrangements.

PARENTAL CONSENT

Each child or young person under the age of 18 (unless they are over 16 and living away from home or married) must have the written consent of his or her parent or guardian. This gives authority to the person named as responsible for the activity to take the young person away and to act as a careful parent would. Note - it does not transfer parental responsibility.

Parental consent forms should clearly set out the activities, risks and safety measures that will be adopted. This is often done using a standard consent form with additional information provided about the event.

In an emergency, while every attempt should be made to contact a parent or carer, this should not delay seeking medical treatment.

The group leader should take the consent forms with them on the trip and their whereabouts known by at least one other member of the team.

Sample Consent Forms are available as part of this series of guidelines (see Consent Forms).

SUPERVISION - SOME PROMPTS

- One person must be designated the overall group leader.
- Ratios of helpers to young people should be adhered to.
- Good practice guidelines identify that for over 8's there must be at least one helper for the first 8 children and then one helper for every additional 12 children.
- Every group must be led by at least two adults.
- When physical activities are planned staffing levels should be increased accordingly.
- Swimming requires one adult in the water with every three children under the age of eight.
- Adults should avoid being alone with children or young people.
- In case of emergency each adult should have a list of all participants & leaders.
- Ideally participants should return with the adult they came with if travelling in groups.
- Ground rules about behaviour and expectations should be made explicit.
- Parents should be informed beforehand if it is intended to allow groups of young people to go off unsupervised e.g. for shopping.
- If instructors are engaged for specific activities, check that they have the appropriate certificates. Organisations should be registered with the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority and have the appropriate insurance. Risk assessments will be needed.
- Make sure children have appropriate clothing and kit needed for activities.

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