

Residential experiences

*'Bringing together young people . . . for several days provides an environment where people can explore ideas relating to individual and group identity.'*¹¹

In this context residential experiences refer to educational visits where outdoor learning is the main focus of the experience and which include one or more overnight stays. Residential experiences include using outdoor centres or youth hostels, camping, bivouacking, snow-holing or sailing boats. This contrasts with residential experiences which have a different focus, such as a school orchestra exchange in Europe.

During residential experiences there will be many opportunities to deliver experiences and outcomes of *Curriculum for Excellence*, particularly those which cannot easily be achieved in the local community. For example, comparing and contrasting local communities with communities within or close to the residential setting as outlined in the experiences and outcomes for social studies. In self-catering contexts, planning and preparation which involves buying and cooking food clearly resonates with promoting healthy eating habits for health promotion and nutrition.

The duration of a residential visit offers a unique form of intensive experience which encourages children and young people to engage with staff and peers at a deeper level and build relationships.

Spending time away from the home environment gives children and young people opportunities to develop:

- confidence, by living more independently and making their own decisions
- resilience, by having individual and group ownership for learning, community living and sharing free time
- a sense of adventure, by exploring new places and new environments
- an appreciation of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle through physical activity
- a chance to reflect on experiences and learning.

In order to maximise the benefits of residential experiences, careful planning and preparation, including work undertaken with children and young people before and after the residential experience, is key to the relevance, coherence, breadth and depth of learning. Project work to take forward during the residential experience should build on previous learning. Taking an appropriate quality task back to the school environment will maintain an important element of depth in the experience. Using technologies such as

¹¹ Higgins, P and Nicol, R, *Learning as Adventure: Theory for Practice*, DfEs and Connexions Service, 2002

Glow will support such an approach, allowing children and young people to report back on an experience while it is happening. When appropriate, indirect or remote supervision will enhance the learning experience by giving learners the opportunity to become more independent.

Overall, for children and young people to get the most out of their residential experiences it is essential that any joint planning with residential providers is rigorous. Clearly identifying and allocating roles and responsibilities for learning, teaching and recognising achievement will focus the educational intent.

'I enjoy seeing students outside of the classroom doing something which I know is within their capacity but which is perhaps outside of their previous experience . . . people who might excel in the classroom find themselves outside of their comfort zones on a much more level playing field, and pupils who can be 'invisible' in school can find their own feet, and sometimes take the lead.'

Principal teacher, art and design

