

External providers

Guidance

External providers

Youth work organisations often choose to use external organisations such as transport operators, first aid providers, caterers or venues to assist in the delivery of programmes.

An external provider may be defined as a ‘provider of one or more contracted services to the youth work organisation’. This would normally include services where a formal written agreement, contract, terms of use or booking form is completed between the external provider and youth work organisation.

Although they are external, youth work organisations still have a responsibility to ensure those providers are operating at good standards and are managing risk appropriately. This is known as a non-delegable duty of care. In 2013 the UK Supreme Court ruled that an organisation could be held directly responsible for the negligence of a contracted external provider. Similar to “vicarious liability”, non-delegable duty of care means that organisations must also ensure that “reasonable care” is taken by external providers. Therefore, it is important that youth work organisations carry out due diligence on any external providers they may be considering using or working with.

There may be occasions where less formal arrangements with external parties exist and these may provide opportunities and efficiencies that may not exist with more established providers. Youth work organisations should however be aware that where such an informal arrangement is in place, the youth work organisation may be subject to greater liability in the event of an incident or any litigation.

Prior to engaging or contracting with external providers, youth work organisations should undertake a checking process and ask questions to evaluate their services and standards.

Key considerations may include the following as applicable:

- Does the provider hold adequate public liability and other (as applicable) insurance cover?
 - Evidence of the level of cover should be sought.
- What safety procedures are in place?
 - Is the provider able to share relevant supporting documentation?
 - Do they hold independent accreditation?
- Is the provider able to share their risk assessments, emergency procedures and incident plans?
 - Provider risk assessments should be used to influence the youth work organisation’s own risk assessment.
- Is the provider able to appropriately meet the aims of the youth programme/service and the needs of participating young people?
- How reliable, quick and easy is communication and liaison?
 - Can the right people be contacted?
 - Is there a communication plan for emergencies, incidents and/or issues?
- Is the provider reliable?
 - It may be possible to ask other organisations for recommendations and seek evidence to support marketing information.
- What pre-programme/activity literature and information is provided?
 - Is it helpful and comprehensive?
 - Does it cover all requirements?
- Does the provider stipulate minimum competencies for their own staff and what are these?
 - What training do their staff receive, and how often?
- How does the provider store and maintain equipment, vehicles and/or facilities?
- How will provider staff work with and handover to and from youth workers?
- Does the provider represent good value?
 - *N.B. a choice should not be influenced by price alone without consideration for safety.*
- What are the booking conditions?
 - Cancellation terms and financial security should be considered.

External accreditation

When conducting safety checks of a provider, youth work organisations should seek evidence of any external and independent accreditations that may be held by similar organisations in that sector. Depending on the sector or nature of service provision, independent accreditations may exist to provide assurances regarding both safety and the quality of educational outcomes. Some examples include the [Adventurous Activity Licensing Authority](#) and [Learning Outside the Classroom \(LOtC\) Quality Badge](#) for the adventurous activities sector, [CoachMarque](#), [BUSK Benchmark](#) and [DVSA Earned Recognition](#) for transport providers, and [Food Standards Agency](#) for catering.

If an external provider does not hold suitable accreditation which covers all elements of its provision, youth work organisations should consider other means of gaining assurances of relevant operational aspects that may include:

- Health, safety and emergency policies and procedures
- [Risk management procedures](#)
- [Food safety](#)
- [Fire safety](#)
- [Use of vehicles](#)
- [Staff competence, qualification and training](#)
- Safeguarding, including principles of safer recruitment
- [Accommodation provision](#)
- Subcontracting to other providers or partners
- [Public liability insurance](#)
- Data protection and privacy

Assurances may be sought via reviewing documentation, some of which may be readily available on the provider's website, by seeking reviews or testimonials from other organisations, or by undertaking a preliminary visit, communicating directly with the provider and/or observing their delivery/services with other users.

Preliminary visits

While accreditations and other sources of information can provide essential assurances, they are not a substitute for a preliminary visit and being able to identify potential issues with providers and discuss these face to face with provider staff. So, wherever reasonably practicable, it is good practice for a member of staff to carry out a preliminary visit, especially to unfamiliar facilities and providers. Preliminary visits should be undertaken by a [competent person](#) who is able to interpret findings to make informed decisions about the use of the provider(s), and to influence the youth work organisation's own risk assessments.

Preliminary visits enable questions such as the following to be addressed, and may enable observation of their delivery/service to other users:

- Will the provider and/or facilities be suitable to meet the programme requirements?
- Are there any particular hazards that need to be considered in programme planning and preparation, including any amendments to the youth work organisation's own risk assessment(s)?
- What will be the options if conditions differ significantly from the pre-visit? i.e. daylight, water level, temperature and weather, or under-foot/road conditions etc
- Will the provider and/or facilities be able to cater for the full range of group needs, including any medical, behavioural or special educational needs and disabilities?
- Will the group need any specialist equipment or items of clothing?
- Are there any staff training needs necessary prior to attending? Either for the youth work organisation's own workers or provider staff.
- Will young people need to be prepared or trained?

Photographs taken on a preliminary visit can be a great aid to briefing youth workers, parents and young people and may even be included in the risk assessment document. Where a preliminary visit is not reasonably practicable, organisations should seek information from reliable sources such as: colleagues; similar groups that have recently used the venue or facility/provider; reputable organisations such as tourist boards.