

Supervision

Guidance

Types of Supervision

Supervision can be provided directly, indirectly (within clear boundaries) or remotely. Workers should always ensure that arrangements are appropriate for the needs and capabilities of the group and that associated risks have been taken into account.

When deciding which type of supervision is appropriate, workers should give prior consideration to variables of: the number, ratios, experience and competence of workers available; the activity and risks associated; the needs and capabilities of the group including expected behaviour and maturity; and the nature of the location and environment, including the risks associated - both human and environmental.

It is important that all workers and young people understand the supervision arrangements in place and associated expectations.

- **Direct Supervision** refers to situations when young people remain within sight and verbal contact of workers.
- **Indirect Supervision** refers to situations when workers may not have direct sight of or verbal contact with young people but clear boundaries are in place. For example, when groups or individuals are given the freedom to explore an environment, i.e. a museum or to spend time in a town centre during a lunch break. When applying indirect supervision, workers should ensure that clear boundaries (of time, geography and behaviour) have been identified and agreed, and that a quick and simple process to re-establish direct supervision in an emergency or changed circumstances is in place.
- **Remote Supervision** refers to situations when supervision is primarily a monitoring and emergency response role. Workers should monitor the group throughout and be able to intervene or assist within a reasonable time when contacted or if there is a cause for concern. 'Reasonable' in this context will depend on the age, maturity and competence of the group, the activity and the characteristics of the environment as identified by the risk assessment.

When employing remote supervision, contact arrangements should be clear and failsafe, and clear guidelines should be agreed with identified emergency procedures in place, including actions to be undertaken if a pre-arranged contact point is missed. Remote supervision should not be employed if any risk assessment has identified risks that cannot be adequately controlled or if any concerns exist regarding the competence or maturity of the group or individuals in the context of the environment and proposed activity.

Supervision ratios

Youth work organisations must ensure that an assessment is made, specific to the programme to ascertain staffing requirements which will enable effective supervision of young people and effectively manage the associated risks.

There are no statutory defined staffing/supervision ratios for youth work and it is not possible or appropriate to provide definitive ratios for particular groups or activities. Many influencing factors relating to the specifics of the group and programme will affect what is appropriate in each case.

When making decisions about staffing requirements, all influencing factors should be taken into account, including the following:

- Staff/worker competence and familiarity with the proposed activities
- The location and nature of the environment in which the programme or activity is planned
- The specifics of the group including the size of the group and the age, gender, ability and needs (behavioural, medical, emotional and educational) of the young people
- The nature of the planned activities and duration of the programme
- The impact and consequences of a worker being unavailable at short notice or indisposed during the programme, and the feasibility of any contingency plans

Organisations should be aware that defined minimum ratios do exist for particular activities such as many adventurous activities or other activities defined by National Governing Body practice. These should be

regarded as minimum requirements and not necessarily automatically appropriate for all groups or programmes, particularly those with more complex needs.

Note: In some cases, if workers are inexperienced in a particular activity (e.g. kayaking) they may need to be included in participant numbers when establishing appropriate ratios.

Legal minimum requirements do exist for children under the age of five as stipulated by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Statutory Framework. Organisations should be mindful that these minimum requirements are applicable to and appropriate for early years educational and childcare settings, and therefore appropriate ratios for off-site activities or trips are likely to be higher.

There is no specific requirement for workers to be of the same gender as young people, however youth work organisations should consider in advance any potential issues which may arise, including safeguarding considerations and privacy needs, and have plans in place to manage them. As such and for younger groups, it is normal practice to have staff of each sex present, especially on residential programmes.

For programmes taking place in remote locations or abroad, organisations should have contingencies in place to ensure the group can continue to be supervised effectively if a worker must leave the group or become indisposed (i.e. through illness/injury, or to accompany a young person to hospital). This may include significant changes to the itinerary or proposed activity.

For it to be deemed appropriate for a worker to be the only staff member with a particular group, the young people participating should be competent to safely manage themselves and know how to access support in the event that the worker is taken ill or sustains an injury.

Workers and their own children

Organisations should be mindful that a worker's ability to effectively supervise and manage a group may be compromised by the needs of their own child if present. In such a case, where possible strategies should be put in place to minimise potential distraction by placing parent and child in separate groups, removing direct supervision responsibilities of the child from the parent/worker. Where this is not possible, other means of managing risk should be considered including additional staffing or adaptations to the programme.