

Away Trips Policy

Away trips are usually planned for a period of intensive training, for attendance at a competition or as a social activity. Each trip will require planning and preparation for leaders and young people. There are certain safeguarding requirements that must be met for any away trip.

Leaders

Coaches, team managers and any other staff required for a trip should be appointed through an appropriate selection process taking into account the requirements of the trip. The selections should be done by the relevant committee and head coach to ensure the best possible team are selected for the benefit of the young people. All leaders appointed to travel with young people must be qualified and meet the safeguarding requirements for their role. This is a requirement where an away trip involves an overnight stay.

Where an away trip is for one day only, not involving an overnight stay, additional staff may be used on an ad hoc basis who are not directly responsible for young people (in the same way as the person on duty). It may not be a legal requirement to be vetted or trained however, this must be checked prior to anyone travelling with young people.

It is the obligation of the club or region to ensure that appointed leaders that are vetted and trained where legally required.

Planning

The details of the trip must be planned and communicated to all people involved including who is travelling, travel and insurance arrangements, overnight accommodation, schedule of events/training whilst away and any extra-curricular activities. It is recommended that young people in a team travel together to encourage those on the team to support each other during the trip. There may be additional details required depending on the type of trip; e.g. specific gear required, medical or dietary needs, consent forms etc. Leaders must be made aware of any particular needs of an individual in the group.

There are responsibility options to consider when planning a trip. The subsequent arrangements identifying the boundaries and areas of responsibility will depend on the chosen option for the trip.

1. Swim Ireland, region or club responsibility – whereby all the arrangements for the trip are made by Swim Ireland, the region or club. The parent's responsibility will be to ensure that their child is dropped off at the beginning of the trip and collected on time at the end. This is often a preferred choice that allows a team spirit to develop fostering an open, honest and inclusive team atmosphere
2. Parent responsibility – parents are solely responsible for their own children, and this would include, travelling, accommodation, meals etc. In this case the activities on the trip need to be clearly defined to ensure young people can be dropped off and collected at the right time
3. Parent and club responsibility – a combination of club and parent responsibilities, making sure the boundaries and responsibilities are clear. This often is a good choice where costs are difficult to meet travelling as a group and parents help alleviate this, e.g. travelling to a competition where parents will be going anyway.

Travelling

The travelling arrangements must meet all legal requirements for the country or countries in which the travel takes place. It is the responsibility of the club or region planning the trip to ensure all road traffic laws are met and obeyed. If any travel is the responsibility of a parent, then this must be clear in the pre-trip planning, identifying when and where responsibility starts and ends. Group travel details must be provided to all those on the trip and to the parents of young people to make sure drop-off and collections times are clear.

Consent

Each young person must have parental consent to attend the trip. The consents required should include the travel undertaken, filming and photography and medical in cases of emergency. There may be specific consents required depending on the country visited or the type of travel planned. These should be checked well in advance of the trip. All young people must provide an emergency contact number for a parent contactable for the duration of the trip and details of their next of kin.

Being away from home

An away trip with a sports team is often a young person's first opportunity to travel away from home on their own. The meticulous planning of such trips can ensure that this experience is a great memory for a young person. Where a parent has a query or there is a specific requirement for a young person being away from home, they should discuss this with the appointed lead team manager or head coach well in advance of the trip. It may be necessary to make alternative arrangements. The organisers will consider any specific need however, it may not be possible within the scope of the trip/activity for every request to be accommodated.

If an athlete has a concern whilst away, they must know who they can talk to; this may be another member of the team, team manager, coach or making contact with a parent or friend.

General guidance for away trips

1. There must be clear and fair criteria for selection of young people for an away trip – this may be determined by qualifications for a competition or a set selection policy for a training or skills camp.
2. The reason for the trip should be clear and everyone informed of the purpose.
3. All staff and athletes involved are subject to Swim Ireland guidance and rules including codes of conduct and disciplinary processes.
4. A club or region require a Swim Ireland International Permit for travelling abroad.
5. Team staff should be aware, if the trip involves travelling to a different country, there may be different legal requirements. Any offence occurring in a different jurisdiction is usually subject to the laws of that country.
6. Any athlete or staff member becoming ill on the trip may require medical attention; the parent of a young person must be informed. If necessary, the individual may be required to return home. Where an athlete is ill it is recommended that a staff member of the same gender remains with them.
7. If a parent who is not appointed as a leader for the trip decides to travel to the same location at the same time, they should respect any boundaries set by organisers as their presence may be disruptive to the purpose of the trip. Where a parent has specific concerns regarding their child, these should be discussed in advance with the lead team manager or head coach appointed for the trip.
8. There should be an adult leader of each gender for a mixed gender group of young people with a recommended ratio of adults to children under 12 of 1:8 or a recommended ratio of adults to children over 12 of 1:10 as minimum.
9. Rooming guidance should be followed:
 - A leader may not share a room with an athlete
 - Athletes of the same gender should be roomed together
 - Athletes of similar ages should be roomed together, where possible
 - Athletes should preferably share rooms; if an athlete must be in a single room due to the make of numbers and genders this must be discussed with the parent and athlete and agreed well in advance of the trip
 - Where all athletes are roomed in single rooms this must be clear to everyone in advance to allow for athletes or parents to raise any concern
 - It is preferable for leaders and athletes to be accommodated on one floor; where this is not possible athletes must know how to contact the leaders
10. Athletes should not have access to unsuitable programmes e.g. on the TV or their devices
11. Use of any chargeable facilities in a room must be agreed beforehand
12. Substance misuse and the use of alcohol and tobacco products are forbidden whilst on a trip.
13. It should be clear who is responsible for additional costs incurred during the trip e.g. if an individual is required to return home etc.

Team Managers and Coaches

The roles of team managers and coaches must be agreed and sent to all involved prior to the trip being taken. The team manager is responsible for the well-being and safety of young people whilst away and must work together with the appointed coaches. The coach is responsible for the technical input and will set out the programme of activities for training, competition or practice and should be clear on the expectations for the team. The team staff should work together to ensure adequate nutrition, rest and down time is provided.

Considerations for team staff to agree:

Communication of travel arrangements and the programme for the trip

Point of responsibility for the trip i.e. starting and end points to be clear for parents

Schedule for training/activities/competition

Briefing/debrief meetings

Periods of 'on duty' and 'off duty' for long trips to enable staff to have downtime

Supervision for training sessions

Dealing with incidents according to the complaints and disciplinary procedures

Final report on the trip

Team managers need a knowledge of the area where the team is staying and know how to access to local medical emergency services, local shops, or alternative activities, etc. This will depend on the activities of the planned trip.

Team manager must have the personal details for each of the young people on the trip i.e. any medical information, emergency contact numbers, etc.

Team staff will decide:

- Suitability of the environment for young people including unsupervised visits away from the venue e.g. local shops or walks
- Use of appropriate social media
- Use of mobile devices
- Social activities and extra-curricular activities depending on availability at the venue

Social media

Team staff should emphasise what is appropriate to post and share on social media with the group travelling. It can be an opportunity to agree boundaries and the use of tags to encourage positive posting as a way of promoting the trip. Any breach of behaviour posted online, or inappropriate use of social media should be dealt with immediately. It may be necessary to inform parents and come to an agreement to remove devices if the behaviour continues.

Team meetings

It is necessary to ensure the smooth running of a trip to have team meetings regularly to cover any difficulties that arise or to celebrate positive outcomes and successes.

The team staff should meet with the athletes at least once a day giving the athletes an opportunity to voice their views. This is also an opportunity to confirm the day's schedule.

Team staff should meet once a day to cover any concerns or queries that have come up in the previous day for either adults or athletes.

Disciplinary/Complaint action

If any complaint is raised or disciplinary action is required, the Swim Ireland complaints and disciplinary procedures must be followed. An immediate sanction may only be issued by the person in charge, and it should be clear who that is, i.e. depending on where an incident happens this may be a coach or a team manager.

It is always advisable to resolve matters informally and quickly to ensure the best outcome for all involved. Issues can quickly develop creating difficult circumstances for those involved if left to aggravate or develop into more serious concerns. Issues between team staff should be resolved by the lead team manager or the lead coach and must not impact on the young people present.

All incidents must be recorded, and where a young person is involved their parents informed as soon as practicable.

Returning home

The team staff should compile a report on the trip including any success and achievements. Issues involving the team should be noted and any follow up required should be immediately actioned i.e. reporting to the complaints and disciplinary committee. Issues involving the trip e.g. travel, facilities etc should be noted for future planning. The report is confidential and should be shared on a need to know basis.

The athletes should be asked for feedback on the trip as this may highlight areas not evident to the leaders, and this information can be used to improve future trips.