

REPORT TO: Halton School Forum

DATE: 17 March 2014

REPORTING OFFICER: Ann McIntyre

SUBJECT: Shared Service Arrangements Academic Year 2014/15:
Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC), Visits and
Outdoor Education Advice and Guidance

WARD(S) Borough-wide

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To consider the continuation of the provision from Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC) and Edufocus to provide Learning Outside the Classroom, Visits and Outdoor Education advice and guidance to Halton schools, and for Halton School Forum to make a decision about funding this provision from April 2014.

2.0 **RECOMMENDED: that**

2.1 **School Forum supports the provision of the LOtC Service provided by CWaC at a cost of £41,371 for 2014/2015 and £6,437 for Edufocus for the period 17 December 2014 to 31 March 2016.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Learning outside the classroom and off site activities provide a valuable opportunity for pupils and young people to encounter experiences that are not available to them in the classroom. They are an opportunity to extend the learning of all pupils and can enable young people to learn through new experiences and develop their initiative and independence, and enrich their understanding of themselves, others and the world around them. They can be a catalyst for positive engagement in education, improved personal performance, and promote a lifetime interest and in some cases lead to professional fulfilment.

3.2 Such visits need to be carried out within a robust planning framework that promotes the safety and security of all participants and manages the risk. The Authority has a policy for the Management of Learning Outside the Classroom and has adopted, as its' employer guidance, National Guidance for the Management of Outdoor Learning, Off-site visits and Learning Outside the Classroom produced by the Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel (OEAP) which provides a source of guidance, information and support for schools and establishments organising educational and offsite visits.

3.3 It is a legal expectation that employees must work within the requirements their employer's guidance. The national guidance strongly recommends that all employers appoint or retain the services of a competent and experienced technical adviser to oversee all aspects of their provision of outdoor learning, off-

site visits and LOtC. Employers must understand that they carry full legal responsibility. Choosing not to appoint a technical expert leaves employers in a vulnerable position. In the event of any proven civil negligence, this can result in the payment of heavy damages. In the case of criminal negligence under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act (1974) or under Corporate Manslaughter legislation (2008), the ultimate sanction is a custodial sentence.

- 3.4 For the past 5 years Halton has engaged the services provided by CWaC Quality Learning Partnership Outdoor Education Adviser (QLP OEA) and Edufocus to manage the risks associated with LOtC activities and to operate within the requirements of legal frameworks governing the health, safety and welfare of employees and pupils/young people in the context of LOtC, educational visits and outdoor education. Last year the service supported 95,430 Halton pupils taking part in 4632 visits.
- 3.5 The QLP OEA's service provides independent technical advice, guidance regarding health, safety and current best practice regarding LOtC and educational visits. Through this service Halton maintains representation on the OEAP (the national forum for sharing of good practice relating to LOtC for all Children's Service establishments). The QLP OEA also gives LA approval and support to establishments for visits of a complex nature and routinely monitors visits as part of the Authority wide sampling procedure. The QLP OEA delivers high quality training and development courses for educational visit co-ordinators, visit leaders and governors in all Children's service establishments. Administrative support is also included in the specification.
- 3.6 The QLP OEA service is delivered by a team of professionally qualified teachers with significant experience in delivering LOtC and leading outdoor educational activities and offsite visits. They provide a flexible, proactive and responsive LOtC service that supports statutory and risk management obligations and maintains best practice.
- 3.7 To underpin service delivery Evolve has been commissioned. This is a web-based educational visits notification, approval and database system provided by Edufocus to support schools and establishments in planning any kind of off-site activity. The system facilitates the LA's approval requirements for complex visits and includes reporting tools and access to guidance and resources for establishments. Edufocus is used by over 19,000 schools in England and Wales and has a fully managed and reliable service infrastructure.
- 3.8 The combined service provided by CWaC and Edufocus provides outstanding support for LOtC, offers good value for money and delivers the service in a cost effective way for schools and establishments. The selection of the current providers is based on past performance, their ability to deliver a flexible and responsive service and a proven record of subject knowledge, experience and expertise.