Holidays and School Trips In and Outside the UK

**SCOPE OF THIS CHAPTER**

This procedure applies to holidays and school/organisational trips within and outside the UK for all Looked After Children.

**RELATED CHAPTERS**

[**Delegation of Authority to Foster Carers and Residential Workers Procedure**](https://walthamforestchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_del_auth_fc_resid.html)

[**Social Visits (Including Overnight Stays) Procedure**](https://walthamforestchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_overnigt_stays.htm)

[**Contact with Parents/Adults and Siblings Procedure**](https://walthamforestchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_contact_parents.html)

**AMENDMENT**

In July 2023, this guidance was updated to cover recording standards in relation to temporary accommodation arrangements in instances where the child/young person’s regular foster carer is away from home on a holiday or is having a break from caring for the child (see section 4).

In May 2021, this guidance was reviewed and updated throughout. [**Section 2.3 Insurance Cover**](https://walthamforestchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_hol_trips_in_out_uk.html?zoom_highlight=holiday#insurance) was updated to include details of how to apply for a Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) which provides access to reduced cost or free medical insurance in the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland. [**Section 2.4, Obtaining a Passport**](https://walthamforestchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_hol_trips_in_out_uk.html?zoom_highlight=holiday#passport) has also been updated to link to reissued [**Home Office guidance for Local Authorities Children's Services Departments when Applying for Passports on Behalf of Children**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/916017/looked_after_children__govuk.pdf).

**1. Holidays for Looked After Children in the UK**

Where there is a proposal for a Looked After Child to go on holiday in the UK, the child's social worker must obtain full information about the holiday.

This will include:

* Proposed dates and duration of the holiday;
* The wishes and feelings of the child;
* Address(es)/contact details of the holiday location/what type of holiday;
* Insurance details;
* Who will be present on the holiday e.g. names of other children and other adults;
* If the holiday involves staying with friends or relatives, their names and addresses;
* Emergency contacts;
* Any risk assessments that may be required, which should include any health or behaviour issues of the child as well as the holiday environment itself.

The child's social worker should seek the views of the child and parent/persons who have Parental Responsibility as soon as practicable.

If the parents consent, this consent must be obtained in writing.

Where the social worker, parent and staff/carer agree to the proposed holiday, the holiday can be approved and should be included in the child's Placement Plan.

For children who are in a long term placement and there is agreement with the Children's Services that the carers have Delegated Authority, (see [**Delegation of Authority to Foster Carers and Residential Workers Procedure**](https://walthamforestchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_del_auth_fc_resid.html)), depending upon the nature of the delegation agreed, it may be the case that the carers are able to make decisions relating to holidays themselves. However, good practice should ensure that decisions by the carers are shared in a timely way with their Supervising Social Worker and/or child's allocated practitioner. The parent/s should be advised as appropriate – especially if the holiday affects contact arrangements.

Children must not be taken on holiday during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances and the holiday has been approved by the Head of the child's school and the Social Worker's Manager.

If parents are opposed to the holiday, the social worker and their manager should seek legal advice.

Written confirmation of the manager's decision, together with the reasons, should be provided to the parent.

Where the holiday will involve additional costs, the social worker should obtain approval for the costs from the relevant manager before the holiday can be agreed.

If approved, the holiday should be included in the child's Placement Plan.

Where the holiday will interrupt contact arrangements between the child and parents, consideration should also be given to arranging additional contacts before and after the holiday.

**2. Holidays for Looked After Children Outside the UK**

2.1 Holidays for Accommodated Children

Arrangements for notifying and consulting the social worker about holiday plans should be agreed in the Placement Plan.

The consent of the parent(s) or person with Parental Responsibility must be obtained and consent form signed.

The child's social worker must obtain full information about the holiday/trip. This will include:

* Proposed dates and duration of the holiday;
* The wishes and feelings of the child;
* Address(es)/contact details of the holiday location/what type of holiday;
* Insurance details;
* Who will be present on the holiday e.g. names of other children and other adults;
* If the holiday involves staying with friends or relatives, their names and addresses;
* Emergency contacts;
* Any risk assessments that may be required, which should include any health or behaviour issues of the child as well as the holiday environment itself.

**NOTE**: If there are any issues such as the holiday destination experiencing political unrest, concern that the child may not return as planned or other circumstances which may place the child at risk, these should be highlighted to the social worker's Manager. A check should be undertaken through [**Foreign Office - Foreign Travel Advice**](https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice) and a balanced decision regarding the outcome made.

If it is a group holiday, the social worker must be satisfied that adequate health and safety precautions including appropriate risk assessments are taken and in place.

Children must not be taken on holiday during term time unless there are exceptional circumstances; such a request must be approved by the Head of the child's school and the Social Worker's Manager.

2.2 Holidays for Children on Care Orders

**Holidays of Less Than One Month**

The procedure is the same as for those for Accommodated Children (see [**Section 2.1, Holidays for Accommodated Children**](https://walthamforestchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_hol_trips_in_out_uk.html?zoom_highlight=holiday#hol_acc)) except that the consent of the parents or person having Parental Responsibility is not required but should be sought and obtained wherever practicable or possible. Any objections by the parent(s) should be recorded on the child's electronic records.

The social worker should ensure that arrangements are in place through the Placement Plan to be notified well in advance of any plans for holidays abroad in order to obtain required consent wherever practicable or possible.

**Holidays of One Month or More**

This requires either the written consent of every person who has parental responsibility for the child, or the leave of the court.

Where a Court Order is required, the social worker should contact Legal Services as soon as possible for the necessary application to be made and advise the parents of the intended application.

It is usual for the court to require evidence of the views of those with Parental Responsibility or the efforts made to obtain them.

If the holiday is authorised by the Court, the holiday should be included in the Placement Plan and a copy of the court order giving leave for the holiday should also be given to the foster carer.

2.3 Insurance Cover

**Healthcare for UK Nationals in the EU, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway or Switzerland**

The UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) provides access to state healthcare in Europe at a reduced cost, or sometimes for free.

* If the child already has a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) this remains valid until the expiry date on the card;
* If the child does not have a European Health Insurance Card or it has expired, they will need a Global Health Insurance Card. [**Cards can be ordered online from the NHS**](https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/apply-for-a-free-uk-global-health-insurance-card-ghic/). For children under 16, the application should be completed by their carers.

The GHIC and EHIC do not replace travel insurance which should be in place for all holidays outside the UK. [**For the latest advice on the GHIC see the GOV.UK website**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-residents-visiting-the-eueea-and-switzerland-healthcare).

**Travel Insurance Cover for Holidays**

Carers should obtain travel insurance for all holidays overseas, this will cover a range of eventualities, including medical expenses, a trip being cut short or cancelled, and loss or theft of possessions. [**For more advice on travel insurance, see the GOV.UK website**](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-insurance).

2.4 Obtaining a Passport

* The Home Office has issued [**Guidance for Local Authorities Children's Services Departments when Applying for Passports on Behalf of Children**](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/916017/looked_after_children__govuk.pdf);
* Children's Services Departments are normally only entitled to apply for passports for a Looked After Child when they have parental responsibility;
* Where Children's Services do not hold parental responsibility, the application cannot be processed without the consent of at least one person who has parental responsibility for the child.

**3. School / Organisational Trips of up to 4 days Away**

The social worker should ensure risk assessments have been conducted.

The child's participation in school/organisational trips should be considered at the time of the placement, and the consultation required before they can be agreed should be included in the Placement Plan.

Where a child is placed with the parents, the Placement Plan will usually provide that a school trip of up to 4 days can be agreed by the social worker in consultation with the school and the parent.

Where a child is placed in foster care or residential care, the Placement Plan will usually authorise the staff/carer to agree to the child going on school or other organisational trips of up to 4 days away without prior consultation with the social worker or the parent - see [**Social Visits (Including Overnight Stays) Procedure**](https://walthamforestchildcare.proceduresonline.com/p_overnigt_stays.htm). If the staff/carer have not been so authorised, the child's social worker and parents must be consulted before agreement can be given.

Where parental consent is not given, the social worker should consult their Manager and obtain legal advice as necessary. Where the Manager agrees to the child going on the trip despite parental opposition, the reasons must be recorded and explained to the parent.

**4. Recording standards: temporary accommodation arrangements where the child or young person’s regular foster carer is away from home on a holiday or is having a break from caring for the child or young person.**

Temporary accommodation whilst normal foster carer is on holiday. Use for a temporary planned stay with a substitute carer when the child's regular foster carer is away from home on a holiday or is having a break from caring for the child:

The child may move to stay with a different foster carer or to a Residential Unit or may be cared for by a substitute foster carer coming into the home of the child's regular carer.

Note that only two breaks of up to 21 days can be recorded in this way in any 12- month period. Third or subsequent holidays of the carer of less than 8 days duration should be coded T4. Third or subsequent holidays of the carer of more than 8 days duration cannot be recorded as a temporary placement. Every effort will be made to reduce the instability caused due to a foster carer going on holiday. In the very rare circumstances that the care of a child is shared between two foster carers, this can be treated as one T3 episode. However, if it was not planned that the care of the child would be shared then both placements must be recorded.

Link to the DfE SSDA903 collection 1 guidance is below:

<https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1153549/CLA_SSDA903_2023-24_Guide_Version_1_1.pdf>