Staying Safe

Consultation Response Form

The closing date for this consultation is: 31 October 2007
Your comments must reach us by that date.
THIS FORM IS NOT INTERACTIVE. If you wish to respond electronically please use the online or offline response facility available on the Department for Children, Schools and Families e-consultation website (http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/consultations).

The information you provide in your response will be subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and Environmental Information Regulations, which allow public access to information held by the Department. This does not necessarily mean that your response can be made available to the public as there are exemptions relating to information provided in confidence and information to which the Data Protection Act 1998 applies. You may request confidentiality by ticking the box provided, but you should note that neither this, nor an automatically-generated e-mail confidentiality statement, will necessarily exclude the public right of access.

Please tick if you want us to keep your response confidential. □

Name          Steve Tilling
Organisation (if applicable) Field Studies Council
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              Preston Montford
              Shrewsbury
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If your enquiry is related to the policy content of the consultation you can contact the Staying Safe Consultation Team by e-mail: staying.safe@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk.

If you have a query relating to the consultation process you can contact the Consultation Unit on:

Telephone: 01928 794888
Fax: 01928 794 113
e-mail: consultation.unit@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk
Which of the following best describes you:

- [ ] Child (Under 13)
- [ ] Young Person (Under 18)
- [x] Parent
- [ ] Professional working with children and young people
- [ ] Volunteer working with children and young people
- [ ] Other (Please specify)

If you work with children or young people, which best describes the organisation you work in:

- [ ] Local Authority
- [ ] School
- [x] Voluntary and Community Sector Organisation
- [ ] Further or Higher Education Institution
- [ ] Private Sector Organisation
- [ ] Health Organisation
- [ ] Youth Justice Organisation
- [ ] Other (Please specify)

The Field Studies Council (FSC) is a pioneering educational charity committed to bringing environmental understanding to all. Established in 1943, the FSC has become internationally respected for its national network of 17 education centres. The FSC provides informative and enjoyable opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to discover, explore, be inspired by, and understand the natural environment.
General Questions

1 a) How safe do you think children are?

- [ ] Very safe  
- [X] Safe  
- [ ] Not very safe  
- [ ] Not sure

Comments:

The FSC believes that the safety of children and young people is the most important priority but that there should always be opportunities for young people to experience outdoor learning.

In recent years the FSC has seen a continuing fall in the number of schools sending their pupils on educational fieldwork. We feel that the decline in these types of educational field visits has a negative effect on the development of children because children are not receiving the necessary practical skills that fieldwork can help to build. At a time when there is increasing demand for young people to be aware of their impact on the world around them, this is being undermined by a decline in the type of outdoor learning and personal development which will enable them to become active and environmentally conscious citizens.

1 b) How good are we at giving children and young people the opportunity to explore, understand risks for themselves and to learn the skills vital for their development?

Comments:

Out-of-classroom education should be a central element of an imaginative and contemporary education which provides an exciting and memorable experience which can enthuse young people and inspire further learning.

Participation in fieldwork allows children to experience different communities and surroundings and gain a wider perspective on the world around them. For disadvantaged groups and under achievers in particular this can be a unique experience. Learning outside, particularly in a novel setting, introduces challenging situations, uncertainty and the opportunity to become risk aware rather than just risk averse and offers young people the opportunity to experience, explore and investigate: vital elements in the development of a modern citizen.
2 If you are a parent, what concerns do you have about your children's safety and how do you address these?

Comments:

3 If you are a child or young person yourself, are the views of children and young people included here the same as yours and those of your friends?

Comments:
4 a) As a member of the public, do you feel a sense of responsibility for protecting children?

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Comments:

4 b) How can we build this sense of responsibility in local communities?

Comments:
5 If you work with children and young people, do you know what your role is in keeping children safe?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Not Sure

Comments:

6 Have we got the right balance between keeping children safe and also allowing them the freedom to develop?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Not Sure

Comments:

The FSC are concerned about the small rise in the number of compensation claims resulting from outdoor activities. It is our understanding that a limited compensation culture has emerged in recent years. However, the public perception of a compensation culture has been greatly inflated through media coverage. Today, there is a minor increased risk of claims against organisations such as the FSC which are involved in providing activities.

The experience of the FSC suggests that there is an unnecessary and disproportionate level of risk averseness, particularly among public bodies in the education sector, with which we have most contact. For some LEAs in particular the approach is to avoid all activities perceived as 'risky', to the detriment of children's experiences of out-of-classroom activity and real-world experience. We are concerned that some public bodies may be
making arbitrary decisions, based on the notion of a compensation culture, with serious consequences for pupils' learning experience.

Evaluations carried out for the FSC by the Institute of Education have so far demonstrated that outdoor learning has many positive cognitive, affective, interpersonal and behavioural impacts. Interviews with both teachers and students suggest that there is increased co-operation between pupils with new friendships being established; improved relations with teachers; increase in knowledge and skills base; and, most significantly, those pupils who often demonstrate challenging behaviour, have improved attention and participation back in the classroom.

7 a) Are the roles and responsibilities set out in Chapter 2 correct?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] Not Sure

Comments:

7 b) What should the role of central Government be, and what is the responsibility of local organisations and communities?
The FSC understands that it is a major challenge to provide an environment in which children feel safe and are able to develop freely. We therefore welcome the Government’s commitment to outdoor learning as stated by the Department for Education & Skills’ publication of the Manifesto for Outdoor Learning. However, unless the aims of the manifesto are matched with a real commitment by the Department to promote the manifesto amongst schools, parents, youth groups, etc, it will remain nothing more than a statement of good intentions.

The FSC feel more needs to be done to encourage children to take activities outside the classroom. There is clear evidence that activities outside the classroom provide a number of benefits to young people.

For example since 2003, field visits have been available to 11-14 year olds from London secondary schools through the London Challenge under the London Challenge New Views scheme. This activity has been co-coordinated by the FSC and more than 31,000 pupils from nearly 300 (8 out of 10 schools eligible for the scheme), have now been able to enjoy education outside the classroom, which without this support through London Challenge, they would otherwise not have had.

London Challenge has undoubtedly had an important role in increasing educational attainment across London. For example, in 2001, the number of schools in Greater London that were getting less than 25% of 5 A* - C was 135 (almost a third of schools in London). In 2006 - thanks to the hard work of Head teachers, teachers and pupils - no schools got fewer than 25% 5 A*-C at GCSE. The success of the London Challenge was shown when the Government announced that the scheme would be expanded. From 2008 the City Challenge, as it will be known, will be extended to include Greater Manchester and the Black Country.

The London Challenge experience underlines many of the benefits that outdoor experiences can provide to young people. These experiences which would not have taken place without the London Challenge have allowed children to learn new ideas outside the classroom. This in turn has helped significantly improve the academic attainment of children in some of the most deprived areas of London. We are proud of our part in the success of the London Challenge and feel it provides an example of best practice for what can be achieved.
8 How can local and central Government do more to protect all children by reaching out to minority communities and those speaking minority languages?

Comments:

9 Are the areas we have identified for new action right? What other areas could be considered and what more could we do?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Not Sure

Comments:

The FSC welcomes the broad range of issues raised by the consultation. However, one area we feel is missing and plays a major role in the provision of activities for children is the training provided to teachers. The FSC welcomed the opportunities for teachers' Continuing Professional Development provided by the new Science Learning Centres, and actively engaged in the development of courses offering the skills required to take students into the field. However, we note that almost all such courses have been cancelled due to poor take-up, with serious consequences for the quality of fieldwork offered to science students.

Furthermore, the FSC is concerned that the draft standards recently introduced by the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) are insufficiently robust to ensure that out of classroom competence becomes a critical standard to be achieved at each stage of professional advancement. The FSC recognizes that the TDA is currently working on exemplification of these standards and encourage the TDA to include high-quality examples
showing how out of classroom teaching should be delivered.

The FSC also urges Ofsted to adopt an inspection framework which ensures that the fieldwork training delivered by Initial Teacher Education departments in universities and colleges, and their partner schools, is at a level which produces teachers with competence and confidence to lead outdoor activity. Such minimum requirements do not exist at present. Recently published research indicates that this level of training is highly variable.

Another obstacle in the way of young people taking part in outside activities is the financial cost. The evidence from the London Challenge project demonstrates the great potential for developing courses if funding becomes available. At present, there is a major reliance on payment by parents/guardians, and this may exclude a large group of pupils from the benefits of residential courses. There is the issue of those who fall outside the normal social services support for low income families – they probably suffer most because they do not get financial help and have to pay the full parental contribution for visits.

Chapter 3 – Helping all children and young people to stay safe

10 Would parents welcome a communications campaign and information on play and positive activities in their local area?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Not Sure
11 What more should be done to enable children and young people to play safely and explore the outside world?

Comments:

12 Are children and young people taught enough in school about how to manage risks and stay safe?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Not Sure
13 Is teaching safety education in Personal, Social and Health Education a good way to increase children and young people’s resilience to harm? Are there other ways we could do this?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

Comments:

14 How can e-safety be promoted to all professionals who are responsible for children’s safety?
15 What information would parents welcome about risks of harm faced by their children and how to manage them? What areas mentioned here would parents like more specific information about?

Comments:

16 What more could be done to help Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) to make a difference?
Chapter 4 – Protecting vulnerable children and young people

17 How could training and development for social workers be improved?

18 Would a national safeguarding awards scheme help to raise the profile of work to improve children’s safety?
19 Will the beacon council scheme help to promote learning from good local practice?

[ ] Yes  [ ] No  [ ] Not Sure

Comments:

20 How can we tackle inequalities in prevention of accidents? What role could national or local organisations play?
21 What problems do professionals face in trying to address the needs of both the adults and children in the family?

22 Do some parents need help to access support available to them?
23 How can local areas ensure that children's and adults' services work collaboratively to safeguard and promote the well-being of children and young people affected by substance misuse, domestic violence or mental illness problems within their families?

Comments:

24 What is the best way to reach parents who might need help with problems that are affecting their children's welfare? Would national or local communications help?

Comments:
25 Whose responsibility should it be to address bullying that happens outside school? How could local agencies work together to address this problem?

Comments:

26 What role could LSCBs play in tackling gun and knife crime? Are there examples of good local or international practice which could be considered in more detail?
Chapter 5 – Responding when children and young people have been harmed

27 How can we make sure children have somewhere to turn to if they are being harmed?

Comments:

28 a) Does the Government need to communicate with the public to improve people’s ability to identify and know how to act on concerns about children’s safety?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not Sure
28 b) What effect would this have on local services, such as children’s social care and the police?

29 How can we protect children crossing our borders from harm? How can immigration officers work best with others in their local area?
30 Would professionals working with children and young people welcome clear information about cross-border issues to help with potential concerns?

☐ Yes  ☐ No  ☐ Not Sure

Comments:
Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge individual responses unless you place an 'X' in the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply X

Here at the Department for Children, Schools and Families we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be alright if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

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All UK national public consultations are required to conform to the following standards:

1. Consult widely throughout the process, allowing a minimum of 12 weeks for written consultation at least once during the development of the policy.

2. Be clear about what your proposals are, who may be affected, what questions are being asked and the timescale for responses.

3. Ensure that your consultation is clear, concise and widely accessible.

4. Give feedback regarding the responses received and how the consultation process influenced the policy.

5. Monitor your department’s effectiveness at consultation, including through the use of a designated consultation co-ordinator.

6. Ensure your consultation follows better regulation best practice, including carrying out a Regulatory Impact Assessment if appropriate.

Further information on the Code of Practice can be accessed through the Cabinet Office Website: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/consultation-guidance/content/introduction/index.asp
Thank you for taking time to respond to this consultation.

Completed questionnaires and other responses should be sent to the address shown below by 31 October 2007

Send by post to:

Consultation Unit
Area 1A
Castle View House
East lane
Runcorn
Cheshire
CW8 4LZ

Send by e-mail to: staying.safe@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk.