

Essex Outdoors Code of Practice 2010

Including Operating Procedures for:

**Bradwell Centre for Outdoor Learning
Danbury Centre for Outdoor Learning
Essex Outdoors Environmental Education
Harlow Centre for Outdoor Learning
Maes y Lade Centre for Outdoor Learning
Mersea Centre for Outdoor Learning**

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1. Introduction

Essex Outdoors is Essex County Council's (ECC) Outdoor Education service.

It is a 'Traded Service' within ECC's Schools Children and Families (SCF) directorate, and as such it responsible for "enriching education in Essex".

The service has 5 centres across Essex, and one in Wales; namely:-

Bradwell Centre for Outdoor Learning
Danbury Centre for Outdoor Learning
Essex Outdoors Environmental Education
Harlow Centre for Outdoor Learning
Maes y Lade Centre for Outdoor Learning
Mersea Centre for Outdoor Learning

The service employs approx. 60 full time employees (FTE) across the service; rising to approx. 100 FTE during peak season.

2. Background

Essex Outdoors is firmly committed to delivering quality outdoor learning opportunities to the young people of Essex and the wider community.

As providers of quality outdoor learning opportunities, working for and on behalf of a local authority, the service has a number of obligations to fulfil, including:-

- Legal, health & safety requirements
- Safeguarding, and the protection of young people
- Ensuring the quality of our operation, including customer service
- Ensuring a consistently sound financial performance.

This document sets out the various operating procedures and codes of practice that the service adheres to in order to fulfil these obligations. It also includes a risk assessment of the work undertaken by the service.

However, this document is not intended to replace the central training syllabus, local procedures or ongoing 'dynamic' risk assessment; rather, it is intended to supplement them.

To this end, Essex Outdoors' *complete* operating procedures are comprised of three elements:-

1. Essex Outdoors Code of Practice (this document)
2. Essex Outdoors Central Training Syllabus (Appendix II)
3. Local/centre-specific operating procedures and risk assessments

The Essex Outdoors Code of Practice and Central Training Syllabus have been approved by both Essex Outdoors' Service Manager (for and on behalf of ECC), and Essex Outdoors' Technical Advisors, namely:-

Martin Lowe – Mountain Instructors Certificate (MIC); BCU Level 5 Kayak Coach; BCU Level 4 Open Canoe and Sea Kayak Coach.

Jim Ormerod – RYA Yacht Master; RYA Coach Assessor; RYA Powerboat Trainer.

3. Legal, Regulatory and Health & Safety Context

3.1 Health and Safety

As a provider of educational and adventurous outdoor activity, Essex Outdoors adheres to the following national and local legal and regulatory requirements and standards:-

- DFES Health and Safety on Educational Visits advice, and associated supplements
- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Act (1974)
- Children's Act (1989)
- Essex County Council Code of Practice 28 – 'Safe Practice on Educational, Adventurous and Recreational Visits'
- Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 1995
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Discrimination legislation
- Adventurous Activities Licensing Service requirements.

In addition, Essex Outdoors is monitored by Essex County Council and OFSTED via the Joint Annual Review (JAR) mechanism.

All Essex Outdoors' instructional staff are First Aid trained.

3.2 Safeguarding and Child Protection

Essex Outdoors is committed to safeguarding the emotional and physical welfare of young people.

As such it adopts ECC's Child Protection procedures, with 'designated persons' at each establishment and clear reporting and disclosure processes.

In addition, all Essex Outdoors staff are Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checked prior to their employment by us; and all of our instructional staff receive child protection and safeguarding training. Hiring managers also receive "safer recruitment" training.

3.3 Quality Assurance

Essex Outdoors is committed to delivering high quality outdoor learning opportunities, and as such takes the following steps to ensure the quality of its service:-

- Ongoing monitoring, evaluation and review of its services via:-
 - customer evaluation forms
 - observations of practice
 - quality assurance inspections

- regular managerial review
- External inspection by appropriate bodies such as the Adventurous Activities Licensing service, the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom, and national governing bodies such as the Royal Yachting Association (RYA), the British Canoe Union (BCU) etc.

3.4 Financial Performance

As a traded service within Essex County Council’s SCF directorate, Essex Outdoors is subject to robust local authority financial management regulations, and conducts its financial affairs with probity at all times.

4. Equality and Diversity Policy

As a part of Essex County Council, Essex Outdoors is committed to ensuring that the life chances of all those who live and work in the county are not unfairly disadvantaged by race, gender, disability, religion, belief, sexual orientation, or age.

This commitment is extended to our customers, employees and partners alike.

5. Environmental Policy

As a service committed to providing quality outdoor learning opportunities, both the natural and man-made environments play a crucial part in everything that we do.

Consequently Essex Outdoors is committed to developing and sustaining an awareness of, and respect for, these environments in staff and visitors alike.

Furthermore we are committed to continually exploring ways in which our centres’ impact upon these environments can be reduced.

6. Operating Procedures

Our operating procedures have been drawn up following careful consideration of the following:-

- Our legal, regulatory and health and safety obligations (as set out above)
- Our mission statement, equality and diversity policy, and environmental policy (as set out above)
- National Governing Body (NGB) guidelines
- An assessment of the risks and hazards inherent in our work
- Ethical, participant, and instructional concerns.

6.1 General Principles

- Essex Outdoors will employ a well-qualified and professional staff team throughout the year.
- Staff will attend a comprehensive training and induction programme before working unsupervised with customers.
- Staff will act professionally and appropriately at all times.
- Only staff trained and qualified to deliver a particular aspect of work will do so, and only after assessment by an appropriately qualified person.
- Staff will continually assess any risk inherent in the delivery of that work.
- A senior member of staff will be on site, or available via a dedicated duty phone, whilst any customers are present.
- Careful consideration will be given to the age, ability, experience, and needs (including any medical requirements) of the customer.
- Careful consideration will be given to the weather and/or the local/natural environment, if applicable.
- Any equipment used must be fit for purpose, and should be PPE/CE/UIAA/BCU approved where applicable. All equipment will be carefully checked before and after use, and any defective equipment identified and isolated.
- Consideration will be given to any potential impact or damage that may be caused to the environment in which any work is taking place.
- Systems and procedures will be reviewed regularly to allow the exploration of any potential for improvements or for changes in 'good practice'.
- Any accidents, incidents or near misses will be reported and acted on accordingly.

6.2 Staff Qualifications and Experience

Only staff trained and qualified to deliver a particular aspect of work will do so, and only after assessment by an appropriately qualified person.

Consequently all staff delivering activity sessions will:

a) Possess the relevant national governing body award for that activity, where required [see Appendix 1];

or

b) Have satisfactorily participated in either the Essex Outdoors central training programme [see Appendix 2]; or local/site-specific training regarding that activity.

In either case, staff will only be eligible to deliver a particular aspect of work after assessment by an appropriately qualified person.

NB. Where local/site-specific training is applicable, training procedures will be documented and stored at the relevant centre.

6.3 Instructor: Client Ratios

Essex Outdoors will adopt a 'default' ratio of 1 instructor to 10 clients for all activities being delivered at, or in the vicinity of, the centre. This ratio is inclusive of any visiting staff/parents/leaders participating in the activity.

However, where National Governing Body guidance proscribes or allows different ratios, Essex Outdoors will adopt these.

Ratios are also subject to change depending on a consideration of the level of risk within the activity, the level of competence of any visiting staff/assistants/leaders, and the nature of the group. In such cases ratios may rise above 1:10, but this will be on an exceptional basis only.

6.4 Equipment Concerns

All equipment used by Essex Outdoors will have been designed for the purpose for which it is employed.

Where national or international standards are applicable we will adopt these as the minimum requirement.

Where no standards exist we will adopt 'best' or industry practice. This may be derived from discussions with other industry practitioners.

All equipment will be used and stored in line with guidance from manufactures.

All equipment will be carefully checked before and after use, and any defective equipment identified and isolated. Periodic checks will also be made on all of our equipment and apparatus, and the results logged and stored onsite in an appropriate place, and available for inspection upon request. The frequency of these checks will be determined by the amount of use and the environment in which it has been used.

6.5 Environment Concerns

All Essex Outdoors staff will have completed an induction and training programme in the area of operation(s) in which they will be expected to work. This programme will include the highlighting of any hazards associated with that area; and how to manage clients/groups accordingly. Nevertheless, staff will continue to consider the nature of those hazards before, during and after delivery of the activity session and 'dynamically' assess any risk accordingly.

Where activity takes place in an environment to which the public has access, additional measures will be taken to reduce the risk to others outside of our client group. In most instances this will be as a result of dynamic risk assessment, adapting to the situation as it prevails.

In other situations where known hazards are present (e.g. at road crossings, other river users etc) staff training will identify the options in managing these hazards.

6.6 Participant Concerns

We will gather as much information as possible about participants before the delivery of any activity session, and make any appropriate adjustments. However, where this is not possible then the session will follow a published format, so that participants can an informed choice to take part or not.

The ability of the group will also be assessed before and during any session, and any appropriate adjustments made.

7. Risk Assessment

Risk is inherent in all adventurous activity. The following table sets out the hazards that comprise that risk; the relevant control measures that will be implemented by Essex Outdoors in order to mitigate that risk; and the effectiveness of those control measures.

Where specific, local (or site-specific) risk exists, that risk will be considered by the relevant manager, and mitigated accordingly. In such cases copies of that risk assessment will be available at the main office of the relevant centre.

Hazard/Risk	Control Measure/Mitigation	Risk Mitigated? (Yes/No)
Separation from group	Staff competence; instructor : client ratio	Yes
Slips, Trips and Falls	Staff competence; personal protective equipment	Yes
Muscular Injury	Staff competence	Yes
Collision	Staff competence; personal protective equipment	Yes
Fall from height	Staff competence; personal protective equipment	Yes
Drowning	Staff competence; personal protective equipment	Yes
Burns	Staff competence	Yes
Hypothermia	Staff competence; equipment	Yes
Road Traffic Accident	Staff competence	Yes
Poisoning/Infectious Diseases	Staff competence	Yes

8. Remote/Offsite Working

Where staff are required to work offsite, but in the vicinity of the centre, then the appropriate offsite procedure will be instituted. This will always include:-

- Ensuring that the main office is aware of intended route, and the expected time of return
- Ensuring that an effective means of communication is in place
- Ensuring a senior member of staff is onsite/at the centre, or available via a dedicated duty phone.

In addition, where staff are required to work in remote locations, and/or engage in adventurous activity, then the relevant ECC Code of practice will be adopted, namely:-

- where staff are engaged in offsite DofE work, ECC's DofE Code of Practice will be followed.
- where staff are engaged in work overseas, then Essex Outdoors Overseas Code of Practice will be followed.

9. Accident/Major Incident Procedure

Records of all accidents, incidents and 'near-misses' will be recorded in the main office, and forwarded to ECC's Health and Safety team as appropriate.

In the event of a major incident occurring at one of the Essex Outdoors centres, then the Service Manager will be informed, and escalated within Essex County Council accordingly.

ECC's Major Incident procedure will be instituted if/when appropriate.

10. Complaints/Grievance Procedure

Essex Outdoors strives to ensure that your experience will be a safe, educational and enjoyable one. However, if you are unhappy with the service that you receive please contact the manager of the appropriate centre. Alternatively you may contact the Service Manager at:

Essex Outdoor Education
E2
County Hall
Chelmsford
Essex
CM2 6WN

Tel: 01245 430945
E-Mail: essexoutdoors@essex.gov.uk

Appendix 1 - Activities/Qualifications Matrix

Showing the qualifications, national governing body awards (NGB's), and/or the central or local training required to deliver each activity. NB. Where the activity is being delivered offsite, the level of qualifications and/or training required to deliver that activity will be adjusted accordingly.

Activity	Qualifications, NGB's and/or Training	
	Required	Desirable
Abseiling (on site)	Essex Outdoors central training programme; local/site-specific training	Single Pitch Award (SPA)
Abseiling (offsite)	Single Pitch Award (SPA)	Local/site-specific training
Aerial Runway	Local/site-specific training	Single Pitch Award (SPA)
Archery	Essex Outdoors Central Training Programme	Grand National Archery Scheme (GNAS) Award
BMX	Local/site-specific training	
Canoeing/Kayaking (very sheltered/sheltered water)	BCU/UKCC Level 1 Coach, under BCU/UKCC Level 2 Coach supervision	BCU/UKCC Level 2 Coach or BCU Level 2 Canoe/Kayak Coach
Canoeing/Kayaking (sheltered water/sheltered tidal water)	BCU/UKCC Level 2 Coach or BCU Level 2 Canoe/Kayak Coach	BCU Level 3 Canoe/Kayak/Sea Kayak Coach or 4* Leadership Award (Canoe/Kayak/Sea Kayak)
Canoeing/Kayaking (moderate water)	BCU/UKCC Level 2 Coach plus moderate water module or BCU Level 3 Canoe/Kayak Coach	
Caving	BCA Local Cave Leader Award Level 1	Local/site-specific training
Climbing (indoors or on climbing tower)	Climbing Wall Award (CWA) training; local/site-specific training	Climbing Wall Award (CWA)
Climbing (rock/offsite)	Single Pitch Award (SPA)	Mountain Instructors Award (MIA)
Forest Schools	Forest Schools Leader NVQ Level 3	
Gorge Walking	Local Cave & Mine Leader Award (LCMLA) Level 1 or Mountain Leader (Summer) Award or Single Pitch Award (SPA)	Mountain Instructors Award (MIA)
Gorge Walking (with abseil)	As above, but Single Pitch Award required	Mountain Instructors Award (MIA)

Activity	Qualifications, NGB's and/or Training	
	Required	Desirable
Hill Walking (lowland, rural terrain)	Basic Expedition Leader Award (BELA)	
Hill Walking (upland and moors, but not mountainous)	Walking Group Leader (WGL)	Mountain Leader (ML) Award
Hill Walking (mountainous, summer)	Mountain Leader (ML) Award	
Hill Walking (mountainous, winter)	Winter Mountain Leader (WML) Award	Mountain Instructor Award (MIA)
Mountaineering (summer)	Mountain Instructor Award (MIA)	Mountain Instructor Certificate (MIC)
Mountaineering (winter)	Mountain Instructor Certificate (MIC)	
Obstacle Course	Essex Outdoors central training programme; local/site-specific training	
Off-Road Biking (including Mountain Biking)	Essex Outdoors central training programme; local/site-specific training	Mountain Bike Instructor Award Scheme (MIAS) Level 2; Scottish Mountain Bike Leader Award Trail Cycle Leader
Orienteering	Essex Outdoors central training programme; local/site-specific training	British Orienteering Federation (BOF) Coach Level 1/2
Power Boating	Royal Yachting Association (RYA) Level 2 PowerBoat certificate	Intermediate Powerboat certificate; local/site-specific training
Problem Solving	Essex Outdoors central training programme; local/site-specific training	
Quad Biking	Essex Outdoors central training programme; local/site-specific training	
Sailing/Yachting (Dinghies)	RYA Dinghy Instructor/RYA Assistant Instructor certificate, supervised by Senior Instructor	Local/site-specific training
Sailing/Yachting (22' ketches)	RYA Keelboat Instructor/RYA Day Skipper	Local/site-specific training
Sailing/Yachting (Multihull)	RYA Multihull Instructor, supervised by Senior Instructor	Local/site-specific training