
Meeting: Schools Forum
Date: 20th September 2010
Subject: Educational Visits On-line Virtual Environment (EVOLVE)
Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Children's Services
Summary: To update the Schools Forum on the use of EVOLVE and to agree the funding of the system

Contact Officer: Glynis Yates, Council Offices, Dunstable

Public/Exempt: Public

Wards Affected: All

Function of: Council

Reason for urgency
(if appropriate)

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. **To agree:**
 - a) **the continued use of the EVOLVE system for the approval, monitoring and evaluation of Educational Visits and Journeys;**
 - b) **that from 2010/11 the annual costs of £5,000 should be centrally held as a legitimate DSG expense.**

Background

1. EVOLVE is an easy to use, web-based service which records and stores all school visits quickly and electronically. This system supports schools and the Local Authority in fulfilling their statutory responsibilities in relation to risk management and monitoring, as set out in Health and Safety: Responsibilities and Powers - December 2001 DfES. Currently there are 55 local authorities using the system to support the safeguarding of pupils and staff offsite.
2. Schools that take young people away from 'the base' have to seek some level of approval. The level of approval varies; the Local Authority approves all visits abroad or those involving adventure activity or a residential experience. Other visits are delegated to the Headteacher or equivalent for 'internal approval'. Evolve allows the Local Authority to track all delegated visits and to advise and support Visits Coordinators and Headteachers where there may be a failure to comply with the policy and regulations. Evolve also allows headteachers and Governing Bodies to instantly access information in relation to visits such as risk assessments, emergency procedures and nominal rolls and to generate detailed reports when the need arises.

Current situation

3. Central Bedfordshire Council introduced the system in September 2009 and the annual cost is £5000. This covers the licence, technical support, updates and improvements to the system and continued storage of all LA visits.
4. The first year of using the system has been very successful and one hundred and twenty five schools (125) are using the system. There are 15 Lower schools who have still not registered onto the system.
5. Training has taken place centrally on several occasions and has been very well attended. Work based training has also been offered and many schools have opted for this to enable all staff to be trained on the same occasion.
6. Between September 2009 and August 2010, 1941 approved visits were recorded on EVOLVE with 66194 young people taking part in activities on 2607 days. The total number of participant days has been 109077.
7. There have been 93 visits abroad to 14 different countries including the usual Europe destinations but also those to Venezuela, Singapore and Africa.
8. Young people have taken part in 314 visits which included adventure activities and 182 residential experiences.
9. An increasing number of young people from Lower schools are experiencing visits abroad and those which are residential.
10. The majority of users like the system as it allows them to track visits and has reduced the need for paper systems. All information regarding staff competency, training, visits approved, young people's participation and evaluation of visits is stored electronically and can be retrieved quickly.