

LOtC Educational Site Provider Award Application Guidance

The LOtC Site Provider Award is intended to accredit all organisations that support and facilitate schools' self-led visits to their site or sites. The award of the LOtC Site Provider Award indicates that an organisation:

- Maintains their site or sites to an acceptable standard and manages and communicates any risks associated with the use of their site or sites appropriately
- Offers clear and up to date guidance and/or materials to support schools conducting self-led visits at their site or sites

In order to achieve the LOtC Site Provider Award providers must demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Council for Learning Outside the Classroom that they meet all of the quality indicators (see below).

They must also meet the following eligibility criteria:

1. Applicants must not provide any teaching or guided tours as part of their offer to schools. Any element of contact with the users in this way will mean the provider will be eligible for the LOtC Quality Badge, and must apply for that award instead.
2. Any promotion of or communication about the site or sites to schools must be education based. Applicants must be offering their site or sites as a resource for supporting the delivery of the curriculum, as opposed to a venue for a reward day or similar.
3. Applicants offering the use of equipment requiring specialist risk assessment are not eligible for the LOtC Site Provider Award. Examples include (but are not limited to) equipment that might typically be used in activities such as rock climbing or caving such as karabiners, belay devices or similar items. Another example would be any activities where the whole of a participant's body will be 2 metres or higher above the ground at any time. This is because CLOtC cannot assess the competence of visiting school staff to manage these risks, and therefore we cannot assure schools that risk is managed appropriately.
4. The experience offered must comply with all relevant UK & EU legislation.

Please note: if any direct education or instruction, or guided tours, are offered at your setting you are not eligible for the LOtC Site Provider Award.

If this is the case please go to <http://lotcqualitybadge.org.uk/how-to-apply/eligibility-statement> to begin a LOtC Quality Badge application.

LOtC Site Provider Award Quality Indicators

1. The provider provides accurate information about its site.

a) The provider ensures that any promotional materials provide an accurate description of current amenities, facilities, services provided and contact details

Sufficient information should be made available to the user to allow for a full understanding of the learning experience offered and enable planning accordingly. This information should cover site descriptions, dining areas/cafeterias, shops, outside and inside space, toilets, cloakrooms/storage facilities, access information, etc. Any information that impacts on the user experience should be provided and contact details should be supplied. The information could be presented in a variety of formats such as an up-to-date website, hard copy brochure, set of guidance notes or leaflet or direct correspondence with the user which describes amenities, facilities and services.

b) The provider ensures that all charges are clearly, honestly and accurately displayed on any promotional materials and on site

The provider should be explicit about its charging policies so that the user can plan financially for a learning outside the classroom experience. Information about charging policies should include the cost of the experience, any variable costs (e.g. discounts depending on group size, etc.) and any additional costs likely to be incurred on site (e.g. car parking, the shop, etc.) Where materials to facilitate self-guided tours are provided any charge for these must be made clear on all marketing materials. This information might be provided on a website, in a leaflet or through direct correspondence with the user.

c) The provider gives a full statement of the accessibility of the site, with maps where appropriate. Any accessibility issues are highlighted on promotional materials

A written access statement is available to users providing full information on the accessibility of the site, including parking, toilets or other facilities. Any site features that could impact on accessibility are highlighted in all promotional materials and on the website. Examples could include steps, low light levels or inclines. Where the site is very large and/or includes areas of wilderness, a general statement regarding accessibility, highlighting any areas that have been adapted to improve accessibility, is sufficient.

d) Where donations are requested, a full and accurate account of their purpose is given

For providers wholly or partially reliant on donations, full and accurate information on what the donations are intended to facilitate must be provided at every point where a donation is requested.

2. The provider has a process in place to help users to plan the learning experience effectively.

a) The provider encourages teachers to make a pre-visit to the site

A pre-visit to the site is a very important part of planning a learning experience. All promotional materials aimed at schools should contain a clear invitation to teachers to make such a visit, and these visits should be facilitated as much as possible.

b) Where relevant, the provider offers guidance and/or resources to assist with preparation and follow-up activities

Providers should offer suggestions about how to plan for the experience and support users in follow-up work. Any information provided to users (e.g. website, teacher notes, self-guided tours etc.) should outline opportunities to extend learning pre and post-visit. These could include any resources that could be used or suggestions on activities associated with an area of learning, in preparation for the visit.

c) The provider offers guidance and/or information on roles and responsibilities during the visit

Providers should carefully outline the roles and responsibilities essential for effective management of the experience. It should make clear where there is shared responsibility, and where the teacher/group leader is solely responsible for the outcomes.

3. The provider meets the needs of users.

a) The provider communicates effectively with users

Information and guidance on the learning provision offered by a provider should be easily available to the user. The provider should provide clear and accessible channels of communication for the user. Where the user does not enter into communication with the provider at any point prior to or subsequent to a visit, the provider must make all relevant information and guidance available to the user. For example, if there is no booking system in place to support educational visits to a site and visiting groups arrive unannounced, there should be a website or leaflet which provides guidance on planning a visit and contact details for the organisation. Where the user does enter into two-way communication the provider should seek to maintain that communication. More established communication with the user might take place before, during and after the learning experience; for example through the offer of pre-visits, correspondence with the user, etc.

b) Essential written policies and procedures are reviewed, maintained and updated. This should be undertaken on a regular basis and cover all sites and materials

It is important that all parts of the organisation are aware of and prepared to meet the needs of users. This means that all practice, whether directly related to learning or not, should be regularly reviewed, maintained and updated. Essential written policies and procedures in relation to all aspects of the organisation should be dated, reviewed/updated regularly and made available to all paid and unpaid staff (e.g. code of conduct, education policy, staff handbook, teachers' guidelines, performance appraisal procedures, risk management policy, health & safety guidelines, equality policy etc.)

c) The provider takes into account any equality, diversity and inclusion issues; makes attempts to improve accessibility where this doesn't affect the character of the site

Providers should have policies in place ensuring that equality, diversity and inclusion issues are considered at the planning stage of any new materials or improvements to the site. Where it is possible to improve accessibility to the site without altering the character of that site efforts must be made to do so.

d) The provider clearly communicates accessibility issues through appropriate signage and indicators

In addition to clearly communicating all potential accessibility issues to users before the visit; providers must ensure that these issues are also highlighted at the site, wherever this is reasonably CLOtC

practical and does not significantly alter the character of the site. Where practical, clear signs should be provided before any potentially inaccessible features of the site are reached; ideally a map of the site with accessibility issues highlighted should be provided at the entrance.

e) The provider shows an understanding of sustainability issues and the impact of activities at the site and shares this with users

LOtC should enable the learner to place themselves and their knowledge and skills in a wider context. Therefore the provider should attempt to ensure that the user is aware of the wider environmental context of the site. There might be a webpage or leaflet providing information on sustainability issues and practices associated with the site/organisation and/or the experience itself (e.g. impact on the local community, impact on natural environment, recycling practices, energy/water conservation, etc.) Where appropriate, there might be an element to interpretive materials which addresses issues of sustainability in relation to the site. There might be a written environmental policy for the organisation which is made available to users.

4. The provider ensures that the site can be used for LOtC to meet learner needs.

a) The provider actively welcomes educational visits

All on-site staff, paid or voluntary, should receive training or guidance in working with educational groups to ensure that the group is made to feel welcome. This should include information on what learning looks like in the context of a site visit so that on-site staff understand what the visit is achieving.

b) The provider ensures that features and points of interest are clearly labelled or signposted

Any features of the site or buildings that hold potential educational value should be highlighted. This could be at site level; however where this is impractical or would significantly alter the character of a site potential points of interest should be highlighted clearly on the website and in any pre-visit information. Providers should have a process in place to ensure that any signposts are maintained and that suggestions for new highlighting are acted on.

c) The provider offers on-site interpretive materials which are regularly maintained and updated

Interpretive materials should be clearly presented and labelled; providers should have a process in place to ensure that they are in good condition and up to date.

d) The provider ensures the accuracy of all interpretive and other materials

Any interpretive materials should be written and/or reviewed by an expert in the field and the provider should have a process in place to keep abreast of developments, making updates accordingly.

e) Where materials to facilitate self-guided tours are provided, the provider ensures that these are appropriate to the age and ability of the learners and are regularly reviewed and updated

Any materials to facilitate self-guided tours should be written and/or reviewed by an expert in the field and in relation to the age group concerned. There should be a process in place to keep abreast of developments in the field and in educational practice generally and to update the materials accordingly. A regular review of all educational materials should be in place and documented.

f) The provider provides information enabling users to explore cross-curricula/cross-sector topics in relation to the site

The provider includes in all interpretive and other educational materials information on how the site can link to several different curriculum areas or topics. An example is using a heritage site to explore the local natural or built environment through links with historic trades or changes in local wildlife. Formal materials on specific curriculum links are not necessary; however information on the diverse points of interest that might be available on-site should be made explicit in advance of the visit.

g) The provider takes into account any equality, diversity and inclusion issues when developing interpretive or educational materials

The provider has a process in place to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion issues are considered at the planning stage of development. This could include providing materials in braille, in large print and in a variety of languages.

5. The provider reviews the experience and acts upon feedback.

a) The provider evaluates its own services

The provider should instigate self or third party evaluation of its services. For example the organisation might participate in an external/third party accreditation scheme which reviews and evaluates the overall quality of the site/s and any interpretive or educational materials (e.g. external awards scheme, funding application, etc.). Alternatively there might be in place an internal quality assurance system or review process. This could be a formal process or could take the form of regular, noted staff meetings. The evaluation should be regular, all-encompassing and the results should be recorded and acted upon as appropriate.

b) The provider gathers feedback on the site and the learning experience from users (teachers and learners)

There should be a mechanism which allows teachers and/or learners to comment on the site and the learning experience, whether the stated learning objectives were met and whether the experience was worth the money spent (e.g. feedback form, comments book, comments board, video diary, web discussions, etc.) Alternatively, the provider should initiate follow up contact with the user (telephone, letter, email, etc.), asking them to comment on the stated content of the learning experience, whether the stated learning objectives were met and whether the experience was considered value for money. In order that user feedback is as considered as possible, the provider should, where possible, discuss (or share information about) the feedback process with the user prior to the learning experience.

c) The provider has a process in place to change practice as a result of review, evaluation and feedback

Review, evaluation and feedback must be acted on in order to develop sites to more closely meet the needs of the user. Anecdotal and statistical evidence should be recorded and analysed. Where there are clear trends in the feedback, action should be taken in response to that feedback and that action should be evidenced in updates to the site/s, marketing or interpretive materials and any other educational materials provided. Regular reviews should be held to establish what, if any, changes need to be made in terms of planning, staffing, maintenance and interpretation.

h) The provider has a process in place to monitor the overall quality of its site or sites and make changes where necessary

The provider should endeavour to ensure that the quality of the experience of the visit is consistent for all new and repeat users. This might be achieved through central training procedures (e.g. health & safety, front of house, etc.) for all staff at all sites or through regular central review of all practices at sites/parts of a single site (meetings, formal review process). This might be covered by quality assurance processes, including reviews of all materials, processes and policies.

6. The provider has safety management processes in place to manage risk effectively.

a) The provider has safety management procedures in place so that risks are identified and appropriately managed. These are shared with users. All relevant risk assessments are current and reviewed regularly

In order that all parts of the organisation are aware of and prepared to meet the needs of users, the provider will have in place the following:

- A risk management policy, with systems in place.
- Site risk assessments, available to users.
- A process for reviewing and updating these risk assessments.
- Emergency procedures and/or an action plan.
- A review of written health and safety policies.

b) The provider communicates potential hazards clearly using appropriate and well maintained methods

As part of the risk management policy, providers should highlight all significant potential on-site hazards clearly, where this is reasonably practical and doesn't significantly alter the character of the site. Where signage isn't practical, users should be made aware of potential hazards in advance of the visit. In wilderness areas, pre-visit information should make clear that many potential hazards might be encountered, and that the group leader is responsible for the safety of the group whilst on site. It is worth highlighting to the group leader that awareness of potential hazards could be a valuable learning point for the group.

c) The provider provides physical barriers or railings where appropriate

As part of the risk management policy, significant potential risk points should be identified and barriers or railings installed, where reasonably practical and not detrimental to the character of the site. Examples might include high walkways or sudden steep drops.

d) The provider has procedures in place to ensure the regular maintenance of the fabric of the site

As part of the risk management policy, the site is regularly inspected for wear and tear and potential issues are identified and quickly rectified.

e) The provider complies with all external regulation relating to it

In order to meet this indicator, a provider will need to sign and submit a declaration form i.e. a signed statement which confirms compliance with all external regulation relating to the organisation.

f) The provider has appropriate public liability insurance cover

In order to meet this indicator, the provider will need to declare their PLI limit and expiry date as part of the Self Evaluation Form.

Residential Checklist

Where an organisation offers residential provision on site, however informal, they will be required to complete a residential checklist describing how their policies and procedures manage the risks involved. They will also be subject to an extra quality assurance visit, the cost of which will have to be met as part of their registration fees.

In all cases the assessor will need to see evidence of compliance with all of the residential criteria, including all relevant current certification and inspection reports.

Welfare

Providers are expected to take all reasonable measures to ensure that users are comfortable during their stay and that the premises are secure. A reasonable level of privacy is expected, for example appropriate blinds at any windows and separate bathroom facilities for male and female users.

Fire Safety

The assessor will want to see evidence of fire risk assessments and drills/walk-throughs, as well as regular testing of the alarms, smoke detectors and extinguishers.

All fire exits must be clearly signposted and users must be made aware of their location before the first overnight stay.

Food Hygiene

Where catering is part of a residential offer the assessor will expect a high standard of compliance with regulations. Evidence of all required checks, routines and records will need to be presented.

General Health & Safety

Ground floor or easily accessible windows should be lockable whilst allowing ventilation. All windows are recommended to be restricted to a maximum opening of 100mm/4 inches (subject to local regulations).

Radiant heaters are not recommended. Rooms should not have individual gas heaters of the type that vent carbon monoxide. Individual convection heaters should be free from any accidental overheating risk (from covering by clothing, for example). The flue from central gas boilers must be more than 1.5 metres from any opening into the building.

Lighting in sleeping accommodation should cover all parts of the room and be adequate at night to prevent slips, trips and accidental collisions.

The provider must comply with ACOP L8 Control of Legionella. The full HSE guidance document on your legal duties is available as a free download here: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/legionnaires/what-you-must-do.htm>