

Getting ready for an 18 to 30 Girlguiding weekend away

With the warmer weather just around the corner, many 'Inspire' aged members as well as Queen's Guide Award candidates will be preparing for residential! I've just run my very first 18 to 30 residential, having not yet had the chance to participate in a section residential, I feel I have learnt a lot about how 18 to 30 residential can be prepared for as the event leader!

The residential I ran was for part of my Outdoor Challenge for my Queen's Guide Award, having a small group of us travel to London to partake in the 2023 Monopoly Run Live - A competition for Scouts and Guides.

Before I began to look at my 18 to 30 residential properly, I had a look at the Girlguiding resource called '18-30 Residential Events Procedure', which can be found here: https://www.girlguiding.org.uk/globalassets/docs-and-resources/residentials-and-going-away/all_adult_residentials_form.pdf The document is incredibly helpful in getting you going with your planning and to figure out if your specific residential needs to apply this procedure - but there was still information about the preparation for an 18 to 30 residential that I struggled to find guidance for online.

As group leader, my role was to ensure I took the appropriate steps and take the correct decisions to ensure the safety and wellbeing of others on the trip, as well as preparing the trip and to make sure everything was run in line with Girlguiding regulations and the code of conduct.

After taking a look at the 18-30 residential document, preparing an 'advert' for the trip and finding participants to come, I could finally start properly getting ready for our London residential!

Preparing the Programme

I began my preparation by preparing a rough plan for the trip, this included a range of things I needed to arrange to help make the residential run smoothly:

- **Finding Accommodation** - There wasn't much advice I could find online regarding accommodation for 18+ Girlguiding residential. However I was aware members can stay in youth hostels. I set out looking for youth hostels within our budget, once I had a few selections, I began looking at reviews. My main priority for choosing accommodation was that it was safe and everybody would feel comfortable here. The hostel I looked at provided lockers with padlocks, key-card activated doors, 24 hour on-site staff, CCTV cameras, and was in a public area of the city. It was important to me that our accommodation was not down any poorly lit, quiet, backstreet areas where we may not feel safe, I recommend checking out the location on google maps to get a good idea of the area if you're not already familiar with it!

- **Planning Events** - Our main event was the Monopoly Run, which happened on the Saturday. The residential itself took place from Friday afternoon to Sunday afternoon, so I needed to make a plan of what else I could fill the weekend with. I wanted the weekend to be engaging, and make sure everybody would enjoy it! If your residential has more adventurous activities, don't forget to check out the Girlguiding website to check if your activity is allowed!

As none of us knew each other before going, I didn't know what everybody would enjoy, but we did have one thing in common, Girlguiding! We filled our residential with a visit to Pax Lodge and Girlguiding HQ!
- **Evening activities** - We only had two nights of activities to plan. On our first night I decided to plan a trip to the theatre. My idea behind the theatre came, again, from the idea that we didn't really know each other!

I found a trip to the theatre was a great way to engage us all in something fun and it gave us a great topic of conversation after the show had finished, which got us all talking to each other!

Our second night was a fairly quiet one. We were originally going to go bowling but after the Monopoly Run we decided to head back to the hostel as we were all super tired, and we just sat and talked - It was a fantastic evening and found we had a lot in common and we really bonded as a group that night!
- **Meals** - For our group, I charged each participant £6 for 2 breakfasts and 2 lunches. Our evening meals included eating out which came from our own expense, but you could easily add this into your budget! I planned our meals to be simple, easy and to be able to be taken around easily. I created the budget by looking online at grocery stores near our hostel where I would be buying the food. From here I got the cost of cereal, milk, fruit, bread, sandwich fillings, etc and this helped me make my budget! Don't forget to check with your participants for any allergies and dietary requirements as this may alter what you can buy.
- **Cost Breakdown** - Similar to creating the meals, I created a cost breakdown of each part of our residential, this included a maximum cost for theatre tickets, the Monopoly Run, activities at Pax Lodge and food.

When I advertised my trip, I budgeted higher than I knew the trip would be, this acted as a way for participants to get a good idea of the trip cost! Once I had plans confirmed, I was able to create an official figure to give to each participant. I also created a payment plan in a spreadsheet file with each cost, when each participant had paid I could mark down when they paid, what they paid for and how much, which was super helpful!

The Admin

The admin side is really important for any trip you go on, especially when you're in charge of the safety of others! All of this guidance I gained from the 18-30 Residential Event Procedure as well as what I learnt whilst I planned my trip.

- **Event Consent Form and Health Information Forms** - You can find these forms by searching the Girlguiding website for 'Unit Forms'. It's really important that both of these forms are filled out by each participant so those who need to know have the correct information! Remember these forms need to be kept secure as they hold confidential information and are to be destroyed after the trip has finished - We kept ours in sealed envelopes in the group folder, and carried by either the first aider or event leader, before being confidentially shredded when the event was finished.
- **Residential Events Notification Form for 18 to 30 residentials** - At the bottom of the 18-30 Residential Event Procedure, you can find your REN form, this form needs to be filled out and sent over to your commissioner. Your commissioner will check you have completed a risk assessment, home contact, and travel insurance (if you're going international), it's a really easy form to fill out, and your commissioner can give you guidance if you need any support!
- **Check everyone holds the correct Safe Space level** - All members on the 18 to 30 residential must hold a Safe Space Level 1, including any non-girlguiding members joining you! One member participating in the event must hold a Safe Space Level 2.
- **Nominate a first aider or first responder** - As with all Girlguiding residentials, you should have a first aider or first responder with you. As I was in charge of leading the event, one of the other participants on the trip took on the role! This person should hold a current first response or equivalent first aid qualification. Make sure to pack your first aid kit!
- **Participants with Disabilities** - If you have a member joining you who has disclosed a disability, speak to them about how you can offer support. If you need to, you can reach out to your inclusion advisor to make sure the member can fully participate in your event, making any adjustments where needed to allow this!
- **Additional insurance** - Girlguiding provides insurance which covers members or anyone acting on behalf of Girlguiding when undertaking a guiding activity - You can check out Girlguiding's policies including the Public Liability Policy, Personal Accident and Medical Expenses Policy and Employers Liability Policy on the Girlguiding website. Other insurance you may need to think about include travel insurance, property insurance and content insurance - you can find out more about this on the Girlguiding Website by searching 'What our Insurance Covers'
- **Risk Assessments** - Risk Assessments are super important for any Girlguiding activity you do. Your risk assessments should identify any potential risks on your trip including

injury and illnesses. You can use the Girlguiding Risk Assessment template found online to help you, their pre-made document is filled with helpful instructions on how to successfully write your risk assessment! You should identify the hazard, who it could affect, what you are doing already to prevent the risk, the likelihood of it occurring, the severity of the risk should it happen and if any further controls are needed to be put in place. Make sure you send this over to your Commissioner before your trip - these aren't as daunting as they first look, and you can always reach out to your commissioner for help!

The Build up to the Weekend

Once you have your preparation and admin completed, what can you be doing on the run up to your residential?

- **Create your Packing List** - What are you going to take with you to your residential? I would always recommend checking the weather forecast for your location as this may change what you need to pack!

For our 3-day-2-night residential which was city walking in March (potential rain and cold weather), my packing list included: 3 tops/t-shirts, my uniform hoodie, trousers and 2 hoodies, a pair of pyjamas, sturdy shoes, a raincoat as well as deodorant, toothbrush and toothpaste, hairbrush, shower essentials, a towel, hand sanitiser and disinfectant wipes, and my phone charger!

Make sure you tailor your packing list for you and your trip! - Will it be winter or summer? Will it be raining or sunshine? Are you walking miles or relaxing?

- **Organise your Documents** - Make sure you have printouts for all your important information such as booking confirmations, risk assessments, health forms and other information needed for the trip. I kept this secure on my person at all times throughout the trip.
- **Finalise your Meal Plan** - Double check your meal plan for your trip! Go over and finalise what you will want to buy and double check allergies/intolerances - You could always pre-order your food and have it delivered to your accommodation just after your arrival!
- **First Aid Kit** - Double check your first aid kit! You should double check your contents to make sure you have anything ready as well as double checking no products in it have expired. Your first-aider/responder should be able to help you organise this too!
- **What luggage are you taking?** - Make sure you have suitable luggage for where you are going, if you're going into the countryside you may want a backpack compared to a

suitcase as it will be easier to carry. Make sure to use whichever you are most comfortable using! I also checked our accommodation to see if there was anywhere we could store our luggage before or after check out which was super helpful.

Learning Curves

Below is some extra information and tips I would have found useful to know before my trip and what I would advise others after my residential weekend:

- **Make sure to think about your trip carefully** - For us, it would have been helpful for us to bring blister plasters, as we were walking a lot, blisters were inevitable, we didn't think about including them in our first aid kit!
Other things to think about - ear plugs if you're sharing a room or staying somewhere noisy, you may need power banks, you could pack extra plasters, chapstick, etc, they always come in helpful!
- **Know your limits and take breaks if you need them** - We all know Girlguiding residential are super fun, but they can also be super tiring. If you need a rest at all during your trip, make sure you take one, your group will support you and you can take a break together - also make sure you pack plenty of snacks and stay hydrated throughout the trip!
- **Buy a folder to keep your documents in** - One thing I wish I had created before travelling was a folder to keep all our information better organised. All of our information was kept in a plastic wallet, which made it quite hard to find things when we needed them! With a folder you can organise your pages and find your documents quicker
- **Check the Weather** - Check your weather against your activities, you may want to create a backup plan in case an activity is not running due to the weather! For instance, if you are meant to be going out on the lake and it starts thundering, you might not be able to, what's your backup plan for the group?
- **Participant Payments** - Keep a payment diary of when your participants pay along with how much and what it is for - You could also create a payment plan which may help your participants, paying in small amounts is often more helpful than paying one large payment
- **Risk Assessment** - Risk assessments can be difficult when you're still learning, but don't stress, you will have so much support if you need it!
What I used to help me get my risk assessment started, was thinking about risks that fit into the following categories; Accommodation, Food Hygiene, Location Specific, Medical and Other, here are some examples;

Accommodation - Risk: Storage Facilities, risk of items being stolen. Solution: hostel provides lockers and locks.

Food Hygiene - Risk: Food Storage, risk of food going warm or out of date. Solution: Food is to be kept in the fridge provided by the hostel and bought fresh for the trip.

Location Specific (London) - Risk: Losing a member somewhere in the city. Solution: Everybody is to stay together where possible and each member is to have contact details for other participants in case of an emergency

Medical - Risk: Member with an allergy. Solution: Member is to inform first aider of any allergies, as well as writing them on their health form before the trip is to take place. Emergency medication is to be discussed prior to the trip (and also written into the risk assessment).

Other - Other could include anything from medical emergencies, member behaviour whilst on the trip (especially if you're representing Girlguiding), Covid-19, missing persons, etc, anything you may be struggling to categorise!

- **Nerves are okay** - With some trips you may not know the people you're travelling with and that's totally okay! I've been on several Girlguiding 18-30 days where I haven't known anyone and every single time the Girlguiding community has been so welcoming, friendly and kind, and I'm sure your group will be too! You could also be nervous your trip might not go as planned, which is totally okay too, which leads me onto my next point:
- **You don't need to stick to strict timings** - I've tried sticking to a strict timetable before and it doesn't always work, try creating a relaxed timetable which could be, morning activity, afternoon activity, late afternoon activity, evening activity.... It's okay if you're ahead or behind your 'schedule' as long as everyone's having fun, that's the main thing!

