



Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre (BFOC) - Centre Activity Policy

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Introduction

4th Dimension Ltd t/a Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre (registered company in England and Wales 04617597) recognise and accept its duties for providing safe and high quality activities, and comply with all statutory obligations as a minimum standard. If you have any queries about these policies, or their content, you can contact us at info@blacklandfarm.org.

Purpose

This Centre Activity Policy establishes clear principles to ensure that participation in activities at Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre (otherwise known for the remainder of this document as BFOC) is a safe and enjoyable experience for all.

Scope

This policy applies to all persons who are legally classed as employees, and extends where applicable to contracted persons, volunteers, and customers.

This document pertains to activities conducted at Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre (RH19 4HP) or utilising the centre's equipment. It does not apply to Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) activities or those held at the Dolawen Centre, as these have their own separate policies.

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01: Quality Assurances and Licencing

We pride ourselves on providing safe, professional experiences for our customers. We are externally assessed by several industry governing bodies and hold a number of quality badges and licences as a result. These are as follows:

AAALA (Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority)

The Adventurous Activities Licensing Authority issues us with a licence following a successful inspection and approval of our safety management systems. They pay particular attention to the safety management systems of a variety of our activities with young people. Commercial providers of outdoor activities are required by law to hold an AALA licence where applicable. Our licence demonstrates that we comply with nationally accepted standards of good practice in delivering a selection of our adventure activities with young people.

Learning Outside the Classroom (LOtC) Quality Badge

The LOtC Quality Badge is a national award which indicates we demonstrate good educational provision as well as effective risk management. The quality badge provides assurance for teachers, parents and LEAs, making trip planning easier for group leaders.

Adventuremark

Adventuremark is a non-statutory safety scheme devised by the Adventure Activity Industry Advisory Committee (AAIAC) for providers of adventurous activities. Adventuremark allows us to demonstrate that the safety management systems and quality of our activity provision meet national good practice standards.

Activity Industry Mutual (AIM)

Activity Industry Mutual is a specialist cooperative insurance company that deals specifically with providers of adventurous activities.

02. Policy Statement

All Instructors will be trained and assessed to a high standard to ensure that safety and enjoyment is paramount to the guest experience. All activity staff, no matter their contract, will be subject to regular observations by the Centre Leadership Team (otherwise known for the remainder of this document as CLT) to ensure quality and safety is consistently maintained.

All equipment used for activities will be in line with industry safety standards and recommendations for use. Equipment will be stored and maintained according to the manufacturer's guidelines, so it remains fit for purpose. Regular equipment checks will take place and accurate records will be kept in line with industry recommendations.

Accurate records will be kept for all staff qualifications, equipment, and structures. These will all be subject to internal & external audits. We maintain our high standards by submitting our systems and processes to be audited by statutory bodies such as AALA, LOTC, and National Governing Bodies such as Paddle UK and Mountain Training. We review our policies, procedures, and risk assessments on an annual basis or more frequently, if circumstances require, e.g., change in NGB procedures, on recommendation of our Technical Expert, following accident or incident, or following restructure etc. to ensure that these policies maintain relevance.

This policy and the processes & procedures it outlines, will be managed, and reviewed annually by the Centre Leadership Team. It will then be endorsed by our Technical Experts. The policy will also be available for all visitors and employees to refer to as required. A copy is issued to every activity instructor and the reading and understanding of the policy continues to form an integral part of activity instructor induction and training.

03. Instructors Requirements

Activity instructors are aged 18 years or over. Instructors will go through training and assessment for all activities they will be delivering outlined in further detail in the qualification header.

All instructional staff will hold a minimum of an 8-hour Emergency / Outdoor First Aid Certificate or a certificate which is appropriate to their NGB qualification. This will be in date and a copy kept on file. Where an instructor does not hold an appropriate first aid certificate, a risk assessment must be completed to ensure adequate first aid provision is in place.

Instructors are required to demonstrate an ability to work with participants of all ages and abilities as part of the interview and training process. This is solidified with a pre-deployment validation from the CLT following their training, and then regular observations, monitoring, and spot checks.

All instructors will be subject to session observations by members of the CLT to ensure the quality and safety of activity delivery is maintained to a high standard. Feedback will be given after each observation, and this will form part of their progression and development. Instructors will also be given the opportunity to observe peers if appropriate.

References will be obtained, and an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check undertaken for all instructors. Instructors who are on the DBS Update Service will be required to provide a copy of their original certificate.

Instructors will be given a full induction to the centre and work to Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for all activities.

All instructors should wear appropriate outdoor clothing or uniform if it is provided. It is important that work clothing remains clean and presentable. If an instructor is not wearing branded uniform, a staff lanyard must be displayed instead.

Training record documents will be created for each instructor, which will be signed by the instructor, trainer & assessor once training has been completed to a satisfactory standard. Instructor training records & qualifications (including driving licences) will be held on our business database, Cinolla.

Freelancers and volunteers will be required to provide a recent (within 3 years) Enhanced DBS, if not on the Update Service, and hold the relevant NGBs for the activities they are running. They will also be required to provide a recent reference from a suitable employer. Freelancers will also attend a site-specific induction and undergo a session observation. They will also be asked to read & sign our Centre Activity Policy, SOPs & Risk Assessments (RAs).

For the purpose of this policy 'instructor' refers to employed PAYE instructors, freelance contracted instructors, volunteer instructors or anyone carrying out instructing responsibilities for Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre.

04: Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) exist for each instructor-led and self-led activity, accompanied by a site-specific risk assessment (RA).

Each SOP will outline the following criteria:

- Instructor Qualification/ Experience.
- Activity Ratio.
- Equipment.
- Pre Session tasks.
- Activity set up information.
- Running the activity.
- Take down information.

SOPs are required to be signed to confirm understanding and adherence by all instructors, including Freelancers, for the activities they will be delivering. These signatures will be held in each instructor training record.

The SOPs will be reviewed annually, or more frequently if circumstances require, in association with BFOC Technical Experts, to ensure that the centre is following current and up to date guidelines, procedures and practices.

05: Training Requirements

A training program is held at the start of each season to familiarise Instructors with the techniques and methods to be used on sessions, together with basic session content. This also provides the opportunity to meet fellow staff and learn about BFOC as an organisation and to get an insight into how the centre operates. Any training required for staff to meet statutory requirements as set out in the BFOC H&S and Employee Policy documents will be provided during work time; further training will be arranged for those Instructors who may benefit.

Every instructor will be trained to run each activity in line with the Standard Operating Procedure and Risk Assessment, following the below training criteria for each type of activity.

Abseil, High Ropes, Climbing and Zip Wire

For roped activities, instructors will either hold a relevant qualification or attend in-house training run by a Suitably Qualified and Experienced Person (SQEP) within the CLT, with a minimum of 2 years experience on those activities. Instructors will then be assessed for competence by an experienced External Assessor / Technical Expert, who is not the in-house trainer, and holds a Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor (MCI) Award or higher/equivalent.

They will then be observed by a member of CLT during their first solo session to gain validation. Monitoring and Spot-Checks will continue post validation to ensure safe and high-quality session delivery.

The in-house assessment pass will be reviewed annually.

Archery

Instructors will be qualified to the minimum of the Archery GB Instructor Award

They will then be observed by a member of CLT during their first solo session to receive validation. Monitoring and Spot-Checks will continue post validation to ensure safe and high-quality session delivery.

Axe Throwing

Instructors will hold a formal target sport NGB e.g Archery GB Instructor Award as well as participate in in-house training conducted by a Suitably Qualified and Experienced Person (SQEP) from the CLT, who has a formal target sport NGB and attended an accredited Axe/Tomahawk training course.

They will then be observed by a member of CLT during their first solo session to gain validation. Monitoring and Spot-Checks will continue post validation to ensure safe and high-quality session delivery.

Bungees

Instructors will attend in-house training by a Suitably Qualified and Experienced Person (SQEP) within the CLT with a minimum of 2 years experience.

They will then be observed by a member of CLT during their first solo session to gain validation. Monitoring and Spot-Checks will continue post validation to ensure safe and high-quality session delivery.

Off-site Climbing and Abseil

Instructors operating offsite climbing and/or abseiling sessions will be qualified to the appropriate Mountain Training qualification and will be governed by their own Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and risk assessment policies..

Other in-house Activities including Self Led (Discovery Walk, Bushcraft, Team Building, Night Line, Orienteering, Low Ropes, Scrambling)

No formal qualifications for these activities are required, however full in-house training will be given to all instructors by a member of the CLT and a record of training retained.

They will then be observed by a member of CLT during their first solo session to gain validation. Monitoring and Spot-Checks will continue post validation to ensure safe and high-quality session delivery.

Paddle Sport Activities

For paddle sport activities, instructors will either hold a relevant qualification or attend in-house training and assessment. The in-house training is delivered by a Suitably Qualified and Experienced Person (SQEP) holding a minimum of a Paddlesport Leader, BCU Level 2 Coach, UKCC Level 2 or Core Coach, within the CLT.

Following the in-house training, instructors will then be assessed for competence by an experienced External Assessor / Technical Expert, who is not the in-house trainer, and is a current course provider for Paddle UK.

The in-house assessment is valid for 3 years, provided instructors attend annual refresher training delivered by a SQEP who is endorsed by our Technical Expert.

Instructors are deployed by a Reservoir Supervisor, with Lead Paddlers supporting paddlesport activities. The role and responsibilities of Reservoir Supervisors and Lead Paddlers are detailed in the operating procedure. Both roles must have completed the relevant in-house assessment and received a Statement of Competence (SoC) from a SQEP endorsed by the Technical Expert.

Instructors operating under Paddle UK awards who have not completed the in-house assessment are required to be observed by a CLT Reservoir Supervisor during their first session for validation. Reference should be made to the Operating Procedures for the specific qualifications and their remit.

All instructors will work within the remit of their Paddle UK qualifications or as specified by their in-house assessment(s).

Monitoring and Spot-Checks will continue post assessment/refresher training to ensure safe and quality session delivery.

Evening activities such as Disco, Wide game and Campfire.

No formal qualifications for these activities are required, however full in-house training will be given to all instructors by a member of the CLT and a record of training retained.

Additional Offsite Activities

Any activities conducted outside of Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre that are not already covered in this document will be governed by their own Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and risk assessment policies.

Additional Notes

Instructors must be revalidated by CLT following any 3-month period of absence from Centre.

06: Self-Led Activities

All self-led activities are subject to Standard Operating Procedures & Risk Assessments.

Groups using self-led activities must sign to say they have read, understood, and agree to abide by the centre Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Risk Assessments (RAs).

07: Group Management

All groups will be accompanied by a group leader, teacher, or responsible adult. They hold responsibility for pastoral care for the group. The instructor is responsible for the safe running of the activities, the safety of the group and themselves. The pastoral carer is responsible for:

- Maintaining group control.
- Providing relevant information about members of the group including medical information.
- Ensuring that the instructor is never alone with a child whilst on session.

There may be certain circumstances when multiple groups are able to be accompanied by a single responsible adult due to the activities being undertaken in the same open location. In addition, there may be times when groups are formed with no pastoral care such as after school clubs or holiday clubs. In this instance, there must be 2 members of BFOC staff, or appropriately qualified/trained volunteers present at all times.

08: Guidance regarding religious head-wear during activities.

Turban wearing sikhs may be exempt from wearing standard helmets where usually required. Activities are assessed for risk and measures implemented to maintain safety where possible.

Other religious or cultural head coverings / hair-styles are assessed on an individual basis, and where possible will conform to standard safety practices.

09: PPE Inspection and Maintenance

Blackland Farm Outdoor Centre will have at least one named person who has successfully completed a RoSPA certified PPE Competent Person Inspection Course. This will ensure that the centre has an appropriately qualified person to perform required inspections of equipment, pass on knowledge to instructors, have the knowledge to maintain equipment, and to highlight defects throughout the season.

PPE will be subject to a thorough inspection procedure by a competent person before its first use, and thereafter at intervals not exceeding six months, or less if specified by the manufacturer, and subject to more frequent occurrence considering on-going inspection and maintenance findings or exceptional circumstances. With the exception of paddle equipment, which will be inspected before its first use each year, as it is only used for six months annually.

All activity PPE will be appropriately labelled and recorded on GearLog to ensure that equipment is in-date and fit for purpose.

Instructors are asked to complete dynamic visual PPE inspections at the start of each session. They will receive in-house training by a SQEP to ensure that they are competent to do so.

If a piece of equipment is found to be broken, faulty or deemed unsafe, it will be put into a quarantine area and a short sentence will be attached explaining the issue. The equipment will then be checked by a SQEP, either repairing and returning to service or discarding in the appropriate manner (destroyed beyond further use and recording the destruction accordingly).

10: Structure Inspections and Maintenance

Blackland Farm Outdoor Center will have at least one named person who has attended, as a minimum, an approved 5-day operational inspection course by an approved Type A, B, or C

inspection body.

BFOC will ensure that one periodical inspection is carried out by an external company annually, typically within the first quarter of the year. All structures will be inspected on a 3-month basis, in-between the periodical inspections by a Suitable Qualified and Experienced Person (SQEP)

The maintenance of the rope courses will be carried out by a (SQEP).

When maintenance and inspection requires leaving the ground, this person must have received training in accessing and be assisted by someone who has received rescue training that will remain on the ground assisting. This maintenance should be recorded along with any certificates of conformity for structural elements such as chains, poles, and wires.

When any accessing of the structure is needed the appropriate SOP is to be followed.

11: Technical Expert (TA / TE)

BFOC will appoint a Technical Expert for both Land and High Roped activities that will cover Climbing, Walking, and Mountaineering activities, and for all Paddlesport activities.

The role of the Technical Expert is to ensure that the process of risk management is appropriate for the purposes of best practice and that instructors are trained and assessed to an acceptable standard. The Technical Expert will provide advice relating to our policies, procedures, and operating standards to ensure that the centre is current and compliant with industry standards, and that they will support us to deliver training and assessments or advise on other appropriately qualified professionals to do so.

Technical Experts will be subject to an annual review to ensure that qualifications and professional indemnity insurance is in date and in line with the requirements of BFOC.

12: Severe Weather

Throughout the day, the CLT will monitor weather conditions and advise groups and instructors regarding notable changes in the weather. Sessions may be changed, or cancelled, depending on changing environmental conditions, or if there is an increased risk of harm.

If thunder and/or lightning presents, the activity must be stopped, and the 30/30 rule must be followed (*If the flash to bang is 30 seconds in length (or less), you should seek shelter. Staying inside this shelter is advised until 30 minutes have passed since the last clap of thunder*).

Outside activities will be cancelled if winds exceed a constant 25 miles per hour - If during the day, wind speeds fluctuate around 25 miles per hour, the activity will be assessed at the discretion of the CLT.

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