



Community Services: Education

Argyll House
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To: Heads of all Educational Establishments

Dear Colleague

Guidance on accepting commercial sponsorship and other activities in educational establishments

1 Definition of commercial activity

1.1 Commercial companies' activities in schools and other educational establishments are wide-ranging. The Scottish Government review identified various types of commercial activity in establishments across Scotland as follows.

- Advertising: publicly displayed materials promoting a particular company, goods or services.
- Sponsored educational materials: the provision or funding of school resources by a company.
- Sponsored voucher schemes: sponsored educational material including voucher schemes in which people can collect points, vouchers or tokens by purchasing a company's products.
- Sponsored events: financial or in-kind support for events such as fun days, open days, school discos, sports kit and other similar activities.
- Prizes and reward schemes.

1.2 Commercial activity in schools and other educational establishments can be positive: providing funding, materials and equipment; it can also build links between the establishment and the business community. These activities can take many forms including posters and reward schemes, but commercial activity in establishments should be viewed cautiously as it also carries risks. In some cases the company or product may be in conflict with the establishment's ethos and

educational aims, for example in promoting unhealthy food or drink, and in other cases it may impact on the routine of the establishments, creating additional work.

- 1.3 The advantages and disadvantages of allowing commercial activity in establishments therefore require to be weighed up on a case-by-case basis. These guidelines and checklist aim to provide a framework to assist establishments in determining whether the activities selected are of high quality and appropriate to the objectives not only of the establishment but also of the education service and Argyll and Bute Council as a whole.

2 Cost and benefit analysis

- 2.1 The Scottish Government research highlighted a number of potential costs and benefits of commercial activities for establishments, parents/carers and children and young people. This is not an exhaustive list and there may be other costs and benefits not mentioned below.

Costs	Benefits
<p><i>Establishment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased burdens on staff/administrative time • Compromising or conflicting values and/or policies • Over reliance on funding provided by companies • Lack of choice in facilities or equipment provided • The burden/cost of maintaining equipment donated • Liability for promotion • Being in breach of code of conduct or financial regulations (probity) • Parents/carers perceiving a lack of funding in the local authority • The need for the school to match donated/received funding 	<p><i>Establishment</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased access to materials, equipment, prizes and trophies • Potential enhancement of the curriculum or learning environment • Financial benefits • Improved partnerships and links with business • Increased links and engagement with the local community • The promotion of school ethos/identity and parent/carer involvement

<p><i>Children and young people and parents/carers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children's and young people's over-exposure to or representation of certain products • Pressure on parents/carers (pester power) • Exploitation of children and young people • Pressure on children and young people to participate in voucher schemes or to buy products • Financial costs 	<p><i>Children and young people and parents/carers</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased experience and understanding of the commercial sector, including enterprise skills/activity • Enhanced facilities in the establishment • Increased opportunities to access a broader range of equipment and experiences • Possible employment opportunities with local companies • Enhanced identity (for example by providing sports strips) • The encouragement of reading through increased book sales • Provision of essential items at a reasonable cost • Increased parent/carer involvement
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3 Guidelines to be adopted: general principles of good practice

- 3.1 These guidelines are now issued to assist when considering any type of commercial activity in an individual school or other educational establishment. The guidelines have been developed to cover arrangements between establishments and commercial companies, however it is recognised that many not-for-profit organisations and individuals also provide educational activities and materials, and the issues raised in this guidance may apply equally to them.
- 3.2 The guidelines have been developed to aid decision-making on potential commercial activities, and are not intended to be used to halt any on-going activity unless the guidelines suggest that there are serious concerns about the involvement.
- 3.3 It is important to note that not every principle will apply in every situation; this is a general framework and a level of flexibility will be necessary when applying them to a particular situation. For example many of the principles relate to sponsored materials or advertising which may not apply to voucher or reward schemes. Similarly, if a commercial activity breaches one of the principles, it may still be worth going ahead - the advantages may outweigh the disadvantages. What is important is that overall the materials or activities offer educational value and that the integrity of the school is maintained.

3.4 The first line of responsibility to accept commercial sponsorship rests with the Head of Establishment, although it must be recognised that the Executive Director of Community Services has ultimate authority. Even well-informed decisions will be subjective and depend on the delicate balance of different interests. The following decision tree shows the process that Heads of Establishment should go through when considering accepting commercial activity or sponsorship. The checklist provided in appendix 1 is designed to assist the process. Appendix 2 provides a pro forma that may be of use when approached by a potential sponsor.

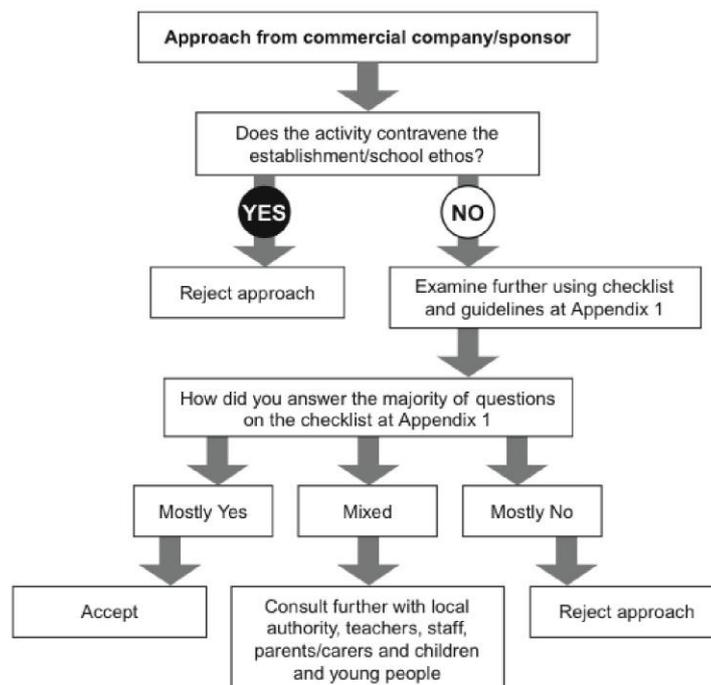


Illustration from Scottish Government guidance booklet

4 General principles of good practice

4.1 The following principles apply in all cases.

Establishments must not accept commercial activities from companies, organisations or individuals:

- that have, or associate with those that have extreme political, racial or religious views;
- that are known to have unethical production practices;
- where the involvement would contradict the Council's code of conduct for employees or financial regulations;
- whose activities or products contradict the establishment or the Council's educational aims and ethos.

4.2 The following general principles apply where relevant.

4.2.1 Materials and activities should:

- reflect and represent a multicultural society;

- present a balanced view of the opportunities open to both sexes;
- take account of diverse family types and relationships;
- promote positive images of people with disabilities;
- avoid express or implied prejudice in relation to gender, class, disability, age, politics, sexual orientation and/or religion.

4.2.2 Materials and activities should not include:

- messages that play on children's and young people's fears, loyalty or lack of experience;
- purely promotional material;
- claims that particular products or services are superior or inferior to others, unless they are based on documentary evidence and presented fairly and clearly;
- illustrations or text that imply that particular products or suppliers are the only ones available in their class or group;
- merchandising slogans or logos (other than the logo used solely for sponsor identification); sponsor identification is important to help identify promotional messages; however logos are not always necessary, a small acknowledgement may suffice.

4.2.3 Commercial companies sending materials should make sure that the materials and activities are marked clearly with:

- the age groups for which they are intended;
- an indication of the subject(s)/curriculum area(s) for which they are intended;
- the sponsor's identity (name, department, address and telephone number);
- the date of publication or release, a reference number, and where to get further information or copies (if different from above);
- a brief description of the pre-launch consultation and testing carried out for the materials or activities.

4.3 Establishments must also consider:

- the impact on staff time, for example of collecting vouchers or assessing the educational value of materials; this may not always outweigh the benefits of taking part;
- any possible financial implications; any activity that results in a product that the establishment may sell for profit can result in liability for VAT; financial advice should be sought;

- the on-going costs of maintaining any equipment provided; this may exceed the benefit of accepting the equipment.

4.4 Unsolicited marketing activity

4.4.1 Sponsors and their agents should:

- only send publicity leaflets/flyers to establishments inviting them to apply for materials or to participate in promotional activities;
- not leave or send samples of their products for children and young people without the establishment's permission;
- not distribute or send unsolicited materials of any kind directly to children and young people.

4.4.2 If staff, parents/carers or children and young people think that an advertisement is wrong and want it changed or withdrawn, or if they have entered a promotion that afterwards they thought was unfairly run and left them disappointed, they can complain to the Advertising Standards Authority [www.asa.org.uk]. Heads of Establishment may also be able to complain if they continue to receive mail from advertisers who they have already told not to contact the establishment.

Yours sincerely

Executive Director of Community Services

June 2017

Appendix 1

Checklist for educational establishments

Please tick as appropriate			
Has any major commercial activity which would bring a benefit of over £3000 in cash or kind been discussed with the head of education?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Has advice been sought from Council staff as to the educational benefit of commercial activities or materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Is there a written agreement outlining what each party expects to get out of the relationship?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Are the materials or activities relevant to the Scottish education system and curriculum guidance?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Do the materials/activities support and enhance the teaching and learning of children and young people and the ethos of the establishment? (e.g. health promoting schools, eco-schools, faith schools)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Do the materials or activities conform to the Scottish Government guidance on nutrition in schools and the underlying principles of <i>Hungry for Success</i> ?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Are the materials/activities/products free of incentives to eat an unhealthy diet or take part in any unsafe/unhealthy activities? No activities should be undertaken with companies that promote alcohol or tobacco	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
As far as you are aware, are the company's other activities broadly in line with the ethos of the establishment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Are the materials/activities accurate, up-to-date, factual, unbiased and relevant to the age and abilities of the children and young people who will use the materials or come into contact with the advertising?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Is it clear who the commercial sponsor is?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Is it clear why they want to distribute materials to you or work in partnership with you so that you can identify where bias may be present?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Has the company piloted the materials/activities with a range of children and young people in the target group to ensure that they are appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Has the establishment consulted with staff and, where appropriate, parents/carers through their respective representative bodies in respect of the educational value of the materials/activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Has the establishment consulted with children and young people on the materials/equipment, again through their representative body?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Are logos as small as possible so as not to dominate the materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Are the materials/activities free from any suggestion that children and young people should encourage their parents/carers to buy the company's products?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Are voucher schemes marketed to parents/carers, who can make informed decisions, rather than children and young people?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Are voucher schemes constructed so that as many establishments as possible, regardless of size and location, can take part?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No
Does the voucher scheme have a full description of the actual offer, time limits, retail value, number of vouchers required to 'purchase' products, extra costs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	No

Does it measure up?

The decision to accept commercial sponsorship rests primarily with the Head of Establishment

Not all questions will apply in all situations; but as a rough guide, consider the following.

- All **Yes** answers will suggest that the resource or activity probably meets good practice guidelines.
- All **No** answers suggest that you should reject the offer.
- If your answers are a mixture of **Yes** and **No**, you may need more information. Further discussion with colleagues, parents/carers and officers of Argyll and Bute Council may help you to come to a decision.

Appendix 2

Checklist for commercial companies and individual sponsors

1 Please tick as appropriate. complete and submit to the head of establishment

As far as you are aware, are your company's activities and products broadly in line with the principles and values of Scottish education?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Are the materials/activities that you have produced suitable to the age and stage of the children and young people they are being sent to?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Are the materials/activities free from overt encouragement to purchase your company's products?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Have you taken care to ensure that materials/activities are up-to-date, accurate and give a balanced view of the issue(s)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Have you been clear about what your company expects to get out of involvement with an educational establishment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Have materials/activities been piloted with children and young people and discussed with educational professionals to ensure that they are relevant?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Are any slogans or logos as small as possible to ensure that they do not dominate materials?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Are materials/activities free from any suggestion that children and young people should encourage their parents/carers to buy your company's products?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Do voucher schemes set out how the scheme works and how many vouchers are needed to buy the products/services on offer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Have you approached the establishment or education authority first, instead of targeting children and young people directly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Are your materials/activities clearly marked with information on what they aim to achieve, your company's contact details and their suitability for age and stage?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Are the materials/activities free from any stereotypes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
On balance, does the educational benefit provided to the establishment outweigh the costs to the establishment, child or young person and parents/carers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
Do your educational activities measure up?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No

2 Commercial companies/individual sponsors contact details

Not all questions will apply in all situations but as a rough guide, consider the following.

- All Yes answers suggest that the resource or activity probably meets our good practice guidelines.
- All No answers imply that you should reconsider the materials or activities you are offering to educational establishments.
- If your answers are a mixture of Yes and No, you may wish to discuss your offer further with educational professionals, parents'/carers' groups and national bodies before proceeding further.

Name of company	
Address	
Telephone	
Email address	
Brief description of materials or activity	
Completed by (sign)	
Name (print)	
Position in company	
Date completed	
Date received	

Any queries regarding this guidance should be addressed to Head of Education,
Community Services: Education, Argyll and Bute Council, Argyll House, Alexandra
Parade, Dunoon PA23 8AJ.