UNSUPERVISED TIME GUIDANCE

There is a legal ‘duty of care’ to safeguard under 18s. Therefore, time away from adults must be supported in age and situation-appropriate ways. It can be beneficial to allow young people (when age appropriate) to explore the environment, play games or rest but this can also result in young people overstretching their abilities and incidents occurring.
These events may arise when students are unsupervised during their free time. This could be at the beginning or end of their school day or during lunch breaks if they are allowed to go out unsupervised.
Setting clear boundaries will help remove some potential hazards, for instance: be clear on rules and expectations; monitor; pop by and check that everyone is ok periodically.
The older the young people are, the more likely they are to want independence. Giving young people the freedom to explore in small groups is part of helping them to develop and grow. Be sure to do this with some clear boundaries and expectations in place. Ensure each group of young people knows how you will communicate with them.

NWA students receive very useful and important information about Derry and things to do in the Key Info Pack and Students Handbook.

Students have a NWA emergency number always at hand in their Student ID and are also informed of all emergency local numbers. During inductions they are advised not to walk on their own, to stay in groups and to use taxis if late in the evening and they are unsure of their surroundings.

NWA staff always advise group leaders and/or home stay providers on some suggestions of how to manage this free time in order to reduce the potential for incidents and injuries on students.

Some examples are:

- organising games
- giving short periods of freedom and frequent meeting points in order to meet students regularly during their free time
- taking them to “closed” spaces (i.e. bowling alley, shopping centres, parks, etc) where it is easy to locate students
- ensuring that they have a local map (app on phone)
- making sure that their phone is charged
- advising them to go into a shop if they need assistance
- setting limits in terms of time, distance and places visited

It needs to be clear to parents that, even though their children are away from adults, they have no need to worry and that steps have been taken to safeguard them throughout the entire duration of their stay.