

Challenging fieldwork scenarios

Fieldwork can be full of surprises and challenges. Consider these scenarios – could anything have been done to prevent these challenges? How might you react to these challenges in the field? Is there any subtext which would need to be considered before these challenges are managed?

Despite multiple reminders a student turns up on the day of the fieldwork without a pair of wellies – they will need them to go into the river.	Despite multiple reminders a student turns up on the day of the fieldwork without a coat and it is likely to rain.
One of your students is a wheel chair user and your planned fieldwork is to some sand dunes. Her chair will not be able to traverse the dunes.	A student is refusing to go on the fieldtrip and says “you can’t make me”. You believe they will simply not turn up on the day.
In the bus on the way to the field site you realise you have forgotten to get a child’s EpiPen from the school office.	There are no toilets near to your rivers field site and the lead teacher says that students can just “go in the bushes”.
You turn up at your planned area of work at your field site and another school group is already there doing the same activities.	During the fieldwork one student physically assaults another. Neither require medical treatment.
As you come away from the field site a student says they have lost their phone. You can’t be late back to school as students will miss their busses.	A male student does not want to be paired up with a female student as he believes she will slow him down and not complete the task correctly.
You realise that in order to get to an essential part of the field site students will have to walk along a road with no pavement.	Your fieldwork is taking place during Ramadan and will involve strenuous and extended walks. It is likely to be one of the hottest days of the year.
A student has lost a younger family member to drowning. You plan on taking the students to the coast to do fieldwork.	You outline your fieldwork plans to your students including a walk through a residential area. A student hints at recent gang activity there.
Your Head insists that students wear their school uniform at all times during the fieldwork. They will be entering a river and getting muddy.	One of your students has recently joined the school and has already done the statutory fieldwork required of their key stage.

One of your students is highly sensitive to sensory stimuli. You need to deliver instructions but it is windy and noisy.	Students are working independently in different locations. Out of nowhere an electrical storm begins. This was not forecast.
A student badly injures an ankle and cannot bear weight. You realise you have no mobile phone signal at your location.	A key piece of equipment (a flowmeter) breaks while students are using it. You do not have a spare and the data it provides is needed.
A student is absent (unwell) on the day of the fieldwork. They will need to complete the fieldwork in order to access the assessment.	One of your students has experienced significant emotional trauma and does not want to work without adult supervision.
One of your students will need to take medication during the fieldwork. They do not wish others to know about it.	Two students have not returned to the meeting point at the designated time. They are known to be frequent truants in school.
A student has not brought a packed lunch as they believe they will have access to fast food. There is no time for them to buy their own food.	The packed lunches provided by your school are nowhere near sufficient for your 18 year old students undertaking a day of fieldwork.
One of your students is neurodivergent and works best in very familiar places and in a highly structured manner.	One of your members of staff becomes extremely unwell during the fieldwork and is unable to carry on with their duties.
One of your students has an adult in their life with whom they are not allowed contact. They will be working independently in the high street.	One of your students will need to have quick and easy access to a toilet due to a medical condition. They feel highly embarrassed about this.
Students get very muddy / sandy in the field and the hired coach driver will not let them back onto his vehicle in that state.	Your head of department has used the same risk assessment as last year but has just changed the date.
There is nowhere near to the field site for you to park the minibus and students will have to carry the equipment quite some distance.	You arrive at the field site and there has been a significant police incident. The whole area is cordoned off for the rest of the day.