We are excited to offer an extended respite break programme in 2023. However, we continue to take a cautious approach regarding COVID-19 and ask that if a child or member of your staff have symptoms of a virus, cold or flu, prior to the HopScotch break, they do not attend the holiday. Likewise, if a member of staff at Ardvullin have symptoms of a virus, cold or flu, they will avoid contact with others and another member of the HopScotch team will provide cover for them for the duration of their recovery.

The enclosed guide gives you all the necessary information to maximise the experience and have a great holiday. Although we ask you to read all the information in the guide carefully, you must know your responsibilities over the week.

It is a simple 3 Ps.

1. Prepare

Select the young people carefully and prepare them for the break beforehand to know what to expect. Then, please complete the required paperwork and return it to us at least four weeks before your holiday.

2. Plan

We want you to get the best from your holiday, so we ask you to select two activities in advance.

While we hope it all goes to plan, you need to prepare for the unexpected, so have a contingency plan in place just in case a child needs to return home for whatever reason.

3. Play

At least three staff members must accompany the young people on all-day trips - the evenings are your responsibility, so be prepared for a busy week!

Bedtimes, catering, and discipline are all within your control, so agree to your preferred rules and stick to them!!

Lastly, enjoy your holiday; we know it will be hugely rewarding for everyone.

**THE CHARITY**

**About HopScotch**

HopScotch Children’s Charity was set up in 1998 to provide free breaks for vulnerable young people living in Scotland.

**PREPARATION**

**Selecting the Children**

HopScotch holidays are for groups of up to 12 children. Sleeping arrangements dictate that the group should consist of six boys and six girls or 12 young people of the same sex. All young people should be between 7-12 years at the time of the holiday, be able to cope with a week away from their usual environment and have no other chance of a holiday this year. The young people should not have been on a HopScotch break before, and young people or close relations of user organisation staff may not take up a place on holiday.

Children are not eligible for a holiday if they have a recent record of behaviours or other problems, which could place other young people and members of staff at risk.

Work with the young people before the holiday.

We recommend that user organisations arrange at least one meeting with the young people before the holiday to know what to expect.

You must be aware of the following:

# HopScotch provides a range of outdoor and indoor activities. These activities will mainly occur at Ardvullin or the surrounding area and are designed to offer a wide range of experiences for the children visiting us.

HopScotch’s Activity Leader will be with you daily, coordinating and delivering activities.

 ensuring quiet and calm once young people are in bed.

As well as supervising children, other daily responsibilities include preparing all meals and keeping the house clean and tidy. The house is clean and ready for you on arrival, and we would ask that you leave it in a similar condition when you leave.

For health and safety reasons, we would also like you to keep the house clean and tidy on a day-to-day basis, paying attention to: -

• hanging waterproofs up to dry/drying wellies

• bringing play equipment/ toys into the house at night

• mopping up after showers

• encourage respect for property, equipment, and facilities and report breakages and any property damage to the Activity Leader or Caretaker as soon as possible.

**Arrival**

On arrival at Ardvullin, The Activity Leader will show you around the house and grounds, go through the house rules, unload the minibus, and try to answer any queries. They will discuss your activities for the week, and it is an opportunity for you to discuss any relevant issues regarding the children. As you usually arrive late on Monday afternoon, you will not return to the minibus until Tuesday morning. You will generally go for a walk after dinner on Monday. The walk is a good chance for everyone to stretch their legs after the journey and get acquainted with the local area.

We provide each child with a pair of wellies, waterproofs, and a backpack for use during the holiday. They will also receive a hat to keep. We also supply wet suits and beach shoes for visits to the beach.

**Daily Activities**

Now that we have our new Activity Centre we can offer a wide range of onsite activities. Due to this and to be more environmentally responsible, we will limit the amount of travel during your HopScotch break. Therefore, we ask that you choose two off-site activities, and we will organise these for you along with some centre-based and local beach visits and walks. Please select your two preferred activities on the Holiday Activities Form and return it to us at least four weeks before the holiday.

**Off-site activities**

• Canoeing - qualified instructors from Rockhopper Sea Kayaking (Journey Time – 40 mins)

• Horse-riding - Young people can enjoy being escorted on lead-rein pony rides at Achnalarig Farm in Oban. (Journey time – one hour)

• Gondola (cable car) to the top of Aonach Mor, next to Ben Nevis and a walk to the viewpoint (journey time – 40 mins).

• Ice Factor - Indoor climbing arena in Kinlochleven (journey time – 30 mins).

• Segway. A magic carpet experience, balancing on a platform. Exploring the Highland Estate. This activity is run by Woodlands based in Ballachulish (journey time - 20 mins). Not suitable for children under 9.

• SeaTours - an enthralling boat tour through one of Scotland’s most beautiful Fort William areas, available from April until October. (journey time – 30 mins)

**Onsite activities**

Now that we have our fantastic new activity centre, we can offer a selection of onsite activities, including:

• Indoor climbing/scrambling on our new mixed-ability climbing. This is a supervised activity and must be monitored by HopScotch or user organisation staff. The climbing wall will be closed when not in use. We provide climbing shoes.

• Yoga facilitated by a yoga instructor.

• Volleyball, badminton, basketball, and indoor football equipment.

• Games facilitated by HopScotch staff and volunteers.

• Bushcraft activity.

• Biking – using ramps and other specialist equipment.

• Team Challenges

• Orienteering

**Local attractions**

· Glenfinnan – a ride in the HopScotch bus to Glenfinnan to see the steam train as featured in Harry Potter (journey time – 45 minutes).

· Visit Sallachan beach, a beautiful beach just a 10 minutes drive from Ardvullin.

· Visit Ardtoe beach, a beautiful, sheltered bay about an hour’s drive from Ardvullin. (journey time – 1.4 hours)

· Ariundle Forest Walk – down by the river and through the woods, this is a great walk for spotting frogs and plants. (journey time – 30 minutes)

· Inchree. A short walk to view spectacular waterfalls. (journey time – 5 minutes drive from ferry exit)

· Castle Toiram. The lovely sandy beach beneath a Castle – it’s a great place to play rounders or fly a kite. (journey time – one hour)

On the days you have off-site activities, you typically leave Ardvullin at 9.45 am each morning. Therefore, taking wellies, waterproofs, and backpacks daily would be best. The sun can be very powerful during the summer, especially at the beach, so we have sunscreen supplies and ask that user organisation staff ensure young people use the cream. Buoyancy aids are provided and must be used during visits to the beach. We also supply wetsuits.

A minimum of 3 user organisation staff (to 12 children) must accompany the young people on day trips, and the lead staff member (carer) must participate in all the activities. HopScotch Activity Leader is responsible for coordinating and guiding you on daily activities. However, they are not responsible for looking after the young people and should not be left in sole charge of them at any time.

HopScotch supplies midge nets, wristbands and repellent, and we have a Midge machine in the grounds of Ardvullin.

**Evenings**

Organising the evening activities is your responsibility. The young people are usually happy to play on the adventure playground or have a football game, and you will have use of the activity centre. However, the children must always be supervised, whether in the activity centre or outside. Some groups of young people will require a more structured programme, and we can supply you with scavenger hunts, treasures trails or arts and craft material and indoor games.

**Bedtime**

When young people go to bed is up to you and will depend on the age of the children. However, we recommend that staff set a fixed bedtime of around 9.30 pm with lights out at 10 pm to avoid overtiredness and distress for everyone the next day. Setting this before the holiday is good, so the young people know what to expect.

**Catering**

HopScotch breaks are self-catering. We leave the cooking arrangements to you, but this is what usually works best:

THE CENTRE

Ardvullin, HopScotch’s Holiday Centre

Ardvullin is in Ardgour on the Ardnamurchan Peninsula. It is reached by crossing the Corran ferry just north of Ballachulish, 8 miles south of Fort William. Ardvullin stands on 5 acres of private grounds overlooking Loch Linnhe.

Our excellent purpose-built Activity Centre located within the grounds of Ardvullin, offering a range of centre-based activities. We can provide indoor climbing, yoga, sports and games in the Centre and at least one day will be set aside to use the facility. Using the centre will reduce travel time to off-site activities and reduce our carbon footprint.

We have an adventure playground, including a 30-metre aerial runway (flying fox), a clatter bridge, a tyre traverse ladder, a scramble net, and a gravity bowl and rota bounce! Young people should always be supervised whilst in the playground. For safety reasons, only one child should use the flying fox at a time. In addition, only one person is allowed on the trampoline at a time, there must be no flips, and the net must be closed whilst in use.

We have tried to make Ardvullin as welcoming as possible; the rooms are big and bright. Sleeping accommodation at Ardvullin comprises girls and boys bunk rooms and male and female staff bedrooms. All beds have a duvet, pillow, sheet, mattress protector and bed linen. There are male and female shower rooms, and one of the staff bedrooms has en-suite facilities. Laundry facilities are in the utility room. We have a large kitchen with everything required for self-catering – electric cooker, AGA cooker, microwave, fridge/freezer, dishwasher, pots, pans, crockery, cutlery, utensils, and baking equipment.

Ardvullin is clean when you arrive, and we ask that it be left that way and that all the beds are stripped. Please note that money may be deducted from the security deposit if our housekeeper must work more than her regular hours. Cleaning equipment and materials are provided for use.

Please sort out your recycling waste and ensure that all the bottles/cartons/cans are washed and put in the correct bins to the left side of the house.

Please do not flush wipes, sanitary wear, and cotton wool pads down the toilet. We have a septic tank at Ardvullin. These items can easily block these items, resulting in unpleasantness and inconvenience for following groups and costing the charity unnecessary costs to unblock the septic tank.

THE HOLIDAY

Luggage

Luggage space is limited on the bus so everyone must have one average-sized sports bag. Food should be packed in cardboard boxes or carrier bags and transferred to the crates on the bus. We have provided useful checklists for you and the young people. Also, please let us know in advance if you would like cool boxes for storing the food on the journey.

The Journey

Our bus driver will pick you up from the specified location and drive you to Ardvullin. The normal pick-up time is 11 am on Monday. Please ensure all luggage and food is ready for loading, and the young people have all been to the toilet.

We need to tell you about some rules for travelling in the minibus. Please make sure everyone is aware of them:

* Everyone (including adults) must always wear seatbelts whilst the engine is running. In the event of an emergency or travel sickness during the journey, please notify the driver and they will stop at the next safe point.
* Heads, arms etc. must be kept away from the windows
* The driver must not be distracted during the journey.
* Rubbish must not be thrown out of the window.
* The driver must not be left in charge of the young people during stops.

Food, apart from boiled sweets, should not be eaten during transit. There will be at least two stops on the journey – one for lunch and, depending on the distance you must travel, one other break. So everyone should take a packed lunch and drink. The journey time will depend on the distance to Ardvullin and the weather and traffic conditions. There is a ferry crossing towards the end of the journey, at Corran, 8 miles south of Fort William. The crossing takes 5 minutes, and the ferry runs every half an hour.

Arrival

On arrival at Ardvullin, The Activity Leader will show you around the house and grounds, go through the house rules, unload the minibus, and try to answer any queries you may have. They will discuss your activities for the week, and it is an opportunity for you to discuss any relevant issues regarding the children. As you normally arrive late on Monday afternoon you will not go out in the minibus again until Tuesday morning. You will normally go for a walk after dinner on Monday. The walk is a good chance for everyone to stretch their legs after the journey and get acquainted with the local area.

We provide each child with a pair of wellies, waterproofs, and a backpack to use during the holiday. They will also receive a scrapbook and hat to keep. We also supply wet suits and beach shoes for visits to the beach.

Daily Activities

Now that we have our new Activity Centre we can offer a wide range of onsite activities. Due to this and to be more environmentally responsible, we will limit the amount of travel during your HopScotch break. Therefore, we ask that you choose two off-site activities, and we will organise these for you along with some centre-based and local beach visits and walks. Please select your two preferred activities on the Holiday Activities Form and return it to us at least four weeks before the holiday.

Off site activities

* Canoeing - qualified instructors from Rockhopper Sea Kayaking (Journey Time – 40 mins)
* Horse-riding - Young people can enjoy being escorted on lead rein pony rides at Achnalarig Farm in Oban. (Journey time – one hour)
* Gondola (cable car) to the top of Aonach Mor, next to Ben Nevis and a walk to the viewpoint (journey time – 40 mins).
* Ice Factor - Indoor climbing arena in Kinlochleven (journey time – 30 mins).
* Segway. A magic carpet experience, balancing on a platform. Exploring the Highland Estate. This activity is run by Woodlands based in Ballachulish (journey time - 20 mins). Not suitable for children under 9.
* SeaTours - an enthralling boat tour through one of Scotland’s most beautiful areas in Fort William, available end of April until October. (journey time – 30 mins)

On site activities

Now that we have our fantastic new activity centre, we can offer a selection of on-site activities including:

* Indoor climbing/scrambling on our new mixed ability climbing. This is a supervised activity and must be monitored by HopScotch or user organisation staff. The climbing wall will be closed when not in use. We provide climbing shoes.
* Yoga facilitated by a yoga instructor.
* Volleyball, badminton, basketball, and indoor football equipment.
* Games facilitated by HopScotch staff and volunteers.
* Bushcraft activity.
* Biking – using ramps and other specialist equipment.
* Team Challenges
* Orienteering

Local attractions

* Glenfinnan – a ride in the HopScotch bus to Glenfinnan to see the steam train as featured in Harry Potter (journey time – 45 minutes).
* Visit Sallachan beach, a beautiful beach just a 10 minutes’ drive from Ardvullin.
* Visit Ardtoe beach, a beautiful, sheltered bay about an hour’s drive from Ardvullin. (journey time – 1.4 hours)
* Ariundle Forest Walk – down by the river and through the woods this is a great walk for spotting frogs and plants. (journey time – 30 minutes)
* Inchree. A short walk to view spectacular waterfalls. (journey time – 5 minutes drive from ferry exit)
* Castle Toiram. The lovely sandy beach beneath a Castle – it’s a great place to play rounders or fly a kite. (journey time – one hour)

On the days you have off site activities, you will typically leave Ardvullin at 9.45 am each morning. It would be best if you took wellies, waterproofs, and backpacks every day. The sun can be very powerful during the summer, especially at the beach, so we have supplies of sunscreen and we ask that user organisation staff ensure young people use the cream. Buoyancy aids are provided and must be used during visits to the beach. We also supply wetsuits.

A minimum of 3 user organisation staff (to 12 children) must accompany the young people on day trips, and the lead member of staff (carer) must participate in all the activities. HopScotch Activity Leader is responsible for coordinating and guiding you on daily activities. However, they are not responsible for looking after the young people and should not be left in sole charge of them at any time.

HopScotch supplies midge nets, wristbands and repellent and we have a Midge machine in the grounds of Ardvullin.

Evenings

Organising the evening activities is your responsibility. The young people are usually happy to play on the adventure playground or have a football game, and you will have use of the activity centre. However, the children must always be supervised, whether in the activity centre or outside. Some groups of young people will require a more structured programme, and we can supply you with scavenger hunts, treasures trails or arts and craft material and indoor games.

Bedtime

When young people go to bed, it is up to you and will depend on the age of the children. However, we recommend that staff set a fixed bedtime of around 9.30 pm with lights out at 10 pm to avoid overtiredness and distress for everyone the next day. It is good to set this before the holiday, so the young people know what to expect.

Catering

HopScotch breaks are self-catering. We leave the cooking arrangements to you, but this is what usually works best:

* Breakfast at around 8.30 am – cereal, toast
* Packed lunch (you will not normally come back to Ardvullin for lunch) – sandwiches, fruit, and something to drink. Cool bag/rucksacks are provided for each member of your group. Cool boxes and flasks are also available.
* Evening meal at around 6.30 pm. Our advice is to keep it simple - pasta, pizza, curry.
* Supper before bed – hot chocolate and toast.
* Please ensure you take enough drinks for the journeys and on day trips to ensure the young people stay hydrated.

We recommend you buy enough food for the entire week and essentials topped up during one of your day trips. If you are shopping, two staff members must be left with the young people and please avoid long shopping trips.

Some groups encourage young people to help prepare packed lunches and evening meals. For example, we have a BBQ, and we will be happy to help set it up for you, but as part of HopScotch’s Health and Safety Regulations HopScotch staff cannot help to cook the food.

Pocket Money

The young people can take £5 in pocket money each. We strongly suggest that all young people have the same money to avoid upset. We recommend staff organise a system so that money lasts and is not all spent on the first day. Staff should keep the money and hand it out when required.

Behaviour

We hope this break will be an excellent adventure for the young people. It will be their first holiday away from home for many, and naturally, they will be very excited. However, discipline is your responsibility, and we suggest you set ground rules before the holiday, discuss them with the young people and stick to them. HopScotch enjoys a good reputation both locally and throughout Scotland. So please ensure that the young people maintain the highest standards of behaviour during the holiday, both at Ardvullin and on day trips.

Going Home

You will typically be leaving for home at about 9.30 am on Friday. We ask that the beds are stripped (except for the mattress protectors unless they are dirty) and that all the rooms are left clean and tidy, ready for the next group of children. Everyone should check they have ALL their belongings with them. We ask that you empty the fridge for health and safety purposes and discard any opened food. If you wish to leave unopened food in the kitchen, we will donate it to a local food bank. Our bus driver will return you to the collection point, and there will be at least one stop on the way home, including a break for lunch if required.

We usually try and get you home between 1-2 pm on Fridays, but please check with our Activity Leader before confirming a time with parents.

HEALTH & SAFETY

HopScotch’s Policy

Promoting and maintaining the Health and Safety of children, staff and volunteers remain a primary consideration for HopScotch Children’s Charity. However, we recognise that as the user organisation, you hold the primary care and responsibility for children, and we would hope that their health and safety regulations would complement ours. HopScotch has a Health & Safety policy that includes Risk Assessments for the house, grounds, minibus, and all activities. Copies of all the Risk Assessments are enclosed with this pack, along with a copy of HopScotch Children’s Charity Child Protection document.

Safety and Fire Precautions

HopScotch Children’s Charity is fully responsible for ensuring appropriate health and safety fire regulations operate at Ardvullin. We will ensure that the fire and other safety rules are explained to all user organisations at the beginning of the holiday. All adults must be thoroughly familiar with fire exits and appliances, evacuation drills and all other emergency procedures. We will organise a Fire Practice for all adults and young people on the first day you arrive and record that it took place, any problems and action taken to alleviate the issues. The house must be kept tidy, and the entrance to Ardvullin and all corridors and access areas must always be clear of obstructions to comply with fire regulations.

Medical services

HopScotch has established contact with a local GP who provides a GP service to the residents of Ardvullin. Phone numbers, directions to the GP and the nearest Accident and Emergency Department will be displayed in the Reception Hall at Ardvullin. Any child who asks to see a doctor must be allowed.

Storage and Administration of Medicines

All drugs, including medicines brought with the young people and over-the-counter medications, excluding inhalers, will be stored in the locked laundry room at Ardvullin that is inaccessible to children.

HopScotch staff will hold the key to this cupboard, and one named person from the user organisation will be responsible for storing and administering drugs and keeping a duplicate key.

First Aid

The HopScotch Activity Leader is a fully qualified first aider. One member of your staff will also need to have a first aid qualification. HopScotch’s minibus has a first aid kit. The Activity Leader and user organisation staff are responsible for ensuring that these are kept fully stocked and taken with the group. HopScotch Children’s Charity will reimburse any expenditure on restocking the minibus first aid kits. Details of any accident, injury or illness must be recorded on an accident form, however minor. Details of time, date, location, witnesses, action taken and by whom and nature of incident should be recorded. This should then be kept in the Accident/Incident book, and a copy should be sent to HopScotch’s office either during or immediately after the holiday. Accident/injury and incident forms should be kept with each first aid kit. A complete copy of HopScotch’s Health & Safety policy is located at Ardvullin.

Swimming

The Activity Leader should check Parental Consent forms to ensure the parent or guardian consented.

The User Organisation’s responsibility is to ensure a sensible deployment of staff before the activity commences. There must be adults in the water and poolside, sufficient to provide adequate supervision for all young people in all pool areas. One adult must be in the water with the Activity Leader.

Public safety signs and danger warnings must be adhered to.

Smoking

It is the policy of HopScotch Children’s Charity that the workplace is smoke-free and that all employees have a right to work in a smoke-free environment. Therefore, smoking is prohibited throughout the entire workplace, with no exceptions. This includes the minibus. This policy applies to all employees, user organisations, consultants, contractors, and visitors. If you are a smoker, HopScotch staff will show you an area where you can smoke from the sight of the children.

Alcohol

There must be no alcohol present at any time at Ardvullin. In addition, hopScotch and user organisation staff must not consume alcohol whilst on duty.

Drugs

All non-prescribed, controlled drugs are banned from Ardvullin. Any child found in possession of/and or abusing such substances will be removed from Ardvullin immediately after appropriate arrangements can be made. Any adult found in possession of/and or abusing such substances will be removed from Ardvullin immediately.

Weapons

Any child or adult found to have an offensive weapon must be removed from Ardvullin immediately. This includes firearms (including air pistols), swords, knives, catapults, crossbows, etc.

Young people Absent from the Centre without Permission

Young people may not leave the Centre without permission, which can pose considerable risks for the child. Therefore, it is crucial to act speedily to help protect the child from harm. If this situation does occur, group staff must inform HopScotch staff immediately, and the correct procedures must be followed.

Child Protection

We recognise our responsibilities as a children’s charity for preventing, identifying and supporting young people who have been abused. We will cooperate fully with statutory or external agencies to assist with their investigations of disclosures or concerns of abuse. All HopScotch staff and volunteers are Disclosure Scotland checked. A copy of HopScotch’s Child Protection Procedures is available on request.

Representation

HopScotch Children’s Charity encourages comments on how it could improve its service from users of its services, members of the community, and representatives of other organisations. All such comments will be given serious consideration as to their relevance and viability to HopScotch Children’s Charity overall policies. HopScotch Children’s Charity encourages direct contact by telephone to discuss views and ideas. However, specific comments should be submitted in writing to enable full consideration by management.

Finally

HopScotch aims to provide the best possible break for children, in the safest possible environment. For you, as user organisation staff, it is hard work and very tiring. Still, we hope it will also be great fun and very rewarding, and a chance for you to develop positive relationships with the young people and provide them with some fantastic childhood memories.