



## PANEL DISCUSSION SUMMARY NOTES

# Managing travel-related risk: Why, when, how?



Amnesty International UK  
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### Chairman:

John O'Sullivan, Group Marketing Director, Key Travel

### Panel:

Angus Clark (AC), Executive Board Secretary, USHA

Anne Hudson (AH), Insurance Advisor, Northumbria University

Dr. Jonathan O'Keeffe (JOK), Regional Medical Director, International SOS (ISOS)

Tim Willis (TW), Regional Security Director for Northern Europe, International SOS (ISOS)

Rose Fernandez (RF), Director of Marketing, Amadeus

Steve Acott (SA), Strategic Partnership Director, Key Travel



The format consisted of questions posed by chairman, John O’Sullivan, and answered by members of the panel, with questions and comments from the floor.



## → **Duty of care – what is the scope?**

In loco parentis | Travel naïve | Leisure time | Courts

The scope of Duty of Care in the Academic sector is broader than in many other sectors due to the need to consider the different types of traveller – these include academics travelling for research, recruitment and collaboration purposes, as well as students on overseas trips as part of their courses. The legislation around the provision of duty of care for professors and researchers is comparable to the commercial sector, and interestingly, for students it is also very similar.

In the scholastic sector, duty of care corresponds to ‘in loco parentis’ – where the institution assumes parental responsibility for the student. In this context universities are taking on responsibility for people who are travel naïve and complacent about risk.

Northumbria University recently scrutinised issues arising from incidents taking place during leisure time for staff and students. The judicial system suggested that because the individual was only in that location due to the work or study they were undertaking, their institution was obliged to look after them.

## → **Is anyone else facing the dilemma as to who is covered by duty of care?**

Insurance | Code of conduct | Reputation | Duty of loyalty

One guest said their institution made sure travellers knew that if they were drunk, under the influence of drugs or broke the law, no insurance would cover them.

At Northumbria, schools create their own code of conduct, which students sign before they travel; sanctions include the possibility that they will not get the credits they expect. Academics often do not want to discuss their research and where they are going: therefore it is important to point out that the university’s reputation is at stake should an incident occur.

JOK said that duty of loyalty of the traveller to the institution is becoming more commonplace and if there is no code of conduct or travel policy, travellers cannot be expected to show loyalty to it. Duty of loyalty among academics was to their discipline or subject, not their institution.



## → **Is everyone here covering employees, students and other non-employee communities involved with the university?**

Itinerary changes | Ad hoc travellers | Risk management  
| Duty of care to the individual | Duty of care to the institution

Universities' community is very broad. Post-graduate student researchers who are early in their lecturing career are still doing a lot of networking. They need the freedom to follow up a research-related opportunity, but also to understand that if they change their itinerary, they should let their university know.

Key Travel's responsibility is to assist universities in meeting their duty of care, but when 20 per cent of flights booked in the university sector are for people coming into the UK, where lies the duty of care to those individuals? With 40 per cent of transactions being overseas flights for ad hoc travellers, who may have travelled only once or twice in the past three years, risk management is vital. Post-grad students often pay for their own travel, so does duty of care apply to them too?

You cannot delegate responsibility for duty of care. The same applies to people coming in, who are not part of the host organisation: it is important to understand what the university and the parent organisation's responsibility is to that person. The person is in that location because of their position in the institution, so their academic institution has duty of care to them and in turn, they have duty of loyalty to the institution.

## → **Who here has been called at 2am and has been challenged to respond to someone involved in an incident abroad?**

Iceland volcanic eruption | Enforce policies and procedures  
| Independent travel

During the eruption of the Icelandic volcano - Eyjafjallajökull - a south-west university had academics scattered everywhere and had no trace of them because some individuals had booked their own flights, some through their TMC (Travel Management Company), and the schools were not maintaining registers on where staff were. This prompted the institution to review and enforce policies and procedures to record where staff are.

At Northumbria, no travel is refunded on expenses and all staff travel has to go through the university's travel provider. However, distance learning students travel independently and could be setting out from anywhere in the world. Student travel is the next on the risk management agenda for Northumbria.

Amadeus's Mobile Messenger product allows employers to execute automated consistent delivery of the promise they make to travellers.



## → Do any of you have an escalation process for when something goes wrong?

Online system checks | Authorisation by dean and head of department  
| Risk assessment

Around 30 per cent did and 70 per cent didn't or didn't know. Nottingham Trent University has an online system. All travel is authorised by the dean of the school or head of department and staff members and students must have a code, so that their whereabouts can be checked through the system. At Northumbria, a risk assessment has to be done by the person who books the travel and details are emailed to one central address at each faculty.

## → Regardless of where you travel, are you fit to travel?

Mental health conditions | Medical evacuations

Mental health issues tend to get overlooked but JOK said statistics show that a scholastic traveller who is evacuated on medical grounds is 23 times more likely to have a mental health condition than a corporate employee.

One guest asked whether the panel experienced resistance to parting with that sort of information. Travellers from Northumbria University talk to a third party in confidence and the university is told: "We met with X and we deem that they are fit to travel for the purposes stated".



## → **How is policy communicated?**

Technology | Need for policy | Escalation process  
| Make sure dialogue happens | Road traffic policies | Other areas of risk  
| Unfamiliarity with destination | Briefings

RF asked, during the Icelandic volcanic eruption, did guests know how to contact travellers? There is technology to address this, but if someone has booked outside policy then the data isn't there.

The new chief executive at St. George's University insists on seeing the risk assessment for any travel requested and as a result, travellers understand the need for policy. The leadership aspect helps.

At King's College London, if a student has an incident, it is escalated to the director of student services and on to the head of administration, if necessary. Anyone with an escalation process should discuss it with their account manager so that a TMC's 24-hour emergency team knows what procedure should be followed.

AC also recommended creating an escalation process at the planning stage, where permission is required to go to certain destinations. If someone is going to a war zone against Foreign Office advice, who signs that off? Make sure dialogue happens in each part of the university, not just at high level, but cater for the differing requirements of faculties.

Many people are poorly equipped to interpret some of the information that comes back from an incident. If there has been a road traffic accident (RTA) and the local picture is unknown, anyone in the UK is almost excluded from being able to make a competent decision, said JOK. Functional lines of communication are vital. A road traffic policy is a must and other areas of risk to consider are malaria guidance, Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, obesity and petty crime. People unfamiliar with a destination may stand out and be an easy target – briefings help mitigate that.

## → **Which institutions carry out regular risk assessment for international travel?**

Risk Policy | Pool best practice | Senior management input

Around 50%. Remember that universities are fragmented. When Key Travel helped the University of Birmingham with its travel programme, the University put together a team comprising of the head of security and insurance, travel and sustainability managers to pool best practice, plus senior management input.



## → Were there are collaboration grants, who is responsible?

Safety management system | Site induction | Risk assessment

It is vital to work out whose safety management system you are following. If there is collaboration with three universities in central Africa, someone takes responsibility for the academic research but no one thinks about who is doing the site induction or a risk assessment: be clear about what the arrangements are in country. This should be covered in the contract.

And whoever booked and paid for the travel, regardless of where travellers come from, takes responsibility if things go wrong. That has been tested. Student clinicians in hospital placements overseas may be faced with something outside their experience and/or training but may feel obliged to help, so Northumbria provides the host organisation with a profile of the student's learning and competency. Also see the USHA website.

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JOS asked the panel what their starting point would be for taking another look at risk assessment?

### Answers were:

- Get commitment from senior management and key stakeholders
- Get the right combination of roles together to oversee risk management – HR, health & safety, security, purchasing and the TMC account manager
- Define who is responsible for travel and risk
- Research risk assessment needs and consult other universities and the USHA website
- Find out who books travel in the university's schools and how
- Separate perceived risk from actual risk to inform decisions on whether people should travel
- There is technology to identify whether people are at risk and to facilitate communication with them
- People deviate from policy when they do not think it adds value, so communicate the value of risk assessment and impart information at the moment travellers need it

### The chairman thanked the panel and summarised:

Duty of care is a complex area and the most effective action was taken when a group of stakeholders took responsibility and worked with the CEO. Regular reviews are a must.