

# West Yorkshire Scouts

## Home Contact Roles and Responsibilities for international Trips

For information on the In Touch Process please see the [In Touch](#) pages of the Scout Associations Website

### **Who should be a Home Contact**

The Home Contact must be someone who is not related to - or emotionally involved with - any member of the party - so there is less risk of the person's feelings becoming involved. If related, and there is a serious injury, the Home Contact may become emotionally involved and ineffective in carrying out an important job which could affect the whole party. The person appointed can be anyone, ideally with some knowledge of Scouting. The Group Scout Leader or the Group Secretary are appropriate people to consider. More importantly the Home Contact needs the maturity and emotional stability to deal with a major incident should it occur.

The Home Contact must be in possession of the names and addresses of the next of kin of each member of the party including the Leaders/adults and know how to contact the next of kin, the party and the home (local) Scout organisation. This can either be through access on OSM or via documents given to the Home Contact.

It is important that the details are checked just prior to departure, as there are often last minute changes, and that the Home Contact has all the information needed if there is an incident or accident. Each parent/guardian also needs to know how to contact the Home Contact – it is good practice to invite your home contact to the last parents evening before you go to meet your parents.

An effective Home Contact can take a lot of pressure off the leader in the field. They will not have to contact a myriad of parents, guardians etc, nor will they have to repeat the message several times when they should be looking after the party on the grounds.

The Party Leader should brief the Home Contact fully on the details of the Trip. A copy of this guide should be handed over, together with any other papers as follows :

- Critical Incident Plan
- Risk Assessment
- Itinerary
- Participant list with emergency contacts

The Party Leader should check that the Home Contact understands the details given in this paper. It is helpful if the Party Leader keeps a copy of all this information, especially the details of the members of the party, given to the Home Contact.

### Non Emergency Procedure

In the event of a non-emergency, such as a breakdown of a coach, the Party Leader may ask for parents/guardians to be told about the delay. The Party Leader does this by telephoning the Home Contact who can then spread the word.

### Emergency Procedure

In the event of an incident, accident or emergency, to an individual or the party, a member of the party must follow the critical incident plan and alert the appropriate Emergency Service(s) and the Home Contact. Once such a message has been given the 'Step by Step Guide' should be followed.

#### Loss of Contact with the Group

It's important for the party leader to confirm with the Home Contact when regular contact will be made (this should be detailed in the critical incident plan). The Home Contact has to be briefed by the Party Leader on what actions should be taken if an anticipated telephone call is not received (again detailed in the critical incident plan).

Remember that precise timings for many activities, such as mountaineering, are very difficult to keep and many factors may delay a party, without there being an emergency. If the Home Contact has any doubts or worries the responsible commissioner should be contacted for advice without declaring an emergency.

#### Contacting the Group

There may be situations, such as an emergency at home, when contact with the party is necessary. Once again, the Home Contact is the link between the parents/guardians and the party. Details of how to contact the party should be provided by the Party Leader. Contact with the party, when on the move, may be difficult unless some pre-determined reporting-in system is used.

#### Other Roles

It is possible that there may be other issues, or events, relevant to the area your party is visiting. This could be a weather forecast or a news item which could directly or indirectly affect the party. Parents may have seen the same information and thus the Home Contact should prepare for such enquiries by making contact with the Party Leader to see if all is well!

#### Overseas Travel Insurance

In normal circumstances the Home Contact will not be directly involved with the details of the Overseas Insurance Cover and any claims relating to the cover. In the case of difficulty the Home Contact should have details of the issuing company, the Policy number and a contact telephone number. This should only be used at the express request of the Party Leader or his representative.

#### **Emergencies - a 'Step-by-Step Guide' for the Home Contact – purple card**

When informed of an incident, the Home Contact should carry out the following:

Consult the purple card guidance - [Purple card](#)

1. Stay calm! Remember the person contacting you may be suffering from shock. Do not panic yourself, listen carefully and give assurance.
2. Record all the relevant information
3. Maintain a log of actions, telephone calls made or received, together with timings.
4. Contact your home District or County Commissioner (details in the critical incident plan). If you cannot speak with them do not delay if matters are urgent: contact the relevant National Scout Headquarters. In the case of a serious accident (loss of life, the prospect of loss of life or paralysis) the Home Contact must advise the Public Relations Officer at Scout Headquarters.

5. If any member of the party has been killed or seriously injured agree with your District / County Commissioner who will contact the next of kin (in person is best). Also arrange any practical help which can be offered.

6. Remain available to liaise with all those involved, both in the area of the incident and the next of kin, until you are relieved or the situation is resolved.

Contact with the news media should not be initiated by the Home Contact. All such contacts should be referred to the Public Relations Officer at Scout Headquarters. It is possible the news media will arrive at the scene of the incident or get in touch with the Home Contact before any communication with Headquarters has been established. When this does happen care must be taken when talking with members of the news media; limit information to straightforward confirmation of the basic facts. The Public Relations Officer can offer advice and assistance in dealing with the news media when emergencies and accidents to individuals occur.