

# Home Contact



0845 300 1818

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## Introduction

This factsheet provides guidance to those organising outings, camps and activities and assistance to the person appointed the Home Contact (as required by *Policy, Organisation and Rules* of The Scout Association).

Future editions will be published, as necessary, in the light of experience.

**STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE WHEN INFORMED OF AN INCIDENT – SEE PAGE 9**

## Why do we need a Home Contact?

When an activity takes Members of the Movement away from their home area, usually as defined by the District Commissioner, it is possible that the Party Leader may need to contact the parents/guardians or the home Scout organisation. Such occasions could include travel delays (perhaps the coach breaks down or is stuck in a motorway traffic jam) or a change of plans (a camp is washed out and the party plans to return home early). There may have been a serious accident or emergency and parents/guardians must be told.

The required method is to use the **Home Contact** as the focus for communications between the party and those at home.

## The 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.

It is advisable that District Commissioners do not take on this role as they may be required to be involved in managing a response to any incident.

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 an emergency contact for each member of the party including the Leaders/adults and know how to contact the emergency contact, the party and the home (local) Scout organisation. Forms to record this information are given at the end of this factsheet. A separate sheet will be needed if the form does not have enough space for the whole party. 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.

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 ground.

The Party Leader should brief the Home Contact fully on the details of the activity. A copy of this factsheet should be handed over, together with any other papers. The Party Leader should check

## The Scout Association

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that the Home Contact understands the details given in this paper. It is helpful if the Party Leader and other leaders keep a copy of all this information, especially the details of the members of the party, given to the Home Contact.

It is recommended that the Home Contact keeps this factsheet beside the telephone – together with a pen or pencil.

### **When to have a Home Contact**

The following are examples of when there must be a Home Contact:

- All nights away experiences;
- International expeditions;
- Adventurous activities away from the home area.

The following are examples of when a Home Contact is strongly recommended:

- Beaver Scout Colony outings;
- Cub Scout Pack day trips;
- Any adventurous activities of a prolonged nature that does not take the participants away from the home area.

### **Communications**

On most occasions there will be no need for contact between the Party Leader and the Home Contact. It is, however, very important to ensure that the system does not fail, on that one occasion when it is needed.

It is important that if the party has only one telephone number for the Home Contact, this is not left unattended during the activity. This means both day and night! Alternatively the Party Leader may need several telephone numbers (with timings for their use) to cover time at work and at home. A Home Contact can be tied down too much if there is not some careful planning beforehand. With modern communications there are various possibilities to ease the situation. It is also acceptable to have a 'shift system' (day/night or specific periods of the activity) but both the Party Leader and other leaders and

parents/guardians need to know who to contact and when!

Despite advances in modern technology it is recommended that the Home Contact uses a landline telephone rather than a mobile one.

Consideration must be given to the telephone services the Home Contact has provided on their line. For example features such as: Call Barring, Anonymous Call Rejection and Choose to Refuse (all opt in services supplied by BT, although there will be similar packages available from other telecom providers) may not allow certain incoming calls to be received. This should be checked carefully as a Home Contact with such features provided on their line is unlikely to be able to offer the flexibility required to allow effective communication.

### **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. It will probably not be necessary to contact the home (local) Scout organisation.

### **Emergency Procedure**

In the event of an incident, accident or emergency, to an individual or the party, a member of the party must 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, together with the use of the attached form (page 10), to record the necessary details. It would also be helpful if the Home Contact held, for reference by others, details of travel insurance if the party is to travel overseas.

### **Loss of Contact with the Group**

If the activity is self-contained, for example, a cross county expedition with no base camp, contact with the party will be difficult unless some pre-determined system of reporting in is used. If this is arranged, 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. This is particularly important if the Home Contact has little knowledge of the activity and therefore cannot make judgements based on personal experience. 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. When a party is known to be carrying camping equipment, it is unlikely to come to any harm if its members have to spend a night out unexpectedly. If the Home Contact has any doubts or worries one of those from the home (local) Scout organisation 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. If help is needed, for example to help one of the party to return home, contact with the host Scout organisation may be helpful. This should be done through the identified home (local) Scout organisation.

### **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**

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**

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

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 (see attached forms).
3. Maintain a log of actions, telephone calls made or received, together with timings.
4. Contact your home (local) Scout organisation (see the first and second choices on page 8). If you cannot speak with either of these choices do not delay if matters are urgent: contact the relevant National Scout Headquarters (see the next section).
5. If any member of the party has been killed or injured agree with your home (local) Scout authorities who will contact the emergency contact (in person is best). Also arrange any practical help which can be offered; at some stage the emergency contact may wish to visit casualties in hospital. Note that the Police may offer to do this; if so, accept.
6. Remain available to liaise with all those involved, both in the area of the incident and emergency contacts for members of the party, until you are relieved or the situation is resolved.

### **Contacting National Scout Headquarters**

If you cannot make local contact with the local Scout organisation (either the first or second choices listed on page 8) then:

- The contact telephone number for the Media Office, at Headquarters is:
  - 020 8433 7100

*After office hours a recorded message detailing the contact telephone number of the Duty Media Officer is available.*

- In Scotland, the Scottish Headquarters should be informed; the numbers are:
  - During office hours: 01383 419073
  - Outside office hours: 020 8433 7100
- In Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Headquarters should be informed; the numbers are:
  - During office hours: 02890 492829
  - Outside office hours: 07973 301195

The appropriate person will also indicate those in your local area you could telephone, if your first and second choices were still not contactable and you do not have the details of others locally who could help.

In the case of a serious accident (loss of life, the prospect of loss of life or paralysis) the Home Contact must advise the Duty Media Officer at Scout Headquarters.

The Home Contact should not initiate contact with the news media. All such contacts should be referred to the Duty Media Officer at Scout Headquarters or the home (local) Scout organisation. In many cases 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 Duty Media Officer can offer advice and assistance in dealing with the news media when emergencies and accidents to individuals occur.

#### **Liaison with the Incident Area**

If any member of the party has been killed or injured the home (local) Scout organisation will ensure that the emergency contact is contacted (in person is best). They will, no doubt, liaise with those in the incident area; note that the Police may offer to do this - if so this offer should be accepted.

It is highly unlikely that there will be a need for someone to travel to the area of the incident, unless a parent/guardian wishes to go. If it is

agreed that a Scout presence is needed this would be best provided by leaders from the host area. Suitable people can be contacted through the Headquarters contact and hence the Field Development Service. Such host area Leaders may well have a lot of local knowledge, contacts, etc., which the home area leaders would not have.

Before travelling to the area of the incident or emergency, Leaders should carefully weigh up what will be achieved by so doing. The professional emergency services are undoubtedly the best people to deal with the incident and should the accident have serious or fatal implications Leaders can probably prove most useful dealing with the emergency contacts of members of the party, etc. in the home location.

#### **Publications Cross Reference**

The current edition of:

- Policy, Organisation and Rules of The Scout Association – Chapter 7 Emergency Procedures
- Accidents – A Guide to Reporting for Leaders and Commissioner – FS120079

**Make sure that the information on this page is complete before the party leaves**

**HOW DO I CONTACT THE PARTY?**

Where is the activity base? .....

Who should I contact at the activity? (*give two names*) .....

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Contact address for activity (if applicable) .....

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Telephone numbers (evening) ..... (day) .....

Outline of proposed activity .....

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Other relevant Information .....

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For overseas travel, if medical treatment or repatriation is necessary:

Name of Insurance Company .....

Policy Number .....

Contact telephone number .....

Other relevant information .....

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**Make sure that the information on this page  
is complete before the party leaves**

**WHO TO CONTACT IN SCOUTING LOCALLY**

***IF AN INCIDENT HAPPENS YOU SHOULD CONTACT THE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING:***

**First Choice** (normally the Group Scout Leader)

Name .....

Telephone Number(s) .....

Scout Appointment .....

If the first choice is not available you should contact:

**Second Choice** (normally the District Commissioner or District Secretary)

Name .....

Telephone Number(s) .....

Scout Appointment .....

- ***TELL THE ABOVE PERSON ABOUT THE INCIDENT.***
  
- ***SHOULD THE ABOVE NOT BE CONTACTABLE YOU SHOULD TELEPHONE SCOUT HEADQUARTERS – SEE PAGE 3.***



## EMERGENCIES - STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE FOR THE HOME CONTACT

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

- **Stay calm!** Remember the person contacting you may be suffering from shock. Do not panic yourself, listen carefully and give assurance.
- Record all the relevant information (page 10).
- Maintain a log of actions, telephone calls made or received, together with timings.
- Contact your home (local) Scout organisation (page 8). If you cannot speak with either of these choices do not delay if matters are urgent: contact the relevant National Scout Headquarters (page 3).
- In the case of a serious accident that involves the loss of life, the prospect of loss of life (for example a party missing in mountainous or cave areas or at sea) or serious injury (paralysis, etc.) the Duty Media Officer at National Scout Headquarters (see pages 3/4 ) must be informed.
- Remain available to liaise with all those involved, both in the area of the incident and emergency contacts for members of the party, until you are relieved or the situation is resolved.

**INFORMATION TO BE RECORDED WHEN YOU RECEIVE A TELEPHONE CALL**

Name of caller .....

Where is the caller? (Location and grid reference) .....

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Telephone number of caller (or how to contact them) .....

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What has happened? .....

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Where has it happened? (Location and grid reference) .....

Who is involved? .....

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Is everyone else all right? .....

Have you called for assistance? .....

If yes, who? (Fire/Police/Ambulance/Coastguard/Mountain Rescue/Cave Rescue) .....

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What does the caller want you to do, if anything? .....

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Is there anything else? .....

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How long will you be at this number? (Encourage them to stay there) .....

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