

# Home Contact



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0845 300 1818

## Introduction

This is the sixth edition of this factsheet - which updates that coded FS120078 and dated Dec 99. It 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. The issue of replacement factsheets will be notified in SCOUTING Magazine, Talking Points and the Activities Newsletter.

**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. 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. 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 grounds.

## The Scout Association

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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 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.

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:

- Beaver Scout Sleepovers
- Cub Scout Pack Holidays and Camps
- Patrol Camps
- Troop Camps and Expeditions
- Venture Scout Unit Camps and Expeditions
- International Expeditions
- Adventures Activities away from the Home District
- Residential Experiences away from the Home District

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

- Beaver Scout Colony Outings
- Cub Scout Pack Day Trips
- Family Camps
- Any Adventurous Activities of a prolonged nature which does not take the participants away from the Home District.

### **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 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.

### **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 next of kin (in person is best). Also arrange any practical help which can be offered; at some stage next of kin 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 the next of kin, 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 numbers for the Public Relations Officer, at Headquarters are:
  - During office hours: 0845 300 1818
  - Outside office hours: 020 7584 7031 and ask for the number of the Duty Press Officer.

- In Scotland, the Scottish Headquarters should be informed; the numbers are:
  - During office hours: 01383 419073
  - Outside office hours: 01383 412704
- In Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Headquarters should be informed; the numbers are:
  - During office hours: 028 9049 2829
  - Outside office hours: 028 9336 7302

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 Public Relations Officer at Scout Headquarters.

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 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 Public Relations 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 next of kin are 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 thence 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 next-of-kin, the media, etc, in the home location.

#### **Publications Cross Reference**

The current edition of:

- *Policy, Organisation and Rules of The Scout Association*
- *Accidents - A Guide to Reporting for Leaders and Commissioner - FS120079*
- *Pre-event Checklist - FS120080*

**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*) .....

.....

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 SCOUT LOCALLY:***

**First Choice** (normally the Group Scout Leader – if not the Home Contact)

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 which 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 Public Relations Officer at National Scout Headquarters (see page 3) must be informed.
- ❑ 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.

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

Name of caller? .....

Where is the caller? (Grid and map 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? (Grid and map 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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