**Mobile Phones - Policy & procedure**

**Our Procedure: Team emergency phone & participant's personal phones**

Participants can bring their phones but are not allowed to use them during the expedition – day or night.

Students are allowed to bring mobiles to enable them to ring their parents at the end of the expedition in case they need early pick up. And as a back-up phone in an emergency.

One student in each team is allowed to keep their phone turned on for photos & collecting evidence for their project. Teams should have a chat group for planning and sharing. This phone will be one that has Vodafone or EE network SIM as these have best coverage in countryside. It should also have good battery charge. Batteries last for days if the phone is on, but not being used and so should not need topping up by staff.

All the other participant’s phones are switched off and sealed in a plastic mail bag. This is kept in the bottom of their rucksacks, and the seal checked by staff at the end of the expedition to ensure they adhered to this Expedition Condition.

Each team is given an Emergency smartphone and GPS tracker (Adventurous Horizons devices). The leader folder will contain a list of the emergency phone numbers for all teams. Staff numbers are available in the staff WhatsApp chat.

The staff leader will input their own mobile number into this team phone before the event starts. The easiest way to do this is to use their phone to ring the team phones and have the team add the staff name to the recent call. Have the team delete this for you at the end of event.

This emergency phone must be left on so that staff can ring or text teams. Teams keep the phone at night in case they need to ring the Event manager in the night. Please remind them that they can do this if they can’t find the event manager’s tent or vehicle in the night.

The student list in Leader folder also lists participant personal mobile numbers for staff to try in an emergency (if Team Emergency phone isn’t working). Please decide which student is keeping their phone on, and check the number on the list is still correct.

On the first day of every event (Training or Qualifying expeditions), staff must have team perform emergency scenarios and show them how to make phone calls and text messages. This should cover:

* Finding reception – and whys SMS may be better
* Including time of message in case message gets delivered late.

**Regular welfare reports:** On our expeditions we encourage staff to set up system of regular text messages from team to notify leader that they are walking to plan (or not) or having break, or late to Check Point. This should include, location (not necessarily Grid ref) and time sent. We have had problems when teams haven’t practiced this and don’t think to alert staff to issues or think that it would be a ‘fail’ if they contact staff or have an issue. Instead, this is them demonstrating they understand their part in the wider supervision and safety of this large event.

**What happens if an individual or team don’t adhere to the procedure & policy?**

Schools must support the mobile phone use policy and procedure. Schools most also explain to students before events, that the events and staff expect the same policy to phone usage as ‘in-class’.

Students normally do not let phones be a distraction but they have been told if a student cannot respect that, then the phone will be taken off them (by staff and given to school staff or event manager) and given back at the end of the expedition. A single warning is usually enough.

All staff reserve the right to remove mobiles from participants where irresponsible use is suspected. However staff are advised to use discretion. We are not here to ‘catch kids out’ but instead understand the challenge for a teenager in not using their phone for multiple days. Most staff would struggle too. We should always ask ourselves questions like ‘Why have they needed to call home? Is there something going on at home?’

**However, if we find phone bags opened or find students listening to music etc, they have broken Condition 15 and have put them and their team at risk of not being successful and having to repeat the expedition. This must be reported to the event manager and the school for the school to investigate, decide and take action.**

**Parents and participants must accept this policy and procedure and consequences. And so we make it clear here and on every event.**

**Why is there a policy?**

DofE has 20 Conditions for Expeditions. Our company holds an Approved Activity Provider licence from DofE and so must promote these conditions and the reasons for the conditions:

Condition 15: **Teams must adhere to a ‘Mobile phone use policy’ that is agreed with their Expedition Supervisor and Assessor. This agreement should also include use of other electronic equipment (GPS, music players, earphones)**

As you can see the Duke of Edinburgh Organisation recommend that we do not allow participants (you) to use mobile phones whilst on expedition (day or night). The many reasons for this include:

**A more real and fulfilling experience for yourself.** Participants are strongly encouraged to ‘un-plug’ from the outside world and focus on becoming part of your team by socialising and supporting each other. To do this you will need to break strong habits of using Snapchat and other apps to constantly contact others throughout the day. Constantly being distracted by the need to keep up contact with others can mean that you are not fully present when with your team and miss so much about them or the experiences around you. Do an internet search for ‘Digital Detox’ and find out why people do this sometimes.

**Mobile phones are unreliable and easily damaged and lost.** Mobile phones don’t stand up well to rain and get damaged in wet pockets. Phones have been crushed in tents when someone has knelt on them. Phones have been dropped on campsites and lost in the long grass. They run out of charge and there are no charging facilities on campsites. Participants are responsible for their phone and its insurance. Adventurous Horizons and its staff cannot be held liable.

**There is patchy network coverage in the countryside.** Many of the networks that work in towns and cities don’t work in rural areas. You will find that there will be dead spots for phone signal and 4G. So your apps will not work. Better to concentrate on other things and speaking to people who are with you.

**Creates pressure on the participants and worry for parents.** If you agree to ring your parents every night and then can’t because there is no reception, or you are too busy with cooking and team review, (or forget) you can get stressed and they can get worried that there is something wrong. They get anxious for no reason. We understand that for some parents it will be hard to wait until you come home to hear all about your experiences but as you grow up and become more independent you will both learn how to cope with that. Start now.

**Inappropriate communication during emergencies.** Some times during emergencies participants will unable to speak to their supervisor immediately because the Supervisor is out of reception but nearby, and so they panic and ring home to get reassurance from their parents. This does not work out well – we have had emotional participants speak to parents who then get very upset, especially because they are miles away and can do nothing to help. The participant then gets more upset. We have had similar things happen when a participant rings home and finds that their parent is missing them and wants them home.

**Leaving messages.** We train participants and staff in how to leave messages (voicemail and text) that include the time they were sent and their location. You must not assume a message was received until they hear from or see each other. You can assume that each other will constantly be moving in and out of signal and will keep checking for messages. You are not far from help and they will be with you soon, but not as soon as you might want.

**Social media** Parents of participants who do not carry mobiles must accept that other participants will be carrying mobile equipment, which may give unrestricted access to the internet or be used for photos that end up on social media. Adventurous Horizons has no control over that.

### **Safety & Supervision**

we have always run and supervised expeditions in such a way that mobile reception is not required for supervision or safety:

The group are given an emergency phone with the supervisors’ numbers and have been taught what to do as a group in an emergency. We assume that they won’t be able to use it and so our supervisors trail the groups and meet up with them every hour to check in on them.

Each team carries a GPS tracker that allows us to see where teams are and so we can stay close in case of emergencies and to intervene if they get too lost or are sitting still for a long time.

On Training Expeditions each team has a trainer who works with them or ‘shadows’ them all expedition. On Qualifier expeditions each assessor has 2 teams to shadow. Both teams will be walking the same route and near each other. There are extra staff ‘floating’ in case a team needs more help.