InTouch

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Introduction

Whenever any activity or event is run within Scouting it is a requirement that an InTouch system is in place (POR 9.3). This is to ensure; everyone involved is aware of how communication will take place between Leaders, participants and those not on the event, there are details of who is present should anything go wrong, and there is a system in place in the event of an emergency.

The procedures put in place to ensure this are likely to vary at different types of events due to the differing circumstances and needs. To facilitate this InTouch is a process that you should follow to define the procedures that will be put in place for your event.

When to use

As the reasons for having InTouch remain the same for all types of events, an InTouch system needs to be in place for every event or activity within Scouting. This is the case from the regular weekly meeting through to the multiple week international expedition, from the Beaver Scout games evening to the Scout Active Support residential. Naturally these examples are likely to use very different procedures, but they all need to go through the process and define what procedures they will be using.
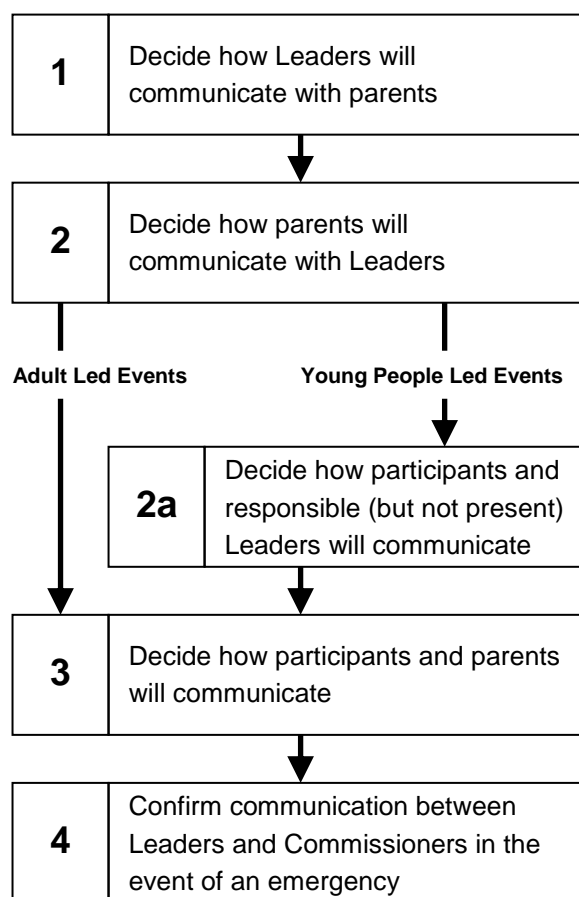
The Process

The process for you to follow is laid out here in a simple flow chart with further guidance throughout the rest of this factsheet. Going through the steps of this process should give you an InTouch system for your event that everyone can be made aware of and work within.

In this process:

'**Leaders**' refers to those running an event, or those responsible for an event but not present.

'**Parents**' refers to parents, guardians and next of kin.

1	Decide how Leaders will communicate with parents
2	Decide how parents will communicate with Leaders

Adult Led Events   **Young People Led Events**

2a	Decide how participants and responsible (but not present) Leaders will communicate
3	Decide how participants and parents will communicate
4	Confirm communication between Leaders and Commissioners in the event of an emergency

Resources

There are a number of resources available to support InTouch, all of which can be found at www.scouts.org.uk/intouch

Further Guidance

As you go through the process, here are the main points you should be thinking about at each step.

1	Decide how Leaders will communicate with parents

Areas to think about:

- How will you hold the details of all those taking part in an event, and the contact details of their parents, so that they can be accessed as required?

- What system will you use if you need to contact a parent individually (eg informing them of a slight injury to a participant requiring first aid)?

- What system will you use if you need to contact all parents at the same time (eg informing them that the coach has been held up and will be back an hour later than publicised)?

- What guidelines have you given to parents about how / when they will be communicated with throughout the event?

2	Decide how parents will communicate with Leaders

Areas to think about:

- What contact details of the leader or leadership team will you give to the parents?

- What advice or guidelines will be given to parents as to the how to contact the event and when / why communication is expected or appropriate?

2a	Decide how participants and responsible (but not present) Leaders will communicate

Areas to think about:

- What contact details of the responsible leader(s) will you give to the participants?

- What advice or guidelines will be given to participants as to the how to contact the responsible leader(s) and when / why communication is expected or appropriate?

3	Decide how participants and parents will communicate

Areas to think about:

- What system and level (if any) of communication will there be between participants and parents?

- Will mobile phones (or similar) be allowed at the event?

4	Confirm communication between Leaders and Commissioners in the event of an emergency

Areas to think about:

- Do records of all those present need to be held by anyone away from the event, and if so by whom?

- How will you contact your Commissioner or their designate in the case of an emergency (as per POR 9.5) at any point during the event?

Weekly meetings

The reasons for having InTouch in place are just as valid for the weekly meeting as they are for events away from your headquarters. Therefore it is important to have an InTouch system set up for these meetings as well. This doesn't mean lots of extra work and a third party required every week, simply that you need to go through the process to make sure a system is in place that can then be used for all your meetings. It is likely that most or all things that this highlights you will be doing already, such as; parents knowing the phone number for the Scout headquarters or leaders, parents providing details including details of next of kin for all new members etc.

Third parties

In some situations (possibly events that take place over a longer period or internationally) it can be useful to have a third party/parties away from the event to be the central point for communications. This can take the pressure off a leadership team to allow them to concentrate solely on running the event.

In situations such as these the third party will need to have the details of everyone attending the event and contact details for their next of kin. They should also have an Emergency Procedures Card. They will need to be available to be contacted throughout the length of the event. As they will have the personal and contact details of the young people involved they will also need to have completed a Personal Enquiry (details of a Personal Enquiry can be found in the Introduction to POR).

If relying on a third party it is also important to think about what will happen if there is an incident that requires their involvement, but one of the people affected by the incident is related to or well known by the third party. Would they be in a position to, or be expected to carry out their role? If not how will that communication take place?

Holding records

Each leader will have their own systems of holding records for the young people in their care. This might be through the personal detail record cards, activity information forms, nights away information forms, a database or other means. If this is data you already hold you will need to ensure you have a procedure for ensuring it is kept up to date. To avoid duplication of data it should be possible to use these records for each event (amended as and if necessary) including providing details for any third party involved. So rather than filling out any new form it will generally be easier to provide copies of the records you hold for this third party. There is information on data protection available in the factsheet FS270001 *Data Protection and the Data Protection Act 1998*.

Emergency procedures

The emergency procedures of The Scout Association are clearly defined in POR chapter 7. To make this process as simple and straight forward as possible for those running an event you can get an Emergency Procedure Prompt Card that can be kept on you and in the case of an emergency will take you step by step through the process.

Adults at events

It is important not to forget adults within InTouch at events as the reasons behind it remain the same whatever your age. This is the case both for adults such as leaders and helpers at events for young people, and also adults at adult only events such as Network or Scout Active Support events. Don't forget that when referring to 'parents' this scheme also means next of kin which is likely to be more relevant for adults.

Mobile phones

Mobile phones can be a very useful tool as part of an InTouch system. However there are a number of issues that you need to take into account if you intend to rely on them:

- Will there be a signal where you are? What will you do if there is no signal?

- Is there any way of charging the phone? What will you do if it runs out of power?

- If you keep all the contact details on the phone and it runs out of power or is broken during an activity, how will you find those details?

- If the young people have mobile phones and contact their parents about anything happening during the event, how will you know what the parents have been told?

It may be useful to have some sort of mobile phone agreement with the young people and their parents to include areas such as, when mobile phones will be acceptable, what they are not acceptable for, any communication to do with the event should also be informed to the leaders etc.

Large events

For large scale events, such as jamborees, District or County events, it is just as important that there is an InTouch System in place. This is the responsibility of the organisers and also those leading groups attending the event. So the organisers' InTouch System will look at what contingents / groups are attending how they communicate with them, and the contingents' / groups' system will look who is a member of their party and how to communicate with their parents.

Appendix 1

These are some examples of the different types of InTouch system that could be set up for different events. They are simply here to give ideas, not as any type of requirement.

A) A week long Troop summer camp to a Scout campsite in a neighbouring County

1. The Leaders will have the parental contact details from the Nights Away Information form for each Scout which they will take with them. They will use mobile phones for contact, and have the campsite pay phone if there are problems with mobiles. They have a contact at home who is able to update the Group website with any messages that need to get to all parents. The parents are told not to expect any contact unless there is a problem.

2. Parents are given the mobile numbers of the Leaders and also the number of the campsite, but explained to that these are only available in the event of an emergency.

3. Mobile phones are discouraged for the event. Parents and Scouts are made aware that there is no need for communication between them, and there is likely to be communication only if there is a problem. If any Scout does feel the need to communicate with their parents they need to discuss this with the Leaders as well.

4. Leaders take contact details for the District Commissioner and District Secretary, and also details of when each of them is likely to be available. Details of who is attending are left with the Group Scout Leader.

B) An Explorer weekend trip to go climbing in North Wales

1. The Leaders hold personal details for all of their Explorers which they take with them. They have mobile phones and a phone at the hostel in which they are staying. As there are only a few Explorers attending they are happy they can contact all parents if required.

2. Parents are given the mobile numbers of the Leaders and also the number of the hostel, but explained to that these are only available in the event of an emergency.

3. Communications with people not on the event are left to each individual, but all are made aware that it must not disrupt the activities and if there are any problems to do with the event that are discussed this must be discussed with the leadership team as well.

4. Leaders take contact details for the District Commissioner and District Secretary, and also details of when each of them is likely to be available. Details of who is attending are left with the District Explorer Scout Commissioner.

C) A weekly troop meeting at the Scout hut

1. The Leaders hold records of all Scouts on their personal detail record cards which they take to each meeting. There is a phone at the hut that can be used if contact is needed.

2. All parents are given the number of the Scout hut and of the Leaders when their children first join.

3. Mobile phones are discouraged during meetings and there is no need for communication to / from parents.

4. Contact details of the District Commissioner are available at the Scout hut.

D) A Beaver Scout meeting where they go to the park down the road

1. The Leaders hold records of all Beavers on their personal detail record cards which they take to each meeting. Leaders will use their mobiles or the phone at the hut if contact is needed.

2. All parents are given the number of the Scout hut and of the Leaders when their children first join.

3. There is no need for communication to / from parents.

4. Contact details of the District Commissioner are available at the Scout hut.

E) A Network weekend social and activity event

1. Members are required to give next of kin details when they arrive at the event that are then held centrally. The organisers have mobile phones and the campsite pay phone if they need to contact anyone. They also have an event website that they can update from site with general messages.

2. Contact details of the organising team are made available of all event publicity

3. Communications with people not on the event are left to each individual.

4. Organisers have contact details of the County Commissioner. They also keep a centralised record of those who have turned up at the event along with their next of kin details.

F) A County caving team (County Scout Active Support Unit) caving weekend to train and assess members

1. The caving team holds details (including next of kin) for all their members which they take on each event. They have mobile phones with them and there is a phone at the bunkhouse where they are staying.

2. The organisers contact details are included in all information provided about the event.

3. Communications with people not on the event are left to each individual.

4. Organisers have contact details of the County Commissioner and a list of which caving team members are attending.

G) An Explorer Scout Queen Scout Award hike through Dartmoor

1. The Leaders hold personal details for all of their Explorers which they will have access to during the weekend. As they will be at home they will have easy access to communication means.

2. All parents are given the contact details of the Leaders when their children first join.

2a. All expedition members are given the contact details of their Leader and the Leader will have mobile phone numbers for all expedition members and any places they are staying that have phone connections. The expedition members identify before they start where there are phones available on route in case of mobile phones not working, and also agree with their Leader if/when they should report in.

3. Parents and Explorers are made aware that there is no need for communication between them as part of the expedition. If there is a problem communication to the parents will come from the responsible Leader as the Explorers may not be in a position to be able to make contact.

4. The responsible Leader has contact details for the District Commissioner and details of who is part of the expedition.

H) A Scout troop visit to Kandersteg International Scout Centre in Switzerland

1. The Leaders will have the parental contact details from the Nights Away Information form for each Scout which they will take with them. They have mobile phones set up to be able to work from Switzerland to contact parents individually if needed, and can also use the pay phones at Kandersteg International Scout Centre. They have two different parents in the UK that they have left details of all those attending with, and will use one of these as a point of contact to disseminate information if they need to contact multiple people.

2. Parents are given the mobile numbers of the Leaders and also the number of Kandersteg International Scout Centre, but explained to that these are only available in the event of an emergency.

3. Mobile phones are discouraged at the event. Communication is made available at specific times if Scouts wish to contact home, but everyone is made aware beforehand that no communication is likely to mean everything is going well and they are too busy to worry about contacting home! If there are any

problems to do with the event that are discussed with parents then these must be discussed with the leadership team as well.

4. Leaders take contact details for the District Commissioner and District Secretary, and also details of when each of them is likely to be available. The parents acting as contact points have details of who is attending in addition to the Leaders.

l) A contingent going to the World Scout Jamboree

1. The contingent unit leaders will have the parental contact details from the Nights Away Information form for each contingent member which they will take with them. They have mobile phones set up to be able to work abroad to contact parents individually if needed, and can also use the pay phones at the jamboree site. They have two different parents in the UK that they have left details of all contingent members with, and will use one of these as a point of contact to disseminate information if they need to contact multiple people.

2. Parents are given the mobile numbers of the Leaders and also the number of the Jamboree organisers, but explained to that these are only available in the event of an emergency.

3. Mobile phones are discouraged at the event. Communication is made available at specific times if Scouts wish to contact home, but everyone is made aware beforehand that no communication is likely to mean everything is going well and they are too busy to worry about contacting home! If there are any problems to do with the event that are discussed with parents then these must be discussed with the leadership team as well.

4. The contingent unit leaders take contact details for the responsible Commissioner and other nominees of the Commissioner, and also details of when each of them is likely to be available. The parents acting as contact points have details of who is attending in addition to the Leaders and Commissioner.

InTouch Checklist

This checklist is available to help Leaders in setting up their InTouch system for any events / meetings. There is no requirement to use this checklist and no one will need to see this to check the system in place. It is simply a tool for Leaders if they wish to use it.

1. Decide how Leaders will communicate with parents

2. Decide how parents will communicate with Leaders

2a. Decide how participants and responsible (but not present) Leaders will communicate

3. Decide how participants and parents will communicate

4. Confirm communication between Leaders and Commissioners in the event of an emergency