

Learning Outdoors Team (LOT) – Off-Site Activities Base Contact Protocol

Purpose

To ensure effective communication, accountability, and emergency response arrangements during off-site expeditions, training events and outdoor activities by establishing a standardised Base Contact protocol.

Scope

This procedure applies to all Learning Outdoors Team (LOT) staff acting as Expedition Leads during off-site activities involving Hampshire Outdoor Centres participants, schools, youth groups or partner organisations.

Responsibilities

Expedition Lead

The Expedition Lead is responsible for:

- Confirming the designated Base Contact prior to the activity.
- Providing all required event documentation prior to departure.
- Maintaining regular contact with the designated Base Contact throughout the event.
- Reporting any incidents, delays, route changes or concerns that may affect participant safety.
- Implementing contingency arrangements where communication difficulties arise.
- Following HOC Emergency and Serious Incident Procedures where required.

Base Contact

The designated Base Contact is responsible for:

- Confirming acceptance of the Base Contact role prior to the activity commencing.
- Monitoring all communications received from Expedition Leads.
- Maintaining access to relevant expedition documentation.
- Acting as the first point of contact in the event of an emergency or welfare concern.

- Initiating escalation procedures where agreed communications are not received.
 - Supporting the Expedition Lead in line with HOC Serious Incident and Emergency Procedures.
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1. Pre-Event Documentation

Deadline: Minimum 24 hours before departure.

The Expedition Lead must upload the following documents to the designated SharePoint folder:

LOT Base Contact Information

- Expedition Summary
- Participant Medical and Dietary Information

The Expedition Lead must confirm the designated Base Contact no later than 24 hours before departure.

Any significant changes made after submission must be communicated directly to the Base Contact before the activity begins.

2. Communication Protocol

All routine updates should be sent via the **LOT Base Contact WhatsApp Group**.

Where WhatsApp is unavailable, SMS or a telephone call should be used.

Check-In

When:

- Upon arrival at the expedition/training area; or
- Once all participant teams have safely departed from the start location.

Message Format:

[Group Name] – Arrived at [Location] – [Time]

or

[Group Name] – All teams moving out from [Location] – [Time]

Check-Out

When:

- At the end of each operational day; and
- Once all teams have safely arrived at their campsite or final location.

Message Format:

[Group Name] – All teams at [Location] – [Time]

Moving Out

When:

- Each morning before the first team departs.

Message Format:

[Group Name] – Teams moving out – [Time]

Expedition Closed

When:

- At the end of the expedition once all participants have been collected, returned home, or formally handed back to the organisation/group leader.

Message Format:

[Group Name] – Expedition Closed – All participants safely collected/returned – [Time]

3. Minimum Contact Requirements

The following communications are mandatory:

- Check-In – Arrival at location or confirmation that all teams have departed.
- Moving Out – Daily, before the first team leaves camp.
- Check-Out – Daily, once all teams are safely at camp or the final location.
- Expedition Closed – At the end of the expedition.

Additional updates should be provided where:

- A participant is injured or becomes unwell.
 - A participant withdraws from the expedition.
 - A team is significantly delayed.
 - Weather conditions impact the planned programme.
 - Routes or locations are changed.
 - Emergency services become involved.
 - Any safeguarding concern arises.
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4. Communication Contingencies

Where mobile signal is limited or unavailable:

- Send updates via SMS where possible.
 - Contact the Base Contact by telephone when signal permits.
 - Provide missed updates as soon as communication becomes available.
 - Inform the Base Contact in advance if communication blackspots are anticipated.
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5. Base Contact Handover

Where Base Contact responsibilities transfer between members of staff:

- A formal handover must take place.
 - The incoming Base Contact must be provided with access to all relevant documentation.
 - The handover should be recorded within the LOT Base Contact WhatsApp Group.
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6. Emergency Escalation Procedure

If a scheduled communication is not received:

Stage 1 – Initial Contact Attempt

The Base Contact will attempt to contact the Expedition Lead:

- 30 minutes after the expected contact time; or
- Earlier if there is a known safety concern.

Stage 2 – Continued Attempts

The Base Contact will:

- Continue attempts via WhatsApp, telephone and SMS.
- Check for any previously communicated route changes, delays or known signal issues.

Stage 3 – Escalation

If no contact has been established after repeated attempts:

- Escalate to the Learning Outdoors Manager.
- Follow the Hampshire Outdoor Centres Serious Incident Plan and Emergency Procedures as appropriate.

7. Incident Reporting

The Expedition Lead must notify the Base Contact as soon as reasonably practicable if:

- An accident or near miss has occurred.
- A safeguarding concern arises.
- Emergency services are contacted.
- A participant is evacuated or withdrawn from the activity.
- A Serious Incident Report may be required.

All incidents must be managed in accordance with Hampshire Outdoor Centres policies and procedures.

Quick Reference Table

Action	When	Message Format
Check-In	Upon arrival or once the group has arrived	[Group Name] – Arrived at [Location] – [Time]
Check-In (Alternative)	Once all teams have departed from the start location	[Group Name] – All teams moving out from [Location] – [Time]
Moving Out	Before the first team departs each day	[Group Name] – Teams moving out – [Time]
Check-Out	Once all teams have arrived safely at camp/final location	[Group Name] – All teams at [Location] – [Time]
Expedition Closed	End of expedition once all participants are collected/returned	[Group Name] – Expedition Closed – All participants safely collected/returned – [Time]

Notes

- The designated Base Contact should normally be a Learning Outdoors Manager, Senior Instructor, Centre Manager or other nominated member of staff with access to the relevant expedition documentation and emergency procedures.
- Base Contacts are not required to acknowledge routine communications unless clarification is required or a concern has been identified.
- Any significant deviation from the planned programme should be communicated to the Base Contact at the earliest opportunity.