

Mobile Phone and Smart Device Policy

Purpose

The intention of this policy is to ensure a consistent approach to the use of mobile phones and internet-enabled devices by young people when taking part in Scout activities, ultimately to ensure safety of all members of 11th Nuneaton.

Exceptions

Explorer Scouts (aged 14-18 years) have their own policy in the form of a 'Fair Use Agreement' which is more suited to the nature of their programme. Until young people and their parents/guardians sign this agreement, they must follow this group policy.

There may be programmed activities or individual circumstances that require the use of a mobile phone for members of other sections of the group. Leaders can choose to allow exceptions for these events and will inform young people and their guardians prior to the event. They will ensure a full risk assessment is created and shared before such event.

Mobile Phones

Phones must not be brought to at any Scouting activity including weekly meetings both in and outside of the Scout HQ as well as overnight events.

Smart Devices

Smart devices may only be used when permission has been given by section leaders. They should not be brought to meetings unless by prior agreement. The exception to this is for smart watches, which may be worn and used solely for the purpose of telling the time.

Justification

There are three very important reasons that 11th Nuneaton have adopted this policy which are explained below.

1. Communication with parents

11th Nuneaton follows The Scout Association's InTouch system for communication. When joining the group, section leaders will inform parents how to contact them during and in between meetings. For each overnight event/activity, a phone number will be provided for use in an emergency. This may be a central group number or leader's own mobile phone numbers depending on the event. For each overnight event, an additional form is completed by parents with their contact details which allows leaders to contact them should the need arise.

If young people can use their mobile phone this system can be bypassed. Young people should make their leaders aware of issues/incidents so that appropriate action can be taken to resolve any problems. Young people directly contacting their parents can cause undue distress and concern to all parties involved.

2. Social media and internet usage

However innocent the intent, an action, message or photograph can be misinterpreted, leading to unintentional safeguarding issues. For example, a photograph may be posted on social media without consent which can cause upset to the young people involved as well as safety concerns. Young people may see or hear content on social media or websites that may upset or concern them and the only way to control this is to restrict use of devices whilst at Scout events.

3. Disruption and security

Phones can be a major distraction during meetings and can cause disruption to the entire section when used to take calls, message, play games or listen to music. This makes it difficult to run a safe, exciting and educational programme.

Parent/guardians responsibility

It is the responsibility of the young person's parents to ensure that the group has up to date contact details for the young person, including emergency contacts. Parents should ensure that young people do not arrive to any meeting or event with their mobile phone. If a young person is found to have a mobile phone on their possession, it may be confiscated for the duration of the event and they can be withdrawn from the activity/event. Section leaders may use their discretion to choose appropriate action.

If young people arrive at meetings alone and a mobile phone is deemed necessary for safety, it should be switched off and handed to the section leader at the start of the meeting for return at the end. It should be noted that neither The Scout Association nor 11th Nuneaton can take responsibility for any loss or damages to devices whether they are in the young person's or leader's possession.

Concerns

If you wish to discuss any part of this policy, please speak to your section leader who will be happy to discuss matters.

References

The Scout Association. Chapter 9. Emergency Procedures. POR (Policy, Organisation and Rules) May 2019.

The Scout Association. Factsheet FS120075 InTouch. Last updated March 2015.

The Scout Association. Safe Scouting and Emergency Procedures (purple card) Version 7 – March 2019.

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