

# **YOUNG EXPLORERS' TRUST**

*The Association of Youth Exploration Societies*

## **SAFE AND RESPONSIBLE EXPEDITIONS**

**Revised Edition  
2002**

**Published by the Expedition Advisory Centre**  
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March 2002

## **The Young Explorers' Trust Mission Statement**

The aim of the Young Explorers' Trust is to give young people from all walks of life the opportunity to take part in exploration, discovery and challenging adventure through safe and responsible expeditioning.

## **The Young Explorers' Trust Safety Statement**

The Young Explorers' Trust encourages all those providing expeditions for young people to adopt, as the primary concern, safety measures which embody their duty of care. To seek to eliminate the danger of fatalities, disabling injuries, emotional distress and serious illnesses; and to reduce minor accidents, injuries and illnesses to a level no higher than might be expected in the everyday life of an active and adventurous young person.

## **The Young Explorers' Trust Expedition Screening Service**

To help and encourage safe and responsible expeditions, the YET operates a system for screening the plans of overseas youth expeditions. The scheme has been operating for over 25 years and so far over 700 expeditions involving 14,500 youngsters have been screened in this way.

Under this scheme expeditions submit their plans to a team of very experienced leaders of youth expeditions who check them thoroughly and then interview the leaders (and sometimes members as well). During the interview the plans are discussed, advice is given and in most cases the plans are granted YET APPROVAL. Often minor changes are requested and occasionally approval is withheld unless major changes are made. Where necessary follow-up advice is given.

Details are on the YET website and the application forms for EXPEDITION SCREENING may be downloaded or obtained by post from Ted Grey: Stretton Cottage, Wellow Road, Ollerton, Newark, Notts, NG22 9AX. He is happy to discuss applications on the telephone (01623 861027)

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE FIRST EDITION

There is a long-standing tradition in the United Kingdom of expedition travel to distant places. Much of this activity is carried out by groups of young people from schools and youth organisations, supervised by experienced leaders and teachers; such groups have achieved many notable adventurous and scientific successes over a period of many years. This movement shows no sign of lessening; indeed there is every likelihood that it will continue to expand, as travel to remote parts of the world becomes easier and cheaper, and as the value of such experience is increasingly recognised. Nowadays, a growing number of these youth expeditions, particularly in the United Kingdom, are 'peer-group led', that is, undertaken without the direct help of adult leaders. This is an important trend, and to be welcomed.

It is in the expectation of such continuing growth that this booklet has been prepared, as a comprehensive statement of the philosophy and the practical arrangements which should underpin safe and responsible youth expeditions. In addition to this booklet, the Trust has also published a Code of Practice for Youth Expeditions\*\*. Expedition travel in remote places offers great rewards, but there are hazards involved and some risk to those who attempt such ventures. By learning from others, many of the hazards may be avoided, the risks minimised and the opportunities expanded. This booklet crystallises much of the experience and hard-won knowledge of many of those who have safely and successfully carried out hundreds of expeditions within this country and overseas, often with the encouragement of the Young Explorers' Trust.

The purpose of the booklet is to promote and encourage good practice on youth expeditions, in order to ensure the continuing safety and general welfare of the young people taking part. The booklet does not set out to explain how to carry out an expedition, conduct fieldwork, climb a mountain or cross a desert. There are many handbooks which address these matters, of which the most comprehensive is that published by the Expedition Advisory Centre of the Royal Geographical Society. The concern of the Trust is that all such ventures should be conducted responsibly, that the intended objectives should be achieved wherever practicable, and that the participants should return safely, having enjoyed, learned from and been inspired by their experiences. It is to be hoped that all youth expeditions will, in addition, take all possible steps to safeguard the environments in which they operate, and will respect the cultures of the communities they visit.

The booklet also contains a Code of Ethics for youth exploration, something we encourage all to adopt. It should be read in conjunction with The Code of Practice for Youth Expeditions\*\* which is published separately.

**R. Putnam**  
**Muncaster, Cumbria April 1994**

\*\* [Editor's Note: The Code of Practice mentioned above has been superseded by the YET's GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH EXPEDITIONS]

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SECOND EDITION

Since the First Edition (1994) the business of organising Safe and Responsible Expedition for young people has become more complicated!

The impetus given to outdoor adventure almost 40 years ago by John Hunt's Everest Expedition and the subsequent widespread development of outdoor adventurous opportunities for young people has recently been enhanced by improved travel facilities, numerous TV programmes which depict adventurous (and often hazardous) activities, commercial providers, GAP year travel, and the like.

On the other hand the Lyme Bay tragedy of March 1993 and the subsequent legislation establishing the Adventure Activities Licencing Authority (AALA) led to a scramble by organisations finding themselves with responsibilities in this area to produce rafts of their own rules and regulations and Codes of Practice whose main aims appeared to be to protect the backs of those writing them. Faced with ever-increasing piles of such paper some leaders never read much of it, whilst others gave up altogether.

The sad but thankfully rare tragic event gets maximum publicity and generates misleading public (i.e. press) perception that all expeditions are very dangerous.

There are encouraging signs that the pendulum may be swinging back a little. A successful conference in 2000 examined the "Question of Balance" between risk and adventure and at it the Duke of Edinburgh said that "there is more danger in not exposing people to risk than in exposing them". Some positive articles appeared in newspapers after that, and a "Campaign for Adventure" was launched to build on the conference. But it is unlikely to be an easy victory as the entrenched vested interests of the bureaucrats, insurance companies, media and lawyers have all the effective guns, while government departments and quangos are much more concerned with PE and sport than with outdoor adventure as we know it.

Whilst deploring some aspects of the current furore it is certainly having the beneficial effect of focussing expedition organisers' attention on the need to tighten their procedures. Quite apart from the threats of litigation in our culture of blame, those of us who believe in the enjoyable benefits to be gained from adventurous activities obviously want to meet the highest standards in running our "safe and responsible expeditions".

The Young Explorers' Trust has therefore decided that this is a good moment to republish this booklet. It is gratifying to see how well it has stood the test of time but the opportunity has been taken to up-date and extend it as necessary. It is not intended to be a complete Leaders' Handbook - there are plenty of these around, but aims to provoke the sort of thinking which will meet the aims of its title and to include some detail where this may be helpful

In the detail which follows it may be helpful to keep in mind three particular ideas about risks:

- Risks cannot be abolished: they need to be identified and managed.
- All stake-holders (and especially parents of under-18s) should be FULLY aware of the possible risks, and what is being done to manage them
- The organisers, providers and chief leaders must be prepared to explain why they judge a particular leader to have the experience and/or qualifications to supervise a particular activity.

Tony Land

April 2002

For this revised edition the Young Explorers Trust is grateful to all those who have made suggestions for improvement, and especially to Graham Derrick, Ted Grey, John Hunt, Tony Land, Roger Miller, Brian Needham, Dr.Bill Turner, David Williams.

# 1. THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

## 1. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Recent years have seen many changes in the educational and social context in which expeditions take place. In maintained schools, the introduction of the National Curriculum and changed arrangements for financing have affected the organisation of informal out-of-school activities. Schools and Governors and L.E.A's now have increased responsibilities for their own extra-curricular arrangements. The importance of cross-curricular work and personal and social education has been recognised, and there is an increasing concern for the natural environment.

In addition a large number of non-school voluntary groups are running expeditions for young people and their own duties and responsibilities.

Most significantly, there has been greatly increased attention paid to the safety and welfare of young people engaged in adventurous activities, given added emphasis by a number of critical media programmes and reports. Following this concern and publicity, especially following the Lyme Bay tragedy in March 1993, the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority was established to inspect and licence outdoor centres and centre-based activities, and accreditation schemes may extend their remit to include non centre-based activities, including overseas holidays and expeditions with an adventurous element. At the same time, the Department for Education and Skills and the Health and Safety Executive are monitoring such provision. Child Protection issues and detailed Risk Assessments are now the norm. It is against this background that the Trust prepared this booklet and believes it appropriate to revise it in 2002 along with the associated GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH EXPEDITIONS

## 2. THE NEED FOR A SAFETY POLICY

All those working with young people have a **legal duty of care**, and the way in which that duty is carried out determines whether or not leaders are liable to prosecution for negligence. Negligence involves a breach of duty, either through omitting to take due care or action, or through taking inappropriate action (negligence through omission or commission) which results in physical or psychological harm, or damage to property.

A teacher must exercise such a standard of care as would be expected of a caring and prudent parent, whether within the school or when engaged in extra-curricular activities voluntarily and out of school hours. Expedition leaders are expected to adopt the same standards. However, in 1954 Mr Justice McNair observed "A balance must be struck between the meticulous supervision of children every moment of school and the desirable object of encouraging sturdy independence as they grow up". It is necessary that appropriate supervision should be organised, taking into account such factors as the age, level of experience, capabilities

and numbers of the young people, any particular hazards or risks which may be present, and the type of activity being undertaken. It is also recommended that responsibility for safety is clearly allocated and that a written plan of staff responsibilities and supervision is known to all concerned. From this it is clear that the question of the competence of the expedition leader and his or her leader team is central in ensuring the safety of any youth expedition.

These long-standing responsibilities have been reinforced by more recent Health and Safety legislation. The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (1992) made under the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974), and subsequent legislation impose a general duty of care on those associated with work activities, and an obligation upon all employers to provide "such information, instruction, training and supervision as is necessary to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety at work of employees." This responsibility extends also to those not employed by them but who may be affected by their activities. Both in school and in situations away from school, as for instance on organised expeditions, pupils, participants and visitors would come into this category.

It is clear from the foregoing that no responsible expedition organisation can afford to ignore the safety implications of outdoor adventure, and that appropriate guidelines, including suitable arrangements for staffing and effective supervision, are now more than ever necessary. Ideas and actions which were unwritten but (in the main) adhered to in the past must now be overt and comprehensive, and regularly reviewed and updated.

If there is a disaster is the Leader who may end up in a court of law and it is important that he can demonstrate that he took every possible precaution. (He will also have to live with himself.)

## **2. ASPECTS OF WELFARE AND SAFETY**

### **2.1 SHARED RESPONSIBILITY**

An expedition is in many senses a shared enterprise. It is important to recognise that the responsibility for the safe organisation and conduct of a youth expedition is held by a number of different 'stake-holders'. At the most obvious level, this applies to the expedition leaders and members, those who directly share the many experiences of the expedition and who plan, prepare, train and travel together. But some responsibility extends beyond those who participate directly; it includes many who may be only involved peripherally, but who lend their support, provide resources or have a commercial interest in youth expeditions. It should be recognised that the trustees of charitable trusts which support expeditions, the directors of commercial companies which organise expeditions, the head teachers and advisers who sanction such ventures, and the parents who give consent for their children to participate, are all involved, and all have a right to receive as much information as they need to exercise their responsibilities properly.



The selection of suitable Leaders is covered elsewhere but it is important to try to achieve an appropriate balance of all the members of the expedition, bearing in mind the aims and the physical and mental requirements of the individuals, the tasks and the group as a whole.

Whether the participants are below the age of 18 or not it is essential to ensure that parents and other supporters are provided with a full itinerary, details of fieldwork and activities which are likely to be undertaken, information of any hazardous situations which may be involved and how they will be managed, and reassurance about staffing and supervision arrangements and other measures taken to maximise safety. Many schools, local authorities or voluntary bodies may have their own codes of practice or regulations which must be applied during the expedition. All 'stake-holders' need to be aware of and give consent to the proposed expedition plan. In the case of parents or guardians, this consent must be in an agreed written form, and there should be a meeting between the leaders and parents with the opportunity to deal with relevant questions.

Parents should be aware that there are sometimes some problems when their son/daughter returns home, especially after a long expedition. These can include temporary disorientation and change of an intended career or higher education course; as well as medical problems which can arise some months afterwards.

## ***2.2 CONTRACT OF GOOD CONDUCT***

Most expeditions require of participants a high level of self-discipline, in the domestic aspects as well as in the more challenging activities, and particularly in matters of general care, consideration, personal conduct and hygiene. Plans should be made to deal with those who prove themselves unable to exercise this self-discipline or who actively disrupt the expedition; occasionally the need may arise to take measures to safeguard the enterprise as a whole by removing those individuals whose continued presence threatens welfare and safety. In such cases great care must be taken over the arrangements for ensuring (especially in the case of those under 18) that the repatriation arrangements are known and approved by the parents concerned.

The success and safety of any expedition depends in the last resort upon the participants themselves. Leaders are always to an extent in the hands of the group, and have to trust them. No amount of planning and direct supervision can counter deliberate disobedience and reckless carelessness. The element of risk and the unknown may well be what draws young people to take part in an expedition, and some may seek excitement in irresponsible ways for the thrill of it and may often be unaware or unconcerned about real dangers.

There is much to recommend the establishment of a 'Contract of Good Conduct', preferably agreed before the expedition and signed by all, which highlights behaviour and safety as central issues. Such a contract may include such problem areas as alcohol, smoking, drugs, sexual behaviour and freedom or otherwise to go off alone. It should also recognise that the laws and customs of the host country need to be respected. The contract might also stipulate the sanctions which may apply for irresponsible or dangerous behaviour. In

expeditions with a fairly wide age range the situation of under 18-year-olds requires particular consideration whilst if there are much older members they may present their own problems. What an undergraduate might consider as his or her "rights" on an expedition might cause many problems if imitated by those still at school, and actions which are acceptable in some areas may differ elsewhere. It is important that all the necessary parameters are drawn in advance.

### **2.3 DISTINCTION BETWEEN HAZARDS AND RISKS**

It is common practice for expedition leaders to make a distinction between 'apparent' and 'real' risk, or to distinguish between 'objective' and 'subjective' dangers. In this booklet we prefer to make the distinction between 'hazard' and 'risk'. A **hazard** may be described as a situation or set of circumstances which can cause harm to people, e.g. a stream in spate; a crevassed glacier; a truncated spur at the end of a mountain ridge; a hidden reef at sea; an electrical storm; an endemic disease. Hazards may be known or unrecognised. A known hazard may be avoided, but where the hazard is unknown, unforeseen or not recognised, it is then impossible to make the conscious choice to avoid it and the level of risk is greatly increased. This suggests clearly the importance of comprehensive pre-expedition research, planning, preparation, briefings and, where appropriate, reconnaissance in order to identify hazards.

A **risk** is the chance, great or small, that someone will be harmed by the hazard. Once a hazard has been identified the risk to expedition members can be assessed. The importance of trying to anticipate the existence of a hazard cannot be over-stressed; it is one thing to anticipate a problem, but a much more serious task to extricate a group from an unforeseen emergency.

It is necessary when leading expeditions with young people to be clear beforehand about the nature of the hazards which may exist, to assess the level of risk carefully, and then to take steps to minimise the risk.

### **2.4 ASSESSING HAZARDS AND RISKS**

Despite the apparent enthusiasm in some quarters for the need to "abolish" risks, this is impossible in an expedition situation. The sensible approach is to recognise this and concentrate on RISK MANAGEMENT. This should involve all the members of the expedition as there is evidence that awareness is more effective than rules and regulations. The aim should be to produce a "CULTURE OF SAFETY" in which safety is a normal and natural background to all activities and in which expedition members look after each others welfare at all times.

Every expedition will encounter hazards. As far as possible, these should be identified systematically beforehand. The main hazards fall under the following headings:

- Environmental hazards e.g. steep terrain, deep water, bad weather, wildlife.

- Health hazards e.g. endemic disease, AIDS, polluted water, poorly prepared local food.
- Human and behavioural hazards e.g. temper, violence, robbery, kidnapping and behaviour brought on by fatigue, stress or drugs.
- Activity hazards e.g. moving on deck under sail, swimming, lead climbing, spontaneous games and competitions.
- Travel and camping hazards e.g. driving, travel on overcrowded public transport, hazards of fire in camp cooking.

European Union directives have led to the introduction in industry of more systematic methods of risk assessment, which require that employers must assess the risk to their employees and introduce measures to reduce those risks to acceptable and manageable levels. They assessments must be written down for all to see. This is an approach which may be emulated. The process of risk assessment is as follows: to list all tasks and activities that may be involved in an expedition; to identify critical tasks and activities, namely those which might cause injury, and who might be harmed, and then to make an assessment of the likelihood of accident or injury. An informal risk assessment system has long been practised in the field of adventure training; there is now a strong case for adopting a more systematic approach and a suggested scheme is set out in Appendix A.

The foreseeable risks arising from a hazardous situation may be reduced by a number of means:

- removal of the hazard;
- increasing the amount or quality of training;
- modifying the design of the activity or fieldwork task;
- substituting an alternative exercise, experience or route;
- protecting people, equipment or the environment more effectively;
- maintaining efficient communication within the group;
- supervising an activity more closely or more effectively;
- giving the expedition a systematic safety audit ;
- investigating thoroughly any incidents, near-misses or accidents which occur;
- revising the whole safety management system.

## **2.5 EMOTIONAL WELFARE OF PARTICIPANTS**

It should be recognised that young people taking part in expeditions, even in apparently safe and non-threatening environments, may be profoundly affected psychologically as well as physically by their experiences. The intensity of the experience of living in small groups under challenging conditions should never be under-estimated, particularly when young people are away from home for the first time, and perhaps encountering new and different cultures and customs, as for instance in the cities or countryside of Africa or Asia. There may, for example, be a sudden, unexpected explosion of formerly controlled emotion

concerning past events (parental separation, death of a relative - or dog). Appropriate measures must be taken to safeguard their emotional as well as their physical welfare. The natural concern to establish physical safeguards and safety measures should not obscure the need for equivalent attention to be paid to arrangements for other aspects of the welfare of participants. This points to the need for all leaders to be highly sensitive to the differing abilities and emotional needs of all participants. Such sensitivity is as important as any technical knowledge or qualification.

It is important that members realise that they have open access to leaders at any time and know that any problem discussed will remain confidential.

It is important to be aware of problems which can arise from emotional relationships within the group, and the need to handle these with great sensitivity. Difficulties might include:

- a weakening of self-discipline with regard to the expedition as a whole
- the diverse effect which it may have on the expedition
- failure of contraception
- problems which might arise on return home
- problems which might arise on the expedition if the relationship breaks down.

## **2.6 COMPLEX AND CHANGING SITUATIONS**

It is important to recognise that problems usually arise as a result of a mixture of different causes or circumstances. There may be a combination of hazards (e.g. steep ground, darkness and bad weather) often exacerbated by the stress of fatigue, fear or uncertainty, leading to low morale. Furthermore, situations are dynamic, and may deteriorate from being within the control of the leaders to being outside their control. The change from a situation that is easily manageable to one that is only manageable with great difficulty can occur rapidly. Such a change may occur through storm damage to a tent, the onset of darkness, a marked drop in temperature or a change in wind direction when walking or canoeing in exposed situations. Expedition leaders and participants require both the environmental awareness and the intuitive sense that suggest that such a change in circumstances is beginning to occur, to anticipate further deterioration, and to take any necessary, decisive action to maintain control of the situation. Experience as well as formal qualifications is a vital asset in any leader team.

It is particularly important that a well-judged decision to turn back is seen as an example of effective decision-making, and in no sense a failure.

### **3. CREATING A FRAMEWORK FOR SAFETY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Effective safety on expeditions and in other active pursuits depends on six important elements. There is a natural tendency to concentrate on specific safety procedures and systems without giving sufficient thought to the overall safety policy and method of managing safety. The Young Explorers' Trust recommends that all organisations engaged in expeditions should recognise the following six principal requirements for any safety system:

1. A clearly understood statement of safety policy
2. An ingrained 'safety ethos' recognised by all participants
3. A system for safety management in the field
4. A set of effective and easily comprehensible safety procedures applicable to the local circumstances of each expedition
5. Competent leadership in the field
6. The systematic review of safety on and after expedition, in order that the standard can be developed and improved

#### **3.2 THE SAFETY POLICY**

Every expedition organisation should have a stated Safety Policy, succinctly expressed, which identifies the nature of the risk-taking understanding or agreement that is being entered into when any organisation or individual arranges to take a young person into a hazardous environment. That understanding may be different where the purpose is to engage in geographical fieldwork than where it is to climb a mountain as an adventurous experience. The nature of such agreements or understandings should be the subject of ongoing appraisal and discussion, in order to minimise misunderstandings. For instance, a Safety Policy can state clearly that it is the intention of the organizing body and the leaders to seek to eliminate the danger of fatalities, disabling injuries, emotional distress and serious illnesses. It can aspire to reduce to a minimum accidents, injuries or illnesses of any sort. A Safety Policy can specifically mention the duty of care of the leaders, and the requirements that apply under Health and Safety legislation.

The Safety Policy statement for the Young Explorers' Trust is as follows:

The Young Explorers' Trust encourages all those providing expeditions for young people

- to adopt as the primary concern safety measures which embody their duty of care.
- to seek to eliminate the danger of fatalities, disabling injuries, emotional distress and serious illnesses;
- and to reduce minor accidents, injuries and illnesses to a level no higher than might be expected in the everyday life of an active and adventurous young person.

### **3.3 THE 'SAFETY ETHOS'**

As important as any set of prescriptive safety regulations is the cultivation of an 'ethos of safety' which should extend amongst all members of an expedition, whatever their level of responsibility. Leaders must understand and demonstrate in their actions and decisions that the safety and welfare of the young people in their care is paramount. **It is particularly important** that decisions in difficult situations on expeditions should not be influenced by personal pride, competition in achievement, or anxiety to offset disappointments arising from adverse conditions or failure to achieve intended goals. Every effort should be made to encourage all expedition members to accept responsibility for the safety and welfare of themselves and others. This should be reinforced wherever possible by instruction in lifesaving and first aid procedures. In this way, they will learn to serve others and to value people. Fun and high spirits are inevitable and to be welcomed on expedition, but recklessness and inconsiderate behaviour can undermine the enjoyment and safety of the whole enterprise.

The 'ethos of safety' should extend into activities which may not, at first sight, appear to involve risk. Many injuries are sustained in camp, or in informal recreational activities. Once away from the major hazards of the expedition, people become careless of the minor hazards of routine life on expeditions. Leaders and expedition members need to be made aware of this danger. Many expedition experiences for young people have been spoiled by careless actions in unguarded moments or by thoughtless horse-play. This ethos must be maintained in the early stages when the excitement of arrival may lower the guard, and at the end of the expedition when home is in sight and levels of discipline and self-responsibility fall.

In this connection, it is vital to promote the importance of health, hygiene and cleanliness throughout expeditions, and particularly when they extend over a lengthy period. Good personal and communal standards in these areas can easily deteriorate in the field, particularly in periods of poor weather. Very high standards in cooking and washing-up routines are especially important.

An essential part of the 'safety ethos' must be the general willingness to recognise and report hazards, however minor, when they become evident, and preferably before any accident or near-miss occurs. Too many accidents occur because a hazard has been recognised but not reported, and as a result nothing has been done to minimise risk. The prevention of accidents is only achieved by constant vigilance on the part of everyone.

## **4. THE MANAGEMENT OF SAFETY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Safety on expeditions depends primarily on the effectiveness of the safety management process and the competence and experience of the leaders. Too many serious accidents may be traced back to ambivalence or

uncertainty about who was responsible for decision-making, and where accountability lay. This should be a matter of particular concern in the case of the 'one-off' expedition, where appropriate management and safety systems have to be designed for each separate venture. ***Similar concern may also arise where expeditions are jointly organised, for instance where another organisation is contracted to arrange an expedition for a school or youth group.*** It is vitally important that there is clarity over lines of responsibility and accountability.

The importance of being clear about the expedition objectives cannot be over-emphasised. There are normally two differing categories of objectives for youth expeditions, development objectives and task objectives. In most cases, the former are perceived as more important than the latter. ***Parents and sponsors are more concerned about the gains in resourcefulness and confidence of the young people than they are about success in scaling a mountain or bringing back fieldwork data.*** It follows that the deliberate provision of new and adventurous experiences may well be the main raison d'etre of the expedition, and it is in this domain that many of the hazards lie. By clarifying and understanding the learning and management processes involved, it is much more likely that the expedition objectives, whether task- related or developmental, will be achieved successfully and in safety. All expedition organisers should be clear about the relative importance of the two sets of objectives, and should ensure that leaders and members understand these distinctions.

Three aspects of the management of an expedition which have a major bearing on safety are:

1. *Roles* and responsibilities
2. Group sizes and ratios
3. Effective communication

## ***4.2 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES***

All leaders of an expedition should be clear about the part they will be expected to play in achieving the different task and developmental objectives, who they are accountable to during the expedition, and for which specific areas of work and groups of participants they are responsible. It may be helpful to draw up a form of 'job specification' for each role, which specifies lines of reporting and accountability. However, this would not diminish the shared responsibility of each leader for the safety and general welfare of the expedition.

A system for dealing with a situation in which the Chief Leader (of the expedition or a sub-group) is incapacitated, should be established.

Members' responsibilities should be similarly defined. There is merit in distributing as much responsibility as possible to expedition members, as this greatly increases their motivation and the value to them of the experience. ***It is very important that every member should have a strong sense of ownership of the venture, and this may be helped by giving each individual his or her specific responsibility.***

Every expedition should consider whether the appointment of a Safety Officer, reporting to the Expedition Leader, might be appropriate. The purpose of doing this would be to obtain an independent external perspective on the hazards and risks of the expedition and the measures required to improve arrangements for the safety and welfare of the participants. The appointment of a Safety Officer would not diminish the general responsibility for safety.

### ***4.3 GROUP SIZE AND RATIOS***

Attention should be given to the appropriate size of group for the task being undertaken. Where expeditions have a large membership, say over forty, a 'command structure' must be established and responsibility delegated, in order that the expedition leader is not over-burdened. Equally important, the expedition participants must operate in groups of an appropriate size. There is much evidence to show that the ideal working group size is around eight to ten with a normal maximum of twelve. Groups may often be divided into sub-units, though for safety in the field in remote areas, group sizes should not be less than four. If activity is sanctioned for groups smaller than this, or for individuals to work alone, then tighter supervision and checking or reporting back procedures must be designed and used. It should also be recognised that the urban areas visited on expedition may be just as dangerous as more remote locations, and that here too there is 'strength in numbers' and particularly in males accompanying females.

Many authorities and national governing bodies for sport have stipulated specific ratios of leaders to trainees for different activities. In the expedition situation, the YET considers that it is unwise to be too prescriptive; it is better to judge each situation carefully on its merits, bearing in mind the experience and maturity of the participants and the nature of the mix of activities. However, expeditions should as a general rule have at least two leaders, and a mixed sex group should expect to have both male and female leaders. Groups with disabled or disaffected members may well require much higher levels of support and supervision.

It is important to recognise the value for young people of working together on expeditions independently from adult supervision under appropriate circumstances. The judgements as to when such peer group led work is appropriate must be made with great care; when such independent activity is authorised, the back-up, communication and checking systems must be well- established.

### ***4.4 EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION***

Effective communication, both within the expedition and between the expedition and the wider world, is a vital part of good expedition management. This is particularly important when the expedition is operating in remote areas with extended lines of supply and support. Within the expedition it is vital that everybody knows what is going on (and this is especially important on long journeys when delays seem inevitable). To fail in communications is to court the loss of control and discipline. Daily briefings in one form or another are essential for the smooth running of an expedition.



Comprehensive prior information is necessary, particularly to the various 'stake-holders' in an expedition. There also needs to be a process of evaluation and review at the end of or following an expedition. Most important is a coherent system for keeping all informed of developments throughout an expedition. This is particularly important on a large expedition, where members may be widely scattered and there may be no single focal point. Leaders must ensure that all necessary information reaches each participant, particularly on matters which may affect their safety and welfare. Communication is best achieved by a combination of face-to-face contact, through frequent group meetings, supported by written instructions and updates produced on a regular basis. An assessment should be made of the merits of establishing a radio network where groups are working independently, and of having the principal base camp linked by radio or otherwise to the outside world.

Communications with the home base need careful planning. The days of internet cafes in Outer Mongolia, personal mobile phones, and satellite phones have made things easier in some ways, but can also create their own problems (for example if members send their own messages home if there is an accident).

Because of the existence of satellite phones linked to international rescue organisations, leaders may be under pressure to take more expensive kit, and may also consider carrying an EPIRB linked to an international call service and possibly joining a medical / rescue service such as Cega.

Whatever the means of communication chosen, it is vital to realise that in remote situations all systems are likely to break down or malfunction. Plans should be designed so that the expedition can function effectively without the use of such equipment, which ought to be regarded as a bonus to communication rather than the only effective means.

## 4.5 THE HOME SUPPORT TEAM

[N.B. In the case of a large organisation (Scouts, LEAs etc) some system may already be in place and its relationship with the expedition must be clearly established.]

In any expedition the role of the HOME AGENT is important. To provide 24 hour support there may need to be a team, with the Home Agent as Team Leader. This person (and team) needs to:

- be unrelated to any expedition member (so as not to be emotionally involved);
- be thorough, well-organised and reliable;
- be available at all times when the expedition is in the field;
- be able to contact the leader team as quickly as reasonable (accepting that there may be some delays);
- have full personal details of all expedition members ;
- have parents' contact details (**BECAUSE HOLIDAY AND OTHER PLANS CHANGE THESE SHOULD BE UPDATED JUST BEFORE THE EXPEDITION LEAVES**);
- have details of insurance and travel plans, and access to medical and legal advice;

- have an agreed press statement (and procedures) available in case of need;
- be regularly informed about the expedition's progress, so that parents and others can be informed if they contact the team.

**In addition:**

- The Home Agent must be as knowledgeable as possible about all aspects of the expedition (e.g. it is useful if (s)he attends training weekends).
- It is vital that everyone understands that the Home Agent is the only conduit for communication with the Expedition.
- Written records should be kept of all communications.
- As far as possible there should be written operating procedures to cover likely eventualities, especially in the case of accidents and emergencies.
- (S)he should have access to a team of reliable supporters who could help in the case of a serious emergency, as well as helping to provide 24-hour cover.

## **5. SYSTEMATIC PLANNING FOR SAFETY**

Effective planning is the key to successful expedition work, and this principle applies equally in achieving a proper level of safety. Although obvious, it is important to remember that it is the safety itself, and not just the filling in of Risk Assessment Forms or the production of Codes of Practice, which actually matters.

The method of planning may vary, but it is always preferable to involve all expedition members when possible. There are four key elements in planning effectively for safety:

1. Allocation of responsibility & accountability
2. Hazard identification
3. Risk assessment and risk reduction
4. Knowledge of emergency procedures
5. Medical planning

### **5.1 ALLOCATION OF RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

On most small expeditions, the expedition leader will be responsible for safety. However, when expeditions consist of several groups, perhaps with different functions, or are widely dispersed, the overall leader clearly cannot maintain direct supervision of all that is happening. In such cases, each group leader would normally assume the responsibility and report back to the expedition leader at appropriate intervals. Where a Safety Officer is appointed, this might also be a matter for him/her to co-ordinate.

Occasionally, groups in the field may be led by people without the necessary technical competence to make detailed judgements about safety [e.g. a fieldwork specialist in a dangerous environment]. In such cases, the responsibility for safety must be delegated, ideally to a 'specialist' who has relevant and recognised

competence. Such delegation of responsibility should be endorsed by the expedition leader. Where there may be a conflict of judgement as to what action is advisable, there may be merit in agreeing beforehand a 'fail-safe' arrangement, whereby both the leader and the 'specialist' must endorse an action before it may take place- In any event, it must be made absolutely clear who is permitted to authorise any activity, and at what level.

Where young expedition members are permitted to travel or operate without direct adult supervision, all the members should be involved in the planning, even though it may be advisable for the group to appoint or elect a group member as leader (either permanently or on a day-by-day basis), who must be clear about the limit of his or her authority and autonomy. In such cases, an appropriate system of monitoring by adult leaders or supervisors is strongly recommended and agreed written plans and emergency procedures should be in place.

## **5.2 HAZARD IDENTIFICATION**

Deliberate steps must be taken to identify those hazards which are likely to be encountered. Some of this work may be carried out before arrival; for instance the identification of the health hazards to be expected in a particular area [a competent organisation such as MASTA ([www.masta.org](http://www.masta.org)) should be consulted]. This preliminary analysis should preferably be backed up by a reconnaissance, either before the expedition sets out or when it arrives in the intended area. Where this is not possible the leader should have experience of similar environments. All expedition participants must be made aware of the hazards thus identified and take part in the Risk Assessment process.

## **5.3 RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK REDUCTION**

The process of risk assessment and reduction has already been described (in Chapter 2 section 4 and in Appendix A). How serious is the foreseeable risk, and how can it be reduced? Where the hazard or combination of hazards is great, and the risk assessment too high, then it will be necessary to modify plans, move elsewhere, or find alternative activities. When working with young people, it is advisable to err on the side of caution. On days of high avalanche danger, for instance, it may well be prudent to call off a planned mountain journey.

## **5.4 KNOWLEDGE OF EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

All expedition members, and not just the leaders, should have knowledge of safety drills and emergency procedures. The basics of first aid should be known by all (emergency resuscitation, treatment for shock, maintaining a clear airway, stemming blood loss). Where water activities are involved, some basic lifesaving skills should be taught. All expedition members should understand and practise how to carry out an emergency evacuation to a safer location, using improvised methods. Much of this training should take place

during the recommended pre-expedition training period. More specialised skills may be required in particular environments, e.g. to deal with snakebite or frostbite.

It is advisable that Leaders should keep on their persons, at all times, a laminated card showing relevant actions and contact numbers.

The Home Support Team (Section 4.5) should also receive appropriate training / practice in dealing with emergencies.

There is clearly a need for leaders to be competent in all these areas, and to be able to produce evidence of such competence. It is recommended that they should hold as a minimum a current basic first aid certificate and that some or all of the leaders should hold an additional qualification of the "Wilderness Medicine" type. Where expeditions are in the field in remote areas for extended periods, there is much advantage in including a doctor, nurse or paramedic in the party with the specialised skills and knowledge which may be required, e.g. at high altitudes. Occasionally it may be possible to recruit such help locally in the area to be visited; this may be necessary where there may be difficulties in obtaining a licence to practise as a visiting medical officer (e.g. in the U.S.A.). This does not obviate the need for all leaders to have appropriate training - the Doctor may be elsewhere or incapacitated, and the expedition may be operating in several separate groups.

## **6. LEADERSHIP AND SUPERVISION**

### **6.1 COMPETENT LEADERS**

The competence of the leaders is always the key factor in achieving safety on any expedition. The word 'competence' is carefully chosen; for leadership competence goes much beyond the technical skill that can be relatively easily measured, and is based on four separate elements: personal qualities, technical knowledge and skill, interpersonal and groupwork skills, and active experience. All expedition leaders, to be effective, should demonstrate a balance of these elements, which taken together will provide the best indication that safety requirements will be maintained, that the developmental and task goals of the expedition will be achieved, and that the experience will be enjoyed.

**The personal qualities** of the leader include self-awareness; sensitivity to people, the environment and changing situations; a sense of values; the ability to inspire; common sense; and sound judgement, which has been described as "the glue that binds all the other components together."

**The technical knowledge and skills** required include activity skills and fieldwork skills appropriate to the tasks of the expedition; and the environmental skills, such as navigating, reading the weather and identifying hazards, which are directly relevant to safety. These may be indicated by a range of formal paper qualifications, e.g. specialist degree or governing body certification (e.g. RYA , BCU or MLTB).

**The interpersonal and groupwork skills** are those of working with young people, leading a team of colleagues (some of whom will have highly specialised technical knowledge or skills) dealing with individuals as a tutor or counsellor, and managing stressful, unforeseen or uncertain situations.

A strong background of **personal expedition experience** is an important requirement for a leader. Ideally, such experience will have been gained on private expeditions, in a wide variety of situations, as well as with youth expeditions. It may be helpful for leaders to maintain a record of their expedition experience in a logbook (see below), as a means of authenticating their experience.

It should be emphasised that not all these elements can be expected in every leader. However, they provide a template against which the overall competence and safety awareness of an aspiring leader may be judged. In selecting expedition leaders each element should be assessed systematically; any shortcomings in particular areas will limit the responsibility any individual may carry and will provide an indication of future development or training needs. It must also be emphasised that an effective leader must have a high level of self-knowledge and an understanding of his or her own 'adventure threshold' - that point at which, for each individual, the adventure situation begins to slip out of control.

## **6.2 SELECTION AND TRAINING**

**Expedition organisers** will need to satisfy themselves as to the personal suitability of those aspiring to the leadership of youth expeditions. This is particularly important under the provisions of the 1989 Children Act. For this reason it is important to follow up character references for new members of the leader team, and to seek all possible assurances as to any personal criminal history. Leaders should be asked to sign a form stating that they have "a clean sheet" regarding offences against children [YET can provide a model if requested]. In addition an applicant may be asked to obtain a BASIC DISCLOSURE print out of his/her record with the new Criminal Records Bureau. [These copies must be ordered by the applicant by telephone from the CRB (0870 90 90 844) and are free to those working with children.] In some circumstances Expedition Organisers may wish to obtain a STANDARD or ENHANCED DISCLOSURE from the CRB, though this has to be done through a registered body: details are to be found on their website [[www.disclosure.gov.uk](http://www.disclosure.gov.uk)].

Every expedition provides an excellent developmental opportunity for leaders and aspiring leaders, and time should be organised to provide further training for those who wish to build up their range of competences. A system of appraisal, counselling and mentoring may help in promoting such development, although it is recognised that this may be difficult for organisations which make only occasional expeditions and lack a core of committed and experienced leaders. To help and encourage new leaders gain the appropriate experience and qualifications, the YET, in conjunction with the RGS, has devised a suitable **Log Book**. Copies are available from the Expedition Advisory Centre at the RGS, or downloaded from the RGS website [[www.rgs.org/eac](http://www.rgs.org/eac)].

Expeditions also provide a good opportunity for 'talent-spotting' among the young people who participate. 'They need to be set alight with enthusiasm for helping to give others the kind of enriching experience they themselves have received' (Hunt, 1982).

## **7. SAFETY PROCEDURES**

Safety procedures will vary according to the purpose and location of the expedition. Whatever they are, they should be promulgated and publicised effectively, so that no leader or member can claim justifiably to be unaware of them. They fall under eight headings:

1. Information and approval
2. Expedition preparation
3. Pre-expedition training
4. Contingency and emergency plans
5. Recording systems
6. Expedition equipment and its use
7. Arrangements during the expedition
8. Safety in activities

### **7.1 INFORMATION AND APPROVAL**

It has already been emphasised that all 'stake-holders' in an expedition require appropriate information as to what is planned, and reassurance as to the measures taken for the health, welfare and safety of expedition members. This should include the identification of risks and the measures being taken to manage them. **Parents or Guardians in particular require a comprehensive briefing (including of the Risk Assessment) and will be required to give their approval to the venture, usually in the form of a Parental Consent Form.** The form should include the opportunity to give permission to the Leader to authorise medical treatment if necessary, and list any special medical information of the participants which may be needed. The parents of young people with disabilities, or from ethnic minority backgrounds, may have special concerns.

### **7.2 EXPEDITION PREPARATION**

The importance of thorough detailed planning cannot be over-stressed. Wherever possible, the tasks of planning and preparation should involve expedition members as well as leaders. The planning function should be carried out against a clearly established series of expedition objectives. The areas to be visited and the tasks to be undertaken should be well researched and, if necessary, a reconnaissance of the area should be carried out, as first-hand knowledge is invaluable. Checks should be made with The Foreign and Commonwealth Office [[www.fco.gov.uk/travel](http://www.fco.gov.uk/travel)] and their advice on dangers should be followed, even if it means last-minute changes or cancellation (consultation with the expedition's insurers can be important

here). Preliminary communication should be established with the appropriate authorities in the areas to be visited, particularly on overseas expeditions. All likely hazards should be identified, and the deliberate process of risk assessment should be undertaken [see Appendix A], which may necessitate some early modification of the plan. A local liaison officer in the area to be visited may be of much assistance.

Detailed plans for travel, overland movement and activities should be drawn up, and the logistical implications calculated. Equipment should be specified, made or purchased, prepared for field use, and checked and maintained.

Adult leaders and other staff and helpers must be identified and trained. Expedition members must be selected, trained and, if appropriate, assessed for suitability. People with disabilities, special needs or known behavioural difficulties must be identified.

### **7.3 PRE-EXPEDITION TRAINING**

A programme of planned, systematic and progressive pre-expedition training has much value for all concerned and is strongly recommended. As well as giving the opportunity to develop appropriate practical and survival skills, such programmes begin to develop the bonds of friendship and teamwork, help to allay anxieties, and enable leaders to identify those with special aptitudes or needs. Effective pre-expedition training will allow better use to be made of precious expedition time. If a pre-expedition training meeting is not feasible, there should at least be a meeting for face-to-face briefing, and other steps must be taken to ensure the suitability of participants. Pre-expedition training might include appropriate leader training and briefing, particularly where some of the expedition leaders may not have worked previously with a particular organisation or in the area to be visited.

### **7.4 CONTINGENCY AND EMERGENCY PLANS**

Prior to the expedition, members and parents should be provided with the name and telephone number of a 'home agent', not related to any member, who is the official point of reference for parents, guardians or the media, and who will provide liaison between the expedition and home. The 'Home Support Team' should be based in the home area of the expedition members (if practicable), and must be readily contactable throughout the period of the expedition [see Section 4.5 for more information].

During the expedition, all participants must be able to deal with emergencies appropriately; understanding proper evacuation procedures, first aid measures and how to summon external assistance. A judgement must be made on the value of independent means of radio communication, or location fixing devices. External support may be distant and unreliable in some expedition locations, in which case there is a requirement for the expedition party to include more specialist skills, e.g. a doctor or a mechanic. Correct procedure in the event of an accident must be taught to expedition members as a routine; this is particularly important where expedition members may be operating beyond the direct supervision of adult leaders for parts of the expedition.

Under some circumstances it may be necessary to repatriate an expedition member for disciplinary reasons, or on compassionate grounds (death of a relative etc.). If the member is under 18 watertight arrangements for travel home should be made and parents kept closely informed.

Essential emergency plans should be prepared before the expedition. They should be written by the Leader and Home Agent and copies held in the field by all leaders likely to be in charge of independent groups, as well as by the Home Support Team and Parent Organisation (School, Scouts ...) if there is one. [YET can provide a sample scheme on request.] Such plans should cover at least the following contingencies:

- a badly overdue group;
- a missing person;
- a serious accident or illness;
- a fatality;
- a need to repatriate one or more members;
- host country civil problems (in an extreme situation rapid evacuation might become necessary).

All leaders should understand the procedures to be followed on the expedition in the event of an accident involving a missing person, serious injury or death. In the aftermath of any such event, it is essential that designated persons deal with the authorities in the expedition area and at home, with the parents and the media with the utmost care and sensitivity. Careful attention must be paid to any necessary counselling or other supportive measures.

## **7.5 RECORDING SYSTEMS**

It is generally regarded as good practice to complete an expedition report after return from an expedition. Whether or not this is done, it is important to keep appropriate records of accidents, near misses or incidents, which may have a bearing on safety. (See Section 10 for definition of a 'near-miss'.) Expeditions whose plans have been approved by YET are expected to complete reports of significant illnesses, accidents, near misses or incidents; these should be submitted after the expedition to YET. They will not be published in a way which could identify any specific expedition without the express consent of the expedition organisers. Reports from other organisations are welcomed.

## **7.6 EXPEDITION EQUIPMENT AND ITS USE**

Appropriate expedition equipment must be selected, prepared and checked. The following categories of equipment will be required:

- Personal equipment
- Camping and support equipment,
- Specialised activity equipment
- Fieldwork equipment



- First aid/medical equipment.
- Transport facilities.
- Safety and emergency equipment

Equipment must be safe, appropriate and fit for the purpose intended, where necessary conforming with the appropriate recognised trade standards. It should all be checked before use, especially if it is borrowed or hired. When members bring their own personal equipment, e.g. boots, shell clothing, rucksacks or sleeping bags, this must be checked for suitability and durability. Expedition leaders and members must be competent in the use of all necessary equipment and where appropriate leaders should attend an advanced "Wilderness Medicine and First Aid" Course in addition to their basic first aid qualifications.

Fieldwork and specialised activity equipment may only be used under the supervision of a person experienced and if necessary qualified in its use. Records must be kept of the use of equipment for which there is a specified life, or where over-use might create risk (e.g. climbing ropes).

Where vehicles are to be used, appropriate training, documentation and maintenance arrangements must be made. Road travel is one of the principal hazards of expeditions, and is particularly so in some developing countries, where roads and tracks may be poorly maintained. Careful attention needs to be given to the maintenance of vehicles, the way in which they are loaded, and the seating arrangements for expedition members. It is essential to carry out thorough inspections regularly, to check for damaged tyres, defective lights etc.

## ***7.7 ARRANGEMENTS DURING THE EXPEDITION***

Leaders on expeditions for young people under the age of 18 should regard themselves as 'in loco parentis', acting as a careful and prudent parent. For practical purposes, this principle might wisely be applied to those who may be older than 18. The leaders' primary concern always must be for the care and welfare of the young people involved. Expedition members should not be abruptly confronted with experiences which might be beyond their capabilities. The particular requirements of those with disabilities or special needs must be kept in mind; in this connection, it is essential that any information about the special health or other characteristics of expedition members (e.g. allergies, drug requirements, poor circulation, emotional instability) should be passed to the leaders in the field, and not retained centrally. A period of pre-expedition training is also invaluable for identifying special needs.

Expedition leaders should be on the look-out for constitutional or psychological weaknesses, particularly susceptibility to cold and wet conditions (or great heat), and poor co-ordination; this is particularly important early in an expedition. Leaders should always bear in mind that the physiological characteristics of young people, even of the same age, may vary greatly. Good group organisation can enhance greatly the safety and enjoyment of an expedition; for instance the use of the 'buddy system' in very cold conditions where there is

a danger of frostbite or hypothermia. Regular physical inspections, particularly of feet, may save a great deal of later inconvenience.

Mention has already been made of the importance of the size and composition of expedition groups; the larger and more disparate the group, the greater the difficulty of management in remote situations. It has been suggested that working groups with more than twelve members will be more difficult to manage and less effective, and may often with benefit be reorganised into smaller groups. Where small groups of young people are operating independently, the task of leadership should be clarified; where appropriate, there must be a clear system for choosing a group leader and deputy leader, the task should be unambiguous, and the boundaries for such unsupervised activities should be defined clearly.

Allowance should be made, particularly during an extended expedition, for the need of leaders and members for periods of privacy, rest, quiet and personal reflection. All members should have their own "space" and other members should respect this. Occasional meetings to reflect on the deeper purposes of the expedition, as well as to address practical problems, may be beneficial.

The welfare of expedition participants depends to a considerable extent on giving proper attention to basic hygiene, to eating and cleaning arrangements, to washing up systems, and to good toilet practice. Usually, more time is lost on expedition due to avoidable health problems such as stomach upsets, than through traumatic accidents. For instance, it is surprising how much discomfort is caused by entirely preventable sunburn (and in the armed forces this is regarded as a self-inflicted wound). Every opportunity should be taken to stress the importance of high standards of personal care and health discipline in these areas. In this connection, special attention should be paid to the hygiene needs of young women on expedition, particularly when working in mixed groups.

## **7.8 SAFETY IN ACTIVITIES**

All outdoor activities should be conducted in conformity with the current generally accepted standards of safety, supervision and organisation and, where appropriate, in accordance with the standards laid down by the national governing bodies of sport and other authorities. Where it is not appropriate to adopt governing body standards, then suitable equivalent measures should be drawn up to cover the specific situation or activity. Host country regulations must also be adhered to.

Expeditions normally venture into remote and less well-known places, and it will generally be necessary to establish 'local operating procedures' to cover the particular hazards of those locations. In such situations, it is particularly important to initiate a systematic hazard identification and risk assessment process. All safety rules and local operating procedures, whether adopted from national governing bodies or devised to meet particular situations, should be accepted and endorsed by leaders, who should acknowledge formally in writing that they have read and understood them.

Attention should be drawn to the particular dangers involved where expeditions take place on or near water. Water remains the most common location of serious incidents in adventure education, and even the most innocuous and light-hearted paddling or swimming activity can be dangerous. The danger is exacerbated where there are waves or turbulence, and where it is not possible to see to the bottom of the water. It is vital that local operating procedures cover informal water activity, as well as the more widely recognised hazards such as river crossing or white-water rafting. The competence and qualifications of the leaders and the training of the participants, as well as the provision of suitable equipment (including life jackets and helmets) must be carefully checked.

Leaders should note that one of the most dangerous times in an expedition is at the end of a day, or especially towards the end of the expedition. Peoples' guards are down, new health and other hazards may be ignored, and there may be the lure of an unplanned activity (horse ride, swim, bungee jump) for which training and risk assessment have not been carried out! Remember that Leaders still have a duty of care even when local agents run the activities. If possible a range of such activities should be planned in advance, risk assessments carried out, and parents / stakeholders informed. If this has not been done it may be safer not to allow the activities.

Leaders should be aware that other dangers may occur at the start of an expedition where tiredness, excitement and stress, combined with exposure to unfamiliar climates and cultures, may lead to unusual behaviour and sometimes to problems of a psychological nature.

## **8. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Those who learn and benefit from their travels and activities in remote environments and unfamiliar cultures have a duty to contribute to the care, conservation and quality of the places visited. Expedition participants must consider the physical effect their activities may have on local environments (for example the over-use of mountain bikes in sensitive areas) and the cultural impact on local communities. The aim should be to ensure the least possible adverse outcomes, whilst also demonstrating cultural sensitivity. It is particularly important to minimise the impact of camping, and in particular of large standing camps, where arrangements for cooking and waste-disposal must be such as to minimise environmental damage.

In some environments UK expeditioners may well need to have explained to them the need to use water sparingly and to copy local usage techniques. In areas of wood shortage alternative means of cooking should be used, and camp fires discouraged. In addition expeditioners should ensure that their purchase of local cash-crops do not leave the local inhabitants short of their staple foodstuffs.

Expeditions must have regard to the principle of 'sustainable use' of the environment, and ideally should seek to make a practical contribution, either through an environmental improvement project or through a positive

contribution to the life of the community being visited, perhaps in partnership 'with local young people. Such actions, valuable in themselves, also increase the likelihood that a return visit will be welcomed.

These aspects are the subject of continuing debate to which many people and organisations have contributed. The matter is one in which the Young Explorers' Trust has a positive contribution to make and this appears in a separate Report.

## **9. ARRANGEMENTS FOR EXPEDITIONS OUTSIDE THE U.K.**

Most of the matters covered in this booklet apply on expeditions both in the U.K. and overseas. However, there are specific matters associated with travel outside the U.K., and particularly to distant areas. New and larger landscapes, different climatic regimes and unfamiliar cultures, all can have a profound psychological impact on young people, particularly when they are experienced simultaneously and for the first time. Long days of often rigorous activity in the open air, combined with the effects of high altitude, high temperatures or high humidity, may have a severely debilitating effect, comparable to a prolonged experience of seasickness under sail on an ocean voyage. The effects on morale, both individual and collective, should not be under-estimated.

It is important that expedition members are prepared properly for such experiences, and it may well be necessary to plan for a preliminary period of acclimatisation or adjustment on arrival, or at least to allow a day or two for settling in after a long journey to the expedition area. For expeditions into Europe, it is important for leaders and organisers to be aware that regulations governing the driving of vehicles and supervision of young people travelling in wild or difficult country are becoming increasingly stringent and at variance at times with U.K. legislation.

When expeditions to remote areas in distant countries are planned, it should be recognised that communication with the outside world and retreat from a deteriorating situation may be very difficult. In the absence of an efficient transport and communications infrastructure, expeditions have to be much more self-sufficient. Emergency services may be poorly developed, and the language and priorities of the local community may make it difficult to gain assistance quickly when this is required in an emergency. On the other hand there is a danger that modern means of communication may reduce the value of the "expedition experience" of being in a remote and unfamiliar land.

It is important that some of the expedition leaders have a good knowledge of the support and legal systems in the host country. They also need to ensure that the financial arrangements and insurance aspects of the expedition are properly established and valid for the areas visited. There has to be a clear understanding about communication between expedition members and home; if the expedition is to be out of regular contact for long periods, it is important for parents and supporters to understand this. Calls by the Home Agent's team to parents to build confidence and personal bonds, will pay dividends if an incident should

occur. It is a sound practice to ensure that all members of youth expeditions if possible write or telephone home shortly after arrival to notify parents and supporters of their safe arrival at the expedition destination. In any case, there must be effective means of maintaining regular, two-way contact with the 'home agent'.

## 10. REVIEW OF SAFETY

The systematic review of the arrangements made for health, safety and welfare and the recording of illnesses, accidents, near-misses and incidents arising on each expedition are both key elements in the Young Explorers' Trust approach to safe expeditioning. By accumulating data it becomes possible to identify the hazards and risks of expeditions much more effectively, and thus to minimise risk.

An '**accident**' in this context is regarded as any event in which a participant has sustained significant injury which hinders the ability to continue to participate in all the activities of the expedition. A '**near-miss**' is a situation in which, had circumstances been slightly different, an injury would have occurred. An '**incident**' is an occurrence out of the ordinary which might have had safety implications even though no-one was in any direct danger on that occasion of sustaining an injury. Thus an accident occurs when a participant is hit by a falling rock; a near-miss occurs when a falling rock narrowly misses the participant; an incident occurs when a rock-fall is seen to have occurred between two visits to the same underground location. The review of any accident should take place as soon as possible after the event, and written eyewitness accounts are particularly helpful.

It is recommended that all expedition organisations should review and compare their own accident and incident records, comparing the data from different expeditions and from year to year. All youth expeditions which plans receive approval and support from the Young Explorers' Trust are expected to record and review illnesses, accidents and near-misses, and to note incidents which are thought to be significant.

## 11. THE YOUNG EXPLORERS' TRUST CODE OF ETHICS

The primary responsibility of any organisation seeking Young Explorers' Trust Approval for a planned expedition is to demonstrate an 'Ethic of Care' for the young people who will be participating, for the leaders who will be carrying responsibility, and for the environments and the communities which will be visited. This 'Ethic of Care' might reflect the values indicated in the Code of Ethics set out on the following pages. The Young Explorers' Trust recognises a fourfold responsibility, to parents and relatives; to supporting authorities; to the peoples and environments visited; and above all to the young people who participate in expeditions given approval by the Trust.

The following statements embody the values which are central to this work.

### **11.1 PARTICIPATION**

- a. The YET wishes to encourage the widest possible participation in adventurous expeditions. It is the aim of the YET that all who wish to take part should be able to do so, provided that in doing so they do not present a danger to themselves or others.
- b. To this end, the YET encourages expedition organisers to keep expedition charges as low as possible, consistent with the need to cover costs and without compromising safety.
- c. No-one should be prevented from participation on the grounds of gender, religion or ethnic / cultural / social background.
- d. Although the remoteness and physical inaccessibility of certain expedition locations may make them unsuitable for disabled participants, the YET wishes to encourage participation by the disabled in appropriate expedition ventures.
- e. Participants should be involved whenever possible in the planning and preparation of their expeditions, to foster their sense of ownership of the project.

### **11.2 DEVELOPMENT**

- a. The YET seeks to affirm and develop the concept of 'the whole person', and to encourage young people to expand and achieve their individual potential and to understand and manage their limitations.
- b. The YET encourages expedition organisers to provide a rich social experience for all participants, which will help to develop their inter-personal and leadership effectiveness.
- c. The projects undertaken should be within the expected physical capability and intellectual understanding of the participants.
- d. All expeditions should provide young people with opportunities for personal challenge, for insights into personal and group behaviour, for active exploration, for better understanding of the environments and communities visited, and for a high level of enjoyment; there should be a progression to leadership and higher levels of responsibility.

### **11.3 LEADERSHIP**

- a. Expedition leaders should be chosen for their ability to inspire and enthuse young people' for their understanding of the environments in which activities and fieldwork take place, and for their skills and sensitivity in working with young people in remote places.
- b. Leaders should have a balance of technical and communication skills, together with positive personal and social qualities, such that their work will be competent, purposeful and sensitive to the needs of all participants.

- c. Leaders should have a clear understanding of the general educational aims as well as the specific tasks, goals and objectives of the expedition or expedition activity for which they carry responsibility.
- d. Leaders must be fully aware of their responsibilities and the consequences of neglecting them.

#### **11.4 SAFETY**

The Young Explorers' Trust:

- a. believes that each participant has a right to be safe, both physically and emotionally, but also to be stimulated by judiciously chosen opportunities for challenging adventure and discovery;
- b. seeks to ensure that no expedition participant experiences a personally unacceptable degree of risk or distress;
- c. encourages expedition organisers to enable participants to become more resourceful, confident and safe in outdoor environments, and to provide opportunities for them to take responsibility for the safety and well-being of others;
- d. encourages the progressive training and development of all those aspiring to lead activities, in order to strengthen awareness of safety and good practice in the field;
- e. is committed to the establishment of a general culture of care, safety, awareness and co-operation in all expedition ventures in which hazards and risk may be present.

#### **11.5 ENVIRONMENT**

- a. The YET aspires to build a wider understanding of environmental issues, to address the groundswell of concern about them among young people and leaders of youth expeditions, and to develop a positive approach to the environment and its conservation.
- b. The YET encourages expeditions to examine and interpret the environment from a variety of perspectives; physical, geographical, biological, sociological, economic, political, technological, historical, aesthetic, ethical, spiritual, and others.
- c. All expeditions receiving YET support must have regard to the principle of the 'sustainable use' of the environments and communities visited, seeking the least possible adverse physical or cultural impact upon them.

## APPENDIX A - RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK REDUCTION

### 1. INTRODUCTION

These suggestions are intended as guidelines: they are not prescriptive, or exhaustive, but the Young Explorers' Trust recommends that a formal written assessment of this sort be carried out. The HSE's "Five Steps to Risk Assessment" is recommended reading.

Risk assessments are necessary because of the "duty of care" for all the people associated with an expedition. Informal Risk Assessment has long been practised in the field of adventure training, but with increasing concerns for a more systematic approach to safety and with increasing public concern, legislation and litigation, it is important that leaders **make and record thorough and formal** Risk Assessments and make them known to parents and participants.

The aim should be to improve the standards and enjoyment of activity and the expedition experience, not to reduce them.

Risks need to be identified and graded: how serious is the foreseeable risk, and how can it be reduced?

Where the hazard or **combination** of hazards is great, and the risk assessment too high, then it will be necessary to modify plans, move elsewhere, or find alternative activities.

### 2. THE STANDARD APPROACH TO RISK ASSESSMENT IS AS FOLLOWS:

Step 1.	LOOK FOR THE HAZARDS [see paragraph 3]
Step 2.	DECIDE WHO MIGHT BE HARMED AND HOW [see paragraph 4]
Step 3.	EVALUATE THE RISKS arising from the hazards and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or whether more should be done [see paragraph 5]
Step 4.	RECORD THE FINDINGS [written assessments should be made to help with later reviews, and as evidence that the assessment has been made]
Step 5.	REVIEW the assessment from time to time and revise it if necessary [see paragraph 6]



### **3. EXAMPLES OF TYPES OF HAZARD**

- Environmental hazards: e.g. steep terrain, deep water, bad weather, wildlife.
- Health hazards: e.g. endemic disease, AIDS, polluted water, poorly prepared local food, poor washing-up discipline.
- Human and behavioural hazards: temper, violence, robbery, kidnapping, and behaviour brought on by fatigue, stress or drugs.
- Activity hazards: e.g. moving on deck under sail, swimming, lead climbing, spontaneous games and competitions.
- Travel and camping hazards: e.g. driving, travel on overcrowded public transport, hazards of fire in camp cooking.
- Accommodation hazards e.g. locked hostel fire exits and windows; the increased vulnerability of young people when using accommodation open to the general public.

### **4. WHO MIGHT BE HARMED?**

- It will be necessary to consider the different people on the expedition and the various circumstances in which they might meet hazards: different members of the party may meet different hazards according to their different activities and ages.
- When working with young people, it is necessary to err on the side of caution. For instance, on days of high avalanche danger, it may be prudent to call off a planned mountain journey.
- The range of experience, knowledge and skills of all expedition members will be relevant considerations, as will stamina and matters concerning equipment (camping, technical etc.).
- Note that many accidents happen in and around camp in informal situations; and also in the last few days of an expedition when "guards are down" and people are more relaxed.
- The same may apply to the first few days when members of the party are excited, exhausted from travel and lack the experience of, and the 'feel' for the new environment.

### **5. ASSESSMENT AND ACTION**

- Hazards should be identified as being of HIGH, MEDIUM or LOW risk.
- Concentrate on the activities that might cause serious harm to individuals or groups rather than being too concerned with the trivial.
- The foreseeable risks arising from a hazardous situation may be reduced by a number of means:
  - ◆ removal of the hazard;
  - ◆ increasing the amount or quality of training;
  - ◆ modifying the design of the activity or fieldwork task;

- ◆ substituting an alternative exercise, experience or route;
- ◆ protecting people, equipment or the environment more effectively;
- ◆ maintaining efficient communication within the group;
- ◆ supervising an activity more closely or more effectively;
- ◆ giving the expedition a systematic safety audit ;
- ◆ investigating thoroughly any incidents, near-misses or accidents which occur;
- ◆ revising the whole safety management system.

## **6. RISK ASSESSMENTS IN AN EXPEDITION SITUATION**

### **Before the Expedition**

- It is clear that leaders must make detailed, formal, written risk assessments during the planning stages of the expedition.
- This should be a co-operative process involving as many of the leader team as possible.
- The members of the expedition should be involved, and the discussion of risks can be a useful part of training.
- The involvement of others with relevant experience can be valuable.
- All risk assessments should have a review sheet which shows additions and amendments, and it should be countersigned by all the leaders.
- Formal rules concerning safety matters should be published. Members and leaders must sign to say that they agree to abide by these rules.

### **During the Expedition**

- A very useful exercise is to use Risk Assessment as part of a daily briefing for expedition members. This is particularly important in areas which provide greater potential hazards. For example on an African rain forest expedition discussion of hazards at the evening meeting ('baraza') enable all the members to be involved and discuss with the leaders (including the doctor) the nature of threats and the actions needed to be taken each day.

## **7. A RISK ASSESSMENT CHECK LIST**

### **GENERAL**

- Names of leaders, their experience, and their professional qualifications (including valid first aid qualifications) and their particular responsibilities
- Which leader will take over in the event of absence or mishap to main leader?
- Number of leaders, number of members, leader/member ratio
- The name and contact numbers of the HOME SUPPORT TEAM [phone, mobile, fax, e-mail].

- Is there a backup contact [give similar details]?
- How are contacts between the expedition in the field, and the Home Agent to be made [especially in an emergency]?
- What arrangements are there for evacuation should this be necessary; and what conditions might hinder or prevent this?

### **WEATHER AND ALTITUDE**

- What weather conditions are expected?
- If adverse conditions may be expected, what kinds of advance warnings might be available?
- Might such conditions hinder or prevent evacuation in the event of an emergency?
- What altitudes may be reached?
- Will acclimatisation be necessary; if YES how long will this period last?

### **ACTIVITIES**

- What activities might involve technical or safety equipment?
- What additional insurance cover is needed for these activities?
- What training will be required for these activities? When will it be provided? By whom?

### **WILDLIFE**

- What animals and plants in the expedition area offer a hazard (including those which are only a hazard if ingested)?
- What special provision will be made in respect of these? [Firearms, serum, member training etc.]

### **MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY COVER**

- What medical advice (e.g. from MASTA) been obtained - and used?
- Is form E111 required?
- What inoculations will be required? [N.B. ensure that tetanus, polio TB etc. are actually up to date]
- How will the Leader ensure that all leaders and members have actually had them?
- What diseases are endemic in the area? What provisions are being made in respect of these?
- Is it normal practice in the area to reuse syringes and needles?
- If YES what stocks of syringes and needles will the expedition be carrying?
- Are sufficient leaders trained in "Wilderness Medicine"?
- Are mountain rescue services available in the area?
- How can they be contacted? [Include telephone numbers or radio contacts].
- In normal circumstances how long would it take to get help to a casualty?
- Are they free? If YES might there be circumstances when charges might be levied?
- Does the insurance cover any eventuality?

- Have arrangements been made with your insurers to use the Insurers Emergency Call Centre?

### **FOOD AND WATER**

- Are there any special risks to drinking tap water in settlements or elsewhere?
- If YES what steps are being taken to protect the party?
- Are there any special risks concerning the food in the area?
- If YES what steps are being taken to protect the party?

### **SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONSIDERATIONS**

- What potential actions or modes of dress might cause offence in the area?
- Are there indications of political instability in the country? If so give details.
- Are there particular concerns about bandits, kidnappers, robbers, gangs etc.? If so give details.
- For any or all of these, explain what steps are being taken to safeguard the expedition members.