

## Mobile Phone Policy at 123<sup>rd</sup> Manchester Scouts

This policy outlines the guidelines for mobile phone use during scout sessions and experiences.

As a general rule it is expected that Squirrel, Beaver and Cub Sessions and residential experiences are phone free. Any contact home will be facilitated by a leader. In the rare instances that a young person uses a smart phone for medical reasons – e.g. as part of a monitoring system for medical condition, please make sure your child's section leader is aware.

### For Scouts and Explorers

We understand that many young people will want to bring their mobile phones with them to Scouts. While we allow phones, it is important to set clear expectations to ensure a positive experience for all participants. At most sessions mobile phones should be kept out of sight and not used for the duration of sessions. On rare occasions – e.g. digital citizen badges, mobile use may be encouraged for a specific purpose, advance notice would be given of these sessions as it will usually requires the downloading of a specific App – e.g. OS Maps, 3D Knots etc.

#### 1. Personal Responsibility

- Scouts may bring their mobile phones, but they do so at their own risk.
- Leaders are not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged devices.
- Any roaming charges incurred on international trips are the responsibility of the phone owner and their family. We strongly recommend checking with your mobile provider regarding international roaming rates and data packages before the trip.
- Scouts and Explorers should be mindful that the content filters and parental controls on their devices may differ from those of other children. Scouts **must not** expose others to content, games, apps etc that is not age appropriate (follow PEGI ratings, BBFC classifications etc).
- All Scouts, whether mobile device users or not should report inappropriate use of devices to leaders.

#### 2. Parental Responsibility

- The decision to equip children with mobile phones rests entirely with parents. No child will be disadvantaged at scouts by not having one.
- Parents are encouraged to set age-appropriate parental controls on devices in regards to screen time and content filtering etc.

#### 3. Designated Contact Times at Longer Camps

- To allow everyone to fully immerse themselves in trips and its activities, we will have designated contact times for camps longer than 2 nights, when participants are encouraged to call or message home.
- On Camps less than 3 nights long we strongly advise against contacting your young person. Or on longer camps, contacting them outside of designated contact times, unless absolutely necessary. This will allow them to focus on the experience, build friendships, and engage fully in the activities.
- In case of a genuine emergency, a designated leader contact number will be provided. This person will *not* be on the trip itself but will be available to assist. Please use this number for emergencies only.

#### 4. Handling Concerns

- If your young person contacts you outside of the designated times, it's important to remember that minor disagreements and fallouts or homesickness can be a natural part of group trips. Please encourage them to speak to a trip leader to resolve any issues they may be experiencing. This empowers them to develop their problem-solving skills and ensures the leaders are aware of any concerns.
- Any Misuse of mobile phones whilst at scouts should be reported to the section leader who will address concerns with the relevant scout and their parents.

#### 4. Mobile Phone Usage & Conduct

- Phones must not be used in a way that disrupts sessions, activities, sleep, or group dynamics.
- **Inappropriate or illegal use of mobile phones will result in confiscation of the device for the remainder of the session or trip, except for at designated check-in times. The definition of "inappropriate use" will be at the discretion of group leaders.**
- There is no guarantee of Wi-Fi access at any scout event, so Scouts should plan accordingly.

By following these guidelines, we aim to create a balanced experience where Scouts can enjoy themselves while staying safely connected. Thank you for your cooperation.