

Remote Supervision of Expeditions

Remotely supervising Expeditions by young people is potentially the most challenging and difficult task an Award Leader/Supervisor can undertake, Nonetheless it is probably the experience that gains the most benefit from those involved. 'Teams Learn by Doing'.

To be successful you must Plan effectively to ensure your 'Higher Duty of Care' is met to the young people in your charge, the organisation, parents and stakeholders.

- Ensure the team is trained, prepared and equipped. (Training and Practice Journeys, Kit Checks, Route Planning etc.)
- Undertake a pre visit to assess suitability of meet points, campsites and possible 'Observation Points' and if possible meet any External Assessors.
- Teams are well briefed in Emergency Procedures, Contacts etc.
- Agree location, Number of Rendezvous Points with the Team and Assessor, Ensure the Route Plan indicates these. **Have a Clear Remote Supervision Plan known to all**
- Consider the following methods:
 1. **Shadowing:** Following the team with or without their knowledge, Easiest on linear features with a 'catching' dimension. Can be considered oppressive by teams if not carefully thought out.
 2. **Checkpoints** Best placed just before or after Navigation Decision Points Labour Intensive and if 'wait here for me' instructions are given to teams can unnecessarily delay teams and interrupt the flow of an expedition
 3. **'Dead Letter Drops'** leaving or collecting a note etc. Often used but ask yourself 'How can I be sure it was the team who visited?' not 'eco' friendly
 4. **Observation.** Good method if your pre visit has suitable locations, unobtrusive.
 5. **Phones & Radios:** Reception Issues as well as impacting on the desired sense of isolation you are trying to create.
 6. **'Random' Meets.** Usually you walk one way to meet the team travelling the other. Good method if planned well.

As you can see there is no perfect solution, No Team or Expedition is ever the same. Good practice indicates that meeting a team once during the day and at the campsite is the ideal; obviously this may be amended for weather and other considerations. The temptation for the inexperienced supervisor is to introduce additional meetings.

Another pitfall is to let the desire of supervisors needs or desires (car parking or access to 'refreshments') dictate the route planning of the team. It is the supervisor and assessor who must fit in with the team's route. All are the servants of the team and its aim.

If a team is not up to the standard of being 'Self Reliant' during the day, if necessary convert the qualifier into a practice, feed back the shortcomings to training development. **Better still ensure they are of the standard before departure!**

Teams late, missed checkpoints, 180° errors all happen, it was ever thus!
A learning curve (for all involved) in a Risk Controlled environment is the ideal.

Further reading: 'Hillwalking' ISBN 0-9541511-0-0 and Remote Supervision Guidance Notes both published by MLTE. Contact 01690 729314 info@mlte.org www.mlte.org.uk