



Girlguiding

Contingency planning

Suggested solutions/considerations for when events don't go as planned

Any trip

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
Someone leaves their phone on a train (and the phone contains all their payment methods)	If it's a young member, contact their parents so they can alert the phone company and make arrangements for another payment method. Adults would need to do this themselves. Also contact the train company in case it's possible to find the phone.	
Someone leaves their bag on a train	A lot depends on what's in the bag - see the first scenario above.	
A member of your group's bag is too full/heavy and is causing issues.	This should have been addressed before leaving. But if it comes up later, try to spread the load to other girls if possible.	
Your whole group can't fit on one train, so you must split up	Consider ratios, headcounts and how to communicate with each other. Your risk assessment document should cover all this. Divide girls into specific smaller groups when travelling – this will make the group easier to manage if you need to divide into different carriages or trains.	

Any trip - continued

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
A girl runs out of spending money 4 days into a 7-day trip	Pre-empt this by covering the need to make spending money last in the briefing before they go. Consider contacting her parents, but it's spending money, not money for essentials, so this might not be necessary.	
Your accommodation doesn't feel right/safe when you arrive	Consider using contingency budget and try to make arrangements to move.	
A girl isn't eating and is getting more and more lethargic	Have a conversation with the girl to understand the issue and then take appropriate steps to address it.	
Girls have an argument and fall out	Have a conversation with all parties to understand the issues. Reiterate the code of conduct agreed ahead of the trip, which should include how this will be managed.	
A girl or team doesn't arrive back at the meeting point at the agreed time	Try to contact them by phone. Some girls may not have a phone, so before the trip consider how to make sure groups of girls have a phone between them. Plan the trip so no one is ever on their own. Speak to the rest of the party to check if they have seen them. Check rooms and the local area using teams of girls. If all else fails, call the local police.	
Someone badly sprains their ankle and is struggling to walk around and carry their own bag	Help them with first aid. Make arrangements for other girls to support them and organise alternative activities if necessary. Consider getting a taxi or bus for them.	

Any trip – continued

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
First aider falling ill on day 1	<p>You should always have more than 1 leader capable of first aid, in case a girl needs to be accompanied home or to hospital. So, 1 leader being ill for a few days shouldn't be a problem.</p> <p>If the sick leader has something infectious, she should leave the group and go home or to somewhere she can isolate if possible. Trips should have a deputy leader who is briefed on everything so they can take responsibility temporarily.</p> <p>If necessary, the trip leader could contact an international or residential adviser and see if a replacement leader can be found.</p>	
Your group is getting a lot of unwanted attention from a group of locals	<p>Consider why this is. Is there a way to minimise how your group stands out? Also, if you have any local contacts, seek advice. Keep the group together.</p> <p>If appropriate, the trip leader could try to reason with the locals, including mentioning calling the police. Otherwise, consider moving locations/removing yourselves from the situation. If things don't improve, call the police.</p>	
A young person panics and runs away from the group in a busy train station	Try to contact them by phone. Check the local area using teams of girls. Let the station authorities know. If all else fails, call the police.	
A young person falls and twists their ankle on a hike, 4 miles from the nearest road	Give them first aid. Make arrangements for other girls to support them. If necessary, cut short the activity and arrange rescue.	

Any trip – continued

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
Someone gets bad news (a relative has taken ill or died, for example) and wants to go home	Have a conversation to understand what's happened, then take appropriate steps to help. The cost implications of going home unexpectedly, and whether insurance covers this, should have been discussed ahead of the event.	
A young person won't drink water (they don't like it)	This should be on the girl's health form, so you should know about it before you leave, and can make sure you have an alternative for her to drink. If it hasn't been flagged beforehand, and you only have water, explain that the girl must drink it to stay well. If she won't, contact her parents to collect her.	
A leader decides they aren't travelling back with the group as they want to go on travelling	The leader should have raised this before the trip. If not, suggest that it's their responsibility to contact the international or residential adviser to see if a replacement leader can be found.	
There's no internet access, but your group needs it to access google maps	You should have considered this before the trip and downloaded maps or brought hard copies.	
A leader can't come at the last minute	Suggest it's their responsibility to contact the international or residential adviser and see if a replacement leader can be found.	

Any trip – continued

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
A participant dies during the trip	<p>In the unlikely event this happens, contact Girlguiding [via Commissioner on your REN? Or direct to HQ?] immediately. Contact the person's next of kin. Support other participants.</p> <p>Inform the UK embassy/consulate who will be able to support you with arrangements. Inform your insurance company. Pay for any immediate costs out of contingency. Don't talk to the media about what's happened.</p>	
You need to access money in an emergency	<p>All trips should have a contingency fund built into the original costs – usually about 10% of the total cost of the trip per person. Leaders should have access to this and know the conditions for using the money.</p> <p>As a last resort, if you're abroad, the UK embassy/consulate may be able to provide a loan. This is for essentials only (like getting home) and will have to be repaid.</p>	

Any staying away

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
A girl doesn't shower/bathe, causing personal hygiene issues	Have a conversation with the girl to understand why she isn't washing and then take appropriate steps to help her.	
Parents are tracking their daughter and constantly messaging	You should have discussed expectations around parent contact as part of the parent briefing. Speak to parents and explain the issues this is causing.	
A young person has really bad home sickness	<p>Talk to girls and parents about homesickness before you leave and have a plan to manage it. Try:</p> <p>1. Validating girls' emotions Tell them that whatever they're feeling is OK. Homesickness is nothing to be ashamed of. This will help them feel less isolated.</p> <p>2. Staying in touch (but not too much!) Let girls take advantage of technology like FaceTime and WhatsApp to have a quick phone call or video chat with home. But try to keep it relatively short – sometimes contact with home can actually make home sickness worse.</p> <p>3. Encouraging girls to go out and get involved Homesickness is often most strong when girls are feeling isolated, or when they don't have other activities to take their mind off missing home. Sometimes, all it takes to get rid of homesickness is a good distraction.</p>	
Your whole group doesn't fit into the accommodation, so you need to split up	You should have planned for this ahead of the event, when booking. But sometimes issues occur that are outside your control. Consider ratios, headcounts and how to communicate with each other. Your risk assessment document should cover all this.	

Any staying away – continued

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
Someone gets dumped while away	Have a conversation with the girl to understand how she's feeling and then take appropriate steps to help her.	
Girl claims her money has been stolen while locked in her room/taken from her bag	Check her room/bag and clothing to make sure she hasn't just mislaid it. If you can't find it, how you deal with it will depend on whether you're the only group with access to the area. Consider informing the accommodation's management or the police. Any background information you have about the characters of the girls involved may influence your approach. Could the claim be false?	
Your transfer bus doesn't show up	Contact the company involved. If necessary, make alternative arrangements – consider planning public transport alternatives before you go.	
2 leaders (out of 4) get sick for a few days of the trip	If the leaders are sick with the same symptoms, they should isolate themselves. Remind the whole group about hygiene protocols. Isolate any further cases. Get medical advice if their symptoms seem serious. Let your insurer know if you're planning to seek medical advice. Review your planned activity programme to make sure it's possible to continue with it.	

Any staying away – continued

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
Parents constantly questioning leaders' decisions while on a trip, perhaps by messaging their child	<p>Holding parents' meetings and giving out information and itineraries before the trip should help stop this.</p> <p>Parents may like a WhatsApp group where the group can post pictures and messages about their activities.</p> <p>If a parent is being particularly difficult, it's probably worth the leader having a phone call with them to see what the problem is.</p>	
A young person gets a belly button piercing while away (without their parents' knowledge)	Agree a code of conduct/behavioural expectations before the trip.	

International trips

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
Your leader leaves everyone's passports in the hotel safe and only realises when half-way home	<p>Contact the hotel and check the passports are there. If possible, arrange for someone to bring the passports to you (to the airport, for example). Otherwise, send 2 leaders back in a taxi to get the passports. Or if you're travelling by coach, you could keep the group together and all go back to the hotel.</p> <p>Let your airline know what's happened in case you need to rearrange travel.</p>	
You make impromptu changes to your planned activity/destination while enroute	<p>Do a dynamic risk assessment. If you're doing adventurous activities this should include reviewing the experience and qualification of any new instructors. Record details if possible.</p> <p>Also, discuss with your home contact and the commissioner who signed off the residential event notification (REN) form what level of change they want to know about. For example, they may want to know if travel plans change. But if you're just changing activity and the risk level is the same after assessment, there may be no need to report.</p>	

International trips – continued

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
<p>A young person has never flown before and is really nervous before the flight/verging on a panic attack</p>	<p>If possible, try to help the young person in advance. Could she be encouraged/supported to visit an airport? Or if finances/inclusion budgets allow, do a short domestic flight? Before the flight you could also encourage participants to share what helps them feel more comfortable in new situations. This doesn't have to be as formal as a wellbeing plan, but it's a good conversation to have and document.</p> <p>On the day, don't leave the young person alone. Ask some of the more sensible girls to help her stay calm. Make sure the leader team is aware of her fears and tell cabin crew when you board.</p> <p>If she still feels nervous, one leader could sit with her and try to talk through and de-escalate her feelings. A leader with mental health first aid training would be ideal. Other leaders should occupy the rest of group, so the young person doesn't feel panicked/watched.</p> <p>If the young person categorically refuses to board, she'll have to miss the flight. A leader should stay with her. Call her parents, they may be able to persuade her to take a later flight if available. The leader should get a later flight. In this situation, the parents become responsible for making any later flight arrangements. The girl may travel as an unaccompanied minor and be met by a leader at the destination airport.</p> <p>It would be worth contacting the home contact to ask if she or another leader not on the trip can wait with the girl to be collected. This might allow the whole team to depart as planned.</p>	

International trips – continued

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
Some of the luggage doesn't arrive with you on a flight	<p>Always pack essentials in hand luggage. Consider splitting some group items across baggage (for example, team resources like games and activities).</p> <p>Inform the airline and log the missing luggage at airport 'lost luggage'. Make sure they know where you're staying and ask what the arrangements will be to collect the luggage, or have it delivered when it turns up.</p> <p>See if any of the others have spare clothing participants with missing suitcases could use. Use your contingency budget if needed for essential items.</p>	
The airline cancels your flight, and you have to fly on multiple different replacement flights, splitting up your group	<p>During conversations with the airline about new flights, make sure they're aware you're a Girlguiding group and there are ratios you have to meet. Explain what these are. The airline should honour them, though it may mean waiting longer for replacement flights.</p> <p>Ask the airline to fly you in as few groups as possible. Insist on having a leader with each group and that no participant or leader travels alone. Consider who to split up into what group based on leaders' skills and experience.</p> <p>Ask the airline to arrange overnight hotel accommodation if the delay fits those criteria.</p> <p>Agree with your group how you'll reunite at the other end. Make sure each group has a planned itinerary and all contact numbers. If joining other groups (on an international camp, for example) let organisers know what's happening.</p> <p>Tell your home contact to let parents know. Tell girls what the plan is and ask them not to alarm their parents before the home contact speaks to them.</p> <p>Send a message to parents when the group is reunited, and everyone is safe. Either via your home contact or WhatsApp group, check all parents have received the message.</p>	

International trips – continued

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
Parents contact the media about something happening on the trip	<p>Try to prevent this by talking about contingency plans before the trip, giving parents reassurance you're ready to handle all situations. Make sure you communicate well with parents through your home contact during any problems.</p> <p>If parents do contact the media, the trip leader should get in touch with the communications/media/PR team at Girlguiding Headquarters or for their region. Ask them to manage parents and the media.</p> <p>No leader or girl on the trip should give any press statement or interviews. Keep your home contact in the information loop. Ask them to tell your commissioner, but not to get involved with the media either.</p>	
Locals desperately want to sell you something/get you into their shop or restaurant, and won't accept a polite 'no thank you'	<p>If hassle is likely, make sure participants go out in groups of a minimum of 4, plus a leader if possible. Prepare the participants for the bazaar type experience and explain it's OK to say no.</p> <p>Say 'no' firmly and move out of the area. Be aware going into markets/past taxi ranks etc that hassle is a possibility and have a plan for what you do and don't want to buy. Talk about this as a group. Monitor how the group is feeling and move on/out of the area if needed.</p>	
You miss a flight, or it's cancelled	<p>If it's the airline's fault, contact their staff immediately, explain ratios, and re-book. You may need to contact your travel insurer.</p> <p>If you missed the flight for another reason, contact your travel insurer.</p>	

International trips – continued

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
Someone's forgotten their passport	<p>You can't travel without a passport, so they'll have to go back for it. Look into the possibility of them travelling on a later flight if necessary.</p> <p>If a girl is travelling outward from the UK and needs to take a later flight, advise her parents that they'll need to arrange for her to travel as an unaccompanied minor. The leader will meet her at the destination airport. Depending on the circumstances, travel insurance may cover the costs of changing flights.</p>	
Someone loses or has their passport or possessions stolen when overseas	<p>The trip leader should have a copy of all passports. Contact the British embassy/consulate and arrange for an emergency replacement. Keep parents informed as UK authorities will likely phone them.</p> <p>Report the theft of any other belongings to the local police and your travel insurer and replace as needed.</p>	
You're using phones abroad, where there could be additional costs	<p>Before you leave, buy a roaming plan, or buy a local SIM on arrival. Make sure young members and parents are aware of potential costs of roaming. Have a group charter that covers using mobile phones for all participants so you're on the same page.</p> <p>Leaders can claim for the costs of any calls they have to make related to the trip from the budget.</p>	

International trips – continued

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
<p>You're going somewhere disaster planning might be necessary, for example an earthquake region</p>	<p>Research regions and risks before you go – check the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO)'s advice. If they advise against travel, cancel your trip as your insurance will be invalid.</p> <p>Write a specific contingency plan for each risk you'll face on the trip – for earthquakes, review FCO guidance, brief participants on how to respond in an earthquake, and think about how you'll stay in contact and how you could seek help from the British embassy/consulate. Precise contingency plan will depend on the specific region and your trip plans.</p> <p>If a disaster does happen while you're away, keep participants safe, follow the advice of local authorities, and let the British embassy/consulate know your group is in the country.</p> <p>As soon as you're able, also inform your insurance company, Girlguiding HQ, and your home contact to let parents know. Refer any press enquiries to Girlguiding HQ.</p>	
<p>Someone has lost money or their bank card, or had it stolen</p>	<p>Split money between adults. Keep money hidden in safe places, on your person where possible. Take care when using ATMs and be aware of surroundings/go in a pair. Report the loss or theft to your bank and insurance company if required.</p>	
<p>There are no seatbelts in some vehicles/bad traffic/poor road safety</p>	<p>Research road safety in advance using FCO information. Consider what this means for your travel options when planning your trip. Make sure all leaders and participants are aware of any rules you put in place as a team for travel, for example, wearing seatbelts, or not travelling in cars where seatbelts aren't available.</p>	

International trips – continued

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
There are region-specific health issues, for example, malaria, dengue fever or yellow fever	Research this in advance using FCO travel guidance. Please note you mustn't tell participants what vaccines to get – you can only give them the factual information and get them to visit their doctor/ pharmacy. You may need a yellow fever certificate to enter some countries. If this is the case, treat these like passports and check everyone has them on drop-off.	
Someone has an allergic reaction because foods aren't labelled in the same way as in the UK	Verbally check with shops/restaurants/cooks etc if the allergen is present – use a translation tool to help if necessary (you could prepare this in advance). Don't eat it if there's any doubt. Follow your risk assessment for allergic reactions.	
A participant is in hospital when the trip is due to end/return home	Let the commissioner who signed off REN know. Consider splitting the group so most return home if ratios allow. Contact parents and get them to travel out to take over. Contact your insurer or the British embassy/consulate for support with repatriation. A volunteer or volunteers should stay in the country if needed and possible.	
There are negative attitudes towards members of different races	Research attitudes before you go and consider whether travelling to this country is appropriate.	

International trips – continued

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
A leader or participant is arrested	<p>Research differences in laws before you go (for example, some medications are illegal in other countries, or you could be arrested if you take photos of military institutions). Make sure all leaders and young members are aware.</p> <p>Plan who will accompany the leader or participant. Get written evidence or a statement from the police. Pay any fine from contingency if needed. Keep your commissioner informed and ask for help from the British consulate/embassy as needed.</p>	
There's an act of war/terrorism/political uprising	<p>Keep up to date with FCO guidance before you go and consider cancelling your trip if the risk increases. Follow directions from authorities and any advice from local contacts. Contact the British consulate/embassy and let your commissioner and Girlguiding HQ know what's happening.</p>	
Participant is a victim of violent or sexual assault	<p>Keep up to date with FCO guidance before you go and follow advice on safe areas to visit. Foreigners may be more likely to be targeted – consider whether this means staying in groups or not going out after dark, for example.</p> <p>Your full contingency plan will depend on specific guidance for the country you're visiting.</p>	

International trips – continued

Scenario	Suggested solution/considerations	Contingency plan in place (if appropriate)
You lose internet/phone signal due to a natural disaster or political unrest (some countries have been known to turn off data and messaging services to manage unrest)	Consider downloading VPN software before you go if you think this might be a risk. Use local landlines to contact your UK home contact if needed.	
There are variations in healthcare provision	Research healthcare provision for the regions you're visiting before you go. Travel with a first aid kit and potentially a sharps kit if needed. Contact the British embassy/consulate and your insurer for help if needed.	
Being scammed at point of currency exchange, especially in closed currency countries	Only change currency at reputable exchange bureaus. Research currency exchange options in advance. Report any scams to local authorities.	

We're currently working on updated recommendations for large-scale events. If you'd like to be involved in helping us shape these, please get in touch with Volunteer Support at volunteersupport@girlguiding.org.uk.