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Dear Mr Hardy,

GB/BB-DEA Expeditions - Training Weekends

I am writing to you as co-ordinator of the above to express my concern for the safety of my daughter Elaine in anticipation of the training weekend scheduled for February 2/3 1991.

In the past these have involved night patrols which I accept may well form part & parcel of the DEA package in preparation for the rigours of Snowdonia etc.

However, what is of great concern to me & I am sure to other parents, is the way in which the girls are left in wooded areas (& indeed in lonely/unprotected places) alone & at night without adult/male protection in between check points.

Whilst Elaine & her comrades survived the second such expedition for her Silver Award, the last one towards her gold, in November last was rather eventful & distressing for them & indeed for us when we learned subsequently how vulnerable they had been in the Boxley area.

They set off mid afternoon without any problems but they later found themselves forced to seek first aid from a farmhouse @ 11.30 pm (?) when one of the girls experienced severe stomach pains & general malaise - all very frightening for them & certainly distressing especially in pitch darkness & unfamiliar surroundings.

After help arrived from base the girls (4 of them) continued with their walk & encountered various groups of people en route who made remarks to them which somewhat unnerved them as you might expect. Some of this was the result of misunderstandings with the assessors.

No blame is being laid at any ones door but it seems to me very dangerous indeed to allow 16 or 17 girls to be out at night with no protection apart from check points often miles apart.

Presumably

(a) walks could be done in daylight

(b) if night exercises are essential, male/adult protected must be provided.

(c) walks could be on roads/tracks/farmland rather than in woods where the girls could get lost (indeed they have been already) or are vulnerable to who knows what.

(eg Merecroft Woods, Boxley Woods, Keybourne Grange)

I trust you will appreciate my concern & will adapt your plans to ensure that all the girls & boys are adequately safeguarded from danger because the alternative, on this day, does not bear thinking about.

As Elaine has got this far in her endeavours, I look forward to her safely completing the course with her comrades!

May I take the opportunity of thanking you for all your efforts in encouraging the young people - it is much appreciated.

I look forward to hearing from you before February 2/3!

Many thanks

L.R.