
MEDICAL

There is a free National Health Service (NHS) in the United Kingdom but foreign nationals may be asked to pay for hospital treatment. However treatment is always given first and payment may, or may not, be requested later. Students from European Union countries should bring an EHIS card with them. If you need treatment you can register with a medical surgery as a temporary patient. Your host parents will sort this out for you.

LIVING AMONG OTHER CULTURES

The Youth Exchange Program of Rotary International is designed to promote international understanding, goodwill and peace. This is being accomplished by offering young people the opportunity to live in another country as a member of a Rotary-approved family, and to learn the customs and cultures of other peoples of the world. While students observe and experience the cultures of others, they share their own backgrounds and cultures with their hosts, and the exchange enriches the personal growth of both the students and the hosts. The intention of these exchanges is not necessarily to reach mutual agreement; it is to promote mutual understanding so that we all can live together more peacefully.

In Great Britain & Ireland you will not meet anything like the numbers of exchange students who travel around other parts of the world. However, we are a very multicultural country and so you will make friends from all over the world – except that they live here and will still be here when you return here in years to come. This will give you a very special and different experience from that of your friends from home.

VISITING ROTARY CLUBS

You will be visiting Rotary clubs regularly, your host club in particular. They will expect you to be tidily dressed. Always ask about the 'dress code'. This will tell you if the occasion requires you to wear something special. Be very polite and respectful to the members and to the President in particular and show an interest in what sort of projects they do. Expect to take part in club and district projects and the Rotarians will be very pleased if you offer to help.

TELEPHONE AND EMAIL

Telephone calls to other countries from this country can be very expensive. If you have to use the telephone ask permission from whoever is paying the bill. It is far better to arrange for your parents to call you at a predetermined time each week. Sundays are usually cheaper days to call.

The cheapest way to communicate with family and friends at home is using Skype or Facebook. Most hosts will have a broadband connection for a laptop. When you have a mobile phone on the local network you must ensure that you have all important contact numbers such as host family, Counsellor, Club YEO, District YEO programmed in. Use text messages where possible as they are cheaper. It is very expensive to use mobile phones to make calls to other countries. Received calls are charged to both your phone as well as to the caller. If you have to make contact when abroad then use text messaging.

When you have a mobile phone on the local network you must ensure that you have all important contact numbers such as host family, Counsellor, Club YEO, District YEO programmed in. Use text messages where possible as they are cheaper. It is expensive to use mobile phones to make calls

to other countries. Received calls are charged to both your phone as well as to the caller. If you have to make contact when abroad uses text messaging.

Email is a marvellous tool to keep in touch with your friends, fellow exchange students and Rotary contacts but it can be a problem with your English language development if you spend too much time reading and writing emails in your own language. Try and keep email contact with home to no more than once a week. If you see messages from friends or family at home then do not open them until the day you have chosen for dealing with them. Agree with your parents that if they send a message that they want you to read immediately then they put an agreed word in the subject line such as URGENT.

DRUG SAFETY

When out in a crowd be careful not to leave any drink unattended when you dance or go to the toilet. It is a good idea for one member of your group to stay with the drinks and make sure they are not interfered with.

If you take medicine prescribed by your doctor make sure that your Counsellor and host parents know about it. Never leave your medication in a place where someone else, particularly a child, could get it. Never use medication meant for someone else.

If you lose or run out of any medication tell your host parents quickly so that they can arrange replacements.

OUT AND ABOUT

THEFT

Make sure that you don't leave your valuables where they can be stolen. If you leave any valuable in a car make sure that it is out of sight. Do not walk around with your bag open or with wallets or purses sticking out of your pockets.

If you do have something stolen then you should report it immediately to your Counsellor or Club YEO. Crimes should be reported to the police as property may be recovered later.

If you take something which doesn't belong to you without the permission of the owner you may be committing a crime and be subject to arrest by the police. Students guilty of theft will be sent home immediately, or immediately following any legal proceedings, and parents will be informed of the reason for early return.

TRAVELLING ON TRAINS AND BUSES

It is courteous to give up your seat in a train or bus to someone who is old, infirm or carrying children. You might not see too many young people doing this but you will be an excellent ambassador for your country if you do.

TRAVELLING SAFELY

Trains and Buses

Trains and buses are convenient, generally cheap and a safe way to travel. However if you are travelling on your own on a train and find that you are the only one in the carriage then move to another carriage where there are other people. If you find yourself alone or there are just one or two others on a bus then move to a seat closer to the driver.

Taxis

All licensed taxis carry a license plate on the rear of the vehicle and will have either an illuminated taxi sign on the roof or will show the company name or telephone number clearly on the vehicle. All drivers have ID. Only licensed vehicles showing an illuminated taxi sign on the roof can be stopped in the street or can wait at a taxi rank. All other licensed taxis have to be pre booked.

Talk to your host family or Counsellor and obtain the telephone number of a local licensed taxi company and then programme it into your mobile phone.

Whatever you do

DO NOT get into a taxi on your own.

DO NOT get into an unmarked saloon car or multi-purpose vehicle.

DO NOT flag down a vehicle without an illuminated 'TAXI' sign on the roof.

DO NOT get into a vehicle without first checking that it carries a license plate on the back.

DO NOT sit in the front with the driver.

DO NOT get into a vehicle if you have any doubts.

Walking

In daylight it is safe to walk in most areas but stick to routes where there are other people or there is a regular flow of road traffic. Always walk facing the oncoming traffic so if a car stops you can see the driver and occupants and NEVER accept a lift in a car from a stranger.

Avoid walking anywhere on your own at night but even with someone else ensure that the footpaths you choose are well lit. Avoid walking through parks or other dark areas unless there are plenty of other people around and avoid city centres unless you are in a group.

If you do not know a district well you may get lost. You should carry a street map of the area with you at all times. However, try not to refer to it too often as you will look vulnerable. Ask your host family for advice and if they, or your friends, tell you that you should not walk in a certain area then do as they say.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Remember you are an ambassador for your country, for your family and for Rotary. The manner in which you behave will often determine the willingness of your host Club, host families and your school to accept another student in the future.

It is important that you attend Rotary meetings and social events as often as you can. Rotarians are often quite willing to take students out and give them opportunities to see and do things but if they don't know who you are or what you are like then they won't offer.

If you have a serious problem or concern or have experienced something you are not happy with then you must tell someone you trust. This could be another Youth Exchange student, your teacher, a member of your host Rotary Club, your Counsellor, a host parent, your District YEO or a member of the RIBI team.

You can also contact ChildLine on Telephone number 0800 11 11 for confidential help and guidance.