

There is an MD officer or YEC (Youth Exchange Co-ordinator) who will oversee the inward and outward process and liaise with other countries' YECs and their students. Each District also has a YEC whose role is to liaise with clubs to find candidates for going abroad and Hosts for incoming students. Here in UK we have one annual camp which is held at the beginning of August in different parts of the country. Preceding the Camp hosting takes place assisted by the lions clubs.

The Camp

A District committee is set up 2 years before the due date with a few dedicated lions who need to find the Venue, agree a programme and find those elusive lions that can actually be on site and run the event for the 10 days. Whilst this is taking place there is also the need to find host families who may come from any part of the UK, not necessarily in the same area as the camp. The nominal duration of the visit for the Student is 3 weeks of which the first 8-9 days is with a host family and then all participants (nominally 40 youngsters from all over the world) join together at the Camp for the final 10 days.

Are you thinking of Hosting?

The following notes are to give you an idea of what to expect. Each young person is from different cultures, social status or religion. Some will have already travelled to other countries whilst others may be leaving home for the first time. You will have some choice over who you are hosting and there will be communication before they arrive however you will need to be flexible and adapt to help them enjoy their stay. How long do you wish to host? It is possible to host just for a few days and with several willing people in the same area it 'spreads the load'. All those coming to UK must have a good command of English, once they have been here for a few days it does improve rapidly!

Finance.

Host Families are NOT expected to be out of pocket by virtue of the arrangement. The Students will have money to pay for their entertainment and the Local Lions club may also assist in providing that entertainment or entrance fee.

Correspondence

Before your visitor arrives, Lions will provide you with the youth's name and address in ample time for letters/e-mails to be exchanged. The Visitor will provide a 'Host Letter' to describe him/herself. When replying, you can tell them about your home life, the occupations and interests of family members. Describe your community's activities and attractions and ask if they would like to see anything special. (Many ask to visit London!)

Arrival in UK

Lions will meet the flights and provide an initial welcome. Hosts may wish to greet their visitors at the airport or alternatively Lions will arrange to send the student by road or rail to a convenient rendezvous. Should the Hosts decide to meet their guest and/or take them to the Camp at the end of their stay, they will be reimbursed for their travel expenses.

Jet Lag

On the day of your visitor's arrival, avoid scheduling too many activities. If they have had a long trip or has crossed several time zones, for most people it takes a day or so to regain a regular eating and sleeping cycle, so plan accordingly.

Diet

Hosts will not be expected to provide meals specifically for the student. Part of the exchange purpose is to make the student aware of cultural differences including the food we eat and the way it is prepared. In some cases the student has prepared a meal or two for their Host!

Drugs

Lions Youth Exchange students are informed about the strict rules regarding drug use. (They will be sent home on the next flight) If you become aware of a drug problem, you should notify the Lions Youth Exchange Chairman immediately. This also applies to bad behaviour.

Travel

Your Guests may travel with you in connection with Lions-sponsored functions. If you have planned a trip to show your guest more of your country, or to take a holiday, you should provide the Lions Youth Exchange Chairman with your destination; duration of the trip; address where you can be reached. If your family is planning such a trip, you may want to decide with your guest how expenses will be apportioned. Discussing such matters may sometimes be awkward, but it can avoid even more awkward misunderstandings later on.

Unless advance arrangements have been made between the youth's parents and the Lions Youth Exchange Chairman, exchange youths are expected to return directly home upon the completion of the exchange visit.

Things to Do

There are no hard and fast rules, Liaison with the local Lions Club is essential to ensure harmony and work out a schedule for the week. If there are difficulties your lions club will help to resolve them and also feed forward that information to the Camp Director to forestall the same potential problems at Camp.

Emergencies

In the unlikely event that your visitor requires medical attention, you and the host Lions will be authorized to make necessary arrangements. (Visitors from many countries have a reciprocal funding arrangement with the NHS). All Lions youth exchange students are required to have adequate medical, life, personal property, and liability insurance to cover any and all contingencies during the entire duration of the exchange visit. Any costs not covered by the youth's insurance are ultimately the responsibility of the youth's parents.

Departure

Your local Lions will tell you your visitor's scheduled departure date and time. If you can, you may want to accompany the visitor to the Youth Camp, or in the case of hosting only, to the airport or terminal to see the youth off.

In most cases, the youth will need to confirm his return flight, if travelling by air, at least 72 hours before departure or risk losing his reservation. They also need to be aware of baggage weights especially if they have been shopping in Primark!

After the visitor returns home, you are encouraged to maintain contacts. We know for a fact that many who host have a lasting relationship with their visitors/visitors families and take holidays abroad with them.

You are also encouraged to give the host Lions Club your evaluation of the exchange, its successes, its problems and your suggestions for other host families. And if your experience has been positive, we hope you will tell other interested families about the programme.