

Know your sport: Welfare issues in orienteering

Over the last few years there have been several well-publicised cases of abuse occurring to children in a number of different sports.

Sport England has developed policies which all national governing bodies are expected to implement to try and ensure children and vulnerable adults can participate in sport and are cared for and protected. This includes British Orienteering (BOF) and, in consequence, BOF expect clubs to have in place appropriate procedures. Here we look at the issue and explain how it operates

As a result of new and enhanced rules and procedures developed by British Orienteering, additional requirements were expected to be included in club constitution. At the club's AGM in February 2017, our Constitution was fully revised and updated so as to make it compliant with the new rules. This now includes reference to a 'Club Welfare Officer'. The relevant extract from the Constitution is shown in the box below. Notice that this makes reference to the 'Club's child protection policy'. This in fact was adopted in 2006 and is brief - it simple refers to the national policy and commits the club to 'adopt and promote' the national policy. This Club statement is also given in the box below.

BKO Constitution - 2017 (extract)

11 Discipline and appeals

The Club shall appoint a Club Welfare Officer who will be the lead contact in the event of any child protection concerns. If the post falls vacant, the Chair will act in this role until a replacement is appointed.

All concerns, allegations or reports of poor practice/abuse relating to the welfare of children and young people will be recorded and responded to swiftly and appropriately in accordance with the Club's child protection policy and procedures.

BKO Child Protection Policy (Effective 1st Sep 2006)

Berkshire Orienteers is intent that children and vulnerable adults will find orienteering a safe environment in which to have fun, learn and develop. The Club will do this by adopting and promoting the **British Orienteering Federation Policy on Protecting Young and Vulnerable People**.

O-Safe

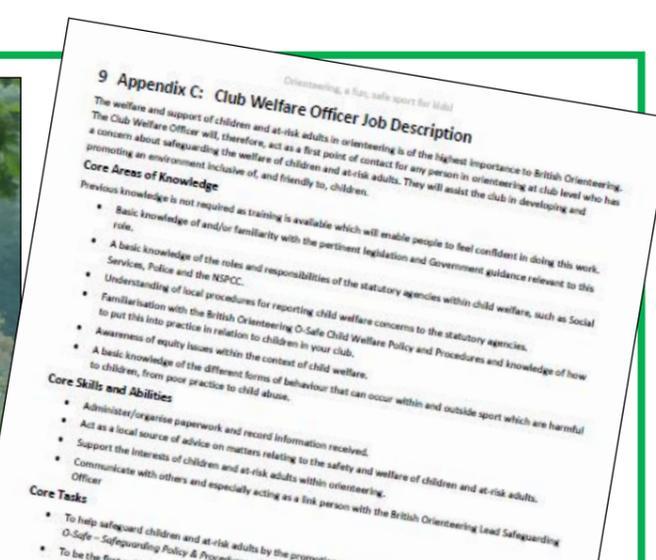
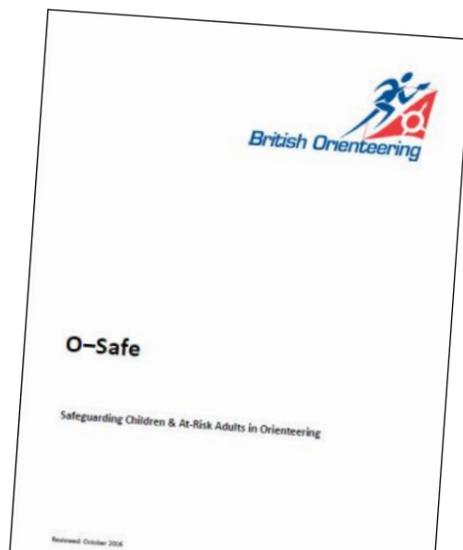
British Orienteering has a Code of Ethics and Behaviour which includes the following as an expected minimum standard:

"All individuals involved in orienteering will, at all times ... abide by 'O Safe' the British Orienteering Safeguarding and Protecting Young People Policy and Procedures and Good Practice Guidelines."

The original safeguarding policy was adopted in 2001. The most recent version is called '**O-Safe - Safeguarding Children & At-Risk Adults in Orienteering**'. This document sets out full details of both the background to the policy and the implications for both employed staff and for volunteers in the sport. It is 35 pages long so difficult to summarise here. The link to an on-line version is given below.

It can be noted that it covers both children and young adults (up to their 18th birthday) and 'at-risk adults' (defined as those adults with mental illness, physical or learning disabilities, or other special needs).

https://www.britishorienteering.org.uk/images/uploaded/downloads/governance_O-Safe%202017.pdf



Welfare Officer - Core Tasks

- To help safeguard children and at-risk adults by the promotion and implementation of the *British Orienteering, O-Safe – Safeguarding Policy & Procedures* at club level.
- To be the first point of contact in the club for the reporting of concerns relating to the safety and welfare of children and vulnerable adult.
- To assist in the raising of awareness of others in orienteering at a club level in respect to the safety and welfare of children and at-risk adults.
- To be the source of advice and information on the safety and welfare of children and at-risk adults at a club level.
- To report regularly to the club's committee, becoming a club Committee Member if appropriate.
- To maintain confidentiality, as far is practically possible, in all child and vulnerable adult's welfare matters – further information is available on confidentiality and the related flow of information in the document entitled 'Protocols for Information Sharing'.

[O-Safe: Extract from Appendix C - Club Welfare Officer Job Description]

The club role

The O-Safe policy requires all clubs affiliated to British Orienteering to take responsibility for safeguarding children and at-risk adults as is required by law and as is suggested by accepted good practice. It then lists a number of expected items. These include "taking responsibility, moral and legal, for safeguarding children and at-risk adults from abuse by implementing procedures that provide a duty of care and well-being".

In particular, clubs are expected to have a '**Club Welfare Officer**'. Their responsibilities and duties are set out in an Appendix to O-Safe. Those items listed as 'core tasks' are given in the box above. As indicated in the second bullet point above, the Welfare Officer is the person who should initially be contacted when a concern is raised. It can be noted that there is also a national contact which can be used if, for any reason, someone feels that it is not appropriate to raise the issue at club level.

The policy then provides details of what procedures to follow once a concern has been raised. The issue of confidentiality is important here as there is a need to ensure that the person raising the concern feels able to discuss the matter without provoking additional problems. This is also dealt with in the O-Safe document.

Orienteering is often seen as a great family sport with several generations in a family being able to participate competitively. Ideally the club's Welfare Officer will have little to do! However should there be an issue, the club will fully implement the O-Safe requirements.



To contact the Club Welfare Officer,
e-mail: welfare@bko.org.uk