

BRITISH ORIENTEERING FEDERATION
PROTECTION POLICY for YOUNG AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE

PROTECTING YOUNG & VULNERABLE PEOPLE

POLICY STATEMENT

The British Orienteering Federation regards the welfare of all young people and vulnerable adults to be of paramount importance. In order to protect them from abuse, the Federation is committed to taking all reasonable steps to provide a safe environment for them to participate in orienteering activities held under the auspices of the Federation. To this end, the Federation will establish, operate, review and update procedures:-

- which promote the safety from abuse of young and vulnerable people,
- which provide a channel through which concerns and allegations can be reported
- for responding speedily to any reports of concerns and allegations.

In addition, the Federation will establish, operate, review and update procedures:-

- for advising adults on how to interact with young and vulnerable people in ways which are beneficial for all concerned
- which support anyone who reports concerns that a young person or vulnerable adult may have been or may be at risk of being abused
- which provide support to and the fair treatment of anyone against whom allegations have been made
- for responding appropriately if it is established that someone is unsuitable for work with or has behaved in an unacceptable manner towards young and vulnerable people

Everyone, whether employee or volunteer, involved with young and vulnerable people within orienteering has a responsibility to follow these procedures; this includes acting as specified in the procedures if they have reason to believe that such a person has been or is in danger of being harmed.

Definitions & Explanations:-

'Protecting Young People' has been chosen as part of the title in preference to the more conventional 'Child Protection' to reflect the age range of young people in orienteering; few children under the age of 7 are involved in the sport separately from their parents and a 17 year old may not like being referred to as a child.

The term 'Vulnerable People' is included in the title in view of the increasing recognition that such people need to be provided with protection similar to that for young people.

'young' people - under the age of 18

'vulnerable people' - 'someone who, whether due to physical or mental disability, age or illness, is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or is unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation'.

'all young people and vulnerable adults' - irrespective of their age, culture, disability, gender, race, sexual orientation – see the BOF Equity Policy

'British Orienteering Federation' (BOF) - the governing body for organised orienteering activities for Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland & England.

'all reasonable steps' – in seeking to achieve recognised good practice standards in the protection of young and vulnerable people, the policy and related procedures take into account the relatively small scale nature of the sport and its heavy dependence on committed but often very busy volunteers

'orienteering activities under the auspices of the Federation' includes activities which are organised at national, association, club and by individuals who are members of a club, association and / or BOF. As well as meaning the participation in orienteering, all aspects of coaching, squad activities and training camps are also included.

'abuse' - physical, emotional or sexual harm or neglect due to the actions or inactions of another person

This policy is solely about protection from abuse. Separate policies, procedures and guidelines promote safety for everyone during orienteering events.

PART A – SUPPORTING THE POLICY

A 1 Designated Officer

Experience has shown that for an organisation to be pro-active in promoting the welfare of young and vulnerable people and to effectively respond to suspicions and allegations of abuse, responsibility for such activities needs to be clearly identified.

BOF will identify a 'Designated Officer' to have responsibility for managing the procedures under this policy. The duties of this role (which extend across all aspects of orienteering held under the auspices of BOF) will be:-

1.1 Promoting the Safety of Young and Vulnerable People

This will include:

- a) ensuring the procedures are known and followed
- b) identifying and communicating codes, guidance and practices as specified below. Those recommended by the National Coaching Foundation (NCF) or the Child protection in Sport Unit (CPSU) will be used unless the Designated Officer believes an alternative is preferable or additions and amendments are appropriate to orienteering activity. He/she must obtain Management Committee approval for such a change.
- c) liaising with the Criminal Record Bureau to obtain disclosure information about employees and volunteers who have close involvement with young and vulnerable people

1.2 Point of Contact for Concerns and Allegations

(For detailed guidance see the section titled 'Responding to Concerns and Allegations')

The Designated Officer will be the point of contact for all concerns and allegations about actual or possible abuse and poor practice which come to the attention of anyone engaged in orienteering activities held under the auspices of the Federation.

If the Designated Officer believes there are grounds for suspecting abuse has taken place or might do so, it is his/her duty to refer the matter to the appropriate external agency - **it is not his/her responsibility to investigate such concerns and allegations**. If this person believes there are grounds for suspecting poor practice (e.g. failure to follow codes of practice) has taken place rather than abuse, his/her duty is to report the matter for further investigation within BOF.

1.3 Promoting Sensitivity & Confidentiality

The Designated Officer will promote the sensitive handling and confidentiality that is so important in all aspects of this work. This will involve ensuring that external expectations on such matters are met and that any other appropriate practices and guidelines are identified and followed.

1.4 Accountability

The Designated Officer will:-

- a) present an annual report to BOF Management Committee with a summary in anonymous form of:-
 - the issues dealt with under this policy,
 - decisions made and action taken,
 - the provision and/or need for training, information, education, advice and support
 - recommendations for changes or improvements in policies and procedures
- b) seek the approval of the Management Committee of any decision he/she has made to adopt codes, guidance and practices which in any way differ from those specified by either the NCF or CPSU

A 2 Identification for Inclusion

It is important to clarify to whom these procedures apply.

Some of the procedures arising from this policy, e.g. reporting concerns to the Designated Officer, apply to everyone engaged in orienteering activities. Other procedures apply to roles of both employees and volunteers that have involvement with young and vulnerable people; such roles are 'identified for inclusion' under such procedures. The Designated Officer role and all accredited coaches will be so identified. The Designated Officer is responsible for deciding, on the basis their role having close involvement with young & vulnerable people, which other employee and volunteer roles are identified for inclusion and will report such decisions to the Management Committee.

A 3 Code of Ethics & Conduct

The existence of and adherence to organisational codes of ethics and conduct by adults promotes both the safety from abuse of young and vulnerable adults and reduces the risk to the adult of unjustified allegation.

The Designated Officer will ensure that everyone in a role 'identified for inclusion' has:-

- a copy of a code of ethics and conduct
- has signed a commitment to it, and
- has been informed that failure to adhere to the code will be regarded as a disciplinary matter.

A 4 Guidance about Abuse

Awareness aids protection. Guidance about what abuse is and possible indications of abuse can raise the awareness of everyone, particularly young and vulnerable people themselves, their parents and carers, coaches and others with an involvement with young and vulnerable people.

The Designated Officer will make such guidance available. This will be issued in written form (augmented by training programmes where feasible) to all those whose role is 'identified for inclusion'. It will be made available in various ways to everyone involved in orienteering activities under the auspices of BOF, particularly young and vulnerable people and their parents and carers.

A 5 Bullying

There is increasing recognition that bullying is a form of abuse and that organisations need to have procedures for minimizing it and responding to it when it occurs.

The Designated Officer will ensure there are anti-bullying strategies and guidance about bullying in place for all settings under the auspices of BOF in which young or vulnerable people are provided with services or are living away from home. He/she will ensure that everyone involved with the delivery of such services will be required to sign a commitment to follow these strategies.

A 6 Photography, Videoing, Publicity

Some people with unsavoury interests in young and vulnerable people use sports as a means of pursuing these interests. It is important, therefore, that sports are aware of this and take action to obstruct such activities.

Some sports (e.g. swimming and gymnastics) have found it necessary to protect young and vulnerable people from exploitation by restricting the photographing & videoing of such people participating in their sports to those who have a valid reason for doing so, e.g. parents or coaches. It is not felt that BOF needs to take such a stance.

The identities of young and vulnerable people should be protected when information or photographs of them are published whether in print or on the web – photographs should not normally be published with full names or any other means of identifying them.

PART B - MONITORING AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCEDURES

B 1 Recruitment and Accreditation of Employees and Volunteers

Good practice in the recruitment of both staff and volunteers for roles involving unsupervised contact with young and vulnerable people reduces the risk of unsuitable people being appointed.

The Designated Officer will ensure the use of appropriate practices for the recruitment, employment and deployment of employees, and accreditation and re-accreditation of volunteers whose roles have been identified for inclusion in these procedures.

The Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) is being established as a source of information about the suitability of employees and volunteers for activities involving young and vulnerable people. All employees and volunteers appointed or accredited by BOF in roles where they are likely to have unsupervised involvement with young or vulnerable people will be required to provide an enhanced disclosure from the CRB. The Designated Officer will be the BOF link to the CRB and will ensure that the CRB code of practice about the use and storage of such information is adhered to. In the event of the Designated Officer receiving information that casts doubt on someone's suitability, he/she will report such doubts as appropriate (e.g. to the line manager and/or a selection panel) for the implications to be considered.

B 2 Induction, Supervision and Appraisal

Induction, supervision and appraisal can promote good practice, reduce the risk of abuse and poor practice occurring. They can also provide early recognition of concerns and allegations about abuse and poor practice.

Within the limits of what is possible within a sport that is heavily dependent on volunteer effort, many of whom have limited time availability, BOF will seek to provide employees and volunteers in roles identified for inclusion with:-

- Induction - written guidelines on roles and responsibilities, lines of reporting and supervision
- Supervision - an oversight of what they are doing and related feedback
- Appraisal - to identify achievements, training needs and to set new goals.

Those responsible for the supervision of others (e.g. line managers, squad and tour managers) must be alert to:-

- the possibility of poor practice or abuse
- their responsibility to act on concerns and allegations at an early stage

Such action should normally involve contacting the Designated Officer for guidance and / or to provide information about concerns.

B 3 Complaints Procedure

One of the lessons from enquiries into incidents of child abuse is that the absence of an effective complaints procedure has been a key factor in concerns or allegations about abuse going unreported.

BOF will have a procedure for use by a parent, young or vulnerable person to lodge a complaint about poor practice and / or allegations of abuse. BOF will ensure that parents and young and vulnerable people are aware of the existence of this procedure and are provided with support and guidance in its use. The Designated Officer **must** receive immediate information about complaints that suggest concerns and allegations of abuse or poor practice.

B 4 Responding to Concerns and Allegations: All Settings

Another of the lessons from child abuse inquiries is that a failure by organisations to act appropriately when concerns or allegations have been raised can result in further harm to the young or vulnerable person or the abusing of more young and vulnerable people. This failure to act can be by the person with the initial concerns or it can also be because the organisation does not respond appropriately when the concerns have been reported.

This section specifies the responses that must to be made to **all** concerns or allegations of abuse, whether the alleged perpetrator is engaged in BOF activities or is from outside the sport. A later section refers to the particular issues involved when the allegation is about the actions of someone within the sport.

Concerns and allegations of abuse could emerge in relation to:-

- recent or current orienteering based activities
- recent or current circumstances outside orienteering (e.g. within a family, another sport or other organization)
- occurrences some months or years earlier, whether within or outside orienteering

It is not the responsibility of anyone engaged in orienteering activities under the auspices of BOF to investigate or decide whether or not abuse is taking place. Local authority Social Services Departments and the Police have statutory duties to do so.

Anyone concerned about the behaviour of an adult or another young or vulnerable person towards a young person or vulnerable adult should contact the Designated Officer as soon as possible.

The Designated Officer will, immediately and in strict confidence, refer all allegations of abuse to an appropriate external agency, assist that agency with the investigation if requested, and seek guidance on how to proceed and who to inform. Other allegations or complaints, e.g. of poor practice or failure to follow guidance or codes of conduct, will be dealt with within BOF. The Designated Protection Officer will keep a detailed confidential record of all complaints received, enquiries made, and decisions and actions taken.

Allegations of Previous Abuse

Allegations of abuse may be made some time after the event; they could be made by an adult who was abused as a child, or could be about an employee or volunteer who is still currently working with children. Where such an allegation is made, BOF will follow the procedures as detailed above because other children, either within or outside sport, may be at risk from this person.

B 5 Responding to Concerns & Allegations: People Involved in Orienteering

This section supplements the previous section in specifying how allegations against employees, volunteers or anyone else involved in activities under the auspices of BOF should be handled.

It is important that everyone is aware of the possibility of abuse and poor practice taking place within orienteering activities under the auspices of BOF. **All** concerns and allegations must be taken seriously and reported to the Designated Officer.

Concerns and Allegations about Abuse

This part is in addition to the procedure outlined in the above section.

When reference is made to an external agency, the Designated Officer will be guided by that agency about whether to inform the person who is the subject of the complaint or allegation, and on whether to suspend that person from their duties pending the outcome of the inquiry. When the external agency has completed its investigation the Designated Officer will decide what action, if any, to recommend within BOF in relation to the findings of that investigation and any outstanding matters, such as concerns about poor practice.

Concerns about Poor Practice

Failure to adhere to codes of ethics and good practice can be due to lack of knowledge of the code, thoughtlessness or long established practice; however, it can be related to abusive behaviour. It is, therefore, important that all suspicions of poor practice are reported to the Designated Officer irrespective of whether or not there are also concerns or allegations about abuse. The Designated Officer will investigate the suspicion and will be aware of the possibility that abuse has taken place or there is a danger of it doing so. If he/she believes there are reasons for suspecting abuse has or could take place, he/she will refer the matter to an appropriate external agency. Whether or not such a referral is made, formal procedures within BOF will be followed to decide if poor practice appears to have taken place and, if so, what action should be taken in relation to the person concerned. The key factor in the decision about what action to take must be the promotion of the welfare of young and vulnerable people.

Support for the Reporter of Suspected Abuse

The suspicion or discovery that an employee or volunteer is, or may be, abusing a young or vulnerable person is likely to cause strong feelings among other staff, volunteers, parents and carers and other people both within and outside the sport. The reporting of such matters and any subsequent involvement with the appropriate agency that is following up the concern or allegation may also cause considerable discomfort. BOF will support anyone who reports his or her concern or allegation about abuse or poor practice.

Support for the Person Complained About

BOF will ensure that any person who is the subject of a complaint or allegation is treated fairly and with respect, and with due regard for privacy and confidentiality. Pending the outcome of any investigation, BOF will arrange for support to be offered to the person against whom the concerns or allegations have been lodged. This support will be offered by someone who will not be involved in the investigation or in any disciplinary procedures that may prove to be necessary.

B 6 Review of the Policy & Procedures

It is anticipated this policy and, more likely, the procedures will need updating because:-

- *the guidance about good practice within sports organisations is developing rapidly*
- *as this is the first BOF policy and set of procedures dedicated to the protection of young and vulnerable people, experience of use is likely to identify the need for addition and amendment.*

The Designated Officer's annual report to Management Committee will include recommendations for changes and improvements in either policy or procedures.

PART C – COMMUNICATION

C 1 Publicising the Policy and Procedures

It is important to support this detailed policy with clear, effective guidance to all members, clubs and associations, and to young and vulnerable people and their parents or guardians.

BOF will publicise the policy and procedures through its website, its members magazine Focus, and in other ways. Advice and guidance on implementing and monitoring the policy and procedures, including the use of BOF as an umbrella body for obtaining CRB disclosure information, will be issued to all clubs and associations. A statement of advice and guidance will be issued to all BOF juniors and their parents, and a separate statement of policy, procedures and guidance will be issued to all members.

C 2 Liaison with Other Sports

It is recognized that those with an unsavoury interest in young and vulnerable people tend to seek out opportunities where they can have contact with them and are likely to move from one setting to another in search of such opportunities. Organisations can reduce this happening by linking with other organisations involved in similar activities to exchange information about individuals about whom there have been either concerns or allegations of abuse and poor practice.

The Designated Officer will identify appropriate organizations with which to exchange information and seek to establish such links. He/she will inform the Management Committee of the links which have been established.

PART D – EDUCATION, TRAINING, ADVICE AND SUPPORT

D 1 Information for Young and Vulnerable People

An effective way of promoting the welfare of young and vulnerable people is to provide them with information about their rights and how they can protect themselves.

Because many of the young people involved in orienteering activities are teenagers, the provision of such information can empower them to protect their own welfare. The Designated Officer will make available to them:-

- information about what is and what isn't reasonable behaviour towards them
- information about what they can do should they become concerned about the behaviour of others
- assurance that they will be supported if they raise concerns about abuse

D 2 Training

Training can equip a person with a knowledge appropriate to their role about:-

- awareness about abuse
- expectations on them, e.g. adherence to a code of ethics and conduct
- what to do if they have or become aware of concerns or allegations of poor practice and/or abuse

The operation of the policy and procedures will require both initial and subsequent training according to the role involved, e.g. the training needs of the Designated Officer's role in these procedures will be different to that of coaches working with young and vulnerable people.

Drawing upon guidance from Sport England, the Designated Officer will specify the training needs of those in roles identified for inclusion and seek means of meeting these needs. In so doing, he/she will take account of the significant volunteer nature of orienteering and the wide but thin geographical spread of those in roles identified for inclusion.

D 3 Advice & Support - Helplines & Expert Advice

Information about sources of help & guidance can be invaluable means for young and vulnerable people who are at risk of abuse or are being abused. Information will be provided through a range of BOF communication channels.

Advice can be obtained by telephoning:-

- the local Social Services Dept and asking to speak to the duty worker, or
- the NSPCC 24-hour free phone Helpline on 0808 800 500.

This assistance can be sought by anyone being abused or concerned that they are at risk of being abused. It can also be sought by anyone (including the Designated Officer) with doubts about what to do about concerns and allegations.

D 4 Support for the Designated Officer & Guidance to BOF

In view of the emotional nature of issues involving possible or actual abuse and the limited knowledge and experience currently available to the designated officer and BOF, it is

important that the former is provided with support and the latter with guidance by people with relevant experience.

The Federation will set up a panel consisting of a small number of people (e.g. four) with an understanding of the issues involved in protecting young and vulnerable people from abuse. To ensure that an appropriate range of experience is available, these people can be drawn from either within or outside BOF. The role of these people is to act as a source of:-

- advice and support to the Designated Officer in dealing with individual occurrences of concerns and allegations
- guidance to the Management Committee about the development of the policy and procedures

Bob Roach