

Bullying & Harassment Policy

Owner	Lead Safeguarding Officer
Approval	British Orienteering Board
Effective date	30.09.26
Review cycle	Annual check; full review every three years and sooner after material changes

Our commitment: British Orienteering will not tolerate bullying, harassment, sexual harassment or victimisation. Everyone involved in or affected by orienteering should be treated with dignity and respect and be able to speak up without fear of retaliation.

Place in the framework: This is a mandatory conduct-and-welfare policy with an embedded response procedure. It sits alongside, but does not form an annex to, the Safeguarding Children and Adults Policy. A report may be routed into safeguarding, lower-level concerns, complaints, employment or disciplinary processes. Safeguarding triage and immediate protection take priority where relevant.

1. Purpose and status

This document sets the behavioural standard for preventing and responding to bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and victimisation in or connected with orienteering. It provides one accessible reporting and triage route while preserving the distinct legal and procedural requirements that may apply to children, adults, workers, volunteers, members and participants.

It does not make every disagreement a safeguarding matter, replace British Orienteering's Safeguarding Regulations, determine whether conduct is unlawful, or create a separate disciplinary or appeal jurisdiction. The person receiving a report must arrange appropriate triage rather than requiring the reporter to select the correct procedure.

This is a British Orienteering policy. It establishes a common minimum standard of conduct and protection across British Orienteering activities in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Legal definitions, statutory criteria, external agencies and procedures may differ according to the home nation, location, activity and status of the people involved.

2. Scope and application

This document applies to British Orienteering and, through membership, affiliation, employment, appointment, contract, licence, qualification, accreditation, event entry or other agreement, to affiliated Associations and Clubs, members, prospective members, participants, directors, employees, workers, contractors, volunteers, coaches, officials, event teams, parents, carers, spectators and other persons within British Orienteering's jurisdiction.

It covers conduct at events, training, meetings, workplaces, selection and performance activity, travel, accommodation, social activity and any communication connected with orienteering, including email, messaging, gaming, social media and other online spaces. Conduct outside the sport may be relevant where it affects safety, welfare, suitability, participation, working relationships or confidence in the sport.

Employees and workers also remain subject to the applicable employment policies. Where employment rights or duties are engaged, British Orienteering will use the appropriate employment

process and obtain HR or legal advice. Safeguarding concerns are nevertheless triaged and protected under the safeguarding framework.

A constituent Association may maintain supplementary procedures reflecting its governance arrangements and the legislation and statutory guidance applicable in its home nation. Those procedures must be consistent with this policy and provide no lesser standard of conduct, reporting access, protection or procedural fairness where British Orienteering has jurisdiction.

Where British Orienteering has jurisdiction, this policy and the British Orienteering Regulations apply. A home-nation may determine how a matter is administered locally, but must not prevent direct reporting to British Orienteering, delay or restrict a statutory referral, or disapply British Orienteering's safeguarding or disciplinary powers. Any question about jurisdiction or the appropriate route will be determined under the applicable governing documents and Regulations.

3. Definitions

Bullying

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, or an abuse or misuse of power, that undermines, humiliates, denigrates, injures, excludes or frightens another person. It often involves repetition and a real or perceived power imbalance, but British Orienteering may address a single serious incident or conduct capable of repetition under its behavioural standards.

Intent to cause harm is relevant but is not required before British Orienteering can act. The impact, context, seriousness, power relationship, pattern and what the person knew or reasonably should have known will all be considered.

Harassment

For this policy, harassment means unwanted conduct that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. In deciding effect, the person's perception, the circumstances and whether it was reasonable for the conduct to have that effect will be considered.

Some harassment is unlawful. The Equality Act 2010 applies in England, Wales and Scotland, with different provisions according to whether the setting concerns employment, services or an association. Northern Ireland has separate equality and discrimination legislation. Legal rights and definitions therefore depend on the jurisdiction and context. British Orienteering applies the wider behavioural standard in this policy whether a statutory definition is ultimately met.

Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect described above. It can include sexual comments or jokes, intrusive questions, sexualised messages or images, unwanted touching, staring, gestures, propositions, pressure for dates or sexual contact, or less favourable treatment because someone rejected or submitted to sexual conduct.

Victimisation and retaliation

Victimisation includes subjecting a person to a detriment because they made, supported or were believed likely to make or support a complaint or allegation of discrimination or harassment. This policy also prohibits wider retaliation against anyone who reports, supports, gives evidence, seeks advice or participates in a safeguarding, conduct or complaint process in good faith.

Child-on-child bullying

Bullying or harassment between children can be harmful even where it is described as banter, conflict or part of a team culture. It may involve physical, emotional, sexual, discriminatory or online behaviour and must be considered under the Child Safeguarding Annex. Responsibility for protection and response remains with adults.

4. Examples of prohibited behaviour

The following are examples; the list is not exhaustive and context matters:

- threats, intimidation, physical aggression, practical jokes that create risk, or deliberate damage to belongings;
- shouting, humiliation, persistent criticism, ridicule, name-calling, hostile sarcasm or spreading malicious rumours;
- deliberate and unjustified exclusion, isolation, withholding necessary information or opportunities, or using selection, status, access or authority to punish;
- unreasonable pressure, threats to a role or place, coercive control, or misuse of coaching, officiating, employment, committee or performance-pathway power;
- conduct related to disability, race, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief, age or another personal characteristic, including stereotypes, slurs and intrusive questioning;
- unwanted sexual conduct, sexualised banter, image-based abuse, stalking or persistent unwanted contact;
- online pile-ons, impersonation, abusive posts, exclusion from necessary groups, sharing private information or images, or encouraging others to target a person;
- initiation, hazing, degrading team rituals or conduct dismissed as tradition or banter;
- pressuring a person not to report, identifying or blaming a reporter, interfering with evidence, or disadvantaging someone for speaking up; and
- failing to act on known patterns or permitting a culture in which such conduct is normalised.

5. What this policy does not prohibit

Legitimate, proportionate and respectfully communicated coaching, selection feedback, performance management, governance decisions, disagreement, correction of unsafe behaviour and disciplinary action are not bullying or harassment merely because they are unwelcome. They may become inappropriate where they are humiliating, discriminatory, retaliatory, malicious, arbitrary, persistently unreasonable or an abuse of power.

Ordinary conflict may be suitable for early resolution, but no person will be required to meet, mediate with or confront another person where there is a safeguarding concern, sexual harassment, violence, coercion, serious power imbalance, fear of retaliation or another reason that makes informal resolution unsafe or unfair.

6. Principles for prevention and response

- **Safety first:** immediate protection and statutory reporting are not delayed by an internal process.
- **Children:** the child's welfare and best interests are paramount; children are listened to and supported to participate without carrying responsibility for protection.
- **Adults:** the response is person-led and outcome-focused so far as safely and lawfully possible; statutory Adult at Risk duties are considered where the applicable criteria may be met.
- **Accessible reporting:** a person may report directly to British Orienteering and does not need proof, a completed form or a legal label.

- **No retaliation:** reporters, witnesses and supporters are protected from intimidation or disadvantage.
- **Proportionality:** the least intrusive effective response is used, taking account of harm, risk, pattern, power, intent, insight and desired outcomes.
- **Fairness:** concerns are approached with an open mind; conflicts are managed; the person complained about is told the substance of the concern and given a fair opportunity to respond, subject to lawful protective restrictions.
- **Privacy:** information is shared only where necessary, proportionate and lawful; confidentiality is not promised and does not prevent safeguarding or statutory action.
- **Equality:** reasonable adjustments and accessible communication are provided, and discriminatory assumptions are avoided.

7. Responsibilities and prevention

British Orienteering Board and senior leadership

Set the culture, approve the framework, ensure proportionate resources and independence, assess organisational risks, receive anonymised assurance and hold leaders to account. British Orienteering will take reasonable and proactive steps throughout the UK to prevent sexual harassment. In England, Wales and Scotland, this includes compliance with the employer's preventative duty under the Equality Act 2010. In Northern Ireland, British Orienteering will apply the same organisational standard while complying with the separate legislation applicable there.

British Orienteering

- publish clear standards, reporting routes and process information;
- include bullying, harassment, sexual harassment and retaliation risks in safeguarding, equality, employment, event and digital risk assessment;
- provide proportionate training for staff, Board members, coaches, officials, Welfare Officers, volunteers and complaint handlers;
- ensure role boundaries, supervision and safer recruitment address misuse of power;
- monitor themes, repeat names, locations and cultural risks without waiting for a formal complaint; and
- coordinate safeguarding, equality, employment and disciplinary action without duplicating findings or sanctions unfairly.

Associations and Clubs

Within British Orienteering's jurisdiction, are bound by this document; promote the Codes of Conduct; appoint and support a Welfare Officer; make reporting routes visible; challenge inappropriate behaviour; preserve records; notify and escalate concerns as required; cooperate with British Orienteering; and implement protective measures and outcomes. A Club or Association must not conduct a safeguarding investigation or use informal resolution where British Orienteering has directed otherwise.

Everyone

Treats others with dignity, challenges or reports harmful behaviour where safe, cooperates with proportionate enquiries, preserves relevant information and does not retaliate. Coaches, leaders and others with power have an enhanced responsibility to model boundaries and act on concerns.

8. Reporting

Emergency: If anyone is in immediate danger or needs urgent medical help, call 999 or the relevant emergency service. Possible crimes may be reported directly to police. Do not delay urgent help while contacting British Orienteering.

Report to safeguarding@britishorienteering.org.uk or the current published British Orienteering reporting route.

A report may be made by the affected person, a child, parent or carer, witness, colleague, Club or Association, member of the public, or another organisation. It may be anonymous, although anonymity can limit the action available. A Club or Association Welfare Officer, line manager or committee member may help, but is not a gatekeeper. A concern about the Lead Safeguarding Officer, senior leader or Board member must use the published conflict and escalation route.

- Report promptly but a delay does not invalidate a concern.
- State what happened, when and where, who was involved, any witnesses or records, immediate risks, communication needs and the outcome sought, so far as known.
- Preserve messages, posts, documents and contemporaneous notes without unlawfully accessing accounts or forwarding illegal or intimate material.
- Do not investigate, confront people, organise a group discussion or promise confidentiality before triage.

9. Initial response and triage

1. Acknowledge the report, check immediate safety and explain the next step and limits of confidentiality.
2. Record the information factually and consider reasonable adjustments, safe contact, support and any risk of retaliation.
3. Screen first for child safeguarding, adult safeguarding, possible crime, sexual misconduct, position-of-trust concerns and urgent protective measures.
4. Identify conflicts and appoint a person with suitable competence and independence to decide the route.
5. Select and record the most appropriate lead procedure, consulting safeguarding, HR, equality or legal specialists where necessary.
6. Tell the reporter which route will lead, who is responsible and what information can safely be provided. Review the route if risk or information changes.
7. A report should be notified promptly to British Orienteering where it involves a child; may involve adult safeguarding; concerns sexual conduct, discriminatory harassment or retaliation; involves a person in authority or a Welfare Officer; is repeated, serious or cross-club; may require restriction; presents a conflict; or cannot safely and competently be managed locally.

10. Selecting the correct process

Nature of concern	Likely route
Immediate danger, possible crime or urgent medical need	Emergency services or police first; then notify British Orienteering when safe.

Concern involving a child or possible risk to a child	Safeguarding triage under the Child Safeguarding Policy and Responding Procedure. Do not investigate locally.
Adult safeguarding concern or an adult who may meet statutory criteria	Adult safeguarding triage, applying Making Safeguarding Personal, consent and capacity principles.
Lower-level conduct or poor practice	Lower-Level Concerns and Poor Practice Procedure, with escalation where there is repetition, power imbalance or increasing risk.
Member, participant or volunteer misconduct	Complaints or disciplinary route, subject to safeguarding triage and any protective measures.
Employee, worker or job applicant matter	Appropriate employment, grievance or disciplinary procedure, with safeguarding and equality input where required.
Possible unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation	Equality and Inclusion route plus the appropriate complaint, employment or disciplinary procedure; specialist advice where needed.
Serious safeguarding conduct or risk within the Regulations	Safeguarding Regulations, including interim measures, independent decision-making and appeal rights.

One procedure should normally be designated as the lead route. Necessary parallel action may continue, for example, protective safeguarding measures alongside an employment process, but decision-makers must coordinate evidence, fairness, confidentiality and outcomes. The Safeguarding Regulations prevail on safeguarding jurisdiction, protective powers, regulatory outcomes and safeguarding appeals.

11. Early or informal resolution

Following triage, a low-risk matter may be addressed through advice, clarification, an agreed communication boundary, reflective conversation, facilitated discussion, apology, training, supervision or mediation. Participation must be informed and voluntary; the affected person must not be blamed or pressured to reconcile.

Informal resolution is normally unsuitable for possible abuse, sexual harassment, violence, coercion, serious discriminatory conduct, retaliation, repeated behaviour, significant power imbalance, a position-of-trust concern, disputed facts requiring formal findings, or where the person affected does not feel safe. It must never replace a required statutory referral or safeguarding response.

The agreed action, responsibility, review date and escalation trigger must be recorded. Recurrence or non-compliance requires reassessment.

12. Formal response

Where formal action is required, the designated procedure governs appointment, notice, evidence, standard of proof, hearing or meeting, outcomes and appeal. As minimum safeguards:

- the decision-maker or investigator is suitably competent, impartial and free from material conflict;

- the issues and relevant behavioural or regulatory provisions are identified clearly;
- the person complained about receives sufficient information and a reasonable opportunity to respond, subject to lawful protective measures;
- children, adults needing support and witnesses receive proportionate adjustments and are not asked to repeat accounts unnecessarily;
- relevant evidence, context, pattern, power and impact are considered, and stereotypes or assumptions are avoided;
- findings, action and reasons are recorded and communicated as far as safe, lawful and fair; and
- any appeal follows the route attached to the lead procedure; this document creates no duplicate appeal.

British Orienteering may pause or adapt internal action to avoid prejudicing police, statutory, regulatory or employment processes. A lack of criminal charge, statutory action or legal finding does not prevent a proportionate decision under British Orienteering's own standards.

13. Interim and protective measures

British Orienteering or an authorised employing or organising body may take temporary, non-punitive measures where reasonably necessary to protect people, preserve integrity or manage risk. Measures may include contact or communication boundaries, supervision, change of duties, exclusion from a location or group, temporary restriction or suspension, support and evidence-preservation directions.

Measures must have a recorded reason, scope and review date, be communicated only to those who need to know, and be reviewed when circumstances change. Safeguarding interim measures are governed by the Safeguarding Regulations.

14. Possible outcomes

Depending on the applicable procedure, outcomes may include no further action; advice; an apology or restorative step; behavioural agreement; training, supervision or mentoring; reasonable adjustment; warning; communication, role or participation restriction; removal from a role; employment or disciplinary sanction; regulatory outcome; referral to another body; or organisational learning and culture action.

An outcome is based on seriousness, harm, risk, pattern, power, intent, insight, response, mitigation, previous concerns, the needs and wishes of affected people, and the least restrictive effective protection. Action should address both individual conduct and any organisational conditions that allowed it.

15. Support, communication and protection from retaliation

British Orienteering will offer or signpost proportionate, accessible support to the affected person, children and parents or carers, reporters, witnesses and the person complained about. Support is not evidence that a finding has been made. Safe-contact preferences and the need for an advocate, companion, interpreter or other adjustment will be considered.

People will receive timely information about the process and, so far as lawful and fair, progress and outcome. They may not receive confidential employment action, personal data or evidence about another person.

Any intimidation, retaliation, interference with evidence or breach of a protective measure must be reported immediately and may result in separate action.

16. Confidentiality, information sharing and records

Information will be accurate, relevant, access-controlled and shared only where necessary, proportionate and lawful. Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed where information must be shared to protect a child or adult, address risk to others, comply with law, refer to an agency or regulator, or ensure a fair process.

British Orienteering and relevant Clubs or Associations will record the report, triage, consent and wishes where relevant, information-sharing decisions, route, protective measures, actions, reasons, outcome and review. Records will be retained under the approved safeguarding, conduct, complaint or employment retention schedule, according to the lead process and continuing risk.

17. Reports not upheld and deliberately false reports

A report made in good faith will not attract action merely because it is mistaken, cannot be substantiated or is not upheld. Deliberately false or malicious information may be addressed under the appropriate conduct procedure, but this conclusion must not be inferred simply from inconsistency, delay, withdrawal, lack of corroboration or a finding that the evidence is insufficient.

18. Monitoring and review

British Orienteering will review anonymised themes at least annually, including reporting access, timeliness, recurrence, retaliation, online conduct, protected-characteristic and sexual-harassment risks, power imbalances, outcomes, training, adjustments and feedback. Employers and activity leaders should reassess risks when roles, venues, travel, technology or participant groups change.

This document will be fully reviewed at least every three years and sooner following legal or guidance change, a significant case, pattern, organisational change or learning review. Before adoption, it should receive safeguarding, equality, employment, data-protection and home-nation legal review, including consultation with people affected by bullying and harassment.

19. Review basis

This consultation draft has been structured with reference to NSPCC Sport guidance on preventing bullying, inclusion and safeguarding children; Ann Craft Trust safeguarding-adults-in-sport principles; Equality and Human Rights Commission guidance; Equality Commission for Northern Ireland guidance; and the principal safeguarding frameworks for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. It is a governance document, not legal advice or a finding about the application of equality or employment law to any individual case.