Responding to a Safeguarding Concern

Owner	Lead Safeguarding Officer
Effective date	27.09.2026
Review cycle	Annual check; full review every three years and sooner after material changes

This mandatory procedure explains what to do when a safeguarding concern is experienced, witnessed or disclosed. It covers immediate action, reporting and the handover to British Orienteering. Internal assessment, investigation and case routes are governed by the Safeguarding Regulations and Safeguarding Case Management Procedure.

If someone is in immediate danger, needs urgent medical help or a crime is in progress, call 999.

Scope and responsibilities

This Procedure applies to British Orienteering, Affiliated Associations and Clubs, Welfare Officers, staff, coaches, officials, volunteers and event or activity organisers. A person receiving a Concern must protect immediate safety, listen, record and report. They must not investigate possible abuse or screen out a Concern because it appears minor, historic, outside the sport or unsupported by proof.

The five immediate actions

1. **Protect immediate safety.** Call 999 for immediate danger, urgent medical need or a crime in progress. Take reasonable steps to make the location or activity safe.

2. **Listen and reassure.** Stay calm, take the person seriously and use their preferred communication method. Do not promise secrecy; explain that information may need to be shared to keep people safe.

3. **Ask only what is necessary.** Use open prompts only to establish what happened and whether urgent help is required. Do not confront anyone, question witnesses, seek proof, examine injuries or search devices.

4. **Record promptly.** Record the person's words, date, time, place, people present, visible signs, immediate action, wishes and consent. Distinguish fact, observation and opinion, then sign, date and secure the record.

5. **Report without delay.** Use the published British Orienteering safeguarding route. A Welfare Officer may support the report but is not a gatekeeper. Urgent statutory action must not wait for British Orienteering.

Also refer to our quick guide to responding to safeguarding concerns

Reporting routes and conflicts

- Anyone may report directly to British Orienteering without first reporting to a Club.
- Concerns can be reported via the online reporting link or in person to the Lead Safeguarding Officer by telephone (07891 091 662) or email to safeguarding@britishorienteering.org.uk)
- A person acting for British Orienteering, an Association or Club must pass the Concern to British Orienteering without delay.
- If a Welfare Officer or Club Official is implicated, absent or conflicted, report to the British Orienteering Lead Safeguarding Officer.
- Concerns about the Lead Safeguarding Officer should go to the Chief Executive or Board safeguarding lead.
- Anonymous reports will be considered, although anonymity may limit the action available.
- Event organisers should identify the reporting route in advance, protect immediate safety and pass Concerns to British Orienteering; they must not conduct a safeguarding investigation.

Concerns involving a Child

The welfare and best interests of the Child are paramount. Contact police or children's social care where a Child is suffering or may suffer significant harm and consult the Local Authority designated officer (LADO) or home-nation equivalent where an allegation concerns an adult working or volunteering with Children. Do not delay referral for parental consent, a club decision, complete information or CMG advice.

Explain what will happen in language the Child can understand and record their wishes and feelings. Parents or carers should normally be informed unless this may increase risk, prejudice an enquiry or conflict with statutory advice. Consider the safety and needs of every Child separately in child-on-child harm. Do not view, copy or forward suspected indecent images of a Child; preserve the device or message trail and seek police advice.

Concerns involving an Adult

Ask the Adult about immediate safety, desired outcomes, consent, communication and support needs. Seek consent to referral and information sharing where appropriate, but consent is not an absolute veto. Information may be shared without consent where necessary, lawful and proportionate to protect the Adult or another person, address serious crime, respond to coercion or lack of relevant capacity, or meet a legal or regulatory duty. Record the decision and reasons.

Presume capacity unless established otherwise under the applicable law and support the Adult to decide and communicate. Seek statutory or professional advice where capacity is material or uncertain. Consult or refer to the relevant adult-safeguarding service where the Adult meets, or may meet, the applicable home-nation Adult at Risk criteria. Failure to meet that threshold does not prevent British Orienteering safeguarding or regulatory action.

Positions of trust and lower-level concerns

An allegation involving staff, volunteers or a person in a position of trust must not be managed only as an HR, performance or club matter. Notify the Lead Safeguarding Officer and coordinate with

statutory agencies, employers, regulators or Vetting Bodies as appropriate. Resignation or retirement does not prevent safeguarding assessment or a required referral.

Poor practice, boundary breaches, bullying and apparently lower-level concerns must first be reported for safeguarding assessment. Patterns, grooming indicators, misuse of power or impact may require action under the Safeguarding Regulations. Informal resolution or another procedure must not be used to avoid statutory referral or British Orienteering safeguarding oversight.

Information, communication and support

Preserve original records, messages and metadata and use secure reporting methods. Share only information that is necessary, relevant, accurate and lawful, recording what was shared, with whom, when and why. Do not circulate illegal, intimate or unnecessarily sensitive material.

Agree a safe contact method and offer reasonable adjustments, an interpreter, advocate or supporter where appropriate. British Orienteering will provide proportionate updates and outcome information where safe and lawful, although confidentiality may limit detail. Good-faith reporters must be protected from retaliation.

Handover to British Orienteering

The Lead Safeguarding Officer will assess immediate safety, statutory referral, jurisdiction, conflicts, support needs, information preservation and Interim Measures. The Lead Safeguarding Officer will ordinarily undertake or oversee proportionate enquiries and may appoint another investigator where independence, complexity, capacity, specialist expertise or fairness requires.

A conflict-free CMG may advise where useful but is not an approval body or mandatory stage. Following assessment or investigation, the Lead Safeguarding Officer will select and record the appropriate route under the Regulations and Case Management Procedure. Contested material cases meeting Regulation 6.5 must go to independent determination, subject only to an independently approved agreed outcome.

Escalation, records and review

If a Concern has not been acted on, escalate to the Lead Safeguarding Officer, Chief Executive or Board safeguarding lead and contact the relevant statutory service directly if risk remains. Nothing restricts emergency reporting, lawful whistleblowing or confidential legal or welfare support.

Safeguarding records must be transferred securely to the central record and retained under the approved schedule. British Orienteering will maintain a controlled home-nation referral directory. This Procedure will be reviewed after its first year, then at least every three years and sooner following material change or significant case learning.