

British Orienteering

Every Junior Matters

A Strategy for Juniors & Youth 2018-25



Full version

April 2018

Contents

• Foreword & Summary	
• Chair's Foreword	3
• Executive Summary	4
• Methodology	
• Methodology & Terminology	7
• Links to Strategic Plan	8
• Strategic Aims & Context	
• Aims & Objectives	9
• Background & Context	9
• Models & Frameworks	12
• Junior & Youth Strategy	
1. Club Junior Development	15
2. Improving the Sport for Juniors	20
3. Fun & friendship, inclusion & safeguarding	27
• Safeguarding	29
• Timeline for action	30
• Conclusion & Credits	32
• Appendix	
• Junior Development Framework	33



Dear Member,

I am pleased to sponsor this strategy “**Every Junior Matters**” to improve orienteering for young people. Over the last 20 years, we have seen fewer juniors at orienteering events. This is verified by statistics that apply to orienteering and sport in general:

- 75% of British teenagers do not take regular exercise
- Across National and Regional orienteering events, 18% of participants are juniors
- Of all British Orienteering junior members, 70% will drop out by the age of 21.

This is disturbing for all of us who believe that orienteering is good for all ages and is an excellent way to develop mind and body for young people. Orienteering has the “Unique Selling Point” that all members of a family can take part. However, as young people grow through teenage years, the majority are leaving the sport due to academic pressures, social reasons, hobby prioritisation and a proliferation of choices in busy lives.

This strategy aims to increase the number of juniors and youth retention in orienteering by offering a more satisfying and accessible sport to juniors and families. We need clubs to have junior programmes that are fun, active, local and safe. There are some good examples, such as SYO, MAROC & SARUM with excellent junior sections, and we would like to help more clubs achieve this. We will deliver a more “joined-up” sport that removes existing inhibitors for young people and offers clear pathways and incentives for juniors, up to and including university. And we will offer a more inclusive sport for juniors that enables friendships, promotes teams and is simply much more fun!

We all need to play our part, so I am asking everyone to help. I would like every club to review and improve what they offer for juniors and families. British Orienteering will help clubs in this process and will take the lead to deliver a more joined-up sport with more opportunities for all juniors to have a safe and enjoyable experience.

Ultimately over the long-term, we aim to shift orienteering to a more balanced demographic, with all ages participating, as a pre-requisite for long-term sustainability. We will all benefit from a stronger presence of juniors and families in the sport. By 2021 we aim to raise junior membership in all regions and by 2025 our long term aim is to have juniors as a third of overall membership and participation.

May everyone – of all ages – enjoy their orienteering!



Judith Holt, Chair of British Orienteering

Executive Summary

This British Orienteering Youth Strategy “**Every Junior Matters**” is based on several months of research, consultation and testing of ideas. The funding for this work comes from Sport England who have a strategy “Towards an Active Nation” for 2016-21, encouraging the population to be more active.

Context

Internationally, there is widespread concern about inactivity levels in young people, with long term issues of health & wellbeing. Many developed countries indicate that 70-80% of young people drop out of sport during teenage years. For orienteering, the situation is equally severe, with countries such as Sweden and France reporting high drop-out rates. In the UK, junior participation rates in club-based orienteering varies across regions between approximately 12-35% of total participation, with Scotland considerably higher than England, Wales and N. Ireland.

The concern over youth drop-out in sport is giving rise to a new focus on **youth retention** – giving young people a rewarding experience that motivates them to stay in the sport.

Objective

The objective of this strategy is to raise junior membership and participation to a third of overall membership and participation by 2025.

Strategy

The British Orienteering strategy “**Every Junior Matters**” presents three broad areas of work to build up and sustain the population of young orienteers.

1. **Clubs to offer junior programmes that are fun, active, local and safe.** A junior programme can take many forms, there is no one set formula. Good examples in clubs include:
 - section for juniors & families on club website
 - targeting families on social media
 - monthly coaching
 - clear safeguarding advice for parents and children
 - weekly after-school clubs
 - youth leagues
 - overnight summer camps
 - juniors helping at events

British Orienteering will:

- Lead & support clubs to place a focus on juniors so that every club has a clear offer for juniors and families that is easily accessible locally.
- Advise clubs on offering activities that are safe and enjoyable.
- Prepare and maintain a list of development-skilled coaches across the country who can help clubs execute good quality junior programmes.
- Share with clubs the existing [Junior Development Framework](#) which gives ideas, advice and examples of good practice
- Start a University start-up programme, encouraging and supporting entrepreneurial students to set up and sustain new university-based clubs

2. The overall provision of orienteering for juniors will become more “joined-up” with clearer pathways, links and changes to make the sport more suitable and accessible for young people.

The main focus areas will be:

- Build links from schools orienteering into clubs via closer involvement of parents, smarter working with schools and a strategic approach to primary schools.
- Support for the British Schools Orienteering Association (BSOA) to develop a series of regional school championship events that signpost to clubs in the region
- Encourage the Junior Regional Orienteering Squads (JROS) to continue their role of regional talent development and provision of summer camps.
- Raise the profile of the Yvette Baker Trophy/Shield and Peter Palmer Relays, with improved marketing and competition classes for small clubs/teams
- Enhance coaching for juniors via a new CPD module that builds on the L2 coaching qualification
- Deliver one national incentive programme for juniors based on colour coded achievement, with automatic notification, as per the adult ranking scheme
- Leverage the Xplorer programme of introductory Park-O for young families to pass leads to clubs
- Address specific areas of concern raised by young people and families including the gap between M14 & 16, urban orienteering for M/W16-, ranking points for first year M/W16, the mini relay for youngest children.

3. The sport will be more social and accessible to all young people at all skill levels

“Two things matter most at this age: basic competence and enjoyment. The sense that ‘you can do this’ whatever your level of ability and that you can get something out of it that matters to you, builds strong foundations. What matters to each child varies – it might be winning, spending time with a parent or just the freedom of running around with friends. Children are customers too and we will focus on their needs and wishes. They deserve a voice and choice, especially if we are to engage groups who are under-represented even at this early age, for example girls and disabled children.”

“Towards an Active Nation” – Sport England

in orienteering, we want young people to want to stay in the sport, whatever their performance level. The following initiatives will be delivered:

- A series of short regional youth camps during the autumn, with the objective to develop social ties & friendships
- A programme to encourage teenage young people to take on orienteering delivery roles such as event & training course planners, organisers, buddying & coaching support, webmasters, magazine and social media editors
- A junior membership initiative with format & T&Cs to be decided e.g. “refer a friend” type initiative, to encourage new members

- A limited number of Mountain Trail Bike (MTB-O) events marketed to orienteering juniors, to be developed by cooperative working with the British Mountain Bike Orienteering (BMBO)
- New technologies such as Virtual-O, Sporteering, maprun.org and The Outdoor Classroom will be encouraged. We will trial a “Virtual-O Champs”.
- Cooperation with the Swedish & French orienteering federations to develop an exchange programme for teenage orienteers
- A new Young People’s Advisory Board, composed of older juniors. This will be consulted and listened to, giving them a voice on how to improve the sport
- A focus on orienteering for disabled & special needs young people with more orienteering for special schools and community disability groups, and a forum for families with disabled children to convey their needs in mainstream orienteering.



Safeguarding

- British Orienteering complies with the requirements of the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU).
- The British Orienteering safeguarding policy is O-Safe, accessible via www.britishorienteering.org.uk/safeguardingandsafety.
- Every orienteering club must have an up to date safeguarding policy regularly reviewed by the club committee.
- Safeguarding must be seen as a pre-requisite to junior development activities.

Methodology

The youth strategy is based on several inputs collected during September – December 2017.



The strategy is a public document, prepared for the British Orienteering membership.

Terminology

In this report, the term “junior” is used to refer to young people up to and including the M/W20 age category. This is conventional terminology in the orienteering community.

The term “youth” is used to refer to young people between the ages of 14-25 years old. This is widely used in public services and commonly spoken English. It is helpful to use this terminology to avoid an abrupt “cut-off” when assessing the needs and provision for young people as they move from childhood to become adults.

Strategic Linkage

The following tables demonstrate how the strategy “Every Junior Matters” links to and supports the British Orienteering Strategic Plan 2025.

Strategic Programmes	Increasing Participation	Competitive Orienteering	Podium Success
Every Junior Matters initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased youth retention leading to increased participation in 14-25 year age groups Increased junior participation in activities at club level e.g. weekly/monthly junior training or families running in activities for all members Increased number of university clubs Regional youth away-day style camps Sign-posting Xplorer families towards club orienteering Providing more fun & social opportunities at club level e.g. Virtual-O, maprun or Sporteering Supporting families with disabled young people, listening to their needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving YBT & Peter Palmer events with greater levels of participation Regional Schools Championships Club junior programmes which help families plan ahead and attend more weekend events Identifying clearer pathways e.g. increasing take-up of incentive schemes Encouraging younger juniors with more prizes Addressing specific areas of concern raised by young people and families e.g. M14-16 gap, M/W16- urban orienteering, and ranking points for first year M/W16. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widening the base of juniors at club level gradually leads to better populated regional junior squads, with eventual long term success at British Orienteering Talent Squad level. <p><i>(Note the primary focus of the Every Junior Matters strategy is not junior talent development)</i></p>

Underpinned & supported by	Supporting volunteers	Leadership & good governance	Raising profile & public image	Working with partners	Developing financial sustainability
Every Junior Matters initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased numbers of young people taking on volunteer roles e.g. course planning or website update Signposting volunteers to safeguarding policy and training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening to the views of young people at all levels e.g. Young People’s Board, or appointing junior club captain 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased communication that is relevant to, or about, young people e.g. articles published on British Orienteering website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeking junior sponsorship opportunities e.g. Tio Mila Collaborate with British Mountain Bike Orienteering (BMBO) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging clubs to apply for grant funding to cover start-up costs of junior programmes Budgeting for junior activities in club annual financial plan

Aims & Objectives

The primary aim of the youth strategy is to raise the population of juniors and youth in orienteering, with the long-term objective of juniors representing a third of the orienteering population in terms of membership and participation.

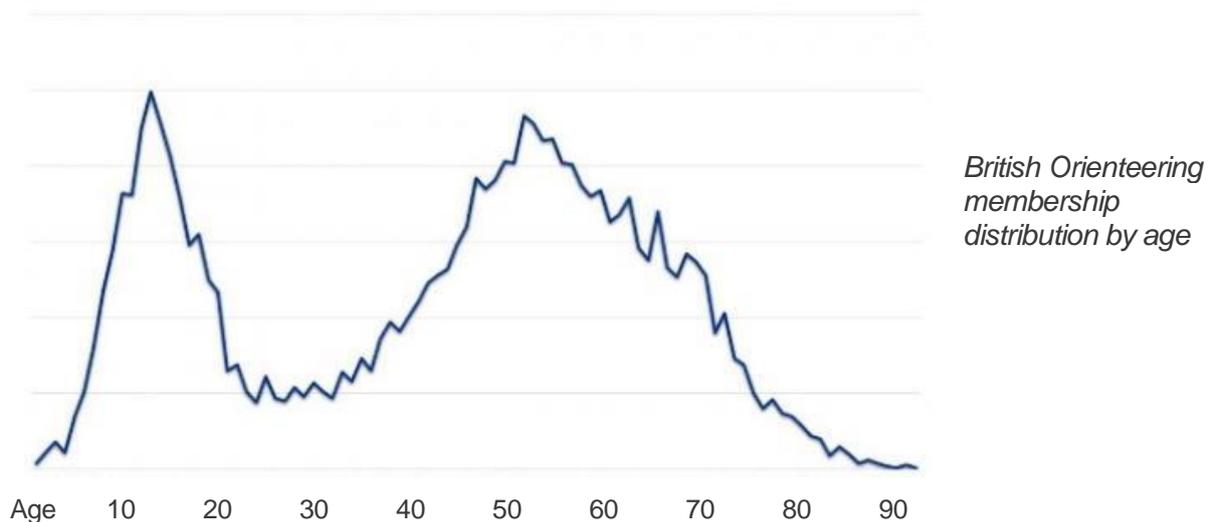
This requires us to be more effective in recruiting juniors into clubs and to improve youth retention of young people once they are members.

Once achieved, this will deliver a more balanced demographic across the sport and an improved level of long-term sustainability.

Background & Context

The drop-off in junior participation and the importance of Youth Retention

Between the ages of 12 and 18, we lose approximately half of our junior orienteers, and by the age of 21, 70% have left. There is a significant drop off from the age of 14. Whilst a level of drop-off is to be expected in any sport during this turbulent time in young people's lives this rapid decline is something we can't ignore.



There is clear evidence of a considerable number of children are trying orienteering at grassroots level. Between 8,000-10,000 try orienteering at Primary school every year, and an estimated 15,000 young people have go at orienteering via PGL activity holidays. Between the ages of 7-13 years, some juniors take up the sport and join as members. However, 8 years later, 70-80% have left the sport.

How much is this a problem, and isn't this drop-off to be expected? We know that young children are encouraged to sample several sports, rather than specialise too early. As they narrow and prioritise, it is therefore inevitable that a drop-off occurs.

Feedback from young people and their families also shows several factors that contribute to a decline in participation in sport:

- Increasing academic pressure, up to the intense period between 15-18 years. As a society, we make it clear to young people, that this takes top priority.
- Social relationships take up time away from school and sport. Young people want to fit in, they start to develop their own relationships and mixing with others.
- The desire to find one's own space. A teenager may reject a sport or activity on the basis that the rest of the family does it. It can be natural to assert and try out independence.
- Family lives are incredibly busy. Most parents work, and children slot multiple activities into their week and weekends. Finding time to devote to a hobby like orienteering is increasingly difficult for parent and young people.
- Young people (and adults) often seek time-efficient ways to take part in sport. They expect to be able to participate relatively close to home without travelling far away.

Orienteering suffers a further factor in its existing demographic. Some young people experience orienteering at events that are largely populated by people over the age of 50 years.

“Abigail has decided that orienteering is for old people. Her sister follows her lead in most things, so she won't be coming either”.

- Mother of 12-year old girl

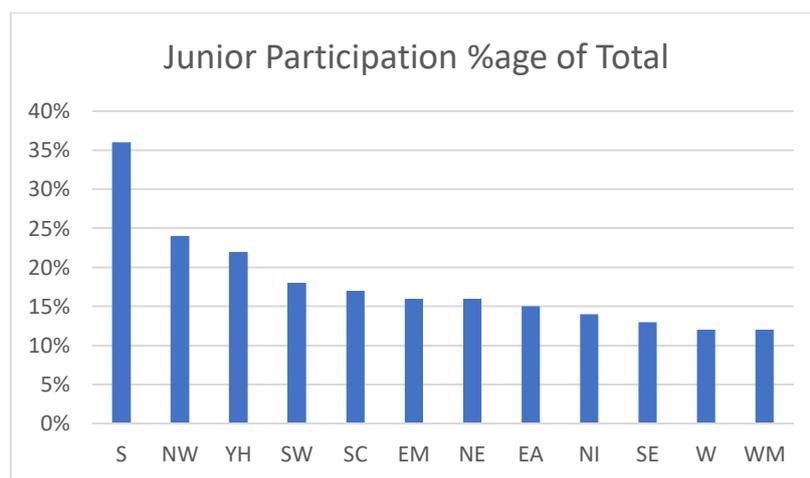


Finally, there is also a marked degree of segregation between junior and adult orienteering. For example, there are many schools leagues with events well populated by juniors. However mainstream orienteering events show consistently low numbers of junior participation, with an average of 17-18% junior participation rate, and sometimes with <10% of participants as juniors.

Regional variation

Those who work with juniors in orienteering will be aware of the varied status of junior orienteering in different regions. A youth strategy needs to recognize this variation when translating strategy into implementation.

A simple view is shown below, taken from 24 National and Regional orienteering events held in 2017 across the regions. The data shown represents the number of junior participants expressed as a percentage of total participants at these events.



This is a small study, so need to be treated with some caution. However, the difference between Scotland and the other regions is striking. Scotland has invested more resources over a longer timeframe into junior development at club and regional level. While SOA recognise there is still much more to be done to improve junior development, the fact is that, in terms of junior participation, Scotland is well ahead of England, Wales and N.Ireland.

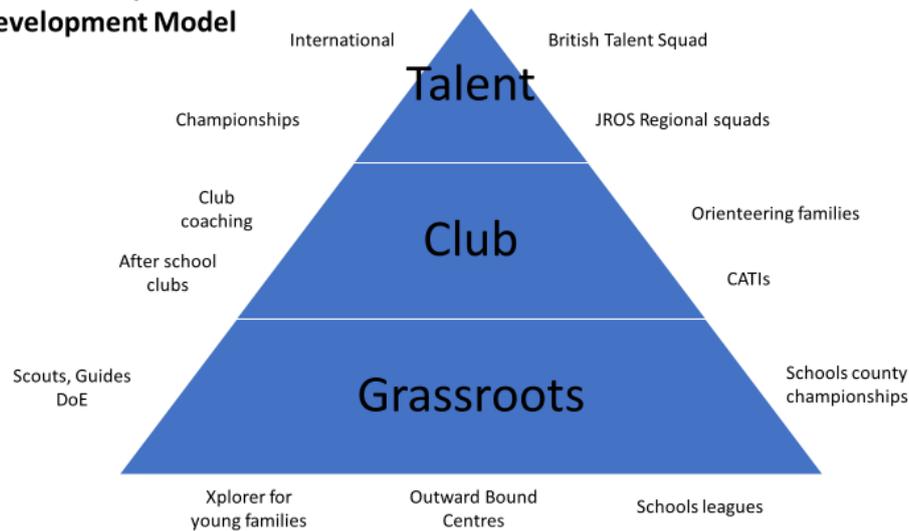
British Orienteering will:

- Undertake a more detailed study into junior participation across regions, clubs, schools and grassroots.
- Understand the main features of junior development in Scotland, identifying areas of good practice that can be replicated elsewhere.

Models and Frameworks

Youth sports has been traditionally organised via “pyramid” style structures, as illustrated below. Larger numbers are recruited at grassroots level, fewer are recruited into clubs, and the small minority “make it” to the top squad. This is essentially organised for the benefit of talent objectives, since it removes all those juniors recruited early in the process. This is verified by the high dropout rate in youth orienteering.

Traditional Sports Development Model



There is a growing realisation that this does a disservice to the majority of juniors in the sport. It highlights that many juniors don't make it from grassroots into the club system. It also illustrates that orienteering offers little to the junior who is not in a regional squad or talent system. There is “drop out” all the way up the pyramid.

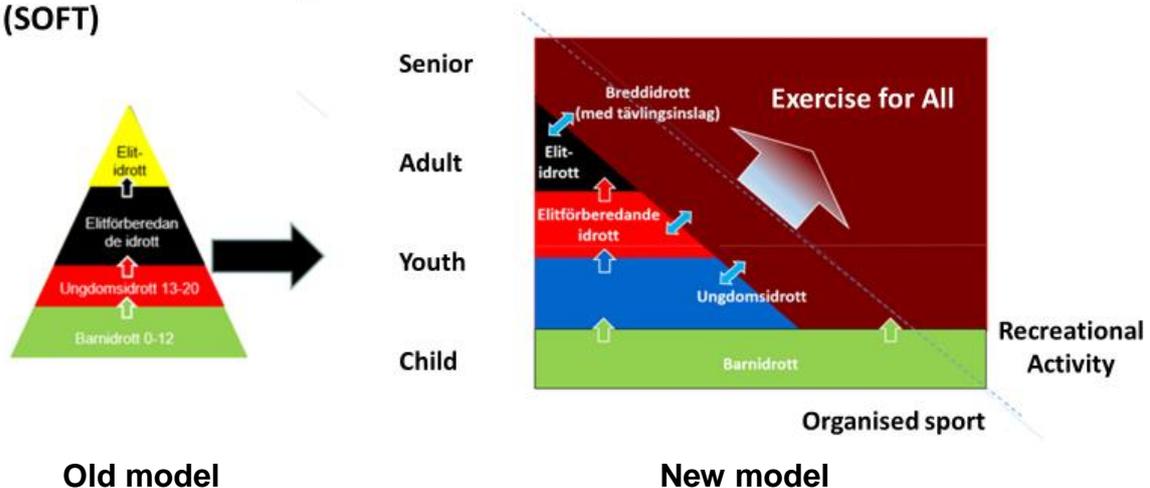


Orienteering federations in other countries are also concerned about youth retention and are starting to take action. For example, the Swedish Orienteering Federation (SOFT) has launched its long term strategy “Strategy 2025”, with an overt reference to moving “away from the pyramid”.



SOFT positions an inclusive approach to sport at the centre of its strategy. That means offering value and benefit to everyone as they progress “up the pyramid” (in terms of age and experience), not just those in the talent system. The pyramid structure is retained for those who aspire to compete and win, but there is a new value structure offered for everyone else, shown in diagram below.

New retention model used by Swedish orienteering federation (SOFT)



The value delivered in the brown-coloured area, is the satisfaction from taking part, completing the course, finding the control. It is about socializing, meeting friends, exploring new places, taking part in new event formats. It includes “giving back” – the satisfaction from volunteering and delivering the sport for the benefit of others.

This is very important to understand how to deliver the sport better for juniors and youth. We must understand that their values of fun and play, friends and teaming are critical factors in their sporting life. We may feel we know this already, but the point is we don’t organise the sport around these values and a structure that recognises them.

To understand further what needs to be delivered for all juniors, including those “outside the pyramid”, there is a more detailed model of youth retention articulated in a useful piece of research “**To investigate innovative and inclusive retention strategies for youth participants in community sport**” by Troy Kirkham. It presents a 3x3 model for youth retention and argues that only by understanding and organising all parts of the model together, will we effectively retain youth participation in sport.

Youth Retention model that shows many components that need to work together

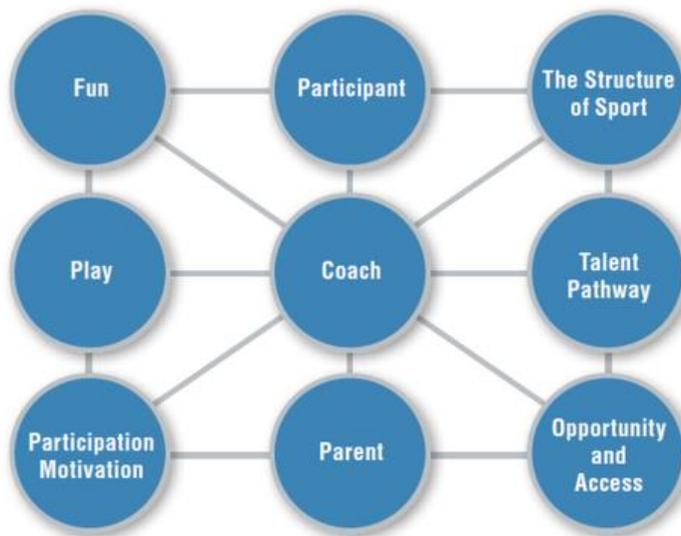


Figure 1: An Interconnected Model for Youth Retention

Orienteering presents some additional unique challenges for juniors, such as the mix of physical and mental skills. But the 3x3 model is useful to think through when planning a junior or youth programme.



A Strategy for Juniors & Youth

1. Club Junior Development

Clubs to have a clear offer to juniors & families

Some orienteering clubs cater well to juniors and families – others do not. Some offer a variety of activities that are targeted towards juniors in addition to club fixtures. Examples of successful activities are monthly coaching, weekly after school club, youth/schools league, summer O-picnics, overnight junior camp.



The issues that families face before and after joining a club include:

- Lack of understanding what a club offers a junior
- No idea who are existing junior members – what ages, where they live etc.
- Unclear fixture list, it can be hard to understand which events are suitable

In some cases, clubs do not present clear messages to families or juniors. Their needs are not well understood, and they are not often asked what they want.

“We plan our weekend family diary several months in advance. Since we don’t really know which orienteering events are the important ones for our son, they don’t get in the diary. If they aren’t in the diary, we don’t go!”

- Mother of 10-year old boy

All clubs should have a clear strategy for juniors, viewed from the family point of view, since parent(s) need to provide support. There are broadly three levels of engagement with juniors that a club could use to position themselves:

Level	Example levels of engagement
Basic	Minimum: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear message to families & juniors on the website • “Come & Try It” style events to recruit newcomers, families & juniors • Policies & procedures in place e.g. Safeguarding
Standard	Basic level, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coaches assigned, scheduled junior coaching; Clubmark accreditation • Regular schools or youth league events • Participation in Yvette Baker Trophy/Shield team competition
Advanced	Standard level, plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of training & coaching opportunities • Participation in YBT/YBS & Peter Palmer Relays • Specific competitive objectives in junior competitions

Most clubs should engage standard or advanced level. Standard level will be aligned with British Orienteering Clubmark, which enables clubs to demonstrate to the public they have the structures and practices in place to provide a good experience for participants and members.

A full list of recommended actions for junior development are contained in the **Junior Development Framework** (See appendix).



Resources to help

Grant funding – Some clubs feel they are at full stretch managing the basic operations – fixtures, permissions, equipment, finances etc. Applying for a grant can help pay for junior development e.g. coaching time, SI/EMIT kit, land permission fees.

Coaching support – There are specialist coaches available who can help clubs get off the ground with junior activities. They can help build a plan, kick-off early activities and build a junior development programme.

British Orienteering will:

- Support clubs to improve their junior development, offering advice on building a plan, applying for grant funding and seeking coaching help
- Develop a graded approach to junior development, based on Basic, Standard & Advanced, that will help clubs get started and make progress to offer more for juniors and families.
- Develop a plan to increase the number of qualified junior coaches and a wider capability to support clubs with long term junior development.

South Ribble OC

We have 26 junior members, which is 22% of total membership. Recruitment is now via Facebook, which is effective at reaching local families across Lancashire.

We offer one hour long junior coaching preceding our 3 Saturday Autumn introductory events. A good tactic is to offer coaching to the parents at the same time.



We learn that juniors are cyclical! We have times when we have a large group of very good juniors. Then there are periods when they grow up, leave and we start building again. Numbers have grown again in last couple of years.

The main challenge is getting critical mass of say 8 keen, active juniors, close in age, who bond and just want to be together. That's "having fun with mates". It becomes easy after that point!

MAROC

Our club based in Deeside, Scotland has a lot going on for juniors. We have 61 junior members, around 40% of total.

We offer a weekly after school club, introductory blocks of coaching for new families, a Talent squad for older juniors, club weekends and a holiday camp.



Club training sessions are much more social than events, especially for newcomers, as everyone is there at the same time, in the same place.

We have learnt to encourage parents to join in our training sessions – no drop-off and pick-up! Parents can shadow, socialise and participate themselves, or else help with admin e.g. signing in and out.

Our advice is to get out there and do it! It doesn't have to be perfect, just get the juniors coming back for more.

South Yorkshire SYO

Several years ago, as a result of declining membership, SYO made the decision to focus on junior development and so our schools league and newcomer series of monthly events was born. The series has been hugely successful so we now 123 juniors, approx 40% of total membership.



We offer monthly newcomer series, weekly club night and monthly coaching sessions, involving juniors and adults together. The YBT and Peter Palmer Relays are essentials on the calendar!

We have learnt that getting parents orienteering means the juniors go to more events, are more likely to travel to major championship races and are more likely to volunteer at events. Regular communication to parents is very important to get their buy-in.

SARUM

As a club, we knew we needed to more for juniors. So we applied for a Sport England small grant and set up a junior programme in 2017. It has been successful very quickly, with recruitment in primary schools and via parent word of mouth.



The main offer to families has been a weekly after school club, centred on Salisbury. This has allowed the first group of children and parents to bond well. We're now focused on getting them to local events and aim to raise teams this year for the Yvette Baker & Peter Palmer Relays.

University Clubs

The number of active university clubs typically fluctuates as students move through the university system. Edinburgh and Sheffield have been the most active clubs for many years; Oxford, Cambridge & Bristol also have healthy membership. There are a considerable number of “transient” university clubs, where the membership can quickly change, from a healthy club to a less active one, and sometimes becoming dormant.

Strategically, it is better to have a greater number of students involved across a diverse range of universities. Therefore, support is needed for start-up university clubs, or those trying to become active again after a dormant period.

Example of Existing University Clubs

- Aberdeen
- Bristol
- Cambridge
- Durham
- Edinburgh
- Glasgow
- Leeds
- Loughborough
- Oxford
- Newcastle
- Sheffield



Potential Start-up University Clubs

- Exeter
- Imperial College, London
- Surrey

British Orienteering will:

- Provide support for start-up university clubs. We will offer a package of support, subject to eligibility criteria, including a small amount of funding for transport, equipment and other start-up costs, links to the local club, and encouragement and advice through the first year to get the club underway.
- Interface with BUCS to help resolve issues on university club registration and management

British Forces & Cadets

The Ministry of Defence sponsors and supports four cadet forces (voluntary youth organisations). They offer challenging and enjoyable activities for young people and prepare them to play an active part in the community while developing valuable life skills. There are over 40,000 cadets in the UK. Avenues will be explored to increase cadet participation in orienteering, via links to local clubs. BAOC (British Army Orienteering Club) and AOA (Army Orienteering Association) have registered an interest in the “Every Junior Matters” strategy.

2. Improving the Sport for Young People

There are some aspects in which orienteering caters well for young people. Examples include White & Yellow courses available at virtually all orienteering events, string & maze courses sometimes available. There isn't the same level of age restrictions compared to some other outdoor or adventure sports. The junior talent side of the sport has been well developed for young people (see JROS & Talent sections).

However, there are many issues, disconnects and a lack of clearly understood pathways that inhibit junior development and youth retention. Examples include:

- Juniors participating at school often are not aware of opportunities at their local club
- Many English clubs don't send teams to the Yvette Baker & Peter Palmer Relay junior competitions
- Xplorer introductory events haven't sign-posted families to their local club
- The Racing & Navigation Challenge incentive schemes are not well understood
- Some L2 qualified coaches say they feel ill-equipped to coach juniors
- The large gap for M14's moving to M16, from Lt Green (3-4km) to Blue (6-7km)
- Lack of ranking points for first year M16s (which can inhibit their ability to apply for county level support)
- Low key approach to junior prizegiving, compared to many other countries

British Orienteering will:

- Improve the marketing and promotion of the Yvette Baker and Peter Palmer Relay events. There will be better website information and new small team categories in both events, making it easier for clubs to plan and raise teams.
- Make Xplorer partners aware of local clubs, and vice versa. Families who enjoy Xplorer events will be signposted to their local club, with club contact information on every map.
- The Racing & Navigation Challenge incentives will be over-hauled so that they generate automatic e-mail notification & attached certificate sent to juniors' parents & club when a level is achieved. (Note this requires full results upload by clubs to the British Orienteering website, including all Level D events)
- Introduce a new CPD module on Coaching Young People, offered as optional extension to the L2 coaching qualification. It will focus on areas not covered in the main qualification: e.g. handling groups of mixed ability juniors, working with parents, motivating juniors to compete, building team spirit.
- Consult on the gap between M14 & M16 age groups. Possible options include: an M16B age class as part of the standard age category/course definitions, a M15 age class running Green, adjusting M16 class to run Green course.
- Consult on ranking points for first year M/W16s, mindful of the adolescent development process.
- Encourage junior prize-giving to more juniors across more events.

Schools Orienteering

There is a large amount of schools orienteering that operates away from the view of the average orienteering club member. An approximate estimate is that between 8,000-10,000 children enjoy schools orienteering each year, with 600-800 school maps in existence. Strategically, this contributes to the raising awareness of orienteering amongst juniors and in the general population, but it doesn't contribute much to the mainstream core of the sport offered by clubs. Most school pupils who enjoy a taste of orienteering don't get the chance to take it up at club level.

In part, this is an inevitable consequence of that fact that the school sports system in the UK is intrinsically separated from club sport, to a greater degree than in most European countries. However, there are several issues that arise from separated school and club systems:

- Schools still rely on clubs for support e.g. to make maps and organise events
- Talented pupils and those who enjoy the sport at school don't get further opportunities beyond the school league
- The progression for a pupil enjoying school orienteering is curtailed around Year 9, as school priorities change towards academic pressure with less time for sport.

A High Potential School – Bedonwell Primary, Bexley

Teacher: *"We are offering all 450 pupils a taste of orienteering, and letting parents know how children can do more with the local club"*

Pupil: *"I enjoyed finding markers using the school map and beating my friend's time"*



In order to raise youth retention in orienteering, it is therefore important to offer a clear pathway between school and club – to identify the most suitable pupils in school orienteering who would enjoy further opportunity to participate, and a clearly communicated club programme for them to join. This requires engagement with school, pupil and parents. A parent is required to help a junior decide on their priorities, enrol a junior in a club, provide transport to events, attend a club coaching session.



Resources available in schools for orienteering have changed over recent years. In general, teachers have less time to offer and organise minority sports. However, funding for sport in primary schools in England and Wales has been raised in 2017 with **double the available funding for sport per pupil**. This has led to a clear increase in primary school teachers asking for help from British Orienteering and clubs. The situation in secondary schools is less positive, with more focus on academic results and no new funding for sport.

There is a significant move towards local authorities, assisted by local sports coordinating bodies (e.g. County Sports Partnerships in England), who organise extra-curricular school sport based on clusters of schools. This can make it easier for the orienteering club, by providing one point of contact covering many schools.

Therefore, the strategy needs to be open to working with all parties – clubs, new primary and existing secondary schools, parents and pupils – to find ways to present a clear pathway for juniors. It is important have a clear objective in mind when offering support to schools.

This is not easy; many clubs have tried this over the years, and some schools are protective of perceived marketing to pupils. Nevertheless, there are good examples of how to generate interest in schools by creating clear pathways between schools and local club.

Examples of how to facilitate a clear pathway include:

- Including Dads & Lads, Mothers & Daughters races i.e. bringing parents to a schools event, thereby involving the family, increasing understanding and buy-in
- Organising the final day of a youth league series to coincide with a club's Level C event, with an invitation to parents to come along.
- Hosting a junior after-school club at a school. This makes it easy for pupils at this school to attend. Sport England has popularised this concept as "Satellite Clubs".
- A junior club member and parent to present on the orienteering club at school assembly, raising awareness amongst pupils and staff in the school
- Including orienteering in a Primary summer school games, where parents attend
- Close cooperation with a Head of PE to offer orienteering in PE lessons, arranging for some parents to help and later to raise awareness via word-of-mouth
- Inserting a write-up about an orienteering activity into ParentMail, sent out to all parents, with a link for further info.
- Information on orienteering and extra-curricular sports on the school website.

British Orienteering will

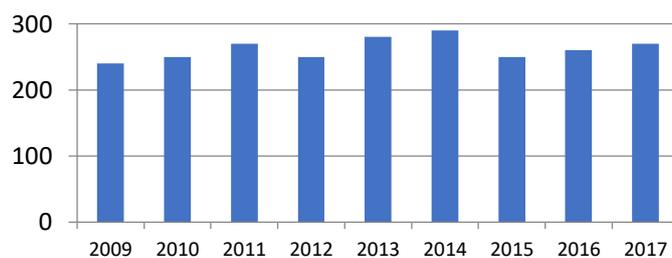
- Work with clubs, primary and secondary schools and local coordinating bodies to identify effective ways to link schools and local clubs, sharing good practice amongst clubs. The focus is to offer further opportunities in local clubs to those school pupils that enjoy orienteering and to involve parents in the process.

British Schools Orienteering Association & Championships

The first Schools Orienteering Championships were organised in Scotland (1964) and England (1966). The current form of the schools association (BSOA) was established in 1995 by Peter Palmer and other school teachers. It is volunteer-run with an organising committee, AGM and annual accounts.

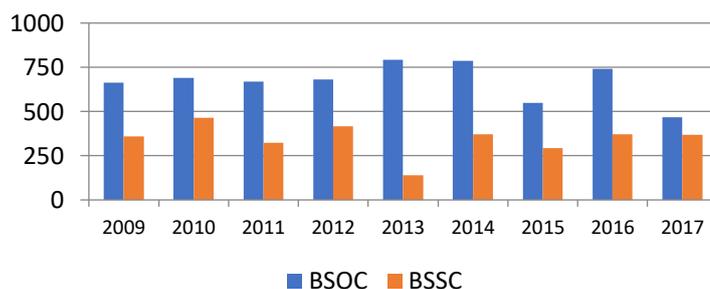
It has the mission to organise British Schools Score & Orienteering Championships for schools and young people. BSOA supply information and equipment to its member schools. It currently takes a team to the bi-annual World Schools Champs.

BSOA membership has been fairly constant in recent years, with an attractive zero membership fee.



Membership 2009-17

BSOA mentors & currently sponsors two championships events each year in the autumn – the British Schools Score Champs (BSSC) and the British Schools Orienteering Champs (BSOC). Numbers attending these events each year vary according to geographical location.



Participation 2009-17

There are both opportunities and risk for future membership and participation:

Opportunities:

- Improved marketing of the schools championships, particularly to the local region
- New funding in primary schools, leading to increased membership

Risks:

- Fewer secondary schools have teachers willing to organise teams
- Distance required to travel to the British championship events
- Other sports increasingly offer more local, accessible opportunities
- Increased demands of health & safety for school trips

The two British Championships are generally well received by junior participants. The events are usually held within a few weeks of each other, requiring considerable organisation for teachers & BSOA during summer and autumn terms.

Participation relies on continued support from a small number of key school teams from Torquay, Kenilworth, Ulverston, Cockermouth, Fallibroome & St Andrews, Pangbourne. While these schools need to be supported, there also needs to be a greater number and variety of schools attending.

There is feedback from families with children at schools without organised orienteering that it is unclear whether they are eligible to compete at BSOC & BSSC (they are). Feedback also shows that the hardcopy entry form for these events is time consuming to print and fill out.

A Best Practice School - St Andrew's, Pangbourne

Teacher: *"The two British Schools Champs give our pupils a fabulous experience and weekends away"*

Pupil: *"It was fantastic to be away from school with my friends"*



I really deserve both

Strategy

The strategic objectives for BSOA are to:

- a) Increase school membership to 350 (+5% pa) by 2021
- b) Offer appropriate national competition format(s) that are straightforward for schools and juniors to understand and attend.

BSOA will:

- Continue to review the twin championship format & timing to suit the changing needs of schools
- Tailor event publicity to clearly show that individual juniors are invited to attend
- Update the championship entry form so it can be completed online.

British Orienteering will:

- Provide support to BSOA and organising clubs to publicise the two British Schools championships
- Support the development of regional schools championships, working with regions to implement a consistent approach

Junior Regional Orienteering Squads (JROS)



JROS is the umbrella organisation for the 12 regional orienteering squads based on the 12 regions across England, Scotland, Wales and N.Ireland. It was set up in the 1990s when the federation British Orienteering switched its junior investment focus to talent management and achieving better results at top competitions such as JWOC.

Regional Squads

The 12 regional squads exist in all regions, although with varying levels of attendance (i.e. some regions are operating below capacity due to insufficient number of juniors emerging from clubs). Membership of regional squads is by invitation, with juniors required to reach good Orange or Light Green skill level. Squad training sessions are generally organised 6-8 per year in the region with one weekend or squad tour per year.

Summer Camps

JROS organises 4 summer camps each year for different age groups, plus an open attendance weekend camp in November at Hawkshead. The Lagganlia summer camp near Aviemore in Scotland is the first camp for juniors to aspire to, with approximately 24 juniors selected each year from the second year M/W14 age group. A team of 20 adult volunteers manage the camp, consisting of senior & junior coaches, control hangers, chefs, drivers, pastoral support and First Aid.

The Lagganlia camp has built up a very strong profile amongst juniors and families over the years, with a reputation for high quality coaching, skills development in outstanding terrain and lots of fun & social interaction for all. A new L2 coaching course was trialled in 2015 & 2017 for young adult coaches aged 18-25 yrs, with both the formal qualification sessions and the requisite practical coaching experience both taking place at Lagganlia.

Strategic importance of JROS

JROS plays a critical role in the provision of youth orienteering and youth retention. It raises skills, sets standards and provides a social platform for young orienteers. It also creates an aspiration and ambition for young club orienteers who would one day like to join a regional squad. Lagganlia, in particular, has acquired an almost “cult” status amongst squad 13-14-year olds and their families, with parents planning summer holidays around it and the young people cultivating their dreams. Those juniors who attend Lagganlia but do not progress further through the talent system have built friendships that can support and encourage them to continue their orienteering. The regional squads form the bridge between club junior orienteering and the British Orienteering Talent pathway and is therefore central to the strategic objective to deliver a cohesive set of pathways for juniors.

British Orienteering recognises and appreciates the immense amount of volunteer work that goes into JROS, the squads and the summer camps, year after year. Without this dedicated work, junior and youth development in orienteering would be severely curtailed.

JROS Fundraising

JROS has built up a good profile for fundraising, raising funds needed for the operation of the 12 squads and camps. These funds pay for coaching expenses, summer camps, squad tours, administration and related expenses. It is important to maintain this income stream in the future, and all donations are gratefully received.

Strategic Commitments

British Orienteering supports the aims and delivery of JROS and wishes to help to ensure its future success.

JROS will:

- Continue with its mission and self-governance to develop junior orienteering through the 12 regional squads and series of summer camps

British Orienteering will:

- Support the mission of JROS with regular communication, cooperation and sharing of information related to juniors
- Communicate progress in junior development to the wider membership via the British Orienteering website & newsletter.

British Orienteering Talent System

This will continue to develop top talent, separating squads into two tiers across school & university ages.

Further explanation can be found within the British Orienteering Squad System GB programme at www.britishorienteering.org.uk/gbprogramme

3. Fun & friendship, Inclusion & Safeguarding



All the research on youth sport indicates the importance of play and fun. It means enjoying the sport on its own merits, and to play sport with friends. It is not being frivolous, “messaging around”. Children list the following as the most important factors in having fun in sport:

- Trying your best
- Working hard
- Competing
- Learning something new
- Supporting my teammates
- Good sportsmanship

9 out of 10 children say that “Fun” is the main reason they play sport.

Children say they want a coach who treats players with respect and acts as a positive role model. This balances social factors, self-improvement, including and respecting others, good leadership. It includes competing, but it can also be about “giving back” to the sport.

New technology plays a central role in young people’s lives. This is having a variety of consequences, many feel it is contributing to levels of inactivity amongst young people. However, adults lead by example, and mobile & PC-based technology is now central to working and social life. We need to uncover and develop the opportunities this presents for orienteering, setting boundaries for young people if needed. Technology has helped orienteering in many ways already (e.g. SI/EMIT, GPS, LIDAR) and those technologies accessible to young people present further opportunity.

“**Virtual-O**” is a realistic PC computer game with leading-edge graphics simulation. **Sporteering** and **maprun.org** offer orienteering using a map on a smartphone, and the phone’s GPS to detect when you are close enough to have visited the control.

This gives us much to consider in orienteering. Young people say that they drop out of orienteering during teenage years when other priorities get in the way, when the sport stops becoming fun. To improve youth retention, we have to offer more to the teenager who is time-conflicted, may not be on any “talent pathway”, but still wants fun.

Teenagers will almost always reduce participation levels as they approach the heavy pressure years aged 16-18, but we can aim to keep their membership, to maintain a **relationship** between the sport and the young person, until they exit school and either start work or go on to higher education.

“Ungoteket” is a new programme, recently introduced in Sweden, that encourages and supports teenagers in delivering orienteering in roles such as event planning and organising, coaching, and junior camp organisation.



British Orienteering will:

- Create a new Young People’s Advisory Board, composed of older juniors, that will give their views and advice how to improve the sport
- Organise a series of youth camps across the regions during the autumn 2018. These will have a social objective, to link young people from different clubs, so they enjoy the experience and form friendships
- Create a programme whereby young people are encouraged and supported to get involved in helping to deliver orienteering as volunteers. Teenagers can be planners, organisers, coaches, webmasters, social media editors.
- Define a junior membership initiative with format and T&Cs to be decided e.g. “refer a friend” type initiative, to encourage new junior members
- Sponsor a limited number of Mountain Trail Bike (MTB-O) events marketed to orienteering juniors, to be developed by cooperative working with the British Mountain Bike Orienteering (BMBO)
- Encourage the use of new technologies such as Virtual-O, Sporteering, maprun.org and The Outdoor Classroom will be encouraged. We will trial a “Virtual-O Champs”, whereby competitors can “run” a course online.
- Cooperate with the Swedish & French orienteering federations to explore the possibility of an exchange programme for teenage orienteers
- A focus on orienteering for disabled & special needs young people with more orienteering for special schools and community disability groups, and a forum for families with disabled children to convey their needs in mainstream orienteering.

Safeguarding

The British Orienteering approach to safeguarding and safety is communicated via www.britishorienteering.org.uk/safeguardingandsafety. This includes:

- O-Safe – A comprehensive national Safeguarding policy
- Guidance of Inclusion and Disability

British Orienteering is committed to compliance with the NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit (CPSU).

Clubs that undertake junior development activities must have adequate safeguarding policies and procedures in place. An up to date Safeguarding policy should be seen as a pre-requisite to any club junior development plan.

Club members working with children should carefully review their DBS eligibility.

The views of children should be taken into account when building junior development plans.

Benefits of Safeguarding

Having the right safeguards in place will help clubs to:

- respond appropriately, with the knowledge and confidence to recruit responsibly, manage bullying and harassment, report concerns and much more
- protect your organisation's reputation and help make your sport attractive to sponsors
- keep sport safe and fun for children and young people

Timeline for Action & Results



Here is a timeline to illustrate the sort of results that the strategy is aiming to deliver:

2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport England funding agreed for 2017-21 • British Orienteering Youth development lead appointed • Youth camps tested
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy agreed & delivered • Clubs engaged, best practice shared • Young People's Advisory Board in place
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clubs reporting good levels of junior & family recruitment • Schools leagues & Xplorer generating leads to clubs • First Virtual-O champs
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yvette Baker & Peter Palmer Relays participation increases • Increase in number of junior-focused coaches • Double the number of university clubs attending BUCS
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All regions showing healthy levels of junior participation • Regional squads operating at capacity • BSOA championships increasing in participation
...	... continued long-term focus ...
2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership & Participation up to 33% of total

This is not yet formalised into an operational plan and set of targets. However, the British Orienteering development team will produce tracking indicators that enable progress to be monitored and managed in a systematic way through the period 2018-21.

The Four Nations

This strategy report is based on consultation across all the nations England, Scotland, Wales & Northern Ireland. All four nations agree with the strategic approach of club development, improved links and pathways and more social opportunities for juniors. All four nations pledge to work together to share good ideas, best practice and cooperative working.

When a proposal is made that affects all juniors e.g. a rule change, all four nations will be consulted. The Sport England funding for youth will generate local activities in England to implement the strategy; activities in the other nations will be implemented via local resources and any additional support channels e.g. grant funding.

Junior participation is considerably higher in Scotland than other nations, which reflects the focus, hard work and investment over many years. British Orienteering will identify what has worked well in Scotland, and aim apply elsewhere if and as appropriate. SOA is performing its own overall strategic review in 2018, including its approach to juniors and youth, and will merge the ideas of “Every Junior Matters” into a local strategy and implementation plan for juniors in Scotland.



Conclusion

For a variety of reasons outlined in this report, orienteering has struggled to keep young people engaged in the sport. Nevertheless, examples of outstanding practice exist in Scotland, the regional squad system and clubs such as SYO, MAROC and others. With focus and determination, we can engage young people in all nations, regions, clubs and schools, and give them a sport that is fun, safe, exciting and rewarding. This is our long-term aim and British Orienteering commits to deliver on this.



Credits

Grateful thanks are due from British Orienteering to the following:

- All members who contributed to the consultation during Nov-Dec 2017
- SROC, MAROC, SYO & SARUM for club profiles
- Junior-related bodies: JROS, BSOA, British Orienteering Talent
- Swedish & French federations: SOFT & FFCO
- Members who contributed with additional car-park or phone conversations
- Parents who gave permissions for use of photographs.

Appendix – Junior Development Framework

Following discussions initiated by several members at the Club and Association Conference in October 2015 a Junior Development Meeting was organised in March 2016. Over 25 clubs shared updates pertaining to their development initiatives and progress. This gave a broader perspective on the successes and challenges faced across the sport for clubs in England. Further conversations highlighted that these are consistent with other clubs across the UK.

To continue to drive forward this work and to create focus the Families and Juniors Development Working Group for England was set up. The group's remit was to look at best practice for engaging juniors and share it across the sport.

The Junior Development Framework is the result of that work based on information supplied by several clubs that displayed growth in membership and a high percentage of juniors as a total of their overall membership.

The Framework presented at the 2016 Club and Association Conference, layouts principles and an approach that has been proven to deliver increases in junior participation and membership by a few clubs from across the UK including South Yorkshire Orienteers, Moravian Orienteers and Happy Herts among others.

Before You Start

Any club development takes time and effort. One off initiatives will be less successful than a long-term programme of events and activities. Before starting a programme of development, it is important to get 'buy in' and commitment from the club in terms of volunteer provision, financial support and equipment provision. As a minimum a key team of 3 individuals with different skill sets is recommended – a good communicator / organiser type person, an experienced planner and a technology person.

Junior development can be split into 2 key stages: attracting participants and then developing those participants into active club members.

Stage 1 – Attracting Participants

Put on a series of CATI type events

A series of events is far better than one offs. This can be done through a youth or schools' league (although it should be focused on the parents bringing the children rather than teachers) or a series of newcomer events. A series of approximately 9 is recommended spread over the academic year.

Stick to a regular format

Use an event format that works for inexperienced orienteers and stick to it. Newcomers like knowing what to expect and it makes it easier for volunteers. Choose a set time (e.g. 1-3pm) and day so people know when to turn up. You don't necessarily need to stick to a specific date each month because you may want to avoid major orienteering competitions and school holidays. Ensure that the dates are firmly fixed for the full series and once fixed don't change them, families like to plan ahead. Courses should be kept short. Re-use areas and run previous courses in reverse. Offer a light green for improvers and adults and something for the more experienced e.g. map memory, sprints. You must use electronic timing as you need to put on a high-quality event.

Keep it local

Newcomers do not want to travel far to begin with (a 20-minute drive is the suggested maximum travel time but this of course will depend on the geography of your area). Pick a target population and choose areas as close as possible to it. Even moving a couple of miles outside the target area will see a drop in number at those particular events. Over time people will be prepared to travel further and you can add in some further afield areas.

Use busy well known parks and gardens that are popular & familiar to families

People are happier to let their children run on their own / children are more confident where they are familiar. They know where the venues are so they can get to the event easily. There are lots of people already there who you can publicise future events to or persuade to have a go on the day.

Base start, finish & registration by cafes

Everything should be close by – lots of people hanging around creates a lovely social atmosphere and gives the event a real buzz. The cafes provide facilities such as toilets & refreshments. In the winter think about using indoor registration facilities such as a classrooms & discovery centres. Alternatively, put up a tent for shelter and ask parents to run a cake stall.

Celebrate children's success

End the league series with a separate prize giving event. Medals for the 1st 3 in each school year / age class, certificates for anybody who does 5 events or more, trophy for winning schools and a prize for anyone who does all events.

Friendly familiar faces at every event with a flexible attitude

Welcome everybody. Look out for lost souls. Explain what to do. Get to know your participants. Greet them by name. Ask how they've done. Talk through the course/map with them. Allow children to be shadowed and run in pairs and still be competitive. Be prepared for all sorts of weird and wonderful requests and try to accommodate them wherever possible. Offer free SI/EMIT card hire.

Publicise your events

Large banners at the venue for 2 weeks before hand. 5000 glossy flyers advertising the series printed & distributed to schools, at school's cross country events, at park runs, in

sports shops, libraries, scout groups etc. Focus on schools where existing juniors attend and ask them to invite their friends or where there is a keen PE co-ordinator. Use Facebook.

Advertise in the 'what's on' section of local magazines and newspaper. Run orienteering activities such as mazes or simple courses at community events – fairs, outdoors events etc.

– and give out flyers. Establish links with partners (school sports partnerships, council etc.) who will be happy to help publicise the events.

Be patient

Although publicity is essential, lots of participants will come through word of mouth and this takes a long while to spread. Twenty or so participants can be normal for much of the first year but numbers will eventually grow.

Capture email addresses

Take the email address of everyone who registers, then you can regularly email them about the next event and invite them to club activities. Find out how they heard about the event.

Stage 2 – Increasing & Developing Membership

Sell the benefits of membership

People need to see the advantages of joining the club e.g. regular socials, competing on behalf of the club, reduced fees at events, British Orienteering negotiated discounts, free coaching, regular newsletters, wearing club kit etc. What can you do to improve your membership offer for juniors and their families?

Put on regular coaching sessions

Beginners need coaching to improve. Split children into different age groups – teenagers do not want to be with 7 and 8 year olds. Offer a range of TD levels so people can slot in at the level they are comfortable at.

Invite regular juniors to coaching sessions

Look at the results and invite regular attendees to club coaching sessions using personal invites. Maybe offer free coaching sessions to members (could be a key selling point for why people should join the club).

Capture the interest of parents

If parents get the orienteering bug then you will get a new family that actively participates in all aspects of orienteering – travelling to big competitions, volunteering etc. Invite parents to help at the league events, encourage them to run themselves, run a separate adults' coaching group.

Regular Communication

Orienteering is complicated. Regular emails and newsletters are essential to explain what all the different competitions are and to keep all club members informed of what club events and coaching sessions are happening.

Enter as many junior competitions as you can

Juniors love being asked to run for the club and events such as YBT, Peter Palmers, BSOC, JK Relays etc. give them a great opportunity to socialise and travel with other juniors.

Personal Invitations

Email new members personally and invite them to run at suitable competitions and come to club activities. Some competitions are more suitable than others e.g. YBT is suitable for any junior regardless of ability (they just need to be able to do a yellow in a pair) but the CSC requires seniors / juniors to run specific courses so they need to be of a certain standard.

Blanket requests don't work because newcomers are shy to push themselves forward.

Regular Socials

Run a monthly evening event varying the format through the year. Nominate a pub to meet in for food afterwards and invite newcomers to attend. Include juniors in this. Nearly all pubs welcome children and they enjoy a chance to socialise too. During the winter it will tend to be mainly adults as night events don't attract many juniors but during spring and summer evening events are popular with families too. Try to hold other events such as BBQs and annual dinners or lunches where club success is celebrated. Give out lots of awards for various performances to lots of different people– best relay run, most improved etc.

And finally.....

Reward volunteers

Increasing membership and participation takes a lot of hard work. Volunteers need to be appreciated and thanked. Some ideas: thank you note, free run voucher and lottery scratched card to main event officials (planner, organiser, controller etc.) after the event. Half price runs for helpers at level C and above events, free runs for helpers at level D events. All main officials presented with a small prize at the AGM / presentation afternoon with a larger prize for Official of the Year and a trophy to someone who has made an outstanding volunteering contribution to the club. BUT accept that not everyone will volunteer don't pressure those that don't want to – you will lose them from orienteering.