

Safeguarding of adults at risk

SOA is committed to maintaining a culture where good, appropriate practices ensure the safeguarding and wellbeing of adults at risk and to ensuring there is zero tolerance for divergence from this culture. Members and participants in events and activities are also required to abide by applicable national legislation and relevant national and local guidelines.

SOA has a Code of conduct in place that addresses standards of general behaviour: qualified coaches sign up to the British Orienteering Code of Conduct for Coaches.

1. Scope

This policy and procedure address the safeguarding and wellbeing of adults at risk who are participating in events or activities under the jurisdiction of SOA, open affiliated clubs and any closed clubs who run events or activities involving adults at risk, wherever they take place. It applies to Board members, staff, members and volunteers, all of whom shall adopt and apply the policy and associated procedures and guidance.

Unless affiliated clubs choose otherwise and introduce additional club specific requirements this policy addresses the topic for SOA and for the clubs and their members.

2. Policy

The SOA Board is fully committed to safeguarding of all adults at risk involved with or affected by Scottish Orienteering activities and interactions, and requires members of SOA and participants in events or activities that occur under SOA jurisdiction to ensure application of this commitment and abide by applicable national legislation and relevant national and local guidelines.

SOA embraces the responsibility to promote the health and wellbeing of adults at risk by providing opportunities for them to participate in sport safely, and to implement this policy and appropriate procedures to protect them from harm, abuse and exploitation.

SOA shall:

- Respect and promote the rights, wishes and feelings of adults at risk,

- Recruit, train, support and supervise staff, members and volunteers to adopt best practice to reduce risk, safeguard and protect adults at risk from abuse.
- Address any allegations of misconduct or abuse of adults at risk in line with the procedures below addressing reporting, investigation and the SOA disciplinary policy.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 An adult: a person over the age of 17 years but also including people over 16 where the law defines them to be adults.
- 3.2 An adult at risk: an adult who is at an increased risk of abuse or neglect as they are unable to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation.

4. Underlying themes

- 4.1 This policy and procedures are based on the following themes.

Person centred - protection and the wellbeing of the person are the primary goal

Prevention - it is better to take action before harm occurs

Protection - wellbeing concerns, suspicions and allegations of poor behaviour and abuse will be investigated swiftly and appropriately

Empowered - people have the right to express views on all matters that affect them, should they wish to.

Accountability - ensure clarity around roles, responsibilities and accountability for everyone involved with safeguarding activities

Working together - we will work in partnership with adults, clubs, carers/family/support workers and statutory agencies to achieve the best results for the individual.

Support - involved parties will be provided with appropriate support and training to ensure effective implementation of this policy.

5. Safeguarding procedures and responsibilities

Appendix 1 provides the listing of the responsibilities below by roles.

General and appointments

- 5.1 The SOA Board shall, through ongoing implementation of this policy, promote the safeguarding of adults at risk while they are engaged in orienteering activities and events, and shall maintain a culture of listening to and engaging in dialogue with people in these groups.
- 5.2 The Board shall appoint an SOA Lead Welfare Officer.
- 5.3 The Lead Welfare Officer shall create a small team, normally consisting of themselves, the Welfare Director and one other Board member, to address more complex or significant safeguarding issues and incidents.
- 5.4 The committee of each open club affiliated to SOA shall ensure that a Club Welfare Officer and a deputy to the Club Welfare Officer are appointed and that continuity in filling these roles is maintained.

Coaches and Club Welfare Officers

- 5.5 All active qualified coaches shall, if they wish to coach orienteering in Scotland, have PVG or equivalent certification in place, be licensed under the British Orienteering system and have attended the Child Welfare and Protection in Sport (CWPS) course or appropriate refresher within the last 36 months. All active Club Welfare officers and deputies shall have PVG certification and have attended the CWPS course or appropriate refresher within the last 36 months.
- 5.6 Club Welfare officers shall provide advice to the club committee and club members on safeguarding of adults at risk matters and required actions plus what needs to be avoided (poor practice and abuse). Mentoring of club members is important when they are first taking up roles that involve working with adults at risk, so that they understand risks and normal precautions associated with the activities.
- 5.7 All people acting in support roles during coaching activities with adults at risk who do not have PVG clearance shall work under the direct supervision of someone with PVG clearance. People routinely and regularly acting in

support roles are expected to obtain PVG clearance.

- 5.8 Club Welfare Officers, on being made aware of a potential safeguarding issue, should focus on supporting the individuals, ascertaining the facts without passing any judgement, record the information and decide whether to pass handling of the matter over to the SOA Lead Welfare officer.
- 5.9 Where there is more than low safeguarding risk associated with an orienteering event or activity then the more significant hazards, risks and precautions need to be part of the risk assessment and the assessment signed by someone who is PVG certified (normally the Club Welfare Officer or a qualified coach).
- 5.10 Coaches shall, when working with adults at risk, have the same qualifications and attendance at courses as set out in paragraph 5.5 above and need to ensure that the scope of their PVG certificate includes adults at risk.

Education

- 5.11 The Lead Welfare Officer shall ensure that appropriate initial and refresher training materials on Safeguarding of Adults at risk are available for sharing with members, and that who should be requested to take the training is specified and shared with chosen recipients.
- 5.12 The Lead Welfare Officer shall, working with the staff and Club Welfare Officers, produce and deliver the training plan, including refresher training particularly when there are substantive changes in requirements. Likely recipients will be Board members, Club Committee members, employees, event officials, qualified active coaches and would be coaches.
- 5.13 The SOA staff team shall keep records of who has received safeguarding and wellbeing training including when it happened: these records will be used to identify who should receive refresher training.

Communication

- 5.14 The Lead Welfare Officer and SOA staff shall produce and deliver a Safeguarding and Wellbeing communication plan to ensure that SOA members are kept aware and knowledgeable of safeguarding and wellbeing.

- 5.15 The Lead Welfare Officer and the Safety Director shall share with SOA clubs and Club Welfare Officers suitable and anonymised learning from significant safeguarding incidents, with the focus being on the learning to be gained. If thought appropriate they may run a webinar on the topics for interested parties. Incidents from outside of orienteering can be used if they provide appropriate learning.

Reporting of poor practice or abuse

While the intent is to implement and follow beneficial practices for safeguarding (known as best or good practices), at times poor practices or abuse/neglect may be encountered and identified. All these less than beneficial cases need to be reported and investigated.

Definitions:

Poor practices: behaviour towards an adult at risk from an individual in a position of responsibility which falls short of the required standards set in the SOA code of conduct, the British Orienteering code of conduct for coaches, and the requirements of this policy.

Abuse: Abuse is when a person or persons inflict or fail to prevent significant harm to an adult at risk. There are 4 identified types of abuse - physical, emotional, sexual and neglect.

- 5.16 The committee of each SOA affiliated club shall ensure that there is a working reporting system for safeguarding concerns, incidents and abuse associated with orienteering events and activities, and that access to the system by members is simple and obvious. Any reports made should go direct to the Club Welfare Officer without transit through an intermediary. The system should include the option of reporting to the SOA Lead Welfare Officer should the potential issue be with a Club Welfare Officer or deputy. Flow charts showing the decision making process for reporting and initial follow up are shown in Appendix 2.
- 5.17 The Lead Welfare Officer shall ensure that a similar reporting system is in place should the reports be made direct to SOA, or Club Welfare Officers decide to forward reports to them.
- 5.18 All members and participants at orienteering activities and events shall, if they encounter evidence of poor practices or abuse, raise a report using the provided club or SOA reporting systems.

- 5.19 Club Welfare Officers, their deputies and the SOA Lead Welfare Officer shall ensure that the reports are stored securely, information contained within them is only shared on a need to know basis, and that ongoing appropriate security of the information is maintained.
- 5.20 Club Welfare Officers, their deputies and the Lead Welfare Officer shall treat reports of historic poor practice or abuse with the same priority and interest as similar reports of current issues.

Investigations should issues arise

- 5.21 The Club Welfare Officer or acting deputy shall on receipt of a report share the information with the SOA Lead Welfare Officer and agree who should collect any additional material required and handle the investigation (or if not related to orienteering, who should forward the information to appropriate external bodies).

The flowcharts attached to this policy set out what steps need to be taken by whom, depending upon whether the issues involve poor practice or suspected abuse and also on the severity of the issue as seen in the initial assessment. For all more significant issues including any involving possible abuse the matter must be handed over promptly to the Lead Welfare Officer.

- 5.22 Whether it is the Club Welfare Officer, their deputy or the SOA Lead Welfare Officer handling the matter, in the initial phase they should:
- make contact with the person who has submitted the information,
 - focus on collecting facts and document the information provided,
 - outline the next steps,
 - maintain appropriate confidentiality,
- 5.23 For more serious cases and for complex or significant investigations the Lead Welfare Officer shall involve the SOA Welfare Director and one other Board member in order to ensure impartiality in the investigation.
- 5.24 If the above small team chooses to do so they have the option of referring cases to the British Orienteering Safeguarding investigation team.

Auditing

- 5.25 The Lead Welfare Officer shall organise and deliver an annual audit of implementation of at least one part of this policy, either across SOA or within one or more clubs.
- 5.26 The Welfare Director and the Safe Director shall review the scope and effectiveness of this policy once every 3 years, or following a significant audit finding or case in Scottish Orienteering or following changes to regulations, and make appropriate updates, should findings indicate that they are required.

Board level oversight

- 5.27 The SOA Board shall review performance at least annually, focussing on training, communication and the number of incidents in this area that have been dealt with by SOA. If appropriate a brief summary of learning arising from the incidents may be included in the President's report to the AGM along with mention of initiatives in place to avoid incidents.

6. Guidance

- 6.1 A normal orienteering event held away from any buildings, changing rooms, shower facilities will have low safeguarding risks in keeping with a generic safeguarding risk assessment. Higher safeguarding risks may be present if overnight stays with adults at risk are organised and/or there are changing facilities/showers. Quiet and secluded routes between a finish and assembly may also increase the risk.
- 6.2 Event organisers for events where first aid provision is through an external company should check that the contracted first aid team members attending have PVG or equivalent certification in place. They should also inform the company that one or more adult at risk will likely be present at the events.
- 6.3 An individual raising a concern or a safeguarding issue is likely to be outside their comfort zones and recipients of such information need to
- be supportive of the individual making the report,
 - remain calm and avoid passing opinions or judgements,
 - focus on facts and be wary of introducing their own interpretations/opinions,

- provide guidance and explanation of the next steps including the need to report the information,
- demonstrate that they are taking the report seriously,
- create a record of what the individual has said.

6.4 It may not be readily apparent to event officials and coaches when adults at risk are present: this may hinder understanding and implementing any particular safeguarding requirements. Provision of information about adults at risk to the officials/coaches at the outset or in advance (by a local authority, any accompanying persons or the individuals) is good practice.

6.5 While the Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 Part 1 section 2 indicates that placing at risk a vulnerable adult is grounds for referral for inclusion in the children’s list, it seems that at present the requirement is not implemented for standard risks (with normal precautions) encountered within sports.

References

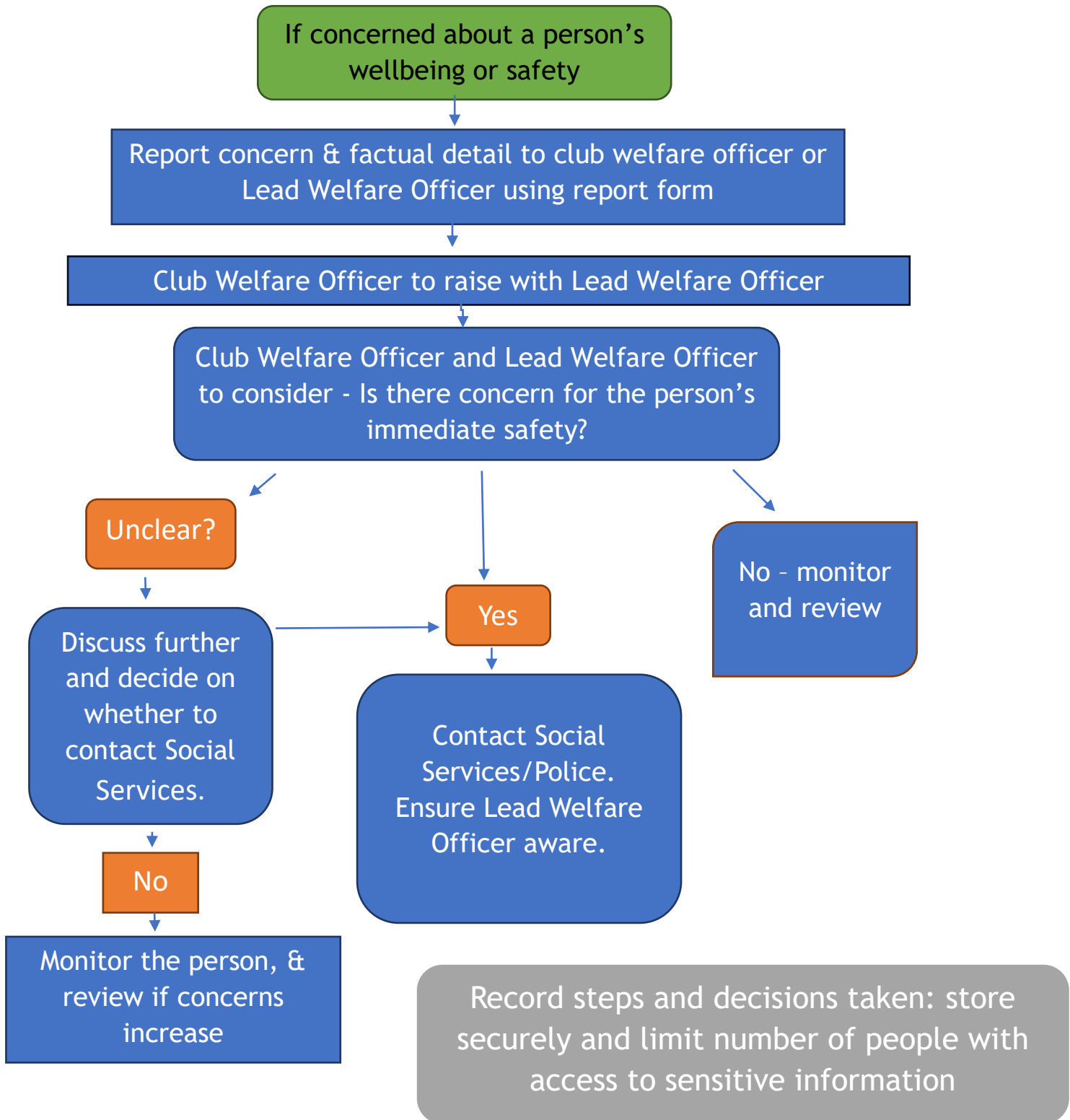
Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007
 The Equalities Act 2010
 Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020
 Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021
 British Orienteering Safeguarding policy 2021
 British Orienteering Transgender policy (awaiting review).

Custodian: Equality, Welfare & Diversity Director

Revision No.	Date	Pages changed and brief outline
Issue 1	26/10/2023	New policy

Appendix 2 Flowcharts for responding to reports of wellbeing concerns, poor practices and abuse.

Concern flow chart



Safeguarding incident at or associated with orienteering activity

