

Outreach and Marketing Orienteering to Newcomers

Widening awareness of orienteering as a fantastic sport for all is a core plank of the Scottish Orienteering strategy ([read more here](#)). For this Newsletter's introductory article, our Communications & Marketing Director, Katherine Ivory, describes some of the SOA's current developments to attract new participants to orienteering and support clubs in their work.

If you ask orienteers why they love the sport, the answers are usually immediate: the challenge of navigating, the satisfaction of finding the best route choice, the enjoyment of forests and hills, and the friendly community that surrounds events. All these things are of wide appeal yet many people having only the vaguest idea of what orienteering involves, or worse, some outdated or niche perceptions.

With so many competing recreational opportunities, ensuring orienteering develops as a thriving sport will not happen automatically - hence work at national level by the SOA Development team to support what clubs do locally. Two specific outreach initiatives underway currently. Whilst the orienteering is a sport that's inclusive and welcoming to all, the current SOA strategy focuses on two particular groups: 1) younger adults, to address the 20-40 membership age gap, and 2) encouraging families and young people to take up orienteering.

Further Adult Beginner Days in 2026

In 2025, the Development Officers worked with local clubs in Edinburgh and Aberdeen to pilot introductory skills-development days geared to adult newcomers. These were advertised in a range of different ways, including online via EventBrite as well as social media. A poster was designed to appeal to younger adults and distributed around each city in suitable places. Following positive feedback and useful learning, the taster days are being repeated in 2026, with a day in Inverness too. This initiative has created a 'play-book' that can be introduced by clubs in other areas too. Contact Louise (louise@scottish-orienteering.org) or Heidi (heidi@scottish-orienteering.org) to find out more.

New 'What is Orienteering' leaflet - coming soon!

For someone completely new to the sport, even simple questions—What is orienteering? Do I need special kit? Can I go to an event as a complete beginner?—can determine whether they decide to give it a try. Providing clear, consistent answers and welcoming introductions can make all the difference. To this end, a new 'What is Orienteering' leaflet is being developed for clubs to use in outreach work with potential newcomers, partner organisations, community groups and schools. It will provide a general resource that explains in simple terms what orienteering is and how to get involved (signposting how to find out about clubs and events). The plan is to trial it at the SOA/BOF stall at the

JK2026 sprint day, and take feedback from clubs and newcomers before finalising for printing.

Community Conversations 2026

March sees the start of the new series of monthly online cross-club meetings (with the first one being a Q&A with our Chair, Jonathan Molloy ([more info here](#))). These sessions provide opportunities for members across Scotland to hear about practical developments and share ideas, with a different topic each time. The April session will be taking a closer look at marketing and practical ways to reach new audiences. It's also an opportunity to give feedback on the new SOA leaflet. All members are warmly encouraged to come along ([sign up here](#)). Please do bring along to share, things that have worked well for your club or good examples you've seen elsewhere that we could all learn from.

Katherine Ivory

Communications & Marketing Director