

# LOC Family Project

by Duncan Archer, Kath Savage and Dick Towler

## Lakeland



## Orienteering

In 2022, Lakeland Orienteering Club decided to take a fresh look at club development, with the primary objectives of boosting club membership and lowering the age demographics of the club – challenges that many UK clubs will recognise! The aims were to raise awareness of orienteering as an enjoyable, health-enhancing sport which is accessible to all, and improve orienteering skills in family members. The long-term targets set were to increase by 20%, the number of adults aged 20-50 and juniors participating in events and becoming LOC members by 2025.

Grants from the Orienteering Foundation and NWOA helped augment LOC funds, and originally Kath Savage and Claire Heppenstall were appointed jointly to the post, with Kath taking over as sole CDO after a few months. We catch up with Kath, and project manager Dick Towler, to find out how the first year has gone.



### Year 1 review

During the first year, Kath spearheaded many family project initiatives including:



Showing the basics of orienteering at half-term family fun workshop by LOC

😊 **Publicity and Marketing** – Eye-catching promotional materials, regular postings on Facebook and Instagram, capturing family email addresses to promote events and activities, mailings through schools and partner organisations, radio interviews and local newspaper articles.

😊 **Family focussed events** – Events whose prime focus is families, with white / yellow / orange courses with SI timing, a friendly welcome and good facilities.

😊 **Promoting regular LOC events to families** – Including LOC's Galoppen events, their summer series, winter urbans, spring series and even their night terrain events (with special night yellow course for novices). Someone is always on hand at events to welcome newcomers.

😊 **Family Fun Workshops** – During February half term, a variety of different fun orienteering games in a workshop format followed by short courses. Town centre focussed with room available for indoor games and refreshments.

😊 **Festive Trails** – Map based "treasure hunt" trails at Easter and Christmas around Kendal and Ulverston town centres.

😊 **Find Your Way and MapRun** – Introductory events using MapRun, and a set of enduring MapRun challenges in 8 convenient locations to have a go at your leisure.

😊 **Presence at other events** – Orienteering activities at the Grasmere

Gallop / OMM Lite Festival and the Kendal Torchlight Festival, which helped raise awareness of O in the outdoor community and appeal to a wider range of families.



A satisfying byproduct of the family project was fielding a full team at the Yvette Baker Trophy qualifier and coming second place (and very nearly first!) against some tough opposition.

### Incentive schemes

Various schemes have been introduced to encourage attendance, and give children a sense of achievement and recognition:

😊 **Course collector** – Record the date of your first event of different types (string, park, forest, fell, urban, relay, score... and even night!) and try to collect them all!

😊 **British Schools eXplorer challenge awards** – Receive points for controls visited and bonuses for club days and workshops, and get badges

and certificates for attaining certain totals. It was fantastic to see juniors receiving them at the recent LOC club champs, and it has been so successful the highest "Forest" award for 100 points has been easily exceeded by a dozen juniors!

😊 Colour skills awards – Work on and demonstrate specific skills through events and workshops at white, yellow and orange standard, giving sessions a sense of purpose.

😊 Not just for the children... – in recognition of the crucial role that parents play, there are also certificates to recognise the contribution of the parents!



Sample incentive log books and certificates



LOC juniors at night terrain event with Explorer challenge certificates.

## Membership strategy

An integral part of the family project is LOC's membership strategy. The club offers local club-only membership completely free to adult newcomers for an introductory year, and to all junior members. LOC membership has many benefits including being part of the club community, regular email updates, access to club coaching, club kit and more! It also entitles juniors to free entry at all LOC events.

After the first year, members are encouraged to become full members of British Orienteering, with all the benefits

that provides, including taking part in events further afield, running for the club in relays, rankings, public liability insurance, and partner discounts.

For juniors up to 14 years old, the last two years have seen a more than doubling of British Orienteering members, and 10-fold increase if you include LOC club only members. In the adult 21-50 range the club has seen 50% more British Orienteering members, and a 3-fold increase if you include LOC club only members. In effect they have already exceeded the 20% growth membership target, and it remains to be seen how much further the club can grow!

It is too early to know how many of the newcomers enjoying free LOC membership will join British Orienteering, but initial signs are that it removes a barrier to initial participation and helps get them hooked on the sport.



Membership comparing 2022 (first column) with 2024 full British Orienteering members (second column) and including LOC only members too (third column)

## Learning

Some of the key learnings from the first year have included:

😊 Strong volunteer support is needed to put everything on and give families a warm welcome at events.

😊 National Trust properties are great for families, with well-known locations, good parking and facilities.

😊 Eye-catching publicity and promotional materials make orienteering stand out from all the other competing activities for families.

😊 Equally important is retaining the initial interest through regular contact (collecting email addresses!), a sense of community (social media, inclusive group workshops), and incentive schemes.



Example of eye-catching publicity for family focussed event.

## Plans for 2024 and beyond

Kath has lots of plans for 2024, including:

- ❑ Continued regular events suitable for families and newcomers
- ❑ Continued high level of publicity
- ❑ Extend the incentive schemes
- ❑ Work on junior development and retention, and converting LOC local members into full British Orienteering members
- ❑ Increase club volunteering

The project is now in its second year, and the club recently agreed to explore continuing into a third, perhaps even a fourth, year.

## Orienteering Foundation support

LOC's family project was part funded with grants from the Orienteering Foundation and an NWOA development grant, for which the club is very grateful. The Orienteering Foundation is a keen supporter for club development officers, especially well thought out proposals with clear and achievable goals. Grants have been awarded in the past to CLOK, DVO, FVO, LOC, Moravian, SBOC and SELOC, and they welcome applications from other clubs. For more information see <https://www.orienteeringfoundation.org.uk/club-development>.

