

FRAMEWORK FOR RETURN TO ACTIVITIES

Special Olympics is adopting a five (5) phase approach to return to activities. **It is important to note there may be times that we will revert to an earlier phase, if and when there is a rise in the spread of the infection.**

In this document, attendees are any individual present within the activity space (e.g. sports hall, meeting room, outdoor field of play). Attendees will include athletes, coaches and volunteers and may include parents/ guardians/carers where their presence is required.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. The health and safety of all members of Special Olympics Ireland is paramount.
2. Special Olympics is an organisation for people with intellectual disabilities (ID), and activities extend beyond sports activities and the guidance must be inclusive and directed at the unique needs and abilities of people with ID.
3. Government guidelines should serve as minimum standards. In addition, consideration should be given to Special Olympics guidelines, and if these are more conservative/restrictive, these should be followed.
4. Guidance is based on current public health advice information available at the time of publication. As knowledge of COVID-19 is changing rapidly, guidance will continue to evolve.
5. Guidance takes a phased approach, allowing clubs to decide, based on their club circumstances, prevailing conditions and government advice within their locality or region. It is expected that clubs may be at different phases at different times and therefore the phases are not dated.
6. For any athlete, coach or volunteer, a return to activity should be on an opt-in basis, with the individuals taking personal responsibility to decide whether they are happy to return.

PHASED APPROACH

Special Olympics Ireland is currently in what we are calling the **STAY AT HOME phase.**

The Framework allows for a gradual move from one phase to the next, whilst also facilitating a return to an earlier phase should circumstances within the club dictate or where the government is managing a strong upsurge of infection on either a local, regional or on a wider scale.

Clubs may enter the **PREPARATION PHASE** on receipt of Return to Activities Protocol. When a club has completed the necessary actions in the **PREPARATION PHASE**, outlined later in this document, and able to confirm, in writing to the Regional Office, that the measures are in place, approval to move to the **ORIENTATION PHASE** may be granted. We are recommending athletes and volunteers go through an orientation period to adjust and adapt to their new club environment. We want all attendees to have a positive experience on their return, but safety is paramount. The time spent in each step may vary and is likely to be a minimum of 3 weeks but potentially significantly longer (e.g. 6 or more weeks) especially where it may be difficult to implement measures that will allow for the move to the next phase or where government guidance changes. It may be necessary to step backwards for a period in order to reassess the risks before moving forward again. Stepping backwards would mean, as a minimum, returning to the restrictions in the previous phase. The final phase, **TOWARDS COMPETITION**, will see competition introduced in different formats with different timelines.

SPECIAL OLYMPICS IRELAND RETURN TO ACTIVITIES PHASES

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STAY AT HOME



All Special Olympics Club Activity and Events **suspended**

No events or activities to be held in person

Sport and other activities offered virtually through **Together at Home** programme or by local coach

Individual sport training sessions **in own home** using own equipment

Meetings, conferences or training to be held virtually

Special Olympics Ireland to confirm move to **next phase**

P

PREPARATION



Clubs to **prepare** for return to activities

No events or activities to be held in person

Sport and other activities offered virtually through **Together at Home** programme or by local coach

Individual sport training sessions **in own home** using own equipment

Meetings to be held virtually. If a physical meeting is required this should be a maximum of 6 people with social distancing measures

Club to confirm readiness to move to **next phase** to Regional Office

O

ORIENTATION



Reintroduction of athletes and volunteers to training under strict guidelines for a minimum of 3 weeks.

No club training should exceed **25 attendees** once social distancing and government guidelines can be met

Sport and other activities offered virtually through **Together at Home** programme or by local coach

All activities must adhere to strict social distancing and sanitisation protocols

Meetings to be held virtually. If a physical meeting is required this should be a maximum of 6 people with social distancing measures

Non-contact training sessions

Physical assistance permitted where required

Beyond Sport activities can take place (i.e. Athlete Leadership)

Club to confirm readiness to move to **next phase** to Regional Office

R

REACTIVATION



Club Training to incorporate **all club members** once social distancing and government guidelines can be met.

Club Training can resume fully once social distancing and government guidelines can be met.

Sport and other activities offered virtually through **Together at Home** programme or by local coach

All activities must adhere to strict social distancing and sanitisation protocols

Meetings must adhere to strict social distancing guidelines and sanitisation protocols

Reintroduction of **contact training**

Physical assistance permitted where required

Beyond Sport activities can take place (i.e. Athlete Leadership)

Special Olympics Ireland to confirm move to **next phase**

T

TOWARDS COMPETITION



Non advancement events, development days, leagues and inter-club activities **may begin to return**

Club Training can continue once social distancing and government guidelines can be met

Sport and other activities offered virtually through **Together at Home** programme or by local coach

All activities must adhere to strict social distancing and sanitisation protocols.

Meetings must adhere to strict social distancing guidelines and sanitisation protocols

Contact training allowed

Physical assistance permitted where required

Beyond Sport activities can take place (i.e. Athlete Leadership)

Ireland Games (with people traveling from multiple geographic areas who are in same phase) **MAY** occur

FACTORS IMPACTING THE RISK OF GETTING COVID-19 (DATES CONCEPT)

DISTANCE	The risk of getting COVID-19 increases as the distance between you and others get smaller. Keep 2 meters apart where possible.
ACTIVITY	How you spend time with people and what you do with them can increase your risk.
TIME	The more time you spend in close contact with other people can increase your risk of getting COVID-19. Keep track of who you spend time with and how.
ENVIRONMENT	Being outdoors is safer than being indoors. Where possible meet with others outdoors. If this is not possible, keep windows and doors open when meeting others inside.
SPECIAL OLYMPICS	<p>Children with an intellectual disability should be able to return to sport once they are able to adhere to the measures in place to minimize the risks associated with COVID-19.</p> <p>Always assess your attendees' needs and ability to comply with guidelines.</p> <p>Specific considerations may include reduced numbers in comparison to mainstream guidelines or where more detail is required to manage close contact or required assistance.</p> <p>At-risk athletes and volunteers are advised not to attend activities.</p>

OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER

When planning for a return to activities, consider:

i. Ability of the Club to offer all athletes the opportunity to take part in the same number of activities that they took part in before COVID-19.

Clubs need to look at each sport and activity that they offer and agree the number of athletes that they can offer the opportunity to attend training or the activity in order to be compliant with Government restrictions and guidelines.

Consideration needs to be given to:

- Training/ Activity requirements: size of training venue, number of lanes required.
- Duration of training/activity: time available to train or host the activity.
- Number of Athletes participating in the activity.
- Specific needs and requirements of the athletes.
- Number of volunteers available to support.

To support all athletes and volunteers interest in returning to club activity it is suggested to ask all attendees to complete an interest survey preference for activity/sport.

It is advised that Clubs set expectations with athletes and families for an initial period of time and reduce the number of activities that an attendee may participate in.

ii. The level of contact involved in the sport

Different activities and sports carry different degrees of risk related to the level of close contact involved. Team sports for example can largely be categorised into contact and non-contact sports, with contact sports carrying a higher risk of virus transmission:

Contact sport is an activity, particularly a team activity, in which by participating you are coming into close contact with others as part of competing or taking part in that activity – for

example, physical contact sport in sport where there is close contact like football, basketball and floorball.

Non-contact sport – activities in which you can comfortably maintain 2 metres distance from others while participating – for example athletics, table tennis or golf.

iii. The risk level for each of the individual participants

- a. The ability of the participants to maintain 2 metres physical distancing rules
- b. If there are any concerns regarding an athlete's susceptibility to COVID-19 due to an underlying illness, their parent/guardian/carer should discuss this with their medical practitioner prior to a return to club activities.
- c. The age of the athlete - a very young athlete will be less understanding of physical distancing and hygiene measures and therefore return to activities may be most appropriate on an individual or small group basis, practicing skill, without physical contact between participants, and where physical distancing is more manageable.

iv. Orientating Athletes into Activities

It is important to recognise that many of our athletes may have been experienced more isolation than other individuals in society as their regular day-to-day structure, networks and supports that they rely on may have been closed, reduced or conducted through a virtual environment. Athletes will be excited at the prospect of returning to meet their friends and play their sport. The environment and the experience for athletes will be much different from when they last took part in club training or other activities. In the absence of their regular day-to-day structured activities, Special Olympics activities may be their first encounter with others outside their home. We recommend that clubs and coaches:

- (i) Communicate the new measures, responsibilities and requirements to all attendees and
- (ii) Provide a briefing and walk-through at the start of each session to educate and reinforce the measures.

v. Grouping of athletes and volunteers.

In order to protect attendees at activities; it is advised that athletes are grouped together and assigned volunteers to support for the duration of the session.