

## 1. FRAMEWORK FOR A 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 or be unable to permit movement to the next phase, should government guidelines prevent SOI from doing so.

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.

### 1.1 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. Similarly if the Government guidelines are more restrictive at times; these should take precedence.
4. This framework is a working document and 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.

### 1.2 PHASED APPROACH

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.

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.

## Additional notes on the framework (May 2021):

Due to differences in Government guidelines with Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland; a framework for each jurisdiction has been outlined below. Please note the framework applicable to your location.

All clubs should review their protocols, safety plans and risk assessments; to ensure they still remain relevant; are in line with Government guidelines and include any changes to activities (i.e. moving sport from indoor to outdoor).

### **Northern Ireland**

It should be noted that; due to Government restrictions, SOI are not in a position to permit any clubs in Northern Ireland to move into the REACTIVATION or the TOWARDS COMPETITION PHASE at this time. Special Olympics Ireland will communicate to clubs when movement to the next stage may be permitted.

### **Republic of Ireland**

The Government have announced from 10th May, the following measure will impact Special Olympics Clubs in the Republic of Ireland: All athletes (adult and U18s) can return to contact outdoor training\* in pods of 15.

\* Please note: Clubs are required to enter Orientation Phase before commencing contact training. Special Olympics Ireland is recommending that clubs complete a minimum of 1 week orientation phase prior to returning to contact outdoor training. This is to assist and support athletes and volunteers to adjust to their return to the training environment during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and required public health measures.

Some of the considerations for your Club are:

- The number of pods will depend on the space available and keeping in line with social distancing and public health requirements
- Attendees include any individual present within the activity space i.e. athletes, coaches and volunteers and may include parents / guardians / carers where their presence is required. No general spectators are permitted. The 4:1 ratio should be maintained a minimum of 2 volunteers e.g. Head Coach and another volunteer present at all times

All attendees should complete:

- The Pre-Return Self Declaration Form before attending a club session.
- Athletes, Coaches and Volunteers will be expected to comply with a COVID-19 Code of Conduct. Please remind your attendees of the content within the code and ensure those who have not previously completed this Code of Conduct form to complete it.

# SOI RETURN TO ACTIVITIES PHASES - REP. OF IRELAND



# S

## 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 **Can't Stop Now** 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 **Can't Stop Now** 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 it must adhere to strict social distancing guidelines and sanitisation protocols

**Club** to confirm readiness to move to **next phase** on Special Olympics Ireland Website

# O

## ORIENTATION



**Reintroduction** of athletes and volunteers to outdoor training in pods of 15, once protocols and government guidelines can be met. **Minimum of 1 week.**

**Non-Contact outdoor** training sessions only

**Physical assistance** permitted where required.

**Sport and other activities** continue to be offered **virtually** through Can't Stop Now programme or by local coach.

**Meetings**, conferences or training to be held **virtually.**

Beyond Sport activities (i.e. Athlete Leadership) to take place **virtually**

**Club** to confirm readiness to move to **next phase** on Special Olympics Ireland Website

# R

## REACTIVATION



**Outdoor Club Contact Training** in pods of 15 can resume once **protocols and government guidelines can be met.**

**Sport and other activities** continue to be offered **virtually** through Can't Stop Now programme or by local coach.

**Physical assistance** permitted where required

**Meetings**, conferences or training to be held **virtually.**

Beyond Sport activities (i.e. Athlete Leadership) to take place **virtually.**

# T

## TOWARDS COMPETITION



**From 10th May:**

**All athletes** (adult and U18s) can return to contact outdoor training in **pods of 15.**

**Club to confirm** readiness to move from Orientation to Reactivation Phase (contact training) on **Special Olympics Ireland Website**

## SOI RETURN TO ACTIVITIES PHASES - NORTHERN IRELAND

# S

### 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 **Can't Stop Now** 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 **Can't Stop Now** 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 it must adhere to strict social distancing guidelines and sanitisation protocols

**Club** to confirm readiness to move to **next phase** on Special Olympics Ireland Website

# O

### ORIENTATION



Reintroduction of athletes and volunteers to training.

No club training should exceed the number of attendees noted below once social distancing and government guidelines can be met:

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

Non-contact training sessions.

Physical assistance permitted where required.

#### From 12 April:

- Adults (18+) – group size **limit 15**
- Age 13-18 – **two** groups of 15
- Age 12 and under – **three** groups of 15

**Sport and other activities** continue to be offered **virtually** through Can't Stop Now programme or by local coach.

**Meetings**, conferences or training to be held **virtually**.

Beyond Sport activities (i.e. Athlete Leadership) to take place **virtually**.

# R

### REACTIVATION



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### TOWARDS COMPETITION



**SPECIAL OLYMPICS IRELAND  
WILL COMMUNICATE TO CLUBS  
WHEN MOVEMENT TO THE NEXT  
STAGE MAY BE PERMITTED.**

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

<b>DISTANCE</b>	The risk of getting COVID-19 increases as the distance between you and others get smaller. Keep 2 meters apart where possible.
<b>ACTIVITY</b>	How you spend time with people and what you do with them can increase your risk.
<b>TIME</b>	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.
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	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.
<b>SPECIAL OLYMPICS</b>	<p>Athletes 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>

### 1.4 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.