

SPECIAL OLYMPICS IRELAND – ACTIVE FOR LIFE

PHYSICAL LITERACY - SO LET ME GET ACTIVE – (Age Range - 0-4 Years) – Starts Outside Special Olympics

“Physical literacy can be described as the motivation, confidence, physical competence, knowledge and understanding to value and take responsibility for engagement in physical activities for life.” (Whitehead, 2014)

The main objective of this phase is to become physically literate through by beginning to learn the FUNdamental Movement Skills (FMS). The Young Athletes™ programme is an excellent opportunity to give young children from age 4 the active start they need. These Physical Literacy skills should be practiced before sport specific skills are introduced and they should continue throughout the pathway. The development of Physical Literacy in young people with intellectual disabilities, will contribute significantly to their future athletic development and their lifelong involvement in sport, physical activity and Special Olympics. An Athlete should participate in as many sports as possible to enable the development of the FUNdamental movements.

Activity Levels: Minimum 1 hour of daily physical activity / Sports Specific - 2 times per week

SO LET ME HAVE FUN – (Age Range - 4-12 Years)

The aim of this phase is to develop FUNdamental Movement Skills (FMS) and beginning to develop FUNdamental Sport Skills (FSS). It is important during this phase that Athletes are exposed to improving their FUNdamental Movement Skills. This is important because the ability of the Athlete to reach their full potential could be compromised if FUNdamental Movement Skills are not continually developed. Athletes should be learning FUNdamental Sport Skills and continue to participate in a number of sports, which is essential for all round Athletic Development. The focus within competition should be on continuing to learn in different environments.

Note – It is recommend that a Young Athletes™ Club wishing to introduce a sport are affiliated with Special Olympics Ireland for one year and the sport must be suitable to the needs and capabilities of the Athletes involved.

Activity Level: For all of this age group - Minimum 1 hour of daily physical activity / Sports Specific - 2 times per week

Number of Sports: 2-4

Competition Level: Young Athletes™ Development Days, Leagues, Interclub Activities



SO LET ME GET SPORTY – (Age Range - 8-12 Years)

The aim of this phase is to further develop FUNdamental Sport Skills (FSS) of a number of different sports while reinforcing the FUNdamental Movement Skills (FMS). It is important during this phase that Athletes are practicing the FUNdamental Movement Skills acquired during the previous phase. This is important because the ability of the Athlete to reach their full potential could be compromised if FUNdamental movement skills are not continually developed. Athletes should be learning general Sport Specific Skills (SS) and continue to participate in a number of sports, which is essential for all round Athletic Development. The focus within competition should be on continuing to learn in different environments.

Activity Level: Minimum 1 hour of daily physical activity / Sports Specific - 2 times per week

Number of Sports: 3-4

Competition Level: Young Athletes™, Leagues, Development Days and/or Area Events / Regional Events / Ireland Games



SO LET ME BE READY - - (Age Range - 13-15 Years)

During this phase, Athletes should begin to combine Sport Specific Skills (SSS) and tactics for their chosen sport, with an emphasis is on consistent quality practice. While at organised competition, Athletes should compete to the best of their ability. At practice, the focus should be on continued learning and development. Competitive elements should be included daily within practice sessions in the form of games and activities. More experiences that are competitive enable Athletes to practice their technical and tactical skills and learn how to cope with the different challenges associated with competition. However if there is an over emphasis on competition instead of practice; Athletes could plateau at a later stage in their sporting journey.

Activity Level: Minimum 1 hour of daily physical activity / Sports Specific - 2 times per week

Number of Sports: 2-3

Competition Level: Leagues, Development Days and/or Area Events / Regional Events / Ireland Games



SO LET ME COMPETE - (Age Range - Late Youth to Adult)

During this phase athletes who are proficient at performing basic and sport specific skills learn to perform these in competitive conditions. Athletes are specialising in one sport for training and competition excellence. Practice is now more competition specific and the focus is on peaking for a competition to maximise performance. Athletes are now aiming for personal bests in all competitions, while striving to develop technical and tactical skills and improving fitness levels within competition specific practice.

Activity Level: Minimum 1 hour of daily physical activity / Sports Specific - 3 times per week

Number of Sports: 1-2

Competition Level: While an Athlete would continue to participate in Leagues and Development Days, there could be more of a focus on Area, Regional and Ireland Games, with the potential to advance to European and/or World Games, where their focus is on achieving their best.



SO LET ME STAY ACTIVE - (Lifelong Involvement)

The objective of this phase is for lifelong physical activity and involvement in Special Olympics Ireland. This phase refers to the activities within their Special Olympics Ireland club and Special Olympics Ireland that an Athlete engages in when they no longer wish to compete. Athletes should be encouraged to stay active on a recreational basis to have FUN, maintain a healthy lifestyle and to socialise with friends. Athletes may decide to partake in sports related activities such as coaching, officiating, health promotion, Athlete Leadership or being a part of the club management team.

Activity Level: Minimum 1 hour of daily physical activity / Sport Specific and/or Recreational Sport

Number of Sports and/or Recreational Sport Activities: 1-5

Competition Level: The focus is on staying physically active and engaged within their club as either an Athlete, Coach, Official and/or Volunteer

