



***Special  
Olympics***  
*Ireland*

2021

# Return to Activities Club FAQs

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## RETURN TO ACTIVITIES CLUB FAQs – Updated since 24/05/2021

### Sports Training

#### Capacity and Pods

- 1. Is the Head coach permitted to move around to all the courts to monitor progress or must he/she stay with the one Pod (Group)?**

A Head Coach may oversee more than one pod and should be counted in the overall numbers. The Head Coach should not move freely between pods but rather oversee the activity of the pods.

In smaller clubs where the Head Coach may be required to work with a particular pod, they should remain in that pod for the duration of the session.

- 2. If you are running a session with smaller groups is it OK for coaches and volunteers to mix with the individual groups?**

No, each pod should work independently with no interaction between different pods to limit contacts.

- 3. Where the Protocol mentions pods of 15, does this include athletes, volunteers, coaches, parents or athletes only?**

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 will should be maintained a minimum of 2 volunteers e.g. Head Coach and another volunteer present at all times.

As per the SOI Protocol May 2021 no outdoor club training sessions in the Republic of Ireland should exceed the numbers advised by Government Guidelines.

If parents / guardians / carers need to be involved in the training at any stage or are staying within the training area they should be counted within your attendees.

- 4. What is the difference between the pods of 15 applicable in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland?**

The NI Executive have different guidelines to the Government in the Republic.

In the Republic of Ireland from May 10th, all athletes (adult and U18s) can return to contact outdoor training in pods of 15. Special Olympics Ireland is recommending that clubs complete a minimum of 1 week orientation phase prior to returning to contact outdoor training.

The number of pods will depend on the space available and keeping in line with social distancing requirements.

In Northern Ireland, the need for pods has been removed from the Sport NI Framework. To determine safe occupancy that minimises the risk of Covid spread a risk assessment of the facility/location for training will need to be carried out.

**5. Is an athlete / volunteer permitted to take part in more than one sports activity or just take part in one?**

In order to limit the attendees' number of contacts and to reduce the risk within the Club, SOI recommends that the Club considers restricting the attendees to just one activity within the Club.

**Parental/ Carer Support/ Spectators**

**6. If parents are needed to be at the training session to help for one reason or another, do they need to be registered volunteers?**

Only registered volunteers can take part and volunteer at club sessions. Members of households and family members cannot volunteer unless they are a registered volunteer.

**7. With regard to Young Athletes Program do the parents still need to stay at the training session and, if so, do they complete the form too as well as completing for their child?**

Yes these parents are attendees and must complete a form for themselves and their child.

**8. We have a number of athletes with a visual impairment who need the support of a volunteer, e.g. using the gadget, holding an arm for support. Is this permitted, especially if they always run with the same Volunteer?**

Athletes with a visual impairment may still have the assistance of their guide provided it is the same guide each time and contact is kept to a minimum. The use of a lead rope ensures no contact but if an athlete needs an arm at times for direction this is permitted, again limiting time and using the same guide.

**9. Re support workers who accompany an athlete on a one to one basis. Does a support worker need to fill in visitor form? Support workers change from week to week. How can a club handle this?**

All Support workers that are taking on an active club volunteer role in the session must be a registered volunteer. Clubs who have support workers in attendance should liaise with the Intellectual Disability service to minimise the number of support workers attending to protect the public health of both the Service and the Club. Like all visitors to the session, the Support Worker (if not helping out at the session) must complete a Visitor's form.

**10. Under current government guidelines club houses and other indoor facilities are to main closed. What about toilet facilities?**

Essential toilet facilities may open. Club houses and other indoor facilities (for example: changing rooms, showers, kitchens, meeting rooms), remain closed in the Republic of Ireland. Sanitisation protocols must be adhered to.

In Northern Ireland all indoor facilities are open for use. Clubs should adhere to the protocols put in place by their venue. Socially distancing marks throughout the facility, creating socially distancing space in all areas in order to comply with Government guidelines, ensure there is adequate hand- sanitising stations easily available to the area the club is using.

**Additional**

**11. Are there sports-specific guidelines?**

Guidelines can be found in the Return to Activities Protocol ([available here](#)) including flowcharts to assist coaches when planning their training session. Links to the relevant NGBs and their guidelines are contained in the appendices of the protocol.

**12. Can a Club train in a different sport if the club only offers an indoor sport?**

Clubs in the Republic of Ireland can train outside under the guidelines to encompass, fitness and strength and conditioning with coaches who are appropriately trained.

Clubs in Northern Ireland can train both indoors and outdoors and can resume their original sport or continue fitness and strength and conditioning with coaches who are appropriately trained

**13. Are athletes supposed to have a temperature check at the beginning of training session?**

Clubs are not required to carry out temperature checks.

**COVID-19 Safety Team**

**Structure**

**14. We are a very small club just wondering if there is a recommended number of volunteers to form a Covid-19 Management Team within a club.**

A maximum of 6 individuals is recommended to be effective and efficient – for some clubs this will be a smaller team. Details of the Covid-19 Management Team roles can be found in Section 3 of the Safety Plan Template.

**15. In a small club with limited volunteers, can the Covid Coordinator also be an Activity Lead?**

Yes the Covid Coordinator can also be an activity lead. Where clubs offer more than one activity, it is recommended that a COVID-19 Activity Lead is appointed for each activity.

**16. What needs to be sent into SOI in order to start?**

Clubs must confirm their readiness to move into the Orientation Phase with S.O.I. via an online form on the SOI website prior to restarting activities.

Similarly, a move to the next phase will require confirmation in advance of moving.

Clubs in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland 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.

The website also contains a link for clubs to notify SOI if they need to move back from one phase to an earlier phase (revert).

**17. If you have completed the COVID-19 training through another club is this valid for the SO club or does it need to be taken again?**

SOI will require that the **Sport Ireland COVID-19 Return to Sport e-Learning Course** training course is completed. The course can be accessed [here](#). If you have completed this Sport Ireland course for another club that is valid.

**Meetings**

**18. Can we hold a committee out of doors with social distancing?**

As outlined in the Return to Activities phases for the Republic of Ireland – meetings should only be held virtually. Physical meetings are not permitted.

For Northern Ireland, Special Olympics Ireland recommend meetings or Beyond Sports activities to be held virtual. If meetings are required, masks must be worn.

## Special Olympics Ireland/ Regional Support

### **19. What supports are to be provided to Clubs who may be struggling to work through the first 2 stages?**

If you need assistance or have any queries please contact your local regional office (<https://www.specialolympics.ie/contact>) or email [covid@specialolympics.ie](mailto:covid@specialolympics.ie).

### **20. Will assistance be provided to clubs in compiling the 64 page Safety Plan, which amongst other things, requires club management to conduct both a Universal and Venue Risk Assessment?**

If you need assistance or have any queries please contact your local regional office (<https://www.specialolympics.ie/contact>) or email [covid@specialolympics.ie](mailto:covid@specialolympics.ie)

### **21. Can you let us know changes to documents if they're updated?**

All documents will be live on the website and we encourage clubs to refer to this on the regular basis. Version control will be included on the documents; with changes noted at the beginning of the document.

We will also endeavour to keep clubs updated by email and through the various social media platforms.

## Insurance

### **22. Do we need additional Combined Liabilities insurance cover for COVID-19?**

No, the Club is covered under Special Olympics Ireland's (SOI) Liabilities insurance policy. Insurers have confirmed that COVID-19 is covered under the term "Disease". The Liability policy indemnifies SOI in respect of claims of bodily injury, death, disease or illness where SOI is found legally liable. However Business interruption cover is not covered for COVID-19.

To protect the Club and its members, and to reduce the risk posed by COVID-19, the Club will need to implement the relevant control measures as per the Club's Safety Plan, the SOI Return to Activities Protocol and Government Guidelines.

### **23. Is COVID-19 covered under Personal Accident insurance for athletes and volunteers?**

No, there is a specific exclusion noted within the Personal Accident Insurance cover where it states diseases are not covered. COVID19 is a disease and as such is therefore excluded from the Personal Accident coverage.

## **Safety**

## PPE

### **24. What are the recommendations for wearing of masks?**

For full and up to date government guidance re the use of face coverings/masks please see the link:

**ROI:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/aac74c-guidance-on-safe-use-of-face-coverings/>

**NI:** <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-face-coverings>

### **25. Can visors be used by volunteers or athletes who find wearing a mask stressful?**

For full and up to date government guidance re the use of face coverings/masks please see the link:

**ROI:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/aac74c-guidance-on-safe-use-of-face-coverings/>

**NI:** <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-face-coverings>

**26. PPE - where can clubs source this? Centrally sourced by SO Ireland?**

Clubs are responsible for sourcing and paying for their own PPE and signage. Printable signage is available free of charge through the HSE website.

**Safety Plan/ Risk Assessment**

**27. Is there a need for us to put all the hygiene etc. steps in our Safety plan when the venue staff already do this? Obviously, we will have a check list for the club every week to ensure all their hygiene procedures are adhered to and ensure our attendees follow protocol. Its more about the amount of information we actually need to put in our safety plan**

Clubs should remain in constant communication with the venue to ensure they are up-to-date with the protocol in place by the venue. Some venues will have completed their own risk assessment to assess what measures are required in the venue. Make a note of what measures have been put in place by the venue so these can be noted as control measures in your Club's risk assessment. If measures are not relevant to your Club they can be deleted from the template.

**28. As a service, would we be required to provide SOI with a separate plan to that which is mandatory in the service as a Covid-19 protocol?**

SOI accepts that each Service has a responsibility to have its own safety plan in place in their own template and we expect that a risk assessment has been completed. We would ask that the service cross reference their Safety Plan with the SOI Safety Plan template and protocol to ensure all SOI requirements and sport-specific considerations are included.

**29. Does a multisport club have need to do a safety plan for each sport or just different risk assessments for each activity in one safety plan?**

No, one overall safety plan will be sufficient for the club but the risk assessment must take into account the risks associated with all of the Club's activities /sports including any sports which may be moving from indoor to outdoors.

**Health**

**High-Risk Attendees**

**30. Is it recommended that athletes with high risk conditions do not return to activities? How will the club know if an athlete has a high-risk condition or are, we relying on the athletes/parent/guardian/carer to let us know?**

Individuals (both athletes and volunteers) with underlying health conditions should continue to stay at home as much as possible in line with guidelines issued by their Health Department; which can be found here:

**ROI:** <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/people-at-higher-risk.html>

**NI:** <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-vulnerable-people>

Clubs can check athlete's health history through their Athlete Participation Form (APF) or from the individual or family/carers. Volunteer health history is accessible from the person themselves.

**31. What if volunteers or coaches are over 70years of age?**

Volunteers are advised to check with their General Practitioner (GP) prior to returning to volunteering if they are in a high-risk health category to allow them make an informed decision on their personal choice on whether or not to return.

**32. May an athlete /volunteer who is COVID-19 vaccinated with high risk condition/s return to activities?**

An individual who is fully vaccinated may return to activities 10 days after their 2<sup>nd</sup> vaccination has been received. All individuals attending activities will be required to continue to follow Public Health Guidelines even with receiving a vaccination.

**33. If an attendee tells us they have symptoms after they have attended, should we close the club for 2 weeks, as others may also be infected?**

Where a club receives a notification of a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case from an attendee, and whilst awaiting the outcome of testing, the club should stop all attendees who were part of the same training group / pod from attending until the outcome of the test is known. A club may also need to consider ceasing all activities whilst awaiting the outcome of the suspected case. Please refer to the safety plan template for a suspected case response plan.

**Pre-Declaration Forms**

**34. We were hoping that the athletes / parents could submit the pre return self-declaration form via google forms. Is that a suitable method? Or do they need to sign a physical form?**

There are multiple programs available that can generate forms which can be used; so yes google forms is a suitable method.

Please ensure that you are using the most recent Special Olympics Ireland Pre Return Self-Declaration form from the website (here) and that all of the questions from this form, along with the name of person completing form and date are included in your form.

All athletes and volunteers will have to complete a new Self-Declaration form if they are Returning to Club Training.

**35. Is the Pre-Return Self Declaration Form signed only once? If yes, does that mean a form signed in October is valid up to next spring?**

Yes, a Pre Return Self-Declaration form is signed once by all attendees prior to returning to activities; and will remain valid unless that person's circumstances change. At each subsequent training session, the athlete should be verbally asked if they are still keeping well.

All athletes and volunteers will have to complete a new Self-Declaration form if they are Returning to Club Training.