
Special Olympics Ireland Safeguarding Policy Statement

Safeguarding is at the core of all Special Olympics Ireland activities and is fundamental to the development and implementation of everything we plan for the future. Special Olympics Ireland is committed to providing an athlete-centred environment where everyone has a voice in their sport.

We are committed to ensuring Special Olympics Ireland continues to learn and improve from experience; we will frequently monitor our practices and strive for 100% compliance. Special Olympics are fully compliant with the Children First Legislation (ROI) and engage regularly with Sport Ireland, Sport Northern Ireland, NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit and the Health Services Executive (HSE) to continually meet legislative requirements and industry standards.

Management of safeguarding requires both a robust personnel structure and strong policies and procedures. Special Olympics Ireland has a full time Safeguarding Officer employed to ensure we meet legislative compliance and best practice guidance; to keep our members safe across the island of Ireland. We have 5 Regional Directors who take on the role of Regional Designated Liaison Persons supporting Club Designated Liaison Persons. Every Special Olympics club has a Safeguarding Officer to promote and implement our policies whilst liaising with athletes to ensure a safe and fun environment is provided. Special Olympics Ireland offers support to members in their role to help fulfil our commitment.

Safeguarding policies and guidelines have been developed to govern our organisation and support the operational implementation of good practices and management of concerns within our clubs. Clubs are required to adapt or adopt these policies to ensure they are compliant with Special Olympics Ireland requirements. These are living documents and are updated as needed by the National Children's Officer. Our aim is to inform members and provide clear pathways for people to feel comfortable raising a concern or an issue, or to highlight a potential risk in our safeguarding measures.

We want our members to understand WHY we safeguard and, although it may seem arduous at times, we welcome the vital protection and peace of mind it brings to all involved. To the parent who worries about their child, to the volunteer who worries about the vulnerable nature of Special Olympics athletes, to the coach who worries about the best way to help athletes achieve their goals and to the athlete who places their trust in Special Olympics; our safeguarding measures are a comfort. The requirements, policies and guidance are there to ease these concerns and prevent any potential harm coming to one of our members. If you feel like you are being asked to do too much, we ask you to consider WHY we need you to do this and weigh up the potential benefits. Our members thank you for taking the time to keep our organisation safe.