



**Special
Olympics**
Ireland



Special Olympics Ireland Sports Club

CLUB GUIDE

This guide has been developed for clubs to act as a guide and resource tool



This Club Guide is intended for clubs affiliated to Special Olympics Ireland.



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



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Section 1

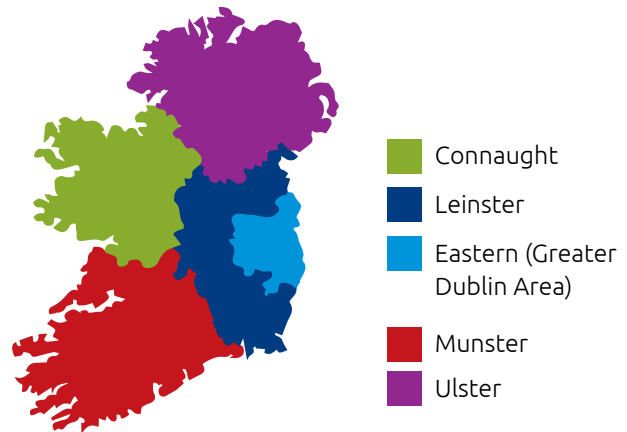
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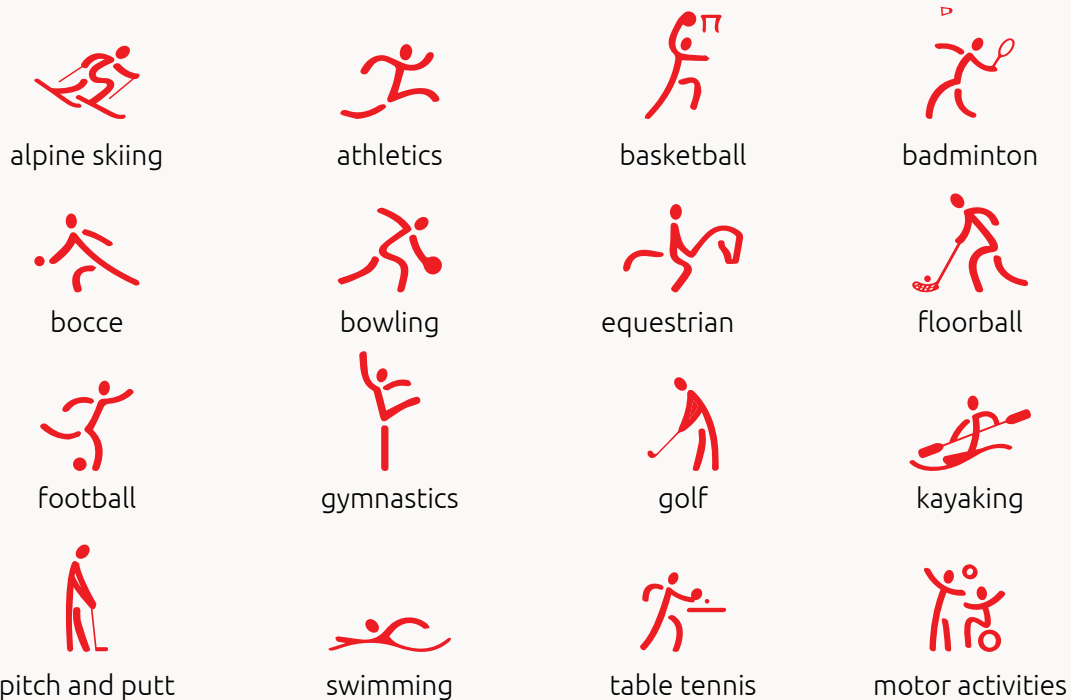
Special Olympics Ireland

Special Olympics Ireland provides year-round sports training and competition opportunities for people with an intellectual disability.

The Special Olympics Ireland programme is offered as an all- Island programme and is sub-divided into five Regional programmes, namely Connaught, Eastern, Leinster, Munster, and Ulster.



The organisation offers training and competition at various stages of development in **15 official sports** and the Motor Activities Training Programme.



A comprehensive Motor Activities Training Programme (MATP) is offered for athletes who do not have the required skill level yet to compete under Special Olympics Ireland or National Governing Body Rules. Athletes may participate in the Young Athletes programme from four years of age, begin sport-specific training from six years of age and compete from eight years of age; there is no upper age limit.





Special Olympics Ireland's sports programme is unique in that it offers a programme of sport for all levels of ability. Athletes or teams are grouped in divisions to ensure fair competition and each athlete or team is recognised for their performance with medals awarded for first through to third place and ribbons for fourth through to eighth place.

Competition is offered at area, Regional and National level, with an opportunity to progress to international competition. A

number of leagues and inter-club activities are organised locally throughout the year offering additional competitive opportunities for athletes to develop their skills in the particular sport.

The Official Special Olympics International Sports Rules govern all Special Olympics Ireland competitions. Special Olympics sports competitions operate in accordance with rules established by the International Federations (IF) or the National Governing Bodies (NGB's) of each sport.



Our Mission

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.



Our Vision

To provide a quality year-round sports programme embedded in local communities, resourced by vibrant and strong leaders, incorporating health and well-being opportunities for athletes with an intellectual disability from 4 years of age upwards.



Special Olympics Athlete Oath

*"Let me win.
But if I cannot win
Let me be brave in the
attempt."*



Governance and Management

Special Olympics Ireland is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The company is subject to the legislative and regulatory requirements of the Companies Act 2014 and the Charities Act 2009. A board of directors is responsible for the overall governance and strategic direction of Special Olympics Ireland, developing Special Olympics Ireland goals and objectives in accordance with its governing document and the legal requirements and regulatory guidelines. Special Olympics Ireland is recognised by Sport Ireland as the National Governing Body (NGB) for Sport for persons with an intellectual disability and the organisation is affiliated to Special Olympics International.

Management

The board has delegated responsibility to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) for executive management matters affecting the organisation. The Special Olympics Programme is managed centrally by a number of departments – (i) Operations, (ii) Sport, (iii) Training and Volunteers, (iv) Finance and (v) Marketing, Communications and Fundraising. Each department is managed by a director who reports directly to the CEO.

Regional Programmes

As the Special Olympics Programme is offered as an all-island programme, the programme is sub-divided into five regional programmes, namely Connaught, Eastern, Leinster, Munster, and Ulster.

The Regional programmes are managed on a day-to-day basis by a team of regional staff, under the direction of the Regional Director. The Regional Directors report directly to the Director of Operations. The regional staff team is supported by a Regional Committee which is made up of regional volunteers who, in turn, work alongside many other teams of volunteers.

Local Level

A local club or entity, who applies and is approved by Special Olympics Ireland to run a local Special Olympics programme, will become a Member of Special Olympics Ireland (the company), and are categorised as Affiliate Club Members.

Affiliate Club Members are independent entities that affiliate to the company and charity in order to participate in a range of services and supports that Special Olympics Ireland offers each year.

Entities that affiliate consist of community sports clubs, registered charities, such as services and schools for people with intellectual disabilities, and other National Governing Body sports clubs. In this document, we simply use the term 'club' to represent Affiliate Club Members.

Local Clubs

Sports training and coaching is provided for athletes, on a weekly basis in local sports clubs. This year-round sports programme of activities is organised by volunteers from within the local community. A small team of volunteers sit on the Club Management Team which has the responsibility for the effective running of the club. The Club Management Team work closely with all its volunteers to provide:

- ✓ Sports training and competition opportunities
- ✓ A safe, secure environment
- ✓ FUN and friendship!





Each Club will be located within one of the 5 Regions within Special Olympics Ireland: Connaught, Eastern, Leinster, Munster, and Ulster. The club is governed by a Club Management Team who are a group of volunteers who agree to take on certain roles within the club to oversee the management and running of the club. The club will have club members according to the club's governing document, known as the Club Constitution or, in the case of Intellectual Disability Services and Special Schools, as may be determined by the relevant entity. Generally, members of the club fall into three categories: (i) Athlete Members, (ii) Volunteer Members and (iii) Associate Members.

Athlete Members

Participation as an athlete in Special Olympics Ireland is open to any person with an intellectual disability from the age of 4 years of age. An Individual with an intellectual disability will be required to register with Special Olympics Ireland and then apply to become a member of the particular club.

Volunteer Members

Volunteering options are open to persons over the age of 15. An individual may apply to the club to become a Volunteer Member. The individual must complete Special Olympics Ireland's Volunteer Registration process and verify their registration prior to engaging the volunteer in club activities.

Persons of 16 years of age and over, will be subject to vetting as part of the registration process. This vetting will be undertaken by the appropriate authority in the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland.

Associate Members

Families or relatives of an athlete are welcomed and encouraged to play an active role in supporting athletes, the local club, and Special Olympics Ireland. To capture the various relationships that exist, we will refer to this group of family and other members as Relatives. One relative per athlete may be granted membership of the club as an Associate Member.

Where a Relative wishes to take on a particular role within the club, the relative must register as a volunteer, following the process outlined in the volunteer registration section.

Note:

"Associate Member" is a Membership Category introduced in the revised Club Constitution Template.

"Relative" means an individual who is a) a blood relative of an Athlete Member (mother, father, child, sister, brother, grandparent, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, cousin); b) a partner of a blood relative of an Athlete Member; c) related to an Athlete Member through a marriage; d) the husband, wife, or partner of an Athlete Member; e) an individual who serves as an Athlete Member's legal guardian, foster parent or carer; f) an individual involved with an Athlete Member in a parenting role; or g) an individual who is selected by an Athlete Member who is over the age of 18 years to be a Relative for the purposes of membership as an Associate Member of a club.





Section 2

Club Governance and Management

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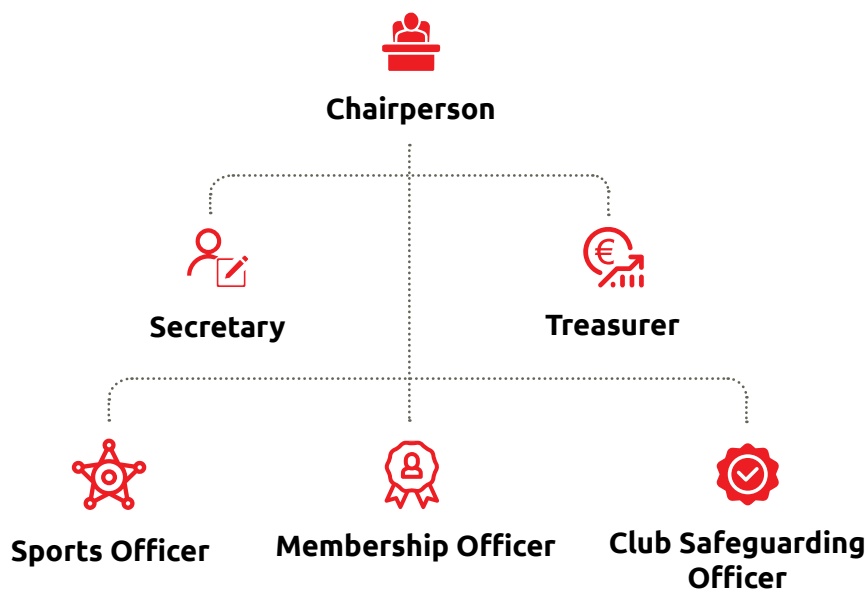
Model Club Structures

Running a club requires co-ordination, communication, organisation, and a structured approach in the delivery of activities. To oversee the appropriate and safe running of the club, each club must put in place a Club Management Team. Model structures for the different Club Management Teams are outlined below.

Model Community

Sports Club Structure: A

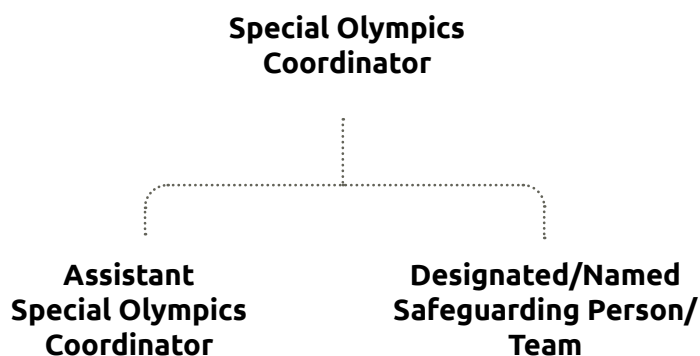
Community-based sports club is a club that operates within the community and is overseen/managed by volunteers who have met the registration requirements of Special Olympics Ireland.



Note:

- * A club with less than 25 athletes may merge the Membership Officer and Secretary roles.
- * In a single-sport club, the Sports Officer may also be the Head Coach but should aim to put a succession plan in place so that the same individual does not hold the post beyond the recommended term of office.
- * In a multi-sports club, the Sports Officer should be a representative for all Head Coaches.
- * Depending on the size of your club you may wish to add additional roles to the committee.

A model structure for intellectual disability service providers and schools is outlined here:



Inclusive Clubs: Inclusive Clubs are required to identify a Special Olympics Coordinator, an Assistant Special Olympics Coordinator and the Designated/Named Safeguarding Person/Team. An Inclusive Club is a club affiliated to the relevant NGB for that sport.



Club Management Roles

Chairperson

- ✓ The Chairperson of the Club Management Team (the “Chairperson”) acts as the overall leader of the Club Management Team and is the primary representative of the Club in dealings with outside bodies. The Chairperson acts as the Club Spokesperson where appropriate.
- ✓ The Chairperson shall lead club activities and, along with the Club Management Team, shall ensure that the club complies with all the obligations set out in this Constitution. The Chairperson shall work with the Club Management Team to ensure that Club activities are conducted safely and that collective responsibility for safety is emphasised at all levels.
- ✓ The Chairperson is responsible for chairing meetings of the Club Management Team and the club’s Annual General Meeting (AGM) and any Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM). In the absence of the Chairperson at a meeting of the Club Management Team, the Officers present will elect one of their number to preside. In the absence of the Chairperson at an AGM or EGM, the Members present will elect one of their number to preside.
- ✓ The Chairperson will present a report of the activities of the Club to the AGM.
- ✓ The Chairperson will act as the Designated Liaison Person for the Club and they must be knowledgeable about child protection and undertake any training notified by Special Olympics Ireland as being necessary, which includes the Safeguarding 3 training course. The Chairperson will ensure that the club’s reporting procedures are followed and report any suspected cases of child neglect or abuse to the relevant authorities.
- ✓ The Chairperson will inform the Mandated Person in Special Olympics Ireland if a report has been submitted.

Secretary

- ✓ The secretary of the Club Management Team (the “Secretary”) is responsible for minuting Officer meetings and AGMs and EGMs and arranging all aspects of Club administration.
- ✓ The Secretary is responsible for giving appropriate notice of meetings to the Members or Officers concerned and ensuring that each such Member or Officer is furnished with a copy of all relevant reports for discussion at a meeting in accordance with the notice provisions contained in this Constitution.
- ✓ The Secretary shall follow up on action points with persons responsible for those action points.
- ✓ The Secretary will retain all records and general correspondence of the Club and will keep minutes of meetings.
- ✓ Communications to the club from Special Olympics Ireland will issue to the Secretary unless it is more specific in nature and appropriate to a particular officer or role held in the club.

Membership Officer

- ✓ The Membership Officer is responsible for the administration associated with Members and ensures that new individuals involved with the club are registered, inducted, and assigned as appropriate.

Note: Secretary has replaced the term ‘Contact Person’.





Sports Officer

- ✓ Coordinates coaches and assistant coaches to ensure regular, quality, training activity, and participation in competitions, leagues, and development days.
- ✓ Acts as a point of contact in the club for receipt of communications on coaching, competition, and sports development from the relevant Special Olympics Ireland Regional Office
- ✓ Ensures all sports-related communications are shared with coaches in a timely manner.
- ✓ Monitors and assists with coach and volunteer recruitment to meet the needs of the sport(s), ensuring the persons assigned hold the relevant qualifications and skills as applicable.
- ✓ Promotes good sportsmanship on and off the field of play.
- ✓ Promotes Special Olympics programmes and activities to ensure the continual development of athletes.
- ✓ Works in conjunction with the Club Safeguarding Officer to provide a safe training and competition environment for all athletes and coaches in line with Special Olympics Ireland's guidelines.
- ✓ Provides updates on sports activities at Club meetings.
- ✓ Represents the views of coaches to the Club Management Team.

Club Safeguarding Officer

- ✓ Oversees and coordinates the adoption and implementation of safeguarding by Members.
- ✓ Acts as a point of contact for receipt of information/guidance on safeguarding from Special Olympics Ireland and/or concerns from Members from within the club.
- ✓ Reports without delay any safeguarding issues to the Designated Liaison Person in the Club (i.e., the Chairperson) so that they may be reported to the relevant authorities when necessary.
- ✓ Ensures adequate first aid cover is provided at all times.
- ✓ Oversees and coordinates the adoption and implementation of safeguarding by Members.

Treasurer

- ✓ The treasurer of the Club Management Team (the "Treasurer") is responsible for keeping records of accounts and for their presentation at meetings of the Club Management Team.
- ✓ The Treasurer will arrange for the preparation of the club's accounts annually. Where required the accounts will be prepared and audited by a qualified accountant or accountants proposed by the Club Management Team.
- ✓ The Treasurer will present the accounts to the AGM and keep the accounts available for inspection for Members outside of the AGM.
- ✓ The Treasurer will be responsible for budgeting, in conjunction with the Chairperson, and will ensure that Club finances and transactions are kept transparent.



Additional Roles that the club may add to the Club Management Team where required:

Coaches/Assistant Coaches

Assist the Head coach to:

- ✓ Implement a planned and structured programme of regular training for athletes.
- ✓ Proactively work with athletes to develop their full potential.
- ✓ Support and facilitate athlete participation in regular competitive opportunities.
- ✓ Monitor athletes at all times to ensure their safety.

Athlete Representative

- ✓ Actively seek the views of fellow athletes.
- ✓ Feedback on athlete views to the Club Management Team.
- ✓ Participate in Management Team discussions and decision-making.

Athlete Leadership Officer/Group Coordinator

- ✓ Encourage broader athlete participation in the running of the club.
- ✓ Coordinate implementation of Athlete Leadership within the club.
- ✓ Recruit Athlete Leadership mentors for athletes.
- ✓ Plan an appropriate Athlete Leadership plan for the club.

Health Promotion Facilitator

- ✓ Lead the Health Promotion Programme in the club.
- ✓ Ensure each session run by the club supports the overall Health Promotion aims of the club.

Public Relations (PR) Officer

- ✓ Identify PR opportunities and plan year-round promotion of the club.
- ✓ Develop good relationships with local media.
- ✓ Help with planning and promoting club fundraising events.





Why have a management team structure?

A management team structure ensures:

- A shared workload.
- Defined roles and responsibilities.
- Clarity for everyone involved.
- A solid support structure.
- A reduction in duplication of effort.
- A platform for future growth.
- Best practice in safeguarding young people and vulnerable adults.



How should a Club Management Team Operate?

The most effective way of running your club is to schedule regular meetings of the Club Management Team to discuss club business.

Regular meetings promote effective communication, increase awareness of knowledge and developments, and provide a platform for addressing challenges. Some key steps to ensuring that meetings are effective include:

- Establishing a regular pattern – i.e., the 1st Wednesday of every month.
- Setting an agenda – consult with the others.
- Circulate the agenda in advance, including time and location.
- Starting on time and ending on time.
- Recording and circulating minutes.
- Following up on actions arising from the meeting.

Minutes of Club Management Team meetings may be kept confidential to the committee but should be recorded and stored appropriately for future reference and for historical records in the lifetime of the club.

Club Management Team members should be aware that the Club's Data Protection Policy, in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation, permits an individual to request a copy of any written information pertaining to that individual to be made available, if so requested.

All officers on a Club Management Team must make every effort to ensure that information regarding athletes, families and volunteers is treated in a careful and sensitive manner and discussed only with those who need to know in accordance with the club's **Data Protection and Safeguarding Policies**.

[Download the Safeguarding Policy here](#)



Annual General Meeting

Once a year, no later than 30th June, the Club Management Team should hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) for all Club Members. The purpose of the AGM is to elect Club Members to vacancies on the Club Management Team, inform the members of previous and future activities, allow members to receive the club accounts and to have an opportunity to provide input and feedback on the club's activities.

The purpose of the AGM is to:

- ✓ Provide a report on the activities of the club from the Chairperson.
- ✓ Review of the minutes of the previous AGM and any EGMs held since the last AGM.
- ✓ Review of the club's affairs by the Members.
- ✓ Allow consideration of the accounts for the year (including an income and expenditure report) and the report from the Treasurer.
- ✓ Review of the Club's membership fees and deciding on membership fees for the coming year.
- ✓ Allow consideration of all motions and nominations and other matters on the AGM Agenda.
- ✓ To elect certain Officers and designation of certain Officer Roles.
- ✓ To elect two delegates to attend and vote on behalf of the Club at the general meeting of Special Olympics Ireland.
- ✓ To elect two representatives to attend and vote on behalf of the club at meetings of its Region for the purpose of considering regional issues.
- ✓ To propose motions and nominations, if any, for submission to general meetings of the Region and general meetings of Special Olympics Ireland.

Roles on the Club Management Team are filled by either elections or appointed by the Club Management Team.

Elections

All Officers shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting of the club. Each person on the Club Management Team is an officer. Certain Officers will be designated as holding a specific Officer Role.

Members of the Club Management Team are elected or appointed:

- The Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer position is elected by the members of the club at the Club Annual General Meeting.
- All other Club Management Team positions are appointed to the positions.
- Volunteers on the Club Management Team should be elected by the members of the club and must be over the age of 18.
- If valid nominations for the position of Officer are not received for any vacant position, the Club Management Team may appoint an Officer.
- Officers shall be elected to the Officer Roles of Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer by the Members at the AGM.
- Officers shall be appointed to the Officer Roles of Club Safeguarding Officer, Sports Officer and Membership Officer by the Club Management Team from among the Officers who do not already hold other roles.
- The Club Safeguarding Officer must have all relevant qualifications required by Special Olympics Ireland for the role from time to time.
- The Athlete Representative should be elected by the athletes in the club.

Emergency General Meeting

Occasionally a club may need to hold an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM). The Club Management Team must ensure all club members receive formal notice of the EGM.





Section 3

Club Administration

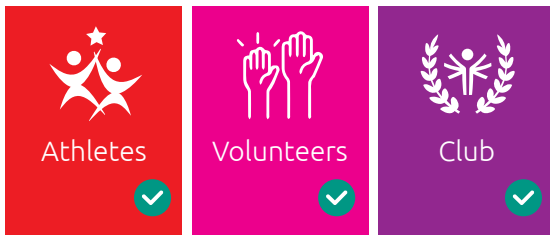
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In order to run your club effectively, systems should be put in place to manage the administration and other requirements associated with running your club.

Registration

Registration procedures are in place for:



The Membership Officer should ensure that the record of club membership is accurately maintained and keep an up-to-date. Due care should be taken at all times to ensure that data on any club member is held in a safe and secure location and all data is appropriately protected.

Athlete Registration

To participate as an athlete within Special Olympics Ireland, an individual must:

- 1 **Apply to become a member of an Affiliated Club.** The Athlete/Parent/Guardian should identify a club of interest and contact the club to begin the registration process.
- 2 Athlete/Parent/Guardian must complete the designated **Athlete Registration process** as defined by Special Olympics Ireland.



Note:

- All athletes in a club must be registered prior to training and participating in Special Olympics activities.
- Athletes' health information should be available to access at the club training sessions.





Volunteer Registration

Individuals wishing to volunteer in a club should contact the club and apply to become a Club Volunteer. All volunteers taking part in any club activity must register with Special Olympics Ireland.

The Volunteer Registration Process requires that applicants undertake the following steps:

- 1 **Register interest** and **personal details** online.
 - 2 **Indicate interest** in the club they wish to join.
 - 3 Complete the online application and submit a recent photograph.
 - 4 Complete Special Olympics Ireland **Volunteer Online Induction Training Course**.
 - 5 If resident in the Republic of Ireland, verify identification and complete online **Garda Vetting** (over 16s).
- Or
- 6 If resident in Northern Ireland, verify identification and apply for an **Enhanced Check** online through AccessNI (over 16s).
 - 7 Individuals who are aged 15, 16 and 17 years old require **parental consent**.
 - 8 All volunteers need to attend a relevant **safeguarding training**.
 - 9 In ROI under 18-year-olds need to complete **Tusla's 'Children First' training course** which can be accessed through [this link](#). Under 18s in NI do not need to complete this.

Every new volunteer applicant will receive notification from Special Olympics Ireland when they are successfully registered. Photographic volunteer cards are issued to new volunteers aged 16 and over. This card must be presented as proof of registration to the club on commencing in a new club.

Volunteers aged 15 years registering with Special Olympics Ireland cannot be vetted until turning 16 years and will receive a formal letter confirming their temporary registration. Correspondence will be sent on the volunteer's 16th birthday requesting that they complete the relevant vetting process; following completion of this a photographic volunteer card will be forwarded. All volunteers aged 16 years and over will be subject to re-vetting every 3 years.



It is not possible to volunteer in any capacity for the club or at Special Olympics Ireland events without becoming a registered volunteer.



ATTENTION!

It is against the law to have unregistered volunteers working in your club. This also includes volunteers in the process of registering. The Club Management Team carries the responsibility to ensure this legal requirement is met in line with the Children's First Act 2015 and the Children First, National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017.





Family/Relative Registration

For each athlete registered, Special Olympics Ireland require a designated contact person from the athlete's family or their carer. This person will be the official point of contact for any direct communication in relation to the athlete, if and when direct contact is required. This information should be captured through the Athlete Registration process. One named Relative will be eligible to be an Associate Member of the club.

A Family Member wishing to take on a specific volunteering role within a club must register as a volunteer, following the process outlined in the volunteer registration section.





Club Representation

Over the course of each year, club members will be invited to attend meetings and sessions within their area, region and/or Special Olympics Ireland. Representation at these meetings will ensure that your club receives relevant updates, new information and opportunity to input and give feedback.

Area or regional meetings allow members of clubs to input into the delivery of the programme, meet each other, exchange ideas, and share information.

Planning

Why Plan?

- Identify activities for coming periods
- Helps to identify required finances
- Creates a pathway for growth and development
- Ensures everyone is going in the same direction
- Provides focus
- Supports funding application

Tips for Smart Planning

- ✓ Establish what the club needs
- ✓ Establish where the club wants to go
- ✓ Set goals and targets
- ✓ Be realistic
- ✓ Allow for flexibility and change of circumstances
- ✓ Regularly review the plan
- ✓ Measure your success

Venue

Every club needs somewhere to train, and, for some sports, you may need more than one venue, e.g., indoor, and outdoor, multi-sports, etc. The relationship that you have with your venue will be critical to the success of the club.

When using or hiring a training venue

- ✓ Ask for a copy of the **Safety Statement** for the facility (seek advice as to whether any amendments may be required to suit your clubs needs and your use of the venue).
- ✓ Ask for a copy of the **Insurance Policy** of the venue.
- ✓ Confirm a **Venue Hire agreement** in writing.
- ✓ Ensure the venue is **accessible** in relation to toilets, recreational areas, and sports areas.
- ✓ Ensure there are **adequate toilet/shower facilities**.
- ✓ Assess the available area for **storage of equipment**, if required.

[Download Venue Inspection Checklist](#)

- ✓ Complete a Venue Risk Assessment Form.

[Download Risk Assessment form here](#)

- ✓ Ensure the club **Child Safeguarding Statement** is displayed at the venue.

[Download statement here](#)

Many clubs may be fortunate enough to be offered a venue free of charge, but, if that is not an option, a preferential rate should be negotiated.



Health and Safety

First Aid Cover

A volunteer with a first aid qualification should be present at all training sessions.

This may be a volunteer or coach with an up to date first aid qualification. However, it is recognised that this is not always possible. On these occasions it is recommended that, at minimum, the volunteer attending the training session has access to:

- ✓ A **first aid kit**.
- ✓ **Contact details** of the local GP and the nearest hospital Emergency Department.
- ✓ Access to athlete's **Associate Member contact** information (this could be via the Coach).
- ✓ **Reporting procedure/guidance** for safeguarding issues.
- ✓ Access to a **telephone**.
- ✓ **Club Safeguarding Officer and Chairperson** contact details.

Accident Reporting

In the event of any accident or injury occurring an Accident Report form must be completed and kept with the club records.

Safeguarding

The Special Olympics Ireland's Safeguarding Policies promotes best practice in safeguarding and support a safe and enjoyable environment for all our members including athletes, coaches, volunteers, families, and staff members.

Safeguarding training is mandatory in every club for the following volunteering roles:

	ROI Safeguarding Courses	NI Safeguarding Courses
All Club Volunteers	Safeguarding Level 1	Safeguarding Children and Young People
Safeguarding Officer	Safeguarding Level 1 & Level 2	Designated Officer
Chairperson	Safeguarding Level 1 & Level 3	Designated Officer

Training is available through the Local Sports Partnerships in ROI, through the Local Councils across NI and NSPCC or through Special Olympics Ireland. On completion of this training, please submit your safeguarding certificate via email to volunteers@specialolympics.ie. Special Olympics Ireland also runs a number of Safeguarding Courses, if you attended a course organised by Special Olympics Ireland your certificate will automatically be awarded, and it is not necessary to send in your details.

All athletes, coaches, volunteers, and family members are also accountable for familiarising themselves with and adhering to Special Olympics Ireland Code of Ethics and Good Practice.

Safeguarding Incident Reporting

In the event of a safeguarding incident, an Incident Report Form must be completed and kept with the Club Safeguarding Officer records.

[Download Incident Report form here](#)

In dealing with any incident, confidentiality must be maintained at all times. If the Club Safeguarding Officer requires support, they should contact their Club Chairperson or the Regional Director, who will support the club in dealing with the incident as required. Incidents of a safeguarding nature should not be discussed openly with the Club Management Team, it is purely confidential and, on a need-to-know basis. The Chairperson is the Designated Liaison person and responsible for reporting any safeguarding concerns to the statutory authorities.

[See Safeguarding Policy here](#)





Finance

The Club Management Team, and particularly the treasurer, has overall responsibility for implementing effective financial procedures. The following guidelines are based on the financial best practice guidelines of Special Olympics Ireland.

Banking Facilities

Special Olympics Ireland recommends that you consider the following when choosing a banking provider to ensure good financial management and financial controls:

- ✓ Have **two approvals** set up for amounts over a certain value to be decided by the Club Committee.
- ✓ Set up **on-line banking** to facilitate electronic payments and to monitor transactions.
- ✓ Apply for a **low value cash-card** for petty cash purposes and/or a debit card.

Cash Handling

Special Olympics Ireland recommends that you eliminate or minimise the need for handling cash. This meets the need for reducing risk in relation to security, fraud and the personal safety of the individuals handling the cash. This will also help the transitioning to an evolving cashless society.

Fees/Subscriptions

All clubs require a regular sustainable income, and it is not unreasonable to ask your athletes to pay for the service that they are receiving once it is not prohibitive to participate.

- We strongly recommend that fees are charged on an annual basis and are paid directly to the club's bank account. This is to ensure good governance and minimise the administration.
- The charging of fees is at the discretion of the Club Management Team.

Fundraising

Fundraising is an intrinsic part of the operation of any club in the community. It ensures sustainability and should be built into the planning process for the club. Many clubs, depending on their size and requirements, may set up a fundraising sub-committee chaired by the Treasurer. This sub-committee should come up with ideas for fundraising projects and organise and oversee implementation of the event or initiative.

It should also be remembered that fundraising is something that every club member may get involved in to support the club.

Should a Club wish to carry out fundraising, [and the Club is not a registered charity] it may do so locally in its own name, describing itself as "[Club name], a sports club". The club must make it clear that monies collected are for the benefit of the club in its local capacity.

To comply with legislation, there should be clarity on the fact that the monies are not being raised in the name of Special Olympics Ireland, which is a registered charity under the Charities Act 2009. This clarity on who will receive the funds must be clearly laid out in all printed materials and documentation. Please ensure you fundraise as a local sports club and not display or misrepresent your club as a charity, which in itself could result in prosecution and damage the reputation of Special Olympics locally and nationally.

For clubs that are registered charities

- ✓ Fundraising activities should be undertaken in the official registered name of the charity.

Grant Applications and Sponsorship

- ✓ Clubs may seek to avail of additional funding through local or national grant aid opportunities or local sponsorship. Please ensure that the grant application is made in the club's name and not in the name of Special Olympics Ireland.



Communication

One of the key components of running a successful club is effective communication which may be broken down into distinct categories:

- 1 Internal
- 2 External

Internal Communication

In affiliated clubs, there are a number of groups who will need to be communicated with, including:

- ✓ Club Management Team and Sub Committees
- ✓ Athletes
- ✓ Volunteers
- ✓ Families
- ✓ Coaches
- ✓ Fundraising and Supporters

It is vital that for each grouping, the club identifies the following:

- Who will take responsibility for **managing communication**.
- What are the best **methods for communication** with each specific group.
- Who will develop and maintain **contact lists** for each communication group.
- Who will **oversee and monitor** the ongoing communication.

A club induction pack should be given to all new members of a club on their first visit, which should include training times, Club Management Team structure, reporting procedure for incidents and accidents, code of conduct to be signed and returned.

External Communication

While it is important to have effective internal communication, it is also important to build good, positive communication channels with the local community. There is tough competition for radio and newspaper space but if clubs provide relevant, efficient, and dependable news in the right format, it should be possible to get coverage in the following media:

- Social Media
- Website
- Local Press
- Newsletters
- Radio and TV
- Special Olympics Ireland Communications

Links with external partners such as Local Authority Sports Development, Local Sports Partnerships, Sport Ireland, Sport NI, NI Councils, and local schools can support clubs by sign posting athletes or volunteers and providing alternative funding opportunities.





Insurance

Special Olympics Ireland has a number of insurance policies in place to cover its business activities. Some policies extend to Affiliated Clubs registered with Special Olympics Ireland through annual affiliation as noted below.

Affiliated Clubs should contact their Regional Office, in the first instance, if they have any queries relating to their insurance cover.

All activities are required to be risk assessed to ensure they meet health and safety standards and to ensure the insurance policy is not invalidated. Please refer to the Club Risk Assessment templates developed by Special Olympics Ireland for reference and guidance. Please note that each activity

will have its unique elements and the club will need to consider all risks associated with each individual activity as it is not possible to list all risks in a template.

Special Olympics Ireland has an Alcohol Consumption/Misuse policy in relation to events/activities.

[Download policy here](#)

SOI Insurance Policies that extend to Affiliated Clubs include:

1. Public Liabilities Policy.
2. Employers Liabilities Policy.
3. Personal Accident Policy.
4. Directors & Officers Policy – This cover is in place for those community clubs that have completed and submitted the Zurich Declaration Form.

Affiliated Clubs are not covered under SOI policies for:

- Contents/Equipment owned by Affiliated Clubs.
- Cyber Liability Risk.
- International Travel.

Pre-Approved Activities

- ✓ Sports training in sports that are offered by Special Olympics Ireland (including training offered to Special Olympics Registered athletes from other National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), Local Sports Partnerships/NI Sports Officers).
- ✓ Competition events in Special Olympics Ireland sports.
- ✓ Club participation in training and competition events in those sports offered by Special Olympics Ireland, which are also being offered by other NGBs.
- ✓ One-day social events that are not considered high risk. High risk social activities include parachuting, bungee jumping, etc.

Activities for which Approval is required:

Special Olympics Ireland will consider other sports activities not accounted for in the above list, subject to a submission to the relevant regional office and an assessment of the event briefing and related risk assessment documents by Special Olympics Ireland and Special Olympics Ireland's insurance company. It is recommended that the submission is made one month in advance of the planned event to ensure sufficient time for various stages of review.

- Club Activity in sports not offered by Special Olympics Ireland.
- Residential social events.

[Download risk assessment guidelines](#)



What is included in the policy cover extended to Affiliated Clubs?

- ✓ **Public Liability:** This covers the legal liability of Special Olympics Ireland for accidental bodily injury to a third party or damage to a third party's property arising out of and in the course of Special Olympics Ireland business that Special Olympics Ireland was considered negligible
- ✓ **Employer's Liability:** This covers the legal liability of Special Olympics Ireland for bodily injury caused to an employee (volunteers are covered under the definition of an employee) in the course of their employment that Special Olympics Ireland was considered negligible.
- ✓ **Personal Accident Insurance policy cover:** This cover applies in the event of an accident which is not deemed negligible and therefore considered a personal accident. This policy cover for accidental bodily injury and or illness sustained by insured persons resulting in death or disablement during the operative time. The operative time and various limits that apply are noted in the policy document. All registered affiliated Club volunteers and registered athletes are covered under this policy. This policy would cover such cost as medical expenses, physiotherapy, etc. The guidelines for reporting and making a claim are set out in the supporting documents resource section. An excess of €100 applies to the Personal Accident policy for which the individual claimant is responsible for covering.

- ✓ **Directors & Officers Liability Policy:** This cover protects individuals from personal losses if they are sued for actual or alleged breach of duty, neglect, misstatements, errors, and omissions as a result of serving as a director or an officer of a business or other type of organisation. Registered Special Olympics Club Committee Members are covered under this policy.

Conditions of Cover

- ✓ A Risk Assessment form for each activity must be completed to minimise risk exposure and retained on file for claims reference purposes. See additional support documents for the Risk Assessment Template and Guidance.
- ✓ An Incident Report form for each incident must be completed and retained on file for claims reference purposes. See additional support documents for the Incident Report Form Template.
- ✓ In relation to sports activities organised by the club, please refer to the Inter Club Guidelines for athlete and club numbers permissible.





Running a Club Session



Before the Session

Opening Up

- ✓ **Volunteers should arrive a minimum of 15 minutes prior** to the athletes in order to open the venue and arrange the set-up as required for the session.
- ✓ New Volunteers should carry their **volunteer membership card** when attending the club until they become established volunteers in the club.
- ✓ **Assess the venue for potential hazards** and eliminate or reduce risk. Ensure risk assessment is completed and a plan is in place to manage volunteer's supervision in relation to the following:
 - Toilets
 - Emergency Exits
 - Changing Rooms
 - Field of Play

Equipment Set-Up

Volunteers should ensure that any required equipment is set up prior to training start time.

Athlete Check-In

All athletes to check-in on arrival. An athlete attendance sheet should be maintained for all training sessions.

Communication

Any relevant club communication to be passed on to athletes or family members.

Changing

Volunteers should check that athletes are appropriately dressed for sport; a guideline should be included in the club induction pack. If athletes are changing into their sports specific kit, volunteers should monitor changing areas for a set period of time before the training session.



After the Session

Changing

- Similar to the commencement of the session, volunteers should ensure that **changing rooms are monitored** for a set period of time after the training session.
- **Volunteers should check toilets/changing rooms** to ensure that all athletes have left the area and to check for any lost/misplaced items.

Sign-Out

All athletes and volunteers should **check out** of a training session.

Tidy-Up

Volunteers should ensure that all **equipment is removed/stored correctly**, and that the venue is left in the manner in which it was found.

Athlete Departures

- A minimum of two volunteers should ensure that all athletes have safely departed before **locking up/leaving the venue**.
- In the case of an athlete not having suitable transport home, club volunteers must follow the club's policy and procedure to **ensure the athlete arrives home safely**.



Volunteers Roles at a Training Session

In many cases, some of your club's volunteers will not have sport specific experience or training. However, they will continue to have a hugely productive role at the training sessions.

Safety

- ✓ **Undertaking a full safety check** of the venue, relevant areas, and equipment prior to athlete arrival and throughout the session.
- ✓ Ensure that the venue/training area remains **secure** for athletes and that no athlete leaves the venue unaccompanied.
- ✓ Ensure that athletes that **travel to and from training** independently remain happy to do so.

Toilet/Changing Room Duty

(Always have two volunteers and appropriate gender)

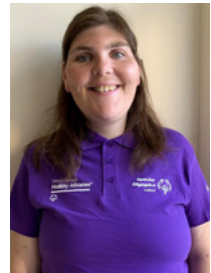
- ✓ Ensuring that toilets and changing rooms are monitored at all times.

Equipment Management

Responsibility for bringing equipment or removing from storage on site and setting up as directed by the Head Coach and tidying away at the end of the session.

Families

In many cases family members will attend training sessions, either at the beginning or end, or remain present throughout if required. This provides a great opportunity for building relationships with family members, communicating and seeking further involvement of family members.





Coach Education

Special Olympics Ireland believes that a quality coach education programme is essential to ensure that each athlete has the opportunity to train to their potential and to this end, a structured coach education programme is in place. The minimum requirement in all clubs is that coaching is provided to your athletes by an appropriately qualified coach.

In order to meet these standards, there are a large number of courses on offer either directly through Special Olympics Ireland and/or National Governing Bodies of sport, further training is available to coaches on events within a sport that is specific to Special Olympics Ireland. Special Olympics Ireland seeks to ensure that all coaches have access to a very comprehensive coach education experience and the necessary knowledge to coach their athletes.

In addition to sport specific courses, coaches may undertake a number of additional courses that will improve their skills as a coach and increase their ability to communicate with their athletes, i.e., Special Olympics Ireland Intellectual Disability Modules.

Information on all coaching and other education opportunities is available from your Regional Office. Remember, many courses are organised by demand, so if you believe that there is something that your club can benefit from, be sure to contact your Regional Office to request it.

Course Opportunities for Coaches Include

- ✓ Introduction to Coaching in Special Olympics
- ✓ National Governing Body courses – Introductory/Foundation level, level 1 and progressing through to level 2, etc.
- ✓ Development days and workshops.
- ✓ Special Olympics Intellectual Disability Modules.



Competition

While quality training is the function of the club, the pinnacle for many athletes is competition. It is the moment where all their hard work gets put into practice, and where athletes get the opportunity to compete against other athletes.

How can your Club Participate in Competition?

Over the course of each sporting year, each region will offer a range of competition opportunities in each sport, varying from once-off competition days to leagues and development events. A Calendar of Events is normally set at the beginning of each sporting year to ensure that clubs have time to prepare for entry to Development Days and Competitions.



Club Development

There may be opportunities for your club to develop, grow and learn, offering your athletes and volunteers greater choice and a better experience. However, it is important to remember that any new development which a club is considering, e.g., introducing an additional Special Olympics sport, should be done in conjunction with the regional staff.

Sports can be developed in three ways:



Enhancing your Sport

There are a number of ways that your club can develop the sport(s) that it undertakes as follows:

- Increase the focus on continued **coach education**.
- Investigate opportunities for **up-skilling existing coaches** through the National Governing Body of the sport or through the development opportunities offered by your Regional Office.
- Offer **training opportunities** to other volunteers within your club who do not currently have a coaching qualification.
- Increase the number of **qualified coaches**.
- Identify individuals within your locality that might bring additional expertise to your club.
- Carry out a **member skills audit**.
- Run additional **training sessions** in your sport.
- **Establish links** with mainstream clubs which may bring potential benefits such as:
 - Access to **qualified coaches**.
 - **Facilities and equipment** potential.
 - **Shared learning**.
 - Increased opportunity to develop **links within the community**.

Inter-Club Activities

An excellent way to enhance both training and competition opportunities for the athletes is to run an Inter-Club Activity. Clubs are free to initiate and organise Inter-Club Activities with another Special Olympics club. Essentially, an Inter-Club Activity is two clubs coming together to give athletes additional opportunities for a competitive experience through friendly or challenge competition or matches. It may also offer more opportunities to train with others and maybe develop new skills.

Many events will include both training and competitive elements. Interclub activities also promote the development of relationships between clubs and are a great opportunity for coaches to get accurate 'competition environment' times/scores for consideration when submitting for divisioning in Special Olympics official events.

Please refer to 'A Guide to Organising Inter-Club Activities' when planning an Inter-Club Activity.





Adding a New Special Olympics Sport

Timing may seem right for your club to add an additional sport, but there are a number of factors that must be considered before this takes place.

1 Special Olympics Sports

- Special Olympics clubs may only introduce the sports offered by Special Olympics Ireland. We recommend that a new club concentrate on one sport for a two-year period before introducing additional sports.

2 Athlete Demand and Preference

- There is no point in attempting to introduce a new sport if there is not sufficient interest from the athletes in your club. While you should survey your athletes on their preference, you will need to ensure that realistic expectations are set.
- Ensure you have enough athletes (e.g., in team sports, ensure you have sufficient numbers for a squad of players, not just the minimum team numbers).
- Ensure you link with your Regional Office to ensure the Region has the capacity to take on the sport.

3 Ability and Age Profile of Athletes

- Different sports place different demands on participants in terms of various skills required, such as flexibility, power, strength, speed and agility and the athletes overall physical fitness level. Other sports may suit particular age groups better. You need to assess the appropriateness of the sport for the athletes involved.
- The ability and age profile of your potential athletes will have implications for the number of coaches and assistant coaches required

4 Availability of Suitable Facilities

- All sports have specific venue requirements so undertake the necessary research on the availability of venues within your area, making sure to include capacity, availability of appropriate hours, accessibility, sports requirements, cost, changing room and toilet facilities.

5 Coaching

- All sports must be led by a minimum of one qualified Head Coach in that specific sport.

6 Volunteers

- The addition of a new sport will require additional volunteers to assist the coach in running the session. There must be sufficient volunteers within your club to support the Head Coach at training session. Please refer to the Athlete: Volunteer section for additional information.
- These volunteers may come from your existing pool, but care must be taken not to take resources away from your existing sports.

7 Impact on Club Management Team

- The club will need to ensure that the structure is in place for managing a new sport, including a Head Coach in that sport.

8 Finance

- Appropriate finance plan for sustaining a new sport.



Developing Membership

Growth

If a Special Olympics club has the capacity, the Club Management Team should strive to increase their membership numbers, from both an athlete and a volunteer perspective. A club must bear in mind that there must be an appropriate number of volunteers to support the athletes and that there are sufficient roles for volunteers to undertake.

Accepting Additional Athletes

Prior to bringing new athletes into the club, you must make sure of the following:

- ✓ Adequate **volunteer numbers**.
- ✓ **Sufficient capacity** in the venue.
- ✓ **Adequate finances** within the club for supporting additional athletes.
- ✓ **Ideas** for recruitment include:



Target **local schools, community groups**.



Create links with **local disability services and groups**.



Local advertising – social media, radio, parish newsletter, etc.

Increasing Volunteer Numbers

Whether you wish to attract new athletes or continue with your existing activities, most clubs will be in a situation where they will need to recruit more volunteers if they are to develop and grow. Prior to starting any volunteer recruitment campaign, a club should take the following into consideration:

- Why do you need volunteers?
- What skills are required?
- How many are needed?
- Are there clear roles for new volunteers?
- When do you need them? Do remember that there is a time requirement in order to complete the volunteer application process which will include a background check.

Sources for Recruiting Volunteers

- Contact your **local community sports clubs**.
- Create a **link with schools in your local community**. It is advised to start this recruitment process well in advance of the start of the season, in April/May, so that the students will be fully registered as volunteers (Anybody aged 16 years and over will require a background check, and this will take additional time to complete).
- Contact your local **Volunteer Centre**.
- **Local advertising** – social media, radio, community newsletters or through Regional Facebook pages, etc.
- **Target the families** of new and existing athletes who are not already actively involved.
- Contact your **Regional Office** for guidance.
- Your **Regional Special Olympics Volunteer Support Centre** will facilitate the placement of a volunteer vacancy notice on the Special Olympics Ireland website.





Enhancing your Special Olympics Programme

When the club's sports training programme becomes established and is running effectively, the club may wish to enhance your Special Olympics programmes on offer such as the **Athlete Leadership programme** or the **Health Promotion programme**.



Athlete Leadership

The Special Olympics Athlete Leadership programme provides athletes of all abilities, working with alongside a mentor, a way to develop and showcase their talents and interests through training and experience, both on and off the sports field.

Many Special Olympics clubs run Athlete Leadership sessions within their club, giving their athletes the opportunity to get involved in activities beyond their sport.

There are lots of things that athletes involved in Athlete Leadership may do, including:

- Volunteering in the club, e.g., helping with **weekly check-in** of athletes at training sessions.
- **Meeting and greeting** new members.
- Helping with **club fundraising activities**.
- Assisting in the **organisation of social events**.
- Putting together a **club newsletter**.
- **Public Relations** and **promotion** of the club.



Health and Well-Being



Offering the Health Promotion Programme to athletes in your club can have a real and meaningful impact on athlete's health awareness and actions.

1 Health Promotion Programme (Athletes aged 16+)

Health has a substantial impact on the quality of life for people with intellectual disabilities and affects each Special Olympics athlete's ability to effectively train and compete in sports. The Special Olympics Ireland Health Promotion Programme was developed to provide health education and information in an accessible format for people with intellectual disabilities in their local community and to help athletes make healthier choices in their everyday lives. The programme is comprised of 19 practical health workshops, which cover topics including nutrition, hydration, mental wellbeing, and personal hygiene. Trained Health Promotion Facilitators deliver workshops in community Special Olympics clubs, services or virtually online. Offering the Health Promotion Programme to athletes in your club can have a real and meaningful impact on athlete's health awareness and actions.

The objectives of the Health Promotion Programme are to:

- ✓ Encourage and enhance healthy behaviours, such as **eating fruits and vegetables, handwashing, and sun safety.**
- ✓ Reduce risky behaviours, such as **smoking and poor nutrition.**
- ✓ Improve **self-efficacy** and **self-advocacy.**
- ✓ Deliver **screening services.**
- ✓ Increases the investment of **health promotion leaders** for people with intellectual disabilities.





2 Health@Play Programme (Athletes aged 4-15)

Health@Play programme was co-developed with safe food to bring health education to Young Athletes aged 4-15 years and their parents. Our Health Education programmes aim to close the gap between sport and health so that athletes, volunteers, families and coaches see them as synonymous. Health education is so important from a young age to establish healthy behaviours for lifelong wellbeing. The programme consists of five modules including topics such as Hydration, Sleep, Screen Time and Healthy Eating. Providing health education to children with intellectual disabilities to empower them from a young age to take control of their own health literacy with parental/guardian support.

The objectives of the Health@Play programme are to:

- ✓ **Encourage and enhance healthy behaviours**, such as eating fruits and vegetables, getting enough sleep and decreasing screen time from a young age in a fun and interactive way
- ✓ Improving **self-esteem, mood, energy and sleep patterns** in younger athletes
- ✓ Provide athletes with **the tools and information** to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing with parental/ guardian support
- ✓ Instil the message that **Sport and Health go hand in hand**



Benefits to your club:

- ★ Increased knowledge of health promoting behaviours e.g., Health diet, increased levels of physical activity.
- ★ Decrease levels of obesity, heart disease high blood pressure and other co-morbidities among athletes.
- ★ A fun and interactive way to integrate health into your sports training programmes.
- ★ Empower athletes to take control of their own health literacy (with parental / guardian support for younger athletes).

Role of the club:

- ✓ Deliver a minimum of 6-8 health promotion workshops over a one-year period OR deliver the 5 modules from Health@Play.
- ✓ Actively promote health and wellbeing within your club.
- ✓ Support athletes to make healthy lifestyle changes that will benefit them both on and off the sports field.
- ✓ Instil the message that Sport and Health go hand-in-hand.
- ✓ Participate in evaluation of the programme.

What support will you receive?

- ✓ **Health Promotion Facilitator Training** for designated volunteer(s).
- ✓ **Health Toolkit(s) / Trainer Guides** for the Health Promotion Facilitator(s) in your club.
- ✓ **One athlete pack** for each athlete who takes part in the Health Promotion Programme (athletes aged 16+).
- ✓ **Interactive materials / equipment** to help you deliver the health workshops/ modules (Health@Play)
- ✓ Receive the **Healthy Clubs newsletter** every month.
- ✓ **Support** from the Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator and the Regional Development Officer for Clubs.



What to do next?

If you are interested in setting up the Health Promotion Programme within your club, please contact health@specialolympics.ie. To see the workshops that we offer and for more information, please visit: <https://www.specialolympics.ie/health-wellbeing/health-promotion-programme>.





Special Olympics
Ireland

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