



***Special Olympics***  
*Ireland*

# **Volunteer Policy**

## FILE MANAGEMENT

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## **1. Introduction**

Special Olympics Ireland (SOI) is a volunteer-led sports organisation for people with an intellectual disability and provides athletes with more than just the physical benefits of sport. SOI welcomes your involvement and contribution as a volunteer to help change the lives of Special Olympics athletes in their local community across the island of Ireland. Through sport, athletes develop both physically and emotionally, they make new friends, realise their dreams, and know they can fit in.

As a volunteer with SOI, you enable athletes to achieve and win not only in sport but in life too. SOI values and needs your involvement in many areas of the programme from raising awareness to

- volunteering at Special Olympics competition, health and athlete leadership events
- volunteering in clubs
- volunteering to raise much needed funds
- volunteering on projects and within our Support Centres
- volunteering as a mentor or on development committees, regional committees or as a board member.

SOI appreciates the commitment, time, energy, and skills you bring. By volunteering we hope you will receive personal satisfaction in the knowledge that you are contributing to your community, enhancing and using your skills for the benefit of others and the enjoyment and camaraderie of being part of the Special Olympics family.

## **2. Purpose**

The purpose of the volunteer policy is to provide individuals with information about volunteering with Special Olympics Ireland. This policy ensures a consistent approach to volunteering and volunteer management within Special Olympics Ireland.

## **3. Scope**

This policy applies to all Special Olympics Ireland applicant and registered volunteers.

## **4. Policy Statement**

It is the policy of SOI that Volunteers have the right to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect as a co-worker, not just as free help
- Be given as much information about the organisation as possible, including information about programmes, athlete activities within the programme and policies
- Receive adequate training to ensure they can undertake their roles to the best of their abilities, attend a place of volunteering that is orderly, conducive to work and worthy of the job to be done, is safe and complies with health & safety regulations
- Have the freedom to make suggestions and receive feedback that shows respect for their opinion
- Make complaints
- Be assigned to a role that recognises their personal preference, life experience, education and employment background as well as recognising the needs of the organisation

SOI are fully committed to providing an environment which supports equal opportunities for both existing and potential volunteers based on suitability and qualifications (as appropriate for particular roles). The organisation fully promotes an environment free from discrimination, bullying, harassment and sexual harassment. All persons should be valued, treated in an equitable and fair manner regardless of age, gender, civil status, family status, ability, sexual orientation, race, religion, or membership of an

ethnic group with opportunities to foster inclusion promoted. This commitment is reflected throughout the practices of SOI.

## 5. Responsibilities

Volunteers have a responsibility to act appropriately as representatives of SOI and to:

- Comply fully with the registration process and receive clearance from SOI to participate as a volunteer
- Comply with requests from SOI to update their volunteer membership as required
- Ensure that their attitude and behaviour towards the athletes, other volunteers and staff members always respect the rights, dignity and worth of every human being
- Maintain appropriate boundaries and always respect the privacy of athletes.
- Abide by the [Code of Conduct](#)
- Ensure they are fit to undertake their volunteer duties independently and to adhere to their own limitations or restrictions
- Inform SOI if additional support is required, and we will try our best to accommodate your needs and find activities that are suited to your requirements.

## 6. Volunteer Management Process

### 6.1 Recruitment & Selection

If you are 15 years of age or over and wish to volunteer, you must make an application to Special Olympics Ireland (SOI) and complete the Volunteer Registration Process. You must be accepted and designated as a registered volunteer before you may undertake a volunteer role / duty within the organisation or within an affiliated Club.

In summary, the Volunteer Registration Process requires that an applicant undertakes the following steps:

1. Complete and submit a SOI Volunteer Application online
2. If resident in the Republic of Ireland, complete and submit a Garda Vetting Application online  
OR  
If resident in Northern Ireland, complete and apply for an Enhanced Check through Access NI.
3. Submit the names and contact numbers of two referees
4. Complete the SOI Volunteer Online Induction Training Course
5. Submit a recent photograph
6. Complete relevant Safeguarding training (or provide a valid certificate to show completion of same)

SOI takes all reasonable steps to ensure that only suitable people are recruited to volunteer with the organisation. Anyone wishing to volunteer their time to SOI will be respectfully considered under our Recruitment and Selection policy. As part of our selection process, we will consider an applicant's ability to volunteer independently as well as the impact each applicant may have on athletes, other volunteers, our stakeholders and our reputation and brand.

### 6.2 Training

SOI is committed to the provision of effective training for volunteers, at the appropriate time, to enable them to perform their roles efficiently and consistently. All volunteers must have completed Induction and Safeguarding training and have already completed or registered for any required mandatory training for their role prior to commencing activity.

SOI has developed a training strategy that is dedicated to creating an environment of continuous learning to facilitate growth and development within the organisation. The approach to training includes using online resources and self-paced learning options to minimise time spent in travel and accommodate the various schedules of volunteers to an extent.

### **6.3 Supervision**

Most volunteering activities takes place in clubs, at events (sports, fundraising, healthy athletes, athlete leadership etc.) or in our Support Centres. Each club and event have a management team with responsibility for coordinating and supervising the activities and welfare of the volunteers assigned to them. Support centres are situated in regional and central offices and are supervised by SOI staff.

### **6.4 Role descriptions**

Written role descriptions are available for volunteers taking on roles at events and/or in clubs.

### **6.5 Data Protection / Confidentiality**

Personal information will be held and processed by SOI in accordance with Data Protection legislation. As a volunteer, we require you to observe our practice of non-disclosure of any personal or confidential information to which you may have access.

### **6.6 Intellectual Property**

The rights to any original works that you may produce while volunteering will belong to SOI.

### **6.7 Social Media**

SOI understands that you can use social media for personal reasons and that your views are your own, but you should be careful about how it affects others, including athletes, other volunteers, staff, and/or SOI. To keep your use appropriate, please remember that:

- You are responsible for what you do on social media
- Whilst you have a right to your personal views and opinions, expression of views that do not support the values of SOI (including but not limited to inclusion and respect for people of all abilities and backgrounds) is contrary to this policy
- Remember that what you post can be seen by the public for a long time.
- Think about the impact of what you share and how it might change people's view of SOI and its members
- Do not share any confidential or sensitive information about SOI, its clubs, athletes, staff, or other volunteers
- Respect the privacy of others. Do not post photos or information about athletes, other volunteers, or staff without their consent

### **6.8 Film and Photography Policy**

This policy applies to all SOI volunteers and employees, including those on a permanent or fixed term contracts and work placement and the public. Special Olympics Ireland has a duty to protect athletes from inappropriate use of photographic images and video recordings.

The Filming and Photography Policy helps all stakeholders on taking and using appropriate images. This guidance is not about preventing parents/guardian and supporters from taking pictures, but rather to ensure that only those who have a right to take photographs do so. This guidance is designed to promote safeguards for any photographic or filming/video activity to minimise the risk of inappropriate taking and use of images. A full copy of this policy can be found here - [Section 22 - Filming and Photography Policy](#)

Permission must be obtained to take images to ensure that people are aware of when images might be taken and how they might be used. If the person is under 18 years, parental consent must also be obtained. Third parties wishing to capture images at any Special Olympics Ireland activity must first complete a self- declaration form and register the device/s that they will use.

#### Environments where taking images is prohibited

- Taking of photographs and video recording is prohibited inside changing areas, dormitories, medical treatment areas, showers and toilets
- This includes the use of mobile phones to record or take images in these areas. Privacy is and should be expected in these spaces and it may be, in some cases, an offence to breach this
- Flash photography should not be used in competition areas as it may cause distraction or harm to the participants

#### Photographs and video recordings that may be taken

- If they are in suitable dress only i.e. wearing a t-shirt/top and shorts/bottoms
- If they are taking part in an Awards Presentation and the above is in place
- Whilst actively participating in their sport or activity, i.e. action shots
- Where the pose is appropriate and would not cause harm or embarrassment
- By parents/guardians or other family members during an event as a celebration of an athlete's attendance or achievement.

#### Using images safely

Where images are taken for personal use by family members, they should be aware of people who may be visible in the image also. The images should not be used in a public platform without permission or before cropping/blurring the image to remove those who have not given permission. Images taken for media or publicity use must be in line with this policy and Special Olympic Ireland Safeguarding policies. The correct permissions must be obtained, and the image must be appropriate.

**Important!** - Images of persons under eighteen (18) years of age used on social media should not include personal details and should be in keeping with the Codes of Conduct, Special Olympics Ireland Safeguarding Policies and the guidance in this policy. It may be necessary to include more information for promotional activities or news outlets; however, this should be done with safety as a priority.

When the image is no longer needed it should be deleted from all locations including the location of deleted items on storage devices. Hard copies should be shredded and disposed of in a safe location. If you are concerned about how images are being used in Special Olympics Ireland you should contact your Club Safeguarding Officer (club), Regional Director (region) or Safeguarding Officer (National Children's Officer) according to where the image has been posted.

## **6.9 Health & Safety**

SOI is committed to ensuring your wellbeing and safety while you are volunteering and, in turn, we expect our volunteers to contribute to maintaining a safe environment.

Volunteers must take reasonable care for the health and safety of themselves and other persons who may be affected by their actions or omissions. Any activities carried out on a voluntary basis are covered by the health and safety legislative requirements.

Volunteers must follow any health and safety guidelines and measures put in place for Special Olympics Ireland activities or by an affiliated club. Volunteers should report all accidents / incidents or dangerous circumstances to the management team in a club or at an event or to a member of staff.

## **6.10 Insurance**

Special Olympics Ireland has a Public and Employer's Liability Insurance policy in place.

In addition, SOI has a Personal Accident and a Directors and Officer Insurance Cover:

- Personal Accident Insurance covers an SOI registered and vetted volunteer in the event of an accident which is not deemed negligible and therefore considered a personal accident. This policy covers 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. This policy would cover such cost as medical expenses, physiotherapy, etc.
- Directors and Officers Insurance covers registered volunteers serving on the Board of Directors and on the Club Management Team (CMT) of Affiliated Club Members that are sports clubs in the community, and those affiliated groups who have opted to select this cover under SOI's policy, and who have submitted the required documents.
- Motor Insurance Policy includes only vehicles within SOI's motor fleet; and covers registered volunteers who drive with SOI's approval following the submission of a copy of their licence and completed questionnaire to SOI. Drivers must have the valid licence appropriate to the vehicle and are not disqualified from holding such a licence.

**Note:** Drivers using their cars in connection with their voluntary work must inform their own insurance company to ensure adequate and continued cover. Drivers are responsible for the upkeep of their own vehicle.

## **6.11 Alcohol, Smoking & Substance Abuse**

The consumption of alcoholic beverages by any person volunteering with Special Olympics Ireland is prohibited while volunteering in any location being used for training, competition, accommodation or other Special Olympics Ireland purposes. Volunteers must present themselves in a fit manner to perform their role.

Smoking and vaping / e-smoking in all forms by any person associated with or attending Special Olympics Ireland activities is prohibited at events and venues, except in designated smoking areas.

SOI prohibits substance misuse and the use of recreational drugs during the course of SOI activity in any location being used for training, competition, accommodation or other Special Olympics Ireland purposes.

## **6.12 Expenses**

SOI is cognisant that volunteers give their time and skills free of charge. The organisation also recognises and is very appreciative of the fact that most volunteers do not seek to be reimbursed for expenses that may be incurred from time to time. However, some volunteering roles, including those which involve a sustained commitment throughout the year, may mean that a volunteer may incur sustained expenses. SOI has made a provision for the reimbursement of pre-approved sustained expenses. All forms are available on request from your SOI contact, who will advise you on the process.

## **6.13 Volunteer Recognition**

SOI endeavours to promote volunteer recognition both formally through Volunteer Awards internally and externally as well as marking occasions such as Volunteer Week and through the promotion of informal recognition of volunteers through genuine, meaningful gestures. The relationship between the organisation and volunteer must be one of mutual respect. It is important that volunteers and the various stakeholders across the organisation are working together.

## **6.14 Volunteer Feedback**

All volunteers are encouraged to provide feedback on their experience in the organisation. All feedback will be given the appropriate consideration. Formal channels for feedback include Area and Regional meetings, Annual Regional meetings (ARMs), Special Olympics Ireland AGM, Strategy consultations, Event and Games After Action reports, Club AGMs, workshops, volunteer surveys, etc.

If you have feedback about any aspect of our work; you can contact us via our feedback form on our website - [click here](#), in writing or by telephone.

## **6.15 Resolving Concerns**

SOI takes the concerns of its volunteers seriously and will make every reasonable effort to resolve any difficulties. If a volunteer has any concerns or complaints about volunteering, they should talk to a staff member or contact SOI via our website - [Feedback and Complaints | Special Olympics Ireland](#).

In the event of an issue arising, all relevant facts should be obtained as quickly as possible and every attempt made to resolve the issue in an informal manner. If an informal resolution cannot be achieved, SOI's Complaints Policy will be referred to.

If a volunteer's behaviour is repeatedly or seriously unacceptable, this may be dealt with in accordance with SOI Safeguarding policies & procedures and where appropriate SOI's Volunteer Disciplinary procedure.

Complaints, which occur at club level and feedback on club operations, should be dealt with by a Club Management Team Member within the local club and in accordance with their club's complaints policy.

## **6.16 Ending a Volunteer Agreement**

SOI strives to foster and maintain positive relationships with volunteers however it reserves the right to end a volunteer agreement at any time.

The following includes reasons why a Volunteer Agreement may be ended but this is not an exhaustive list:

- Unsuitability for or incapacity to fulfil a role
- Theft or misuse of Special Olympics Ireland's assets
- Abuse or mistreatment of Special Olympics athletes, fellow volunteers, staff or other stakeholders
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs whilst carrying out any activities on behalf of Special Olympics Ireland.

## **7 Related documents**

Volunteers may wish to refer to the following documents for further information:

- Code of conduct for volunteers – [Section 11 - Code of conduct for volunteers SG policies](#)
- Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers Policy - [Vetting Information | Special Olympics Ireland](#)
- Policy on the Recruitment of Ex-Offenders - [Vetting Information | Special Olympics Ireland](#)
- Volunteer Agreement (accessible via the volunteer agreement credential on Just Go)

Other useful documents in relation to volunteer activities:

- Special Olympics Sports Club Guide - [Club Resources | Special Olympics Ireland](#)
- Event Management Guide - [Event Management | Special Olympics Ireland](#)
- Regulations Governing Special Olympics Sport - [Club Resources | Special Olympics Ireland](#)