



Special Olympics
Ireland

CLUB HANDBOOK



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Section 1

Introduction



Special Olympics
Ireland



INTRODUCTION

- Special Olympics Ireland
- Our Mission
- Our Vision
- Our Membership
- Our Support Structures

Special Olympics Ireland

Special Olympics provides year-round sports training and competition opportunities for people with an intellectual disability. The Special Olympics programme is offered as an All-Ireland programme and is sub-divided into five regional programmes.

The organisation offers training and competition at various stages of development in 15 official sports - alpine skiing, aquatics, athletics, basketball, badminton, bocce, bowling, equestrian, floorball, football, gymnastics, golf, kayaking and table tennis. In addition, pitch and putt, a locally popular sport is offered. Athletes may participate in a training programme from six years of age and compete from eight years of age; there is no upper age limit. A comprehensive Motor Activities Training Programme (MATP) is offered for athletes who do not have the required skill level as yet to compete under Special Olympics or National Governing Body Rules.

The Official Special Olympics Sports Rules govern all Special Olympics competition. These rules are based on the relevant International Federation and the rules of each individual country's National Governing Body (NGB) of sport.

Special Olympics 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 his/her 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 events are organised locally throughout the year that offer additional competitive opportunities to athletes to develop.

Our Mission

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

Our Vision

The long term vision is to build a sustainable Special Olympics Ireland programme so that every person with an intellectual disability has the opportunity, in their local community, to participate in high quality sport and development activities that bring life-changing experiences of increased skills, self-confidence and joy.

"Let me win
but if I cannot win,
Let me be brave
in the attempt.

- Special Olympics Athlete Oath

Our Membership

Athletes

Participation as an athlete in the Special Olympics programme is open to children and adults with an intellectual disability. Athletes may take part in sports training from the age of 6 years, sports competition from 8 years of age and there is no upper age limit.

Volunteers

The Special Olympics programme is supported by thousands of volunteers who undertake numerous roles within the organisation and they are the true backbone of the organisation. Volunteering options are open to persons over the age of 15 who successfully register with Special Olympics Ireland. On reaching the age of 16, the person is also subject to a background check which will be undertaken by the appropriate authority in the Republic or in the North of Ireland.

Family Members

Family members of the athletes are welcomed and encouraged to play an active role in supporting athletes and Special Olympics. A family member is defined as a parent, sibling, legal guardian, immediate carer or spouse of an athlete.

Participation of Siblings in the Club

Special Olympics is a sports training and competition programme for people with an intellectual disability and as such the focus of training must be for them. However, in some instances, it may be of benefit to the athletes and the club as a whole to permit a brother or sister to participate in training provided:

1. They are given no responsibility
2. They are under the direction and control of the coach taking the training session
3. The focus of the session must remain on the athletes.

Our Support Structures

Local Level

Sports training and coaching is provided for athletes, on a weekly basis, in local Special Olympics 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 & friendship!

The long-term aim of the Special Olympics programme is to promote the all-round development of the individual, integrating the person into local communities and giving him/her opportunities for personal development and achievement. All this may be achieved by becoming a member of a Special Olympics Club.

Club is any group established to run a Special Olympics sports programme, i.e. community groups, intellectual disability service providers and special schools.

Regional Level

Each Special Olympics Club is located within one of the 5 regions within Special Olympics Ireland:

- Connaught
- Eastern
- Leinster
- Munster
- Ulster

Each region has a regional office, where a team of staff and volunteers, in conjunction with a Regional Committee, organise and manage the Special Olympics programme in the region and provide support to athletes, volunteers and clubs. Due to their size, some regions are further divided up into Areas for competition, communication and support.

For a list of your regional contacts refer to the appendices.

All Ireland Level

Special Olympics Ireland is governed by a Board of Directors which has responsibility for overseeing, directing and co-ordinating the organisation, its policies, affairs and activities of Special Olympics Ireland. Day-to-day management of the organisation is delegated to the Chief Executive Officer, who works with a team of staff and volunteers to manage and deliver the programme.

Where your club fits in



Purpose of this Club Handbook

The purpose of this club handbook is to act as a guide for all clubs to:

- Outline minimum standards of safe operation
- Provide guidelines for best practice
- Offer helpful hints and tips
- Inform on policy and procedure

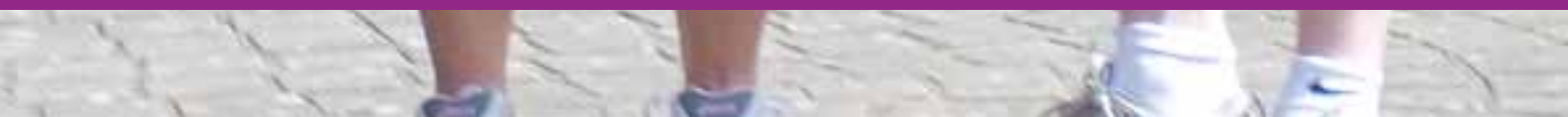


Section 2

Club Management Team



Special Olympics
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CLUB MANAGEMENT TEAM

- Structure
- Sub Committees and Assistants
- How should a Club Management Team operate
- Training for Club Management Team members
- Club Management Team roles and responsibilities

STRUCTURE

Running a club requires coordination, communication and organisation and a structured approach in the delivery of the activities. In this regard, each club must put in place a Club Management Team. The structure for the Club Management Team is outlined below.

The roles shown in shaded boxes are required in every community-run club. The non-shaded boxes represent roles that are recommended to be put in place when a club has reached a stage where they are appropriate and necessary for the club's continued development.

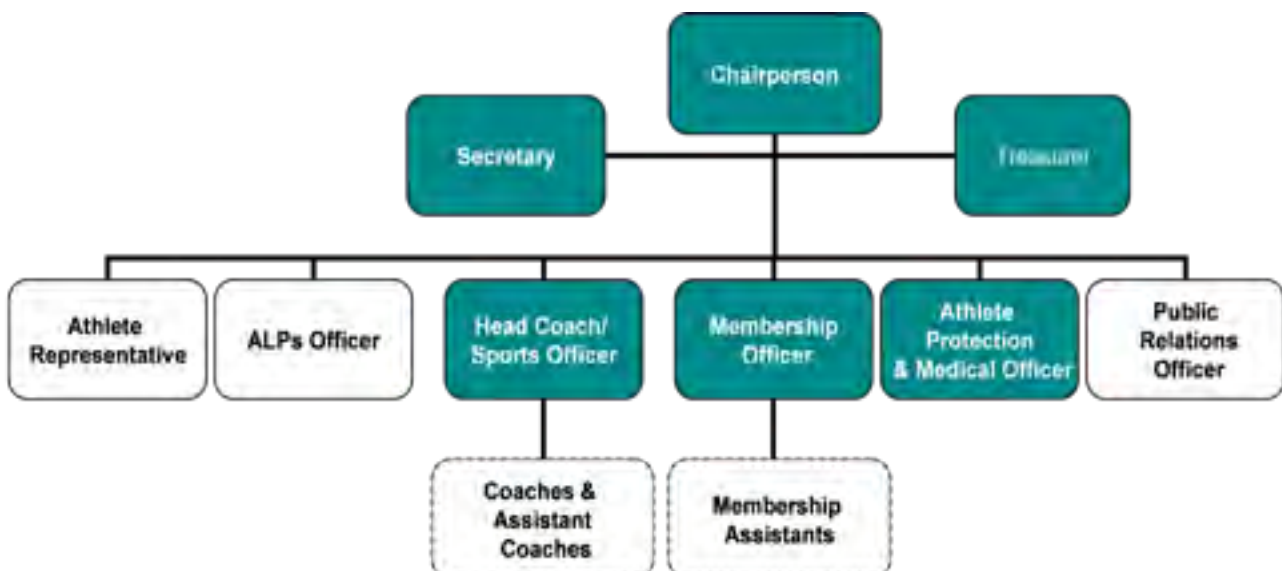
In a club where there is only one sport offered (single-sport club), the Head Coach is a member of the Management Team. Where there are a number of sports in a club (a multi-sport club), the Head Coaches will appoint a Sports Officer to represent the sport and the coaches on the Club Management Team.

A volunteer may only undertake one role within the club management structure in any given year. Most clubs will need additional help from volunteers to run their weekly training sessions and other club activities. The ratio of coaches, assistant coaches or volunteers should be one volunteer to every four athletes. This ratio may need to be higher if some athletes need greater support.

Why have a team structure?

A 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



SUB-COMMITTEES AND ASSISTANTS

A Club Management Team may form a sub-committee, from time to time, to undertake a particular function or project that has specific defined goals, e.g. a fundraising event. A sub-committee will be led by a member of the Club Management Team, who will coordinate the subcommittee and report on progress.

The Club Management Team may also appoint assistants to any of the roles in order to assist the officer in undertaking his/her task.

HOW SHOULD A CLUB MANAGEMENT TEAM OPERATE?

Regular Meetings

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
- Circulating the agenda in advance, including time and location
- Starting on time and ending on time
- Recording and circulating the 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 mindful that Data Protection legislation 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 Special Olympics Ireland policies.



Annual General Meeting

Once a year, not later than the end of November, the Club Management Team should hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) for all club members. The purpose of the AGM is to elect the Club Management Team, inform the members of previous and future activities, allows members to receive the club accounts and to have an opportunity to provide input and feedback on the club's activities.

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

Elections

All Officers shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting of the Club

Members of the Club Management Team are elected or appointed through:

1. Open election:

The Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer position is elected by the members at the Club Annual General Meeting.

2. Closed Election:

Athlete Representative: The Athlete representative should be elected by the ALPs athletes. Where an ALPs Programme does not yet exist within the club, the Club Management Team may co-opt an athlete.

3. Co-option:

- i. Sport: In a single sport club, the Head Coach will be on the Management Team. In a multi-sport club, Head Coaches should appoint a Sports Officer to represent them on the Club Management Team.
- ii. Athlete Protection Officer/ Medical Representative: This position may be appointed by the Club Committee on the basis of their suitability for the role.
- iii. Membership Officer: This position may be appointed by the Club Committee on the basis of their suitability for the role.
- iv. Public Relations (PR) Officer: This position may be appointed by the Club Committee on the basis of their suitability for the role.
- v. ALPs Officer: The ALPs Officer, where the role exists, will be on the Club Management Team.
- vi. All proposals for co-option must be approved by the Club Committee and be in accordance with the structure as outlined by Special Olympics.



Term of Office

Officer roles at every level of the organisation are for a two-year term, at the end of which the person is eligible to put themselves forward for the role for a further two years. Again at the end of the 4th year, a person may put themselves forward for another two years, but the maximum consecutive term in a role or combination of roles on a team or committee is six years. A gap of one year is required after the maximum term.

An individual's term is subject to review and/or cessation at any time, either by the committee/team that elected or appointed the person, or if necessary by Special Olympics Ireland. Extensions to the maximum term will be considered by Special Olympics Ireland in exceptional circumstances only – the aim is to encourage regular rotation of team and committee members.

TRAINING FOR CLUB MANAGEMENT TEAM MEMBERS

When a club is initially established, training and support is provided throughout its first year by their Special Olympics Regional Office. A Club Management Team will receive ongoing support, where required, from the appropriate Development Officer within their region. It is also recommended that the club organises role-specific and “on-the-job” training for any new officer filling a role and ensure that there is a proper handover within the role.

Training falls into two categories, mandatory and recommended as outlined in the table below:

Course	Mandatory	Recommended	Where to access training
Special Olympics Volunteer Induction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Club Management Team All Volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online at http://moodle.specialolympics.ie/moodle Details of Tutor led local courses available on the website for each region at www.specialolympics.ie Regional Office
Club Management Team Training		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Club Management Team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Office
Code of Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Athlete Protection Officer Head Coaches Assistant Coaches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chairperson Volunteers Family members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Sports Partnership Sport NI Regional Office
Introduction to Coaching Practices		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any volunteers new to a coaching role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional office
Intellectual Disability Modules		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Club Management Team Assistant Coaches Volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> training@specialolympics.ie muireann.niriain@specialolympics.ie Regional Office
Appropriate Sports Specific Coaching Qualification (National Governing Body [NGB] or Special Olympics Ireland for bocce and golf)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head Coach Level of qualification will vary depending on the NGB 	Assistant Coaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Office or specific NGB

CLUB MANAGEMENT TEAM ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Chairperson

- Act as the overall leader of the management team running the club
- Be the primary representative of the club in dealings with all outside bodies and act as its spokesperson wherever appropriate
- Ensure the club's activities are in line with Special Olympics rules, policies and procedures
- Ensure that the club's activities are conducted safely and that collective responsibility for safety is emphasised at all levels
- Lead club fundraising activities
- Oversee the appropriate management of club accounts

Secretary

- Assist with all aspects of club administration
- Prepare agendas and communicate notice of meetings
- Follow up on actions from meetings with people assigned the actions
- Act as a conduit for communications in to, out of and within the club

Membership Officer

- Responsible for the administration associated with club members, athletes, volunteers and family members
- Ensure that all new members are welcomed into the club, appropriately registered, assigned and trained where necessary
- Update relevant forms and submit them on time for annual affiliation
- Responsible for recognition duties within the club for volunteers

Head Coach (single-sport club)

- Lead sports training and competition activities
- Act as the main point of contact for sport in the club
- Represent the view of coaches to the management team
- Must have a sports specific qualification in line with Special Olympics Ireland requirements

Sports Officer (multi-sport club)

- Act as the main point of contact for sport in the club
- Represent the view of coaches to the management team
- Represent Head Coaches for each sport
- Work with Head Coaches to coordinate sports needs and activities from an overall perspective within the club.
- Must have an appropriate coaching qualification in line with Special Olympics Ireland requirements



Athlete Protection and Medical Officer

- Oversee and coordinate the adoption and implementation of the Code of Ethics & Good Practice by the club's members
- Act as a point of contact for information and for reporting of alleged incidents related to athlete protection
- Promote the health and well-being of athletes participating in Special Olympics training at the club
- Ensure Athlete Participation Forms are held on-site by coaches for all training sessions and competitions
- Ensure adequate first aid cover is provided for all training sessions
- Must have either Basic Awareness - Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport (IRL) or Safeguarding Children and Young People in Sport (Basic awareness raising) (NI) and must also attend Children's Officer training (IRL) or Designated Safeguarding Children's Officer (NI) within the first year of their first term



Treasurer

- Manage club income and expenditure in conjunction with the Chairperson
- Ensure all club transactions are transparent and accountable at all times
- Produce regular statements of accounts
- Budgeting, in conjunction with the Chairperson

Additional Roles & Responsibilities

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
- Must have an appropriate coaching qualification in line with Special Olympics Ireland requirements

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 Programme Officer

- Encourage broader athlete participation in the running of the club
- Coordinate implementation of the ALPs programme
- Recruit ALPs mentors for athletes
- Plan an appropriate ALPs programme for the club

Public Relations 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



Section 3

Administration in your club



Special Olympics
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ADMINISTRATION IN YOUR SPECIAL OLYMPICS CLUB

- Registration
- Affiliation
- Club Representation
- Planning
- Venue
- Use of the Special Olympics Logo
- Club uniforms
- Health and Safety
- Finance and Fundraising
- Insurance
- Communication

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

REGISTRATION

Registration procedures are in place for

- Athletes
- Club
- Volunteers
- Family members

The Membership Officer should keep an up-to-date record of all club members.

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, an individual must:

1. Complete and submit to the Regional Office an Athlete Participation Form to become a registered athlete
2. Become a member of a Special Olympics Club

Athlete Participation Forms must be present at every Special Olympics activity in which the athlete is participating.

All athletes completing registration, which includes the submission of a photograph, will receive a photographic membership card.

Athletes should only have one Athlete Participation Form in circulation, the original of which should be held by the athlete or family member and a copy held by his/her Club Membership Officer. If an athlete is joining more than one club, a copy of the most up to date Athlete Participation Form should be made by the family and given to the new club, rather than creating a second form. Any change to medical information must be updated as soon as it is known.

* See appendices

Volunteer Registration

All volunteers taking part in any club activity must be fully registered with Special Olympics Ireland. This may be done in one of two ways:

1. Apply online at www.specialolympics.ie or
2. Complete a hard copy application form and the relevant Vetting Form, see appendices

Volunteering is open to persons over the age of 15 and all volunteers must apply to Special Olympics Ireland to register. As part of application, volunteers over 16 years of age are subject to vetting, which is undertaken by the appropriate authority either the Gardaa Síochána (Republic of Ireland) or AccessNI (Northern Ireland). Volunteers may also be subject to a reference check.

Every new volunteer applicant will receive notification from Special Olympics Ireland when they are successfully registered (i.e. application and background check complete). It is not possible to volunteer in any capacity for Special Olympics Ireland without becoming fully registered.

Photographic Volunteer Membership Cards are issued to new volunteers when the volunteer's assignment is confirmed (i.e. club/event/committee role) and when a photograph has been provided. Newly registered volunteers should be asked to show proof of their registration when first joining the club by producing their photographic membership card or formal letter confirming that they are fully registered.

Remember

Clubs who have non registered volunteers are taking a risk in relation to the safety of its members and their non-registered volunteers are not covered by Special Olympics Insurance.

Family Registration

For each athlete registered, Special Olympics requires a designated contact person from the athlete's family or his/her 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.

Other family members may also register by giving their details to their Regional Office or at Family Information stands at events. Family members wishing to take on a role within a club must register as a volunteer, following the process outlined in the volunteer registration section.

AFFILIATION

Club Annual Affiliation

Every club must affiliate to Special Olympics Ireland on an annual basis. Annual Affiliation takes place between September and October every year and is a mandatory requirement for participation in the Special Olympics Ireland programme.

Athlete and Volunteer Annual Affiliation

Each year, a full list of registered athletes and volunteers will be sent to your club. This list should be checked against your records to ensure all information is accurate. Any missing names must be followed up to ensure the athlete or volunteer is fully registered and/or assigned to your specific club.

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 and new information on developments and that you will have an opportunity to input and give feedback. Area or Regional meetings allow members of clubs to meet each other, exchange ideas and experience and share information.

PLANNING

Planning is vital to build a successful and progressive club. Clubs should always plan in the short to medium term (e.g. 6 months to a year) but must also look at long-term plans.

Why plan?

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

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

Venue Hire

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 in order to suit your needs and your use of the venue)
- Ask for a copy of the Insurance policy for the venue
- Confirm a Venue Hire agreement in writing
- Ensure the venue is accessible in relation to toilets, rest/recreational areas as well as to the sports area
- Ensure there are adequate toilet/shower facilities
- Assess the available area for storage of equipment, if required

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.

Tips on developing a good working relationship with the management of the venue

- Always leave the venue as you found it
- Get to know the key staff
- Invite members of the venue management team to club functions
- Publicly acknowledge any contribution or support given when an opportunity presents itself, e.g. Club AGM or Inter-Club activity

USE OF THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS LOGO

The Special Olympics logo plays an important part in projecting the image of Special Olympics as a strong, united organisation at the local, regional, all-Ireland and international levels.

Important Note: In 1988 The International Olympic Committee (IOC) officially recognized Special Olympics. Under the terms of the agreement, Special Olympics is authorized to use the word "Olympics" worldwide, but only after the word "Special." **Special Olympics may not use the Olympic Rings or the word "Olympian" in any way.**

The logo is composed of the official seal and the logotype, as shown below:



Incorrect logo usage



Don't display the seal without the logotype



Don't display the logotype without the seal



Don't change the size relationship between the seal and logotype.



Don't add graphic elements to the logo or replace the seal with another symbol.



Special Olympics Logo and Athlete uniform

The proper use of the Special Olympics logo and any commercial logos on athlete uniforms is governed by the Special Olympics Official General Rules. A copy of the General Rules is available on the Special Olympics International website www.specialolympics.org/general_rules.aspx

Club Logo

Clubs must use the appropriate Special Olympics regional logo on all apparel/uniforms - see example below, Special Olympics Ireland Leinster.



- The Special Olympics regional logo must always be placed on the left- hand side of the garment (as the garment is worn).
- A club may incorporate their name into the appropriate regional Special Olympics Ireland logo by adding their name to the bottom of the existing logo. The Special Olympics Regional Logo must be used in its entirety as per the example below:



- The Club name must be printed in a font proportionally smaller than the line that appears above the club name.
- A club does have the option of designing their own appropriate club logo. However, the club logo must be submitted for approval to your Special Olympics Regional Office before any uniform order is placed with a supplier. The club logo, once approved, should be placed on the right-hand side of the garment.
- The Club logo must not be larger than the Special Olympics Regional logo.
- An approved copy of your Regional logo can be obtained from your Regional Office.

Sponsor Logos

- Club uniforms that are for training use only may have a sponsor logo / commercial markings which contain small and attractively designed identifications accompanying the club logo. However, these uniforms may not be worn in competition.
- The Special Olympics Official General Rules, Article 1 Section 4.07(b).states “In order to avoid commercial exploitation of people with an intellectual disability, no uniforms or apparel that are worn by Special Olympics Ireland athletes during any sports competition event or during an opening or closing ceremony of a residential Games may be emblazoned with commercial names or commercial messages. The only commercial markings that may be displayed on athletes’ uniforms during Games competitions or opening or closing ceremonies are the normal commercial markings of the manufacturer”.

CLUB UNIFORMS

- Generally the larger the order, the better the price that may be negotiated with a supplier. While you may develop a local contact, do check with your Regional Office team who may be able to guide you in this regard.
- Consider storage requirements if you are ordering for the future to ensure that you have a secure storage facility.



HEALTH & SAFETY

First Aid/Medical Cover

A person with a first aid qualification should be present at all training sessions. This may be any volunteer, coach or the Athlete Protection and Medical officer 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 a minimum, a person attending the training session has access to:

- Athlete Participation Forms involved in the session
- A first aid kit
- Contact details of local GP and the nearest emergency department
- Reporting procedure document

Accident Reporting:

- In the event of any accident or injury occurring an accident report form must be completed and kept with club records (see Appendices)

Code of Ethics & Good Practice

Special Olympics Ireland's Code of Ethics and Good Practice aims to promote best practice and to provide a safe and enjoyable environment for all our members including athletes, coaches, volunteers, family and staff members.

Training in the Code of Ethics and Good Practice is mandatory in every club for the Athlete Protection and Medical Officer and Head Coach. It is also recommended that the Chairperson of the Club has completed this training. Training is available through the Local Sports Partnerships or Sports NI, or through Special Olympics Ireland tutors. On completion of this training, please submit your certificate number to your regional office.

All athletes, coaches, volunteers and family members are also accountable for familiarising themselves with and adhering to the Special Olympics Ireland Code of Ethics & Good Practice. Each club has been issued with a Code of Ethics and Good Practice document and it is also available to download from the Special Olympics Ireland website.

Incident Reporting

- In the event of any Code of Ethics incident an Incident Report Form must be completed and kept with Athlete Protection and Medical Officer records or if requested forwarded to Regional Athlete Protection Officer. (See Appendices).

Code of Conduct for Club Members

A code of conduct for club members is included in the Special Olympics Ireland Code of Ethics and Good Practice.

The Code of Conduct will ensure that all club members agree to behave in an appropriate manner and everyone is treated equally. All club members should be made aware of the Code of Conduct and agree to abide by the Code on joining the club.



FINANCE AND FUNDRAISING

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

Bank Accounts

- A current account must be opened with a registered bank only and not a credit union or post office.
- The account name must be in the club name in its entirety e.g. Tivoli Tigers Special Olympics Club.
- A minimum of 3 Club Management Team members must be registered as authorised cheque signatories (one of whom must be the Treasurer). Two signatories are required to authorise all payments and withdrawals.

Fees/subscriptions

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

- Clubs may set a fee for participation
- A fee can create a value to participation and elicit commitment
- Fees can be set on a session, term or yearly basis, or a variety of the above, depending on the circumstances of the individuals
- Fee payments must be recorded
- The Club Management Team may apply discretion in the payment of fees, if required.



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.

Grant Applications and Sponsorship

Clubs may seek to avail of additional funding through local or national grant aid opportunities or local sponsorship.

INSURANCE

Special Olympics Ireland has a general insurance policy in place to cover its activities. This policy extends to Clubs registered with Special Olympics Ireland to cover the following:

- Sports training and athletic competition events
- Social events
- Fundraising events

What does the Special Olympics Ireland Insurance Policy cover?

The policy provides cover for:

- **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.
- **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 employee) in the course of their employment.
- **Directors and Officers Liability:** this policy provides protection for Directors and Officers, including sub-committee members countrywide, from claims made against them personally, arising from alleged breach of trust, neglect, misstatement, omission etc. committed in their capacity as Directors and Officers of Special Olympics Ireland and Special Olympics Clubs.

Conditions of cover

1. When organising an event, hiring venues, etc, the Club must clarify with the hiring company as to whether their general Liability Insurance Policy is sufficient or if they are required to arrange for any additional insurance indemnity. If required, the Club must notify the regional office team who will request a letter of specific indemnity on the behalf of the Club Management Team. There may be a charge for certain specific indemnities which would be payable by the Club. The Club should ensure that the request is raised at least four weeks in advance of the proposed event. It can take approximately 10 to 15 working days to secure specific indemnities
2. The policy has a ceiling of 500 persons per social and fundraising events. If numbers attending such an event are expected to exceed 500 then the Club must notify the regional office team who will then advise our insurers. Similar to above, there may be an additional charge for this which would be payable by the Club and at least four weeks advance notice must be given to the regional office.
3. The policy is subject to a €300 excess.

Please refer to the appendices for a copy of the Special Olympics Ireland insurance policy.

What is not covered by Special Olympics Ireland Insurance Policy?

Special Olympics Ireland policy does not include cover for:

1. Equipment and other contents owned by clubs
2. Personal Accident

Personal Accident Insurance Cover

What is Personal Accident Insurance?

- A type of insurance to cover related costs in the event of a personal accident, e.g. medical costs, legal costs, loss of earnings
- Cannot be taken out to cover an entity i.e. a Club, School or Company but a group can approach an insurance company and take out this insurance on behalf of its individual members.
- An individual may arrange this type of cover if they wish to have this level of cover in place.

Things to consider

- The Club will be required to undertake the administration i.e. collecting and paying over the members' insurance premium and maintaining an updated file of members and annual subscriptions paid.
- The extent of the cover will determine the unit costs per person i.e. will you want to include loss of earnings as well as cover for medical costs and legal costs?
- The amount of excess* will also determine the unit cost per person. The lower the excess the higher the unit cost.
- The number of members will possibly have a bearing on what unit cost you can negotiate.

* Excess is the initial amount of money that the insured person must pay out in any successful claim. The balance only is paid by the insurance company.

Recommendation:

- It is recommended that Clubs should arrange personal accident cover for it's members. Some clubs have this cover in place for a cost of €5 - €6 per person.

Any additional insurance that Clubs take out (such as Personal Accident Insurance) must be in the name of the Club and is not covered under the umbrella of Special Olympics Ireland's insurance cover.



COMMUNICATION

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

- Internal
- External

Internal Communication

In a Special Olympics Club there are a number of groups who will need to be communicated with including:

- Club Management Team & Sub Committees
- Athletes
- Teams/Training Groups
- Families
- Coaches
- Fundraisers & Supporters
- Regional Office staff/volunteers

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

- Who will take responsibility for managing communication
- What are the best method(s) 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

Club Newsletter/E-Zine

A great way for the club to keep all of its members and stakeholders up-to-date is to create a regular newsletter or e-zine, including activity reports, information on upcoming events, schedules, calls to action, etc. This is also a project that your athletes could be involved in as part of an Athlete Leadership Programme activity.

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:

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



Section 4

The Sports



Special Olympics
Ireland

THE SPORTS

- Sports Rules
- Sports offered by Special Olympics Ireland
- Running your training sessions
- Coach education
- Advancement cycle
- Competition

It is important to keep in mind at all times that the main purpose of your Special Olympics Club is to provide sports training and coaching to the athletes who are members of the club. All of the structures and guidelines exist to ensure that your club can offer a quality sports training programme to your athletes in a safe and secure environment.

SPORTS RULES

Special Olympics Ireland sports are governed by Article 1 of the Special Olympics International General Rules (www.specialolympics.org). Each sport is run in accordance with the relevant International Federation of each sport and the National Governing Body (NGB) of that sport in Ireland. At international competition, International Federation rules apply together with Special Olympics Sports Rules, while at area, regional and national competition the latter is applied in conjunction with NGB rules. Where a conflict exists between both sets of rules, the Official Special Olympics Sports Rules apply.

SPORTS OFFERED BY OLYMPICS IRELAND

Special Olympics Ireland currently offers 15 sports (13 summer sports and 2 winter sports) plus a Motor Activities Training Programme. The organisation works closely with the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) for sport to ensure we provide quality sports coaching and competition for our athletes.

Summer Sports

- | | | |
|--------------|-------------------------------------|----------------|
| - Aquatics | - Bowling | - Kayaking |
| - Athletics | - Equestrian | - Pitch & Putt |
| - Badminton | - Football (5-a-side and 11-a-side) | - Table Tennis |
| - Basketball | - Golf | |
| - Bocce | - Gymnastics | |

Winter Sports

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------|
| - Alpine Skiing | - Floorball |
|-----------------|-------------|

Special Olympics 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 his/her performance with medals awarded for first through to third place, and ribbons for fourth through to eighth place.

Refer to A Quick Guide to Special Olympics Competition in the appendices which clarifies and provides a range of topics in regards to sport.

MINIMUM COACHING STANDARDS IN YOUR CLUB

Each sport in your club must be led by a coach appropriately qualified in that specific sport (Head Coach), who should be present and lead each training session and competition. It is recommended that each team within a sport in your club has its own appropriately qualified head coach. All assistant coaches must also have an appropriate coaching qualification in line with Special Olympics Ireland requirements. A list of appropriate qualifications for each sport can be accessed from your regional office.

Where a club offers more than one sport, each sport must be led by a Head Coach qualified in that specific sport. In this instance, the club will appoint a Sports Officer to represent all the club sports and coaches on the Club Management Team.

The Head Coach leads the planned and structured training session and will manage all sporting aspects for the session. However, there are a number of elements that need to be planned and put in place prior to the training sessions to ensure a smooth and effective session.

MINIMUM TRAINING GUIDELINES FOR CLUBS

The following is a list of training recommendations for Special Olympics Clubs. It should help provide you with an indication of suitable training and preparation time for your athletes, to ensure the best possible opportunities to develop skills and prepare for competition.

Each Special Olympics programme must develop its own training standards as requirements before entering competitions and these are the guidelines developed by Special Olympics Ireland. These recommendations apply to community and service/club based clubs equally.

Minimum training guidelines for all clubs

All athletes should be offered a minimum of 1 hour training per week per sport.

Additional Explanation: If the club offers 2 sports, there should be 1 hour training for each of these, each week. All athletes should attend training each week in each sport in which they are involved. This means it is not sufficient for a club to offer training in a sport for one hour a week and have 2 groups of athletes alternate the week on which they attend.

Minimum duration of training required prior to entering competition for a new club

New clubs should be established and training for a minimum of 6 months prior to entering competition. However, in exceptional circumstances, this may be reviewed following discussions with the relevant Regional Development Officer Sport, Regional Development Officer Clubs and the Regional Director.



Minimum duration of training required prior to entering competition for a new athlete to the programme joining an existing club

No athlete should participate in training in a Special Olympics Club until they are fully registered with Special Olympics Ireland. Any new athlete to an existing sport in a club, should be training for a minimum of 8 weeks prior to competition. In addition, any athlete already registered in the programme but joining a new club, or already registered in a club but starting a new sport within their current club, should be training for 8 weeks in that sport prior to entering competition.

RUNNING YOUR TRAINING SESSIONS

In order to ensure that your athletes get the most out of the club training sessions, your club should have a structure and a plan around each session

Volunteer to athlete ratio

The minimum recommended ratio of support for competition purposes is 1 coach/chaperone for every 4 athletes and this should be used as a guideline at a training session. It is imperative that at all times an appropriate ratio of volunteers to athletes is maintained, taking the following factors into account:

- A minimum of 2 volunteers must be present at all times regardless of athlete numbers
- The club should seek to ensure that the gender of the athletes is considered when allocating volunteers, i.e. male volunteers with male athletes and female volunteers with female athletes, as is practical
- The level of risk associated with the sport
- Some NGBs have sports-specific guidelines in place for coach:athlete ratio – e.g. swimming, kayaking. Where there is conflict between the NGB and Special Olympics coach:athlete ratio guidelines, the higher supervision ratio should apply.
- The ability level of the athletes participating in the sport – e.g. will an athlete require one-to-one assistance?

Safety should be the number one priority.

Before the session starts

Opening up

- Volunteers should arrive a minimum of 15 minutes prior to the athletes in order to open up the venue and arrange the set-up required for the session
- Ensure all volunteers check-in
- Assess the venue for potential hazards and eliminate/reduce or put plan in place to manage the risk
 - Toilets
 - Emergency Exits
 - Dressing rooms
 - Field of play
- Ensure that the Athlete Participation Forms are available on site

Equipment Set-up

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

Athlete Check In

All athletes to sign in on arrival and pay fee (if applicable)

Communication

Any relevant club communication to be passed on to athletes/family members

Changing

Volunteers should check that athletes are appropriately dressed for sport. If athletes are changing into their sports-specific kit, volunteers should monitor changing areas

After the session

Changing

- Similar to the commencement of the session, volunteers should ensure that changing rooms are monitored
- Volunteers should check toilets/changing rooms
 - to ensure that all athletes have left area
 - check for any lost/misplaced items

Sign-out

- All athletes should be signed-out of session

Tidy-up

- Volunteers should ensure that all equipment/gear is removed/stored correctly and that venue is left as 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 Special Olympics policy in ensuring that the athlete arrives home safely (see appendices)

Volunteer Roles at a training session

In many cases, a large number of your club's volunteers will not have sports-specific experience or training. However, this does not mean that they cannot take on a hugely productive role at the session:

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.

First Aid

- Ensure that the first aid kit is present and fully stocked.
- Replacing any depleted stock

Toilet/Changing Room duty (always have two volunteers and appropriate gender)

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

Check-in & Cash-management

- All athletes and volunteers must sign in and out of a session. Volunteers are required to manage this process and collect and monitor any cash collection on the night

Equipment Management

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

Liaison Role

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

Coach Assistance: The coach may need assistance in the following areas

- Supervising activities/ drills
- Providing one to one guidance to athletes where necessary
- Providing feedback to athletes

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 his/her 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 and/or the National Governing Bodies of sport. Further training is available to coaches on events within a sport that are specific to Special Olympics. Special Olympics 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 sports-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.

Information on all coaching and other education opportunities is available from your regional office. And remember, many courses are run on demand, so if you believe that there is something that your club can benefit from, be sure to contact your regional office to request same.

Course opportunities for coaches include

- Introduction to Coaching Practices
- National Governing Body courses – introductory/foundation level progressing through to Level 1, 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 of the hard work gets put into practice, and where athletes get the opportunity to compete against other athletes.

How can our 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 one-off competition days to leagues to development events. The level of competition offered within a region will depend on the particular year of the 4-year advancement cycle.

Competition for each sport is set at the beginning of each sporting year in order to ensure that clubs have time to prepare for entry. All clubs will be notified by their region/Special Olympics Ireland of any impending competition deadlines in adequate time for entry.

ADVANCEMENT CYCLE

Special Olympics Ireland has a specific competition cycle in place, known as the advancement cycle. Competitions run on a 4-year cycle with athletes progressing from Area to Regional, to Special Olympics Ireland Games and finally to a World Games, whereupon the cycle commences again.

Advancement from one level of Special Olympics competition to the next differs from mainstream sport in a fundamental way, in that every eligible athlete, regardless of ability should have an equal opportunity to progress, provided that they have participated in the previous highest level competition and meet the established criteria for those particular Games.

Adherence to the advancement process is essential to guarantee consistency and ensure that athletes in every club have the opportunity to advance from one level of competition to the next. It is important to read, understand and put in place the minimum training guidelines in your club - see page 36.



PREPARING FOR COMPETITION

Prior to entering any competition, clubs must ensure that their athletes are appropriately trained, aware of the rules of competition and that all relevant paperwork relating to a competition is in order.

Entering competition

It is the responsibility of the coach to ensure that all athletes entering the competition are fully prepared. Some questions to ask

- Is the athlete at least 8 years of age?
- Has the athlete been training for a minimum of 8 weeks in that sport?
- Is the athlete fully aware of the rules of the event they are entering?
- Is the athlete's registration up to date?
- Has the coach been keeping an accurate log of times/scores and training record?
- Is the athlete ready to enter competition?
- Is the coach aware of the protest and appeals procedure and the format of competition on the day?
- Is the coach aware of all Special Olympics Rules and procedures for competition

An athlete may be refused entry to competition if they are not correctly registered. It is important for a coach to maintain accurate and up-to-date records of their athlete's time/distances/scores and to bring these records with them to competition, in case they may be required.

Pre competition

Prior to the competition there are a number of organisational tasks to remember:

Transport

- How are the athletes and coaches getting to and from the competition?

Forms

- Coach must have the Athlete Participation Forms for all participating athletes on site at the competition venue.
- Has someone been assigned responsibility for these forms?

Ratio

- A minimum 1 coach/chaperone:4 athlete ratio will apply

Volunteers

- Have you assigned volunteers to attend competition along with the athletes and coach?
- Have all volunteers been reminded that they will need to bring their photographic membership card?

Families

- Have all family members been both informed of their athlete's participation and invited to attend?
- Are family members aware of the code of conduct at events, particularly relating to protests and appeals and access to restricted areas?





Section 5

Developing your club



Special Olympics
Ireland

DEVELOPING YOUR CLUB

- Developing your sports
- Developing membership
- Increasing volunteer numbers
- Adding a new Special Olympics programme

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

There are a number of areas that may be developed in your club

- Enhancing the Sports experience
- Growing the Membership
- Adding a new programme
- Increasing your profile in the community

DEVELOPING YOUR SPORTS

Sports can be developed in 2 ways:

- Enhancing your existing sport
- Adding a new sport

Enhancing existing sports

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 coaching qualifications
- Increase the number of qualified coaches
- Identify individuals within your locality that might bring additional expertise to your club
- 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 instigate 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 competitions or matches. It may also offer more, such as opportunities to train with others and maybe develop new skills. Many events will include both training and competitive elements. It also promotes the development of relationships between clubs. This is also 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' in the appendices.

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.

Special Olympics Sports

- Special Olympics Clubs may only introduce the sports offered by Special Olympics Ireland

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 a sufficient number of athletes (e.g. in team sports, ensure you have sufficient numbers for a squad of players, not just the minimum team numbers).

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 athlete's 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

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

Coaching:

- All sports must be led by a minimum of one qualified coach in that specific sport.
- Is there someone currently qualified, available and interested?

Volunteers:

- The addition of a new sport will require additional volunteers to assist the coach in running the session. Are there sufficient volunteers within your club to support the Head coach at the training session?
- These volunteers may come from your existing pool, but care must be taken not to take resources away from your existing sport

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

Finance:

- Appropriate finance plan for sustaining a new sport



DEVELOPING MEMBERSHIP

- Growth
- Education

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 always bear in mind that there must be an appropriate number of volunteers to support the athletes and that there is sufficient roles for the 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 – radio, parish newsletters etc.

INCREASING VOLUNTEER NUMBERS

Whether you wish to cater for new athletes or simply to cope 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 regional office
- The Volunteer Support Centre will be able to undertake a recruitment drive of currently registered volunteers in your area
- Your Regional Special Olympics Volunteer Support Centre will facilitate the placement of an advertisement in the CONNECT newsletter and on the Special Olympics website
- Contact your local Volunteer Centre
- Create a link with schools in your local community. It is advisable 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)
- Local advertising – radio, parish newsletters etc.
- Target the families of new and existing athletes who are not already actively involved

ADDING A NEW SPECIAL OLYMPICS PROGRAMME

When the club's sports training programme becomes established and is running effectively, the club may wish to add other Special Olympics programmes such as the Athlete Leadership Programme.

Athlete Leadership Programme

The Special Olympics Athlete Leadership Programme (ALPs) provides athletes of all abilities, working with 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 ALPs 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 ALPs may do, including:

- Volunteering in the club, e.g. helping with weekly check-in of athletes at training sessions, helping the coach
- 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





Appendices



APPENDICES

Please see below the list of Appendices included in this club handbook. Please note that these documents are subject to change from time to time. In the case of any changes, please ensure to remove the original document and insert the updated one which will be circulated to all clubs.

Your Club Handbook is also an ideal place to store any additional forms or documents that may be issued for club use.

- Athlete Participation Form
- Volunteer Application Form
- Volunteer Vetting Forms
- Special Olympics Ireland Insurance Policy
- Incident Report Form
- Accident Report Form
- Quick Guide to Special Olympics Competition
- Special Olympics Ireland policy on Transportation of Athletes by Non family members
- A Guide to Organising Inter-Club Activity
- Code of Ethics Support Structure