

Getting Started



Accreditation

The Basics

Background

Founded in 1968 by Eunice Kennedy Shriver, Special Olympics is the world's largest sports programme for children and adults with intellectual (learning) disabilities. The global Special Olympics movement is now thriving in 172 countries throughout the world and providing life changing benefits to more than 5 million athletes with intellectual disabilities.

Special Olympics Great Britain

Created in 1978, our mission at Special Olympics Great Britain (GB) is to provide year-round sports coaching and athletic competition in summer and winter 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 skills, gifts and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community. Using sport, Special Olympics GB empowers children and adults with an intellectual disability to enhance their health and wellbeing, develop as individuals and feel equal and valued.

Through around 150 accredited programmes in England, Scotland and Wales, we provide coaching and competition opportunities in 28 sports. These programmes are run by over 4,000 volunteers, who support over 10,000 athletes with intellectual disabilities to take part in our sport programme.

Our Accredited Programmes

Our membership is made up of local accredited programmes who deliver sports coaching and competition opportunities. Programmes are able to choose which sports they provide, according to the preferences of their athletes and the resources available locally.

Depending on their structure, Programmes are supported by Special Olympics GB to accredit as local Clubs, Networks, Regions or Home Countries.

A list of registered sports with Special Olympics GB can be found on our [website](#), along with details on each accredited Club or Network and which sports they deliver.

All Abilities

The fundamental difference that sets Special Olympics competitions apart from those of other sports organisations is that athletes of all ability levels are encouraged to participate and every athlete is recognised for his or her performance. Competitions are structured so that athletes compete with other athletes of similar ability in equitable divisions.

Special Olympics GB promotes inclusive competition pathways for people with intellectual disabilities, whether through Special Olympics specific events or those delivered by other organisations such as National Governing Bodies.

How to get accredited?

Any organisation, group/club that wishes to be involved in any Special Olympics activity must annually accredit and register its members to:

- be part of this national network
- have access to the Special Olympics competition pathway
- be covered by insurance (coaching and competition)
- benefit from the resources and support offered (local and national)

Any group/club or organisation that wishes to accredit to Special Olympics GB is assigned a Support Officer – usually a Special Olympics GB member of staff from its National Office – who will help provide support in all the areas necessary to get your programme accredited to Special Olympics GB.

Things you need to know

Accreditation Type

There are two different types of accreditation available depending on the structure and pathway your organisation takes to become accredited. You will be appointed a Support Officer, who will be able to discuss with you the best pathway to take according to your structure and resources.

The types of accreditation available are:

1. **Branch** programmes can use the name Special Olympics in their title and should reflect the geographical area they cover (e.g. Special Olympics Essex). Branch Programmes receive a personalised Special Olympics logo and have managed access to use the Special Olympics GB charity number, which must be annually reported on.
2. **Associate** programmes receive a logo that states they are “accredited to” Special Olympics GB and should use this on any Special Olympics related materials and equipment. They do not have access to Special Olympics GB’s charity number. Generally, this type of membership is preferable for organisations who will continue to operate independent to Special Olympics, and who usually have their own charitable status, such as a local Mencap group. Such clubs must annually report on any funds raised and spent using the name of Special Olympics.

Steering Group

Each accredited Programme must have a group of people, made up from its key stakeholders, who represent and discuss Special Olympics related activity and developments. This includes managing finance, registering individuals with Special Olympics GB and generally ensuring accreditation expectations are met. The minimum required roles depend on your accreditation type and structure (see table below) and an individual may hold multiple roles within the group, however, is not recommended.

Mandatory Steering Group Roles

England Region	England Club/Network	Wales Home Country	Wales Region	Wales Club	Scotland Home Country	Scotland Region
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main Contact • Finance Officer • X2 Competition Co-ordinators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main Contact • Finance Officer • Eligibility Officer • Safeguarding Welfare Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson • Vice-Chairperson • Main Contact (aka Secretary) • Finance Officer (aka Treasurer) • X2 Competition Co-ordinators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main Contact • Finance Officer • Eligibility Officer • Safeguarding & Welfare Officer • Volunteer Co-ordinator • x2 Competition Co-ordinators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main Contact • Finance Officer • Eligibility Officer • Safeguarding & Welfare Officer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chairperson • Vice-Chairperson • Main Contact (aka Secretary) • Finance Officer (aka Treasurer) • X2 Competition Co-ordinators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main Contact • Finance Officer • Eligibility Officer • Safeguarding & Welfare Officer • Volunteer Co-ordinator • 2x Competition Co-ordinators

*All Eligibility Officers MUST complete a specific registration form

Programmes and Partner Organisations (if applicable) have the right to be represented on any such Steering Group. This is a requirement and forms part of any Governance Agreement.

Additional members are encouraged and may be co-opted onto any Steering Group to support Special Olympics activity.

Duties and responsibilities for Steering Group members are available on our [website](#).

Finance and fundraising

Each accredited Programme is responsible for funding its own coaching and competition programme, including any related costs, such as travel, kit and venue hire. Special Olympics GB does have a dedicated Fundraising Assistant who may be able to help you search and find grants that may be applicable to you.

Networks (Branch) will require a suitable process to be in place managed by the Lead Organisation, to ensure funds raised by using the Network's name, are used appropriately by Partner Organisations.

Funds related to the use the Special Olympics name and / or brand must be accounted for, either in a Bank account in the name of the Special Olympics Club (Branches only, opened with permission from Special Olympics GB) or through an organisations audited budget lines.

Costs

All accredited Special Olympics Programmes pay annual accreditation fees to Special Olympics GB. The accreditation cycle is from 1st January to 31st December each year. Accreditation fees include Third Party Public Liability Insurance.

Accreditation fees for Special Olympics GB are per person, and include ALL people registered with your Programme, including athletes, Unified Partners, coaches and volunteers.

As of January 2014, the annual accreditation costs per person are £1.75 per person. These fees should be paid in January at the same time existing programmes are asked to re-accredit for the following year.

Special Olympics athletes cannot be charged to take part in Special Olympics, however, they can be asked to make voluntary donations towards the costs of activity. No athlete can be excluded from taking part in Special Olympics coaching or competition if they cannot afford to make a voluntary contribution.

If accrediting with Special Olympics GB as a commissioned network Accreditation fees are waived during the period of commissioning.

Sports

You will need to think about which sports you are able to deliver and where, depending on the resources available and member interest.

Most Special Olympics sports run to the same rules as the National Governing Body. However, some run with a few changes and alterations to suit the all ability, intellectual disability specific competitions provided by Special Olympics. More information on Sports Rules can be [found here](#) on the Special Olympics International Resources website.

All accrediting programmes should aim to attend and host competitions in their chosen sports on a regular basis.

Coaches

Each of your selected sports must have an appointed Head Coach. This person must be qualified to coach their sport, and should ideally have some experience of coaching people with intellectual disabilities. Head Coaches should be supported by Coaches and Volunteers, who should be qualified wherever possible.

Athletes and Unified Partners and Registration

Most Programmes will already know where they want to recruit athletes, participants or Unified Partners from. However, if your Programme has not thought of this, please discuss the various options with your Support Officer.

Special Olympics athletes and Unified Partners must be registered with Special Olympics GB. Athletes are required to provide basic supporting information relating to their intellectual disability, showing that they meet the Special Olympics Eligibility Criteria. More information can be provided by your Support Officer and can be found on our website <https://www.specialolympicsgb.org.uk/resources#res1>.

Special Olympics participants are individuals who take part in Special Olympics activity, however, are not registered. Unless advised otherwise (via Service Level Agreement) you are not required to capture any more information on participants other than the total number split into age and gender demographic breakdown.

Eligibility Officers (where required) are responsible for gathering the required supporting information for eligibility from athletes and their support networks, checking the information

and then submitting this to Special Olympics GB. This is known as the Special Olympics Athlete Membership (SAM) process.

Volunteers

The term “volunteers” includes family members, local paid club or organisation staff, coaches, steering group / committee members and generally anyone who fulfils a role and plays an active part in delivering local Special Olympics activity.

All regular Special Olympics GB volunteers must be over 12 years of age (supervised between 12 and 18 and never have sole responsibility for the athletes) must be registered with Special Olympics GB.

Volunteers (including Steering Group members) who fulfil more than one Special Olympics role within any organisation should only complete a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) or Disclosure Scotland (DS) check for the role or roles that are included in regulated activity or activity that Special Olympics GB deems still requires a DBS / DS check.

General Club/Training Roles	General Athlete Support Roles
Head Coach	Athlete 1 to 1 Support (Carer)
Coach	Athlete Escort
Asst. Coach	Doctor
Helper in the Water	Nurse
MATP Coach	Paramedic
MATP Asst. Coach	First Aider
YAP Coach	Lifeguard
YAP Asst. Coach	Physiotherapist
HAP Coach	Competition Delegation Members
HAP Asst. Coach	Safeguarding & Welfare Officer
Comp. & Coaching Advisor	
Driver	

Steering Group members, who are only part of a Steering Group and not in regular contact with athletes or Unified Partners, do not need to complete a DBS / DS check. All Steering Group members must still complete the Special Olympics GB basic volunteer registration process.

It is best practice to identify someone from within your programme to register with Special Olympics GB as an Identifier as part of the DBS process, to check supporting documents for DBS applications. This will help your programme to quickly and easily complete the DBS process when required. The Special Olympics GB Volunteer Support Team will provide training and resources for your DBS Identifier.

Induction Training

Special Olympics provide mandatory Induction Workshops to accrediting programmes. These are free workshops that include information on what Special Olympics is, what it provides and the role of your Programme and its members within the organisation.

- A Steering Group induction – Delivered to the members of the Steering Group before completion of the accreditation process aims to equip steering groups and their

members with all the information needed to set up, run and sustain an effective Special Olympics programme:

- A General Induction – Delivered to all volunteers of the Special Olympics programme and any interested parties (families, potential partners etc.) officially welcomes everyone to Special Olympics and ensure you have an understanding of Special Olympics GB.

Both workshops should be received before accreditation is complete, except those taking the Branch (Network) pathway to accreditation, who must as a minimum, have confirmed a planned date for this workshop.

Accreditation

Once you have confirmed the accreditation pathway that your Programme will take, your Support Officer from Special Olympics GB will work through a checklist of requirements with you that must be completed before accreditation is complete.

Once the Accreditation Checklist is completed, you will then complete an online accreditation form, which captures the information you have prepared as part of your Accreditation Checklist. Upon completion of the accreditation form, and payment of accreditation fees (if applicable), your Programme will become accredited to Special Olympics GB and will be able to access the further development support previously mentioned.

There is no set timeline in place to complete the accreditation process (unless a commissioned Network) and you will not be pushed into completing accreditation if you or your Organisation feels you need more time. On the last page you will find a copy of the Accreditation Checklist for your reference, along with a summary for each requirement.

Partnerships

It is always useful to have a local understanding of what is going on across Special Olympics in your local area as well as in the wider sport, health, disability and education sectors close to the area you cover so you can share information and resources, but also so you can learn from others. You will be supported to create a partnership with your Special Olympics Region and/or other local Special Olympics Programmes as well as wider partners.

A representative of your accredited Programme should attend meetings wherever possible, details of which will be passed to your registered Main Contact.

Get Involved and Develop

You get out what you put in to Special Olympics. The more your Programme is involved in Special Olympics activity and events, the more your athletes, Unified Partners, participants, families and volunteers will develop and enjoy their experience.

Further Support available

As well as the support offered to become accredited and the grants available to develop your Special Olympics activity, on-going support is offered by Special Olympics GB to; help develop your activity, create partnerships, host and attend competitions, develop public relations, develop local media interest and assist where possible, with the general administration related to maintaining accreditation with Special Olympics GB.

All Special Olympics Programmes should be aware of and in contact with other local Special Olympics activity in order to; share best practice, resources, support, to be involved in events at all levels and to receive information on competitions, developments and support.

If you have any questions or require any additional support, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the team at National Office.

Further resources and information can be found on our website at <https://www.specialolympicsgb.org.uk/resources#res1>.

Accreditation Checklist

Heading	Completed
Geographical coverage confirmed What area does the proposed activity cover? Existing accredited activity should be included	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accreditation type confirmed Branch (mandatory for Delivery Networks) or Associate	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mandatory Steering Group confirmed Either from an existing group, or recruited from key stakeholders	<input type="checkbox"/>
All additional required Volunteer roles confirmed E.g. Chairperson, Volunteer Co-ordinator, DBS Identifier, Head Coaches, Athlete Rep, Family Rep, Communications Officer, Fundraiser and any other Steering Group / Committee roles	<input type="checkbox"/>
Fundraising and Reporting planned Funds kept appropriately (either in Budget line within organisational accounts or in SO Branch bank account. Finance Officer / Treasurer aware of annual reporting requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sports selected with Head Coach appointed Which sports are to be provided and by who? Each sport must have a qualified Head Coach.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coaching sessions confirmed When, where and who will deliver coaching sessions for each sport?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Competition expectations understood Competition attendance and hosting planned (in line with Service Level Agreement, if applicable).	<input type="checkbox"/>
Partnerships Details of any partner organisations you work with to support your Special Olympics Programme. (If a Network (Branch) provide them with the Partner Organisation Charter for their sign & return.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Steering Group and General Induction Workshop planned Booked ideally 6 weeks in advance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Athletes, Unified Partners (if applicable) and Participants identified How will athletes be recruited; either through existing activity or additional partnerships. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athletes – Registered Members with an intellectual disability and eligible for the SO Competition Pathway • Unified Partner – Registered Members without an intellectual disability engaged in Unified activity within an SO Programme/Project • Participants – All non-registered Members in training with SO Programme 	<input type="checkbox"/>
Basic development plan agreed OR Service Level Agreement signed Thought has been put into (and discussed with Support Officer) future aspirations, plans and succession planning. Written or verbal	<input type="checkbox"/>
Policies Identified whether Special Olympics GB policies or external policies will be followed for Equal Opportunities, Safeguarding and Welfare, Data Protection and Health and Safety.	<input type="checkbox"/>
DBS Identifier registered Using DBS Identifier Nomination and Registration Form	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eligibility Officer(s) identified, informed & registered Using Athletes Registration Process doc. & Eligibility Officer Registration form	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p>All Volunteers Registered & DBS / DS completed as required</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Governance Agreement OR Charter signed and adopted Depending on the type of accreditation you take, this will be given to you by your Support Officer</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Accreditation Submission Online accreditation form submitted along with associated required documentation</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Invitation accepted to next Steering Group OR Regional meeting</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/></p>