

## Eligibility Definition

The Special Olympics General and Sports Rules set down the criteria for athletes to be eligible for Special Olympics from which the following is extracted:

### 1. General Statement of Eligibility

Special Olympics training and competition is open to every person with an intellectual (learning) disability who is at least eight years of age and who is registered to participate in Special Olympics as required by the General Rules.

### 2. Age Requirements

There is no maximum age limitation for participation in Special Olympics. The minimum age requirement for participation in Special Olympics competition is eight years of age. Children who are at least six years old may participate in age appropriate Special Olympics training programmes.

### 3. Identifying Persons with an intellectual (learning) disability

A person is considered to have an intellectual (learning) disability for purposes of determining his or her eligibility to participate in Special Olympics if that person satisfies any one of the following requirements:

The person has been identified as having an intellectual (learning) disability:

*Which is defined as 'a condition of arrested or incomplete development of mind, which is characterized by impairment of skills manifested during the developmental period, which contribute to the overall level of intelligence, i.e. cognitive, language, motor and social abilities'*

(World Health Organisation ICD-10)

In other words:

*'A significantly reduced ability to understand new or complex information, to learn new skills (impaired intelligence) with a reduced ability to cope independently (impaired social functioning) which started before adulthood, with a lasting effect on development'*

(Department of Health (2001) Valuing People)

*"Before Adulthood"* means before the age of 18.

In common with other national and international sports organisations, Special Olympics GB deems a person to have an intellectual disability if they have a full scale IQ score of 75 or lower. IQ tests are acknowledged to be limited that is why it is important to gather other information to assist in understanding an individual's abilities. In addition the individual is usually expected to have significant difficulties with self-care, adaptive behaviour and self-organisational skills. This definition covers adults with autism who **also** have intellectual disabilities, but **not** those with a higher level of autistic spectrum disorder who may be of average, or above average intelligence, such as people with Asperger's Syndrome.

Special Olympics GB receives many enquiries from people who are uncertain whether their son or daughter is eligible to participate in Special Olympics. It is important to draw a distinction between people who have a general intellectual (learning) disability (who are eligible for Special Olympics) and those with a specific learning difficulty (who are not eligible). Conditions such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit disorder or challenging behaviour alone, are not eligible for Special Olympics.

Similarly people with a physical or sensory impairment do not qualify for Special Olympics unless they also have an intellectual disability.

An intellectual (learning) disability is defined as 'a condition of arrested or incomplete development of mind, which is characterized by impairment of skills manifested during the developmental period, which contribute to the overall level of intelligence, i.e. Cognitive, language, motor and social abilities' (ICD-10 – specifically Blocks F06.7-F06.9 (Mental Disorder due to brain damage) F70-F79 (WHO terminology; mental retardation) F80-F89 (disorders of psychological development) and F90-F98 (behavioural and emotional disorders with onset usually occurring in childhood and adolescence) for full guidance refer to [www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/bluebook.pdf](http://www.who.int/classifications/icd/en/bluebook.pdf).

## Some indicators that suggest someone may have an intellectual disability

- Did not go to a main stream school
- Finds it hard to answer questions
- Is unable to read, write, interpret and process new information
- Finds recalling information difficult
- Finds it hard to maintain their own self care
- Needs significant assistance to carry out their daily lives

## People who **do not** have an intellectual disability include those with conditions such as:

- Dyslexia
- Dyspraxia
- Attention Deficit Disorder
- Asperger's Syndrome
- Challenging behaviour

Similarly people with a physical or sensory impairment do not qualify as having an intellectual disability unless they **ALSO** have an intellectual disability.

If an athlete is not eligible to register with Special Olympics GB as an athlete (with an intellectual disability), they may still participate as a Unified Partner in Special Olympics if their accredited programme delivers a Unified Sports® programme that is listed on their accreditation form, or should be offered an opportunity as a volunteer.

Special Olympics reserve the right to:

- ask for proof of eligibility at any time
- specify the nature of the proof required
- refuse or withdraw the membership of any athlete who, in our opinion, does not meet the Special Olympics eligibility criteria

**Any costs associated with obtaining the required proof of eligibility are the responsibility of the athlete concerned. Where possible we ask that you do not go to the expense of having new tests or assessments done but send copies (ONLY) of any previous assessment you may have.**

Mencap can provide key information and support on all aspects of intellectual (learning) disabilities, so for additional guidance, please visit <http://www.mencap.org.uk/all-about-learning-disability>.

If you have any questions or concerns in relation to eligibility please contact the National Office by telephone on 020 7247 8891 to discuss further.