

Special Olympics GB Partnership Competition Definition

[Article 1 of the Special Olympics Sports Rules](#) sets out the parameters by which Special Olympics competitions are run. In Great Britain most of our competitions are run by Special Olympics clubs/regions for SAM registered¹ athletes/unified partners² and they adhere to the [Official Special Olympics Sports Rules](#). However, Special Olympics GB is keen to stage competitions in partnership with other organisations as it recognises that this can save on resources, promote inclusion, raise awareness of athletes with an intellectual disability and increase the number of competition opportunities for its membership.

Examples of partnership competitions are:

- Inclusive events - where athletes with an intellectual disability compete alongside non-disabled athletes
- Pan-disability competitions - involving athletes with other impairments as well as those with an intellectual disability
- Competition just for athletes with an intellectual disability but which is arranged by another organisation in conjunction with Special Olympics GB

Whatever the type of partnership competition is being organised, there are some fundamental and non-negotiable criteria to adhere to if the event is to be sanctioned by Special Olympics GB³:

- Athletes competing in events for individuals with an intellectual disability must meet the [Special Olympics GB eligibility criteria](#) i.e. they must have an intellectual disability and not a learning difficulty or another impairment
- The competition must be open to athletes of all abilities i.e. it cannot be just for elite athletes or those who reach a certain level of performance
- The competition must be grouped into divisions by ability so every competitor/team has a reasonable chance of winning their event. Special Olympics call this process 'divisioning' and an explanatory [video](#) is available which we recommend you watch
- There can be no more than eight competitors/teams in each division. To give meaningful competition, there should however be at least three competitors/teams in each division
- Awards must be presented for each division (medals can be given for 1st-3rd places, but another type of award such as ribbons should be given for 4th-8th places). Participation awards should be given for disqualifications

When planning a partnership competition, the following must also be adhered to:

Divisions

Our preference is that athletes with an intellectual disability participate together and not against non-disabled athletes or athletes with other impairments. We may however, sanction events where all athletes are classified together provided that this still meets the conditions above and that separate awards are made for athletes with an intellectual disability within each division.

¹ 'SAM registered' (Special Olympics GB Athlete Membership) refers to an athlete who meets the [Special Olympics GB eligibility criteria](#), has completed all of the necessary paperwork and has been assigned a SAM number. A SAM registered unified partner is an individual who doesn't meet the [Special Olympics GB eligibility criteria](#) but competes alongside SAM registered athletes in [Unified Sports](#).

² Athletes/unified partners must be SAM registered to compete at all levels of Special Olympics competition. If event managers wish to invite non-SAM registered individuals to local/regional competitions, they must detail this on their sanction form, but note that these individuals can only compete as a 'guest' on **one competitive** occasion.

³ For inclusive and pan-disability events where athletes with an intellectual disability compete alongside non-disabled athletes or athletes with other impairments the competition criteria applies **only** to those events for individuals with an intellectual disability.

Awards

In Special Olympics competition, awards are presented for all athletes within each division (up to 8th place). If there are events for non-disabled athletes or athletes with other impairments that have a different awards protocols (e.g. only 1st – 3rd) then Special Olympics GB would normally allow the awards for the athletes with an intellectual disability to follow the same protocol. Official Special Olympics GB awards can only be given to SAM registered athletes/unified partners and non-SAM registered athletes that meet the [Special Olympics GB eligibility criteria](#).

Entry Information

Within the event entry information, competitors must be asked to provide their SAM number. Entrants details must be passed to Special Olympics GB to clarify the SAM registered individuals and all non SAM registered individuals should be provided with information concerning Special Olympics GB.

Sanctioning

All partnership competitions must be sanctioned by Special Olympics GB by completing a sanction form⁴ prior to the event.

Sports Rules

There are [Official Special Olympics Sports Rules](#) that should be adhered to but if the partnership competition diverts from these rules, this must be detailed on the sanction form. Normally a competition following National Governing Body rules would still be sanctioned.

Policies

Partnership competitions must have in place the following [policies](#) (or can adopt the ones in use by Special Olympics GB) and copies should be made available on request:

- Safeguarding and Welfare
- Equal Opportunities
- Data Protection
- Health and Safety

Acknowledgment

To help create awareness of the organisation among people with an intellectual disability and their families and supporters, Special Olympics must be acknowledged as a partner in press releases relating to competition; by including the Special Olympics logo in event information and by displaying Special Olympics branding at the event.

Advancement

The [Article 1 of the Special Olympics Sports Rules \(Section L\)](#) stipulates that a Special Olympics athlete should have competed at the next lower level of competition to advance to a higher level⁵. Special Olympics GB may allow this rule to be waived if for instance, there has been no competition available at the lower level for the athlete to enter.

Should you require any further advice, support or guidance about partnership competitions, please contact Special Olympics GB's Competition Development Manager [Emily Onley](#).

⁴ Local/regional sanction forms are available on the [Special Olympics GB website](#). National sanction forms can be obtained by contacting Special Olympics GB's Competition Development Manager [Emily Onley](#).

⁵ See the ['Competition Advancement Pathway'](#) document.