



Event Volunteering Guidance

Last reviewed August 2025

Introduction

Across Special Olympics GB, our amazing volunteers are the backbone of our events. Without volunteers, there are no Special Olympics GB competitions and events, which can only happen thanks to the time, energy, commitment and kindness of our event volunteers.

Special Olympics GB has been supported by hundreds of event volunteers in the last 5 years alone, and with that in mind we are committed to ensuring that they have the best experience possible.

This guidance is put together for the benefit of both clubs/volunteer coordinators and prospective volunteers themselves. It aims to clarify key **processes and requirements** for those **volunteering at events*** for **safeguarding, insurance and delivery quality** reasons.

*Please note – for the purposes of this document, the term ‘event’ includes: *competitions (all levels – see page 7 of our [Guide to Competition](#)) or other ad-hoc/ non-regular activity sanctioned in Special Olympics GB.*

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1. Key Information:

- Minimum Age – 15 (or 18 for a role requiring duty of care) – see Appendix 1
- Maximum Age – there isn’t one!
- We encourage all ethnicity, gender, community and ability to get involved with Special Olympics GB volunteering.
- No prior experience required (depending on the level/nature of role)
- Cannot regularly volunteer in club/programme activity – must volunteer in the capacity of pre-approved event support only
- There are a number of different reasons you might register as an event volunteer with Special Olympics GB – from helping a one-off event as a family member wanting to support, through to an official who volunteers at the same event annually, or somewhere in between.



2. Pathways & Opportunities:

There are a number of different avenues you can take with volunteering in Special Olympics, many of which begin at an event. Some examples are:

- Transition to club volunteer/ coach to continue the volunteer journey and impact
- Volunteer at bigger events nationally or even internationally – eg. Coach or other member of delegation
- Support or mentor other event volunteers at events or beyond
- Your development is important to us – explore training and learning opportunities to pursue other roles in volunteering that foster your individual goals and aspirations

Reach out to volunteer@sogb.org.uk to discuss opportunities and support.

3. What is an Event Volunteer and How do I Register?

An event volunteer is an individual who is registered as a Special Olympics GB Event 'Only' Volunteer, and who does **not** volunteer on an ongoing basis in club/programme regular activity (eg. Weekly training), but rather supports at specific events sanctioned by Special Olympics GB in a specific and pre-approved capacity.

Event Volunteers have **no duty of care or supervision*** of athletes in the context of Special Olympics GB delivery. They will however have supervised contact with athletes meaning that there are still key compliance factors in place. This means that basic safeguarding awareness and an appropriate background check must be in place for all event volunteers.

***Athlete Care Support:** It is important to distinguish between volunteers acting in a Special Olympics GB capacity, and individuals providing personal care support in a specific 'non-SOGB' or third party capacity. When a person accompanies an athlete to SOGB activities or events solely to provide 1:1 personal care or support (such as a family member, personal carer, or support worker), and has no direct contact with other athletes or supervisory responsibilities within the club or programme, they are not considered SOGB volunteers and do not require volunteer registration. However, clubs must clearly identify these individuals during the entry process. If any individual is to undertake delegation responsibilities, hold duty of care, or have supervisory duties for any athlete beyond their designated person, they must be registered as a SOGB volunteer and complete all associated compliance requirements as outlined in the registration flowchart illustrated below.

4. The Process

See below an example of different ways someone might become involved in Special Olympics GB as a volunteer.

1. [Register of Interest Form](#) – includes:
 - *Name and General Contact Details*
 - *Availability and Location so you can be signposted to relevant opportunities*
2. Find an Event/Competition on our [Events Calendar](#)
3. Contact Event host – find out about any available roles
4. Complete [Event Volunteer Registration form](#) (may differ for some corporate partners) – includes:
 - *Basic personal details and Contact details*
 - *Role information*
 - *Event information*



- *Safeguarding Declarations*
- *Health Declarations*
- *Release and optional photo consent*
- *Code of Conduct*
- *Marketing Release & Contact Preferences*

5. Requirements

For Special Olympics GB to make sure all activity is **safe, meaningful and fun for everyone** – that means *athletes, volunteers and spectators* alike - it is important that some vital requirements are fulfilled at all times which ensure **compliance and quality** in all delivery settings. This forms the basis of the Special Olympics GB volunteering requirements, including those in an event-only context.

Requirements for Event Volunteering are therefore explained in the Flowchart in Appendix 2. (see page 5)

6. Family, Friends & Care Support

We love to celebrate the support and contributions in our network of family and friends of Special Olympics GB, and we want to encourage as many people as possible to attend Special Olympics GB events and cheer on athletes (and perhaps to even get involved in volunteering, too!).

We also appreciate that in some cases, Special Olympics GB family and friends may play additional roles for care and support of the athletes they attend with.

As such, it is important to note some key information about family and friends for events depending on the nature of their involvement at an event or competition:

- **Spectator zones versus athlete zones** – for a lot of events, particularly competitions, there will be athlete and spectator zones. This is for a number of different reasons including:
 - **Safeguarding** of athletes (and volunteers) – ensuring that only those who have gone through a process to be able to be in that zone are in that zone. This might for example be poolside at a swimming gala, or track side at a cycling event. These will traditionally be clearly signposted and manned.
 - **Logistics** and event delivery – it can be difficult to navigate volunteer operations and run an event with a high number of people in a certain area, so specific zones help things to run smoothly.
 - **Integrity** of the event – it can be a mix of emotions to attend and compete at an event, and a huge part of the Special Olympics ethos in competition is to foster friendships, skill-building and build a sense of belonging. In fact, 91% of Special Olympics GB Athletes reported these 3 things being the main reasons they take part (2023 Member Survey). Therefore clear zones help to nurture an environment where this can be achieved.
- **Etiquette and Code of Conduct** – our code of conduct for family, friends and supporters/spectators is currently under review, however currently we refer to our volunteer code of conduct for everyone which is underpinned by our values:

We are authentic.

We act with honesty, integrity and respect.

We are creative and innovative.

We love to embrace difference and doing things differently.

We are brave, courageous, resilient and determined.

We listen and are led by the voices of our athletes.

We are always kind.



Please note that any Care/ 1:1 support roles for athletes at an event must be declared in advance. This process may vary on a case by case basis however typically this individual should register as this role using the **event volunteering form** and ensure clarity in who they are caring for at the event for safeguarding and welfare reasons. Under no circumstances can anyone under the age of 18 provide a duty of care/1:1 support role at a Special Olympics GB event or activity.

7. Data & Communication

It is important to understand [Special Olympics GB Data Privacy and Protection Policies](#) and Procedures when collecting and managing membership data. Special Olympics GB may need to use basic data for reporting to organisations such as Special Olympics International and Sport England (Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Sport, Role). All data is held and managed under relevant DP Laws.

Special Olympics GB asks within the above listed forms for your consent to be in touch with regards to future opportunities and will archive your data upon request.

Key considerations for clubs:

- Event volunteers' **contact details will be shared** with event hosts in order to communicate important information regarding the event(s).
- Event volunteers linked directly to an accredited club/programme **should** be recorded/listed on Active Member Registers
- Event volunteers **should** complete a [member update form](#) should any of their information change
- Should a volunteer **opt-in for future communications**, they may be contacted by SOGB regarding other opportunities or events within their geographical region or within their sport. For example, future competitions, National events, etc.

To provide feedback on this guidance, please get in touch with volunteer@sogb.org.uk. Thank you.



Appendix 1 – Youth Volunteering Processes/Requirements

Special Olympics Great Britain (SOGB) welcomes and values volunteers of all backgrounds, experience and age, but cannot accept volunteers under the age of 15.

Generally the age at which an individual can volunteer ranges from aged 15. There is however some important information to note for volunteers of a certain age, explained below:

- Volunteers under 18 (15-17 inclusive)
 - Special Olympics GB must assume the following in order to ensure that our duty of care is appropriately demonstrated:
 - **Risk Assessment:** Conduct a thorough risk assessment of the volunteering space/activity to identify potential hazards. This includes evaluating the physical environment, tasks to be performed, and any equipment that will be used and how this relates to the volunteer in question in practice and protocol.
 - **Health and Safety Policies:** Ensure that the club, programme or organisation's health and safety policies are up-to-date and that they cover the specific needs of work experience or placements of those under the age of 18. This includes emergency procedures and reporting mechanisms for incidents.
 - **Training and Induction:** Provide training and induction before the individual starts their volunteering. This should cover health and safety procedures, policies, and any specific risks associated with their volunteering tasks. (**Please note** Special Olympics GB is currently reviewing its basic safeguarding induction training).
 - **Supervision:** Ensure there is adequate supervision of the young person whilst they are volunteering for the charity.

This is captured via our U18 volunteer consent and supervision form – downloadable [HERE](#) on the Special Olympics GB Resources Page.

Template Risk Assessments are also found [HERE](#).

Get in touch with volunteer@sogb.org.uk for any questions or support.

- Volunteers aged 15, or over 80
 - Personal accident insurance (i.e. compensation paid if someone suffers injury such as the loss of an eye or a leg so is regarded as a benefit as opposed to insurance) is *not* applicable for those of this age.

Appendix 2: Event Volunteer Flowchart

