



Frequently Asked Questions – 2026 National Summer Games

Given the huge excitement around the approved format for the 2026 Special Olympics GB National Summer Games, we have prepared the following FAQs to support athletes, coaches, volunteers, family members, and supporters of the Special Olympics GB movement.

Please note that this latest announcement relates only to the agreed format.

Further work is still required to confirm the host location, venues, and dates. This will be communicated when this information is finalised.

Additional, technical information regarding the event and logistics will be released in a National Summer Games handbook – this will be agreed following the confirmation of location, venue and dates, and the appointment of the competition Technical Officials.

WHAT IS THE PLANNED FORMAT FOR THE 2026 NATIONAL SUMMER GAMES?

The 2026 Special Olympics GB National Summer Games will follow a hybrid model, consisting of:

- Multi-sport event (4–5 days): Ideally held at a single location or cluster of venues, prioritising Special Olympics GB's most popular participation sports:
 - Athletics, Boccia, Football, Artistic Gymnastics, MATP, Swimming
- Single-sport national competitions (1–2 days): Building on the successful 2022 Summer Series of Sport, hosted at different locations across Scotland, England and Wales for:
 - Remaining Tier 1 and selected Tier 2 sports, including Badminton, Basketball, Bowls, Cycling, Equestrian, Golf, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Table Tennis, Tennis
 - Some competitions may be expanded versions of current national single-sport events
 - Please note that the current list of included sports may be reduced/expanded dependent on competition viability and resource.
- All National Summer Games events will include Ceremonies and non-sport engagement opportunities more information on which will be shared in due course.



WHEN WILL THE 2026 NATIONAL SUMMER GAMES TAKE PLACE?

We aim to stage the 4–5-day multi-sport event during the school summer holidays in England, Scotland, and Wales to maximise athlete participation.

To support volunteer availability and secure media exposure, we also intend to avoid a clash with the 2026 Commonwealth Games, taking place in Glasgow from 23 July to 2 August.

Single-sport national competitions are expected to run between June and September 2026, with exact timings to be agreed in consultation with the appointed technical officials and competition manager delivering these events.

WHO WILL ATHLETES REPRESENT AT THE NATIONAL SUMMER GAMES?

Athletes will represent a combination of their club and home country at the 2026 Games (e.g., St Albans and *Special Olympics England*).

While some members expressed a preference for regional representation through the National Summer Games Consultation, the size and structure of regions across the Special Olympics GB Network in Scotland, England and Wales vary significantly. Representation by club and home country ensures greater inclusivity, accessibility and stronger media opportunities from a local to national level

This also ensures better sustainability and financial viability related to athlete and volunteer team kit

WHAT KIT WILL ATHLETES WEAR AT THE NATIONAL SUMMER GAMES?

With the current cost of living crisis, we want to keep all costs as low as possible for all parties.

Therefore, athletes and volunteers will be able to wear kit of the club that they represent at the National Summer Games. This has been a contributing factor to the above question on who the athletes will represent at the event – we cannot ask athletes and volunteers to purchase regional kit that will be worn in isolation at one event.



At the National Summer Games, all kit must align to [Special Olympics brand guidelines](#), with no front of shirt sponsor branding. This is to support the [current Corporate Partners](#) who are already investing in Special Olympics GB and allowing the charity to function day-to-day. We also hope to bring in more corporate sponsorship to deliver an even stronger experience for our athletes.

Any sleeve, back of shirt or shorts sponsorship must not represent a brand that is seen as a competitor to a current Special Olympics GB Corporate Partner. Further support on how to apply this guidance will be shared in due course.

HOW WILL ATHLETES REGISTER OR BE ELIGIBLE TO TAKE PART?

Athlete entry will be co-ordinated through accredited Special Olympics GB clubs. Information about the entry process, deadlines, and requirements will be shared well in advance with all clubs, to ensure fair and transparent access to the Games.

Athletes can only participate in one of the sports in the multi-sport event. However, athletes competing in this multi-sport event do have the option to also compete in other single-sport events.

To be eligible to compete at the National Summer Games, athletes must:

- be a Special Olympics Registered Athlete within an accredited Special Olympics GB Programme
- have completed a minimum of 8 weeks of training in their chosen sport
- have participated in a sanctioned local, regional or partnership competition since 1st January 2024, and be technically capable of competing at the level of the event they are entering

The above eligibility criteria is aligned to the [Special Olympics International Article 1 Sports Rules](#), which require athletes to be prepared and technically capable for the level of competition they enter.

This is also supported by [Article 3 of the Special Olympics Official General Rules](#), which highlights the importance of providing opportunities for athletes to compete at appropriate levels through local and regional competitions.



Participating in a local or regional event helps athletes prepare effectively, gain experience, and ensures a safe and positive competition experience. All Special Olympics GB competitions, including local and regional events, are open to all registered athletes across Great Britain and are not restricted by region.

In the event an athlete has not attended a sanctioned competition, a decision on their participation will be determined by the organisers of the event aligned to clause 13.2 of the [Special Olympics International Article 1 Sports Rules](#)

To find out more about Special Olympics GB Competitions, check out our [Event Calendar](#) or contact a member of our [Competitions Team](#).

WHY WERE THESE SPORTS CHOSEN?

The sports included in the 4–5-day multi-sport event are Special Olympics GB’s most popular competition sports and have the highest level of demand ,and competition viability, based on our annual Special Olympics International Census submission and the register of interest data provided by clubs during the [event consultation](#). These sports are also more feasible to deliver from a facilities and infrastructure perspective.

The 1–2-day single-sport competitions build on the success of the 2022 Summer Series of Sport and align with current National Competitions (e.g., the National Cycling Competition hosted annually at Wyke Cycling Track, and the National Table Tennis Competition in Crewe).

WHAT RULES AND COMPLIANCE WILL BE IMPLEMENTED AT THE EVENT

In regard to Sport Rules; for the 2026 National Summer Games we will be following the Special Olympics International [2024 Sport Rules](#).

For Athletics, Swimming and Football we will be following the [SOI Sport Impact Standards](#) to ensure high quality, fair and meaningful competition and advancement opportunities.

Delivering a safe, meaningful and positive experience for all will be of the highest importance for the organisation and management of this event. All events will follow the Special Olympics GB organisational compliance policies and practices, including the national safeguarding policy,



safe recruitment policy and implementation health and safety protocols to ensure athlete and volunteer wellbeing remains the top priority.

IS THERE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR OTHER SPORTS TO BE INCLUDED IN THE PROGRAMME?

Yes. Additional sports may be included where clubs, regions, or partners can provide the necessary facilities, resources, and infrastructure. We encourage anyone with the capacity to support this to contact the [Special Olympics GB events team](#).

WHY IS THE FORMAT DIFFERENT FROM THE LAST NATIONAL SUMMER GAMES IN SHEFFIELD (2017)?

We carried out an extensive consultation process before deciding on the format for the 2026 Games, with 80% of accredited clubs taking part.

This hybrid model reflects the feedback received, balancing member expectations and aspirations with financial sustainability.

Since 2017, challenges such as the global pandemic and the cost of living crisis have increased financial pressures and significantly shifted the landscape of major sports events. Many city councils and local authorities also have reduced funding capacity, limiting opportunities for Special Olympics GB to seek external income for an event.

Special Olympics GB had to borrow funds to host the 2017 Games, with these loans only fully repaid in 2023. The Board of Trustees and National Office are committed to delivering the 2026 Games within a sustainable financial model, without borrowing that could impact our future operations.

We hope the new format will bring the essence and connectivity of the traditional style event with an increase in opportunities for athletes, volunteers, partners and supporters to engage and celebrate the Special Olympics GB movement.



WHAT WILL THE FINANCIAL COMMITMENT BE FOR CLUBS AND ATHLETES?

A nominal delegation fee will apply, covering the cost of sports and competition delivery.

The fee will be calculated based on the number of days and sports attended by an athlete and volunteer. Current estimates are less than £30 per sport, per day.

Example:

- If the fee were £25 per day per sport:
 - An athlete competing in four days of swimming = £100
 - The same athlete also competing in one day of Table Tennis = £125 total

The exact fee will be confirmed once the location, venues, and dates are finalised.

Participating clubs will be responsible for securing and covering the cost of athlete and volunteer accommodation and travel to and from the events and food/subsistence outside of the event(s). Lunch and snacks will be provided during the competitions. Special Olympics GB also hopes to secure preferential rates with hotel and travel partners to reduce costs.

Fundraising resources and support will be provided by the National Office Team, more details will be shared in due course.

WHAT OPPORTUNITIES WILL THERE BE FOR VOLUNTEERS?

Volunteers are at the heart of the Special Olympics movement.

There will be opportunities for people to volunteer in a wide range of dedicated event roles — from officiating and event delivery, to supporting athletes and creating a welcoming Games experience. More information on volunteer recruitment and training will be shared closer to the Games.



WILL FAMILIES AND SUPPORTERS BE ABLE TO ATTEND?

Absolutely. Families, friends, and supporters play a vital role in the Special Olympics GB community. Spectators will be welcome at the Games, and we will share further information about attendance in due course.

HOW WILL PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL SUMMER GAMES IMPACT SELECTION FOR THE NEXT SPECIAL OLYMPICS WORLD SUMMER GAMES IN CHILE 2027?

The National Summer Games will be a qualification event for athletes who wish to be part of the selection process for the next Special Olympics World Games in Santiago, Chile, in 2027. There may be other competitions that form part of this qualification process.

The detail on this process is currently limited because we have not received confirmation from Special Olympics International on the number of athlete places that we will have available, or the sports that they can represent in.

We will share this information with the network when we have received guidance from Special Olympics International.