Volunteer Committee General Guidance

About this Guidance

This guidance helps to break down recommendations for running a Special Olympics GB committee and the different kinds of committees that exist based on our key organisational **Values, Mission, Delivery and Strategic Plan**.

This guidance covers the following in further detail:

About SOGB Committees or working groups:

- What is a committee?
- What is a working group?
- What is needed to get started?
- What is the role or purpose and value of them?

Structures and processes:

- Essential committee and working group roles
- Requirements and procedures
- Operational (and where applicable, Financial) management basics
- Other Governance and Compliance requirements

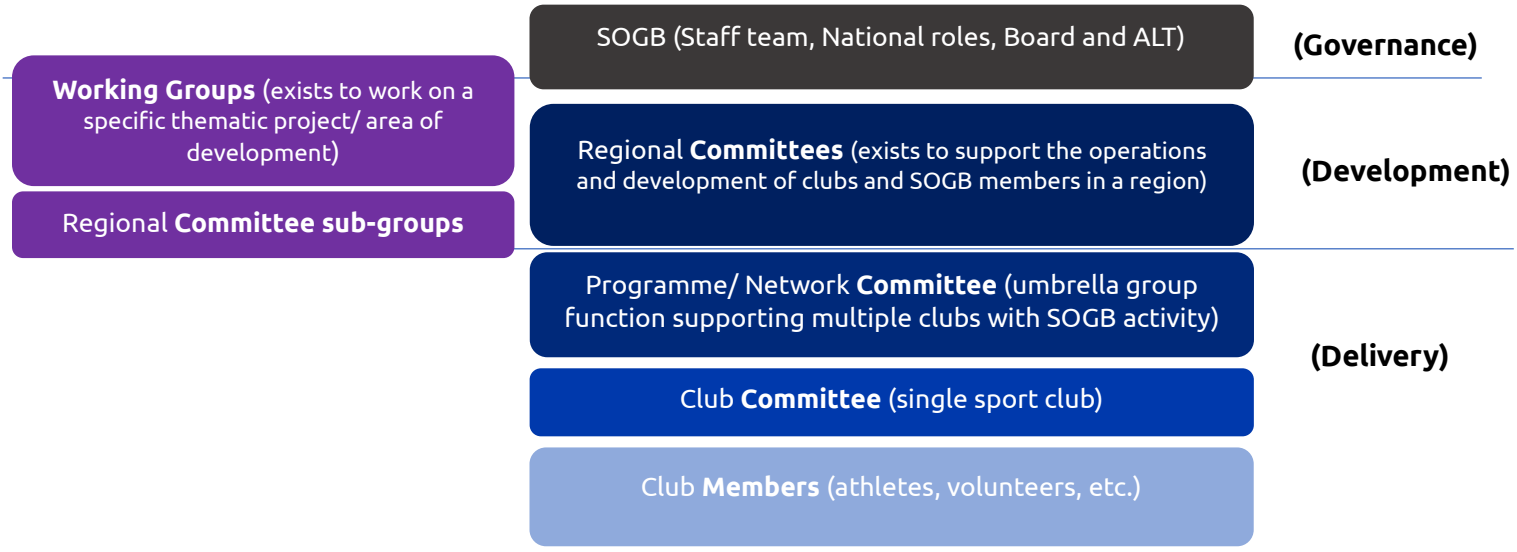
Practical guidance and tools:

- Operational templates
- Good practice examples
- Common challenges and how to avoid/ mitigate risk
- Tools and further guidance

Need support?

Need support, have questions or want to discuss your group or setting up a new group? Get in touch with Special Olympics GB on membership@sogb.org.uk to discuss your committee, working/development group or related queries you might have. We are here to help.

Committees & Working Groups – where do they sit in SOGB?



What is a SOGB committee or working group?

A SOGB committee or working group is a cross-organisational collaborative body that is often volunteer-led, and serves as a structured mechanism for one or more of the following:

1. **Acting as Ambassadors for Special Olympics** on a local/ regional level
2. **Providing direct support** in SOGB activity on a local/ regional level
3. **Channelling member voice** into the organisation's planning/ decision-making processes.
4. **Developing specific areas** in the scope of SOGB

These groups will always operate within the parameters of **SOGB values, vision and requirements** for operation. They serve as a part of the organisational infrastructure that connects grassroots membership with organisational advocacy and operations, strategic decision-making, and member support, overall ensuring sustainable growth and effective support for the SOGB network.

These groups operate at both strategic and operational levels and are designed to support Special Olympics GB's key objectives. Typically, these groups might be:

- **Club focused** (eg. Club Committee or sub-committee)
- **Geographic or area/regionally focused** (eg. Regional committee)
- **Thematic** (eg. Network structure working group)
- **Specific in another way** (eg. National Sports Advisor group, major event sub-committee)

These committees are predominantly made up of Special Olympics GB members including volunteers, athletes, family members, Board members, and National Office staff working together across all organisational layers. However, this may vary depending on the nature of the group.

Getting Started

The first thing you might need to start a committee or develop your existing committee is one of the following, depending on the nature of your group/committee:

- **Constitution** (club or region committee) - see downloadable template **HERE**
- **Guiding Principles** (working group or development focus) - see template **HERE**

These documents help you to lay out the parameters under which your group exists and operates, ensuring clear processes and clarity of expectations.

Understanding your Committee or Working Group's purpose

The purpose of the committee will ultimately define its structure and processes.

Different types of committees in SOGB include:

- **Regional Committee** (eg. Yorkshire & Humberside Regional Committee)
- **Club/Programme Committee** (eg. SO City of York Committee)
- **Working Group** or Thematic Development Committee (eg. Competition working group)

Working groups and Committees may also split into **sub-groups** depending on an activity or a focused need. Traditionally, Working Groups feed directly into at least one National Office Staff member and report up through the Executive Team to Board and ALT level, whilst Committees are traditionally more member-led and operate within accreditation requirements as laid out by SOGB.

SOGB Club & Regional Committees

In SOGB Clubs and Programmes committees, the aim is to provide a central support system for the club/programme to operate effectively. Key areas of functionality include communication, processes and compliance, and so it is important that roles and responsibilities are clear in this group so that this can be upheld and there is someone taking ownership and accountability of this.

The requirements for clubs and programmes which deliver activity will naturally be different for clubs and programmes who do not deliver activity – for example, an accredited sports club that delvers swimming, versus a regional committee which does not deliver any activity but supports clubs in their geographic region in other key areas defined.
Therefore, to meet SOGB requirements, some roles are mandatory - see below:

Club/Programme Committee Structure – min. 2 people

- Chair/Main Contact (**mandatory**)
- Eligibility/Athlete Registration Officer (**mandatory**)
- Treasurer (**mandatory**)
- Safeguarding & Welfare Officer (**mandatory**) – *best practice to not be the Head Coach*
- *Coaching roles* (eg. Head Coach, Coach, Assistant Coach, Coaching support, etc.) (**mandatory**)
- *Competition roles* (eg. Competition Coordinator, Competition Manger) (**non-mandatory**)
- *Volunteer roles* (eg. Volunteer Coordinator, DBS Identifier, Families Rep) (**non-mandatory**)
- *Other* (Athletes Rep*, Fundraising, Media, Photography, Care Support, etc. (**non-mandatory**)

***Athletes Representative** is a role which is highly recommended for **all SOGB Accredited clubs and programmes**. SOGB offers leadership training pathways which are available to all athletes and may help guide some athletes with their skills and confidence to step into leadership roles. See stories HERE.

Regional Committee Structure – min. 3 people
Special Olympics GB does not currently impose a set of standardised mandatory requirements for roles in regional committees or working/development groups, as this will be relative to the group depending on its functionality and processes in place. For example, some regional committees have a bank account which requires a Treasurer to be in post and 2 signatories, whereas some will not.
Recommendations for roles in a Regional Committee are as follows:

- Chair/Main Contact
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Competition Coordinator
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Athlete Representative
- Families Representative
- **Safeguarding & Welfare Support Role***
- **Representative per club/programme in the region****

*Historically it was mandatory for regional committees to have a Safeguarding & Welfare Officer in place. Over the years, SOGB processes and resources have evolved and grown, and it is no longer mandatory to have this role in place from an operational perspective. Please see more about SOGB Safeguarding Reporting Processes and Procedures HERE.
It is however still **recommended** to appoint a qualified Safeguarding & Welfare support role on a regional committee to help interpret SOGB guidance and protocols on a local level, provide general

guidance and support and link with the SOGB Safeguarding Lead on a regional level. This person should not, however, be responsible for managing incidents and reporting in lieu of SOGB.

**It is important that all clubs and programmes can have a voice and connect with the organisation locally, regionally and nationally. Where possible at least 1 representative per club or programme should feed into a regional committee in some way – whether it be a specific role or a general liaison role. It is however the choice of the club as to whether they wish for someone from their club to be a part of this and it is not a mandatory requirement.

Example Committee Composition Guidelines for Best Practice:

- Independence: At least 25% committee members should be unrelated/not cohabiting
- Term Length: 12 months (re-election at AGM)
- Meetings: approximately 4 meetings per year, minimum 7 days' notice unless urgent with minutes taken and distributed to all within 14 days of the meeting.
  See below for a link to the template Constitution.

Checklist

In setting up or developing your committee, you might follow the below steps:

- ❑ Assign a **name** to your committee
- ❑ Establish the **purpose**, **mission** and **objectives** of the committee in line with SOGB
- ❑ Establish the **makeup** of the committee – roles and requirements for holding a role (eg. Must be a registered SOGB member within an accredited club/programme)
- ❑ Establish key **processes** within the committee – such as voting in roles from accredited club/programmes, succession protocols, representation and decision-making protocols in line with the purpose and objectives and scope of responsibility.
- ❑ Establish the process for setting up any **sub-groups** for specific thematic areas (eg. Fundraising, competitions, etc.) respective to applicable SOGB processes.
- ❑ Establish frequency and format of **communications** (eg. Meetings, email communications)

Club/Programme Committee Resources

- See HERE for volunteer role descriptors
- See HERE for:
  - SOGB network programme terms of reference template (to be launched 2025)
  - Active Member Register excel
  - Financial controls template and Branch return template
- See HERE for the new Standards of Deployment document for all volunteer roles (to be launched 2025)
- See HERE for Safeguarding policies and procedures – including policy templates

Regional Committee Resources

- See HERE for templates such as regional agenda template, club report template, financial controls template and the branch return template.

Other Resources - Recommended training:

- Effective Meetings – Sport England – HERE
- Various training including effective chairing, minute taking and networking – Sports Governance Academy - HERE
- Various guidance and tools including effective meetings, AGM Checklists, constitutions, accounting guidance and general good governance resources – **sport**scotland - HERE
- Various including club constitution, club development plan and role description templates – Disability Sport Wales - HERE

Working Group Structure (Development or thematic)

Working Groups or other thematic/ development groups have more variable/ flexible structures across SOGB than committees which are more connected to delivery over development. As such, there are no standardised mandatory roles for this to be established, as this will vary depending on the nature and goal of the group.

The aim of the SOGB Working Group or thematic/development group is to act as a specific forum to review and advise on a specific theme or topic aligned with the SOGB strategy and channel membership voice in a clear and measurable way. They help to bring together cross-organisational expertise in the network to help SOGB in delivering against key objectives and provide a pathway for information to flow through to impact SOGB decision-making on a strategic level.

Recommended roles to help the generic functioning of a working group might include:

- Chairperson
- Secretary/ note taker
- Communications lead
- *Strategic/ Advisory roles*

See HERE the guiding principles template to be used to establish a working group. Get in touch with SOGB on membership@sogb.org.uk if you want to set one up or be a part of a one!

Quick Top Tips for your committee or working group

Decision Making

- Aim for consensus where possible – the chair or lead will have the deciding vote in ties
- Use simple majority voting when needed
- Record all decisions in minutes

Conflict of Interest

- Declare any conflicts at meetings - conflicted members withdraw from relevant discussions
- Don't count conflicted members in quorum for affected decisions

Communication

- Regular updates to membership are important
- Use multiple channels to communicate and connect (email, website, social media)
- Maintain transparency in decision-making
- Respond promptly to member queries

Risk Management

- Identify key risks as early as possible in planning
- Implement appropriate controls for risks and review risks regularly

Common Challenges, and how to avoid

- Not maintaining proper financial records or allowing a single-person control of finances
- Mixing personal and charity finances – use financial controls to manage accounts properly
- Ignoring safeguarding requirements
- Failing to hold required meetings
- Not following your own constitution
- Making decisions without authority or without going through due process
- When emailing a group, use BCc – don't share emails!
- If in doubt – ask! 😊