



Special Olympics GB General Guide

Special Olympics
Great Britain



This Guide is intended for local accredited programmes or clubs accredited to Special Olympics Great Britain.

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Welcome to the first draft of our new Special Olympics Great Britain ('GB') Club Information Pack. We hope you find this document helpful.

Special Olympics GB is made up of around 100 local accredited programmes, or 'clubs', across Scotland, England and Wales, driven by the passion and commitment of our incredible volunteers and athletes. As your national team, we want to make sure that we are providing the **best possible guidance and resources** to help each and every club to thrive and grow in the best way that works for them, whilst supporting them with policies, procedures and tools to deliver inclusive sport, safely. We have pulled together information on key areas for clubs to review and practically make use of, and have listed some links to other helpful documents and specific resources.

This document is a work in progress, and so, we welcome your feedback - if you would like to share your thoughts on how this pack has (*or hasn't!*) worked for you and your club, please get in touch on membership@soqb.org.uk or access our digital suggestion box [HERE](#).





01 Accreditation

What is Accreditation?

Special Olympics GB Accreditation is the process through which an organisation **becomes a part of the Special Olympics movement**, driven through standards informed by Governance and Compliance.

Accreditation permits the organisation to **deliver inclusive sport and activity** as a part of the Special Olympics GB pathway from a local level, enabling athletes to progress all the way from local competition to the international stage. There are also athlete pathways in leadership and coaching/volunteering which accredited clubs and programmes may facilitate as a part of their Accreditation.

Accreditation is a form of **quality assurance**, because in order to achieve Accreditation, an organisation must meet a set of minimum operating requirements. These requirements, or 'standards', outlined in the Special Olympics GB Accreditation Agreement, ensure that athletes and volunteers are **protected** and are taking part in **safe, meaningful and enjoyable sporting experiences** supported by Special Olympics GB.

What does **best practice** look like?:

Athlete Registration (including correct record keeping)
Policy implementation

Athlete Leadership embedded at committee or coaching level

Volunteer Registration (including mandatory roles fulfilled)
Safeguarding Compliance (including Training)

Accreditation Agreement reviewed and signed

Session Information (including risk assessments)

Coaching Compliance (including training or qualifications)

Financial Compliance (including reporting/controls where applicable)

Each year (around November), existing accredited clubs or programmes re-accredit to Special Olympics GB, but they can cease their accreditation or join as a new accredited club 365 days a year.

What is Governance and Compliance?

In the context of Special Olympics GB accredited clubs/programmes, **governance** and **compliance** are two critical elements that ensure they operate effectively, ethically, and within the law. **Governance** refers to the structures, policies, and decision-making processes that guide how clubs are managed, ensuring effective leadership, strategic direction, and ethical standards. **Compliance** involves adhering to laws, regulations, and standards applicable to Special Olympics GB, both internal and external, to avoid risks and ensure the network operates ethically and safely. Together, governance and compliance ensure all activity runs smoothly, transparently, and in alignment with legal requirements and values, maintaining the integrity, reputation, and longevity of the organisation and its network of accredited clubs/programmes.



What is the future of Special Olympics GB Accreditation?

We have been working hard to improve our processes year on year, with over 70% of our membership reporting the process to be better than the previous year in our last membership survey, and 70% of our membership reporting that they were satisfied/ very satisfied with support they received for club management/development.

Special Olympics GB is committed to exploring opportunities to make things easier, more efficient and more effective when it comes to Accreditation. A thorough and diverse range of consultation activities have taken place over the last 5 years to better understand the 360 degree impact of Special Olympics GB Accreditation Structures and Processes from all stakeholder types and external stakeholders in the sector. Watch this space with the upcoming insights and action plan to be launched in early 2025.



Resources

Click [HERE](#) to access the Special Olympics GB Resources Page for 'Programmes' where you can access Accreditation documents, guidance, and other helpful tools and templates.



Accreditation Process and Information

Please be in touch with membership@sogb.org.uk to discuss Accreditation or other club/programme support.

The links below take you to resources found on the Special Olympics GB Member resources page:

<https://www.specialolympicsgb.org.uk/club-resources>

What we need to know, why and how to tell us:

1. Membership Information

Why: It is vital for compliance, governance and insurance purposes that information regarding club membership is recorded and reported on an ongoing basis to Special Olympics GB. This information is also vital for Special Olympics GB reporting for license compliance, including for annual Special Olympics International Census.

How:

- **Active Member Register** – complete and email with any updates or amendments – template found [HERE](#).
- **Athlete Registration** forms: complete forms found [HERE](#).
- **Volunteer Registration** forms: complete forms found [HERE](#).
- **Member Info Update** form: complete when needed [HERE](#)
- **DBS/PVG** Information – guidance and link found [HERE](#)
- **Safeguarding Training** Information – get in touch to share this information – for more guidance click [HERE](#).

2. Sessions & Associated Information

Why: It is important that any sessions which are to be accredited as Special Olympics GB sessions, and therefore may form a part of the athlete advancement pathway, are recorded and reported to Special Olympics GB. We are continuously developing guidance for sports delivery. At this time, we require information on sessions including **venue, coaches and training, session days/times and risk assessments.**

How:

- Complete a New/Update **Session information form** [HERE](#) **if needed**.
- Templates for **Risk Assessments** [HERE](#), or send documents directly.
- **Coaching Support Grant** – find out more [HERE](#) - See information on sports and rules [HERE](#)

3. Policy Information

Why: All Special Olympics GB accredited clubs must adopt and adhere to Special Olympics GB Policies and Procedures. This is to ensure good governance and compliance across the organisation and the overall management and quality assurance of the Special Olympics purpose, brand and nature of business for sustainability and longevity.

How:

- Access Special Olympics GB **Policies** [HERE](#)
- Get in touch with any queries.

4. Accreditation Agreement

Why: In order for a club's accreditation to be valid, they must review and sign the Special Olympics GB Accreditation Agreement, which then must be counter-signed and approved by Special Olympics GB directly. If this is not complete, accreditation is not active. This may impact things like insurance coverage and competition access.

How:

- Ensure you have **reviewed and signed the Accreditation Agreement** – a copy of this can be found [HERE](#) (or online [HERE](#)).
- At the end of Q1 2026, the Agreement will be sent out for re-signing.

5. Accreditation Fee Invoicing

Why: Special Olympics GB Accreditation requires an annual accreditation fee which is invoiced to clubs directly. This is around March annually.

How:

- Ensure your finance officer contact is up to date
- Be in touch with accounts@sogb.org.uk for queries on financial reporting, flexible payment options for fees or other related items.

Wish to become or continue to be an Accredited Special Olympics GB Club or Programme?

Follow the below steps

1

Establish, Record and Report SOGB registered Membership– Athletes, Participants and Volunteers.

2

Share your SOGB Club Information – Session information, risk assessments, coach information and policies.

3

Sign the SOGB Accreditation Agreement – found [HERE](#)

4

Receive confirmation of Accreditation (annual) from Special Olympics GB

5

See the club resources page [HERE](#) for more support, including brand guidelines, coaching rules and resources and other templates and guidance.

02 Athletes

This section is designed to provide key information for athletes, as well as family/support or SOGB volunteers supporting athletes' sporting experiences.

Information and guidance will be provided on the following topics:

- 2.1 Athlete Registration
- 2.2 Athlete Opportunities
 - 2.2.1 Athlete Health Information & Risk Assessments
- 2.3 Athlete Leadership Team
- 2.4 Unified Business
- 2.5 Athlete Stories

Special Olympics GB Athletes are exceptional! They are resilient, brave, determined and passionate individuals who want to take part in sport, make friends, have some fun and be accepted into an inclusive, supportive community. Special Olympics GB is driven by the power of Special Olympics GB Athletes from its core values through to its long term strategies, and as such, is led by Athletes at every milestone moment.

Athletes' goals, needs and voices are central to every decision we make as an organisation. We are extremely proud to be supported by an [Athlete Leadership Team](#) of Special Olympics GB athletes who represent the voices of thousands of athletes. For more information on Athlete Leadership, see section 2.3.

2.1 Athletes & Registration

In order to access Special Olympics GB Pathways, individuals should register as members of Special Olympics GB. Anyone with an intellectual disability can register as an Athlete to take part in Special Olympics GB activity via a [local accredited club or programme](#), regardless of their age once above 8 years old (or 7 for *training only*), gender or ability level. Click [HERE](#) for more information on our website.

Thanks to the powerful local networks of Special Olympics GB clubs and programmes, Special Olympics GB facilitates a range of safe, meaningful and fun opportunities for athletes via local training sessions and competitions in both summer and winter sports, year-round. Athletes must register via their local club or programme in order to access these pathways from local training and beyond, in alignment with the [Special Olympics General Rules](#). These processes also ensure that athletes are



supported in their sporting journey in accordance with Special Olympics GB Standards of Accreditation and Compliance.

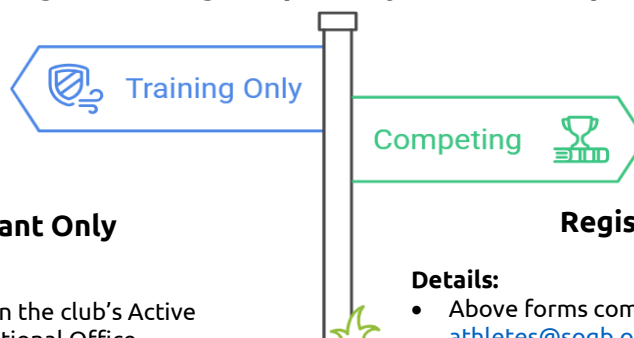
All athlete resources, including forms and guidance, can be found on the athlete resources section of our website, [HERE](#). You will find our '**Guide to Athlete Registration**' on this page which breaks down steps to registering as an athlete which can be completed either via online forms or through paper/email:

1. **SAM** ('Special Olympics Athlete Member') **registration forms & Release Forms** (both online and Word Doc/printable and Easy-Read Version available)
2. **Health Information** forms (see Section 2.1.1)
3. Guidance and Forms for providing **Evidence of Eligibility*** including the Eligibility Endorsement Form.
4. (Once Registered, athletes should be added to their club/programme **Active Member Register** which forms a part of Accreditation – see page 4).

*Click [HERE](#) to learn more about the Special Olympics Eligibility Criteria.

We also have templates and resources to help clubs to best support athletes in building safe sessions, such as **athlete one page profiles** and **risk assessments**. These are **recommended** for club internal use to build safe and person-centred sessions for athletes around needs and aspirations, and feed into overall club session risk assessments and protocols for ensuring safety and clarity of what to do in certain situations. Guidance and templates for these can be found [HERE](#). (See Section 2.1.1)

Is the individual taking part in (or wishes to take part in) training, or training *and* pathways such as competition?



Register as Participant Only

Details:

- Must be recorded by name/sport on the club's Active Member Register & shared with National Office.
- No access to pathways (eg. Competition/ leadership) and not accounting towards club accreditation fee total.
- SOGB Insurance coverage provided per guidance.
- May register as an athlete later if desired.
- May compete on a one-off basis as a 'Guest' in SOGB Competition.
- **Recommendation for newcomers:** If attending SOGB training sessions for more than 4 weeks, register with the club as a participant at a **minimum**.
- **Please note: participant registration process under review.**

Register as SOGB Athlete

Details:

- Above forms completed and submitted to athletes@sogb.org.uk or online
- Must be recorded by name/sport/SAM Number on the club's Active Member Register & Reported directly.
- Access to pathways in sports trained in under registration, and counted towards club accreditation fee total.
- SOGB Insurance coverage provided per guidance.
- Take part in regular/ ongoing accredited training.
- Health Forms/Risk Assessments – see Section 2.1.1
- May register as a participant only if desired via [Member Update Form](#)



Please note:

If there are participants which are involved in your group or organisation's wider sport provision, and not specifically in the context of Special Olympics GB, they do **not** need to be registered with Special Olympics GB via these processes.

Eg. Swim England club with 200 members – one SOGB group accredited to SOGB. All 200 members do not need to be registered and recorded, only those involved in the context of Special Olympics GB and reported through Accreditation.

Returning Athletes

Special Olympics GB athletes who have been registered before are able to re-register with a local accredited club or programme following a period of inactivity by using the Member Update Form – [HERE](#) (this is also accessible via the resources page [HERE](#)).

This is a simplified form which does not ask for evidence of eligibility. Special Olympics GB will need to verify that this individual has been previously registered with Special Olympics and, where possible, will re-allocate their original SAM number upon completion of this process. If you are unsure, get in touch to discuss.

2.1.1 Athlete Health Information & Risk Assessments

Special Olympics GB provide two methods for clubs to gather information regarding an individual's needs concerning health and welfare in order to ensure that their taking part is safe for them, and for others, and that any steps needed for their safety and/or for that of others can be feasibly and effectively put in place (eg. Via club activity risk assessments, care support or coaching plans, etc.). These are:

- **Health Information Form** (Word Doc form only)
- **Athlete One Page Profile & Risk Assessment** (online and Word Doc forms)

Health forms are *mandatory* for all athlete participation in Major Events (National & International SO events, for example) as a part of Special Olympics Rules & Processes. These are *recommended* to be used on a local level but are not requested to be sent to National Office for review unless there is a query or health concern which requires medical sign off for participation. Please be in touch to discuss any medical/health related queries or advisements, or other personal care needs which require 1:1 care support to participate, which SOGB volunteers are not positioned to nor able to provide and are not covered to provide under SOGB Third Party Liability Insurance.

This process and associated forms are currently under review – please get in touch to discuss questions or comments in this regard.



Athlete One Page Profiles & Risk Assessments are *mandatory* requirements for Major Events attendance (National & International SO Events for example) and are *recommended* to be completed in a club setting for all participants on a local level. Support is available from National Office around guidance, implementation and use in building sessions, risk assessments, etc. It is recommended to review Health Information forms and One Page Profiles/Risk Assessments annually (eg. Annually) for all regular participants.

[Get in touch](#) to share your feedback/ insights in things athlete registration, recruitment and retention to help improve processes and better support SOGB clubs.

2.2 Athlete Opportunities

Special Olympics GB are always actively seeking to build and enhance its offer for athlete opportunities and pathways.

We are committed to creating opportunities for athletes both on and off the field of play, and we are always looking for more and better ways to connect with and empower Special Olympics GB Athletes. Existing Athlete Opportunities include:

- [Competition and Advancement](#)
- [Athlete Leadership](#), [Social Enterprise](#) & [Ambassadorship](#)
- [Participation Programs](#)
- [Sports Leadership](#)
- Consultation (bespoke/ad-hoc – eg. Working groups, research, etc.)
- [Corporate Partner Activity](#) & [Pilot Programs](#)

2.3 Athlete Leadership

The Athlete Leadership Programme provides a way for athletes to showcase their talents and interests, undergo training and learn new skills. In training Athlete leaders, we as an organisation can tell more stories, improve athlete voice and ensure athletes remain at the heart of SOGB.

'Athlete Leaders' refers to a pool of athletes who have completed [Athlete Leadership Training](#). The core training consists of 6 online sessions where athletes learn more about leadership roles within Special Olympics, self-reflect on their own skills, interests and goals and create future targets based on this self-reflection.

Athlete leaders who would like to continue their leadership journey may apply to join the

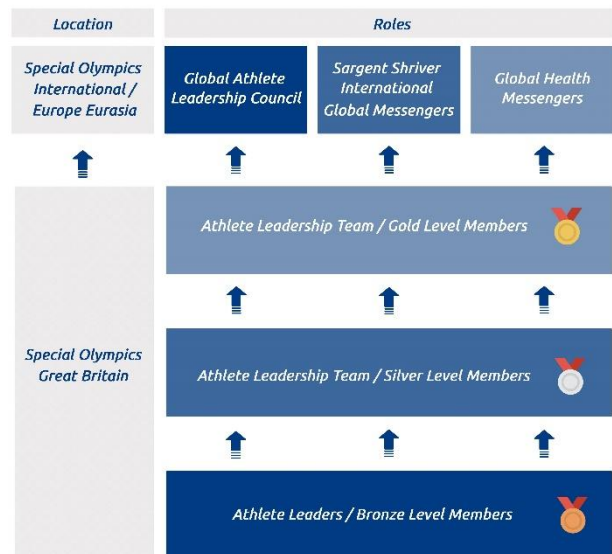
Athlete Leadership Team, which works with national office to ensure that the athletes voice is heard and actioned on right across Special Olympics GB.

This team and their opinions are integral to all the decisions we make at National Office with their creative solutions and constructive feedback. This team are led by their Chairperson, Mitch Camp, who is an athlete from St Albans. Mitch plays a key role in advocating for athletes across Great Britain and beyond and has helped to shape the future of athlete leadership on and off the field of play. Click [HERE](#) to meet the Athlete Leadership Team

"I can now see that Athlete Leadership is as important as any other aspect of sport. Thoughtful and considerate Leadership brings about the best in people. To be an Athlete leader is to understand the needs of others."

Athlete Leader

Athlete Leadership Pathway



For determined athlete leaders who are passionate about Leadership, there may be an opportunity for the leadership pathway to continue through to international roles working with Special Olympics on the global stage.

What's the value?

Inclusion - is incredibly important and we recognise that with athletes' input (right across the organisation)

We can be an organisation that is truly inclusive. Moving away from an organisation that is for athletes to being one that is led by athletes. Inclusion ensures everyone feels valued and importantly, adds value.

"Thanks lots for the amazing leadership training, super inspiring we've had lots of conversations about her future, goals, leadership and this has cascaded through the family too. Brilliant"

Parent of Athlete Leader

Through athlete leadership training we learn more about our athletes' interests, skill sets, whilst they can recognise areas for their own development. We work with our corporate partners and others to create and offer meaningful opportunities for our athletes to take part in. These might be focussed on sharing their lived experience, working on a disability and inclusion strategy, an employability project or using their own expertise to lead a project.

How to get involved?

If you are Special Olympics GB athlete or know somebody who is, and are interested in Athlete Leadership training [please complete this form](#). We encourage clubs, coaches and committees to also support athletes in learning about and accessing this pathway.

For information on the Athlete Leadership Team – see our **YouTube Video** [HERE](#).

Finally, meet our **Class of 2024** [HERE](#)!

2.4 Unified Business

Unified Business' brings together volunteers from Coca Cola Europacific Partners and Athlete Leaders from Special Olympics Great Britain to work together on the design and delivery of projects/products.

Why does it exist?

94% of people with intellectual disabilities are unfortunately unemployed. However, we have an incredibly creative and hard-working pool of athletes and we believe in the impact that employability and life skills development can have. In delivering these projects in a 'unified' way, we are also able to challenge social perceptions and raise awareness of people with intellectual disability.

How Does It Work?

Through Unified Business, CCEP volunteers and Special Olympics GB Athlete Leaders collaborate on focused, short-term projects with clear goals and timelines. These 'sprint' projects allow for intense, creative collaboration, resulting in products that are as practical as they are inspirational. Discover a unique range of athlete-designed products [here](#).

2.5 Athlete Stories

As a part of our strategic plan, we are committed to spotlighting the amazing and inspiring stories of our outstanding athletes. A selection of athlete stories can be found [HERE](#). If you would like to share your story please contact Tom Rawlings (Marketing and Communication Manager) on tom.rawlings@sogb.org.uk

03 Competition

This section is mainly designed to be beneficial for: Event hosts, Competition Coordinators, Main Contacts and Head Coaches.

Contents:

- 5.1 About Special Olympics GB Competition**
- 5.2 Competition processes**
- 5.3 Competition Support**
- 5.4 Feedback**

3.1 About Special Olympics GB Competition

At Special Olympics GB, our focus is on ability not disability. They are non-elite and open to **ALL** abilities thanks to an inclusive ability banding system called Divisioning. [Click here](#) to find out more on Divisioning.

Special Olympics GB are committed to growing and developing our support for clubs and programmes to deliver high quality competitive opportunities year-round in [Summer and Winter sports](#).

Key resources:

[Special Olympics GB Member Resources Page – Competitions](#) - this page includes most recent updates on competitions, processes, forms and guidance.

[Special Olympics GB Guide to Competition](#) – this detailed document covers everything you need to consider when organising and delivering a competition. See pages 18, 31, 41 and 44 for some useful checklists!

[Special Olympics Sport Rules](#) – each competitive sport has it's own rules and guidelines to follow.

[Special Olympics Article One](#) – this document provides general principles established by the [SO Official General Rules](#) that are not found in the sport-specific rules.

[Divisioning](#) – this document explains the Special Olympics process of competition-level matching to allow athletes of all abilities to be given an equal chance of succeeding.



[Special Olympics GB National Sports Advisors](#) – Special Olympics GB have successfully recruited a number of experts across priority development sports in order to support in a number of key initiatives, including in competition development and technical guidance.

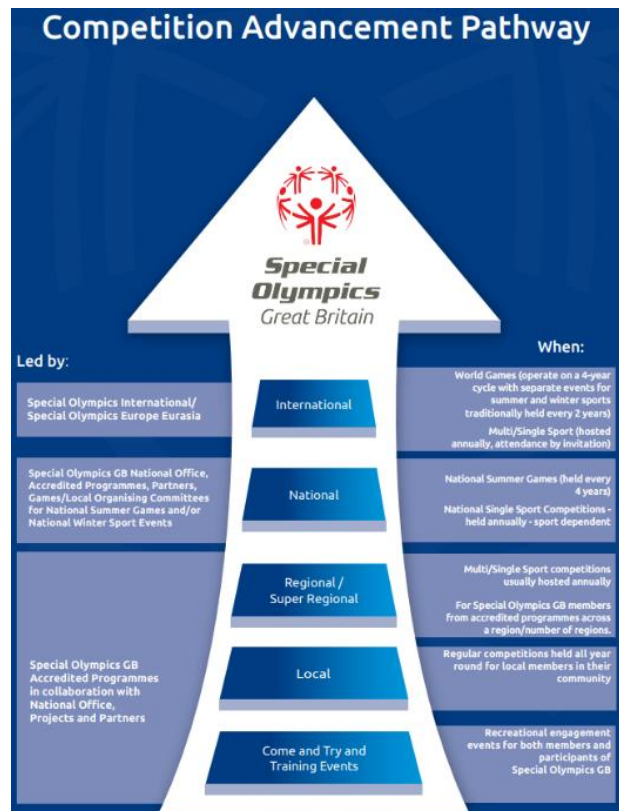
On an ongoing basis, you can find the most up to date information on sport rules, formats, divisioning and more on the Special Olympics website, [HERE](#).

Who can take part?

Our competitions are for people with **intellectual disabilities or learning disabilities** who are registered with a SAM Number ('Special Olympics Athlete Member'), or in other words, as an active athlete with an accredited local programme, and is training in that sport. Non-registered athletes or 'participants' who train in an accredited local programme may compete once on a one-off basis.

What is the Competition Advancement pathway?

Special Olympics GB offers a fair and progressive **Competition Advancement Pathway** based on participation rather than performance. An athlete can progress up to the next level after having competed in previous levels – the graphic to the side can be found on page 7 of the Guide to Competition, along with more info on rules and criteria



How do I find out about competitions?

To see our upcoming competition opportunities please visit our **events calendar** [HERE](#).

When a local accredited programme sanctions an event to host, it is added to this calendar along with the entry criteria, processes and key contact information. We will also put partnership competitions on this calendar to signpost athletes to opportunities outside of the traditional Special Olympics GB network, such as National Governing Body ('NGB') opportunities.

If you have any questions about any competitions you see in the calendar, get in touch on competitions@soqb.org.uk

3.2 Competition Processes

- **Hosting an event**

To host a Special Olympics GB at any level of the competitive advancement pathway, it must be **sanctioned** by Special Olympics GB. Click [HERE](#) to access the **online event sanctioning form** which should be submitted at least 3 months prior to your event. We are here to support you with this process.

You can also click [HERE](#) to access **templates** for competition entry forms and info packs. **Please note** in January 2025 a **new entry form template** was released – see the latest guidance [HERE](#).

More information on what this involves and when this should be completed is found on pages 20-32 of the [Guide to Competition](#).

If you are interested in hosting your own competition, then please get in touch on competitions@sogb.org.uk and complete the above sanction form.

- **Attending an event**

To attend a Special Olympics GB event to compete, athletes must be registered with a local accredited programme and have a SAM Number. The forms and information for this can be found [HERE](#). Additional information about entry criteria can be found in the Guide to Competition on pages 6 and 11 of the [Guide to Competition](#).

A key thing to note is that athletes must be training for a minimum of 8 weeks in the sport in which they want to compete in on an ongoing basis in a Special Olympics GB accredited session for a minimum of 8 weeks. For information on this, see section 2.01 of the [Special Olympics Rules](#).

****Please note:** the processes above might vary slightly depending on the level of event (come and try, local, regional, super-regional, national, international). We are always looking for ways to innovate how we do things, and we know there is increasing demand for more participation-driven/ skill-based events which might apply a simplified sanctioning process to formal competition. The National Office Team are here to support you to ensure you have all of the information and help you need to complete any applicable processes for hosting and/or attending events, so please get in touch to discuss your competition enquiry directly.*



3.3 Competition Support

- **Event Delivery Support Grant, Branding and Medals/Awards**

Event Support Grants are back! Each Special Olympics GB Sanctioned competition delivered by an accredited programme, or partner organisation, can access the Special Olympics GB support grant to help fund delivery costs of events.

[Click here to apply.](#)

In addition to this Special Olympics GB can support by providing medals/awards, branding and refreshments/water for events. Get in touch on competitions@sogb.org.uk to find out more.

- **Fundraising**

For the latest signposting information to fundraising opportunities which may help with organising or attending a competition or event, see our resources page [HERE](#).

- **National Governing Bodies ('NGBs')**

National Governing Bodies are responsible for ensuring quality sport delivery and support across the country. Special Olympics GB is actively connected to over 20 NGBs across the country and are developing sport for development plans for future growth. If you require sport-specific support, get in touch with us directly or with the applicable National Governing Body to learn more about what support might be available, whether it be checking and challenging sport specific information or recruiting officials. Information on Governing Bodies is found on our [Sports Page](#).

- **Sector Support**

e.g. [Active Partnerships](#)/ [Scottish Club Sport](#)/ [Disability Sport Wales](#)

There is a lot of support out there which you can access with regards to your event or competition – whether it be to spread the word, recruit volunteers/ officials or engage with other organisations. If you have specific support you need with your event, get in touch with us and we can help you to connect with any potential avenues for support.

- **National Office Team**

The National Office Team are on hand to support with your queries and needs around delivering or attending Special Olympics GB Competition. Get in touch to access support – contact details can be found [HERE](#).

- **National Sports Advisors**

Check out our new National Sports Advisors [HERE](#). These passionate and knowledgeable volunteers will be on hand to support us with technical, developmental and building networks within their sport.



3.4 Feedback

We are really keen to hear what our athletes and volunteers think about competitions they attend, to help gather this feedback we have a [short online survey](#) we'd like anyone who attends a competition to complete.

If you have any questions regarding competition, please email any queries to competitions@sogb.org.uk.

One last thing...

Speak to us!

Let us know about your competition activity and success as well as your ideas, so we can share and celebrate your amazing activities as much as possible.

We are committed to sharing more stories and promoting your activity year-round, on all levels of the pathway, so please get in touch with us to discuss or to share.

PLEASE NOTE: Guidance specific to Event Volunteering and associated support and processes will be covered under the Volunteer Section. In the meantime, get in touch with any queries in this space on volunteer@sogb.org.uk.

**Next
Sections
Coming
Soon**

Inspiring stories of courage,
strength and determination

Let me win.
But if I cannot win,
let me be brave
in the attempt.
- Special Olympics athlete oath





***Special
Olympics***
Great Britain