



SPECIAL OLYMPICS GB
**NATIONAL
SUMMER GAMES
2026**

Athlete Experience & Club Activity Guide

This practical guide has been designed to support the planning of fun, inclusive activities for groups of athletes, coaches, parents/carers, volunteers and club leads attending the multi-sport event 27th – 30th August 2026 National Summer Games in Birmingham.

Attraction opening times, prices, booking rules and accessibility arrangements should be checked directly with venues.



How to use this guide

- Choose a mix of quiet, active, cultural and social options so athletes can opt into what suits them.
- Keep group sizes manageable and agree a meeting point, buddy system and emergency contact process before leaving accommodation or Games venues.
- Book paid attractions early, especially for wheelchair spaces, carers tickets, sensory needs or coach parking.
- Build in rest time. Competition days are exciting but tiring, and many athletes benefit from predictable plans and quieter breaks.
- Complete a simple trip risk assessment for each activity, including transport, medication, dietary needs, safeguarding, money handling and consent.

At-a-glance activity planner

Activity type	Best for	Examples	Cost guide	Planning notes
Free city moments	Short gaps and team photos	Library of Birmingham terrace (open Monday to Saturday 11.00-16.50), canals, Bullring Bull, Centenary Square, Ozzy the giant mechanical bull in New Street Station	Free	Check walking distances and accessible toilets.
Calm green space	Rest, picnics, decompression	Sutton Park, Botanical Gardens, Winterbourne, Cannon Hill, Woodgate Valley Park	Free/££	Take blankets, snacks, sun protection and water.
Interactive attractions	Rainy days and mixed-age groups	Thinktank, SEA LIFE, LEGOLAND Discovery Centre	££	Book ahead; confirm access and group arrangements.
Chocolate and Birmingham heritage	Fun day out with a clear theme	Cadbury World and Bournville	££	Popular attraction; allow travel time and queues.
Evening social	Team bonding after sport	Quiz, karaoke, silent disco, badge swap, bowling	Free/££	Keep timings short and include quiet exit options.
Active fun	Athletes with energy after competition	Bowling, mini golf, Bear Grylls Adventure	££	Check suitability, supervision ratios and consent.

Free and low-cost Birmingham favourites

Library of Birmingham rooftop terraces - Great for a short visit, skyline photos and a calm break near Centenary Square. Birmingham City Council information notes two elevated outdoor spaces: the Discovery Terrace on level 3 and Secret Garden on level 7.

Centenary Square and Symphony Hall area - Good for group photos, fountains, public space and a simple city-centre wander.

Canal walk around Brindleyplace - A classic Birmingham experience with flat sections, cafes and photo spots. Plan a short loop rather than a long walk.



Bullring Bull team photo - An easy, iconic Birmingham photo stop. Best done in small groups because the area can be busy.

Sutton Park - A brilliant option for clubs based near Sutton Coldfield or Wyndley. Ideal for picnics, fresh air and decompression time.

Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery / city culture - Check current opening arrangements before visiting. Good for smaller groups who enjoy history, art and quieter activities.

Lapworth Geology Museum - Features dinosaurs, fossils and precious rocks. Only a 10 minute walk from Winterbourne with free entry.

Interactive and group-friendly attractions

Thinktank, Birmingham Science Museum - Hands-on exhibits and a clear indoor plan for wet weather. Thinktank states it is accessible to wheelchair users, has central lifts to all floors and can book wheelchairs in advance.

National SEA LIFE Centre Birmingham - Good for mixed-age groups and athletes who enjoy animals and visual experiences. SEA LIFE says it has disabled access throughout, disabled toilets and can accommodate small mobility scooters; groups should note the stated limit of 10 wheelchairs in the attraction at one time.

West Midlands Police Museum - Won gold for accessible tourism in this year's regional tourism awards. Learn about two centuries of policing history at the Lock-Up, located in Birmingham City Centre.

Cadbury World - A fun Birmingham classic for chocolate fans and Bournville heritage. Cadbury World publishes dedicated accessibility information and asks visitors to plan around individual needs.

Brindley Cruises - Boat trips with live commentary about the 250 year old history of the Birmingham Canal Network. The boat runs seven days a week from outside the SeaLife Centre. Staff can provide advice or assistance for passengers with mild mobility impairments.

LEGOLAND Discovery Centre Birmingham - Best for younger athletes, families, or athletes who enjoy creative building and sensory play. Check group age guidance and booking terms.

Cannon Hill Park - Features mini golf, a land train and a fun park as well as the Midlands Arts Centre with its galleries, cinema and arts and craft activities. A multi-award winner for accessible tourism. The park is also home to the Birmingham Wildlife Conservation Park with red pandas, lemurs, meerkats, otters, birds, wallabies and a large collection of monkeys for the animal lovers.

Hollywood Bowl / bowling - Reliable evening fun, especially for mixed ability groups. Ask about ramps, lighter balls, lane access and quieter times.

Mini golf / arcade activities - Good for informal team bonding. Keep spend limits clear and agree supervision around arcades.



Calmer sensory-friendly choices

Quiet picnic at Sutton Park - Low-pressure, flexible and easy to adapt. Choose a clear meeting point and avoid over-long walks.

Botanical Gardens or Winterbourne House and Garden - Good for athletes who enjoy plants, calm paths and slower activities. Check terrain and accessible routes before travelling.

Hotel or accommodation friendship evening - Badge swap, friendship bracelets, games night, film night or quiz without extra travel.

Photo memory station - A low-cost club activity: athletes take photos, add captions and create a Games memory board.

Quiet cafe stop - Useful after competition. Book ahead or visit outside peak times where possible.

Evening entertainment ideas clubs can run themselves

Friendship Festival - A club-led social with music, photo booth, friendship wall, badge/pin exchange and giant games.

Regional quiz night - Rounds can include Birmingham, Special Olympics, sport, music and picture questions.

Karaoke or open mic - Keep it supportive and optional. Celebrate every performance.

Silent disco - Great for sensory choice because athletes can control volume or step away.

Club talent showcase - Short, positive performances from athletes, coaches, family members and volunteers.

Games memory wall - Athletes write or draw their favourite moment of the day.

Special Olympics-themed activities

- **Friendship Passport:** Each athlete collects stamps/signatures from clubs across Great Britain.
- **Badge and pin exchange:** A simple way to meet other athletes and build friendships.
- **Meet my club board:** Each delegation shares photos, region facts, sports and athlete messages.
- **Spirit of the Games cards:** Athletes nominate someone who showed courage, joy, kindness or determination.
- **Mascot challenge:** Each club brings a mascot and takes photos around Birmingham.
- **Random Acts of Kindness challenge:** Thank a volunteer, cheer another club, help a teammate, or leave a positive message.



- **Birmingham selfie challenge:** Safe, supervised photos at agreed landmarks such as the Library, canals, Bullring Bull and Centenary Square.
- **Athlete media team:** Athletes interview each other about their favourite event, medal moment or friendship story.

Birmingham Weekender 2026

- A free arts and culture festival with performances and activities in multiple city centre locations running from Saturday 29th to Monday 31st August.
- Features live DJs, hundreds of shimmering mirror balls and a packed programme of free events suitable for all ages.
- A programme of events can be found here: <https://www.birminghamhippodrome.com/birmingham-weekender-2026-whats-on/>
- Specific accessible performances and general accessibility information can be found here: <https://www.birminghamhippodrome.com/birmingham-weekender-2026-access/>

Sample mini itineraries

Two-hour city-centre photo trail

1. Start at Centenary Square.
2. Visit Library of Birmingham terraces if open and suitable.
3. Walk a short canal section around Brindleyplace.
4. Finish with drinks/snacks and a group photo.

Quiet recovery afternoon

5. Return from competition.
6. 30 minutes rest at accommodation.
7. Picnic or gentle stroll in Sutton Park.
8. Games memory wall activity in the evening.

Rainy day indoor option

9. Book Thinktank, SEA LIFE or bowling in advance.
10. Travel in smaller supervised groups.
11. Set clear spend limits.
12. Build in a quiet break before returning.

Friendship evening

13. Badge swap on arrival.
14. Short quiz or music round.



15. Friendship wall and photo booth.

16. Close with club shout-outs and Spirit of the Games awards.

Club planning checklist

Before leaving accommodation / venue

- ☐ Named trip lead and deputy confirmed
- ☐ Participant list and emergency contacts held securely
- ☐ Medication, dietary and personal care arrangements checked
- ☐ Transport plan agreed, including accessible transport if required
- ☐ Buddy system agreed and explained
- ☐ Meeting point and return time agreed
- ☐ Money/spend limits clear
- ☐ Weather plan in place
- ☐ Consent and photo permissions understood

During the activity

- ☐ Regular head counts
- ☐ Clear boundaries about staying with the group
- ☐ Monitor fatigue, heat, anxiety and sensory overload
- ☐ Offer quiet break options
- ☐ Keep safeguarding concerns confidential and report through agreed channels
- ☐ Record and report any incidents promptly

After the activity

- ☐ Final head count
- ☐ Medication/personal belongings check
- ☐ Debrief with athletes: what went well and what was hard
- ☐ Note any learning for the next activity
- ☐ Share positive photos/stories only in line with consent rules



Simple risk assessment prompts

Area	Questions to ask	Controls to consider
Safeguarding	Who is supervising? Are ratios right? Are there changing/toileting considerations?	Named adults, buddy system, privacy, clear reporting route.
Transport	How are athletes travelling? Is transport accessible? What if delayed?	Route plan, coach parking, accessible taxis, emergency contacts.
Health and medication	Who holds medication? Any allergies, epilepsy plans, diabetes care, anxiety plans?	Medication lead, care plans, first aid, water and snacks.
Money and valuables	Will athletes carry cash/cards/phones?	Spend limits, secure storage, staff awareness.
Sensory needs	Could crowds, noise, queues or lighting be difficult?	Quiet breaks, ear defenders, shorter visits, opt-out route.
Weather	Heat, rain or cold?	Sun cream, hats, hydration, waterproofs, indoor alternative.
Missing person	What if someone becomes separated?	Meeting point, head counts, recent photo, immediate escalation plan.

Suggested Birmingham activity directory

Activity	Why it works	Best time	Access / booking reminder
Library of Birmingham terraces	Free views and calm photos	Short city-centre visit	Check opening and terrace access.
Canal walk / Brindleyplace	Classic Birmingham, cafes nearby	Morning or early evening	Plan a short, step-free route.
Sutton Park	Nature, picnic, decompression	Afternoon rest block	Agree parking/drop-off and meeting point.
Thinktank	Hands-on indoor activity	Rainy day or half day	Book groups; ask about wheelchairs/access.
SEA LIFE Birmingham	Visual, animal-focused, indoor	Short half-day	Book; note wheelchair group limits.
Cadbury World	Fun, chocolate, Bournville history	Half day	Pre-book; check carer/access arrangements.
Bowling	Inclusive team evening	Evening	Ask for ramps, accessible lanes and quieter slots.
Botanical Gardens / Winterbourne	Calm green space	Afternoon	Check accessible routes and toilets.
Grand Central / Bullring	Food, shopping, Bull photo	Short stop	Busy: use smaller groups and clear meet points.
Club friendship night	No extra travel, low cost	Evening	Plan quiet room/space alongside music and games.



Ready-to-use message for clubs

Suggested wording:

We want every athlete, coach, family member and volunteer to enjoy Birmingham during the National Summer Games. Alongside competition, clubs may wish to plan short, inclusive activities such as city-centre photo trails, canal walks, quiet park visits, bowling, museum visits, or a club friendship evening. Please make sure all activities are planned with appropriate supervision, consent, accessibility arrangements, medication needs, travel plans and safeguarding procedures in place. Always check attraction opening times, prices and accessibility guidance directly before booking.

Sources and checks used

- Birmingham City Council - Library of Birmingham garden terraces: https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/50132/visiting_the_library_of_birmingham/1412/about_the_library_of_birmingham/8
- Thinktank accessibility information: <https://www.birminghammuseums.org.uk/thinktank/visit/accessibility>
- SEA LIFE Birmingham accessibility guide: <https://www.visitsealife.com/birmingham/plan-your-visit/information/accessibility-guide/>
- Cadbury World accessibility information: <https://www.cadburyworld.co.uk/plan-your-visit/information/accessibility/>
- Midlands Arts Centre accessibility information: <https://macbirmingham.co.uk/visit/access>
- Visit Birmingham accessibility information: <https://visitbirmingham.com/plan/accessibility-information/>
- Brindley Cruises accessibility statement: <https://www.brindleycruises.co.uk/blank-1>
- West Midlands Police Museum accessibility statement: <https://museum.west-midlands.police.uk/plan-your-visit/access/>
- Birmingham Botanical Gardens visitor information: <https://birminghambotanicalgardens.org.uk/plan-your-visit/visitor-information/>
- Winterbourne House and Garden visitor information: <https://www.winterbourne.org.uk/plan-your-visit/visitor-information/>