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**News release**

 With Pictures attached - Tuesday 16th May 2017

**Special Olympics athletes showcase talents alongside county’s finest**

Athletes with learning disabilities celebrated medal success and personal best performances competing for the first time at the Athletics Norfolk’s county championships at the weekend.

Twenty-five athletes – including eight invitees from Suffolk – competed in 18 Special Olympic style events, including races over 50, 100, 200 and 400 metres and long jump and throwing events (softball, javelin and shot-put).

Special Olympics Norfolk (SON), which provides support for about 70 sportspeople with learning difficulties, was invited to showcase its members’ talents in the Track and Field Championships at the UEA Sportspark alongside events for some of the county’s top athletes..

Special Olympics athletes setting personal best performances included Cameron Lain (turbo javelin), Jordan Rednall (softball), and Ricky Brown (junior long jump).

The men’s long jump saw all three medal winners jump further than 4 metres - Joe Silom 4.67m (new PB), Cameron Ross 4.35m and Oli Minns 4.25m.

Lily Edwards threw the shot 4.02m for junior girls’ gold and Lorraine Hood threw the softball 11.56m for the women’s gold.

Division 1 of the men’s sprint saw the medals split by a mere half a second, Joe Silom winning gold in 13.5s, Cameron Ross silver in 13.9s and John Young, competing for the first time, taking bronze in 14.0s

The men’s 200m race was equally competitive with Oli Minns winning gold with a time of 27.5s. He went on to take gold in the 400m in a time of 61.7s to finish the day in style.

Nicola Fish, chair of SON, said: “It was wonderful to be able to showcase our athletes' talents to such a big audience and the support the spectators gave them was fantastic. It was a first for us to be involved in a major mainstream athletics event and we hope other sports will offer more inclusive competition in the future.”

SON will be sending a team to the Special Olympics national games at Sheffield in August and plans to organise a regional event in 2018 with Athletics Norfolk support.

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**Picture captions:**

Special Olympic Norfolk and Suffolk athletes competing on Sunday at the Athletics Norfolk championships in Norwich. Picture: Michael Lyons

Joe Silom (left) winning the men's 100m from Cameron Ross and John Young (second right). Picture: Michael Lyons

Lily Edwards taking junior girls' gold in the long jump. Picture: Michael Lyons

Oli Minns competing in the men’s long jump. Picture: Michael Lyons

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**Notes:**

**Special Olympics Norfolk** is a county branch of Special Olympics Great Britain. It was originally formed around 15 years ago, and relaunched in 2013. It is one of 6 branches in the Eastern Region, along with East Herts, Essex, Peterborough, Suffolk and St Albans. **SON** currently supports around 70 registered athletes with about 120 training regularly and the numbers are growing. It offers 7 sports: Alpine skiing, athletics, artistic gymnastics, boccia, cricket, football and swimming. [www.specialolympicsnorfolk.com](http://www.specialolympicsnorfolk.com)

**Athletics Norfolk** works with key partners to develop the sport, including track and field, road-running, cross-country, disability athletics and sports hall. Launched in 2014, its central ethos is working in partnership with clubs across the county. www.athleticsnorfolk.org.uk