

A close-up photograph of a swimmer in a pool, wearing a black swim cap and goggles. The swimmer is making a 'V' hand gesture with both hands, indicating a victory. The background shows the blue water of the pool and red lane markers. The image is framed by an orange border.

SAFEGUARDING REPORT

| 2022 - 2023

**SWIM
IRELAND**

Introduction

Welcome to the Swim Ireland Safeguarding Report covering our season, September 2022 to August 2023. It is a celebration that we had a full year of our sport following on from the disjointed seasons of previous years.

This past year has seen the fruition of some projects with other new initiatives starting out. These developments are helped by the regular input of Club Children's Officers each month through our CCO Forums. CCOs have been able to get back to working with groups of young people in their clubs, and we have now introduced the Aquatics Leaders Awards, ready to deliver to young people from 11 to 17+ years of age. This Award brings together the existing Club Youth Awards, the newly developed Emotional

Resilience and Leadership programme as well as elements from the previous Club Captains project to help young people develop leadership skills in and out of their club.

The highlights of this year are summarised below and show a stability in our safeguarding requirements.

I hope you find this third annual Safeguarding Report an interesting and informative read.

KATE HILLS *Head of Safeguarding, Ethics and Youth Development September 2023*



Facts and Figures Overview

-180- Club Children's Officers in 139 Clubs with members U18 years of age	-5128- Members with valid vetting	-5617- Members with valid Safeguarding Level 1 (ROI & NI)	-400- Members with valid Safeguarding Level 2 (Club Children's Officer course)	-384- Members with valid Safeguarding Level 3 (Designated Liaison Person course)
-100%- Affiliated clubs are compliant with the Sport Ireland Audit	-24- CCO Forums delivered to Club Children's Officers from 87 Clubs	-10- Emotional Resilience and Leadership Facilitators trained	-16- New Safeguarding Level 1 Tutors trained	Local club access for our Club Children's Officer to our Case Management Tool to safely and confidentially record issues affecting our young people, enabling better monitoring

It is worth noting that the period covered by this third report is 12 months; the previous and second Safeguarding Report spanned 22 months (over the COVID-19 period).

Youth Development Strategy

2022 – 2026

We are into the second year of the Youth Development Strategy, with the three core pillars of focus for our work with young people:

SAFEGUARDING

Our core business is ensuring a safe environment

ETHICS

Working with our safeguarding pillar, we ensure young people's rights are enshrined in our culture and ethos

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

We provide young people with development opportunities beyond their sport

Safeguarding Standards

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Swim Ireland works across the island of Ireland to provide a safe environment for young people in our activities wherever their location we bring together legislation and best practice standards from both jurisdictions to create a uniform and consistent environment for everyone to engage safely in our sport.

An important part of our work is understanding what a safe environment for young people is and how young people feel safe when they are taking part in any of our aquatic activities. Our safeguarding standards are regularly reviewed and monitored, and as we see technology and safe practices change, we update our policies and practices accordingly.

We work closely with the governing sports councils in Northern Ireland and Ireland to be at the forefront of best practices, being part of the Northern Ireland Safeguarding Children in Sport Strategic Group and the Sport Ireland Children in Sport Group. Safeguarding Reports from other sports are helpful measures in assessing gaps in safeguarding practices to ensure our environments remain leading in best practice.

As hosts for the first European U23 Swimming Championships in Dublin we were the first host NGB to require a safeguarding declaration for visiting teams to Ireland, to ensure team staff were aware of Irish safeguarding legislation but also the stringent requirements in our sport.



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Pillar 1: Safeguarding

Overview Of Safeguarding Measures In Place

We have identified roles working with children who are required to meet our safeguarding standards before taking up their role.

The minimum requirement for each person in an appointed role working with children and young people includes:

- Swim Ireland recognised qualification for role (coaches/teachers must be licensed)
- Valid vetting through Swim Ireland
- Valid Swim Ireland recognised Safeguarding training (at the required level for role*)
- Club/Associate membership

**Club Children's Officers undertake a further 2 training courses (Safeguarding Level 2 and Safeguarding Level 3). These requirements must be met before taking up the CCO role.*

Every person who applies for Swim Ireland membership or in a position of parent/carer for a member is required to:

- Implement and work to our codes of conducts (Committee, Coach/Teacher, CCO, Leader e.g. Team Manager or Official, Parent/Carer, Athlete)
- Work within our Safeguarding Policies and Procedures
- Follow the Rules of Swim Ireland

Facts and Figures

-139-

Clubs with young people and children

-5617-

Members with valid Safeguarding Level 1 (ROI & NI)

-400-

Members with valid Safeguarding Level 2 (Club Children's Officer course)

-384-

Members with valid Safeguarding Level 3 (Designated Liaison Person course)

-3799-

Members with an in-date National Vetting Bureau Vetting Credential, enabling them to work in the Republic of Ireland

-1329-

Members with an in-date Access NI Vetting Credential, enabling them to work in Northern Ireland

-100%-

Members are governed by our Codes of conduct (conditional upon becoming a member)

Safeguarding

Safeguarding Training

The period of this report spans a season of our sport, September 2022 to August 2023, with all safeguarding training undertaken on line. The online delivery allows for a greater reach of training, and the range of attendees stimulate a broader discussion of topics and viewpoints. All initial safeguarding courses attended are required to be tutor led.

During the period covered by this report:

-1637-

Members attended
Safeguarding Level 1
(ROI & NI)

-66-

Members attended
Safeguarding Level 2

-74-

Members attended
Safeguarding Level 3



Safeguarding



Compliance and Audit

Audits

Swim Ireland has compliance rules governing the appointment of individuals to certain roles at club affiliation or for individuals taking out memberships. Any individual appointed by a club to a relevant role or applying for Associate Membership needs to meet the minimum safeguarding requirements prior to taking up the role. This is the first audit for members to ensure any one individual cannot take up a role without meeting the safeguarding requirements.

Further audits are carried out during the season to check continued compliance of club and Associate Members. These include:

- Check of safeguarding and vetting credentials of members in any relevant roles on the membership system using bespoke reports

- Random audit check on rules for all roles working with children ensuring a member cannot be assigned to a relevant role without meeting the safeguarding standards

- Contact with a club requesting details of people working in roles in the club to cross check against the membership system (and safeguarding requirements)

- Club website/social media review to identify declared individuals working in club to cross check against membership system (and safeguarding requirements)

- Request for copies of person on duty rotas from clubs

43 clubs were audited throughout the season.

Risk Assessment and Child Safeguarding Statement compliance

A Risk Assessment (RA) and Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) are required to be submitted by each club and region every two years. The next submission period is from 1st September to 31st October 2023. Preparation work has commenced with a number of workshops delivered to assist CCOs and clubs. Each RA and CSS needs to be approved by the Head of Safeguarding.

73 Club Children's Officers and committee members from 58 clubs attended Compliance workshops.

Course compliance

Some qualification awards, e.g. Level 1 Teaching, Level 2 Coaching etc. have elements of the course that involve working with young people as part of the training. Individuals seeking to attain any of these qualifications are required to have safeguarding training and vetting in place before booking their place on a course:

We are pleased to announce that there is 100% compliance to safeguarding requirements where individuals book a place on relevant courses.

Safeguarding

Case Management

This Safeguarding Report covers our first full year back and the impacts of the lockdown periods are evident. The difficulties in social interactions and the impact of being away from our sport has resulted in an increase in associated issues.

Behaviour – breaches of the Codes of Conduct have risen, particularly in adult behaviour. Individual tolerance levels appear to be lower and together with the greater expectations following the COVID-19 period, this behaviour has created problems for clubs.

Use of devices to take images – there has been an increase in adults breaching the Filming and Photography Policy, where the policy is being ignored i.e. devices are not being registered and little or no understanding of the need for registration. There has been a decline in young people using their devices in changing areas, but this has been

Misuse of social media – this, as an issue, continues to rise amongst young people where there have been anonymous, negative or malicious postings or online bullying directed at members. However interventions by Club Children's Officers have often resulted in the real issue being identified, with relationships being restored between young people in the club. Reports of on-line sexualised behaviour are on the rise.

Lower level concerns continue to be monitored both at club and national level. Club Children's Officers now have the opportunity to record issues in their clubs securely and confidentially using the Case Management Tool. This has been successfully piloted over the last 18 months with 7 Club Children's Officers and will now be available to the Lead Club Children's Officer in all clubs.

The national case investigated by the An Garda Síochana has shown the effectiveness of Swim Ireland's Reporting Policy and in having robust procedures in place to work with statutory authorities for the protections of young people.

The Club Children's Officers have continued to have direct contact with the National Children's Officer for advice and guidance on issues. The Club Children's Officers also attend the monthly CCO Forums with opportunities to discuss difficult issues within their own network where real case studies (anonymised) provide valuable learning opportunities for the CCOs.



Pillar 2: Ethics

Swim Ireland fosters a culture of commitment to young people by recognising the importance of providing a safe and secure environment. Club Children's Officers in each club are trained and encouraged to listen and understand what young people want and need from their sport.

The Club Children's Officers and Regional Children's Officers work at their respective levels to ensure there is an ethical framework for those working with young people. The National Children's Officer works closely with the national level staff, from all departments to ensure the ethical commitment shows in the work we do with young people.

Club Children's Officers and Regional Children's Officer

Every Swim Ireland affiliated Club has at least one appointed Club Children's Officer and each region has an appointed Regional Children's Officer. Club and Regional Children's Officers have a position on the Club or Regional management committees or have direct access to the management committee to ensure there are no gaps in safeguarding governance.

The Club Children's Officers (CCO) and Regional Children's Officers (RCO) are vital for cascading the implementation of safeguarding standards and ethical values from the National Children's Officer (NCO) to club and regional operations. The CCOs and RCO also engage with young people to ensure they have opportunities to have their views and opinions listened to and considered.

-180-

Club Children's Officers are registered in 139 Clubs with members U18 years of age.

-4-

Regional Children's Officers registered at Regional Board/Committee level (Connacht, Leinster, Munster and Ulster)

Ethics

Club Children's Officer (CCO) Forums

Monthly CCO Forums deliver updates and present opportunities for the CCOs to discuss various topics of interest or concern.

Topics covered in 2022/2023 were:

- CLANG – a mental health and well-being promotion
- Safeguarding requirement for affiliation
- Understanding the Aquatics Leader Award
- Emotional Resilience and Leadership programme for Clubs
- Codes of Conduct for young people
- Exploring the competition pathway
- Completing the Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment
- P.A.C.T. poster – promoting safe online practices

Discussion points in 2022/2023 included:

- Safeguarding policies including setting boundaries for social media, codes of conduct, away trips, travelling
- Exploring issues using scenarios and case studies from clubs
- Understanding who is subject to safeguarding requirements
- Understanding the meaning of confidentiality
- Aquatic Parent Programme – what parents need to know
- Reflections on the year and plan for next year

-24-

CCO Forums
were held

-505-

Club Children's Officers
attended over the season

-87-

Clubs attended one or more
CCO Forums

Ethics

Performance Ethical Framework

The ethical framework operates at national level through to our National Centre, National Programme and National Team athletes. Performance athletes often feel isolated from their club environments and we have the following in place to ensure their needs are met:

- Provision of safe environment respecting the athletes needs
- Clear expectations of behaviour for both coaches and athletes
- Provision of the highest standards of knowledge and expertise
- Feedback opportunities for each athlete
- Recognition and promotion of the team relationship
- Encouragement of athletes as leaders
- Support for athletes in other areas of their lives
- Support for National Team opportunities

One Good Coach® Workshop

Sport provides an opportunity for young people to develop trusting and supportive relationships with adults.

Young people have clear ideas on who they trust; for 80% of young people their sports coach is one of their top three trusted persons and is a person young people are in regular contact with. In collaboration with Jigsaw the One Good Coach® workshop was developed to recognise the value of the Athlete/Coach relationship. This is a free online resource for Coaches/Teachers to complete in their own time to support their understanding of being a trusted person.



-845-

Coaches/Teachers have signed up
for/completed this workshop

Pillar 3: Youth Development

Our members and young people embraced the challenge of participating online, and our programmes were well attended with easy access to courses and upskill sessions.

Club Emotional Resilience and Leadership Programme (ER&LP)

The ER&LP was initially delivered to regional athletes and coaches. It is now available as a club programme. A club signs up for the programme and following an introductory session with an ER&LP Tutor, the club members (aged 11 years and older) have access to the whole programme for two years.

10

ER&LP Tutors have been trained to deliver the Introductory ER&LP session for Club registrants

40

Club Children's Officers from 38 Clubs participated in information sessions to familiarise themselves with the programme



Youth Development

Engagement with Young People

Workshops

Since the return of our sport, sessions with young people returned to being in-person rather than on-line. On-line sessions are useful for accessing a wide number of people over a large geographical area, however that forum can be challenging for young people in expressing themselves and being given space and support for their work. With the full return to sport this year we resumed the Working with Young People series. This is rolled out through the CCO Forums and through the RCOs.

The Working with Young People series provides ideas for workshops and discussion topics with young people in our clubs.

Using the Laura Lundy model of engaging young people (see end of report), the Working with Young People series provides ideas and topics for CCOs to use to engage and work with young people in their clubs. These include:

- Team building
- Coping with challenges
- Squad/team contracts
- Planning Club Youth Awards
- Safe on-line activities
- Emotional resilience
- Social events
- Starting out: how to engage with young people

This series has been delivered to the CCOs through the CCO Forums over the course of the year and is published as a standalone series **through the Swim Ireland website.**



Youth Development

Surveys

Following from the successful engagement with young people through the use of surveys during the COVID-19 period, we have provided guidance for Clubs on using surveys and on framing questions to ensure young people are asked meaningful and purposeful questions.

As part of this we compiled a list of questions from young people for coaches and teachers to provide responses to commonly asked questions.

Club Children's Officer

The Club Children's Officer remains a valuable individual for young people to engage with locally by being a neutral and unbiased person for a young person to talk with. Parents, coaches, team managers and young people are encouraged to know who their CCO is, by ensuring CCOs introduce themselves to their squads and during club meetings and by having their contact details available.

Educational Opportunities for young people

We encourage young people to continue their aquatic journey by offering educational opportunities in becoming a teacher, coach or lifeguard in their chosen aquatic disciplines. For some young people, they take this on at the same time as they are continuing in their sport.



Youth Development

Teaching/Coaching Qualifications

In the period of this report, the following numbers of young people (U18) qualified in the various aquatic disciplines:

-179-

Level 1 Assistant
Swimming Teachers
Level 2
Swimming Teachers

-23-

Level 1 Assistant
Swimming Coaches

-6-

Level 2
Swimming Coaches
Level 1 Assistant
Water Polo Coaches

-5-

Level 1 Assistant
Diving Coaches

Lifeguard opportunities

Young people aged 16+ years can take a lifeguarding course with the Royal Lifesaving Society (RLSS) through Swim Ireland

-22-

Young people achieved the National Pool Lifeguard (NPLQ) qualification

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Youth Development

Athletes' Commissions

Swim Ireland have appointed two Athletes' Commissions. One acts as a representative body for all swimming and diving athletes and the other acts as a representative body for water polo athletes.

Objective of the Athletes' Commission (Swimming and Diving)

To be a consultative body of Swim Ireland and as a voice for Irish athletes.

To ensure strong channels of communication for athlete specific issues at the appropriate level.

To ensure that the athletes' points of view are heard and considered in Swim Ireland decisions.

To ensure respect for the rights of the athletes

Objectives of the Water Polo Athletes' Commission

To act as a consultative body for water polo and in particular a voice for Irish water polo athletes.

To draw up recommendations for the National Water Polo Committee (NWPC) regarding operational aspects of water polo

To ensure that the athletes' points of view are heard and considered in NWPC decisions and to have an appropriate feedback mechanism from the NWPC to the athlete's commission.

To ensure that strong channels of communication for athlete specific issues at the appropriate level exists.

The two Athletes' Commissions are in place and actively engaging with their respective disciplines.



Future Developments for Safeguarding

Aquatic Leader (AL) – this has been repurposed from the Junior and Senior Aquatic Awards and now comprises two sections. All young people complete the first sections of the award. For 11 – 15-year-olds they will be awarded the Junior Aquatics Leader; for 16+ years they can continue on to achieve the Senior Aquatics Leader Award.

Information HUB – still under development, this will provide a wealth of information and knowledge for young people, in and out of sport (expected release: early 2024).

Case Management Tool – this is available for all CCOs with the objective that all clubs will be using this tool by the end of the strategy, in 2026.

Purpose written policies for young people – following the review of the Safeguarding Policy, relevant policies will be written for young people e.g. PACT poster, advising on caring use of social media.

Safeguarding policies will be highlighted throughout the forthcoming year, to raise awareness and provide members with guidance on best practice.

Auditing will continue with clubs and individuals to raise the awareness of safeguarding compliancy needed for roles and member licences.

Head of Safeguarding, Ethics and Youth Development – Kate Hills

Kate has been working with Swim Ireland as the Head of Safeguarding and the National Children's Officer for 17 years, overseeing changes to legislation and safeguarding practices to ensure Swim Ireland Safeguarding Policies are up-to-date and relevant for our sport. As the Head of Safeguarding, Kate reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer in Swim Ireland and through the CEO of the Swim Ireland Board. Kate reports in person to the Swim Ireland Board annually and where necessary, reports directly to the Board on matters of interest or concern. Kate also works closely with the Athletes' Commissions advising on safeguarding matters to ensure the protection and confidentiality of athlete information is maintained and concerns are dealt with in the correct manner.

Kate currently holds a Master's Degree in Child Protection and Welfare and is writing a thesis on understanding the stressors and challenges of club level swimmers for a Professional Doctorate in Childhood Studies. Kate also sits on the strategic groups for safeguarding children in sport in both Sport Ireland and Sport NI. Widely renowned for best practice policies in NGBs, Swim Ireland's Safeguarding Policy documents are up to date and reflective of safeguarding, ethics and youth development for aquatic sports.

Working with Young People – Lundy Model of Engagement

SPACE

Have YP's view been actively sought?

Was there a safe space in which YP can express themselves freely?

Have steps been taken to ensure that all YP can take part?

VOICE

Have YP been given the information they need to form a view?

Do YP know that they do not have to take part?

Have YP been given a range of options as to how they might choose to express themselves?

AUDIENCE

Is there a process for communicating YP's views?

Do YP know who their views are being communicated to?

Does that person/body have the power to make decisions?

INFLUENCE

Were YP's views considered by those with power to effect change?

Are there procedures to ensure that YP's views are taken seriously?

Have YP been given feedback explaining reasons decisions made?