

Child Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment of Harm (updated April 2024)

Guidance for safeguarding standards is provided by the Children First Act 2015 (ROI) and two documents: Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children (2017) (ROI) and Co-operating to Safeguard Children and Young People in Northern Ireland (2017) (NI). These documents detail the safeguarding requirements for organisations working with young people. There are two mandatory documents to be completed by Swim Ireland, regions and clubs:

1. Risk Assessment of Harm
2. Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS)

Risk Assessment of Harm

The risk assessment of harm is based on the Children First Act 20125 (ROI) and is required to be completed by Swim Ireland and all regions and clubs affiliated to Swim Ireland across the island of Ireland. The need to complete this document in Ireland is a legal one and in Northern Ireland it is required as good practice and is part of Swim Ireland's safeguarding standards and rules.

The risk assessment requires each provider to undertake an assessment of the risk of harm to children where young people are involved in a relevant service and requires the provider to appoint a relevant person, state the risks and the measures taken to alleviate these risks. The risk assessment information is then included in the Child Safeguarding Statement.

In Swim Ireland:

- the provider is Swim Ireland, the region or the club
- the relevant service refers to the provision of aquatic activities for children and young people
- the relevant person is the Children's Officer (CO) at club, regional or national level

Completing the Risk Assessment of Harm

Any risk of harm particular to an environment or situation is included and any specific risk to Swim Ireland, the region or club should be identified. The risk assessment template is available on the Swim Ireland website and should be used as guidance for clubs and regions. Additional risks identified as specific to a region or club must be added into the template document.

The risk assessment of harm is completed by the club or regional committee, as the provider, and must be signed and dated by an officer of the committee and the CO. The risk assessment must be uploaded to the region or club profile on the Swim Ireland membership system. The Swim Ireland risk assessment is completed and signed by the National Children's Officer (NCO) and CEO and displayed on the Swim Ireland website.

Child Safeguarding Statement

The Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) outlines the principles, policies and procedures in this document to ensure the safety and well-being of children in relevant activities and identifies those responsible for overseeing the implementation of the policies. The CSS specifies the need to carry out a risk assessment of harm, as described, to assess the potential for harm to occur to young people during any Swim Ireland activities.

Completing the CSS

Once the risk assessment of harm has been completed, the relevant committee must also complete the CSS. The CSS contains specific information in accordance with Children First Act 2015 (ROI). The CSS template is available on the Swim Ireland website and should be used as guidance for clubs and regions.

For clubs and regions, the CSS must be signed by the CCO or RCO as the relevant person and state the Mandated Person (the National Children's Officer). The CSS must be uploaded to the region or club profile on the Swim Ireland membership system. The Swim Ireland CSS is completed and signed by the NCO as the relevant person. Where a risk assessment or CSS is required for other activities a Designated Liaison Person or NCO, as appropriate, will be the signatory.

Review of the Children Safeguarding Statement and Risk Assessment of Harm

To ensure best practice and good governance in a club or region the risk assessment should be reviewed by the relevant committee regularly. It is recommended that this is on a committee's agenda at least twice a year or when a significant change occurs, e.g. taking on a new pool, facility, activity etc.

The Children First Act 2015 (ROI) states the risk assessment of harm and the child safeguarding statement must be renewed within 24 months of a previous assessment. For Swim Ireland affiliated clubs and activities there is a set period for renewing the documents; this applies to all regions and clubs with under 18 memberships. The risk assessment of harm and the CSS is required to be renewed between the following times:

1st September 2025 - 31st October 2025

1st September 2027 - 31st October 2027

1st September 2029 - 31st October 2029

Regions and clubs will be supported during these periods to complete their review through the relevant CO and the committee.

New clubs

New Clubs are required to complete a risk assessment on affiliation and thereafter during the specified renewal periods as above.