SAFEGUARDING REPORT

September **2020** - June **2022**

SWIM IRELAND

Introduction

Welcome to the Swim Ireland Safeguarding Report covering the period September 2020 to June 2022, almost two full seasons of our sport in the universally most challenging environment for young people.

The reporting period started when there were severe restrictions on access to indoor training facilities for young people, and whilst we saw a growth of outdoor aquatic activities where fitness and fun was still on the agenda, many young people missed their indoor training environment. By the midpoint, many of our clubs were getting back in their pools albeit, in some cases, with reduced access. At the end of this reporting period, we are now enjoying an almost full return to our sport.

The environment presented a rethink to the way we engaged and the stark recognition of the impact on young people being without their sport. Huge credit should go to our members who kept the enthusiasm and connections alive, whilst abiding by our stringent safeguarding measures. Members embraced the mantra *'Well Meaning is Not Good Enough'* by ensuring those working with young people met our standards. These standards are also directly supported by the Swim Ireland Board and Chief Executive Officer

Facts and Figures Summary

- 201 Club Children's Officers in 139 Clubs with members U18 years of age.
- 4494 members with valid vetting
- 5719 members with valid Safeguarding Level 1 (ROI & NI)
- 444 members with valid Safeguarding Level 2 (Club Children's Officer course)
- 408 members with valid Safeguarding Level 3 (Designated Liaison Person course)
- 100% of affiliated clubs complied with the new Sport Ireland Safeguarding Audit
- First all-Ireland NGB with a bespoke Case Management Tool to safely record and provide accurate metrics on issues affecting our young people, enabling better responses
- 42 CCO Forums delivered to 1313 Club Children's Officers from 120 Clubs
- Increased engagement with young people through workshops, surveys, Club Children's Officers, with clear mandates for our future commitments to hearing and listening to their voices.

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

Kate Hills
Head of Safeguarding
Ethics and Youth Development
July 2022

Youth Development Strategy

2022 – 2026

Moving on from this period where there have been many obstacles, the future is exciting as one strategic period ends the next begins.

Our third Young People's Strategic Plan, 2022 – 2026 will have three pillars:

SAFEGUARDING

Our core business in ensuring a safe environment

ETHICS

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

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Enabling young people to develop beyond their sport through their engagement with us

Safeguarding Standards

As an organisation working across the island of Ireland, we bring together the legislation and best practice standards in sporting activities from both jurisdictions to create a uniform and consistent environment for young people to participate. These safeguarding standards apply throughout our work, creating an overarching philosophy for young people engaged with Swim Ireland.

We are part of the Northern Ireland Strategic Group that developed and published the *Safeguarding Children in Sport Strategic Group 3-Year plan 2021 – 2024*. Whilst a plan for Northern Ireland sports bodies, the strategic objectives are aligned with our own existing Swim Ireland Safeguarding Policies.

As a member of the Sport Ireland Children in Sport Group, we have informed on best practices for young people in sport through the recently published *Safeguarding Guidance for Children and Young People in Sport*. As part of this group, we were also foremost in maintaining the safe environment for young people in sport during COVID 19 by piloting and delivering all Sport Ireland safeguarding training virtually.

Pillar 1: Safeguarding

Standard Safeguarding Measures

All roles working with children and young people are required to attend safeguarding training and undergo vetting as a minimum.

All Club Children's Officers are required to undertake further training, attending Safeguarding Level 2 and Safeguarding Level 3 as well as the basic safeguarding training required by all roles.

At the end of this reporting period, we have registered the following credentials:

5719	444	408	3280	1214
members with valid Safeguarding Level 1 *(ROI & NI)*	members with valid Safeguarding Level 2 *(Club Children's Officer course)*	members with valid Safeguarding Level 3 *(Designated Liaison Person course)*	members with an in-date National Vetting Bureau Vetting Credential, enabling them to work in the Republic of Ireland	members with an in-date Access NI Vetting Credential, enabling them to work in Northern Ireland

In addition, in a time that was dominated by COVID-19 and since, we prioritised the need for members to understand the COVID-19 restrictions imposed in Ireland and Northern Ireland:

2831 members attended bespoke Swim Ireland COVID-19 training to ensure the maintenance of H&S guidelines

Safeguarding

Safeguarding Training

The period of this report spans a season that started in a lockdown period with safeguarding training taking place online. These online tutor-led deliveries remain the delivery method today enabling a wider and broader reach of members and will remain so into the future.

The three levels of Safeguarding Training are provided by 9 Swim Ireland Tutors.

During the period covered by this report:

2068
members attended
Safeguarding Level 1
(ROI & NI)

160
members attended
Safeguarding Level 2

145
members attended
Safeguarding Level 3

Safeguarding

Compliancy and Audit

Due to government restrictions, audit visits to Clubs were limited during the period of this report. The responsibility of creating a safe environment for young people rested on Club Children's Officers and Club Committees to self-audit members working with young people. We imposed stricter measures for affiliation of members during this time and conducted system audits of those registered in certain roles working with young people.

Compliancy measures during restrictions included:

- Audit of safeguarding and vetting credentials of members in key roles on the membership system undertaken using purpose-built database reports to identify expiring credentials or non-compliant members.
- Additional rules were applied to membership roles on the membership database, ensuring a member cannot be assigned to a relevant role without meeting the safeguarding standards
- Safeguarding Club Audit training delivered to 119 Club Children's Officers from 76 Clubs, to guide club committees in completing the Safeguarding Risk Assessment of Harm and Child Safeguarding Statement*.
- Club assessment undertaken of their overall safeguarding standards for the Sport Ireland Safeguarding Club Audit*

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

- 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)
- Signed the appropriate Code of Conduct for role (Committee, Coach/Teacher, CCO, Leader e.g. Team Manager or Official)
- Club membership

All the above is required prior to taking up a role working with young people in a Swim Ireland Club.

NB: All parents/carers and young people are required to sign a Code of Conduct on application for membership of a Club.

We continue to work with Clubs on their safeguarding affiliation requirements to ensure compliancy with regular audit checks.

**100% of fully affiliated Clubs at the end of this reporting period have completed and submitted the Club Risk Assessment, the Child Safeguarding Statement, and the Sport Ireland Club Audit*

Safeguarding

Case Management

During the restrictions, there were few sporting opportunities for young people, meaning young people did not have direct access to trusted people within their clubs. This affected the type of issues reported. Once our sport recommenced in September 2021, the issues reported reflect the difficulties people experienced during the restrictions including difficulties with socialisation, acceptable and appropriate behaviours, plus collaboration and working together. It took time to re-establish those relationships between trusted adults and young people.

There was a decline during the restricted periods in certain behaviours that had been of concern:

- Parental/carer behaviours
- Adult behaviours in club environment
- Breaches of codes of conduct

On return to sport, we recorded rises in:

- Inappropriate use of devices – mainly connected with taking images in private areas such as changing rooms
- Mental health issues – difficulties coping with being away from their sport; and then returning with the uncertainty of being able to cope
- Eating disorders – not apparent until returning to physical activities and often only evident when undertaking physical activity
- Lack of socialisation skills – with no physical access to friendship networks within clubs young people found it hard to restore relationships
- Difficulty in coping – young people returned to their sport, school, and other external activities together, going from full stop to full-on in a short space of time

The CCO Forums and regular contact with CCOs throughout the period provided support for young people in facing these difficulties.

Pillar 2: Ethics

The Swim Ireland culture and commitment to young people recognises the importance of providing a safe and secure environment in order to listen and understand what young people want and need from their sport. This involves creating an ethical framework around the work we do, being reflected at every level for every young person.

Club Children's Officers

The presence of a Club Children's Officer (CCO) is vital for the implementation of safeguarding standards and ethical values in a club whilst also undertaking an important role in engaging with young people.

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

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

Club Children's Officer (CCO) Forums

There were 42 CCO Forums delivered to 1313 Club Children's Officers from 120 Clubs during the period of this report.

CCO Forums provide support for CCOs covering topics such as:

- Lockdown challenges for young people
- Safe online practices
- Supporting young people out of sport i.e. maintaining relationships
- Returning to water
- Re-establishing safe practices in clubs
- Re-establishing relationships and appropriate behaviours
- Re-establishing trust between athlete and coach
- Review of policies and practices e.g. age-appropriate policies, use of camera devices, person on duty role, diversity, and inclusion

Ethics

Performance Ethical Framework

In recognition of the different environments performance athletes often train and compete in, we have a bespoke ethical framework operating at national level for our performance athletes including commitments to:

- 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

The Athlete Ethical Framework recognises the Swim Ireland duty of care:

#shamROCK	Respect	Ownership	Commitment	Knowledge

One Good Coach® Workshop

Sport provides an opportunity for young people to develop trusting and supportive relationships with adults. Prior to the COVID-19 restrictions, 80% of young people rated their sports coach as one of their top three trusted persons. During the lockdown periods, where club training could not take place, this rating fell to less than 15%, in effect removing a valuable source of support for young people in sport.

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.

555 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.

Emotional Resilience and Leadership (ER&LP)

Swim Ireland delivered, in conjunction with MITOS, the Emotional Resilience and Leadership Programme. This involved bringing together coaches and athletes in a parallel programme over 6 weeks, one for coaches and one for young people. The programme was designed to raise an awareness of, and to enable a healthy sense of self for young people by recognising their emotional responses, as well as their coping and leadership strategies.

The ER&LP was designed to complement training programmes at club, regional and national levels.

The age specific programme was delivered to:

108	260	158	129	28
Coaches	young people aged 11/12 years	young people aged 13/14 years	young people aged 15/16 years	young people aged 17+ years

38 Club Children's Officers from
33 Clubs participated in information sessions to enable the programme to be delivered through Clubs

Engagement with Young People

Opportunities were presented during the season for young people to give their views and engage with Swim Ireland.

Youth OpenTalk – this was a short forum style workshop where young people were offered the opportunity to put forward their views on a variety of topics, and to run interviews with other athletes and Swim Ireland staff.

Direct survey – a nationally led survey eliciting young people views on being away from their sport and what was important for them on their return. The results of this were passed to Club Children's Officers to implement in their clubs.

Club Children's Officer – local opportunities for young people to engage though online forums and suggestions sessions; this was facilitated by training Club Children's Officers (through the CCO Forums) in youth engagement techniques.

Educational Opportunities

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 themselves.

Teaching/Coaching Qualifications

The following numbers of young people accepted the opportunity to gain a qualification in an aquatic discipline:

203	27	52	1	13	3
Level 1 Assistant Swimming Teacher	Level 2 Swimming Teacher	Level 1 Assistant Swimming Coach	Level 2 Swimming Coach	Level 1 Assistant Water Polo Coach	Level 1 Assistant Diving Coach

Lifeguard Opportunities

Young people aged 16+years can start the following lifeguarding courses through our association with Royal Lifesaving Society (RLSS):

Currently twenty-seven young people have achieved one of the following qualifications:

- National Pool Lifeguard (NPLQ)
- National Vocational Beach Lifeguard (NVBLQ)
- National Rescue Award for Swimming Teachers and Coaches (NRASTC)
- Open Water Lifeguard (OWL)

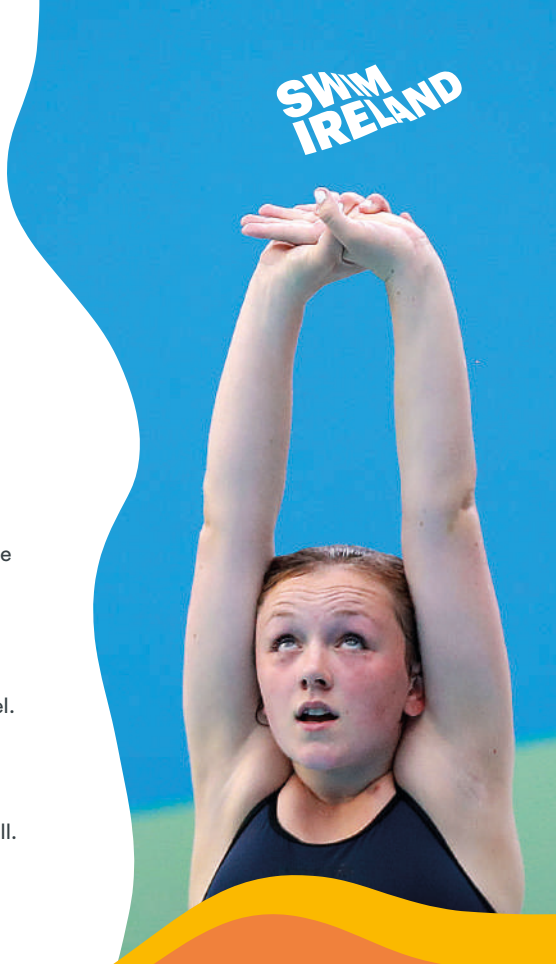
Athletes' Commission

Swim Ireland have appointed an Athletes' Commission, to act as a representative body for all swimming and diving athletes (excluding Master's athletes). The objective of the Athletes' Commission, made up of 5 – 9 athletes from the disciplines of swimming and diving, is to recognise the voice of the athlete

Objective of the Athletes' Commission:

- 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' point of view is heard and considered in Swim Ireland decisions.
- To ensure respect for the rights of the athletes

Later this year, 2022, there will be a dedicated Water Polo Athlete's Commission established as well.



Future Developments for Young People

Developments in the new Strategic Plan 2022 - 2026

Future programmes that centre on the development of young people in our new Strategic Plan include:

- Junior Aquatic Leader (JAL) – this incorporates the current Club Youth Awards, developing and understanding their well-being and emotional resilience, beginning their development as a Leader in sport
- Senior Aquatic Leader (SAL) – this follows on from the JAL and furthers a young person's skills in planning, development and leadership incorporating much of the current Club Captains Programme
- Information HUB – providing a source of information for young people on their life connected to their sport i.e. good nutrition, coping mechanisms, progressions, positive skills and characteristics, time management etc.
- Emotional Resilience Programmes in Clubs – this club-based programme is being developed from the ER&LP delivered to our regional athletes, ready to be rolled out in Clubs
- Athlete Engagement Framework – this identifies all the areas that young people have contact with Swim Ireland to ensure there are mechanisms for capturing their views and opinions and allowing a meaningful feedback opportunity for them.

Head of Safeguarding, Ethics and Youth Development

Kate Hills has been working with Swim Ireland as the Head of Safeguarding, the National Children's Officer for 16 years, managing the changes to legislation, best practices and overseeing the Swim Ireland safeguarding policy development and implementation for young people in our sport. The Head of Safeguarding reports directly to the Chief Executive Officer in Swim Ireland; and is also required to report, through the CEO, to the Swim Ireland Board with attendance at two Board meetings annually.

Kate currently holds a Masters in Child Protection and Welfare and is working towards a 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.

The Swim Ireland Values and Behaviours guides the delivery of our Strategy and will be evidenced by Swim Ireland staff, volunteers, athletes, and workforce in their actions.

Values & Behaviours

S

Skills, Professionalism & Knowledge

We harness our skills, knowledge, and experience in an always professional manner, to allow us to continually grow and develop Swim Ireland..

W

Wellbeing & Inclusivity

We aim to be inclusive and welcoming in our sport, seeking to empower everyone to participate in a safe and enjoyable environment, where everyone is treated with the same level of respect, equality and importance.

I

Integrity & Excellence in Governance

We see governance as the central pillar to a successful, high performing organisation whereby honesty and transparency is key.

M

My Passion, Our Vision!

We are purposeful, driven and passionate in the pursuit of our vision and the delivery of our objectives and services across the organisation.

Teamwork & Collaboration

We work together and empower each other with a clarity of purpose and vision in all of our working relationships to achieve optimal success in all we do.