



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

An initiative within the Department of Rural and Community Development.



IRELAND'S NATIONAL DROWNING PREVENTION STRATEGY

2018 – 2027



Water Safety Ireland
Sábháilteacht Uisce na hÉireann

SCALING UP EFFORTS TO BRING DROWNINGS DOWN

Bucket, bathtub, pond or pool: wherever there is water, there is threat of drowning.



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2	AWARENESS	13
FOREWORD	4	TRAINING	16
OUR MISSION	5	INTERVENTION	19
FACTS & STATS	6	ACTION	22
5 DROWNING PREVENTION PILLARS	7	BEST WORK PRACTICES	24
EDUCATION	10	OUR STAKEHOLDERS	26

INTRODUCTION



Michael Ring, TD

Minister for Rural & Community Development

“By making water safety a part of the conversation, we make it part of our culture. I believe that will have huge benefits for us all.”

Why do we need a national drowning prevention strategy?

In Ireland, we have 3171km of coastline. We have over 12,000 loughs and our 5 longest rivers alone measure over 1070km. Our waters are an amazing resource yet 133 people lose their lives to drowning on them each and every year.

PREVENTION IS VITAL

Once someone starts to drown, the outcome is often fatal. Unlike other injuries, survival is determined almost exclusively at the scene of the incident. It depends on two highly variable factors. How quickly the person is removed from the water and how swiftly proper resuscitation is performed. Of those that do survive, many are left with severe life changing injuries.

While the causes of drowning are many and complex, prevention can be achieved through the combination of many simple and easily achievable actions. By

making small changes in how we all act on, in or near our waters, we can have a huge impact.

LIKE OTHER NATIONAL HEALTH ISSUES, IT BEGINS WITH TARGETED ATTENTION

Smoking, drink driving, heart disease... there's no doubt that targeted attention can have a real and lasting impact on public health issues.

In Ireland that means rethinking every aspect of water safety. In swimming pools and at beaches, rivers and lakes, in our homes, on our farms and in our work places, water poses real and often unseen dangers. By shining a national spotlight on them and on all aspects of water safety, we can give these dangers the focus they need and together scale up our efforts to bring drownings down.



JUST IN TIME...

'There was a young man in trouble on the slipway. Two men from Cork had tried to get him. He was on the bottom for about 4 minutes but they couldn't get down to him because the tide was falling. When the tide's falling it pushes the water away from the slip. So when they had jumped in, they had actually been moving away from him each time. I went in and managed to get hold of him.'

'Sean handed him to be in the water so I took him ashore and another gentleman who was there hauled him out with me. I proceeded to deliver CPR. We had him back... and next thing he went again!'

'The Rescue Helicopter arrived and they had to wait for some time because he kept slipping in and out of consciousness. Eventually they got him stable and as they were taking him away, he managed to sit up in the stretcher and... he waved.'

'The amazing thing about all this is that while all this is going on, his mother is actually giving birth to a baby girl.'

SEAN SLATTERY & DAVID SLATTERY
SHARE THEIR STORY
'JUST IN TIME' AWARD WINNERS 2017

Water Safety Ireland's 'Just In Time' Awards, kindly sponsored by SEIKO Ireland, recognise the initiative, valour, bravery and skill of a member of the public who comes to the assistance of a person/s in distress in water.



FOREWORD

Martin O'Sullivan

Chairman – Water Safety Ireland

On average 133 people lose their lives to drowning in Ireland every year. It's a tragic loss and for every person that dies the effect ripples outwards, devastating families, friends and colleagues. This is our chance to change that.

I believe this strategy, with your help, has the potential to significantly reduce drownings in Ireland. It is a plan built upon the hard work, vision and insight of all our members, volunteers and associated partners. It employs learnings from all over the world and from every corner of Ireland to set out a clear action plan that will elevate water safety in Irish culture. That's something that will benefit this generation and every generation to come.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has firmly recommended that drowning needs targeted attention, just like other public health issues. This plan sets out how Water Safety Ireland will do just that.

The strategy identifies 5 strategic Drowning Prevention Pillars

that highlight the step changes needed to bring the number of drownings in Ireland down. Under each, we have highlighted specific actions that Water Safety Ireland will undertake to achieve them.

From ensuring every child in every school is taught basic water safety skills to increasing public awareness of best practices for all aquatic environments, this strategy delivers a bold vision.

Our ambition is to cut the number of drowning fatalities in Ireland by 50% in the next ten years. It's a goal I believe we can achieve. But we can only do it with the help of all our stakeholders.

I'm asking you to play your part. Embrace this plan and join with us in making these goals a reality. Help make water safety a bigger part of the conversation.

Together we will save lives.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Martin O'Sullivan".

OUR MISSION

Through education, training and action, we will foster a culture that encourages safer attitudes and behaviours in all those who live, work and play on or near water in Ireland.

AN ACHIEVABLE GOAL

Together we can reduce drownings in Ireland by 50% by 2027 and in doing so make our waters safer for the highest risk populations, groups and communities.

This is Ireland's National Drowning Prevention Plan. Developed by Water Safety Ireland, it is a blueprint to save lives and reduce the number of drownings in Ireland by 50% by 2027. It is also a statement of what we can achieve when all our stakeholders combine their efforts with a shared focus.

For our volunteers and our committee members; for our lifeguards, teachers and trainers; for our strategic partners and for every member of the general public; this plan is a rally call to promote a culture of water safety in Ireland for good.

Together we can bring drownings down.



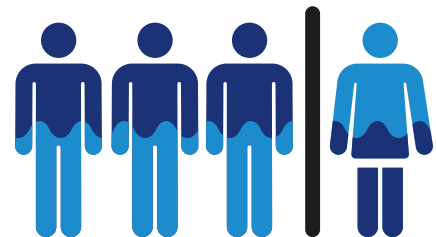
DROWNING IS A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE
THAT MUST BE ADDRESSED.
THE NUMBERS DON'T LIE.



THE ECONOMIC
COST OF
DROWNINGS
IN IRELAND IS
€266M EACH YEAR



IRELAND'S
DROWNING
DEATH TOLL IS
MORE THAN
TWO THIRDS
OF THAT ON
ALL OUR ROADS



IN IRELAND, THERE ARE
3 TIMES
MORE MALE
DROWNING FATALITIES
THAN THERE ARE FEMALE



GLOBALLY THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY
42 DROWNING DEATHS,
EVERY HOUR, EVERY DAY.

372,000 PEOPLE EVERY YEAR.



Scaling up efforts to bring drownings down

*FIVE DROWNING
PREVENTION PILLARS
FOR CHANGE*



EDUCATION

Ensure every child in Ireland has the opportunity to learn basic water safety skills in both primary and secondary schools.



AWARENESS

Give targeted attention to all aspects of drowning prevention on both a national and community level.

These five pillars frame the key changes Water Safety Ireland will affect in delivering against Ireland's National Drowning Prevention Plan.



TRAINING

Increase the number of trained experts in Community Water Safety, Rescue Boat, Lifeguarding, Pool Safety and Swim Instruction.



INTERVENTION

Promote, maintain and enhance public drowning prevention equipment and environments.



ACTION

Challenge all volunteers and stakeholders to take ownership of Ireland's National Drowning Prevention Plan and play their part in delivering against it.

**In Ireland, thirty
children aged
fourteen and
under have
drowned in the last
ten years –
the equivalent
of an entire
classroom.**





EDUCATION

Ensure every child in Ireland has the opportunity to learn basic water safety skills in both primary and secondary schools.

AMBITION

DELIVERY

FOSTER A GREATER LEVEL OF WATER SAFETY AWARENESS

- > Work with the Department of Education to promote awareness of Water Safety at primary and secondary levels
- > Lead the implementation of a comprehensive integrated Water Safety certified education programme in at both primary and secondary levels

INCREASE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING

- > Apply new techniques and initiatives to Water Safety awareness and education which are both interactive and age-appropriate
- > Translate our education & awareness material for non-national & minority groups
- > Continue to develop a corps of suitably trained personnel to support Water Safety Ireland

ENSURE EASY ACCESS TO TEACHING RESOURCES

- > Review the library of teaching programmes for all IWS Courses
- > Translate our education & awareness material for non-national & minority groups
- > Adopt digital technologies to make educational packs more available



JUST IN TIME...



'Where the football team got in at the beach, it's actually the most dangerous part. There's a very strong rip current that flows from the beach out to sea. They would've been about chest height in the water and would've been sucked off their feet straight out.'

'Usually the surfers use the current to get out to the waves. And then it's very useful. But when you don't know how the current works then it's very dangerous. You wouldn't think, when you go in the water just to cool down your calf muscles that you'd get pulled out to the Sea.'

'Most of the lads weren't strong swimmers at all. They had no experience working with water. If you're going somewhere, find out the local knowledge. Try to keep an eye for currents, calm areas on the sea. They might look the safest. But the rips are what cause the majority of problems.'

Honestly, respect the water because you never know what will come out of it.'

OWEN MURPHY, FRIEDERIKE ROST & FERGAL MULLER
SHARE THEIR STORY
'JUST IN TIME' AWARD WINNERS 2017



'I was off duty, driving home from work. I was in the middle lane of traffic going over the bridge in Waterford City. I saw a man in distress enter the water. So, I immediately abandoned my car and ran to the nearest life buoy.'

When I got to the river's edge, the river was very fast flowing. I rang 999, the Coast guard. Told them what was happening that they needed to get there quick.

I got to the life buoy and threw it in. He wasn't so determined to grab it. But I persuaded and persuaded and he got it. I just kept persistent with him. You know "swim... swim!" And he did. Thank God, he did.

But you know, if that life buoy hadn't been there, with that current, the outcome would have been different!'

GARDA MICHELLE POWER SHARES HER STORY
'JUST IN TIME' AWARD WINNER 2017



AWARENESS

Give targeted attention to all aspects of drowning prevention on both a national and community level.

AMBITION

DELIVERY

INCREASE WATER SAFETY IRELANDS'S CORE KNOWLEDGE BASE

- > Analyse drowning statistics to identify at-risk groups with a view to reducing the number of drowning fatalities
- > Conduct research & development on drowning prevention

STREAMLINE AND ENHANCE PUBLIC AWARENESS COMMUNICATIONS

- > Develop effective marketing, media, online and print campaigns
- > Produce guidelines to assist media depict positive images and behaviour and to help them to avoid showing unsafe water safety behaviour in advertising & media
- > Establish a communications policy for Water Safety Ireland

TARGET ALL AT RISK GROUPS

- > Continue to promote the wearing of lifejackets to reduce boating accidents and drownings
- > Assist the development of further strategies to help reduce suicide through drowning
- > Promote awareness of Water Safety amongst those traveling overseas



**ENSURE GREATER
RECOGNITION OF
WATER SAFETY
IRELAND AS THE
NATIONAL WATER
SAFETY BODY**

- › Increase opportunities to brand Water Safety Ireland as the Statutory Governing Body responsible for the promotion of Water Safety
- › Develop the commercial entity of our organisation to improve branding and PR opportunities





JUST IN TIME...

'Probably the nicest day we had this Summer. It was early June. The sun was shining. It was 20 plus degrees. Fantastic! The park was really busy. We were sitting on the opposite side of the lake where it was quiet.

There were a couple of kids playing in the water. I was notified that they were in trouble. It gets deep very quick. There's no gradient. Once you take few steps it just drops. They were just playing on the edge and missed their footing.

When I got into the water to get them I found a woman there too. She was completely submerged. After I got the kids out, I dove back in for the woman. Her head was completely

under. I'm nearly 6ft and my feet didn't touch the bottom. When I got the woman out of the water, I noticed she had a child attached to her, a young girl. I didn't know the child was there. Didn't see her until I got to the shoreline.

I don't know whether the mother went in to help the daughter or whether they were playing and got into trouble... thankfully I was there to help in time.

When you're around water, just be aware!

DEAN BYRNE
SHARES HIS STORY



TRAINING

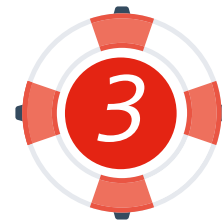
Increase the number of trained experts in Community Water Safety, Rescue Boat, Lifeguarding, Pool Safety and Swim Instruction.

AMBITION

DELIVERY

IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TRAINING NATIONALLY

- > Develop and standardise Lifeguard training and rescue boat training to international best practices
- > Review all lifesaving syllabi by 2020
- > Promote IWS as the sole recognized statutory provider of professional lifeguard services
- > Review and promote a code of conduct for all Surf Lifesaving Athletes
- > Periodically review, update and develop all swimming syllabi and awards
- > Continue to roll out IWS Swim Awards
- > Continue to develop rescue boat training with the Community Rescue Boats Ireland (CRBI), National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI) and other relevant organisations
- > Develop coaching structures and training in accordance with Coaching Ireland's Development Programme
- > Instruct, train and certify IWS personnel to best International practice
- > Maintain a College of Referees of sufficient size to meet the needs of lifesaving as a sport in Ireland and to meet our international commitments



AMBITION

DELIVERY

INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY OF TRAINERS AND INSTRUCTORS

- > Increase the number of instructors for summer weeks and winter training programmes nationwide to ensure more children are trained in pool and open water safety
- > Continue to train a corps of Pool Lifeguard Providers who can deliver requisite courses nationally, both voluntarily and commercially
- > Ensure enough lifeguards are trained to meet market demand
- > Review the syllabi for internal education programmes and simplify the structures to deliver an increase in availability of examiners and instructors
- > Encourage increased participation in lifesaving as a sport

INCREASE THE TYPES OF WATER SAFETY TRAINING AVAILABLE

- > Implement the Open Water Safety Awareness course for the aquatic workplace to help promote safer working environments
- > Assist the development of further strategies to help reduce suicide through drowning
- > Continue to develop Cardiac First Responder (CFR) training programmes under Pre Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC)

The drowning death toll globally is almost two thirds that of malnutrition and over half that of Malaria.





INTERVENTION

Promote, maintain and enhance public drowning prevention equipment and environments.

AMBITION

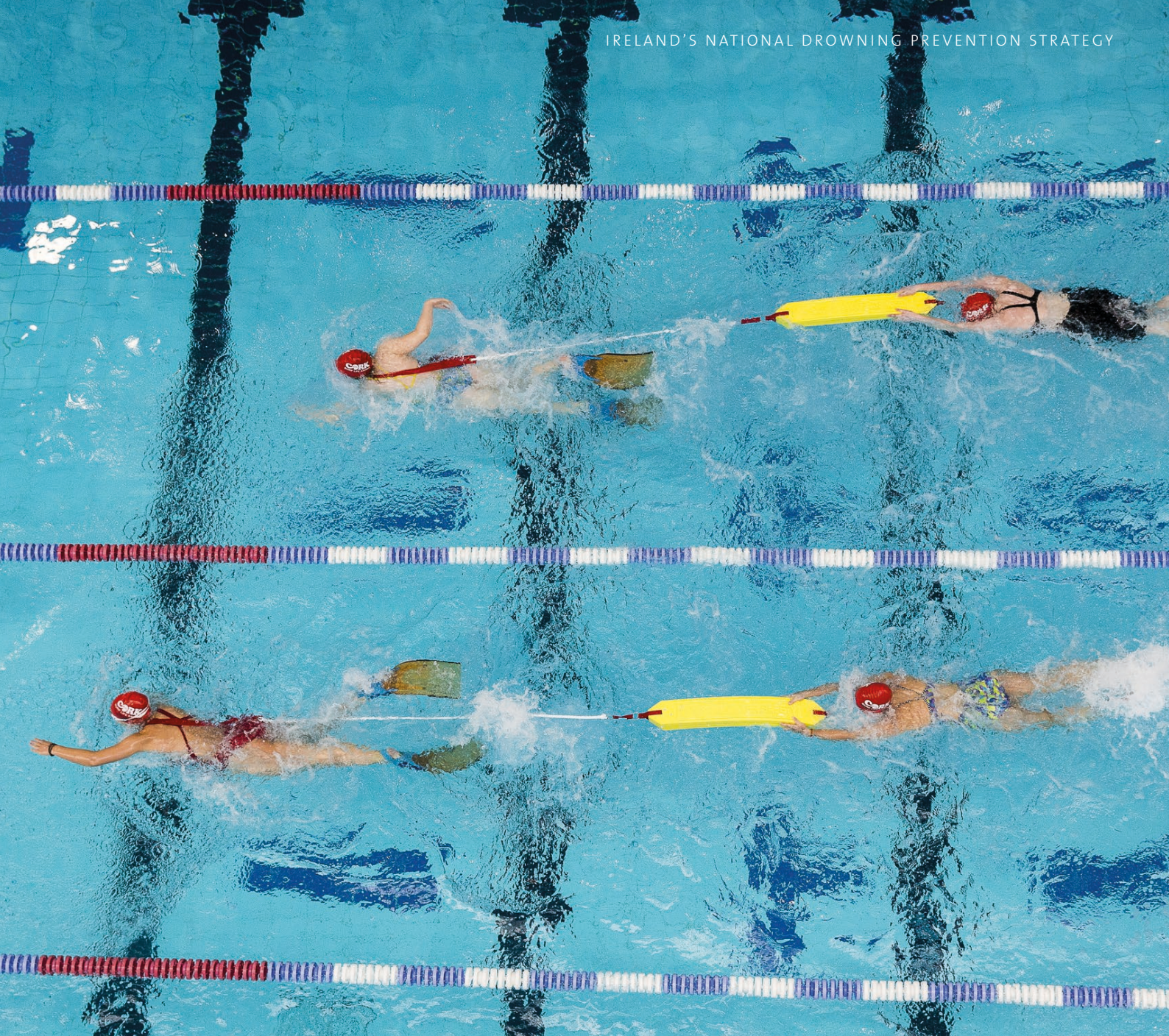
DELIVERY

IMPROVE PUBLIC RESCUE EQUIPMENT

- > Promote the maintenance of public rescue equipment by local authorities and site owners
- > Continue to develop the on-going inspections of Community Rescue Boats Ireland stations in order to promote best practices
- > Continue to encourage WSAC's to purchase vehicles and lifesaving equipment to support the work of our members.
- > Continue to carry out usage tests on rescue equipment to ensure high standards

TAKE A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO DROWNING PREVENTION

- > Promote the erection of the ISO Sign for wearing lifejackets at all slipways, harbours and piers in Ireland to help advise the public to wear them when going afloat
- > Continue to encourage WSAC's and local authorities to build Lifesaving Training Centres
- > Support the ongoing Risk Assessment Programme for open water sites



INSTILL BEST IN CLASS SAFETY PRACTICES IN OUR SWIMMING POOLS

- › Implement a Risk Assessment Programme for Swimming
- › Draft a Regulatory Framework for swimming pools for submission to the relevant Minister with a view to potential implementation
- › Review and reprint the Swimming Pool Safety Guidelines





JUST IN TIME...

It was a lovely sunny day down in Ballybunion Beach in Co Kerry. I heard a man calling for help. It was actually a stretch of beach that was only about 30 meters wide where this current was underneath and you just couldn't move. It was dragging you out towards the sea.

5 meters before that current, everything was fine. Everyone was playing in the water and there were no problems at all.

I went out to him as fast as I could. He told me he had two children out in front. I saw two girls, one 15 yards in front of him and another 20 yards past that.

Their father got exhausted when he went out to get them and the girls just couldn't fight against the current. It was too strong. The

man had entered the water to try and get them out and got caught.

Thankfully I was there. A couple of minutes more and I fear that the second girl would have gone under and it could have been worse case scenario.

If those girls had been able to swim, they might have reacted quicker and the current wouldn't have been able to drag them as far out.

Definitely, all my kids are going to learn how to swim. I have them all enrolled in swimming classes.'

GARDA ALAN O'DONNELL
SHARES HIS STORY
'JUST IN TIME' AWARD WINNER 2017





ACTION

Challenge all volunteers and stakeholders to take ownership of Ireland's National Drowning Prevention Plan and play their part in delivering against it.

AMBITION

DELIVERY

STRENGTHEN AND GROW OUR BASE OF VOLUNTEERS

- > Support and assess the promotional work of volunteers through promotional, sponsorship & marketing to help increase their participation in activities.
- > Develop and support the volunteer base of IWS and develop policies to increase our membership
- > Support Volunteers to reach their full potential

FOSTER STRONGER PARTNERSHIPS AND BETTER COMMUNICATION

- > Continue to develop a stronger relationship with Local Authorities
- > Develop strategic partnerships with common interests in promoting water safety in all aquatic environments.
- > Improve and expand communication channels between the Council, the Executive and IWS members
- > Maintain our affiliations with other international lifesaving organisations
- > Support the role of the Water Safety Development Officer within IWS, Local Authorities & WSAC's



AMBITION

DELIVERY

CONTINUED STAFF MOTIVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

- > Complete a review of the staff establishment and make recommendations to the Minister
- > Continue to develop and support staff to reach their full potential
- > Review current service, recognition and merit awards and develop and implement an online system
- > Move the Water Safety Ireland HQ to a larger office space



WATER SAFETY IRELAND

An organisation built on transparency and best practice.

At Water Safety Ireland, we are deeply committed to Ireland's National Drowning Prevention Strategy. For us that means adopting the very best work practices in everything we do. With effective checks and balances in place to govern every action, we can bring the number of drownings in Ireland down for good.

REGULAR PERFORMANCE REVIEWS

- Conduct an annual review of Council effectiveness
- Every 3 years seek an external review of Council effectiveness
- Audit WSAC (Water Safety Area Committee) activities on an annual basis
- Develop a performance delivery agreement with the department including a Service Level Agreement and a Memorandum of Understanding
- Implement recommendations and actions of independent reviews and audits

WORKPLACE EXCELLENCE

- Ensure that all Data Protection Regulations are fully implemented.
- Establish an anti-fraud and anti-corruption policy
- To continually operate with child safety procedures always in mind and the continued development of child safety best practices in line with Government guidelines and legislation
- To conduct our business activities in a financially prudent manner; efficiently managing and allocating our resources effectively
- Maintain a Risk Register on all IWS activities
- Establish best practice guidelines for and implement succession planning for IWS personnel

BEST IN CLASS GLOBALLY

- Develop the national Water Safety plan for Ireland in accordance with the terms of the WHO Global Drowning Report

Playing a pivotal role for the public.



CHILDREN & PARENTS

RELY ON IWS TO:

**TEACH BASIC WATER
SAFETY SKILLS**

**ENSURE WATER SAFETY
IS TAUGHT IN SCHOOLS**

**PROVIDE SWIMMING AND
LIFESAVING COURSES**

**PROMOTE WATER SAFETY
IN THE HOME**

**PROVIDE BEST
PRACTICE ADVICE
FOR ALL AQUA
ACTIVITIES WORKERS**



WORKERS

RELY ON IWS TO:

**RAISE AWARENESS
ON WATER SAFETY
IN WORK ENVIRONMENTS**

**PROMOTE WATER
SAFETY ON FARMS**

**INSTALL PUBLIC
RESCUE EQUIPMENT,
SIGNAGE AND DROWNING
PREVENTION FACILITIES**

**DELIVER ADVICE AND
MESSAGING TO
KEY 'AT RISK' GROUPS**

As the statutory body established to promote water safety in Ireland, our work has real benefits for diverse communities all over Ireland.

The public rely on Water Safety Ireland to ensure that they stay safe while on or near water.



SWIMMERS

RELY ON IWS TO:

**MAKE BEACHES AND
BATHING AREAS SAFE**

**TRAIN AND TEST
BEACH LIFEGUARDS**

**CARRY OUT RISK
ASSESSMENTS ON POOLS
AND BATHING AREAS**

**PROVIDE SWIMMING
POOL SAFETY GUIDELINES**

**PROVIDE INFORMATION
ON THE LOCATION OF
LIFEGUARDED WATERWAYS
IN IRELAND**



ANGLERS & BOATING ENTHUSIASTS

RELY ON IWS TO:

**TRAIN AND
EXAMINE
RESCUE BOAT CREWS**

**PROMOTE
MARINE SAFETY**

**INSTALL PUBLIC RESCUE
EQUIPMENT, SIGNAGE
AND DROWNING
PREVENTION FACILITIES**

Thought leadership and action for all our stakeholders.



THE PUBLIC

RELY ON IWS TO:

**PROMOTE
PUBLIC AWARENESS
OF WATER SAFETY**

**PROMOTE MEASURES,
INCLUDING THE
ADVANCEMENT OF
EDUCATION, RELATED
TO THE PREVENTION
OF ACCIDENTS IN WATER**

**PROVIDE INSTRUCTION
IN WATER SAFETY, RESCUE,
SWIMMING, RESUSCITATION
AND RECOVERY DRILLS**



NATIONAL & INTERNATIONAL AQUATIC ORGANISA- TIONS

**COLLABORATE IN
THE DELIVERY OF
BEST IN CLASS
V SAFETY MEASURES
AND DROWNING
PREVENTION TACTICS**

**PROMOTE
MARINE SAFETY
ALONG WITH OTHER
MEMBERS OF THE
MARINE SAFETY
WORKING GROUP AND
THE IRISH MARINE SEARCH
AND RESCUE COMMITTEE.**

Stakeholder groups rely on Water Safety Ireland for a strategic approach to saving lives.



CENTRAL & LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND AGENCIES

RELY ON IWS TO:

**DELIVER AN ACTIONABLE
DROWNING PREVENTION
PLAN FOR IRELAND**

**COLLATE AND ANALYSE
DROWNING STATISTICS TO
ENABLE EFFECTIVE TARGETING
OF 'AT RISK' GROUPS IN IRELAND**

**ARRANGE WATER SAFETY
CONFERENCES, LECTURES
AND DEMONSTRATIONS
TO LOCAL AUTHORITIES,
GOVERNMENT AGENCIES,
NGB'S, SCHOOLS,
COLLEGES AND MEMBERS
OF THE PUBLIC.**



NGB's & CHARITIES

RELY ON IWS TO:

**INSIGHT AND
INFORMATION
ON MOST COMMON
DROWNING SITES
AND CAUSES**

**GUIDANCE ON BEST
WATER SAFETY PRACTICES**

**GUIDELINES TO ASSIST
THE DEPICTION OF POSITIVE
IMAGES AND BEHAVIOUR
AND TO HELP THEM TO
AVOID SHOWING UNSAFE
WATER SAFETY BEHAVIOUR IN
ADVERTISING& MEDIA**



JUST IN TIME...

'It was a Sunday morning and we decided to go for a walk in the woods to have a picnic. I asked could I take Max with me as I'm his Godfather. We went to feed the ducks.'

'Scary moments. Milliseconds is all it took. We thought we had done the best thing possible by going up where there was railing. We had small children.'

'You could see Max, he was looking for a piece of bread but he leaned over the railing a bit.'

'I had hold of him all day by the hood. But when he bent down to get the bread I let go and he went over the railing and once his balance went, he flipped.'

'I turned away for a second and I heard this big splash!'

'I remember see Michael's two hands grab the railing and he jumped straight in.'

'The water was cold so I was gasping straight away. I tried to touch the bottom but it was too deep. So, I grabbed Max with one hand and pushed him up over my head and tried to swim. I didn't want my sister coming home to a tragedy!'

'I was glad Max didn't go up to heaven where my other granddad is.'

MICHAEL LYONS VI,
MICHAEL LYONS VII,
MICHAEL LYONS VIII (Age 5)

SHARE THEIR STORY
'JUST IN TIME' AWARD WINNERS 2017





IRELAND'S NATIONAL DROWNING PREVENTION STRATEGY

2018 – 2027



Water Safety Ireland
Sábháilteacht Uisce na hÉireann

Water Safety Ireland, The Long Walk, Galway, Ireland

+353 (0)91 564400 | info@iws.ie | www.iws.ie

SCALING UP EFFORTS TO BRING DROWNINGS DOWN