



Rialtas na hÉireann
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**BETTER
SAFE
THAN
SORRY**



WATER SAFETY IRELAND
STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN
2023-2027

TOGETHER,
WE'RE
BRINGING
THE NUMBER
OF DROWINGS
IN IRELAND
DOWN FOR
GOOD.

Decorative wavy lines in a light blue color, located in the bottom right corner of the image.



Heather Humphreys, T.D.

Minister for Rural and Community Development

The fantastic array of rivers, lakes and beaches that we enjoy here in Ireland leads to a lot of pleasure and opportunities for people, for visitors and locals, for young and old. However, we must also be mindful of the dangers involved, and the precautions that we must take.

The work of Water Safety Ireland in saving lives is carried out through education and training; by raising awareness of water safety and by active intervention when somebody is in difficulty in the water. You give freely of your time in order to achieve the vital objectives of the organisation. You ensure that swimming and lifesaving skills are taught to thousands of adults and young people annually. Water Safety Ireland, its members and volunteers, quite literally save lives every single day of the year, in communities throughout the country.

I warmly welcome this new Strategic Development Plan which will guide the delivery of an ambitious work programme which will make a significant difference to all who enjoy water activities over the coming years.

I wish to reiterate my commitment to working with Water Safety Ireland to meet the goals and objectives contained in the Plan, for the enjoyment and safety of all.

Heather Humphreys



Clare McGrath

Chair – Water Safety Ireland

As Chair, I present this Strategic Development Plan 2023 to 2028, on behalf of the Council of Water Safety Ireland.

This Strategic Development Plan will guide the work of Water Safety Ireland in conjunction with Ireland's National Drowning Prevention Strategy 2018-2027. The plan outlines the ambition and the expectation of the Water Safety Ireland Council. It also reflects our mission, vision, values, goals and objectives as an organisation.

We will use it as a method of ensuring that we are all aware of our objectives and are all working collectively towards the same goals. We will also regularly measure our progress in achieving the goals set out in the Plan.

The Council of Water Safety Ireland has adopted this document under a planned work programme. The various talents of the Council members will target key areas of responsibility and drive the Plan forward with timed objectives and regular evaluation. The methodology of achieving those objectives has been identified and assigned to the various commissions and working groups that have been established by the Council.

The participation of our most valuable resource, our volunteers, is paramount and a key objective within this strategy. I look forward to the development of new approaches that tackle water safety issues and which promote appropriate skills, attitudes and behaviours.

Clare McGrath



Dr Joanne Walsh

CEO – Water Safety Ireland

Water Safety Ireland is a wonderful example of communities, volunteers and rescue heroes all working together, "ag obair le chéile" for one common goal, to keep lives safe in all aquatic environments.

Water Safety Ireland holds a vital position as the key pillar in the promotion and education of water safety in Ireland and in spear heading measures required to prevent accidents in water. Over the last few decades drowning rates have decreased in Ireland. We can attribute this reduction to many factors, not least our organisation's rich history of volunteerism and its deep-rooted commitment to drowning prevention initiatives nationwide.

Our key objective is to bring the number of lives lost by drowning down further, but to make this happen we need everyone to be water safety aware and water safety conscious.

This plan outlines the goals and objectives necessary to achieve this ambition, but to deliver on this plan we all need to bring water safety into our conversations, into our homes and into our culture.

Joanne Walsh

OUR VISION

**A WATER
LOVING
PEOPLE
WHERE
SAFETY
IS SECOND
NATURE**

WHAT WE DO:

Water Safety Ireland is the statutory, voluntary body and registered charity established to promote water safety and reduce drownings in Ireland.

Our focus is on Public Awareness and Education. Tragically, an average of 110 people still drown in Ireland every year. We strive to reduce these fatalities by changing attitudes and behaviours so that our aquatic environments can be enjoyed by all with confidence and safety. We have three key areas of focus.

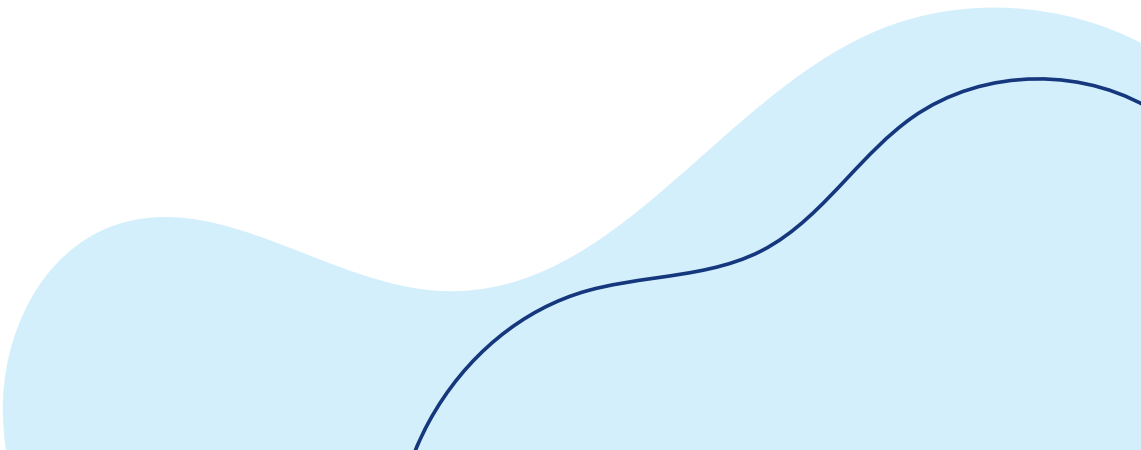
1. EDUCATION

- a) An education syllabus that teaches swimming, lifesaving, water confidence, safety, survival, rescue skills and basic life support;
- b) Courses are provided nationwide to the general public and also to children as part of the primary school curriculum in classrooms, pools and open water nationwide;
- c) Many qualifications such as our Pool and Beach Lifeguarding Awards are recognised internationally;
- d) Beach Lifeguards are trained and tested by our examiners for the Local Authorities prior to the annual summer season each year;
- e) Trained Lifesavers compete in provincial and national Lifesaving Championships and at International level;
- f) Risk Assessments on bathing areas and waterways nationwide that may pose a particular risk to the public, in order to make them safer;
- g) Train and examine rescue boat crews for the Community Inshore Rescue Services and administer associated VAT refunds;
- h) Water safety training for those working near aquatic environments in the public and private sector.

2. PROMOTION

- a) Research, analysis and publication of drowning statistics that inform policy and enable effective targeting of those at risk of drowning;
- b) National and local media to build a public awareness of coastal and inland water safety;
- c) Publications, courses, advice and campaigns in print and online that promote water safety and target at-risk groups in all aquatic activities so that the public adheres to best practices;
- d) Supporting the work of over 5,000 volunteer members and those volunteering and commercially delivering swimming, lifesaving and basic life support training;
- e) A National Water Safety Awards Ceremony that includes the “Seiko Just-In-Time” Rescue Awards and other awards that recognise volunteerism and partnerships that promote water safety at national and local level.

3. PARTNERSHIPS

- a) Local Authorities, state agencies, private enterprises and coroners on matters relating to water safety, the provision of Public Rescue Equipment and Lifeguarding locations nationwide;
 - b) The Marine Safety Communications Working Group and the Irish Marine Search and Rescue Committee to promote maritime safety;
 - c) A range of organisations to help reduce the high number of drownings by suicide;
 - d) Conferences, lectures and demonstrations to Local Authorities, Government Agencies, NGO's, schools, colleges and members of the public.
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**A STRATEGIC
PLAN FOR
THE NEXT
FIVE YEARS
WITH CLEAR
GOALS AND
OBJECTIVES**



GOAL 1: TO PROMOTE A PUBLIC AWARENESS OF WATER SAFETY

OBJECTIVES

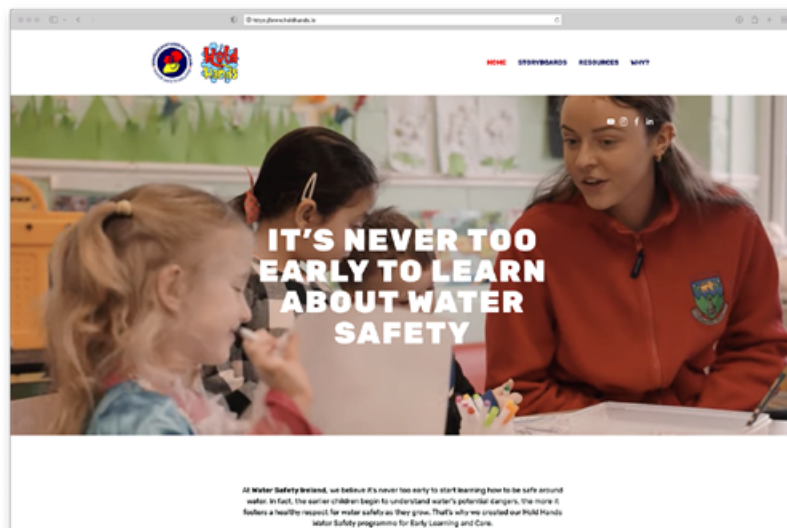
1. *Position Water Safety Ireland as the leading body for the promotion of water safety awareness.*
2. *Drive adherence to water safety best practices involving all activities in, on and near water.*
3. *Foster engagement in positive, safe and confident aquatic activities.*
4. *Develop national and international strategic partnerships to encourage collaboration on water safety.*
5. *Publish and communicate water safety related data.*



GOAL 2: EXTEND THE REACH OF EDUCATIONAL MEASURES TO CHANGE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOURS IN, ON AND NEAR WATER.

OBJECTIVES

1. *Promote an awareness of water safety at all education levels.*
2. *Further embed a certified water safety education program at all educational settings.*
3. *Promote and deliver water safety awareness courses for those working in, on or near water.*
4. *Partner with agencies that focus on reducing drownings by suicide*





GOAL 3: PROVIDE INSTRUCTION IN WATER SAFETY, SWIMMING, RESCUE, RESUSCITATION, AND RECOVERY TO BEST INTERNATIONAL PRACTICE.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Deliver certified water safety, swimming and lifesaving courses nationwide.*
- 2. Develop participation in lifesaving sport.*
- 3. Develop a training framework for Community Inshore Rescue Boat Stations nationwide.*

GOAL 4: DEVELOP A PEOPLE FRAMEWORK THAT ENCOMPASSES DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION.

OBJECTIVES

1. *Ensure that all members recognise and adhere to the voluntary charter.*
2. *Develop the role of a Volunteer Support Manager.*
3. *Develop a Volunteer framework.*



**PARAMOUNT
TO THIS
STRATEGY
ARE OUR
VOLUNTEERS.
THANK
YOU.**



GOAL 5: PROMOTE WATER SAFETY IRELAND AS THE STATUTORY PROVIDER OF PROFESSIONAL LIFEGUARDING STANDARDS AND QUALIFICATIONS.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Review all lifesaving syllabi annually to ensure that all standards conform with best international practice.*
- 2. Provide sufficient Providers, Instructors and Examiners to meet market demand.*
- 3. Provide a risk assessment service sufficient to meet demand.*
- 4. Engage actively with Local Authorities and the leisure industry to promote standards and qualifications.*





GOAL 6: CONDUCT OUR BUSINESS AND ACTIVITIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH ALL RELEVANT CODES OF PRACTICE AND GUIDELINES.

OBJECTIVES

- 1. Ensure compliance with the Code of Practice for State Bodies, GDPR and all governance mandates and legislation.*
- 2. Continue an active relationship with our parent department.*
- 3. Ensure that adequate resources are available to meet the goals and objectives of the organisation.*



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