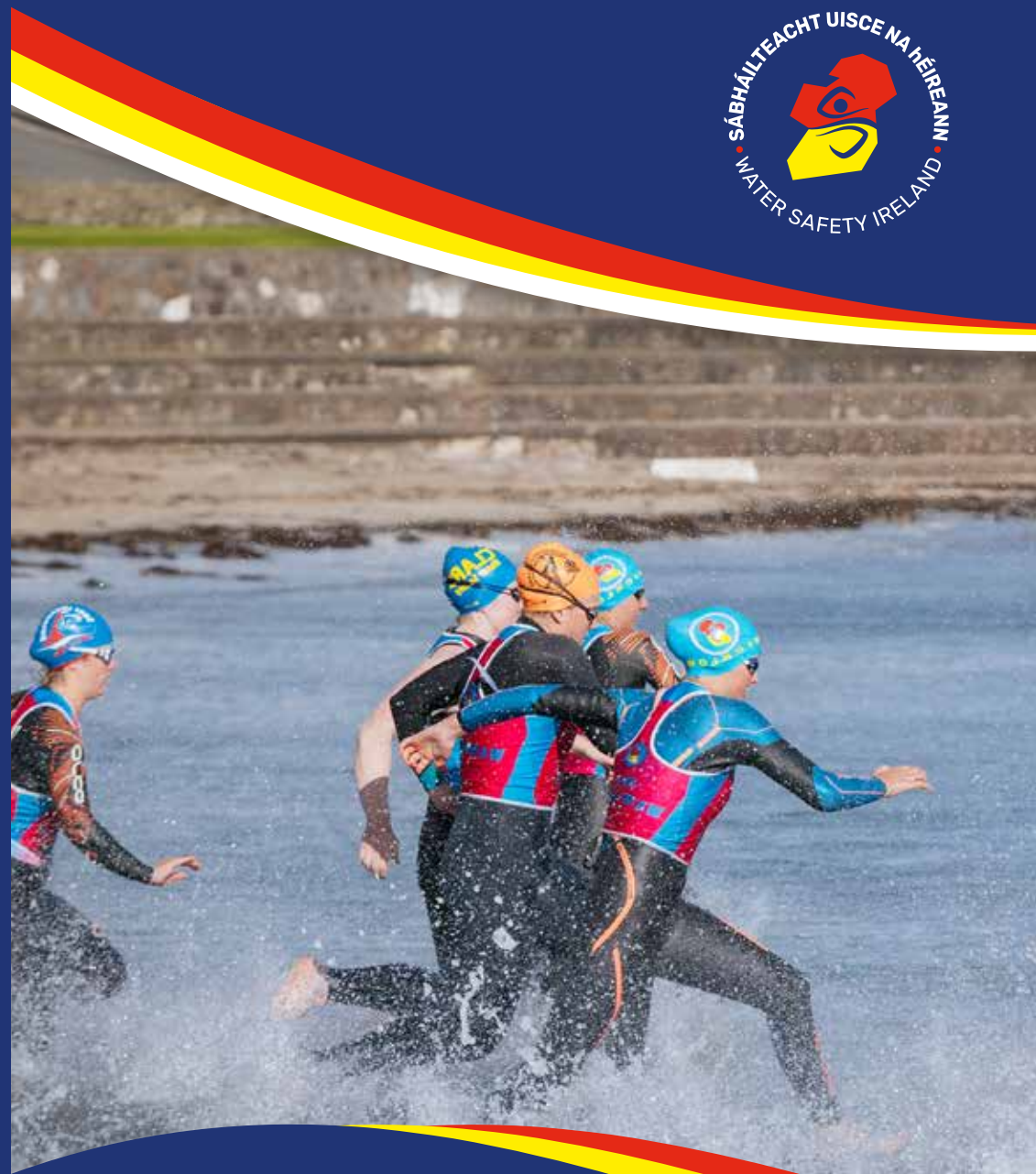




Riailas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

Sábháilteacht Uisce na hÉireann,  
An Bóthar Fada, Gaillimh, Éire, H91 F602.

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**LIFESAVING  
SPORT IN IRELAND**

# LIFESAVING SPORT

## What is Lifesaving Sport?

Lifesaving Sport was initially conceived to enhance the physical and mental agility of lifeguards but has evolved into a dynamic international competitive swimming discipline that rigorously tests fitness, rescue, judgement and first aid skills. Beyond its athletic dimensions, Lifesaving Sport stands out as one of the few sports with a distinct humanitarian purpose — to train proficient lifesavers and lifeguards. Acknowledged as an official discipline of the World Games and recognised

by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), although not yet part of the Olympic program. Lifesaving Sport takes place in swimming pools and open water venues, offering a diverse array of engaging, enjoyable, and challenging activities. Inclusive for all ages from 8yrs to 50yrs+, this rapidly growing sport in Ireland welcomes participants into a community that celebrates diversity and the contagious excitement of lifesaving endeavours.

# LIFESAVING SPORT STRUCTURES

## Global Governance

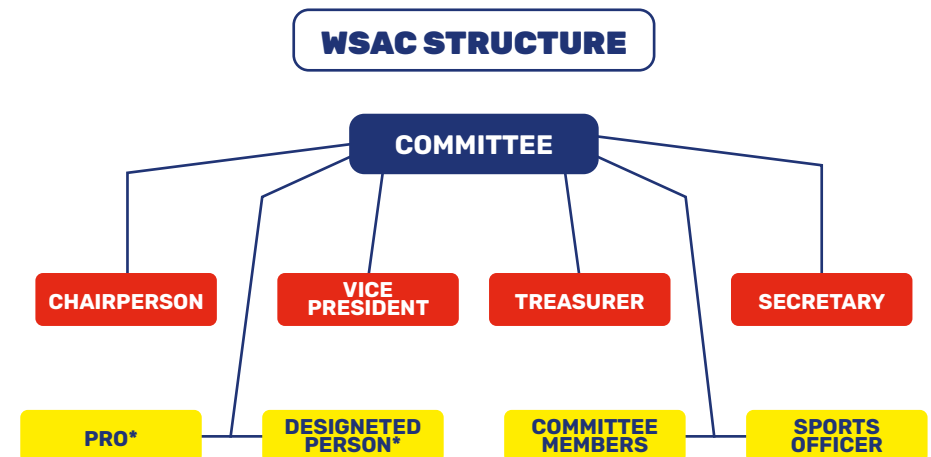
Lifesaving Sport is governed by International Lifesaving (ILS) and in Europe by Lifesaving Federation of Europe (ILSE). Internationally elected members engage in both the World and European Sports Commissions

with responsibilities such as organising championships, conducting officials' training, and critically reviewing and updating the rules governing the sport.

## National Governance:

Each country has a recognised governing body overseeing the sport within their geographical regions. Recognised by both ILS and ILSE, Water Safety Ireland (WSI) is the governing body for the sport in Ireland. The responsibilities of the WSI Sports Commission, which reports to the WSI council, parallel those of the European and World Commissions at national level.

Local delivery of the sport is facilitated by democratically elected Water Safety Area Committees (WSAC) which are typically aligned with county boundaries. Additionally, committees also represent the Gardai and the Defence Forces.



# COMPETITIVE CALENDAR

## National Competitions

The sporting calendar encompasses both indoor and outdoor seasons, with indoor/stillwater competitions conducted regionally and concluding annually with the National Championships in spring. Junior, Senior, and Master competitions adhere to long course format standards. Records at the World,

European, and Irish levels are recorded across these categories. Open water regional and national championships occur in late summer and early autumn at venues nationwide. These are enforced by stringent safety measures and are overseen by internationally qualified officials.

### National age categories are:

- Nippers 8 - 14 years of age
- Juniors 14 - 18 years of age
- Seniors 16 + years of age
- Masters 30 + years of age

## International Competitions

Biennially, the European Junior, Senior, and Masters Championships take place at venues selected through applications to the ILSE Sports Commission, requiring team members to participate in both indoor and outdoor events. The World Junior, Senior, and Masters

Championships occur every two years, with venue selection based on predefined criteria, alternating between the Northern and Southern hemispheres for fairness in cost and accessibility.

### International age groups are:

- Juniors 15 - 18 years of age
- Seniors 16 + years of age
- Masters 30 + years of age

National trials conducted prior to major international events are used to select Irish teams. The National squad and the National

team actively engage in various other nations' championships. WSI also extends a welcoming invitation to other ILS member organisations.

# COACHING STRUCTURES

**The Assistant Lifesaving Sports Coach Award** is tailored for individuals aged 17 and above and who aspire to assist WSI qualified coaches during sessions. These courses are conducted in full locally. Theoretical components are delivered via Zoom, employing standardised WSI Sports Commission presentations.

## The Level 1 Life Saving Sports Coach

is for those aged 18 and above who wish to assume greater responsibility in session delivery and training programs. These courses are delivered in full on a Regional basis. Learning encompasses online, face-to-face and self-directed elements. Specific criteria have been outlined for course participants, tutors, and assessors.

## The Level 2 Life Saving Sports Coach Award

is for individuals aged at least 18 years of age who meet defined criteria and aspire to lead group training sessions and guide squad development. This course adheres to outlined criteria for participants, tutors, and assessors. This award is currently in an advanced stage of development.

**Level 3 and 4 Coaches'** criteria have been established. However, implementation for these levels is pending.

WSI embraces the principles of prior learning, acknowledging relevant coaching qualifications from other organisations for those wishing to get involved in Lifesaving Sport. All coaching courses receive support from WSI developed resource materials, including manuals and logbooks.





# SQUAD STRUCTURES

WSI operate squad structures regionally and nationally. Selection for all squads are based on points scored during the previous year's events.

## Regional Nipper Squads

Water Safety Ireland manages three regional squads catering to the senior nipper age category (12-14 years) across the provinces of Connaught/Ulster, Munster, and Leinster. Each squad accommodates a maximum of 30 competitors, evenly distributed by gender. The primary objectives of these squads include pool and surf skill development, establishing requirements for progression, and fostering a foundation in training methodologies. Led by a designated regional coach approved by the sports commission, the regional coaching teams are provided with direction and structured programs by the national coaching

team. The squads engage in a minimum of two Stillwater and two open water training days, emphasising skill enhancement, enjoyable racing experiences, and informational talks by specialists. Future plans involve inter-regional fun competitions and the potential for international travel to participate in other nations' nipper nationals. Members of the Senior national squads are mandated to contribute to at least one camp, initiating the cultivation of coaching experience among these athletes.

## National Youth and Senior Squads

Water Safety Ireland runs a comprehensive National Squad Training program geared towards the ongoing refinement of pool and surf skills for the nation's top competitors, facilitating their evolution into elite athletes. This program is strategically designed to contribute to the selection process for National teams representing Ireland at international competitions. Reserved positions on each team are allocated for active participants in the national squad program, with additional wild card positions open to both national squad members and others. The squads are categorized into 24 Youths (14-18 years) and 16 Seniors (16 years and above), evenly

distributed by gender. Under the guidance of the National Coach, the coaching team, appointed by the sports commission, is responsible for formulating the annual plan for camps. The squads engage in a minimum of four squad camps, attend all regional and national competitions, and participate in at least one foreign competition. The team camps emphasize event skills in both still and surf, featuring talks from experts in related fields and team-building activities. The National team, selected through National Trials, subsequently competes as Team Ireland in European/World championships, contingent upon budget availability.

# GETTING INVOLVED

Water Safety Ireland embraces an inclusive approach, actively urging local area committees to welcome newcomers to various facets of their operations. Whether individuals are interested in acquiring lifesaving skills, becoming a lifeguard, engaging in lifesaving sport training, or volunteering, everyone is encouraged to participate. To connect with

your local area committee, a simple email to [your local area committee, a simple email to \(countyname\)@watersafety.ie](mailto:(countyname)@watersafety.ie) will suffice. For instance, if you reside in Waterford, you can contact [waterford@watersafety.ie](mailto:waterford@watersafety.ie). Alternatively, for additional information, feel free to reach out to WSI's head office in Galway, or contact the sports commission at [sport@watersafety.ie](mailto:sport@watersafety.ie).

