



Assessing the Risks for the Safety of Children

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Definition of Risk

Risk is defined as:

“the probability that a particular adverse event occurs during a stated period of time, or results from a particular challenge” (Royal Society, 1992: Risk Analysis, Perception and Management: Report of a Royal Society Study Group.London, Royal Society)

Risk Assessment procedure

The purpose of this document is to assist and clarify the decision making process in assessing the issues in relation to the welfare and protection of children in the aquatic sports in any given situation. This procedure sets out the key questions necessary to identify where there is potential risk of harm:

- What are the activities and environments being assessed?
- What is the nature of the risk that may occur?
- Who should be considered when assessing the likelihood of a risk occurring?
- What protective and preventative steps can be taken to minimise the risk?
- What degree of risk remains?

These questions need to be assessed by a responsible person (recorder) who is part of the organisation of an event, the management of a Club or similar; e.g. Event Manager; Club Committee member; Team Manager. There may be more than one recorder. The procedure is designed to easily help identify any areas of potential harm for children involved in the activity.

What are the activities and environments being assessed?

Within the aquatic sports there are a whole range of activities and environments to be considered for assessment. Activities take place on a number of levels and in a number of environments; each of these should be assessed for any risk. Each individual event that takes place will need a separate risk assessment procedure.



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The Swim Ireland structure has four operational levels: Club, Regional, National and International

1. Club – training sessions take place at regular and repetitive times on a weekly basis up to 9 or 10 sessions usually in the same facility, and there may be more than one location; other extra-ordinary events taking place need to be considered, e.g. fundraising, competitions, team meetings,
2. Regional – regional training sessions take place at specified intervals at various times and locations; meetings, other events and environments e.g. overnight accommodation need to be identified and considered on an individual basis;
3. National – national squads will attend training sessions on a less regular basis and typically attend only two or three specific locations, and these would take place over a number of days lasting from 3 days to 2 to 3 weeks
4. International – club, regional and national squads may avail of international training camps and/or competitions typically lasting from 2/3 days to 2/3 weeks.

For each of the activity levels an assessment should be conducted that incorporates the location of training session, any overnight accommodations with associated venues (e.g. restaurants, gyms) and transport.

What is the nature of the abuse that may occur?

There is the potential for abuse to occur in any situation/environment including in the aquatic environment and these abuses need to be considered in assessing the potential risk to children. The types of abuse are

- Emotional
- Physical
- Sexual
- Neglect
- Bullying

See the Swim Ireland Safeguarding Children Policies and Procedures 2010 p43 and Appendix 4 for further details

Who should be considered when assessing the risk of abuse occurring?

Any individual who comes into contact with or has an impact on the organisation of children in the aquatic environment needs to be considered:

- Parents
- Coaches/Teachers
- Team Managers/Chaperones
- Committees and associated personnel
- Event organisers
- Sports science staff
- Other children
- Other adults outside Swim Ireland, e.g. parents, lifeguards, general public

The involvement with children of each of these people should be recorded in conjunction with the environment, their activity and their potential to cause children harm in that environment will determine the level of risk present.



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What protective and preventative steps can be taken to minimise the risk?

Where potential areas of harm are identified the risk can be minimised by setting out clear guidelines that should be followed by all:

- Education and training for all on awareness of potentially abusive situations – ensure all personnel have read and understood the Swim Ireland Safeguarding Children Policies and Procedures 2010; have attended the required child protection training
- Recruitment and selection procedures for all adults involved with children – where required by their position the available Garda/Access NI checks are carried out
- Sign up procedures to codes of conduct – identify the code applicable to position
- Ensure adequate supervision of adults and children to ensure codes are being followed – ensure correct supervision according to the qualification held; newly recruited personnel should be supervised for period of time; all sessions must be supervised
- Nomination of specific people for children to liaise with and feedback any issues or problems – appointments of children's officers and designated person
- Clear complaints process – procedures in place to ensure everyone treated with respect and fairness
- Disciplinary measures in force for breaches of the code of conduct – clear process to follow and sanctions that may be applied
- Clear reporting procedures where abuse has occurred – gives confidence to designated person (see Swim Ireland Safeguarding Children Policies and Procedures 2010 p47)
- Identified roles and responsibilities – ensuring that only known personnel have access to children, e.g. only Team Managers, Coaches and nominated Officials on the pool side during a competition, access is denied to anyone else.

What degree of risk remains?

By recording the risks on the form below this will identify the likelihood of risk by assessing if harm is likely (high risk) or less likely (low risk) to occur without the preventative or protective measures in place. Once the level of harm has been agreed between responsible group this will lead on to determining the measures required to remove or reduce the risk of abuse occurring.

Different recorders may identify different dangers and different factors that may contribute to or lessen these dangers – it is important to use the mandatory requirements in the Swim Ireland Safeguarding Children Policies and Procedures 2010.

A key concept in risk management is the acceptability of risk, i.e. having identified the risks as fully as possible, are they acceptable to those responsible for the decision or more acceptable than the risks associated with any alternative courses of action available.

Completion of the Risk Assessment Form

The responsible person should complete the Risk Assessment form – see Appendix 1. In the event that two or more people are involved in the process, all persons should sign and print their name.

Auditing of the Protective and Preventative Measures

Completion of this process and the identification of risks will be subject to an audit procedure where a selection of Clubs will undergo a check by an appointed person, the National Children's Officer or a Club Officer, to ensure the protective and preventative measures are in place. These checks will be random and by appointment



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and will also form part of the requirements from the Health and Safety Statement. An audit can be carried out on request from the person or club conducting the risk assessment in order to ensure the correct measures are in places, and to identify any gaps remaining.

Appendix 1 – Risk Assessment Form

Organiser/Risk Assessor: _____

Location/Event: _____

RISK	How Likely is this to happen (please ✓)			ACTION TO BE TAKEN TO MINIMISE RISK	ACTION TO BE TAKEN IN THE EVENT OF RISK HAPPENING
	VERY	POSSIBLE	NEVER		
Child left behind after training		✓		Make all parents aware of times CP/Vetting/Code of Conduct complete by leaders Leaders remain in pairs until collected	Discipline parent Contact parent/family Leaders remain in pair until parent arrives
Adult entering changing area alone	✓			CP/Vetting/Code of Conduct completed for all staff Risk awareness highlighted with parents and child Supervision of area in pairs	Ensure reported to CCO Check in with child Possible disciplinary procedure
Access to child during training session	✓			CP/Vetting/Code of Conduct completed for all staff Supervision of training session	Ensure reported to CCO Check in with child Possible disciplinary procedure

Date Assessment completed: _____

Date Assessment review required: _____

Signature: _____

Print name: _____

Completion of this process and the identification of risks will be subject to an audit procedure where a selection of Clubs will undergo a check by an appointed person, the National Children's Officer or a Club Officer, to ensure the protective and preventative measures are in place. These checks will be random and by appointment and will also form part of the requirements from the Health and Safety Statement. An audit can be carried out on request from the person or club conducting the risk assessment in order to ensure the correct measures are in places, and to identify any gaps remaining.