

WATER SAFETY IRELAND TAKES NEW CHAIR ON BOARD

Clare McGrath, the new Chair of Water Safety Ireland (WSI), has said that her objective during her five-year term of office is to reduce the percentage of drownings by promoting the necessary rescue skills, attitudes and behaviours that will prevent such tragedies and water related accidents in Ireland.

Clare McGrath has been a lifelong advocate for drowning prevention and, in addition to being a volunteer with WSI and serving on the WSI Council, she has been the Water Safety Development Officer with Clare County Council since 2014.

She received a 30-year Long Service Award at the WSI National Awards Ceremony in November 2021 for her voluntary efforts as an Instructor, Examiner and Tutor and her experience predates this award, having won National Lifesaving Competitions aged 16 and lifeguarding at 17.

As a current member of the WSI Council, McGrath has helped to develop a National Drowning Prevention Strategy.

The current Chair of the WSI Sports Commission has played a key role in developing Lifesaving Sport in which participation levels are at an all-time high.

Currently the Chair of the Federation of Irish Sport, and the former Chair of Swim Ireland, McGrath has a particular penchant for teaching WSI's Lifeguarding and Lifesaving Sport syllabus, in the education of a corps of lifeguards so that waterways and pools have competent cover to protect the public.

MORE PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

"I very much look forward to working with the WSI Council and engaging its Commissions, our 30 Water Safety Area Committees nationwide and the members, local authorities, and other agencies to develop policies and projects that help encourage more participation and engagement at all levels."

She added that over the next five years as chair she will look forward to providing leadership to the Council in the continued delivery of Ireland's Drowning Prevention Strategy 2018-



WSI's new chair Clare McGrath has been the Water Safety Development Officer with Clare County Council since 2014.

2027, and the strategic development of the organisation. "I thank the outgoing chair Martin O'Sullivan for his commitment and the WSI staff for the support they give to drowning prevention."

Minister for Rural and Community Development, Heather Humphreys TD, who announced the new chair's appointment, acknowledged Clare McGrath's wealth of experience as a lifelong member of Water Safety Ireland and Swim Ireland.

"WSI is an organisation with a rich history of volunteerism and is deeply committed to these volunteers who teach swimming, lifesaving and promote drowning prevention initiatives nationwide. WSI has been consistently to the fore in raising awareness of the dangers of drowning in water over many years as well as the education and training of thousands of people in water safety," noted Minister Humphreys.

SAFER WATER-BASED ACTIVITIES
Ireland has an impressive selection of waterways to choose from and has a long tradition of water-based activities. However, despite such an array of beaches, rivers and lakes on our doorstep, last year alone 79 people drowned in 2021 – 70% were male and 30% were female.

"Although this is well below the annual average of 111 drownings every year over the last decade, it is still a tragic unnecessary loss of life and a significant public health issue," noted Roger Sweeney, Acting CEO at Water Safety Ireland.

"Drownings happen quickly and silently, and warmer weather sometimes lulls people into a false sense of security. However, waterways are still quite cool which affects the muscles needed to swim safely back to shore."

He added that the pandemic increased the level of interest in aquatic activities. "Consequently, a busy period ensued for the Irish Coast Guard, the RNLI, the Community Rescue Boats and for the lifeguards trained and assessed by Water Safety Ireland and employed by local authorities. This summer, let the lifeguards be there for you."



The WSI's Lifeguarding and Lifesaving Sport syllabus trains a corps of lifeguards so that waterways and pools have competent cover to protect the public.



WATER SAFETY IRELAND'S TOP TIPS

This summer, Water Safety Ireland is urging everyone to make water safety a part of the conversation and has issued key drowning prevention guidelines:

- Swim at lifeguarded waterways and between the red and yellow flags. Ask the lifeguard if you're unsure of the location of the safe swim zone.
 - Ensure your children know what the flags mean and only swim when it is safe to do so.
 - Swim within your depth and stay within your depth. Never swim alone.
 - Never bring inflatable toys to open water locations like beaches, rivers and lakes. The slightest breeze can take children away from shore and out of their depth.
 - Parents and guardians need to be particularly careful to ensure that children are always supervised in, near or on water.
 - Warm air does not mean warm water. Don't let children stay in too long and ensure they get fully warm immediately after getting out.
 - In rivers and lakes, the water is less buoyant and can be colder than sea water. Know what you're getting into.
 - Never jump in without thinking. At rivers and lakes, be aware of hidden dangers, submerged objects and unexpected depths. Poor visibility can hide what's underneath the surface and entanglement is a risk.
 - Be aware of currents. They are not always obvious and can be much stronger than you imagine.
 - In the case of jelly fish stings or weever fish stings, go to the lifeguard for first aid.
 - Always wear a lifejacket with a correctly fitting crotch strap when on, near or in water.
 - Check how deep or shallow water is especially before entering the water.
 - Do not run at the side of a pool.
 - Never swim in quarries or reservoirs.
 - Stay away from edges particularly where there is slippery, unstable, or uneven ground.
 - Keep children away from water barrels and slurry pits.
 - If you see somebody in trouble in the water:
SHOUT – REACH – THROW.
- a. SHOUT to calm, encourage and orientate them.
 - b. REACH with anything that avoids you needing to enter the water. Use a branch, pole, rope or even a piece of clothing.
 - c. THROW a ringbuoy or any floating object to them.

LIFE JACKET

THE NAME SAYS IT ALL



WEAR ONE ON OR NEAR WATER. ALWAYS.



**FOR ADVICE VISIT
WATERSAFETY.IE**