



Swim England
West Midlands



Swim England West Midlands

Strategy

2024-2027





Swim England West Midlands overview

Swim England West Midlands is a not-for-profit organisation acting in the best interest of developing aquatics in the West Midlands. The region is a semi-autonomous constituent part of the national governing body, Swim England, and together we work closely to develop in partnership an opportunity for aquatics in the region.

In developing this strategy, we seek to align with the national strategy.





Swim England strategy overview

Swim England's 10-year strategy, *Access Aquatics*, has a clear and defining vision – to champion a healthy and successful nation through swimming.

It sets out the national governing body's priorities to remove the barriers to participation and ensure its sports and activities are accessible, inclusive and safe for all.

The strategy focuses on what takes place in the water, who is participating in and delivering aquatics and where activity takes place. This has led to three key areas:

- **Capability** – being able to swim is essential to access aquatics.
- **People** – it is people that take part in aquatics and enable it to happen.
- **Water** – nobody can enjoy the benefits of being active in the water without ... water.

Swim England's commitment in the next decade is focus on these goals and work with partners and stakeholders to open up access to aquatics for all.

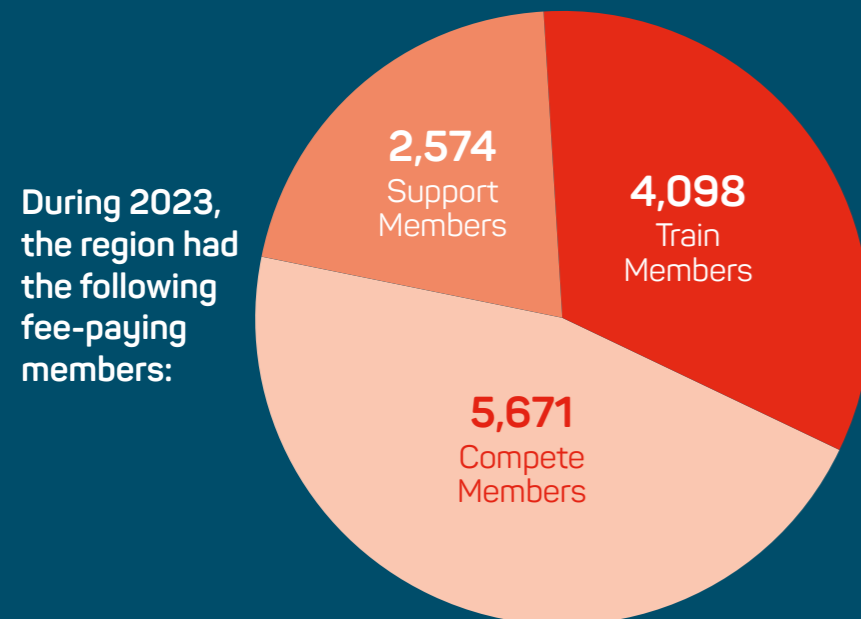
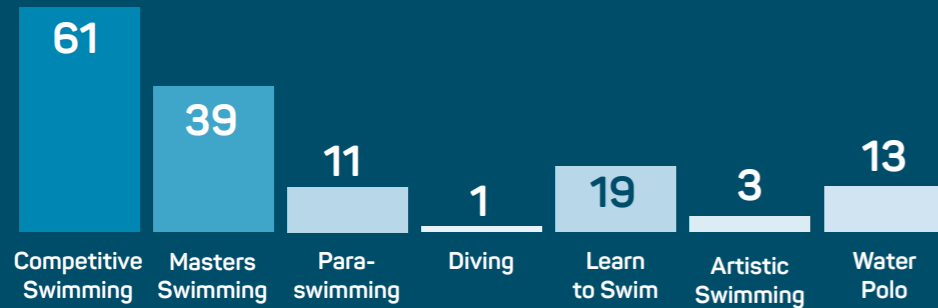
To read *Access Aquatics* in full, please [click here](#).



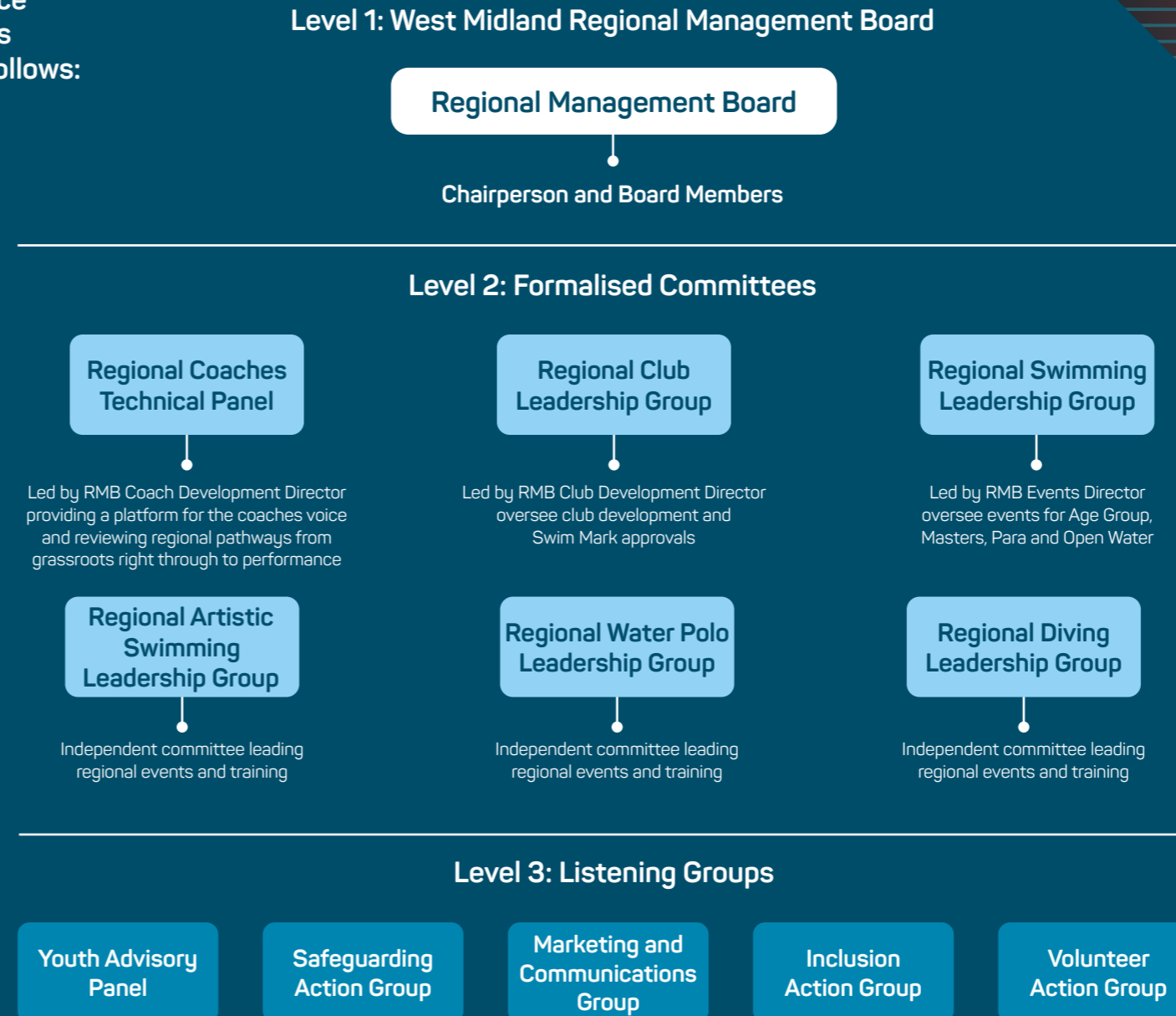
Introduction

The West Midlands Region has four counties, which include Worcester County (this includes the counties of Worcestershire and Herefordshire), Shropshire, Warwickshire and Staffordshire and, as of 2023, 71 affiliated clubs.

These clubs represent the following disciplines:



The governance of the region is managed as follows:





The West Midlands has an overall population of more than six million and has a mixture of some of the most sparsely-populated rural areas, contrasted with some of the most deprived urban areas in the country. However, our membership does not reflect the rich diversity of the West Midlands and our membership and demographics are as follows;

- Gender split: 45.3% male and 54.7% female
- Only 1% of our membership declare themselves to have a disability
- Of those that declared, only 3.07% are not of a white British background
- 67% are under the age of 18 years old
- 55% of our members come from the four most affluent categories of indices of deprivation

The region finds itself in a fortunate position of being led by a board which is transformational. The directors who lead the region have a set of experiences which go beyond aquatics and, as a region, we hope to capitalise on this as we seek to drive the region forward. Our regional ethos looks at tackling challenges head on and a commitment to ensuring that our stakeholders, such as young athletes, have a clear voice. Our commitment to addressing challenges was evidenced with our approach to the Club Culture Research, conducted in 2023, which underpins this strategy going forwards.

Following the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games, the region has looked to develop new aquatic experiences, with a focus on diving development to complement the facilities available in Sandwell Aquatics Centre. We are also a learning region and with each major project, we seek to evaluate what was achieved and learn lessons from it.

Whilst we are ambitious we also recognise that we have some challenges which impact our ambition. The challenges that we face are:

- A cohesive pathway for participation and performance
- A workforce suitably trained to address our challenges
- A robust and sustainable volunteer workforce in clubs, both on the poolside and in the committee room, as well as officials
- A sustainable and robust club structure
- A disengaged membership in need of improved communication
- A workforce, both volunteers and coaches, that feels unsupported and overstretched
- A membership that is not reflective of the West Midlands population
- Modernising our governance, particularly in relation to safeguarding
- Lack of resource to achieve the region's ambition

The above are exacerbated by the current economic position and the availability of affordable facilities.

We remain determined to develop the experiences in our region with a focus on growing water polo, artistic swimming, diving and masters – and a commitment to place-based growth. We look forward to the development of these areas. Following our Club Culture research, we remain committed to implementing the outcomes of that work which we believe will address some significant challenges, such as lack of supplementary education and robust governance systems.

We end this introduction with a note of caution. Whilst we are ambitious and we want to achieve great things, we are a small workforce of employed staff and our number of volunteers is reducing. Spreading ourselves too thin is a risk and one we intend to evaluate as we progress through the length of this strategy.



Our Vision

Inspire, empower and unite the communities of the West Midlands through the benefits of aquatics.

Swim England Vision

“Championing a healthy and successful nation through swimming”



Our Mission

We will be participant centred, safe, inclusive, well-run and sustainable. Through partnerships, we will grow aquatics by enabling diverse and accessible opportunities for all.

Swim England Mission

“Improve the health and success of the nation by enabling access to aquatics for all”





Our Guiding Principles

To realise our vision, we will grow aquatics in the region by;

- being participant centred
- being safe, well-run and sustainable
- being inclusive of all communities
- providing education
- growing aquatics
- working in partnership

Our Regional Strategic Themes

Our strategy has four key areas:

1. People
2. Participant journey
3. Governance
4. Marketing and communications



Regional strategy objectives

Swim England published Access Aquatics, its strategic vision for the next decade, in May 2023. Following discussions, it was agreed that regional strategies would align with Access Aquatics. The following information details the Swim England West Midlands’ objectives and how they work towards the targets in Access Aquatics.

What is your regional objective?	Describe the regional landscape now	What is the intended outcome by 2027?
<p>1. People Empower our community to learn, develop and grow through education, information and opportunities.</p>	<p>A suite of coaching courses available in conjunction with the Institute of Swimming. Coach Developer Programme. A suite of workshops available annually, such as Time to Listen and Team Manager. Officials’ training delivered through the counties.</p>	<p>A provision of education that is engaged with, and meets the needs of, the community workforce. A cohesive plan for officials training and an increased number of officials. A coach education plan that incorporates soft skills and inclusive thinking. Parent and athlete education plan. A workforce that feels informed, supported and educated. Established forums that are relevant, appropriate and engaged with by the membership.</p>





What is your regional objective?	Describe the regional landscape now	What is the intended outcome by 2027?
<p>2. Participant journey Develop a safe and inclusive culture for enjoyment, progression and lifelong involvement in aquatics.</p>	<p>A pathway with unclear entry and exit routes.</p> <p>A lack of understanding of the pathway from our key user groups.</p> <p>Success at a junior level but a lack of success into senior performance developed within the region.</p> <p>Club Culture research underpinning our ways of working.</p> <p>Established listening groups; e.g. Youth Advisory Panel.</p> <p>Key workforce in the region trained as designated safeguarding leads.</p> <p>Successful events and competitions across the sports.</p> <p>A strong number of clubs representing artistic swimming, diving and water polo.</p>	<p>A clearly defined regional pathway, whereby clubs understand their place, space and role.</p> <p>Improved level of performance developed within the region with clear entry and exit routes.</p> <p>A regional development support package available for clubs, fully utilising the club health tracker and supporting clubs to develop.</p> <p>Increased opportunities for engagement and growth in artistic swimming, diving and water polo.</p> <p>Increased number of listening groups engaging new members, ideas and ways of thinking.</p> <p>Accessible and inclusive clubs and sports.</p> <p>A safe space for all in aquatics.</p> <p>High-quality competitions that are thriving, commercialised and growing interest in the sports.</p>





What is your regional objective?	Describe the regional landscape now	What is the intended outcome by 2027?
<p>3. Governance Support robust governance.</p>	<p>71 clubs 56 SwimMark clubs 15 Club Affiliation clubs 12,859 members</p> <p>Working in line with Heart of Aquatics plan. Funding offer available to clubs. Four members of staff. Club Culture research underpinning our ways of working. Established listening groups, e.g. Youth Advisory Panel. Informal judicial support offering. Implementation of a regional designated safeguarding lead to support clubs with welfare and safeguarding matters and work within the remit of the Heart of Aquatics. An active safeguarding action group led by the regional designated safeguarding lead.</p>	<p>Increase in membership to pre-Covid levels, with a focus on increased membership in artistic swimming, diving and water polo.</p> <p>A regional development support package available for clubs, fully utilising the club health tracker and supporting clubs to develop.</p> <p>Well governed clubs with a clear and supportive disciplinary process in place in the region.</p> <p>A safe space for all in aquatics.</p> <p>Safe listening spaces and networks established through forums.</p> <p>Formalised regional disciplinary panel that clubs can access for support in judicial matters.</p> <p>An active and supportive network for club welfare officers and an established group of designated safeguarding leads that can support our clubs.</p> <p>A community that feels safe in reporting and the system in place.</p>





What is your regional objective?	Describe the regional landscape now	What is the intended outcome by 2027?
<p>4. Marketing and communications Transparent, open and relevant communication with our current and future community.</p>	<p>Instagram Reach = 2.1k Page visits = 746 1.5k followers 64% women 35% men 60% age group 35-54 20% 18-24</p> <p>Facebook Reach = 9.4k Page visits = 6.0k 1.8k followers 73% women 26% men 70% age group 35-54 10% age group 18-24</p> <p>Newsletter Reach = 294 subscribers Open rate = 72%</p> <p>Club/Chair Forum with low levels of engagement (large drop off since Covid).</p> <p>Chairs WhatsApp group which acts as a support function.</p> <p>Weekly newsletter that members subscribe to.</p> <p>Introduction of some listening groups.</p>	<p>Digital improvement and clear messaging. Improved and recognisable brand. An engaged membership that feels listened to, consulted and informed. Communication that is meeting the needs of the community – segmented communication for our four key user groups;</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Athletes 2. Coaches 3. Parents 4. Volunteers <p>Established and thriving listening groups with high engagement levels and positive outcomes. Increased engagement with our media channels and newsletter; website, Facebook, Instagram. A functional and effective website that is easy to navigate.</p>



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