



# Water Polo Strategy

2020-2025

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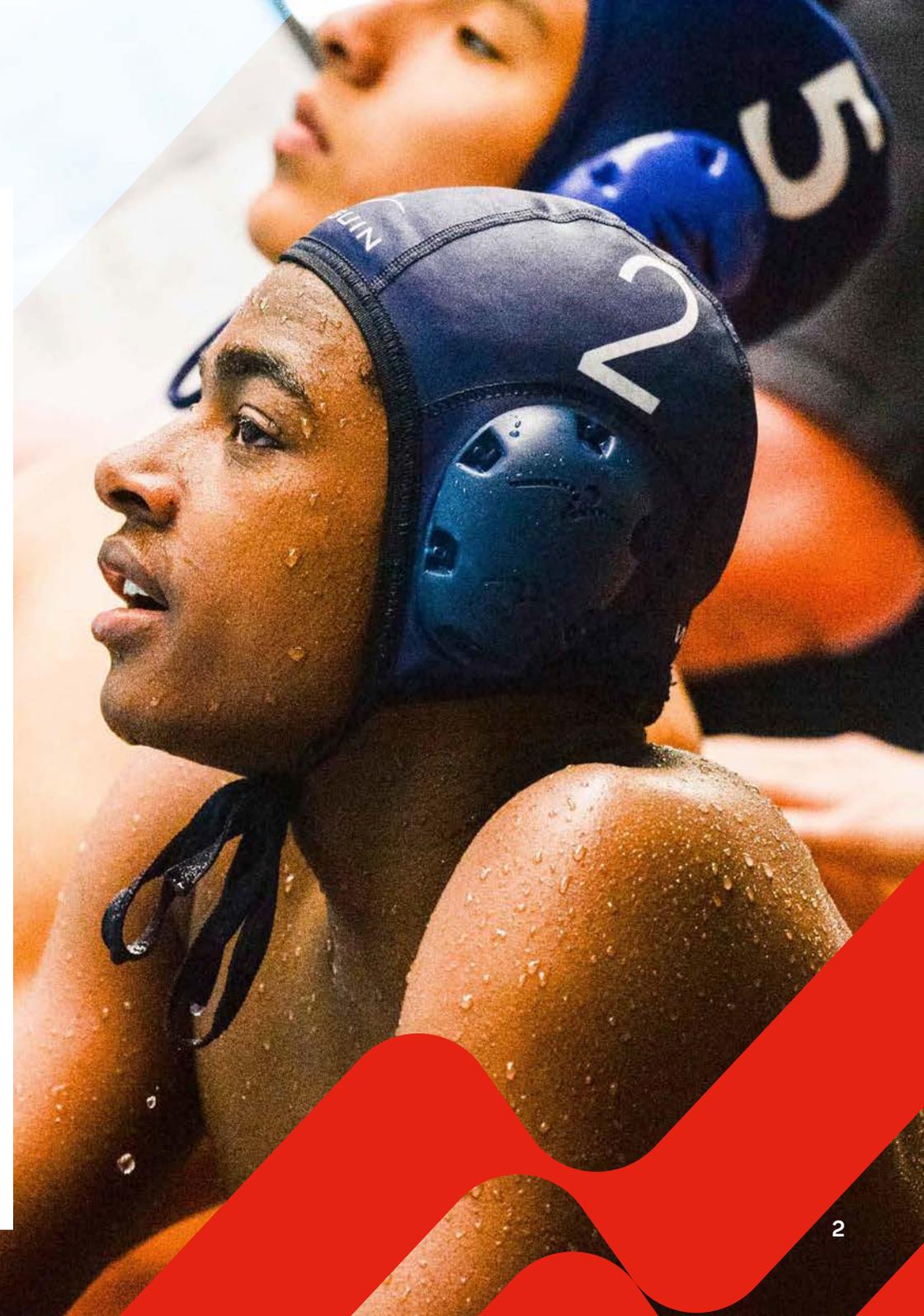
### Five-year plan to develop the sport

#### Our vision

To get 14,000 people registered and playing water polo at the right level for them

Water polo is a highly competitive, energetic and fun water sport, sustained by a relatively small but fiercely loyal community. It could and should be accessible to far more people. Both men and women represented GB at the London Olympics in 2012 and have regularly played at European level, but by 2019 there were only 6,900 registered players in England.

This is our five-year strategy to extend the reach and range of water polo. Communicating effectively is central to our mission. Our aim is to increase player registration to 14,000 by 2025, with more juniors coming from the state school sector, more competitive swimmers transitioning to the sport, and a greater diversity of players and officials. We intend to review the sport's regional and national competition structures, enhance support for top players and training at all levels, and to communicate more effectively to and about our community.



# Key strategic themes

## 1. Widening participation

We will work to double the number of registered players in five years. Ultimately, this should lead to improved GB performance internationally



### We will do this by:

- Improving our communication to educate people about the benefits of water polo and of Swim England water polo registration.
- Working with swimming clubs to break down barriers and show that moving from swimming to water polo helps to retain members within aquatics.
- Using best practice examples of junior/mini polo (and other) sections to develop membership and increase diversity.
- Improving engagement with school and university populations - players, coaches and officials.
- Looking at developing a water polo CPD for swimming teachers and as an additional offering for swim schools.

### What will success look like?

- > Swim England Water Polo registrations increase by 12.5% in 2021, 17.5% in 2022, 20% in 2023 and 25% in 2024.
- > A significant increase in the diversity of participation (including better gender and ethnicity balance, more state-educated children).

## 2. Competitions

We will review Swim England junior competitions (National Age Groups and Inter-Regionals) and implement a structure that meets players' needs

### We will do this by:

- Ensuring that all players can play games at a level appropriate to their ability. Agreeing appropriate Swim England fees for those playing in low-level competitions only.
- Putting in place a clear 12+ month rolling competitions calendar. We will communicate widely when updates are made.
- Building club culture and trying to maintain the integrity of clubs/teams where it makes sense.
- Having clear entry criteria and aims for each competition; avoiding clashes with other disciplines.
- Outlining a comprehensive competition pathway that demonstrates how players and teams can progress to higher levels.



### What will success look like?

- > Review complete in 2020, piloted in 2021 and fully implemented for 2022.
- > The number of teams taking part in Swim England competitions will double by 2024.
- > The purpose of each competition will be clear and meet the needs of the participants.

## 3. Coaching

With the Institute of Swimming (IOS), we will implement an affordable, modular qualification system. This will deliver high-quality education and enable coaches to learn only those aspects that they need to coach at the level of polo they choose. The new system will include CPD and mentoring opportunities, online and face-to-face

### We will do this by:

- Streamlining courses to be modular, and publicising them through a wide range of channels, such as BWPL.
- Creating a network or membership scheme for coaches, to facilitate communications, learning and sharing.
- Holding subsidised Level 1 and 2 courses with the regions in 2020/1.
- Recognising prior learning (e.g. teachers, overseas coaches with pre-existing qualifications).
- Working with the IOS so that courses are as cost-effective and accessible as possible.
- Working with the regions and stakeholders (e.g. ESSA) to ensure that an annual calendar of coaching courses meets the needs of the sport (regionally and nationally).
- Ensuring there are sufficient qualified tutors and high-quality coaching materials nationwide.

### What will success look like?

- > Up to 10 subsidised courses delivered in 2020/1 to enrol 100 new coaches.
- > Modular level 1 courses implemented by 2021.
- > All courses implemented by 2022.
- > Numbers of suitably qualified registered coaches and academy coaching contact hours will both increase by 10% p.a. (currently 324 registered coaches).



## 4. Officials

We will implement an affordable qualification system that enables officials to learn only those aspects that they need to officiate at the levels of polo they choose. This will include CPD and mentoring opportunities, online and face-to-face



### We will do this by:

- Reinstating referee courses, making them relevant for the desired levels of competition/players.
- Developing ways of running efficient and cost-effective courses, making them accessible to more volunteers.
- Working with Swim England regions, clubs and affiliated leagues to ensure that a calendar of officials' courses meets the needs of the sport (regionally and nationally).
- Ensuring there are sufficient qualified and experienced presenters nationwide.

### What will success look like?

- > All courses implemented by end 2021.
- > Number of suitably qualified referees and table officials on register will increase by 10% in 2021 and 15% p.a. in 2022-4.



## 5. Talent pathway

We will provide an inclusive, high-quality talent pathway so that players can train with the best coaches and staff, and reach their true potential. We will develop our talent coaches and staff (e.g. team managers) to ensure that we can offer players the best possible experience. Our ambition is to produce a consistent pipeline of talented, rounded players who will have the opportunity to represent ENG/GB in junior and senior squads



### We will do this by:

- Producing agreed standards and a clear selection policy used by all regional and national academies to recruit players and coaches.
- Delivering a high-quality Diploma in Sporting Excellence (DiSE) programme that provides tailored learning and training for players, supported by experienced staff.
- Increasing the training opportunities for talent pathway coaches to support their development.
- Ensuring junior and senior English national squads compete in appropriate competitions to give them experience for future GB programmes.



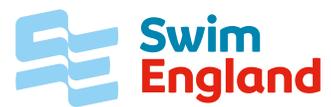
### What will success look like?

- > A minimum of 80% of enrolled players will complete the DiSE programme each year.
- > England will provide a minimum of 80% of players for all GB squads.
- > A minimum of 70 coaches will work within regional and national academies by end 2024 (currently 37).

# Our commitment to water polo

- We will draw up an implementation plan alongside our five-year strategy, both with key performance indicators. We will provide quarterly updates and seek feedback at least once a year. We will work with BWPL, BUCS and ESSA to ensure our communications are timely and relevant.
- We will clarify the governance role of the Water Polo Leadership Group and its interaction with the rest of Swim England and other parties, with its particular focus on oversight and strategy-setting.
- We will ensure the different stakeholder groups (e.g. players, coaches, officials) can exchange views regularly and influence, and then support, the strategy and tactics and learn from the experiences of other sports.
- We will look at the Swim England staffing requirements across each strategic theme to ensure responsibility and accountability are properly aligned, as well as working to ensure the strategy is sustainable for the future.
- We will deliver a series of 'How to' masterclass papers to help clubs develop. This will include negotiating with pool providers, recruiting swimmers as they leave competitive swimming, setting up mini/junior polo etc.
- We will seek additional water polo sponsorship, and raise money to fund specific initiatives, such as Drenched/Mini-polo, within the constraints of existing Swim England relationships.
- We will look for additional sources of funding, both cash and in-kind, to help reduce the financial burden on our competitive players and their families, as well as our volunteers, and to make the strategy sustainable.
- We will consider how we can better market the sport of water polo to the English population as a whole, to enable us to achieve the goals above, including opportunities outside the current club structure.





Written by the Swim England Water Polo Leadership Group  
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