

Artistic Swimming Leadership Group

15th October 2025 18:30 – 20:00

Attendees:

Maria Ramos – Chair (MR)
 Sarah Clarke – Coaching Lead (SC)
 Hannah Secher – Workforce Lead (HS)
 Susan Foex – North West Regional Representative (SF)
 Ali Ravenhall – West Midlands Regional Representative (AR)
 Di Hughes – East Regional Representative (DH)
 Sarah Small - North East Regional Representative (SS)
 Mary Hooper – South West Regional Representative (MH)
 Sue Barrington - North East Regional Representative (SB)
 Lenka Tanner – East Midlands Regional Representative (LT)
 Amy Davis – East Regional Representative (AD)
 Daniel Vernis – London Regional Representative (DV)
 Karen Thorpe – Artistic Swimming Manager (KT)
 Claire Coleman – Head of Development (CC)
 Gareth Picken – Sport Development Team Administrator (GP)

Apologies

Zoe Foster – West Midlands Regional Representative
 Ekaterina Boyd – Swim England Head of Events
 Keith Munday - SOC Representative

MINUTES	
1.	Chair’s Welcome and General Update
MR welcomed everyone to the meeting, mentioning that 2025 has been a successful year and the focus is now on 2026.	
2.	2025 Review and 2026 Plans
<p>KT began by outlining the national successes from 2025, including: gold in the World Cup, gold in the Senior and Junior Europeans and bronze at the World Championships. Regionally, all regional teams took part in the Regional Games and there has been a year-on-year improvement in performance.</p> <p>The 2026 National Programme athletes have been selected for the Youth, Juniors and Seniors teams. The main focus competitions are the Youth Europeans, Junior Worlds and Senior Europeans.</p> <p>KT further outlined the priorities for the 2026 Regional Programme and the details of the Regional Games on the 29th May at Hengrove Leisure Centre.</p> <p>As there have been no changes to the international rules from World Aquatics, an Artistic Swimming conference is not scheduled for this year.</p>	

SF asked that the Swim England Events team book the pools much earlier to avoid date changes as seen for 2026 National Age Groups. This is causing issues for the regions to book pool time for their own competitions and grade days.

3. Discussion on competition structure within the regions

MR asked the regional representatives what each region's competition structure looks like.

DH – South East – some counties (Kent, Hampshire) are really proactive with their own County competition; however some competitions have had to be cancelled due to the release of the National Age Group dates. The regional events (Age Groups and Champs and Combo Masters) follow the national programme and schedule and are designed as a warm up for Nationals. Entry grades are 1 lower in figures and teams than Nationals, with solos and duets the same standard. A figure only event is run in November.

SF – North West – combined NAGs/Champs qualifier event in January where the qualifications standard is one grade below the national standard. There is a Masters/Combo competition scheduled for June. There is also a multi-regional novice competition in partnership with the North East region. County events are not yet run as there are only 1 or 2 clubs per county. A multi-regional event is also run in the North East. A discussion was held on the viability of the extra competition especially when it comes to ensuring sufficient officials, and in some categories, there were very low entries, however the NW and NE believed it was a good opportunity to make more competitions available to swimmers.

SB – North East – In addition to the Regional Age Groups and Championships there is a Yorkshire programme for the lower-level athletes in June. The partnership with the North West region is going well.

AR – Midlands – the region has their regional age group competition just before National Age Groups, regional championships just before the National Championships. In addition, there is a novice competition in May and June held by the counties.

AD – East Region – Warm up competition for NAGs in February, National Championships warm up event in March and Combo warm up event in May/June with a novice competition held in October.

MH – South West – there are no county competitions, however there are some club competitions. Four licensed competitions take place in the region each year; Regional and development figures take place in February, novice figures take place in March, combo combination take place in June, duets competition in November. Entry is one lower than the national requirements.

DV – London - the region doesn't have a competition schedule for the year yet, however, there is a plan to split the figures competition into two events prior to National Age Groups and Combo Cup. There is a big masters' community within the region.

MR thanked everyone for the updates and asked if there are any gaps which the regions are struggling with.

MH raised that the availability of appropriate pools is the biggest issue in the South West as the region is geographically large and yet there are only two pools where the depth meets the requirement for competitions. An additional issue is swimming clubs seem to always book out pool time before artistic swimming gets a chance.

DH raised that the time gap between the competition conditions for coach cards and the closing date for National Age Groups has recently been too short for clubs.

MR mentioned that the closing date for National Age Groups will be the 18th February with the conditions being finalised at the moment.

4. **Round tabletop issues and sharing best practice**

MR asked the regions for feedback on any issues which the regions are facing and to share any good practices.

DH raised that at a recent club and county consultation meeting, inclusion and neurodiversity were raised with the primary question being; what is sport doing to support athletes who are neurodiverse and their coaches. Whilst there is CPD available on the Swim England website, there are no resources which are Artistic Swimming focused.

A wider conversation took place on the experiences of other regions when supporting neurodiverse athletes and athletes with disabilities.

CC mentioned that starting in 2026, Swim England will be working alongside a neurodiverse charity to support this work further. CC further explained that the Certificate of Exception could be something that the Artistic Swimming Leadership Group might need to consider.

DH further raised, on behalf of a judge, an issue with the number of communications sent out by Swim England. CC replied that there is ongoing work to improve all of the Swim England communication channels.

5. **Club Health Tracker**

CC explained the premise of the club health tracker. As of two weeks prior to the meeting, only four artistic swimming clubs have engaged with the Club Health Tracker nationally and therefore CC asked for the regional representatives to promote the project within their regions.

Some regions have had issues with login emails not reaching their clubs. CC replied that this would be investigated.

MH and HS left the meeting at 19:58.

6. **Grades**

KT asked the group for feedback on virtual grades, specifically, who is using them, do we need them, do we need to review the process. The group agreed that virtual grades are useful for the regions.

In-Club Routine Grades - who is using them, do we need them, do we need to review the process. Again, the group agreed that this was useful for the regions.

Grade Videos will be updated during half term. For any errors, report back in email to SC for amendments before the 27th October.

Following on, KT outlined the some of the findings from the Grade Review and qualification system used for competitions which has taken place this year. KT explained that this

provides a new opportunity to look at national Grades are the biggest challenge for artistic swimming clubs and there are inconsistencies across the country.

Next Steps are to discuss potential options with clubs.

KT mentioned that the PowerPoint would be shared with the regional representatives so that it could be further shared with the regional boards.

8. AOB

LT stressed the need for the date and location of the SE national competitions to be shared with the regions as soon as possible so that regional competitions could be booked accordingly

SF raised a concern over the number of Judge 1 coaching courses and opportunity to complete the necessary requirements before moving to Level 2.

9. Close of meeting

MR closed the meeting at 20:14 and thanked everyone for attending.