



water safety
Scotland



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Governance Report

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Endorsed and agreed by the Steering Group of Water Safety Scotland

Introduction

Water Safety Scotland (WSS), since it was founded in 2014 by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), has gone from strength to strength in terms of membership, credibility and in achieving its main mission of addressing the targets set out in [Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy](#) and subsequently the Community Safety Minister's [Water Safety Action Plan](#). All of our activities have been and continue to be driven by the aspiration to reduce the rates of accidental drowning in Scotland.

WSS wants to ensure further growth, recognition and above all sustainability. As part of the RoSPA grant for 2022/23, WSS was asked to review its governance to ensure its future sustainability.

In order to achieve this, we have undertaken a full and open governance review of WSS. This has been conducted in two stages:

- A look at short-term governance changes, based on the results of an online survey conducted with our members.
- An exploration of options for long-term governance.

Current governance

WSS currently sits under the auspices of RoSPA. RoSPA created the group and continues to manage it thanks to generous and continued funding from the Scottish Government dating back to 2012.

WSS has a complicated structure (see Appendix 1), made up of a Steering Group, Strategy Subgroup, several subgroups/working groups and a Main Group.

Direction, decisions and leadership are the responsibility of the Steering Group, which is managed and led by RoSPA. The Steering Group consists of RoSPA (Secretariat), an Independent Chair (RNLI) and a Vice Chair (SFRS). Decisions about WSS must take into account the views of all three members of the Steering Group. Ultimate accountability for WSS, however, lies with RoSPA.



Short-term governance changes

WSS created a short online survey for all members of WSS. The survey focused on short-term changes that the WSS Steering Group suggests are needed to further growth, reduce duplication, and increase our sustainability.

The survey included questions on proposed changes to structure and working methods. The survey was live from the 13 October to 10 November 2022 and all 54 WSS member organisations were invited to participate. Table 1 shows the response rate.

Number of organisations contacted	Number of organisations that responded	Response rate (%)
54	27	50

Table 1: Response rate

The results of the survey were analysed using Microsoft Excel. Charts and graphs were then produced to illustrate the data. Appendix 2 provides details of the responses by question. All responses to the open-ended questions in the survey were analysed together.

Results

- 96% of respondents believed that the current purpose of WSS should remain as it is.
- 95% of respondents agreed that the Steering Group should be opened up to a further two organisations and that the Chair/Vice Chair roles should cease. A small number of respondents indicated the Chair role should remain.
- Respondents were mixed in their views on the number of subgroups. Some believed there to be the right amount, whilst the majority felt there were too many and they would become increasingly difficult to service, as well as place additional demands on people’s busy diaries. A specific and appropriate remit was seen as necessary to ensure the correct number of subgroups.
- 81% agreed with the proposed streamlined structure for WSS.
- 80% agreed that members should be expected to attend the Annual Information Exchange meeting, join a WSS subgroup, and actively use WSS materials, e.g. education resources, WSS code.
- There was only one comment about the Annual Information Exchange meeting, which suggested two bi-annual meetings – in spring and autumn.
- Respondents reported being happy with the level of communication they currently received from WSS.
- Open-ended responses indicated partners’ contentment with WSS as a partnership organisation. There were some suggestions of a potential membership/affiliation fee to help resource WSS further.

Options for long-term governance

In addition to the short-term changes, the WSS Steering Group also explored options for the future of WSS to ensure its continued sustainability in the longer term.

Numerous meetings were held and expert views provided to help debate the various options.

Results show that there are four future options available to WSS in terms of ensuring its continued sustainability and maintaining it as an entity in its own right:

- 1 No change
- 2 To become an independent charitable organisation
- 3 To become an independent charitable organisation under the parent organisation of RoSPA
- 4 To become an independent charitable organisation under the parent of another organisation

1. No change

Under this option, WSS would remain within the current proposed (short-term) structure under the auspices of RoSPA.

This is the 'business as usual' model with the current grant from the Scottish Government continuing to allow RoSPA to carry out the leadership and management of WSS, heavily supported by the management committee/Steering Group partners. The main benefit of this option is that it currently is seen to work with little or no impact on business operations.

The main drawback of this option centres on the continued reliance on a small number of individuals which could result in single points of failure. Additionally, there are operational limits placed on WSS by RoSPA, which hampers the scope for growth of WSS. This includes

restrictions in terms of everyday working practices, the ability to allocate secondments, access to IT and technology, and funding opportunities.

2. Independent charitable organisation

Under this option, WSS would become its own independent organisation as a registered charity in Scotland. This would give WSS complete control over its everyday activities and future.

However, the time and resource required to set this up would be significant and would impact on the outputs of WSS. The current grant – provided via RoSPA – would not cover the HR and set-up costs. And using the grant for this purpose would make WSS financially unstable. WSS receives a substantial amount of 'in kind' contribution from RoSPA; that would be lost under this option.

3. Independent charitable organisation under the parent organisation of RoSPA

This option would see WSS becoming its own independent organisation as a registered charity in Scotland but would remain under the parent organisation of RoSPA.

This option would allow business to continue as usual (including current work output) but would also allow WSS independence for everyday working practices, the ability to allocate secondments, access to IT and technology, and funding opportunities through its own independent accounts. This model currently works in other organisations. For example, the Bank of Scotland Foundation is an independent charity, funded by Lloyds with staff employed by Lloyds and seconded to the Foundation.

This option would require initial set up as a charity (although risks would be greatly reduced under the continued management of RoSPA). This option would require agreement from RoSPA.

4. Independent charitable organisation under the parent organisation of another body or institution

In this option, WSS would become its own independent organisation as a registered charity in Scotland but would be under the parent organisation of another body or institution. This would have all the benefits of option 3 (under a different parent) if it fell under a well-established parent organisation. WSS, under a Scottish parent organisation, makes sense, as the outputs are all specific to Scotland. In addition, this would increase consistency and reputation within Scotland. This option is, of course, dependent on the availability and interest of an appropriate parent organisation. It would cause substantial disruption to everyday working and output, and would require the release of all WSS documents and content from RoSPA to a new organisation.



What WSS needs as a minimum

Throughout this process, it has become clear that regardless of long-term governance options, WSS has a number of requirements which will allow it to prosper and continue in the short-term. These include:

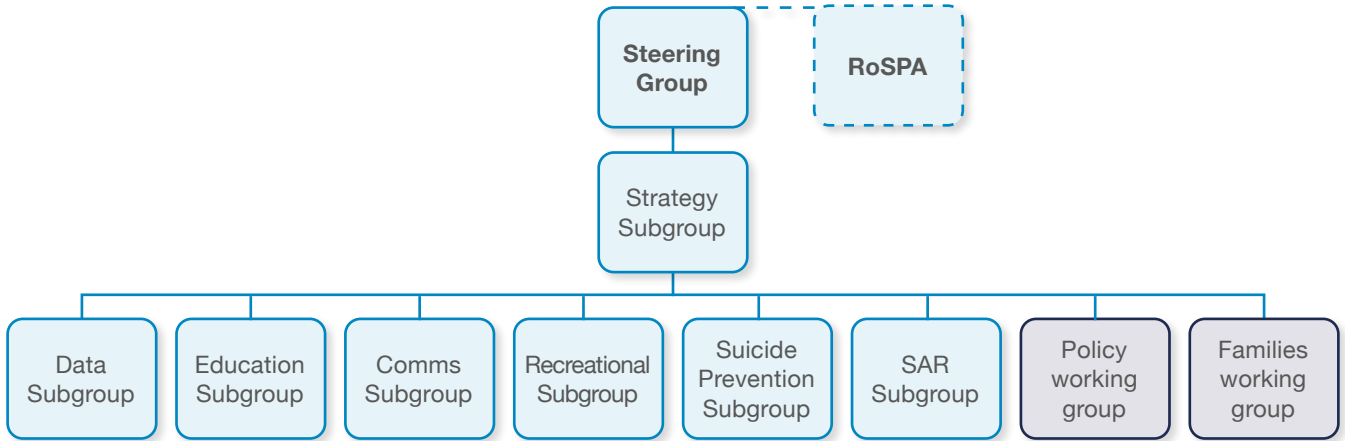
- WSS's own independent accounts to enable bidding on funding opportunities (this is currently not possible under RoSPA UK's financial structure).
- Independence in relation to specific IT needs, e.g. its own WSS Microsoft licence, SharePoint, and its ability to make decisions on content for its social media platforms and in press releases.
- The ability to second employees into WSS from other organisations.
- The ability to charge membership fees (in the future, if agreed).

Additionally, for WSS to continue to push forward, Steering Group organisations need to agree a suitable time commitment to WSS activity.

Recommendations

- Given that 81% of our members agreed with the new proposed structure, we will implement this structure and streamline subgroups accordingly.
- Main Group meetings will move to an Annual Information Exchange meeting – the Steering Group should decide whether these should be once or twice a year.
- 96% believed the Steering Group should move to a management committee and include two new organisations. Accordingly, a process for this should be put in place following the February Main Group meeting. Due to uncertainties with the future state of WSS, it is recommended that a new Chair be elected in the interim and the proposed structure without a Chair be revisited at an appropriate time in the future.

Appendix 1: Current structure of WSS



Appendix 2: Short-term governance survey results

