Risk assessment for:	ESSA National Finals of Secondary Teams Championships 2026 **Venue**: Sandwell Aquatic Centre **Date of event**: 21st November 2026		
Completed by:	Stewart Nicklin-Hammond – Championship Director		
Date of assessment:	17/10/2026	**Date of review:**	12/12/2026

Hazards	Who is at risk?	Control measures	Risk rating	Additional controls
Entry into the venue including outside areas: Entering venue before ESSA staff are in place. Injuries due to falls caused by overcrowding through entrance or in foyer. Injuries from falls over trip hazards in carpark and curbs stones or on loose or uneven pathways around the centre. Injuries from doors and barriers upon entering the venue. Increase risk during exit time and in an emergency.	• Spectators • Coaches • Competitors • Staff • Volunteers	• ESSA staff and volunteers in place to manage entry and exit points along with centre staff and security personal. Security outside to support with safety on car park and only mini buses and coaches that have special arranged passes can enter this specific area. • Everyone reminded to use the clearly marked pathways around the car park and take care on pathways shared with the public as will be very busy. Please ensure that you take your time and be aware of uneven ground. VI athletes supported by own staff. •Entry doors watched by security and venue staff to ensure safety and barriers on to poolside. • Fire exists to be kept clear. • Entrance to the venue will only be granted once the venue, and organising team agree admission. • Due to progressive entry with split water familiarisation times this will allow for a steady flow and not everyone arriving at once. • Admission into the venue to be managed by volunteers to ensure a steady flow of people. • Venue's stated spectator maximum not to be exceeded as tickets are sold so ensure numbers and numbers are controlled for swimmers and team mangers coaches with passes. • Signage clear to enable groups to move in opposite ways even in the venue keeping it moving quickly and clear. Spectator entry will be via QR code and pre-paid tickets to speedier entry available.	Minimal	• ESSA staff and venue staff to direct spectators to fire exits in an emergency. • Venue Pool Safety Operating Procedure and Emergency Action Plan to be followed by event organiser

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Emergency exiting the venue: Obstructions of doorways delaying evacuation in an emergency. Numbers of people in the venue Slippery floor Additional needs athletes who need additional space and time.	• All	• Venue and organisers to check fire exits are clear inside and out. • Announcer's safety announcement before each water familiarisation period competition commences alerts everyone to number and location of fire exits. • Venue checks completed via security, ESSA staff and venue staff. • Poolside kept as clear as possible and ensure safe pathways around the deck. • Wet floor signs to be placed by venue staff where needed. • Athletes to be in footwear when the use the stairs between the sports hall and the pool. • Para swimmers and with additional needs to be at the back of their party as not to slow down the exit of others. • PEEPs put in place by the school or division.	Low	• ESSA and venue staff monitor exits throughout gala making sure they remain clear at all times.
Slips/falls in the venue due to wet surfaces or obstructions: Competitors/team managers slipping on floors and steps Spectators slipping and falling on wet or uneven surface.	• Competitors • Coaches • Competitors • Spectators	• Coaches to ensure competitors thoroughly dry off before leaving poolside. • Coaches and competitors to ensure they wear suitable footwear. • Coaches and competitors not to run between areas. • Ensure that all cables are secured and covered. Cables crossing walkway to be covered and/or tapped. All equipment tested before competition commences. • Ensure equipment is stored away or kept clear of walkways. • Clear signage of any hazards is present which cannot be moved. • Cleaning up any spills • All athletes must be wearing foot wear to use the stairs going to/from sports hall to/from pool deck. • Ensure all stay on left when moving on the stairs in both directions • Stairs to be monitored but schools are in charge of swimmers on stairs and when in the venue.	Low	ESSA and venue staff to monitor

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Access arrangements in venue Swimmers gaining unsupervised access to the balcony. Swimmers non-supervised in the venue General public in the venue at the same time as event General public access to competition secure areas. Schools using mixed area for changing. Public access to athletes and team staff.	• Competitors • Coaches • Spectators	• All swimmers have pass that must be visible to gain access to competition area • All coaches and team managers must have accreditation visible to gain access to competition area • Swimmers with pass and no wrist band not allowed in public balcony area for their safety • A secure area made with security staff at entry doors so only athletes with accreditation and team staff with accreditation can access. This area will be secured with staff on any doors that mix into others areas. • Athletes are the responsibility of their school throughout the competition and their own risk assessment covers supervision while at the competition. (Including travel) • General public have separate entry into venue and kept without access to poolside. • Schools advised not to use the public end of the changing village to get changed as this is not inside the secure area. • Security in place to form secure area and in place in changing village to support athletes and coaches if needed.		

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Hazardous and sharp items on poolside: Obstructions and electrical cables. Equipment on the floor. Glass bottles and sharp items. Lifeguard chairs with sharp supporting feet	• Competitors • Officials	• Ensure that all cables are secured and covered. Cables crossing walkway to be covered and/or tapped. All equipment tested before competition commences. • Ensure equipment is stored away or kept clear of walkways. • Clear signage for any hazards that are present which cannot be moved. • All electrical equipment should meet safety standards. • If glass bottles are found they will be removed from poolside. • Ensure lifeguard chairs have cushioned protection on the feet and are clearly visible and not covered by bags.	Low	• Remind swimmers only to bring plastic bottles onto poolside.
Slips and trips on poolside and changing rooms: Slippery and wet floor. Uneven surfaces. Competitor items left on poolside.	• Competitors • Officials	• Cleaning up any spills. • Running not allowed on poolside. • Competitors to leave items by the walls of poolside or in lockers • No large bags allowed on poolside.	Medium	• Frequent health and safety announcements made throughout the event. • Advise on correct footwear. • Competitors to be informed by Officials and volunteers to leave items against the wall of poolside.

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Risk of drowning: Competitors become unconscious. Lifeguards or helpers during rescue. Anyone on poolside.	• Coaches • Competitors • Staff and lifeguards • Volunteers	• Lifeguards on poolside at all times during the event. • Lifeguards are adequately trained. • Safety signs are on display. • Competitors are not to be left unsupervised on poolside.	Low	• Safety announcements at the start and throughout the event. • First aiders on poolside. • Schools responsible for competitors' whereabouts.
Diving during warm-ups & competition: Risk of hitting head or hands on pool floor. Starting blocks unstable.	• Competitors	• Swimmers are advised of rules pertaining to specific venue/event, e.g. diving restrictions. • Venue and officials to ensure each block checked for stability and compliance with Swim England regulations before warm-up commences. . • Announcer appointed before gala reads safety announcements before warm-up- including pool depths and reminders of swimmer competitive start competence. • Strict supervision by school staff in place to ensuring safety • Schools reminded that are in charge of their warm up and to ensure they are aware of goings on around them.	Low	• If blocks cannot be made stable alternative means will be created for swimmers to start the race safely. • Competitors to be supervised whilst warming up by a member of school staff.
Competitor injury in the pool: Backstroke swimmers hitting head or hands on wall at turns or finishes. Swimmers catching arms on slack lane ropes.	• Competitors	• Venue to ensure both sets of backstroke flags are put in place at correct distance from ends of pool and remain in place for the duration of the event. • Venue and officials to check ropes are correctly tensioned.	Low	• Schools to remind competitors to look out for backstroke flags and count strokes to the wall in warm-up.

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Safeguarding and welfare of competitors: 18's leaving venue unsupervised - risk of abduction or injury.	• Competitors • Staff/volunteers • Coaches	• Teachers/Coaches to ensure competitors do not leave venue before being collected by parents or leaving with staff member. • ESSA staff and volunteers to stop and question any child seen leaving the venue without an adult. • Schools have been notified prior to the event that they are responsible for all the children/competitors they bring to the event. • Schools are responsible for letting children under 18 leave.	Medium	• Schools have been notified prior to the event that they are responsible for all the children/competitors they bring to the event. • Schools are responsible for letting children under 18 leave.
Safeguarding and welfare of competitors: Unauthorised access to changing rooms. Abusive/inappropriate behaviour towards a minor. Mixing with the general public	• Competitors • Staff/volunteers • Coaches	• All event organisers and school staff in regulated activity with children must have a clear up to date DBS check or school signed document taking responsibility. • All school staff will be issued with an ESSA accreditation card after a DBS check has been completed and their attendance has be signed off by school management. • All school staff and ESSA staff must show their accreditation card to security staff to enter the changing rooms or to go onto poolside. • All schools are encouraged to get changed in the secure area and not in the public changing area. • Security staff will be at the entrance to the secure area and will prevent any members of the public from entering the changing area.	Low	• School and event staff are vigilant for any safeguarding issues. • School and event staff are aware of the signs of child abuse and know the action to be taken in the event of an occurrence.

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Safeguarding and welfare of competitors: Mobile phone use	• Competitors • Staff/volunteers • Coaches	• The use of mobile phones, cameras or other mobile devices is banned in the changing rooms. • All schools will be sent the following link to a Swim England video for no use of mobile phone in the changing room that every member of staff and swimmer must watch prior to the event. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kkFoXGAw-TY • Male and female changing areas will be separated in the secure area.		• Schools will be clearly informed on the mobile device/camera use ban in changing rooms before the event and clear signage will be displayed at the venue. • The Swim England video on no use of mobile phones in the changing rooms will also be played during the event on the big screen as a reminder.
Terrorist attack (Venue) Terrorism attack at venue	• all	• Everyone to remain vigilant at all times and report anything suspicions • Security personal on standby in venue ready to support. • Bag searches to enter venue as needed.	Low	

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Terror attack at school: Unable to return to school due to an incident at school (environmental or terrorist related)		It is sensible to: • Be aware of the latest news relating to your destination • In the UK know the current threat level (available at: https://www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels.) • On way back be aware of possible safe areas or venues, near where you intend to be, that you could use as an emergency shelter. • Are staff phones charged and numbers shared? • Do all leaders have all group information? Will they be spaced apart? • A contact card for all participants giving a number to call if separated from the group, and the name and telephone number of the establishment • How you would get away in an emergency, bearing in mind that the direct route and planned transport might no longer be an option. Are you aware of alternatives and can you access emergency funds to pay for them?	Low	Contact with school to be advised of situation. Communication with school during journey back to school and before that. In these circumstances communication with parents etc… must only go through the lead teacher under instruction of the Police/LEA.
COVID-19 Showing symptoms of covid and spreading with others	• all	• There are no legal controls upon this and is treated as illness by schools • If concerns when at the venue they will be treated by venue staff initially and if emergency care needed 999 would be called. They will kept separate from others to the best of our abilities.	Medium	

Signed by
Stewart Nicklin
ESSA National Event Director.