



Technical Officials Development Plan 2025-2027



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Foreword from CEO

Technical officials are the guardians of fair play, safety, and integrity in sport. Their expertise and commitment ensure that competitions are conducted to the highest standards, from grassroots to elite levels. Often working behind the scenes, technical officials play a vital role in enabling athletes to perform at their best and uphold the spirit of sport.

The Technical Officials Development Plan is a comprehensive, multi-layered strategy designed to elevate the role of officiating in Irish sport. It represents a significant step forward in the recruitment, retention, recognition, support, and development of this essential workforce. The plan is the result of extensive collaboration across National Governing Bodies and Local Sports Partnerships, facilitated through the Officials Network, and informed by the insights and experiences of those who officiate across a wide range of disciplines.

This plan sets out a clear vision for the future: one where technical officials are respected, valued, visible, and supported through structured pathways, inclusive opportunities, and ongoing professional development. It also reflects Sport Ireland's commitment to fostering excellence and equity in all areas of sport.

Success will be reflected in a measurable increase in the number of officials across all sports, with a younger, more diverse, and inclusive workforce. We will see more athletes, coaches, and volunteers transitioning into officiating roles, supported by high quality training pathways and mentoring opportunities. Officials will feel valued and connected, with improved retention and morale driven by recognition initiatives and safer, more respectful environments.

This plan sets out a clear roadmap for development, recognition, and support, laying the foundation for a future where officiating is not only valued but celebrated as a vital part of Irish sport.

Dr. Una May

Chief Executive Officer, Sport Ireland



Foreword from the Director of Coaching

In every sporting arena, the integrity, fairness, and quality of competition depend not only on the athletes, but on the dedication and professionalism of technical officials. In Ireland, our sporting culture is rich, diverse, and deeply rooted in community and excellence. As we continue to grow and evolve, so too must the structures that support our sports.

Our sporting heritage is woven into the fabric of who we are. From local pitches to international arenas, our sports reflect the values we hold dear: integrity, respect, and excellence. This plan is a tribute to those who stand behind the scenes, making sport possible—not for recognition, but for love of the game.

The journey toward excellence is not a sprint; it is a commitment to continuous growth, learning, and leadership. This Technical Officials Development Plan lays the foundation for a future where every official is supported, valued, and empowered to thrive. It is a call to elevate the standards of officiating, to inspire the next generation, and to build a culture where excellence is not just expected—it is lived.

Whether on the pitch, in the pool, on the court, or trackside, technical officials play a vital role in ensuring that sport is conducted safely, fairly, and in the spirit of true competition.

Through clear pathways, enhanced training, and a renewed focus on recognition and retention, this plan aims to elevate the experience of officiating in Ireland. It is a call to action for sporting bodies, local sports partnerships, clubs, and communities to invest in the people who make sport possible.

Excellence is not achieved by chance—it is built through preparation, consistency, and a shared vision. This plan is a step toward that vision, ensuring that Irish sport continues to thrive with integrity at its core.

Le meas,

Michael McGeehin

Stiúrthóir Cóitseála, Director of Coaching



SPÓRT
ÉIREANN
CÓITSEÁIL

SPORT
IRELAND
COACHING



Background

Sport Ireland is the statutory body tasked with leading, advocating and providing directed investment for the development of sport in Ireland. This includes, but is not limited to, participation in sport, high performance sport, anti-doping, coaching, officiating and the development of the Sport Ireland Campus.

The Technical Officials Plan (TODP) is designed to support the recruitment, development, and retention of technical officials in Ireland. In alignment with Sport Ireland's Statement of Strategy 2023–2027, the Technical Officials Development Plan (TODP) is a proactive framework to recruit, develop, and retain technical officials (TOs) across all sports, ensuring quality, fairness, and growth at every level.

This plan addresses the challenges facing officiating and aligns with Sport Ireland's values of Inclusion, Integrity, Respect, Excellence, and Accountability, while embracing Sport Ireland's mission:

Sport Ireland's Mission:

“Ensuring that Ireland is an active nation where people are encouraged to start, continue to participate, progress and achieve in sport.”

Vision for Technical Officials

“To create a sustainable, inclusive, and supportive environment for technical officials across all sports in Ireland, ensuring they are valued, respected, and empowered to perform to the highest standards, whether grassroots or elite.

For technical officials to thrive, develop, and contribute positively to the sporting experience.”



Definition of Technical Officials

This plan expresses Sport Ireland's commitment to Technical Officials in sport. The definition of an official according to Sport Ireland is "Any person who controls the play of a competition by applying the rules and regulations of the sport to make judgments on rule infringements, performance, time or ranking. A Technical Official acts as an impartial judge of sporting competition (e.g referee, umpire, line official, scorekeeper, statistician, judge etc." (Sport Ireland Statement of Strategy 2023-2027, page 52)

For the purpose of this TODP, the term 'technical official' refers to all officiating positions including referees, umpires, match officials, tournament referees, third umpires, table officials, scorers, television match official, timekeepers etc.



Sport Ireland's integrated approach to Technical Officials development

Sport Ireland has placed strategic emphasis on the development and support of technical officials as a cornerstone of delivering high quality, well organised sport across Ireland. These technical officials are essential to ensuring fair play, safety, and the integrity of competition.

The current strategic direction outlined in the Sport Ireland Statement of Strategy 2023–2027, the Sport Ireland Coaching Plan 2020–2025, and the Sport Ireland Participation Plan 2021–2024, sets clear objectives to increase both the number and quality of technical officials through structured recruitment, education, and retention initiatives. The Technical Officials Development Plan is supported by the formal extension of the Coaching Unit's remit to include officiating.

Key performance indicators and policy actions (Appendix 1) have been established to monitor progress and ensure officiating is embedded across Sport Ireland's strategic delivery. The Participation Plan further reinforces officiating as a cornerstone of quality sport experiences, prioritising accessible training, targeted recruitment from underrepresented groups, and the development of interpersonal skills particularly for those working with children and new officials.



A pivotal initiative within the Sport Ireland Policy on Volunteering in Sport (2023) is the establishment of the Respect Officials' Working Group, created in response to increasing reports of abuse and poor treatment of officials. This group plays a central role in safeguarding the wellbeing of technical officials and promoting a respectful sporting environment.

Aligned with the Sport Ireland Policy on Women in Sport 2023–2027, Sport Ireland is committed to broadening the officiating base to include more women and girls, from grassroots to high-performance levels. The Women in Sport Officiating Report 2023 highlights both the motivations and challenges faced by female officials, including abuse, unclear progression pathways, and inconsistent support. In response, Sport Ireland is investing in targeted education programmes, mentoring networks, and inclusive pathways to ensure that officiating is accessible, respected, and supported for women across all levels of sport.

Officiating is now embedded across multiple strategic frameworks, including:

- Sport Ireland Statement of Strategy 2023–2027
- Sport Ireland Coaching Plan 2020–2025
- Sport Ireland Participation Plan 2021–2024
- Sport Ireland Women in Sport Policy 2023
- Sport Ireland Women in Sport Officiating Report 2023
- Sport Ireland Feasibility Study 2024
- Sport Ireland Policy on Volunteering in Sport 2023

The TODP is a comprehensive, multi-layered plan designed to elevate the role of officiating in Irish sport. Through inclusive policies, targeted investment, and collaborative implementation, the plan aims to ensure that officiating is accessible, respected, and impactful, contributing to a thriving Irish sport sector.

Current state of play

There is limited international and domestic research on sports officiating upon which to draw. However a recent feasibility study carried out by Knight, Kavanagh & Page on behalf of Sport Ireland and Sport NI (2024), provides us with insight into key challenges and highlights several emerging pillars. It highlights under representation of Technical Officials and the need to focus on the changing demographics of Technical Officials (TO) and the limited data being held by sports in this space.

Findings and recommendations are based upon a consultation process which included 100 TOs and National Governing Body (NGB) staff responsible for the management and orchestration of Technical Officials in their sports. The study is also informed by a survey of 686 current/former technical officials.

Overview of Technical Officials in Ireland

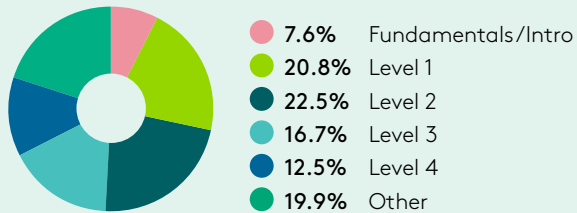
The main sources of TOs are former (or current) participants, parents of (usually) young people taking part in a sport, coaches and spectators.

- **Ageing Supply Chain:** There is a declining base of existing TOs. The 'supply chain' is narrowing because sportsmen and women are 'getting old later', being active sports participants for longer and becoming TOs later in their careers or not at all.
- **Raising Participation:** More people are participating in sport but the number of TOs is not keeping up.
- **Lack of Recruitment Strategy:** Many NGBs do not have a clear plan to attract and train new TOs.

Across sport in Ireland there is a need for larger quantities, higher standards and continuously improving (and potentially younger) Technical Officials.

Qualifications, training & development

Level of Officiating Qualifications



The survey indicated that, during the two years prior to completing the survey, 69% of TOs have been offered officiating training/education/support (mainly in the form of online courses, webinars or practical workshops) by the NGB in the main sport in which they officiate.

Slightly fewer (68%) have been in receipt of some training.

More than one third (37%) of TOs report having been offered officiating education/training/support by another agency over this same period.

- Technical Officials have been offered training and qualifications; however, the issue is understanding the quality and accessibility of training, support and development programs for Technical Officials in sport.
- Sports must start to consider the logistical factors of training and education, including format, presentation and accessibility are key.
- One of the most effective ways to ensure that NGBs/sports have sufficient Technical Officials is to retain the ones they have. It is universally acknowledged that it is far harder to get and train/develop a new official than it is to keep the ones you already have. The top three things that encourage people officiating are:
 1. **'Local' support from clubs/officials'/referees' societies/associations (58%)**
 2. **Peer group support (54%)**
 3. **Support from relevant sport/NGB in the form of a coach/mentor and referees societies/associations (52%)**.

In essence, the primary factor is, thus, the quality and accessibility of formal and informal support.

Challenges and obstacles faced by Technical Officials

- Survey results show that abuse or criticism from players, coaches, and spectators is the most common challenge faced by Technical Officials (TOs), with 69% citing it as a key issue. Quantifying levels or its impact on Technical Officials and their participation is undoubtedly challenging. It is evident that rates and severity of abuse vary widely by sport, age group, and level of competition. Officials also differ in their tolerance levels, making the issue even more complex.
- Dealing with abuse and associated issues on a collective/ individual basis is the primary demand directed at Sport Ireland - from NGBs, other sports organisations and individual officials; at all levels of participation/ performance.
- The next most significant challenges for TOs are lack of support and limited time due to other commitments (each cited by just under 40% of TOs).

Sport Ireland has used the results of the feasibility study to inform the development of this comprehensive Technical Officials Development Plan. The plan aims to address challenges and leverage opportunities for TO development across all sports. Sport Ireland recognises the proven success and potential of the sport sector in delivering on officiating objectives. To this end, it remains committed to strengthening partnerships with both NGBs and Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs).

Role of NGBs

National Governing Bodies are central to the development and delivery of officiating structures within their respective sports. Their inclusion in the Technical Officials Development Plan ensures that recruitment, training, retention, and recognition strategies are sport-specific, scalable, and aligned with national standards. NGBs are uniquely positioned to audit existing officiating pools, design structured pathways, and implement mentoring systems.

They can also lead targeted recruitment campaigns, develop qualifications, and integrate officiating into broader sport development frameworks. Their strategic oversight and access to sport specific data make them essential for evidence based planning and investment.

Role of LSPs

Local Sports Partnerships, meanwhile, play a vital role in growing participation, getting people active, supporting activities that rely on the presence of officials. Their inclusion in the plan supports the grassroots promotion of officiating roles and helps build local capacity. LSPs can facilitate mentoring networks, collaborate with sport organisations to deliver training and education, and support clubs in embedding officiating into their culture. By collaborating with clubs and NGBs, LSPs help amplify national messaging and ensure that officiating opportunities are accessible and inclusive. Their proximity to communities makes them key drivers of recruitment and retention and long-term engagement.



National Governing Bodies Key Insights on Technical Officials



26,323

TOs surveyed
from 38 NGBs

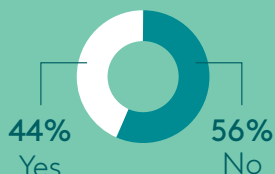
36.72% Male

10.27% Female

33.87% Gender not recorded

19.14% Non-specified

Do TOs in your sport have validity periods or license?



55%

NGBs have a TO pathway

942



Number of annual training courses run for TOs by NGBs

10%



NGBs have conducted research related to TOs

10%

NGBs collect disability data

56%



NGBs have mentor or buddy systems in place

31%



NGBs with TO academies

20%

NGBs with TOs development programmes

Pillars

Sport Ireland identifies six key pillars which have emerged as current gaps and future opportunities for Technical Officials in sport.

These pillars will be actively pursued to fulfil the commitments outlined in this plan.





Recruitment

Objective:

1. Expand and Diversify the TO Workforce.
2. Strengthen and Simplify Officiating Pathways.



Retention

Objective:

3. Increase Support Structures to Sustain the TO Workforce.
4. Provide recognition and development opportunities to encourage sustained involvement of TOs.



Training & Development

Objective:

5. Facilitate the development of high quality, relevant and accessible training for Technical Officials.
6. Progress the development of structured pathways for Technical Official qualifications and tutor development.



Rewards & Recognition

Objective:

7. Raise the profile of Technical Officials.
8. Recognise and reward TOs as an integral part of the sporting workforce.



Abuse

Objective:

9. Promote a safe, respectful environment for Technical Officials.
10. Implement a national respect campaign.



Data & Information

Objective:

11. Collect and use data to inform decision making and drive development for Technical Officials.
12. Enable evidence based planning and investment.



Recruitment

Objective	Action for Sport Ireland
1. Expand and Diversify the TO workforce.	Support NGBs to launch recruitment campaigns: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Targeting former athletes, para athletes, parents, coaches, females and volunteers.• Promote officiating as a rewarding alternative or complement to coaching and volunteering.• Use modern digital platforms and targeted messaging to reach wider, more diverse and younger audiences.• Promote diversity, equity and inclusion in all recruitment materials and messages.• Collaborate with NGBs to develop clear, accessible officiating pathways.• Explore the introduction of youth officiating pathways to build early interest and experience.
2. Strengthen and Simplify Officiating Pathways.	Improve visibility and communication of officiating opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve the quality, accessibility, and clarity of information on how to become a Technical Official (TO).• Support NGBS to develop well defined, clear entry points and structured pathways for individuals to become certified officials.• Encourage NGBs to design and maintain fully developed TO pathways, covering grassroots to elite level. Support NGBs and clubs with practical toolkits: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop standardised and easy read template plans for NGB outlining best practices for onboarding new Officials.• Ensure process for becoming an Official – including required training, registration and mentoring are transparent.• Promote checklist, guides and support material for sports to tailor for Official engagement.



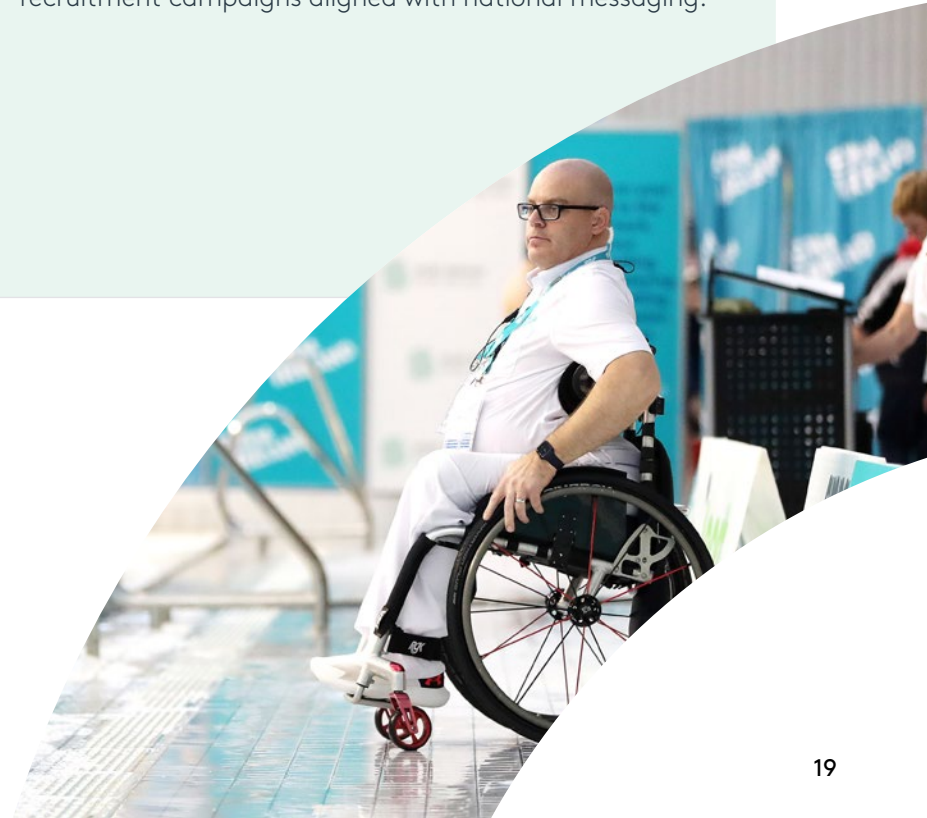
Recruitment

What can NGBs do?

- Audit current officiating pool to understand who they have and at what level.
- Target campaigns by age group, demographic, and motivation (e.g., former players, former para-athletes and Special Olympic athletes).
- Celebrate and recognise officials' contributions through storytelling and awards.
- Provide information and education around the benefits and impact of officiating.
- Promote officiating at club events, schools, and through youth engagement initiatives.

What can LSPs do?

- Support community outreach initiatives by promoting officiating roles at local sports events, schools and community programmes.
- Collaborate with NGBs and clubs to promote locally relevant recruitment campaigns aligned with national messaging.





Retention

Objective	Action for Sport Ireland
3. Increase Support Structures to Sustain the TO Workforce.	Invest in Support Systems for Retention <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support and formalise mentoring and buddy systems for new and existing officials.• Collaborate with NGBs & LSPs, to integrate officiating into broader sports development strategies and local sports plans.• Share and promote best practice guides for NGBs to establish both informal and formal support structure.
4. Provide recognition and development opportunities to encourage sustained involvement of TOs.	Promote a culture of recognition across all roles: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Educate coaches, administrators, players, parents and spectators on the importance of appreciating officials at all levels.• Build understanding of the basics of recognition, ensuring appreciation is meaningful and consistent.• Develop a network of mentors.• Work with NGBs to create a cross sport and sport specific mentor system.



Retention

What can NGBs do?

- Collect and analyse annual retention and drop out data to inform strategies.
- Develop clear support and development plans within their officiating pathway.
- Encourage retired officials to stay involved in non field roles.
- Establish structured mentoring systems to connect experienced officials with newer recruits.
- Nominate mentors to participate in national and cross sport mentoring networks.
- Collaborate on regional workshops and recognition events.
- Promote appreciation of officials among coaches, players, parents, and spectators.

What can LSPs do?

- Support grassroots engagement, by promoting NGB's officiating opportunities and identify new recruits.
- Help build a culture of respect and understanding at the grassroots level. Collaborate on regional workshops with NGBs for coaches, parents, and players on the value of officials.





Training & Development

Objective	Action for Sport Ireland
5. Facilitate the development of high quality, relevant and accessible training for officials.	Support Development Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create guidance for role specific training that supports Technical Officials (TOs) at all levels of their journey from grassroots to elite.• Promote cross sport collaboration to share resources, methodologies, and best practices.• Accessible resources such as easy read templates, ALT text, closed captions, videos and ISL.• Deliver a comprehensive training offer, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental skills and resilience training (e.g. conflict management, communication, confidence)• Develop generic e-learning modules for foundational knowledge accessible across all sports.
6. Progress the development of structured pathways for Technical Official qualifications and tutor development.	Audit Existing NGB Frameworks: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with NGBs to map and align existing officiating qualifications.• Support the development of new qualifications, where appropriate, that are nationally recognised and standardised. Develop Technical Officials Developer Course: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a Technical Officials Developer Course to train those who will, in turn, educate and mentor TOs. Create a Structured Development Framework: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with NGBs to develop a Coach Developer Infrastructure (CDI) equivalent for officials outlining clear stages of progression and professional development.



Training & Development

What can NGBs do?

- Audit existing qualifications and training systems and align with national structures.
- Collaborate with Sport Ireland and other NGBs to share resources and standardise training where possible.
- Develop modular and flexible training content, combining online and in-person options.
- Nominate and train officials as tutors/developers through a national TO Developer Course.
- Create clear progression routes within their officiating frameworks.
- Integrate TO development into coach education pathways, encouraging mutual respect and understanding.
- Promote a culture of continuous learning, with regular CPD opportunities.

What can LSPs do?

- Collaborate with NGBs to deliver blended learning options for officials.
- Promote digital literacy and E-learning opportunities for officials.
- Support officials with funding for personal development opportunities through clubs and community hubs.
- Collaborate with NGBs to train and deploy local tutors and developers.



Rewards & Recognition

Objective	Action for Sport Ireland
7. Raise the profile of Technical Officials.	Media & Events <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with national and local media, as well as NGB & LSP to celebrate TOs.• Develop national visibility campaigns to promote the value and impact of officiating.• Identify opportunities to increase visibility and profile of Technical Officials in sport.• Advocate for inclusion for Technical Officials at sports awards.
8. Recognise and reward TOs as an integral part of the sporting workforce.	Strategic Support <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Include official support plan requirements into funding agreements with NGBs and LSPs.• Tangible appreciation initiatives.• Work with NGBs and LSPs to extend formal invitations to Technical Officials for awards dinners, competitions and ceremonies.• Encourage awards and celebratory events to include dedicated moments for officiating recognition



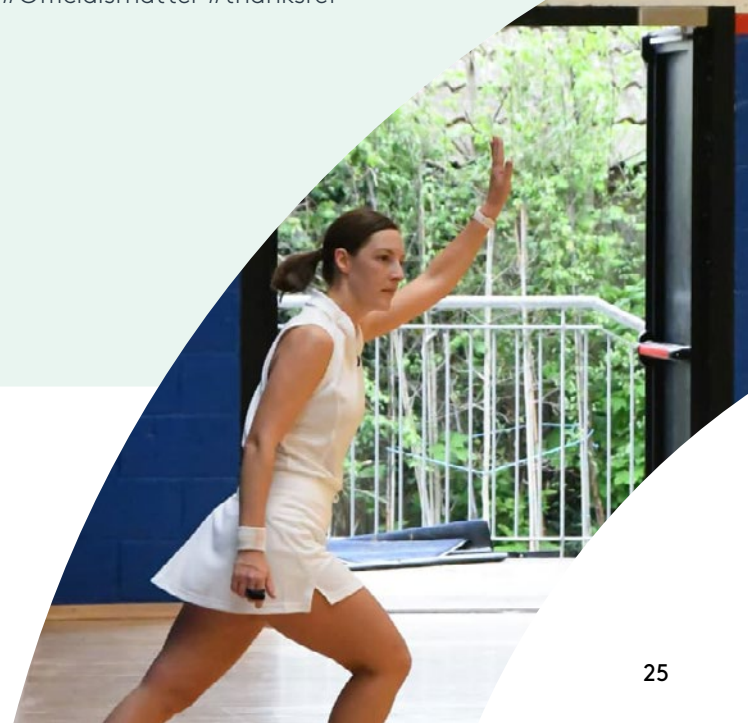
Rewards & Recognition

What can NGBs do?

- Nominate officials for national and internal awards on an annual basis.
- Build a recognition strategy that includes regular communications (e.g., shoutouts on social media, newsletters).
- Collaborate with LSPs and Sport Ireland to deliver events and shared appreciation platforms.
- Engage clubs to adopt local appreciation efforts, including thank-you initiatives and highlighting TOs at events.
- Use storytelling to humanise officiating, showcasing official's journeys, challenges, and successes.
- Integrate recognition into official development pathways (e.g., milestone certificates, achievement badges).
- Involve TOs in event planning to ensure they are represented and celebrated.

What can LSPs do?

- Celebrate Officials through local media partnerships, showcasing their stories and contribution.
- Collaborate with clubs and NGBs to include categories for Technical Officials at local or regional volunteer awards.
- Support Clubs in recognising officials and provide clubs with toolkits, certificates and templates for social media Campaigns. #Officialsmatter #thanksref





Abuse

Objective	Action for Sport Ireland
9. Promote a safe, respectful environment for Technical Officials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop and adopt clear definitions of abuse, including verbal, physical and online, across all levels of sport.• Establish robust policies addressing all forms of abuse across NGBs and LSPs.• Embed zero-tolerance policies into codes of conduct and disciplinary frameworks of NGBs and LSPs to ensure accountability and enforcement.• Educate stakeholders to promote mutual respect and safeguarding of TOs in sport.
10. Implement a national respect campaign.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support the delivery of a national campaign for Respect Officials.• Develop template plans for NGBs outlining effective strategies to prevent and respond to both face-to-face and social media based abuse, including guidance on managing abuse from multiple sources such as coaches, club officials, spectators, parents and players.• Launch a unified, cross-sport awareness campaign that promotes respect for officials at all levels of participation.



Abuse

What can NGBs do?

- Publish and promote a clear Code of Conduct that outlines expected behaviours and the consequences of abuse, ensuring it is visible and accessible across all levels of sport.
- Create practical resources for clubs to promote respectful behaviour among players, coaches, officials and spectators.
- Designate a Respect Officer at every venue to monitor behaviour, support officials and address incidents of abuse or misconduct.
- Engage clubs in a culture shift to make respect a shared value, not just a rule.
- Collaborate with Sport Ireland to create and promote a cross sport Respect Campaign.
- Record and communicate the outcomes of abuse cases, ensuring sanctions are transparent and consequences are clearly understood by all stakeholders.
- Ensure match and event report templates include a dedicated section for reporting incidents of abuse, enabling consistent documentation and follow-up across all levels of sport.
- Educate all stakeholders (players, parents, coaches, volunteers) about the impact of abuse on officials.

What can LSPs do?

- Promote and deliver Respect Education locally.
- Run workshops and awareness sessions for clubs, coaches, parents, and players on respecting officials.
- Support the integration of abuse prevention and respect messaging into all local training and induction programmes.
- Support local implementation of the national respect campaign.
- Collaborate on the rollout of national respect campaign, using local platforms to amplify messaging.





Data & Information

Objective	Action for Sport Ireland
11. Collect and use data to inform decision-making and drive development for Technical Officials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a standardised data collection template.• Support NGBs in developing robust information systems• Provide guidance and tools for NGBs to begin developing or enhancing their own officiating data systems.• Ensure these systems are future proofed for integration into a national data infrastructure.
12. Enable evidence-based planning and investment	<p>Use data insights to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shape national and NGB-level officiating policies.• Justify funding and resource allocation.• Identify and share best practices.• Facilitate collaboration across sports by identifying common challenges and enabling the shared use of generic supports and e-learning resources.



Data & Information

What can NGBs do?

- Identify key staff or volunteers responsible for data oversight.
- Adopt and implement the standardised officiating data collection template.
- Conduct regular audits of current systems and identify gaps in their data.
- Submit agreed datasets to Sport Ireland annually.
- Ensure data protection standards are followed when managing sensitive information.
- Use the insights to shape targeted recruitment and retention efforts.
- Participate in cross sport working groups to share learnings and tools.

What can LSPs do?

- Collaborate with NGBs and local clubs to support the collection of officiating related data by sharing standardised templates and offering light touch guidance on how to gather and submit relevant information.



What success will look like?



Recruitment

- More Technical Officials across all sports.
- Younger, more diverse, and inclusive officiating community.
- Increased transitions from athletes, coaches, and volunteers into officiating roles.



Retention

- Reduced drop-out rates year-on-year.
- Strong Retention Strategies: Officials feel supported, connected and valued.
- Growth in mentoring and buddy systems for officials.



Training & Development

- Accessible, high-quality training pathways across all sports.
- Increased participation in training and CPD.



Rewards & Recognition

- Higher morale and satisfaction among officials.
- Regular recognition initiatives for TOs at all levels of sport.
- Greater appreciation of officials roles.



Abuse

- Fewer incidents of abuse (verbal, physical, online).
- Clear policies and reporting systems in place.
- Safer, more respectful environments for officials.



Data & Information

- Consistent data collection across all NGBs.
- Evidence-based planning and investment.
- Shared insights and collaboration across sports.



Implementation & Monitoring

Sport Ireland will lead the implementation of the Technical Officials Development Plan (TODP) through a structured, collaborative approach involving National Governing Bodies (NGBs), Local Sports Partnerships (LSPs), and other key stakeholders. This process is designed to ensure consistent delivery, measurable progress, and continuous improvement across all aspects of officiating in Irish sport.

Implementation Framework

Annual Progress Reviews

Sport Ireland will conduct yearly evaluations to assess progress against strategic objectives, monitor key performance indicators, and identify areas requiring additional support or adjustment.

Capacity-Building Workshops and Webinars

Regular workshops and webinars will be delivered to build capacity within NGBs and LSPs. These sessions will focus on recruitment strategies, mentoring systems, data collection, abuse prevention, and integration of officiating into broader sport development plans.

Technical Officials Network

The TO Network will play a key advisory role in the ongoing implementation of the Technical Officials Development Plan. Members will provide regular insight, feedback, and practical recommendations based on their lived experience and engagement with officiating across sports. Their input will help ensure the plan remains relevant, responsive, and reflective of the needs of technical officials on the ground.

Sport Ireland Coaching Committee

The Committee will provide strategic oversight and expert guidance in support of the plan's implementation. This includes offering technical advice, contributing to policy development, and ensuring alignment with broader coaching and officiating development initiatives. The Committee will also support the integration of the plan within Sport Ireland's strategic objectives and contribute to monitoring its impact.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Performance Indicators

Progress will be tracked using key performance indicators (KPIs) outlined in Sport Ireland's strategic documents. These include increases in the numbers of technical officials, improved retention rates, enhanced training participation, and reductions in abuse incidents.

Data-Driven Decision Making

Sport Ireland will support the development of standardised data collection templates and systems across NGBs and LSPs. Insights from this data will inform policy updates, funding allocations, and shared learning across sports.

Feedback and Continuous Improvement

Feedback mechanisms will be embedded throughout the implementation process to ensure that officials, clubs, and sport organisations can contribute to the ongoing refinement of the plan. This will help maintain relevance and effectiveness in a changing sporting landscape.

To ensure the future success of officiating in Ireland, Sport Ireland envisions a system where:

- Recruitment is proactive and inclusive.
- Retention is supported by strong networks and meaningful recognition.
- Training is holistic and widely accessible.
- Recognition and safeguarding are embedded in every aspect of officiating.
- Data driven systems guide decision-making and progress tracking.

By implementing these changes, officiating in Irish sport can become more resilient, respected, and sustainable for future generations.

Appendices



Appendix 1

NGBs Involved in the Technical Officials Network 2025

Athletics Ireland
Badminton
Basketball Ireland
Cricket Ireland
Cycling Ireland
Diving Ireland
FAI
Fencing Ireland
GAA
GAA Handball
Golf Ireland
Gymnastics Ireland
IABA
IRFU
Irish Judo

Others

Respect the Officials Working group
Sport Ireland Coaching Unit
Sport NI People Development Team

Irish Surfing
IWA-Sport
LGFA
Motorsport Ireland
Netball
Pitch and Putt Ireland
Rowing Ireland
Special Olympics Ireland
Squash Ireland
Swim Ireland
Table Tennis
Tennis Ireland
Triathlon
Wrestling

LSPs consulted

Active South Dublin Sports Partnership
Carlow Sports Partnership
Cavan Sports Partnership
Clare Sports Partnership
Cork Sports Partnership
Donegal Sports Partnership
Fingal Sports Partnership
Galway Sports Partnership
Kerry Sports Partnership
Kilkenny Sports Partnership
Leitrim Sports Partnership
Limerick Sports Partnership
Longford Sports Partnership
Louth Sports Partnership
Roscommon Sports partnership
Waterford Sports Partnership
Westmeath Sports Partnership
Wicklow Sports Partnership

Appendix 2

Strategic Objectives and Performance Indicators Related to Officials

This appendix outlines the strategic and policy objectives, actions, and performance indicators relevant to the development and support of Technical Officials across Sport Ireland’s frameworks. These are drawn from the Sport Ireland Statement of Strategy 2023–2027, Sport Ireland Coaching Plan 2020–2025, Sport Ireland Policy on Women in Sport 2023, Sport Ireland Volunteering in Sport Policy 2023 and the Sport Ireland Participation Plan 2021-2024.

Table 1: Sport Ireland Statement of Strategy 2023-2027

Core Focus Area 2: Sport Development Services – Supporting Core Partners to Deliver a Thriving and Cohesive Sports Sector		
Key Strategic Objective	Outcomes	Key Performance Indicators
Programme and Project Development		
13. Building and strengthening of the ‘committed/organised sport’ element of the sports development framework by supporting, developing and expanding the group of highly effective NGBS/Core Partners focusing on those offering lasting benefits over the life course.	An acknowledged, strong NGB sector which delivers National Sports Policy and wider Government objectives and targets. More people participating on a regular basis in high-quality, well-organised sport.	13.1 Increase NGB membership, participation and volunteer levels across the strategic period via effective operational delivery, of involvement opportunities, recruitment, retention and development of participants, volunteers, coaches and officials.
Coaching and Officiating		
21. Extend the role of Sport Ireland coaching to include support for and the further development of officiating.	Technical Officials development work area allocated within the Sport Ireland structure	21.1 Development and delivery of Technical Officials development plan in partnership with NGBS and LSPs. 21.2 Increased numbers of technical officials across the sport sector.

Table 2: Sport Ireland Coaching Plan 2020-2025

Policy Goal	Policy Actions	Performance Indicators
<p>5. Be a leader in the delivery of education and training in the sports sector.</p>	<p>5.6 To develop a strategy for Sport Ireland with respect to the development and support of referees and officials in sport, and if mandated, acquire the resources to support the implementation of actions arising.</p>	<p>5.6.1 A report on the levels of activity, impacts and needs with respect to the development and support of referees and officials has been published.</p> <p>5.6.2 An agreed approach on how Sport Ireland can support the NGBS in the implementation of the development and support of referees and officials is published.</p> <p>5.6.3 An implementation plan has been developed, resourced and actioned.</p>

Table 3: Sport Ireland Polict on Women in Sport 2023

Coaching and Officiating	
Policy Goal	Action
<p>7. Broaden the coaching and officiating base to include more women and girls from grassroots to high performance.</p>	<p>21. Invest in coaching and officiating education and continuous learning programmes which target females from under-represented groups, young people, students, current participants and volunteers.</p> <p>22. Invest in specific initiatives to increase the number of women coaching and officiating in high performance sport.</p> <p>24. Create guidance for mentoring and networking supports for female coaches and officiators.</p> <p>25. Support NGBs to create clear pathways from participation into coaching and officiating.</p> <p>26. Promote inclusivity and equality of access across coaching & officiating through research and follow up action plans created.</p>

Table 4: Sport Ireland Volunteering in Sport 2023

Recognise & Value Volunteers	
Policy Goal	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the visibility, recognition and profile of volunteers. • Strengthen the volunteering culture in Ireland. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a Respect Officials’ working group

Table 5: Sport Ireland Participation Plan 2021-2024

Action 32	
Objectives	Action
Action 32	NGBs will be asked to set gender diversity targets and develop equality action plans. Support will be provided for dedicated leadership training programmes for women including governance-related and technical training (coaching, refereeing and team management). Sport Ireland will monitor their progress in delivering on these and report annually. If sufficient progress is not being made, we will engage further with all stakeholders on the matter.



Additional References

Women in Sport Officiating Report 2023

<https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2023-03/SI2207%20WIS%20Officiating%20Report%20FINAL%20Draft.pdf>

Feasibility Study on Technical Officials 2024

<https://www.sportireland.ie/sites/default/files/media/document/2025-02/Officials%20Feasibility%20Report%202020-02-25.pdf>



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