



Report subject	<b>Framework for keeping safe in and around water</b>
Meeting date	4 March 2026
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	The Framework for keeping safe in and around water aims to provide BCP Council with a clear overarching approach to water safety and a working action plan which aligns to the corporate strategy. It aims to promote safety around our coastal and inland waters for the prevention of drowning. Following the National Water Safety Forum’s principles, it provides a practical plan using data and insights to assess our water spaces and provide communication and education to support safe access to our blue spaces.
Recommendations	<p><b>It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:</b></p> <p><b>a. Notes the contents of the framework and agrees the framework process</b></p> <p><b>b. Delegates to the Director of Commercial Operations in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure and Commercial Operations the implementation of the framework.</b></p>
Reason for recommendations	The development of the framework supports the corporate strategy to ensure that working together, everyone feels safe and secure and that people can be active and healthy with the positive impact blue spaces can bring.

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Richard Herrett – Portfolio Holder for Destination, Leisure & Commercial Operations
Corporate Director	Glynn Barton – Chief Operations Officer
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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Information

## Background

- Existing measures for water safety have been in place for many years in the BCP Council conurbation to ensure water safety including lifeguarded beaches and swimming pools, beach ranger service, signage, public rescue equipment (PRE) and learn to swim programmes.
- Following a workshop in autumn 2022, a working group was formed in July 2023 to focus on the prevention of drowning as an internal cross service group including colleagues from the RNLI.
- An audit was undertaken by the RNLI to review all signage and PRE equipment for coastal locations and recommendations for this have now been implemented upgrading measures in 100 locations across the seafront.
- The group have met monthly whilst exploring the key elements of the framework and continue to meet regularly to look at data, communication, education and review.
- The framework has used the National Water Safety Forum water safety principles, linked into the Local Government Association (LGA) toolkit as a guide to produce BCP Council Water Safety Framework.

## Water Safety Framework

- Table 1 below shows the principles used from the National Water Safety Forum in compiling of the framework.

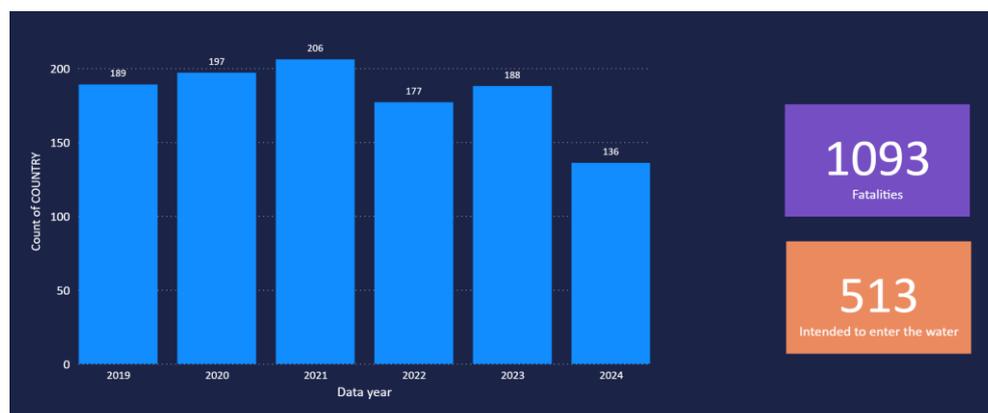
**Table 1**

[National Water Safety Forum – water safety principles](#)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <span style="font-size: 0.8em;">v</span> Step 1 – Profile your area </li> <li> <span style="font-size: 0.8em;">v</span> Step 2 – People: who do councils need to engage with? </li> <li> <span style="font-size: 0.8em;">v</span> Step 3 – Planning </li> <li> <span style="font-size: 0.8em;">v</span> Step 4 – Educate </li> <li> <span style="font-size: 0.8em;">v</span> Step 5 – Protection: exploring physical features </li> <li> <span style="font-size: 0.8em;">v</span> Step 6 – Response: exploring proactive and reactive response measures </li> <li> <span style="font-size: 0.8em;">v</span> Step 7 – Review </li> </ul>
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Table 2 provides an overview of accidental water-related fatalities from 2019 – 2024 from the Water Incident Database (WAID) across England.

**Table 2 – WAID Overview of accidental water-related fatalities**



7. From 2019 – 2024 across England 81% of fatalities are men, with recreational activities accounting for the highest proportion of accidents. Running / walking was the highest noted activities with adventure sport following.
8. The framework details all areas of water within BCP Council's remit and identifies the Service Director who takes responsibility and accountability for water safety matters, this includes coastal and inland waters.
9. Data from previous incidents are captured both regionally and nationally to identify trends and focus communications and education. In addition to this the Council's mapping system has a layer to identify the water and can be mapped with incidents to work towards a heat map with a clear flowchart for the recording of these incidents.
10. As detailed in point 3 an audit has already been completed of coastal areas provided by the RNLI. Inland waters have all been identified and a phase 1 audit based on officer recommendation of inland water areas has been undertaken leading to the creation of a risk assessment for regular review. A phase 2 audit of the remaining areas sits within the ongoing action plan.
11. Existing measures are detailed and enhanced within the framework to lay out work in areas such as the night-time economy, park homes and suicide prevention linking these into communication.
12. A database of landowners with water as part of their remit has been compiled in order to be able to communicate through the communications plan with them alongside engagement with regular businesses working alongside the Council's Economic Development team.
13. Engagement and education are a key element of water safety, captured within the framework in terms of measure of all children being able to swim by the end of key stage 2 and the link into swimming lessons across the BCP conurbation.
14. The communications plan within the framework draws on the existing resources from our partners such as the RNLI's Float to Live campaign and the Royal Life Saving Society's (RLSS) Don't drink and drown campaign to further share and widen messages across the council's channels.

15. The framework details the agreed response both in a normal situation and in an emergency which links into the wider Emergency Planning processes.
16. Engagement has been undertaken with the blue light services with the supply of information to support the framework.
17. The framework is an evolving document which will have continuous improvement to enhance as work continues to develop.

### **Summary of financial implications**

18. The current arrangements in place span across a number of different teams across the authority but predominantly within Commercial Operations. The arrangements are currently funded in base budget.
19. Any new actions from assessments linked to the framework which come at a cost to the council will need to be costed and funding identified before taking forward or approval from the appropriate authorising and decision making board.
20. No additional funds will be spent until approval is obtained, other than what is already being funded in base budget.

### **Summary of legal implications**

21. There are no direct legal implications to the development and adoption of a Framework for keeping safe in and around water. The framework supports the Council's duties and common law obligations to take reasonable steps to ensure public safety on land and water under its control.
22. Adoption of a structured, evidence-based approach will assist the Council in demonstrating compliance with these duties and in mitigating potential liability risks.
23. Any procurement or commissioning activity arising from the framework must comply with the Procurement Act 2023 and BCP Council's financial regulations.
24. Further, the implementation of the framework must observe the data protection obligations under the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, where personal data is used. The Council must also ensure that the framework is applied consistently and kept under review to demonstrate ongoing compliance, and to ensure that the framework remaining effective and aligned with current risks and relevant standards.

### **Summary of human resources implications**

25. The water safety working group is carried out from existing roles within the council with cross service working. There are no additional human resource requirements.

### **Summary of sustainability impact**

26. Climate change in the future will increase the water safety risk through higher water sea levels, more storm force weather and a higher intensity of rainfall.
27. Research shows water usage increases when temperature reach 21 degrees which is likely to become more frequent with increased heat waves through climate change.

### Summary of public health implications

28. Both coastal and inland water forms part of our seafront and open spaces which provides a positive space for wellbeing and being active which is accessible for all. This framework supports the use of the water by ensuring there is collaboration for the safe use of water in the BCP conurbation.
29. It is important that access to our waters provides education for people to be safe and where to get help if they need it. This needs to take into account the diversity of the population.
30. Public Health is represented on the working group and provides a pro active link to the Our Dorset Strategy <https://ourdorset.org.uk/wellbeing/suicide/> which aims to achieve zero suicides.

### Summary of equality implications

31. An EIA has been completed for this work and is being sent to the EIA panel for review.

### Summary of risk assessment

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Health & safety	High	The regular review and assessment of waters alongside data insights supports the mitigation of risk in terms of health and safety.
Duty of care	High	The framework details areas of water responsibility and a process for assessing data and trend to ensure duty of care from the council.

### Background papers

There are no background papers

### Appendices

Appendix 1 – Framework for keeping safe in and around water