



# Framework for keeping safe in and around water

Commercial Operations

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## Version history

<b>Version number</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of changes</b>	<b>Responsible officer</b>
1.0	04/09/2024	First draft for input from water safety working group	Helen Wildman
1.1	13/11/2024	Second draft for input from water safety working group	Helen Wildman
1.2	23/04/2025	Third draft for input from stakeholders	Helen Wildman
1.3	25/09/2025	Fourth draft for DMT	Helen Wildman
1.4	13/11/2025	Updated statistics	Helen Wildman

## Executive Summary

The framework for keeping people safe in and around water brings together council teams and partners to keep people safe around our coastal and inland waters. It uses data, risk assessments and clear communication to help prevent drowning in our community.

Research indicates that our blue spaces are good for our health by helping people to relax, lowering heart rates, and giving a sense of freedom - but this can make it harder for people to recognise potential dangers.

By aligning with national and regional plans, this framework supports residents and visitors to stay safe whilst being active. Following National Water Safety Forum principles, it sets out a practical plan for action and ongoing review.

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## Vision and Objectives

The Framework is to provide BCP Council with a clear overarching approach to water safety and a working action plan, which aligns to the Council's Corporate Strategy. This framework, through cross service working, gives a model for officers to use to ensure water safety is considered within design, planning, implementation, and day to day operations. Its aim is to provide a joined-up approach with our emergency services and other stakeholders promoting combined education to ensure people in our conurbation, whether they are residents or visitors, can enjoy both inland and coastal waters safely.

This framework has been created to align with the National Water Safety Forum and UK Drowning Prevention Strategy with the aim to reduce accidental drowning fatalities in the UK by 50 per cent by 2026 and reduce the risk among the highest risk populations, groups and communities. This strategy will be reviewed across the next 12 months ready for an updated strategy being published in 2025-2026. This framework will be reviewed for any amendments on the completion of this work.

The objectives are:

- to develop a water safety framework which covers:
  - coastline and sea
  - areas of inland water including lakes and rivers
  - swimming including leisure centres
  - water sports
  - Poole Harbour
  - Christchurch Harbour
  - key information and research
- to align work with key partners, working in collaboration with co-ordinated objectives
- education objective to enable every child to have the opportunity to learn to swim by the end of key stage 3
- to work with minority community groups developing their education and awareness in water safety
- to use key data to measure and reduce the number of incidents across the BCP conurbation
- to increase and communicate water safety awareness and the everyday risks effectively
- to communicate effectively for suicide prevention
- to educate the public who use our waters
- to store and use data to focus on areas which require further consideration
- to highlight the known risk factors and mitigate these where appropriate in a prioritised order
- to ensure the safety of our colleagues whilst at work
- to create a working action plan for BCP Council

## Background

Existing measures have been in place for many years in the BCP Council conurbation to ensure water safety. These measures include lifeguarded beaches and swimming pools, a beach ranger service, signage, public rescue equipment (PRE), education and learn-to-swim programmes, and risk assessments for events close to the water. These efforts are designed to reduce the risk of drowning and other water-related incidents by providing a safe environment for residents and visitors alike.

A workshop introduced the principles of a water safety forum, providing key information and factors to consider when integrating these measures. This workshop marked a significant step towards a more structured and comprehensive approach to water safety.

An audit was undertaken by the RNLI to review all signage and public rescue equipment (PRE) across the coastline. The audit identified areas for improvement and resulted in a rated action plan for future work. This proactive approach ensures that safety equipment and signage are up-to-date and effective, thereby enhancing the overall safety of the coastline.

In July 2023, BCP Council established a Water Safety Working Group focused on drowning prevention. This group is primarily an internal cross-service working group, including colleagues from the RNLI and Public Health. The group follows the National Water Safety Forum's principles and the Local Government Association (LGA) toolkit as a framework. By working through these principles and gathering information, the group aims to profile the area and design a comprehensive BCP Council Framework for keeping people safe in and around water.

The National Water Safety Forum (NWSF) is a UK-focused, voluntary network, working together to reduce water-related deaths and associated harm. It was established in 2004 following a government review to bring together a one stop point of reference for the prevention of drowning and water safety harm in the UK.

Their UK Drowning Prevention Strategy 2016 – 2026 aims to reduce accidental drowning fatalities in the UK by 50% by 2025 and reduce risk amongst the highest risk populations, groups and communities.

The Local Government Association (LGA), recognising the vital role that councils play in tackling water safety in their areas alongside landowners, has produced a water safety toolkit based on the National Water Safety Forum's principles as detailed below.

∨ Step 1 – Profile your area
∨ Step 2 – People: who do councils need to engage with?
∨ Step 3 – Planning
∨ Step 4 – Educate
∨ Step 5 – Protection: exploring physical features
∨ Step 6 – Response: exploring proactive and reactive response measures
∨ Step 7 – Review

This stepped approach has been used to create the framework detailed in this document, linking in with existing work and developing a designated cross service water safety working group to regularly monitor and review the work.

## Responsibilities of water areas

Appendix 5 lays out the areas of water within BCP Council's remit and identifies the Service Director who takes responsibility and accountability for water safety matters and responses to foreseeable incidents, both along the seafront from Hamworthy to Highcliffe and for all waters inland, noting where third-party landowners link to these.

The appendices will be reviewed and updated every six months to account for changes in personnel.

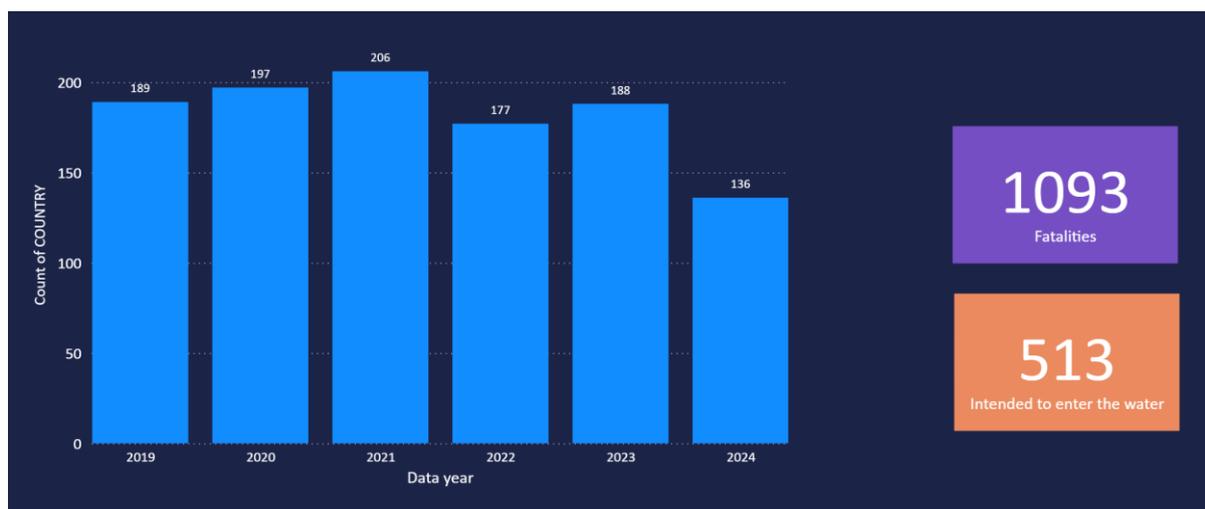
# Key data

## Water Incident Database (WAID)

The Water Incident Database (WAID) is a service developed by the NWSF to bring together water-related incident data from a wide range of sources within the UK search and rescue region. The information below captures data from 2019 – 2024.

Nationally there were fewer drownings in 2024 compared to the 6 year average.

## Overview of accidental water-related fatalities – England (2019-2024)

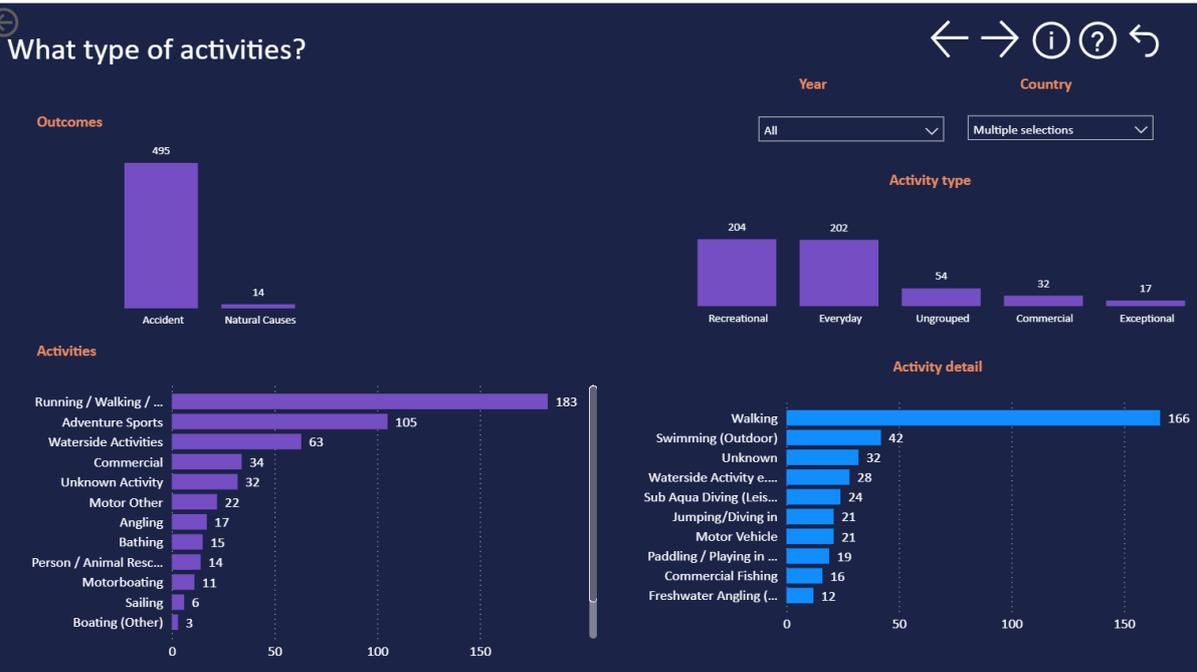
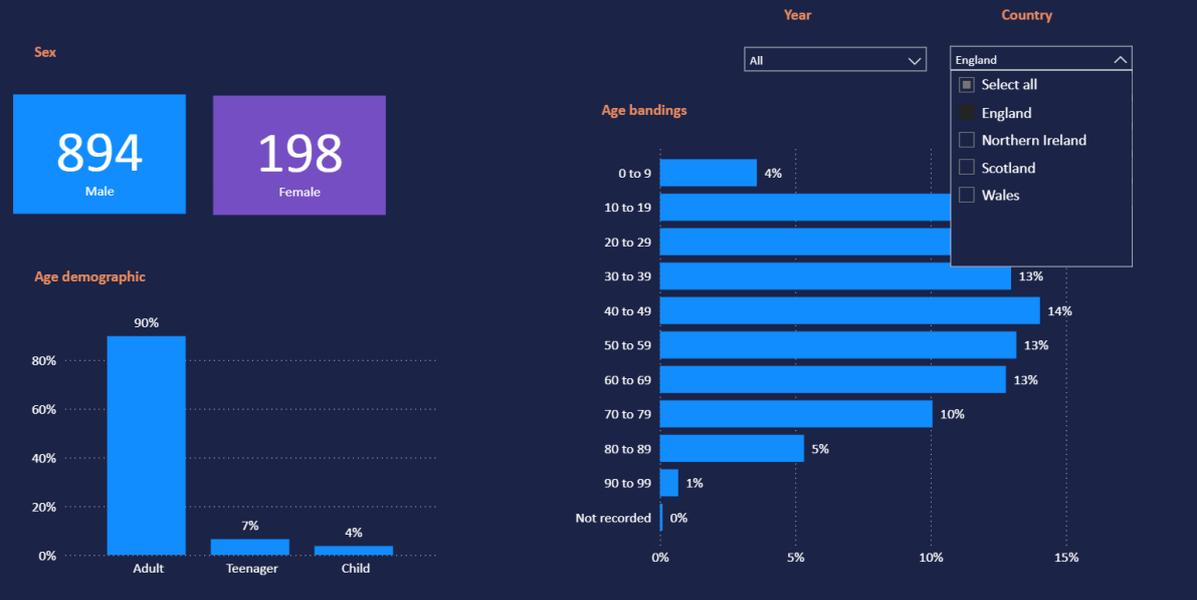


Across England, 81% of fatalities were male with July and August having the highest level of fatalities with recreational activities accounting for the highest number. Of these running/walking was the highest activity with adventure sports following.

56% of incidents over this period were on inland water with 34% being linked to coastal and 9% ungrouped.

One of the National Water Safety priority targets is to ensure organisations with recreational activities have a clear plan to address the risks.

## Demographics



To understand the picture across the BCP conurbation a profile exercise has been undertaken to look at the local data, risk factors and existing measures to link together work in place and to highlight gaps and areas for further development.

## Local mapping of key data

The GIS team have mapped all water locations across the BCP conurbation. Past data from the RNLI, health and safety incident reporting, Coroners & Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue have been added to the mapping to provide an overview of incidents within the local area up to July 2024.

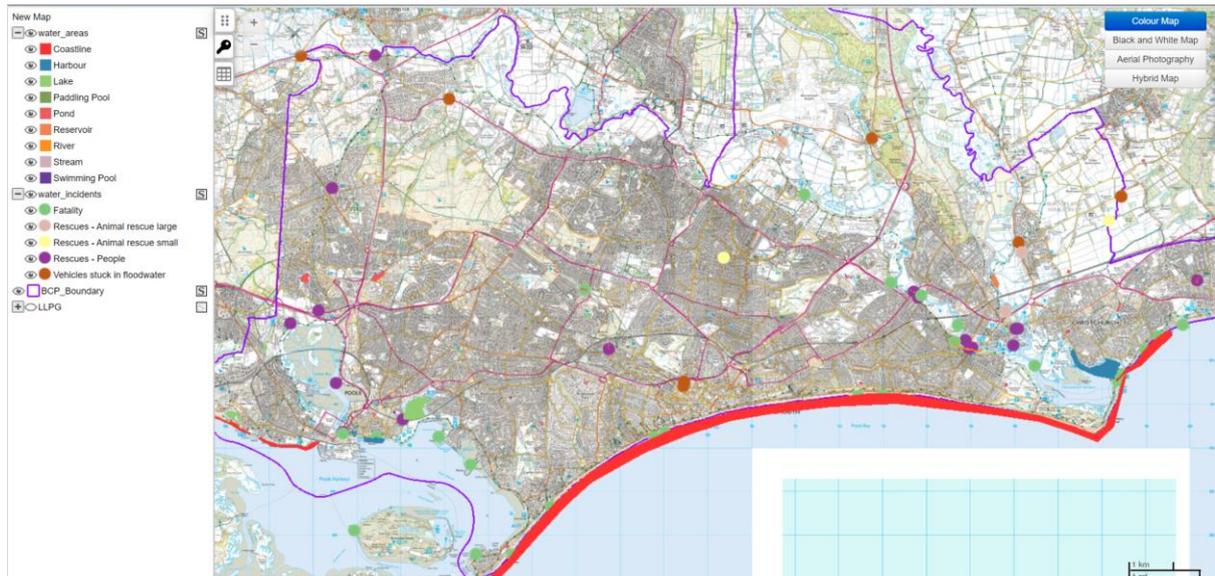
Data will be updated by the water safety group for review meetings.

Review meetings will be carried out every 6 months to coincide with the start and end of the season so that statistical data is up to date.



This mapping will enable updates at all review points to identify areas of concern and assist with prioritising resource or audit focus areas as water usage changes and evolves in the future.

In addition to this the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Team (FCERM) are developing an Inland Asset Management System to capture assets that have an impact on flood risk. As part of this there will be more waterbodies and rivers identified than on the current inland mapping. Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDS) is now a part of planning and there are a number of new private developments including water storage areas that may be dry during normal conditions, but fill up to a high level during wet weather conditions, which will also need to be considered in this mapping (see action plan appendix 4)



## Risk factors

Risk factors change heavily between seasons. Whilst largely a tourist destination with a summer offering of 15 miles of coastline, consideration also needs to be given to inland waters and the different risk factors introduced by winter weather bringing in flood rescues and unstable riverbanks. A changing weather picture in line with climate change highlights the need for preparation for both sets of extremities which changes the risk factors, and the activities associated with them.



These captured risk factors have informed the audit process and have been used within the risk assessment found in the appendix 1. Geographical risks that have been identified and used within audit work include

- River currents
- Groynes
- Tidal variances
- Rip currents
- Flooded areas such as riverbanks

- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)
- Fluvial/pluvial/coastal flooding
- Unstable structures, pontoons
- Weirs and other water control structures
- Underwater objects, debris
- Weather
- Deceptive water depth

Alongside the geographical risks, some of the key considerations are from the communities using the locations and their different behaviours and how these can change the risk.

Identified risks include

- Intoxicated members of the public entering the water (drink and drugs)
- Intoxicated members of the public operating vessels
- Non / poor swimmers getting into difficulty in the water
- Visitors not being aware of the dangers of the sea
- Not adhering to segregated areas of water use (i.e. jet skis, swimmers, shipping)
- Pier jumping / tombstoning
- Inexperienced craft users such as standup paddleboard (SUP) users caught in currents and offshore winds
- Lack of supervision of young children
- Inexperienced / improperly prepared / untrained water users
- Suicide attempts
- Medical episodes in and near the water
- Wave / storm watching
- Secondary drowning
- Antisocial behaviour / criminal activity in and around the water
- Inexperienced drivers going through floodwaters of unknown depths
- Culvert, screen and outfalls

## Auditing

A review has been undertaken as part of the framework to audit water areas under the ownership of BCP Council. This has been split as follows

- Coastal areas (RNLI Seafront audit)
- Harbours
- Inland water
- Mixed ownership / harbours
- Swimming pools

See section on Landowners for engagement on non-council areas.

## **Approach to Seafront Water Safety**

BCP Council works closely in collaboration with the RNLI, who carry out Beach Safety Audits (BSA) identifying some key points. Each summer season the RNLI operate lifeguard stations across Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch in locations as identified by the BSA.

Council officers meet twice weekly with RNLI whilst on site to discuss current, relevant information as well as monthly meeting to look at trends. There is also a pre and post meeting to discuss learning for each season.

The Council support a range of surf life savings clubs and have recently invested £1.5m into the development of a new surf lifesaving facility at Westcliff.

To keep our beaches clean we recruit and train cleansing, facilities and general assistant staff to clear and remove debris from the sand and promenade daily. We use mechanical equipment as well as hand picking to ensure the seafront is clear and safe from 8am each day. Our refuse department then clear full recycling and refuse bins.

BCP Council works closely with Dorset Police, Southwest Ambulance and the Coastguard to co-ordinate and resolve any incidents that may occur across the bay. We have operational response meetings twice weekly throughout the season to communicate and plan any resources that may be identified.

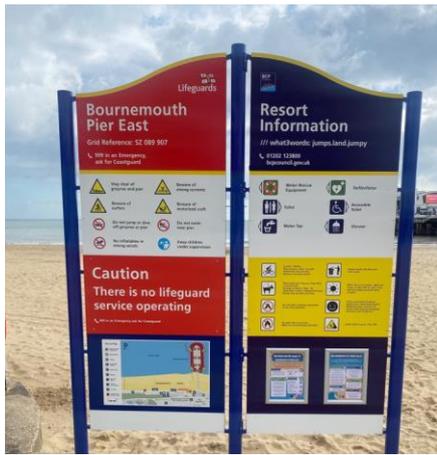
## **RNLI Seafront audit**

The RNLI were commissioned to audit BCP Council seafront's signage and Public Rescue Equipment (PRE) and presented their findings. To ensure coverage across the whole area, additional audits were also undertaken during 2024 for Mudeford Sandbank, Hengistbury Head and Boscombe Pier.

Signage risks were rated red, amber and green. A target was set of implementing the recommendations from the audits in 2024 which is now complete.

Work has been undertaken for the coastal areas updating and increasing PRE equipment in over 100 locations across the seafront:

- maximising visibility and accessibility through appropriate PRE locations
- adding clear location information alongside PRE locations and on signage
- updating and increasing signage provision across 26 primary sites and 40 secondary sites
- increasing public awareness of seafront risks according to location
- equipping visitors with location information and maps so they can make informed decisions about their own safety.



The full audit can be found in Appendix 2 from the RNLI with the additional areas covered in Appendix 1.

### **Approach to Inland water safety**

Sixty per cent of all drownings now take place on inland water (source: National Water Safety Forum). Mapping has been undertaken of all areas of water in BCP and mapped both visually and within a spreadsheet – see appendix 5. The auditing of the inland water has been divided into two phases, with an initial officer decision on the areas most utilised to complete an audit within phase 1.

Our inland waters, such as ponds, lakes, lagoon, rivers and streams are not classed as public bathing waters. However, the public may use them for various recreational activities. Where specific measures are required for public safety, such as throw ropes, guidance information and signage on safety or access etc, then these form part of the water framework risk assessment procedures. Each site will be inspected and safety reviewed on a practicable basis by the relevant teams.

### **Phase 1**

On initial assessment, officers identified the most utilised or complex areas of water to be part of an initial phase of auditing. The Water Safety Group compiled a standardised template to include the risk factors identified as part of the working group which officers used to audit the area. An overview of these risk factors can be found above under Risk Factors.

This work has been transferred into the inland water risk assessment around the prevention of drowning.

An action plan sits alongside this as a live working document and identifies in priority order additional measures to enhance water safety across BCP. Where there is no existing measure, risks rated from the amber colour of 6 upwards have been included within the action plan. This action plan will assist with enabling the Council when looking at funding or assessing best use of funding.

## Phase 2

Phase 2 is a recommendation from the Water Safety Group to be undertaken to ensure all areas of inland water have been audited and are reviewed. Phase 2 will incorporate all remaining areas of water within the BCP conurbation.

Data sharing and incident reporting alongside operational awareness will highlight through the working group any emerging risks until this phase is completed.

## Culverts

Culverts are where bodies of water enter a piped system and best practice is that anything a small child could access should have a security screen on it to prevent persons accessing the confined space or getting washed down the culvert. A number of BCP Council teams and riparian owners are responsible for these assets, and awareness of large culverted openings and outfalls forms part of ongoing work by the FCERM team to catalogue flood risk assets into an Inland Asset Database.

One of particular note is the Bourne Stream inlet at Pier Approach which the FCERM team are currently bidding for Capital Grant Funding to install a security screen at to improve its safety. Any new security screens installed will require ongoing maintenance by the appropriate team (normally Countryside or Parks) to be taken on.

## Existing measures

A range of existing measures are in place and used throughout the conurbation. This framework enhances the link to these and enables review and monitoring of these measures within the framework ensuring we retain and develop on these vital services.

### Parks and open spaces

Ongoing monitoring of parks and open spaces across the BCP conurbation takes place as part of the maintenance of the space. This is further explored in the auditing section of the framework.

### RNLI lifeguarded beaches

There is an arrangement in place for the RNLI to risk access locations and through the partnership, agreement is reached on how to approach this operation.

During summer 2025 the RNLI provided lifeguard services at 15 locations on BCP Council's seafront as follows (geographically):

### **Poole**

- Shore Road
- Sandbanks
- Branksome Chine
- Alum Chine

## **Bournemouth**

- Durley Chine
- Bournemouth West
- Bournemouth East
- East Cliff
- Boscombe West
- Boscombe East
- Manor Steps
- Fisherman's Walk
- Southbourne

## **Christchurch**

- Friars Cliff
- Avon Beach

The key areas of Sandbanks, Bournemouth and Boscombe have provision from Easter through to the end of September, with other sites coming online at either the end of May or the end of June. Management of the service is through the Seafront Operations Team (Operations Manager and the four Senior Rangers) with the RNLI's control centre being based in the Sandbanks Beach Office, allowing a clear line of communication with the team through a shared radio network.

The level of RNLI cover is reviewed on an annual basis.

## **Water safety signage**

Signage exists across the BCP conurbation both on coastal and inland water. The audit work which is detailed within the protection phase of the framework, lays out where additional signage would be of benefit and the review ensures that there is a process for updating and reviewing signage so that it remains current.

## **Swimming pools**

BCP has 13 swimming pools. Three are council operated in house with a further 5 owned by the council and contracted to third party operators. The remainder are through schools or private ownership.

Public swimming pools owned by the council and operated either inhouse or by BH Live, the YMCA and Meyrick Park follow separate health and safety measures to include lifeguarded swimming session trained to NPLQ level, risk assessments regularly reviewed and updated, operating under our affiliation with Swim England and operating STA pool scanning principles along with the use of CCTV as a review method.

Swimming pools operated by schools are managed and risk assessed through their individual school procedures.

At this time, no further auditing is required, and non-council operated sites will continue to be monitored through partnership meetings with the operators.

The BCP Leisure sites are a key link in reaching audiences on water safety, in particular parents of children reaching the 3,000 parents of swim lesson juniors. This is further explored under the education section.

### **Frontline Operational Response**

BCP Council coordinates internal operational teams and partner agencies through weekly operations meetings, weekly strategic meetings and as needed the use of briefings and virtual Multi Agency Controls (MAC) between Easter and the end of September. This has been in operation since 2020. The group membership includes internal teams from seafront operations, environment, parking, highways, communications, anti-social behaviour and communities' teams plus partner agencies: Dorset Police, Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Service, South Western Ambulance Service Trust (SWAST), RNLI Lifeguards, HM Coastguard and the NHS.

These meetings include linking into partners on water safety messaging through social media posts depending on the seasonality and largely sharing partner messaging across all channels to ensure consistent joined up messaging.

### **Public Rescue Equipment (PRE)**

Whilst PRE equipment is in place in various locations across the BCP conurbation, this framework brings together the monitoring, mapping and review of this equipment.

Public Rescue Equipment (PRE) varies in type and provision across the BCP conurbation. This is largely due to areas of water being looked after through different teams. The objectives for this equipment within the action plan is to:

- update the PRE provision increasing where risk assessment determines the need
- maximise visibility and accessibility through appropriate locations of PRE
- add clear location information alongside the PRE for emergencies
- ensure the ongoing monitoring, upkeep and maintenance of PRE
- assign responsibility for PRE equipment

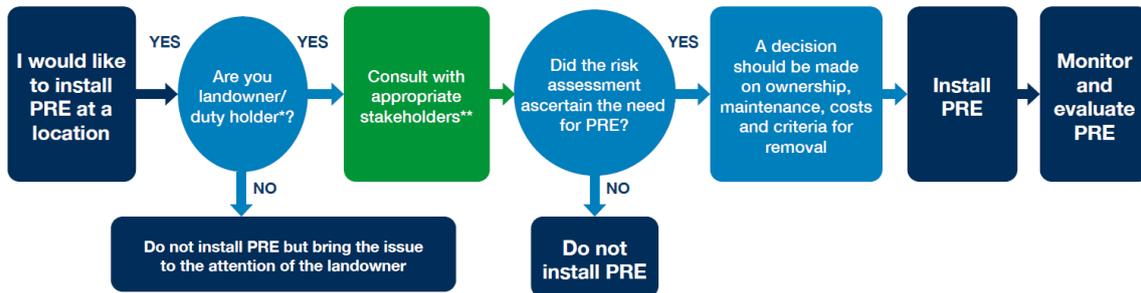
Around 60 new PRE housings have been installed across the seafront from Sandbanks Ferry through to Fisherman's Walk including trauma kits and updated defibrillators. These have been mapped as follows:

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1HBJfRLtk7csk1N5xXjSuljJSsD5LZ-Q&usp=sharing>. This information is included in the GIS mapped water safety layer.

As part of the risk assessment for inland areas, PRE has been identified where it exists, and additional locations suggested within the mitigations work where it would be beneficial which can be found in the risk assessment in appendix 1 and the action plan in appendix 4.

The National Water Safety Forums decision tree for PRE has assisted with the determination alongside the risk assessment.

## Decision tree



The responsibility for checking and maintaining existing PRE equipment lies with the Service Director who takes accountability for the site with a report it section on the Council's website for any defects. The seafront rangers have regular patrols to check equipment. For the more rural areas where PRE is installed a maintenance schedule will be required.

Following the seafront audit work a corporate contract now exists for PRE equipment.

## Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) work

A significant amount of work is undertaken by the Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management (FCERM) team within the Council whereby bespoke precision flood modelling is done for the area using a specialist flood modeller.

More generally, flood risk mapping which is controlled by the Environment Agency can be accessed on the national website - <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk>

Flooding is a risk factor identified through the profiling of the areas. It is of note for coastal and inland water areas and is shown in the statistics for Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service where rescues have been undertaken for those stuck in flood water or needing to be evacuated from flooded properties. It is also of note for the procedures for park homes where flood risk is identified (of which there are several with the BCP Council area). A representative from the FCERM team is part of the Water safety working group to ensure the communication lines of any heightened risks or emerging trends are fed into the action plan and enabling links to the more detailed work they undertake.

Flooding introduces many other hazards in addition to those noted above, including

- Turbid water where people cannot see what they are walking on. Fast flowing water can easily lift manhole covers creating new hazards/ drops in pavements and roads that were previously 'safe'.
- Fast moving floodwaters can contain significant debris (such as cars, tree trunks etc.) that pose a hazard.
- Fast flowing water can easily knock people off their feet or move vehicles.
- Floodwaters may have electrical powerlines knocked down into it.
- Floodwaters can often contain sewage leading to illness.
- Floodwaters/ blockages may affect infrastructure, such as bridges

- Hypothermia

## **Night-time economy**

Alcohol can be a key contributor when it comes to water safety and has been identified as a risk factor. Education of the night-time economy sector is important for encouraging safe journeys home upon leaving venues.

Areas identified through the framework for this sector include

- Water safety training for door supervisors at premises located near the sea
- Throw bags which can be deployed in the event of an emergency for those near water
- Notices displayed in premises near the sea, and on vessels with the benefit of a premises licence, regarding water safety and the “float to live” message.
- Messages communicated to Town/Pub Watches including details of where further information can be obtained from the group/RNLI.

Premises licences, authorising licensable activities such as the sale of alcohol and entertainment, can be applied for boats as if they were premises. Boats and ships engaged on an international journey do not require authorisation for licensable activities.

When an application is received for a vessel, the licensing objectives are considered and the general safety of passengers or emergency provision; all of which are subject to regulations issued with its Passenger Certificate and Safety Management Certificate. If the Maritime and Coastguard Agency is satisfied the vessel meets the standards for a passenger ship, then it should normally be accepted as meeting the public safety objective.

## **Park Homes**

BCP Council has 26 licenced home park sites containing park homes of which 5 are close to inland water and are at risk of deep water flooding.

Under the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960, BCP Council issue an annual licence to all residential park home sites. Within the licence the site owner is required to assess and mitigate against flood impacts of the site. The sites are inspected to ensure they meet the requirements and if the site does not meet all of the condition's improvement notices are issued and enforcement can be taken. This sits within the Housing Enforcement Team to oversee and enforce.

A comprehensive evacuation procedure should be written up under the licence for the action to be taken in the event of flooding on the site. A copy shall be displayed in a prominent position and suitably maintained on the site.

Prior to any new structure being constructed on the site, a Land Drainage Application shall be made to the Environment Agency and written consent shall be sought from the Licensing Authority.

It shall be the responsibility of the licensee to ensure that all reasonable steps are taken, and any preventative measures are implemented to protect the site and everything contained therein in the event of flooding.

The communication from the Council will be to encourage people to pre-evacuate once they have the warnings to evacuate instead of waiting. This is both through social media and the use of leaflets handed door to door.

## **Suicide prevention**

National guidance exists on suicide prevention from the Government [Suicide prevention: identifying and responding to suicide clusters - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/suicide-prevention-identifying-and-responding-to-suicide-clusters)

Work from Public Health includes a Suicide Prevention Evidence Review and Public Mental Health Evidence Review.

A representative from Public Health Dorset sits on BCP Council's Water safety working group to ensure there is a link between the existing groups to feed in knowledge and work together across the services.

We recognise that there may be incidents involving water where individuals chose to take their life, and we will work with the identified Dorset System approach to explore and examine any learning from the scrutiny of that incident.

A number of our incidents on coastline water are related to mental health. Data sharing through the groups identified in the flowchart of information flow (see section on data) helps to join up the approach on this.

## **Planning**

The planning system provides an opportunity to consider water safety for new developments.

Existing national and local planning policy already addresses flood risk and requires that any developments affected by flood risk should be avoided or where it cannot be avoided, flood risk should be mitigated through a number of flood protection measures. These flood protection measures include safe access and egress, flood risk defences, flood resilient construction etc. This is linked to the Flood Risk Mitigation Strategy which helps to enable new development whilst also protecting existing areas from flood risk.

An amendment has been made to the previous paragraph 101 a) of the National Planning Policy Framework to make clear that development proposals should consider the safety of children and other vulnerable users in proximity to open water, railways and other potential hazards.

The Council is also aiming to deliver a new BCP Local Plan which could incorporate other policy requirements to address health and wellbeing including water safety. Examples could

include requirements for health impact assessments in major developments and incorporating suicide prevention measures for new development adjacent to waterfronts.

There are no specific building regulations relating to the prevention of drowning however, the following requirements within The Building Regulations 2010, would support water safety where there's a relevance to the use of the building:

- Requirement H1 of Approved Document H relates to safe and effective drainage systems for foul water drainage.
- Requirement H3 of Approved Document H relates to the safe and effective drainage methods of surface water, as well as ensuring effective drainage of paved areas around buildings to assist with flood prevention.
- Requirement K1 of Approved Document K outlines specifications for stair design, handrails, guarding and ramps both internal and external to buildings depending on the use.
- Requirement K2 of Approved Document K focusses on methods for protection from falling, such as the height and design of guarding to glazing, balconies, landings etc.
- Approved Document M outlines requirements to ensure safe access to buildings for disabled people. Although it is not specific to water safety, a buildings compliance with Approved Document M is likely to reduce the overall risk of injury to those that are disable when using buildings which have a close proximity to bodies of water.

# Engagement with our people

Communication on water safety through stakeholders, public, residents, visitors, associations, other agencies and statutory bodies is a key element of the framework. Scoping to capture who requires engagement has taken place to identify different collective groups, contacts and communication methods.

## Water safety partners

- Canals and Rivers Trust
- Environment Agency
- MCA Coastguard
- Dorset Police
- Dorset & Wilshire Fire & Rescue
- National Water Safety Forum
- Natural England
- Poole Harbour Commissioners (PHC)
- Public Health
- Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI)
- Royal Life Saving Society
- Royal Society of Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA)
- South Western Ambulance Service Trust (SWAST)
- Utility companies
- Dorset Coast Forum (Coastwise)

## Commercial

- Boat and watercraft hire
- Diving
- Commercial fishing vessels
- Commercial vessels
- Concessions (Parks and Seafront)
- Hotels, B&B's, Air BnB (Bournemouth Area Hospitality Association (BAHA))
- Leisure centres
- Pubs and clubs (night-time economy)
- Shellfish producers
- Watersport providers (kitesurfing, kayaking, windsurfing, surfing, jet skis)

## Community groups

- Angling clubs
- Beach Hut Associations
- Birdwatchers
- Boating community
- Canoe clubs

- Christchurch Harbour Association
- Diving - Leisure
- Dog walkers
- Environmental groups
- Events
- Gig rowing clubs
- National Coast Watch Institute, Hengistbury Head
- History / conservation societies
- Kayaking
- Kitesurfing
- Lessees / tenants
- Paddleboarders
- Rowing clubs
- Sailing clubs
- Splash / paddling pools
- Surf Lifesaving clubs
- Surfers
- Swimming clubs
- Uniformed groups
- Volunteer sector
- School, further education establishments, universities and language schools

## Landowners

The Marine and Coastal Access (MCA) Act 2009 provided a comprehensive framework aimed at clarifying and enhancing the responsibilities of landowners in managing risks associated with their properties.

The MCA Act 2009 stipulates that landowners have a duty to manage and mitigate risks on their land to prevent harm to visitors, tenants, and the environment. This duty is not only a legal obligation but also a moral responsibility to ensure safe access and to maintain the integrity of the land

Communication with landowners to understand their responsibilities within the BCP area is key and links to the communications plan. Work is underway to produce a database of these landowners in the BCP area as detailed in the action plan in appendix 4.

## Specific audiences

Men – men accounted for 82% of total accidental drownings in 2020

Students and young adult drinkers – 61 people aged 15 - 29 drowned in 2020

Runners and walkers – The largest at risk group in 2020 - 35 per cent of people who accidentally drowned were running or walking near water.

Older walkers – May have underlying health conditions and have an increased risk of tripping or falling.

Dog walkers – WAID figures as well as feedback from Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service indicate that people attempting animal rescue often need rescuing themselves.

Parents - As communicated via the media, there had been a rise in incidents / deaths involving children, this is echoed by the RNLI Lifeguard team. Factors include poor swimming ability and lack of supervision.

In addition, several councils have told the LGA that they have issues with particular beaches where tides and other local conditions are understood by residents but not by tourists. Links to the hospitality industry can help communicate this information.

The communications plan in appendix 3 further explores how we will communicate with these audiences and visitors.

## **Education and communication**

Engagement and education are a key element of water safety and the information below details the links to early years through schools alongside community engagement with links into existing campaigns and communications plan engagement.

### **Schools**

Every child should have the opportunity to learn to swim and receive water safety education at primary school and where required at Key Stage 3.

Nationally, forty-five per cent of children aged 7-11 cannot swim 25 metres unaided. Learning to swim is only part of what children need to stay safe in or near water. They need to be taught to respect the water, to understand the tides and currents and other hazards that can drown even strong swimmers, and in particular they need to know about cold water shock and dealing with other seasonal factors on or near water in BCP.

The framework links to Children's Services to highlight issues and join up messaging linking into existing communication means such as the Headteachers' forums.

### **Learn to Swim**

By the end of Key Stage 2 all children should be able to swim.

Within BCP there are approximately 9,000 children on the learn to swim programme. Out of these 3,200 children are on the learn to swim programme within the BCP Leisure sites (stats as of Nov 2024).

BH Live, which operates the Bournemouth sites, has approximately 4,200 learn to swim juniors with the Junction in Broadstone around 1,000 learn to swim juniors with the remaining between private lessons as non-council pools.

There is a well-documented shortage of swim teachers nationally and therefore continued investment in our swim teachers within the BCP conurbation is vital to retain the level of learn to swim which currently takes place within BCP.

### **Prevention work**

Children's Services provide regular bulletins to all the schools, talking about the seasonality of water and their orientation around it.

The Headteachers' forum provides a network to talk to safeguarding leads highlighting work undertaken and key messages.

The RNLI supports school visits at the beaches throughout the summer and outreach activity

Where required, educational support can be managed and linked into schools outside of the holidays for information sharing. This system is activated through a system of SMS texts and currently works well.

### **Communities**

Reaching out into the community is key in order to embed water safety into different cultures. With the community makeup changing and with specific audience groups such as refugees, there is a need to ensure that the community are connected within their own environment and are educated in the risks in the area in which they live.

The RNLI have water safety information in all languages and the communications plan looks at how we share that information and support the RNLI in reaching those various community newsletters and channels. Information is then distributed to the inbox of the central community organisations for these groups.

### **Community Events**

There are over 500 community events that take place on outdoor council land each year with a large proportion of these taking place by open water. All events provide a detailed risk assessment for their operation which needs to include water safety risks and any preventative measures for the risks identified.

The BCP Council event guidance covers the requirement to consider water safety within the planning of any event including tide times and heights and if any additional water safety controls need to be put into place especially for events on or by the water.

For larger community events, a full event management plan is provided by the organiser and needs to include water safety. This is reviewed by a multi-agency safety advisory group (SAG) which includes representatives from seafront, health and safety, environment, and the RNLI.

### **Water Sport businesses**

The only licencing requirements currently in place are for passenger boats over 12. There are a number of businesses within the BCP area who hire out self-drive pleasure boats, canoes, kayaks and paddleboards. Some of the licences for these businesses will come

through BCP Council and others will be through private landowners. The communications plan in appendix 3 details reaching these audiences.

A review of BCP licenced businesses is detailed within the action plan in appendix 4 to explore the requirements given to the businesses to ensure water safety.

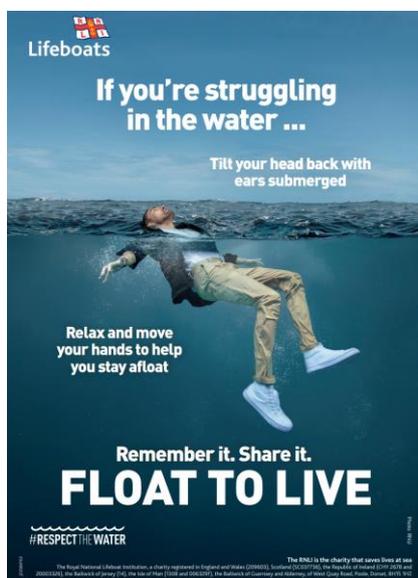
## Communication campaigns

Many of our key stakeholders have existing campaigns focused on water safety which the BCP communications plan link into so we are adding strength and synergy rather than reinventing and messaging.

Key campaigns being used and linked to include.

### RNLI – Float to Live campaign

#### [Float To Live – What To Do In An Emergency – RNLI](#)



### Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue – Be Water Aware

#### [Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Service | Be Water Aware](#)



## Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) - Don't Drink and Drown

[RLSS UK's Don't Drink and Drown campaign](#)



The communications plan which can be found in appendix 3 details how these are used in more detail.

### Coastwise

[Coastwise | Dorset Coast Forum](#)

DCF worked with the Jurassic Coast Trust, National Trust, RLNI, Safewise and the Marine Coastguard Agency to produce a fun and engaging video to promote beach and water safety messages to junior-school aged children in a holistic context.

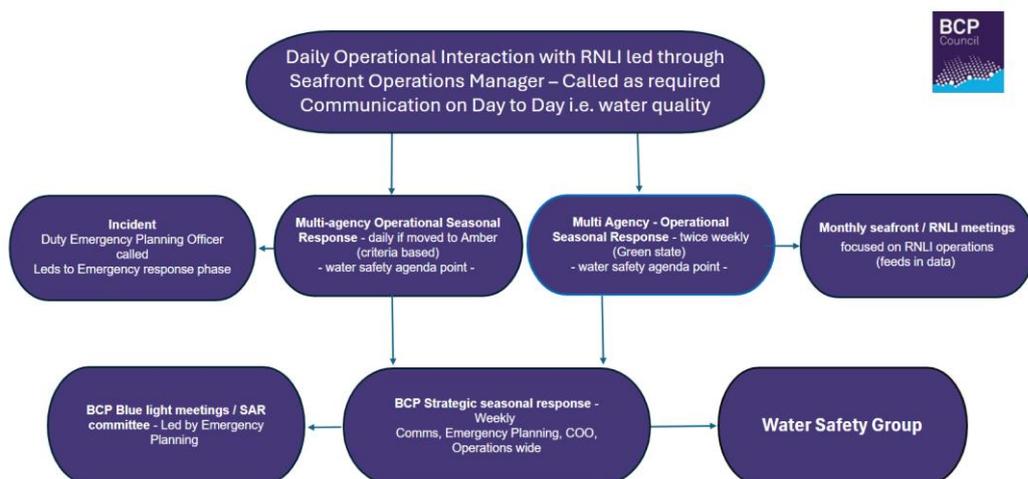
### Communications plan

The communications team have compiled a communications plan, identifying the messaging to ensure target audiences are reached and engaged with; to include proactive messaging and link to our water safety partners to ensure we are sharing existing schemes and campaigns.

This plan can be found in appendix 3.

## Emergency Response Approach

The day to day seasonal response in normal operating hours is detailed in the flow chart below



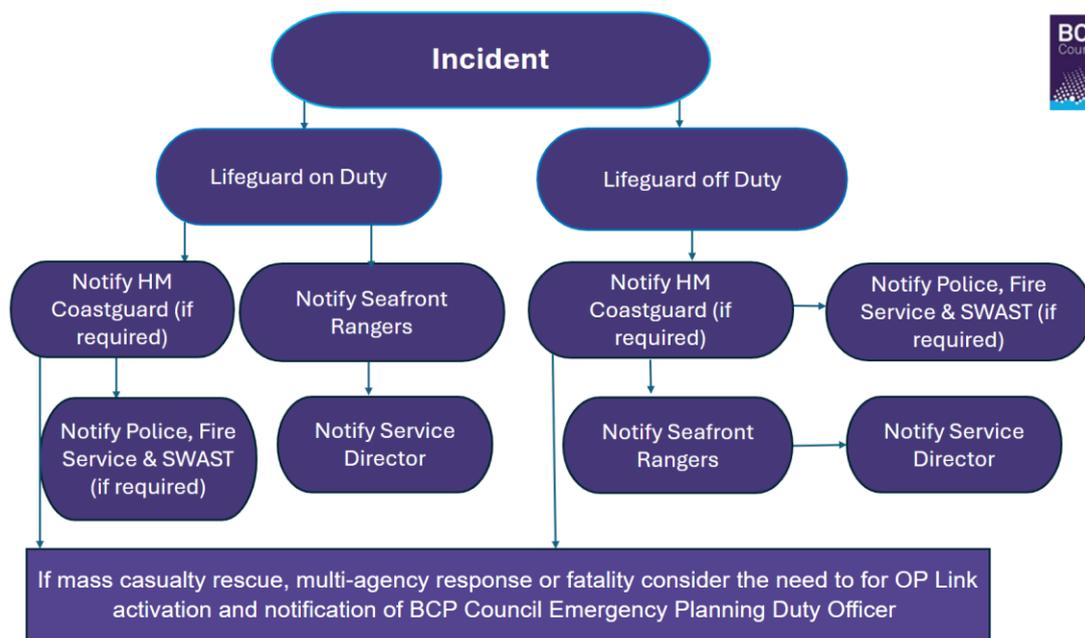
The response to an incident involving water safety is critical. There are a number of forms that this will take from the emergency response to an incident to the proactive responding to foreseeable incidents and monitoring of water safety to the setting of an action plan.

A fatality from a drowning incident can happen within minutes. Responding effectively can initially come from a member of the public or an officer with a more detailed emergency services response.

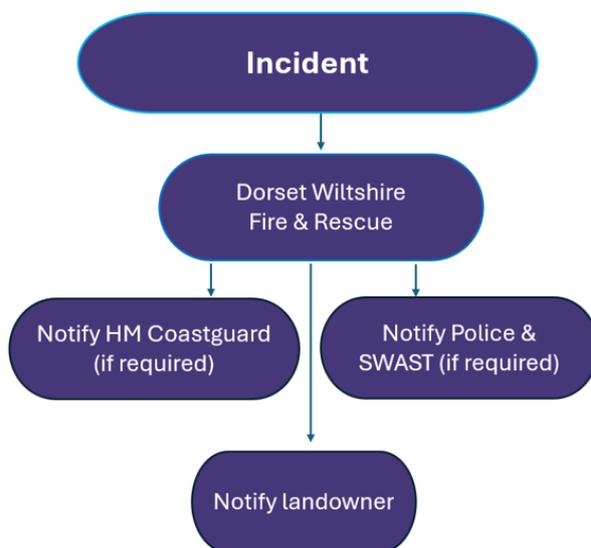
The lead emergency service for the sea and coastal areas is the Maritime Coastguard Agency (MCA) via HM Coastguard. They will lead in the tasking of the RNLI or their own assets in such a response. With the RNLI on site on a large proportion of our seafront during the summer months, they will often be the first responder linking into the HM Coastguard where wider resource and multi-agency response processes can be activated.

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service (DWFRS) has no statutory duty to undertake water rescue activities. Dorset Police are the lead agency for the search of missing persons. However, DWFRS has the capability to support Dorset Police with search and rescue operations both in and around water. DWFRS's water rescue capability is aligned with the DEFRA Concept of Operations (linked below). Additionally, DWFRS can request the mobilisation of cross-border assets and nationally declared resources to support search and rescue operations.

The below flowchart lays out a coastal incident response



The below flowchart lays out an inland incident response



## Action Plan

It is noted that with an ever-changing evolving picture for water use and climate, a live working action plan should be reviewed and adapted to meet these needs.

The action plan in appendix 4 details the progress of work underway within the framework and future aspirations to continually develop the work. Leads for each action are clearly identified.

## Reporting

Reporting of water safety issues come through a number of channels both internal and external such as from customer services and directly from the public to the Seafront and Environment teams. Capturing individual messaging from so many channels will be streamlined through the existing transformation work with customer services.

The flowchart within the data section above lays out the reporting process for incidents to ensure this is well captured in reviews. The data section covers this in further details.

Water safety is a standing agenda item on the Commercial Operations Health & Safety Quarterly meeting to ensure key messages are captured, which then feeds into the corporate meetings.

The corporate health and safety team sit within the Water safety working group to highlight any reported water safety items at meetings and feed into the mitigation work.

## Review

As a live framework document, a 6 monthly review will take place within the Water Safety Working Group linking into relevant teams to ensure review of risks, actions and changing trends and statistics.

In the case of a significant water safety incident taking place in the BCP conurbation, a separate debrief will take place for that incident with key actions being assigned for the Water Safety Group to take forward.

Lessons learnt from national information and guidance documents will also be considered within each review.

## Background documents

- UK Drowning Prevention Strategy 2016 – 2026 (National Water Safety Forum)  
<https://www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk/media/1005/uk-drowning-prevention-strategy.pdf>
- Dorset Suicide Prevention Strategy 2021 – 2023  
<https://democracy.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/documents/s22820/Enc.%203%20for%20BCP%20Council%20Suicide%20Prevention%20Plan.pdf>

- IRIA Manual C786 - Culvert, Screen and Outfall Manual
- Maritime & Coastguard Agency's Managing Beach Safety  
[Managing Beach Safety - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)
- National Water Safety Forum Water safety partnerships guidance  
[Home | National Water Safety Forum](#)
- The Local Government Association (LGA) Water Safety Toolkit  
[Water safety toolkit | Local Government Association](#)
- The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents - RoSPA  
[RoSPA – The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents - RoSPA](#)
- A Movement for Movement: Dorset's Physical Activity Strategy  
[A Movement for Movement | Active Dorset](#)

## **Appendix 1 – Risk Assessment of inland water phase 1**

## **Appendix 2 – RNLI signage & equipment audit**

## **Appendix 3 – Communications plan**

## **Appendix 4 – Action Plan**

## **Appendix 5 – Responsibilities for water areas &**