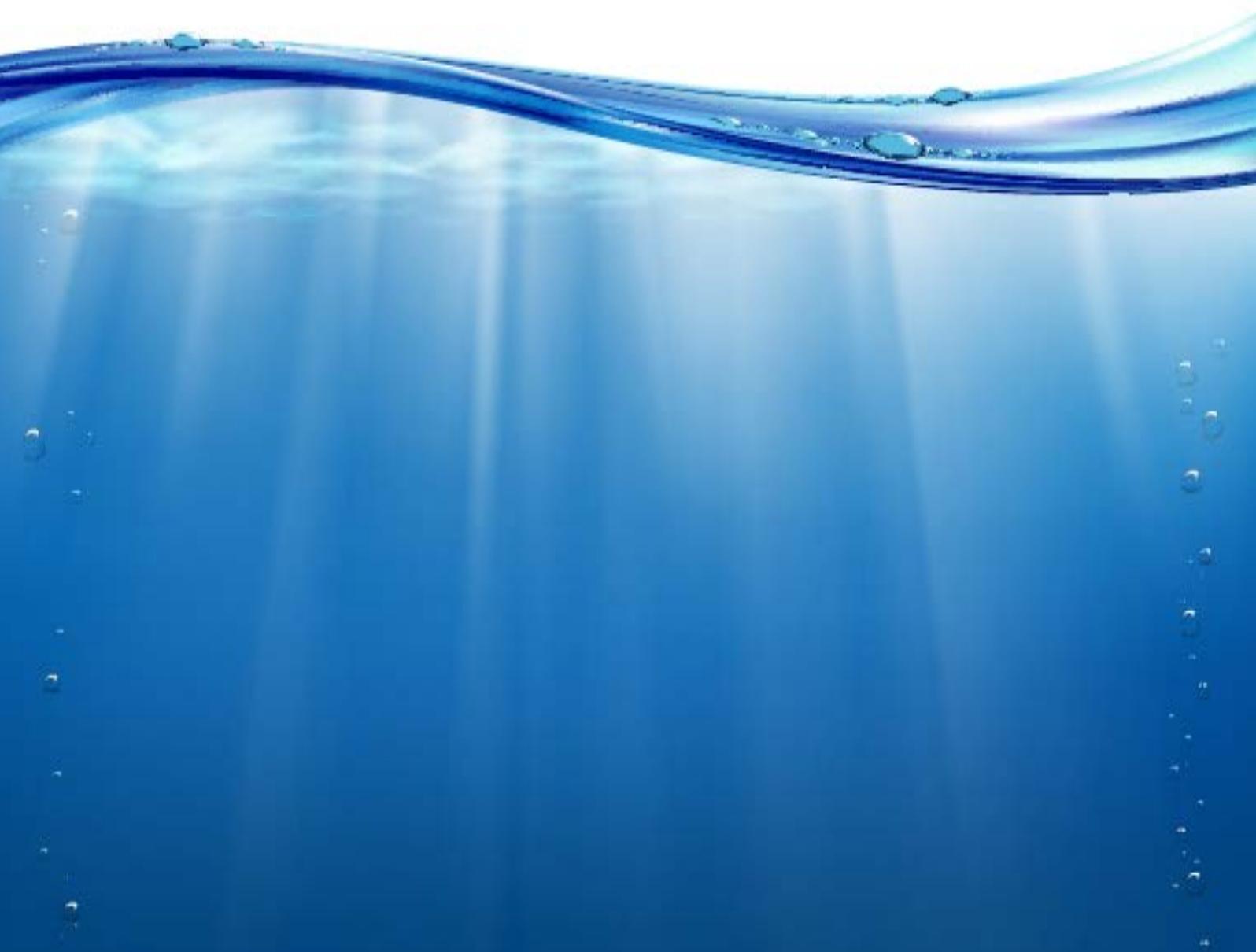


**water safety**  
Wales

# Wales' Drowning Prevention Strategy 2020-2026





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# Foreword

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**Lesley Griffiths MS**  
Welsh Government  
Minister for Environment,  
Energy and Rural Affairs

On average around 600 people die in water-related incidents each year in the UK. These figures include an average of 45 people who lose their lives in Wales.

Our Welsh rescue services are committed and highly effective, but unfortunately they cannot reach everyone. The Welsh Drowning Prevention Strategy will give a clear outline on how we will work in collaboration with partnership organisations to engage, educate and raise awareness on the dangers of water to the communities which we serve.

Water Safety Wales is a collaboration of individuals, communities, charities, organisations, public sector and private sector who all bring different skills and knowledge together for mutual benefit. This strategy, developed by Water Safety Wales will give direction and practical guidance to anyone and everyone with the desire or means to help reduce drowning. We will be most successful if everyone plays their part.

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**Wales has many iconic inland water features and Blue Flag beaches which attract a plethora of visitors every year. We fully support water activities and encourage everyone to enjoy the water in a safe way.**

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The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 has key themes: A resilient Wales, A prosperous Wales, A Wales of cohesive communities, A healthier Wales, A more equal Wales, A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language and A globally responsible Wales. Working with the National Water Safety Forum (NWSF) and addressing the key elements of The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, Water Safety Wales will work towards reducing water-related deaths and help people enjoy the water safely.

A handwritten signature in grey ink that reads "Lesley Griffiths".

# Introduction

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This strategy will enable Welsh citizens and visitors to Wales to be safer in, on and around water. It promotes and encourages a consistent approach to water safety engagement, education and awareness.

It will contribute to the UK Drowning Prevention Strategy<sup>1</sup> and reduce water-related incidents in Wales.

The sharing of work and a collaborative approach is key to reducing water-related incidents.

Water Safety Wales recognises the excellent drowning prevention work which has been undertaken in Wales by different organisations over the years. These initiatives and campaigns have contributed to drowning prevention and kept individuals and communities safer. By building on this foundation our collaborative approach to this strategy will continue to deliver water safety education and awareness.

## Our Vision

**Water Safety Wales is committed to reducing drowning deaths and keeping our communities safe around water. We have an aspiration of zero water-related deaths.**

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## Our Mission

**In order for Water Safety Wales to achieve our mission, we have developed the following seven key aims:**

- Improve water incident data and intelligence in Wales
- Promote and develop learning to swim and water safety education
- Promote and support the development of water safety plans
- Promote public awareness of water-related risks and ensure consistent messages reach the right people at the right time
- Promote the safe participation in water activities across Wales
- Contribute to the reduction of water-related suicide
- Work with families affected by water-related incidents

# The need for a Drowning Prevention Strategy in Wales

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**This strategy forms a framework to guide and support organisations and individuals in drowning prevention.**

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The National Water Safety Forum developed and released the first UK National Drowning Prevention Strategy in 2016. This was followed by the development and release of Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy in 2017, which was reflective of issues and concerns in Scotland.

In Wales a number of individuals from Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK) and South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS) developed a Water Safety group in 2015. This group expanded into Water Safety Wales.

At the time of writing, Water Safety Wales consists of 22 different organisations (Appendix 1) all working towards reducing instances of drowning.

Recognising there are still too many water-related incidents occurring in Wales, it was agreed a strategy would assist the work of the water safety community, and raise the prominence of drowning prevention with policy influencers in Wales and across Welsh society.

Water Safety Wales is committed to reducing drowning deaths and keeping our communities safe around water. We have an aspiration of zero water-related deaths.

The uniqueness of Wales combined with the need to ensure safety of our communities on and around water, requires a specific strategy and framework. This strategy aligns with the National Drowning Prevention Strategy, which aims to halve accidental drowning deaths in the UK by 2026 and reduce the risk of people taking their own lives in the water.

Whilst the majority of Welsh people speak English there are a number of local communities across the country where Welsh is the first language. Water Safety Wales recognises the Welsh Language Act and the importance of making information bilingual. Water Safety Wales and partner organisations are all working towards the inclusion of bilingual material to support drowning prevention.



Wales has an approximate population of 3,170,000 over an area of 20,779 sq.km.<sup>2</sup>

In 2018 there were 10.02 million overnight trips to Wales by British residents<sup>3</sup> and nearly 1 million overseas visitors.

The increase seen in tourism is excellent for our economy and is clear evidence of the fantastic landscape and coasts we have.

Visitors to Wales are across all seasons and they visit both inland and coastal locations to explore our magnificent landscape and culture.

Wales has three national parks, namely Snowdonia National Park, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park and Brecon Beacons National Park, and all of these have varied and popular areas of water.

However, the national parks are just three of many areas of outstanding beauty, with Wales also named the first country in the world to have a dedicated footpath that hugs the entire coastline – all 870 miles / 1,400 km of glorious diversity<sup>4</sup>.

A key element of The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is a healthier Wales. Water Safety Wales encourages everyone to enjoy our beautiful countryside and coastline undertaking safe outdoor activities. This supports Visit Wales' promotion of Wales as a location for many outdoor activities.

## Coast



Our 870 miles of coastline with more Blue Flag beaches per mile than anywhere else in the UK encourages many visitors and activities throughout the year. The seas around Wales have large tidal ranges, with the Bristol Channel being the second highest in the world, and many areas are subject to unpredictable, strong currents. Wales is also subject to weather changes which see our shores and beaches inundated with high waves, coastal flooding and potentially dangerous situations. It is recognised there are many coastal search and rescue agencies working to keep our Welsh coastal communities safe.

## Inland



As noted earlier Wales has many excellent rivers, outstanding reservoirs and historic canals, along with other inland water risks such as quarries, lakes, ponds and areas liable to flooding.

In 2017 the devolved Welsh Government announced a change in the statutory duty of rescue responsibility for inland water in Wales. This change saw the three Fire and Rescue services, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFERS), Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (MWWFRS) and South Wales Fire and Rescue Service (SWFRS) take on that statutory duty (Appendix 2).



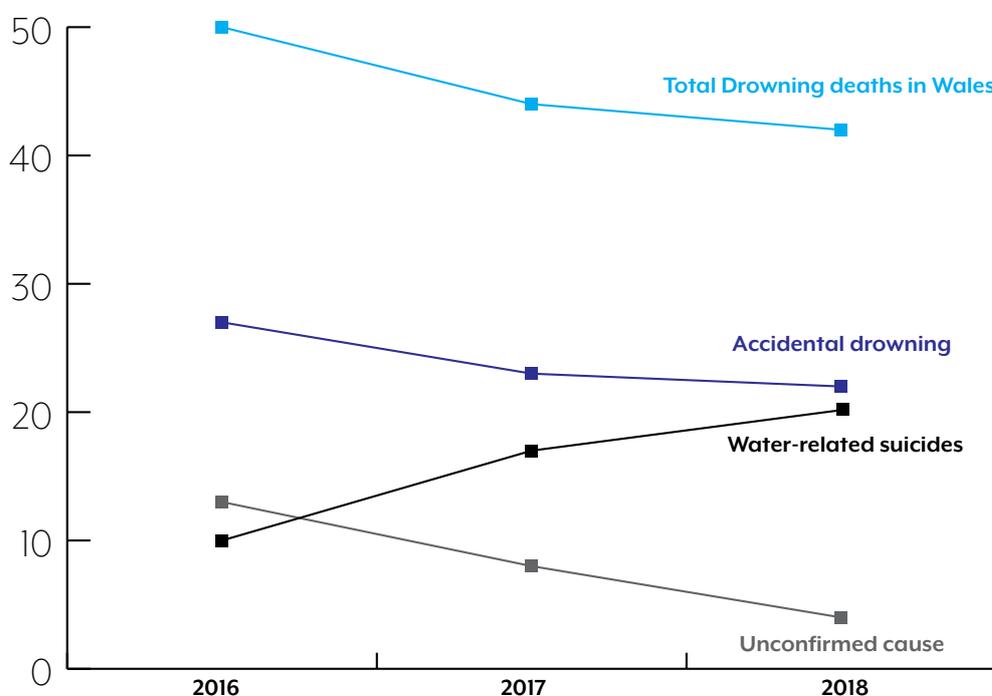
## The Welsh picture

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On average around 600 people die in water-related incidents each year in the UK.

Many of those deaths resulted from accidents, although the number of accidental drowning deaths is declining. However, the number of water-related suicides is increasing (WAID 2016-18<sup>5</sup>).

In Wales, on average 45 people lose their lives to drowning every year (WAID 2016-18).

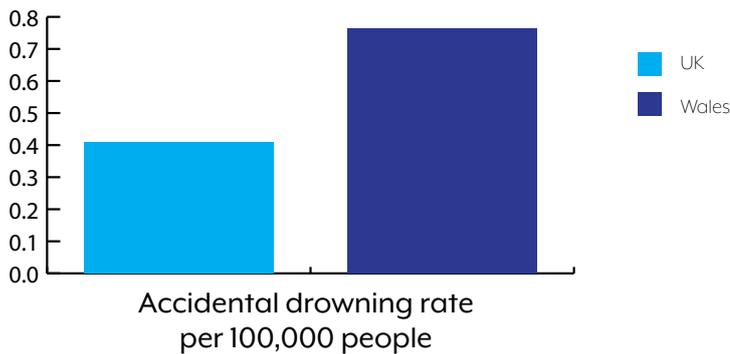
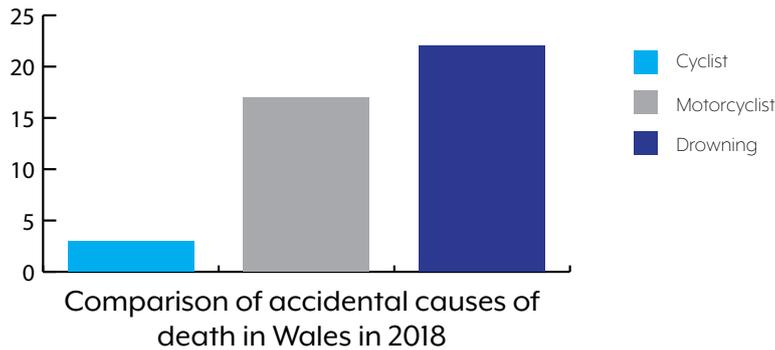


Drowning deaths in Wales 2016-18

The UK Drowning Prevention Strategy states that Wales carries a disproportionately high number of accidental drownings in relation to its population size. The drowning rate in Wales is almost double that of the UK as a whole.

In 2018, more people in Wales died as a result of an accidental drowning than died in fires, in motorcycle accidents, while cycling, in incidents involving pedestrians or in fatalities in the workplace<sup>6</sup>

The rate of water-related suicide in Wales is also higher than the rest of the UK by almost 20%.<sup>7</sup>



The number of people participating in recreational activity on or around the water continues to grow. Around 700,000 more adults took part in water sports or waterside activity in the UK in 2018, when compared to the previous year.<sup>8</sup>

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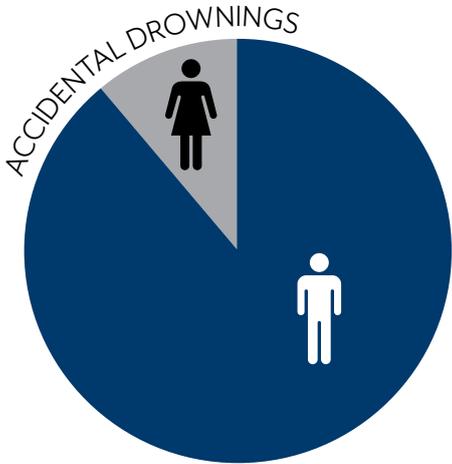
**In Wales, millions of people enjoy the water environment safely. However, too many people are drowning, and our search and rescue teams are being called on too often to respond to water-related emergencies. To best target our water safety and drowning prevention work, we need to better understand who, where and when people are drowning and the circumstances.**

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# Demographics - who is drowning?

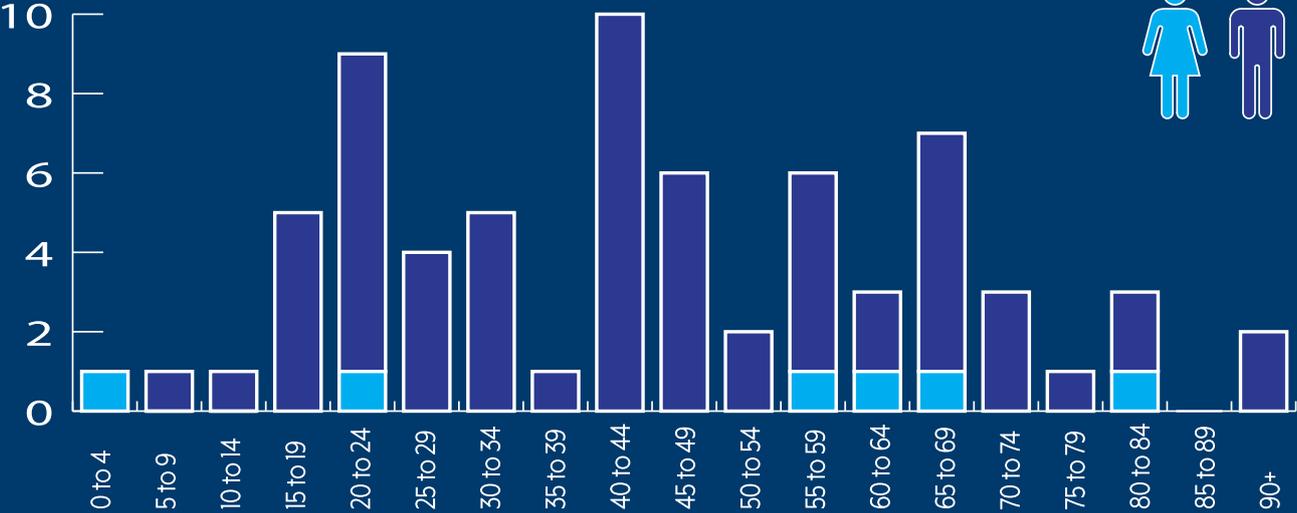
Drowning can occur at all stages of life. Fortunately, the number of children under 14 who drown is comparatively low. In adult males drowning occurs in almost all age groups between 15 and 90+. The number of females who drowned in Wales were low and spread across a mix of age ranges with no discernible pattern.

A clear trend is that almost nine out of ten accidental drowning deaths in Wales are males. This is similar to the picture across the UK as a whole.



Male – 89% Female – 11%

## Gender and Age, Wales 2016-18



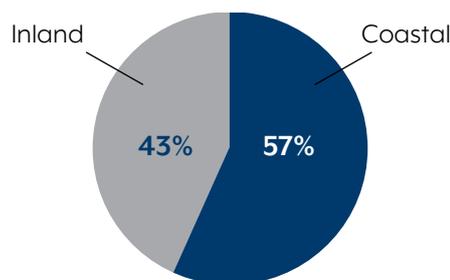
## Geography - where are people drowning?

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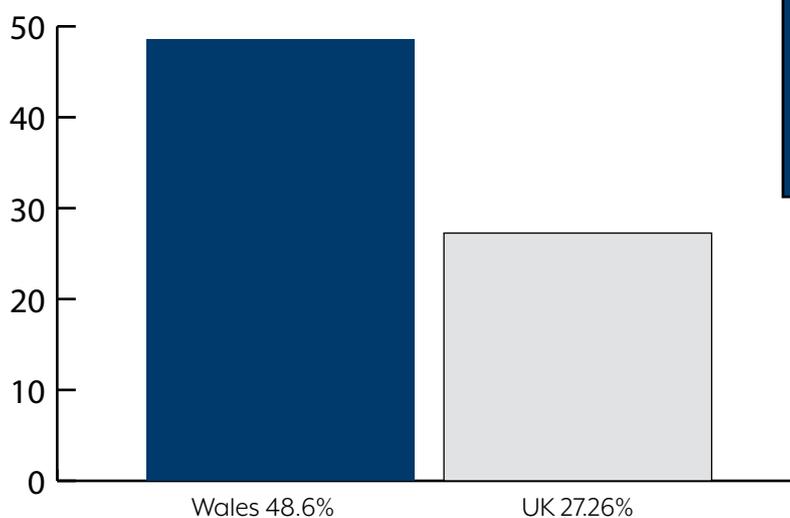
The majority of accidental drowning deaths in Wales occur at the coast – 57%. This differs from the UK picture, where the figure is 42%.

Data does not clearly identify geographical patterns in accidental drownings; however, more obvious trends occur in water-related suicides, with some parts of Wales experiencing multiple water-related suicides at a single location or within a small area.

Percentage of accidental drownings in Wales at the coast vs inland:



Percentage of accidental drownings which happened on the weekend:



The number of people who drown at the weekend is significantly higher in Wales than in other parts of the UK and the proportion of people who die in the summer months of July and August is also higher in Wales.

## Activities and behaviour - how are people getting into difficulty?

Water Safety Wales acknowledges a number of factors can increase the likelihood of drowning:



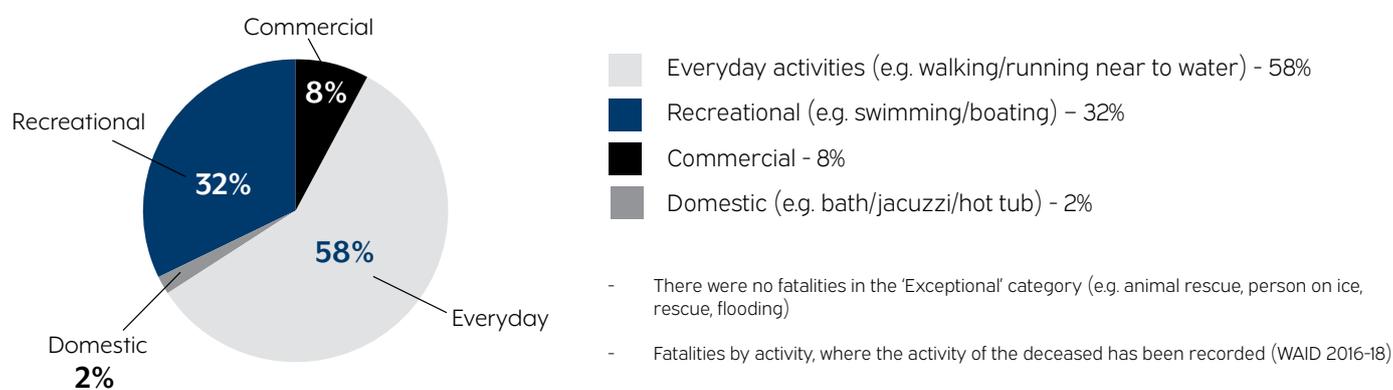
- **Lack of knowledge and awareness of the risks**
- **Lack of ability or training for the situation**
- **Lack of supervision, especially of children**
- **Lack of appropriate equipment**
- **Socio-economic factors**
- **Use of alcohol and drugs**

Six in 10 of the people involved in water-related fatalities in Wales had no intention of entering the water. This is around 10% higher than the UK as a whole. These people were doing everyday activities like walking or running near water or cycling. Many were the result of slips, trip and falls.

Around a third of fatalities involved people doing a recreational activity in or on the water, such as swimming or boating. This is slightly lower than the UK as a whole.

Commercial activity accounted for around one in 10 water-related deaths, in line with the UK average, while 2% of deaths were in a domestic setting.

A presence of alcohol and/or drugs was reported in one in every three people who drowned in Wales in 2017 and 2018. While alcohol and/or drugs were not directly attributable in all cases, it is widely accepted and regularly reported by experts that alcohol is a drowning risk factor.





# Emergency responses

On average there are 1,755 water-related incidents annually that require emergency response, which equates to approximately 5 every day.

Many of these could have been easily avoided. Every emergency response indicates that a member of the public can be at risk, and that whilst performing a rescue, emergency service personnel are also at risk.

Total number of emergency responses to water-related incidents in Wales for 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19:



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**These figures represent the majority of emergency responses to water-related incidents in Wales co-ordinated by the Welsh Fire and Rescue Services and HM Coastguard.**

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\* Appendix 3



# What's happening now

## - current drowning prevention activities

### Existing initiatives

There are many excellent initiatives being delivered across Wales promoting water safety and drowning prevention. Water Safety Wales thanks and congratulates all organisations and individuals that have worked tirelessly to contribute to the reduction of water-related deaths. Below is a collection of some of the excellent work.

### Learn to Swim Wales

Learn to Swim Wales is a bilingual assessment and awards Framework devised by Swim Wales. Learn to Swim Wales is a progressive seamless pathway beginning with a baby's first experience in the water through to curriculum aquatic activity through 'Nofio Ysgol' and onto Adult Learn to Swim Wales which is an adaptable framework to introduce and develop aquatic skills for older participants.

This innovative scheme is a key contributor in achieving the Swim Wales Vision 'Aquatics for everyone for life' through children learning vital skills of water competence by the time they leave primary education. The fundamental factor that sets swimming and skills of water competence apart from other sports and physical activities is that skills of water competence are 'the sum of all personal aquatic movements that help prevent drowning as well as the associated water safety knowledge, attitudes, values, judgement and behaviours that facilitate safety in, on and around the water.' (Moran, 2013). Swim Wales and supporting stakeholders in Water Safety Wales have adopted the concept of 'water competence' as a paradigm shift in how swimming and drowning prevention is viewed.

All assessment outcomes throughout Learn to Swim Wales have been designed to ensure the physical needs of the participants are met and developed. This follows the principles of the Athlete Development Support Pathway (also known as LTAD) including Physical Literacy skills and cross curricular skill development opportunities. Skills of water competence are developed throughout the framework, with some key skills being repeated to ensure that learners have full understanding and their comprehension is revisited and reinforced. Collaboration with the RNLI has ensured consistency of messaging and a standardised delivery plan has been developed and shared to ensure consistency of delivery across all operators of Learn to Swim Wales.





## Carmarthenshire Water Safety Partnership

Drowning is always a terrible tragedy for any community and often accepted as 'one of those things'.

Only when we lost Cameron did we ask if these accidents could be prevented. One slip off the wall by the swollen River Towy in Camarthen and Cameron was never seen again. That was February half-term 2015.

A fund was set up where local and surrounding communities raised £40,000. The fund co-ordinator – Adam Whitehouse – began to research best practice models and water safety interventions across the UK to benefit Wales by reducing fatal drownings and also set this charity up.

Thus began a journey to work in partnership with families, third sector, statutory agencies and businesses to raise the profile of our water safety work. Some of our work in the last five years includes:

- Signed up to the UK National Drowning Prevention Strategy 2016-26
- Delivered new slipway in Carmarthen with Welsh Government funding
- Delivered first vandal-proof lifebuoy cabinets in Wales
- Designed and delivered over 100,000 PDF or paper bilingual water safety leaflets to schools
- Welsh bilingual drowning prevention messages promoted across the UK
- New charity centre in Carmarthen focused on water safety engagement through sports, heritage, community well-being and tourism

## River and Sea Sense



Debbie Anne Turnbull is the Founder and Director of River and Sea Sense (RASS) Ltd.

After losing her son Christopher aged 15 in 2006, Debbie has worked across North Wales delivering her bespoke educational programme to schools, youth groups and speaks professionally at conferences across the UK and to international audiences.

Debbie has educated over 400,000 young people and teachers to date.

Debbie is developing an online resource to enable her to educate more people and retell stories of rescues as part of the drowning prevention learning. Debbie hopes to achieve her target of "touching a million hearts". A new bereavement support initiative will run alongside this for families who have lost a child.

In 2017 Debbie won the National Lottery Special Achievement Award presented by Bear Grylls live on air on the BBC – Bear Said "We Think You Are Amazing." – As a result of this Debbie has attended Parliament on four occasions and has spoken in the House of Lords highlighting 'A Mothers Story' this resulted in her receiving a Points Of Light Award from the then Prime Minister Theresa May.

## Drowning prevention activities in Chepstow

Chepstow Fire and Rescue Station and Chepstow Leisure Centre have been working in partnership for the last seven years to offer valuable lifesaving advice to over 750 children during RLSS UK's Drowning Prevention Week every June.

Local primary schools were given water safety demonstrations during their swimming lessons. Children also benefited from picture boards demonstrating CPR, and the opportunity to wear virtual reality goggles which highlight the dangers water can pose.

In 2019 a crew from Chepstow Fire and Rescue Station started a programme delivering a joint SWFRS and RLSS UK water safety talk to the local primary schools. This has been supported with running a local drowning prevention poster competition in primary schools.

To further support this work regular local community car washes and annual quiz nights have been organised to raise funds for RLSS UK and The Fire Fighters Charity.

## Royal Welsh Show

The Royal Welsh Show has been located in Llanellwedd, Builth Wells for many years. The population is normally around 2,500 and during the show this increases to around 400,000.

The River Wye runs between the showground and the village of Builth Wells with a single river bridge access. The show has several venues which people will frequent: the main showground, young people's village, Penmaenau Farm on one side of the river and Builth Wells town on the other. During the show young people have lost their lives in the river and on the road. Following a drowning in 2016 a Builth Wells area safety advisory group was set up consisting of fire, police, local authority, Royal Welsh Agricultural Society, Welsh Ambulance Service Trust (WAST) and local councillors. This group looked at the public risks and identified that the road, the river and alcohol were factors in incidents. The group identified various ways to mitigate these risks to make the public safer.

The water safety aspects of this were:

- Stewards, street pastors and staff working in and around water during this and other shows trained to use throw lines
- A green route identifying the safe route to all the venues during the show avoiding water
- Water safety displays around the pond within the showground during the show (1,000 spectators per demonstration)
- Water safety leaflets issued to all stallholders, exhibitors and members of the public who are camping or caravanning at the show
- A water safety stand with FRS, RNLI and RLSS UK in attendance
- Water safety advice included on the Royal Welsh Show app supported by regular Tweets and social media
- Water safety assets located at the show to reduce attendance times of the response crews and to deliver water safety messages
- Regular patrols of the river bank carried out by police and partners
- Daily morning meetings of all partners to discuss issues and put in place counter measures to reduce incidents



## Tenby and Milford Haven

Water safety and anti-social behaviour issues in Tenby and Milford Haven are being addressed using a multi-agency approach to educate and inform young people.

Two initiatives called Breakwater in Tenby, and Wave in Milford Haven have been developed in response to concerns raised about young people tombstoning and the anti-social behaviour that is associated with the activity.

All Year Seven pupils are brought to the harbours and participate in 30 minute workshops delivered by water safety, local authority and emergency service agencies. The workshops concentrate on informing pupils about water safety, how to assess risk and the impact of anti-social behaviour.



## Cardiff and Penarth Water Safety Partnership

The warm summer of 2018 saw a marked increase in members of the community using the local waters and saw the near fatal drowning of a young person. The public were using the water in often dangerous locations near weirs and were unaware of the hidden dangers. The partnership implemented a multi-agency approach and conducted patrols around these areas, informing the public about the hidden dangers, cold water shock and local bylaws.

## Adventure Smart Wales

The Adventure Smart Wales campaign began two years ago with funding support from the Welsh Government Tourism Product Innovation Fund. This project brought experts from 30+ safety and sporting organisations together. They developed and promoted a suite of positive, consistent safety messages and resources to increase preparedness of people adventuring in the Welsh outdoors, and reduce avoidable incidents needing emergency services response. The campaign focuses on three areas; having the right gear for your chosen activity, having the relevant skills and checking the weather conditions. Key target audiences include families enjoying Welsh beaches during the school holidays; raising awareness about tides, rip currents, cold water shock and visiting a lifeguarded beach.



## Aide-Memoir

Water Safety Wales has produced a clear comprehensive aide-memoir for persons working on, in or around water. It gives clear advice of what to do in an emergency along with consistent education messaging and has been used by PCSO's, Fire Service, Dwr Cymru, Mineral Product Association (MPA) and Coastguard teams plus many others. It has since been replicated across areas of England.

## Welsh Baccalaureate Challenge

Water Safety Wales, working with the Mineral Product Association, has been instrumental in producing the first education tool for peer-to-peer water safety education amongst young people. This challenge is the first of its kind where different organisations have come together and created something for mainstream education supported by the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC). It is available to all secondary schools across Wales.



## Swim Safe

Swim Safe is a free swimming and water safety programme for children aged between seven and fourteen. A partnership between the RNLI and Swim England, Swim Wales and local delivery partners actively support children to enjoy a fun, structured water safety session at a choice of open water locations. It was launched in 2013 and first ran in Wales in 2016. Every year thousands of Welsh children take part, learning vital survival techniques and the differences between a pool and open water environment.



## Surf Life Saving Association of Wales

Surf Life Saving Association of Wales is a registered humanitarian charity and the governing body of 31 voluntary lifeguard clubs in Wales. It is a unique not-for-profit cause with 3,000 volunteers that is committed to local communities and exists through donations, fundraising, sponsorship and grants. SLSA Wales helps save lives through education, training and prevention and is committed to reducing the coastal drowning rate by the year 2026, in line with the UK Drowning Prevention Strategy. Over the last 30 years they have performed 2,000 rescues as well as trained and qualified 4,700 lifeguards to national standards under the International Lifesaving framework.



## Swansea Local Authority

Swansea's waterfront is an important and valuable part of the city's economy, and a highly desirable place to visit, stay and live for tourists and students alike. Swansea Council recognises the inherent risks associated with its proximity to the water and following insight and review of drownings and near drownings, strives to prevent further incidents and make users feel safer.

In order to deliver this, Swansea Council has a dedicated water safety and drowning prevention team, and is one of the only local authorities in Wales to do so.

RLSS UK 'Don't Drink and Drown #Beamate' campaign has been supported by Swansea Council for a number of years.

The Water Safety team has participated in Freshers' events within the universities to urge students to remember the dangers posed by too much alcohol should their walk home after a night out bypass open water.

Other campaigns within the city centre continue to remind people of the dangers of water, ensuring they keep an eye out for friends and make sure they return home safely.



## Welsh Water 'One Last Breath' Campaign

Traditionally, methods such as signage at dangerous locations and factual information videos were often used to warn people of the dangers of swimming in reservoirs.

But feedback from focus group sessions at local secondary schools with Welsh Water's target audience of teenagers and young adults showed that we needed to present the dangers in a more engaging and hard-hitting way in a campaign that didn't feel authoritarian to our audience.

So we developed the One Last Breath campaign – more gritty and modern in appearance with minimal reference to Welsh Water.

The campaign used hard-hitting 360° and 2D video, promoted to our target audience through social media posts and advertising. It was amplified through radio advertising and partnerships with schools to disseminate content to young people through workshops and film viewings.

The campaign attracted widespread print and broadcast media coverage and Welsh Water's Safety Team, who record all incidents of swimming/attempts to swim at our reservoirs, have seen a fall in incidents since the 'One Last Breath' campaign was launched and there have been no subsequent accidental deaths at Welsh Water reservoirs at the time of writing.

## Our Vision

- what we want to do

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**“Water Safety Wales is committed to reducing drowning deaths and keeping our communities safe around water.**

**We have an aspiration of zero water-related deaths.”**

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The uniqueness of Wales combined with the need to ensure safety of our communities on and around water, requires a specific strategy and framework. This strategy aligns with the National Drowning Prevention Strategy, which aims to halve accidental drowning deaths in the UK by 2026 and reduce the risk of people taking their own lives in the water.



## Our Mission

– Seven key aims

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**In order for Water Safety Wales to achieve our mission, we have developed the following seven key aims:**

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- Improve water incident data and intelligence in Wales
- Promote and develop learning to swim and water safety education
- Promote and support the development of water safety plans
- Promote public awareness of water-related risks and ensure consistent messages reach the right people at the right time
- Promote the safe participation in water activities across Wales
- Contribute to the reduction of water-related suicide
- Work with families affected by water-related



## Our Ambition - how to achieve these seven key aims

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Water Safety Wales is a partnership of organisations and individuals with a common goal of aspiring to zero water-related deaths and reducing the number of water-related incidents.

Through its structure it will seek to support drowning prevention education and engagement.

This strategy will form the future focus of Water Safety Wales.

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## TARGET:

### Improve water incident data and intelligence in Wales

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The water incident database (WAID) currently brings together data from different organisations relating to fatalities. Understanding the circumstances which lead to drowning helps us prevent others. We need to build a picture of what people are doing and how they are behaving when they drown so we can devise the most effective interventions and reach the most vulnerable people.

#### **Promote UK and Welsh WAID data reports with partner organisations and local authorities**

- Produce an annual press statement
- Create an annual trend report and summary
- Share Welsh WAID data

#### **Support the sharing of Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) inland water rescue data with WAID**

- Work with WAID and National Fire Chief Council (NFCC) on sharing of FRS data across the UK
- All FRS in Wales to share water rescue data

#### **Explore opportunities to identify areas of high risk and to share local knowledge of incidents to ensure lessons are learned**

- Share incident information and lessons learned, in a confidential manner where appropriate
- Scope the combination of coastal and inland data gathering in Wales to include near-miss information

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## TARGET:

### **Promote and develop learning to swim and water safety education**

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Not everybody in Wales knows how to swim or how to keep themselves safe in and around water. We want to promote the importance of acquiring these key life skills through early years, primary and secondary school programmes and across our diverse communities.

Water Safety Wales support the Swim Wales' Vision 'Aquatics for everyone for life' (Appendix 4)

#### **Establish an education sub-group**

- Bring together key organisations to promote a consistent approach to developing skills of water competence and water safety education
- Confirm collaborative best practice methodologies for messaging and education

#### **All children to participate in water safety education activities**

- Work with Swim Wales and partners to highlight the importance of learning to swim and developing water competence skills, not just for the associated health and well-being benefits but specifically for the potential to prevent drownings and save lives.
- Promote and encourage learning to swim and developing skills of water competence across all ages.
- Continue to advocate the need for water safety education to be included in swimming lessons for all ages

#### **Collaboratively co-ordinate the promotion of the opportunity for diverse communities in Wales to have the opportunity to learn to swim and receive water safety education**

- Collaboratively co-ordinate and promote the importance of learning to swim and developing skills of water competence
- Promote local swimming and lifesaving groups

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## TARGET:

### **Promote and support the development of water safety plans**

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Support the development of Water Safety Forums and partnerships across Wales to better understand water risks within local communities and develop plans to mitigate.

#### **Supporting Unitary Authorities (UA's) in Wales to develop a Water Safety Plan**

- Assist UA's in identifying areas of high risk
- Share good practice guideline documents and research on water safety
- Encourage inclusion of water safety as a standing agenda item on relevant meetings

#### **Support the development of local water safety forums and community groups**

- Assist in identifying areas of high risk
- Share good practice guideline documents and research on water safety
- Share best practice across Wales

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## TARGET:

### **Promote public awareness of water-related risks and ensure consistent messages reach the right people at the right time**

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Water Safety Wales recognises the valuable work already being done to raise awareness about water-related risks and drowning prevention. We will continue to support these efforts and look to increase collaboration and consistency.

#### **Establish a media and communications subgroup**

- Bring together communication experts from membership organisations to ensure consistent bilingual media messaging across Wales
- Create a bilingual communications toolkit for use by organisations across Wales
- Use evidence, data and subject matter expertise to ensure campaigns and messages are targeted at identified risk

#### **Raise awareness of Water Safety campaigns across Wales**

- Create and share an annual calendar to encourage organisations to support campaigns
- Support organisations in campaign delivery

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## TARGET:

### **Promote safe participation in water activities across Wales**

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The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 has a goal of a healthier Wales. Undertaking water activities is a great way to maintain a healthy balanced lifestyle.

Wales is a popular visitor destination with a global reputation for outdoor activity and adventure, with our coastal and inland waters a key attraction.

#### **Encourage safe water activities in Wales as a way of maintaining a healthy lifestyle and enjoying our environment**

- Promote the importance of correct equipment when undertaking water activities
- Promote correct training to undertake water activities
- Work with governing bodies and Visit Wales to support and encourage safe participation of water activities

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## TARGET: Contribute to the reduction of water-related suicide

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Water-related suicide is increasing in Wales. Water Safety Wales acknowledges the need to better understand influencing factors and will work on prevention, in line with Welsh Government Suicide and Self Harm Prevention Strategy, Talk to me 2.

### **Establish a suicide prevention sub-group**

- Establish links with organisations working to reduce suicide and mental health-related water incidents
- Bring together professionals to better understand the water-related suicide picture in Wales

### **Support the understanding that suicide is preventable**

- Work with relevant suicide prevention organisations to understand common misconceptions
- Share and promote relevant campaigns and activities to help reduce suicides around water
- Encourage responsible media reporting of water-related suicide

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## TARGET: Work with families affected by water-related incidents

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The impact of losing a family member can only truly be understood by those who have gone through that experience. Many bereaved families are at the forefront of drowning prevention.

### **Recognise the human impact of drowning**

- Work with families who may want to be involved in drowning prevention
- Explore the opportunities to establish a families/advocacy subgroup



**water safety**  
Wales

## Our Commitment – Review and Evaluation

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The launch of this strategy is a long-awaited document supporting organisations in Wales to make a difference towards drowning prevention.

Through the Water Safety Wales meetings, feedback of current and proposed work will be captured as an ongoing mechanism of evaluation against the strategy.

To further support this strategy Water Safety Wales will look to commence a formal mid-strategy review in 2023.

The review and evaluation will assess the seven key aims to ascertain if they are still correct or in need of amendments. We will also review our progress against the seven key aims and publish a report at the end of 2023.

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# Strategic summary

<p><b>Vision</b></p>	<p>Water Safety Wales is committed to reducing drowning deaths keeping our communities safe around water. We have an aspiration of zero water-related deaths.</p> <p>The uniqueness of Wales combined with the need to ensure safety of our communities on and around water, requires a specific strategy and framework. This strategy aligns with the National Drowning Prevention Strategy, which aims to halve accidental drowning deaths in the UK by 2026 and reduce the risk of people taking their own lives in the water.</p>
<p><b>Why do we need a Strategy?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An average of 45 people drown in Wales each year</li> <li>• To make our citizens and visitors as safe as possible around water</li> <li>• Wales differs from the rest of the UK with the devolved Government, education and water rescue response</li> </ul>
<p><b>How are we going to achieve our seven key aims?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Improve water incident data and intelligence in Wales</b> The water incident database (WAID) currently brings together data from different organisations relating to fatalities. Understanding the circumstances which lead to drownings helps us prevent others. We need to build a picture of what people are doing and how they are behaving when they drown so we can devise the most effective interventions and reach the most vulnerable people.</li> <li>• <b>Promote and develop learning to swim and water safety education</b> Not everybody in Wales knows how to swim or how to keep themselves safe in and around water. We want to promote the importance of acquiring these key life skills through early years, primary and secondary school programmes and across our diverse communities.</li> <li>• <b>Promote and support the development of water safety plans</b> Support the development of Water Safety Forums and partnerships across Wales to better understand water risks within local communities and develop plans to mitigate.</li> <li>• <b>Promote public awareness of water-related risks and ensure consistent messages reach the right people at the right time</b> Water Safety Wales recognises the valuable work already being done to raise awareness about water-related risks and drowning prevention. We will continue to support these efforts and look to increase collaboration and consistency.</li> <li>• <b>Promote the safe participation in water activities across Wales</b> The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, has a goal of a healthier Wales. Undertaking water activities is a great way to maintain a healthy balanced lifestyle. Wales is a popular visitor destination and has a global reputation for outdoor activity and adventure. Our coastline and inland waters are a key attraction. Water Safety Wales will encourage safe water activities in Wales as a way of maintaining healthy lifestyle and enjoying our environment.</li> <li>• <b>Contribute to the reduction of water-related suicide</b> Water-related suicide is increasing in Wales. Water Safety Wales acknowledges the need to better understand influencing factors and will work on prevention.</li> <li>• <b>Work with families affected by water-related incidents</b> The impact of losing a family member can only truly be understood by those who have gone through that experience. Many bereaved families are at the forefront of drowning prevention.</li> </ul>

# Appendix 1

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## Organisations involved with Water Safety Wales at the time of writing:

Adventure Smart Wales

Canal & River Trust

Dwr Cymru – Welsh Water

Dyfed Powys Police

Gwent Police

Keep Wales Tidy

Maritime and Coastguard Agency

Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service

Mineral Products Association

National Advisory Group to Welsh Government on Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention

National Resources Wales

National Union of Students

National Water Safety Forum

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service

Royal Life Saving Society UK

Royal National Lifeboat Institution

Royal Society for Prevention of Accidents

Samaritans

Severn Trent Water

South Wales Police

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service

Swansea Council

Swim Wales

The Surf Lifesaving Association of Wales

Water Safety Scotland

# Appendix 2

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## Fire and Rescue Services, Wales

The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2017  
Made 15 February 2017  
Laid before the National Assembly for Wales 20 February 2017  
Coming into force 1 April 2017

The Welsh Ministers, in exercise of the powers conferred by sections 9 and 62 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004<sup>(1)</sup> on the National Assembly for Wales and now vested in them<sup>(2)</sup>, and having consulted such persons as they consider appropriate in accordance with section 9<sup>(5)</sup> of that Act, make the following Order:

Title, commencement and application

1.—(1) The title of this Order is the Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (Wales) (Amendment) Order 2017.

(2) This Order comes into force on 1 April 2017.

(3) This Order applies in relation to fire and rescue authorities in Wales.

Amendment of Order

2.—(1) The Fire and Rescue Services (Emergencies) (Wales) Order 2007<sup>(3)</sup> is amended as follows.

(2) After article 3 insert—

“Rescue and protection in case of flooding and inland water emergencies

3A.—(1) A fire and rescue authority must make provision in its area, to the extent that it considers it reasonable to do so, for the purpose of—

- (a) rescuing people, or protecting them from serious harm in the event of an emergency involving flooding; and
- (b) rescuing people in the event of an emergency involving inland water.

(2) The duty within paragraph (1) applies to an emergency falling within section 58(a) of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

(3) In this article— “flooding” (“llifogydd”) means any case where land not normally covered by water becomes covered by water; “inland water” (“dyfroedd mewndirol”) means—

- (a) rivers, streams and canals; and
- (b) lakes, reservoirs and water-filled quarries.”

(3) In article 4—

- (a) in the introductory words, for “or 3” substitute “, 3 or 3A”;
- (b) in paragraph (a) after “services” insert “, equipment”.

# Appendix 3

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The data captured for the Welsh Emergency response section is from Fire and Rescue Service and HM Coastguard sources.

The Welsh Fire and Rescue data has been taken from the Public Government statistics document:

<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-08/>

The HM Coastguard data has been supplied by HM Coastguard Milford Haven and takes in to account the following incident types :-

Person Appears in Difficulty, person in water, person cut off or stranded, person personal water craft – eg lilo / inflatable, Flare, Person stuck in Mud, Civil contingencies Flooding, Divers, Vessel – personal watercraft, Man overboard and other incidents starting with Vessel which involve an emergenc..y response and risk to life.

<b>Agency</b>	<b>2016/17</b>	<b>2017/18</b>	<b>2018/19</b>
Welsh FRS	669	703	669
HM Coastguard	919	1080	1225
Totals	1588	1783	1894

An average of 1755 per year, 4.8 per day

# Appendix 4

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Swim Wales' Vision is 'Aquatics for everyone for life'. Swimming and water safety have been explicitly included in the National Curriculum for Key Stage 2 and the inclusion of 'experience in and around water' throughout the Curriculum for Wales 2022 which can be included and evidenced across all areas of learning and experience provides the opportunity for the development of skills of water competence and water safety throughout a child's education.

The fundamental factor that sets swimming and skills of water competence apart from other sports and physical activities is that skills of water competence are 'the sum of all personal aquatic movements that help prevent drowning as well as the associated water safety knowledge, attitudes, values, judgement and behaviours that facilitate safety in, on and around the water.' (Moran, 2013). Swim Wales and supporting stakeholders have adopted the concept of 'water competence' as a paradigm shift in how swimming and drowning prevention is viewed.

Swimming is a key component of a person's physical literacy journey and recent data suggests that 52% of Key Stage 2 children (aged 7-11)<sup>9</sup> attending School Swimming in 2017/18 in Wales cannot swim 25 metres unaided as assessed by the National Curriculum Assessment (Free Swimming Data Collection, 2018).

With the changes to the Free Swimming Initiative funding to leisure providers, curriculum opportunities to develop skills of water competence and have experience in and around water are integral. There is also evidence that low income families do not have sufficient disposable income to fund potentially lifesaving skills. Schools provide the main opportunities for children to get active, normally through timetabled 'PE' sessions, which included swimming. (StreetGames, 2019)<sup>10</sup>. With the changes coming in with the Curriculum for Wales 2022, schools will have discretion in designing their

curriculum but should follow issued guidance in practice. Swim Wales and the All Wales Water Safety group are the expert voices in relation to water competence and can provide resources, training and wider support to enable consistent assessment across Wales.

Social patterns are evident among swimming participation, with children from lower socioeconomic class less likely than those from higher socioeconomic class to engage in swimming<sup>11</sup>. A relevant consideration should be the financial expense of swimming lessons, especially relating to low income families who simply might not have sufficient disposable income to fund the learning and development of these potentially lifesaving skills regardless of the importance and understanding that they have of this area.

This is supported by the recent data showing that across the Swim Wales network the average cost of a swimming lesson is £6.06; with low income families spending just £3.21 per week on 'active sport' this shows that socioeconomic class is a serious consideration in relation to access to extra-curricular lessons.

Swim Wales and our collaborative partners wish to highlight the importance of learning to swim and developing water competence skills, not just for the associated health and wellbeing benefits but specifically for the potential to prevent drownings and save lives.

# References

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- (1) <https://www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk/media/1005/uk-drowning-prevention-strategy.pdf>
- (2) <https://www.ukpopulation.org/wales-population/>
- (3) <https://gov.wales/topics/culture-tourism-sport/tourism/researchmain/latest-stats/?lang=en>
- (4) <https://www.walescoastpath.gov.uk/?lang=en>
- (5) <https://www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk/waid/>
- (6) <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-10/road-accidents-and-casualties-2018-where-when-and-who-807.pdf>
- (7) <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2019-08/fire-and-rescue-incident-statistics-april-2018-to-march-2019-734.pdf>
- (8) <https://www.rya.org.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/sportsdevelopment/2018-watersports-study-exec-summary-final.pdf>.
- (9) In 2017/18, 63,946 Key Stage 2 pupils in Wales were assessed against the National Curriculum Assessment; of these 30,556 met the assessment criteria (Free Swimming Data Collection (2018) Source: Free Swimming Data Collection (2018) Learn to Swim – School Swimming Data 2017/18. Data File. Collated by Data Cymru
- (10) StreetGames (2019). “Families Insight Study” [Powerpoint Presentation] Accessed: 14th June 2019
- (11) Audrey, S., B. W. Wheeler, J. Mills and Y. Ben-Shlomo (2012). “Health promotion and the social gradient: the free swimming initiative for children and young people in Bristol.” Public Health 126(11): 976-981.

# Notes

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# Notes

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Wales Drowning Prevention Strategy 2020-2026