

## Respect the Water: Elmbridge Water Safety Plan



(linking in to the UK Drowning Prevention Strategy 2016-26)

### **UK Drowning Prevention Strategy 2016-26**

Drowning is among the leading causes of accidental death in the UK; about 400 people drown every year and many of these tragedies involve children and young people, cutting short lives and devastating families. In addition, a further 200 people take their own life through drowning. The National Water Safety Forum has therefore produced the first [UK Drowning Prevention Strategy](#) (2016-26) with the aim of reducing accidental drowning fatalities in the UK by 50% by 2026.

The national strategy includes the following themes:

- Develop partnership working to ensure consistent guidance for the safe enjoyment and management of activities in, on and around water
- Reduce the drowning risk amongst the highest risk populations, groups and communities.
- Ensure every community with water risks has a community-level water safety risk assessment and water safety plan
- Increase awareness of everyday risks in, on and around water
- Recommendation that all recreational activity organisations should have a clear strategic risk assessment and plans that address key risks
- Develop a better understanding of water-related self-harm
- Improve evidence and data to better understand the causes of drowning
- Support partners and networks
- Provide leadership and advocacy
- Mobilise resources and sustained investment in drowning prevention
- Measure success

<https://www.rospa.com/leisure-safety/water/inland/>

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The 2024 Water Incident Database (WAID), which is maintained by the National Water Safety Forum shows that the number of accidental drowning fatalities has decreased from 283 (2016) to 193 in 2024 a reduction to date of 31%.

### **Linking to the national Strategy to make Elmbridge a safer Borough**

Elmbridge is a very green Borough, but at the same time also has a large volume of water passing through the area, including the River Thames to the north, rivers Ember, Wey, Mole and Rythe, several ponds on the Elmbridge Countryside (Black Pond, Middle Pond, Littleworth Pond) and some former gravel pits which are now deep water ponds (Littleheath Pond).

There are also several water holdings across the Borough which are situated on private land, including reservoirs, fishing lakes and golf courses. The Borough does not have a direct role in the management of these land holdings and these all are managed by the landowner.

The longest stretch of water in Elmbridge is the River Thames, which runs through the Borough from Long Ditton to Weybridge. The Local Authority owns very little land immediately adjacent to the river along the length of the River Thames with bulk of the riverbank and bed owned by a variety of landowners including private landlords, the Environment Agency, Network Rail, as well as small portions in Local Authority control. The riparian landowners throughout this stretch have responsibility for assessing and managing their risk, be they private or public bodies. Where there is a public right of way the responsibility still rests with the landowner. There are also a number of properties based on islands along the Thames which present challenges and increased risks through access, but also in times of flood. Responsibility for safe access to these sites is again vested with the landowner be the private properties or land in common ownership.

The Borough has a vibrant culture, much of it linked to the water with many active water based sporting clubs, open spaces and riverside bars and cafes as well as an extensive network of other rivers and canal towpaths used for more informal recreation and walking. These sites have become increasingly popular, especially following the pandemic with many people becoming more aware of and placing greater value with their outdoor green spaces.

This does however make it is a high-risk location for drowning and sadly such tragedies do occasionally occur. The Elmbridge Community and Safety Partnership is therefore eager to work with its partners and link to the national strategy and its ambition to at least half the number of deaths by 2026. The approach of this Respect the Water plan will be to continue to encourage people to use the rivers and canals for recreation but ensure they do so in a safer and more informed way. Particular emphasis will be given to educating people about the high-risk activities of impromptu wild water swimming, cold water shock and jumping from bridges (tombstoning) and also self harm.

### **Informing the local strategy**

In order to inform a local plan, research is undertaken and updated annually with partners into RNLI call outs, drownings, including any recorded near misses in the Borough in the last five years to establish where these happened, who was involved and what the circumstances were. This information is provided in a table in Appendix 1. Not all the details surrounding these incidents especially near misses are known, but in order to understand why they keep happening, it was necessary to employ a detached, subjective approach. As can be seen from the table, some of the drownings and near misses were partly related to local factors such as the cold and fast-moving River Thames however, similar to the national picture, many of the incidents were not 'accidents' in the true sense at all, but an inevitable consequence of ill-judged behaviour. This was typically

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connected to male 'bravado' (between 80% and 90% of all those who drown accidentally are male), occasionally further influenced by alcohol or other substances, and, or a complete lack of awareness of the dangers posed by 'wild water'.

Understanding the extent to which swimming abilities played a part in many of the drownings is difficult to establish as even a strong swimmer would struggle to survive in a river in full flood, whilst subject to cold water shock, and in some cases further incapacitated by alcohol or other substances. We are however aware that at least one of the fatalities in 2022 was not a strong swimmer.

Also, similar to the national picture, very few drownings occur locally in connection with formal recreation activities in, on or around water, although this year (2024/25) has seen one fatality and some further near misses which require some further consideration with the National Governing Bodies. Given the rowing, paddleboarding and boating culture in Elmbridge this is very significant, and further demonstrates that deaths are predominantly caused by people entering the water impulsively or accidentally.

A number of the incidents have in the past been linked to fishing activity on the Thames and this is an area that this plan will consider.

Partners have reported an increase in the number of people in mental health crisis presenting at the waterways in Surrey. Therefore, it is important but the public mental health work and local suicide prevention plans consider suicide prevention work on the local waterways.

## Reducing the risks

Practical measures can be devised to try to reduce some of the location specific risks, but the biggest challenge will be trying to change behaviour by increasing awareness of the significant risks posed by wild water. Getting this message across will require a multi-faceted approach, and input from a wide-range of professions, particularly those who work with young people and other high risk groups.

Due to changing weather patterns, including the occurrence of warmer, wetter winters, flooding in the Borough has increased over recent years. Care needs to be taken to reduce any risks associated with this and hidden dangers.

Although formal recreation activities on the waterways pose only a low risk this should not lead to complacency and there is a need to ensure all groups have their own detailed risk assessments and follow best practice endorsed by the relevant national governing bodies.

The use of signage to warn people of waterway dangers is a contentious issue; signage can create clutter and spoil scenic river views and is also subject to constant graffiti and theft. In some cases through joined up working smart design can incorporate a number of messages from multiple agencies on one information\ pictorial sign. The public perception of the 'health and safety gone mad culture' has also led to a loss of credibility regarding risks warning signs so these are often just ignored. It is therefore not recommended that signage is used extensively, but possibly just where there are very specific location hazards, that could place people at risk inadvertently. Key signage has been updated in the borough during 2023, with advice from RLSS and ROSPA to ensure they key messages are clearly displayed through a pictorial design.



Similarly, Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) guidance makes it clear that the installation of water safety equipment must be seen as part of the overall assessment of the hazards presented and preventative measures. The guidance cautions against the provision of lifebelts other than at specific locations where they can be dropped vertically such as in a lock (locks are the EA's responsibility). This is because they are extremely difficult to throw any distance horizontally such as from a river bank due to their weight and shape (and are vulnerable to vandalism and theft).



Surrey Fire and Rescue Service working with the Council and other partners have held a number of practical water safety events, demonstrating throw line use, highlighting the dangers of open water at Cowey Sale. These will continue to be organised again in the summer of 2025 including a commitment from the Leisure operator to undertake presentations/workshops in schools to increase water safety awareness amongst local children/young people.

Following advice from ROSPA and looking at best practice elsewhere with our partners, as a part of the partnership Water Safety campaign, the Council have installed 11 throw line boards around the Borough at the highest risk locations.

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- Hurst Park Open Space (3)
- Desborough Island (3) – see above
- Albany Reach (2)
- Thamesmead Recreation Ground,
- Waterside Drive
- Cowey Sale

2 further boards are being considered with Surrey Fire and Rescue this summer.

A risk assessment identifying all the significant potential hazards connected to Elmbridge’s waterways, where they are most likely to occur, who is most likely to be involved and possible mitigation strategies has been initiated below, and colleagues and partners have contributed to this. However, if we are to be successful in the national aim to reduce the number of drowning tragedies by at least half by 2026 contributing to the creation of this strategy in Elmbridge will only be the first step and it is intended to remain a living document. It is vital that all stakeholders continue to work together to update and implement the strategy and this will be revisited through the Elmbridge Community and Safety Partnership as a regular standing agenda item.

In the absence of a single body responsible for water safety in Elmbridge, and in recognition for the important role that the rivers and other water courses have in the Borough’s culture and amenity this Local Drowning Prevention Plan has been produced working with partners through the Elmbridge Community Safety Partnership which will retain responsibility for its monitoring and delivery.

**Agency Contacts.**

	Contact	Role	Email
Elmbridge Borough Council	Ian Burrows 01372 474572  Nic Martin 01372 474399	Head of Leisure  Policy & Community Safety Officer	<a href="mailto:iburrows@elmbridge.gov.uk">iburrows@elmbridge.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:nmartin@elmbridge.gov.uk">nmartin@elmbridge.gov.uk</a> <a href="mailto:Communitysafety@elmbridge.gov.uk">Communitysafety@elmbridge.gov.uk</a>
Surrey Fire and Rescue	<b>Michael Rolph</b>	Borough Commander for Elmbridge	<a href="mailto:michael.rolph@surreycc.gov.uk">michael.rolph@surreycc.gov.uk</a>
Environment Agency	Russell Robson 07887 831933	Waterways team leader	<a href="mailto:russell.robson@environment-agency.gov.uk">russell.robson@environment-agency.gov.uk</a>
RNLI	James Woodhouse	RNLI Water Safety Education	<a href="mailto:james_woodhouse@rnli.org.uk">james_woodhouse@rnli.org.uk</a>
RLSS	Hannah Wiggins Bettles 0300 323 0096	Community Drowning Prevention Coordinator	<a href="mailto:Hannahwiggins-bettles@rlss.org.uk">Hannahwiggins-bettles@rlss.org.uk</a>
Surrey Police	Inspector Lucy Marriott	Surrey Police	Marriott, Lucy 41194 <a href="mailto:Lucy.Marriott@surrey.police.uk">Lucy.Marriott@surrey.police.uk</a>
Surrey County Council		Service Manager for TYS Elmbridge Youth Work Service	Tim Kitchen <a href="mailto:tim.kitchen@surreycc.gov.uk">tim.kitchen@surreycc.gov.uk</a> ; Keir Schiltz <a href="mailto:keir.schiltz@surreycc.gov.uk">keir.schiltz@surreycc.gov.uk</a> Gary Nash <a href="mailto:gary.nash@surreycc.gov.uk">gary.nash@surreycc.gov.uk</a>
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**Communications Contacts**

In the event of an incident on the Thames or an area with more than one agency dealing with an incident, all communications agencies should liaise to agree a joint approach to managing media communications.

	Contact number	Email
Elmbridge Borough Council	01372 474474	<a href="mailto:Communications@elmbridge.gov.uk">Communications@elmbridge.gov.uk</a>
Surrey Fire and Rescue	020 8541 7259	<a href="mailto:Laura.downton@surreycc.gov.uk">Laura.downton@surreycc.gov.uk</a>
Environment Agency	0800 807060	<a href="mailto:WaterwaysThames@environment-agency.gov.uk">WaterwaysThames@environment-agency.gov.uk</a>
RNLI	07827358256	<a href="mailto:Julie_rainey@rnli.org.uk">Julie_rainey@rnli.org.uk</a>
Surrey Police	01483 632000	<a href="mailto:mediarelations@surrey.pnn.police.uk">mediarelations@surrey.pnn.police.uk</a>
Surrey County Council	020 8541 7259	<a href="mailto:Laura.downton@surreycc.gov.uk">Laura.downton@surreycc.gov.uk</a>
Eikon (Surrey Youth) Head of Fundraising and Communications	01932 347434	<a href="mailto:Natasha.iles@eikon.org.uk">Natasha.iles@eikon.org.uk</a>
Lifetrain Trust	01372360875	<a href="mailto:eleni@lifetrain.org.uk">eleni@lifetrain.org.uk</a>
Surrey Care Trust	07867578543	<a href="mailto:justine.aldos@surreycaretrust.org.uk">justine.aldos@surreycaretrust.org.uk</a>
SSCB (Safeguarding) Communications Group	01372 833330	<a href="mailto:Jane.donson@surreycc.gov.uk">Jane.donson@surreycc.gov.uk</a>
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**The evidence from the analysis broadly correlates with the statistics given in the UK Drowning Prevention Strategy 2016-26:**

- The large majority of drownings and near misses were male and mainly people in their teens and 20s
- Compulsive/ill-judged/reckless behaviour was a significant contributing factor in many of the incidents
- The influence of alcohol or other substances may have been a contributing factor in a number of cases
- A number of incidents were likely to have been attempts at suicide
- Poor swimming abilities may have been a factor in some cases, but even very few strong swimmers now have experience or an understanding of cold, wild water conditions.

**Elmbridge Community and Safety Partnership Health & Safety Risk Assessment**

<b>Environment</b>	The Borough's waterways, towpaths and river/canal banks		
<b>Activity Description</b>	Formal and informal activities on, in or near the waterways		
<b>Assessment date</b>	Feb 2025		
<b>Review date</b>	Annual review		
<b>Names of assessor(s)</b>	Elmbridge Community Safety Partnership.		
<b>Hazard &amp; Description</b>	<b>High risk locations</b>	<b>High risk groups</b>	<b>Control measures (and Risk Owner)</b>
<p><b>Slips, trips and falls:</b></p> <p>Numerous trip hazards such a mooring rings/spikes, ropes, gangplanks, occasional potholes, and eroding and unstable banks.</p> <p>There is a reluctance among some small boat owners in wearing buoyancy aids when visiting pubs, as nowhere safe to store equipment.</p> <p>Nationally 44% of all drownings occur when the person apparently had no intention of entering the water, so in a riverine Borough like Elmbridge falling in to the river/canal will always remain a potential risk. There is also a risk of actually being knocked in to the water by a jogger or cyclist (see below).</p> <p>Dog owners have been known to enter the water to rescue their dogs, placing</p>	<p>Slips, trip and falls along towpaths and riverbanks can occur anywhere.</p> <p>Boat owners can create a serious risk of falling in to the water in any location if they do not take care to create a safe method of access to their craft.</p> <p>The number of unauthorised moorings in the Borough should be monitored in case obstruct safe passage on the towpath.</p> <p>Poplar dog walking locations adjacent to the river (i.e. Hurst Park, Black Pond etc)</p> <p>There is an increase in recreational boat use\ hire however most of these craft are safe for novice users and</p>	<p>The number of potential trip hazards along the towpaths could create a greater risk of slips, trips and falls for the elderly or those with mobility issues. However, the flat, level topography of the towpaths and riverbanks provide ideal walking routes for both these groups (and people recovering from illness/injury), and the physical and psychological benefits of walking in these pleasant environments far outweigh the low level risk.</p> <p>People with visual impairment</p> <p>Children (particularly toddlers)</p> <p>Runners, walkers and cyclists who use the towpath</p> <p>Boat owners and recreational users</p>	<p>The Thames towpath is managed largely by the County Council and Thames Trails Other areas of the river bank are the responsibility of the landowner. <b>(All Landowners)</b></p> <p>Elmbridge are working closely with the Environment Agency to manage unauthorised moorings and storage of items along the towpath, all of which create trip hazards and obstruction. <b>(EBC &amp; EA)</b></p> <p>The RNLI has delivered water safety awareness at the Elmbridge Junior Citizen since 2009. Each year over 1200 year 6s from Elmbridge Schools attend Junior Citizen. This equates to approximately 10,800 children from Elmbridge who have received water safety advice from the RNLI. New RNLI messaging for youth audience includes guidance on how to float as with RTW campaign. <b>(EBC &amp; RNLI)</b></p> <p>Joint messaging around 'floating' and cold water shock for young people <b>(RNLI)</b></p>

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<p>both themselves and their dog at high risk.</p> <p>Increasing amount of possessions\ fly tipping on the riverbank linked to unauthorised moorings creating increased risks.</p> <p><b>Hazards:</b></p> <p>Sprains, cuts and bruises, fractures and back injuries.</p> <p>Risks of drowning if slip, trip or fall is in to the watercourse.</p>	<p>supplied with personal floatation devices</p>	<p>Those under the influence of drink/drugs</p> <p>Island dwellings who use small boat craft to reach the mainland or local shops and restaurants</p> <p>Dog owners</p>	<p>Communication plan to promote safety to dog walkers <b>(RNLI &amp; all.)</b></p> <p>Residential boater safety awareness with fluorescent key rings, pin covers, gangplank awareness <b>(SFRS, EA, EBC)</b></p> <p>Runners and Walkers campaigns <b>(RLSS)</b></p>
<p><b>Cycling\ running along the towpaths:</b></p> <p>Some areas of the towpath along the Thames especially are well used by large numbers of recreational cyclists and joggers. The number of cycling events\ sportives has seen a rapid growth following the success of other cycling events and similarly running events in the lead up to the London Marathon.</p> <p>The Thames towpath is also used by rowing coaches on bicycles who ride along keeping up with their boat to give instructions to the crew (and often steer the bike with one hand whilst using a megaphone in the other).</p> <p>The narrowness of the towpath creates competition for space between cyclists, and between cyclists, runners and pedestrians. As a result, altercations and collisions can occur.</p>	<p>The area most heavily used by cyclist is the Thames towpath between Hampton Court and Weybridge. Along this long stretch of the towpath the path narrows considerably between fencing, walls, treelines and the watercourse. There is therefore only a narrow confined space for walkers and cyclists and very little room for error when riding manoeuvring a bicycle.</p>	<p>All cyclists and pedestrians using the towpath.</p>	<p>Continue to promote good cycling behaviour through cycling groups and the Elmbridge Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPS) <b>(EBC\ SCC)</b></p> <p>Raise awareness of large sportive\ running events on the towpath through social media <b>(EBC)</b></p> <p>Throw lines and signage have been installed at key locations identified by risk to ensure that SFRS are alerted and providing a secure throw bag to be used in emergencies <b>(SFRS\EBC)</b></p> <p>River walk by key agencies to identify any high risk locations <b>(SP\ EBC\ EA\ SFRS)</b></p>

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<p>Pedestrians and cyclist moving out of the way to avoid other cyclists creates further risk as hazards such as mooring rings/spikes and ropes etc increase the closer you get to the water's edge.</p> <p><b>Hazards:</b> Injury through collisions and falls.</p> <p>Risk of drowning through accidently riding/falling in to the watercourse; or a pedestrian or bicycle rider being knocked into the river/canal by a careless cyclist.</p>			
<p><b>Flooding:</b> Many of the Boroughs towpaths and surrounding areas flood during the winter, causing a risk of unseen hazards, and the rivers edge being obscured underwater.</p> <p><b>Hazards:</b> Risk of drowning</p>	<p>All areas of the river and adjacent areas throughout the Borough are subject to occasional flooding (i.e. Cobham mill, Graburn way, Hurst Park, Sadlers Ride, Brooklands Community Park).</p> <p>Even during winters with normal rainfall the rivers in the Borough are frequently at a high level with very strong currents (and on red boards)</p>		<p>Direct signage which can be erected at times of flooding to warn people not to enter. For example:</p> <p>Do not enter! Towpath flooded – danger of drowning Collapsed banks maybe hidden under the water.</p> <p><b>(EBC, EA, SCC)</b></p>
<p><b>Jumping from bridges into watercourses\ tombstoning:</b> This occasionally occurs in summer at a small number of locations in the Elmbridge area especially at the end of the school summer term and local conditions make it an unacceptable risk.</p> <p>Young people congregating in water areas at key times of the year. i.e. end of summer term\ exam break up day.</p>	<p>Walton Bridge</p> <p>Taggs island</p> <p>Hampton Sailing Club\ Hurst Park</p> <p>Lammas Lane</p> <p>Weir Public House</p> <p>Little Heath brick pit.</p>	<p>This activity is almost exclusive undertaken by boys and young men (80%).</p> <p>The evidence that some people injured or killed undertaking this activity had poor swimming abilities suggests immature/inexperienced risk judgement combined with male bravado and possibly peer-pressure.</p>	<p>Educate potential high risk groups through a wider wild water awareness campaign, including working with schools, Surrey Youth Services and Junior Citizen to spread the message. Link to key campaigns around float to live and cold water shock,<b>(ALL)</b></p> <p>Targeted multi agency social media campaign to reach younger audience. <b>(ALL)</b></p> <p>Multi agency school visits to raise awareness of risks at key times (May) - target Year 11s <b>(SFRS, EA, RLSS, RNLI, SP, PFP)</b></p>

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<p><b>Hazard:</b> Risk of drowning as a result of the above and effects of cold water shock.</p>	<p>Desborough island Hampton Court Bridge</p>	<p>In some cases, risk inhabitation and awareness is further clouded by alcohol or other substances.</p>	<p>Look at targeted banners along key locations <b>(EBC\ RNLl)- May</b></p> <p>Ensure fallen trees and rope swings removed to prevent being used to jump into the water</p> <p>All schools to sign up to Swim England School Swimming Charter. <a href="http://www.swimming.org/schoolswimming/school-swimming-charter/">http://www.swimming.org/schoolswimming/school-swimming-charter/</a></p> <p>Targeted letters sent to schools adjacent to the River Thames <b>(EA)</b></p> <p>Any council, police, EA officers who see this happening to advise those taking part of the extreme risks and report <b>(ALL)</b></p> <p>The Council and its leisure operator offers free swimming for under 8s when accompanied by an adult and reduced rate swimming for 5 to 16 year olds living in the Borough whose parents or guardians are in receipt of eligible benefits. <b>(EBC)</b></p> <p>Xcel and Hurst Pool to promote the RLSS Rookie Lifeguard Course, which targets 8 – 12 year olds and teaches water safety and lifesaving skills. Offer an increased number of courses at both sites at weekends and holiday periods. <b>(EBC, RLSS)</b></p>
<p><b>Impulsive jumping in to watercourses:</b> This is one of the major causes of drownings nationally. It is a distinctively different from premeditated wild swimming, and is an impulsive act often influenced by alcohol and other substances but can also just be an ill-judged high spirits spur of the moment attempt at wild swim without considering the location or conditions. Other motivations can</p>	<p>The high number of young male students in the Borough makes it a high risk area in general. The nature of this behaviour means that it can happen at any location within the Borough.</p>	<p>This almost exclusively involves boys and young men but can also include children in general in the act of trying to retrieve items for the water.</p> <p>Those under the influence of alcohol/drugs.</p>	<p>Educate potential high risk groups through a water awareness campaign including working with schools, Surrey Youth Services and Junior Citizen to spread the message. Link to key campaigns around float to live and cold water shock, <b>(ALL)</b></p> <p>A campaign specifically targeted at young males: <b>Don't Drink and Drown (RLSS)</b></p> <p>Xcel and Hurst Pool to promote the RLSS Rookie Lifeguard Course, which targets 8 – 12 year olds and</p>

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<p>include trying to rescue items that have fallen in to the water (such as footballs).</p> <p>The motivations for this impulsive behaviour are such that it can occur at any times of year, even when the water is very cold. So putting aside all other factors, the level of physical impairment and reactions to cold water shock alone can be one of the most significant contributing factors in drowning.</p> <p><b>Hazard:</b> Risk of drowning resulting from unconsidered location dangers (such as strong currents) and lack of experience of wild water conditions including the effects of cold water shock, and, or judgement and swimming abilities impaired by intoxication.</p>			<p>teaches water safety and lifesaving skills. Offer an increased number of courses at both sites at weekends and holiday periods <b>(EBC)</b>.</p> <p>Continue to promote the free under 8's swimming offered at Xcel and Hurst Pool. Available to children when accompanied by a paying adult. <b>(EBC)</b></p> <p>Targeted letters sent to schools adjacent to the River Thames <b>(EA)</b></p> <p>Look at targeted banners along key locations <b>(EBC\ RNLI)- May</b></p> <p>Share respect the water promotional video to raise awareness of the risks <b>(EBC\ SF RS\ SP)</b></p>
<p><b>Informal children's water play:</b> During the summer a number of sites in the Borough are used for informal paddling (see right).</p> <p><b>Hazards:</b> Risk of drowning</p>	<p>River Thames- the Thames has a number of small scalloped areas where young children can paddle safely.</p> <p>Albany reach- gentle sloping "beach" but leading to deep fast flowing River Thames.</p> <p>Black Pond -The local conditions at this site make it a potential Leptospirosis hot spot.</p> <p>Littleheath Pond- a former brick pit this site is very deep and potentially very cold increasing risk of cold water shock</p> <p>Cobham Mill</p>	<p>This is mainly undertaken by children and young people during the summer.</p> <p>Most children enjoy paddling and the health benefits of swimming are obviously beneficial for all. However, this can pose a risk so needs to be appropriately supervised.</p>	<p>Educate potential high risk groups through an awareness campaign, including working with schools and uniformed associations (Scouts\ guides etc) to spread the message. <b>(ALL)</b></p> <p>Raise awareness of water quality in the Thames to deter swimming (all)</p>

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<p><b>Informal wild swimming:</b> During the summer a number of sites in the Borough are used for informal wild swimming and paddling (see right).</p> <p><b>Hazards:</b> Risk of drowning</p> <p>Leptospirosis: This is a potentially fatal illness transmitted from rats or cattle to people though contact with ditch, canal or river water – particularly through open wounds or accidental swallowing.</p>	<p>River Thames- the Thames is used at various locations with increased risks from fast moving water, submerged objects and reeds.</p> <p>Black Pond -The local conditions at this site make it a potential Leptospirosis hot spot.</p> <p>Littleheath Pond- a former brick pit this site is very deep and potentially very cold increasing risk of cold water shock</p> <p>There is increased danger from swimming in any restricted areas such as locks and weirs</p>	<p>This is mainly undertaken by young people during the summer, but there are also a growing number of experienced older swimmers or regularly wild swim.</p> <p>People with a lack of experience of wild water conditions are also unprepared for how cold river water is and the effects this can rapidly have on the body and brain.</p>	<p>Educate potential high risk groups through a water awareness campaign, including working with schools, Surrey Youth Services and Junior Citizen to spread the message. <b>(ALL)</b></p> <p>Targeted multi agency social media campaign to reach younger audience. <b>(ALL)</b></p> <p>Multi agency school visits package available for partners. <b>(SFRS, RNLI, SP)</b></p> <p>Staff on patrols to advise people not to swim in open waters and restricted areas such as locks and weirs. Comms materials available for front line staff <b>(ALL)</b></p> <p>Elmbridge to continue to promote swimming lessons in the Councils pools. <b>(EBC)</b></p> <p>Xcel and Hurst Pool to promote the RLSS Rookie Lifeguard Course, which targets 8 – 12 year olds and teaches water safety and lifesaving skills. Offer an increased number of courses at both sites at weekends and holiday periods. <b>(EBC, RLSS)</b></p> <p>Continue to promote the free under 8's swimming offered at Xcel and Hurst Pool. Available to children when accompanied by a paying adult. <b>(EBC)</b></p> <p>Elmbridge JET service, Surrey Police, SFRS to carry out increased visits to high risk sites on warm summer days to warn swimmers of the dangers and encourage them to leave the water. Leaflets to be considered to hand out to inform\ educate <b>(EBC)</b></p>
<p><b>Water-related self-harm:</b> Nationally a third of all drownings result from a person's apparently deliberate act to end their own life. However, in some cases the person may not have entered the water consciously considering it would end in their death; it can be an impulsive act</p>	<p>The nature of this behaviour means it can happen at any location within the Borough.</p> <p>Hampton Court Bridge Walton Bridge Chertsey Bridge Staines Bridge</p>	<p>There are certain groups most at risk from suicide (particularly young men) but this can involve anyone.</p>	<p>Any council, police, EA officers and contractors working on bridges/close to water who see anyone near a watercourse who looks like they may be distressed should approach and engage them to assess whether there is genuine cause for concern. <b>(ALL)</b></p> <p>Have an awareness campaign for boat owners and other river users/riparian residents so they know what to look out</p>

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<p>of desperation or 'cry for help', but as discussed above, any impulsive entering of a water course carries a very high risk of drowning regardless of intention.</p>			<p>for and who to contact if they have concerns about anyone. <b>(EA)</b></p> <p>Monitor attempted\ completed suicides to identify high risk locations. Offer suicide prevention training to local officers\ community workers who may respond to such incidents. (SCC)</p> <p>Review street pastors from learning from London pilot <b>(EA\ RNLI)</b></p> <p>Develop a local alert system: so if there is someone looking distressed there is a local alert system (SCC)</p> <p>Engage Samaritans to make aware of the Drowning Prevention Plan. <a href="mailto:admin@samaritans.org">admin@samaritans.org</a></p> <p>Work closely with SCC Public Health:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. signage of crisis support</li> <li>. mental health and suicide awareness training for businesses, clubs that are based on the waterways, or rely on the waterways.</li> <li>. In the event that there is a sad death, to convene a respected response group to identify immediate actions and learning.</li> <li>. Use this Surrey suicide prevention learning work to target the key groups that have been identified as having sadly lost their lives by suicide on the waterways in Surrey.</li> <li>. Ensure that any suicide prevention work around the waterways is carefully managed to prevent any social contagion risks.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Working on or near the waterways:</b> Each authority and agency working on or near the waterways has their own risk assessments based on their specific roles and policies. However, their staff face a number of generic risks, including some of those listed above, but also from encountering</p>	<p>Anywhere within the Borough.</p>	<p>All staff working on or near the waterways.</p>	<p>All agencies involved in the management of the waterways in the Borough meet (River Thames Alliance\ Community Safety Partnership) and communicate regularly to share intelligence regarding waterway issues and use this plan as a live document. <b>(All)</b></p> <p>Staff are trained not to put themselves at risk in order to help others in difficulties in the water. The procedure is to</p>

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<p>members of the public getting in to difficulties in the water, particularly during the summer months.</p> <p><b>Hazard:</b> Risk of drowning from trying to help others in difficulties.</p>			<p>phone the emergency services first and then try to reach people from the bank using throwlines (where available), or other items such as clothing or branches if they are near the bank. If the character of the bank or situation makes it risky to pull the person out of the water they should be helped to hold on to the bank until additional help arrives. <b>(ALL)</b></p> <p>Staff to advise anyone who has got in to difficulties in the water to seek medical attention, even if they seem okay as water may have entered their lungs which can lead to secondary drowning - children are particularly susceptible to this. <b>(ALL)</b></p> <p>Communication with boat owners and residents <b>(EA)</b></p> <p>Refresher\ updates to be arranged for businesses, residents, contractors and sports clubs adjacent to the river and funding for throwlines to be sought <b>(EBC, SFRS, SP)</b></p>
<p><b>River based sporting activity (Rowing and regattas, Sailing Canoeing):</b> The Borough has a large number of sports clubs offering a range of activities for all ages. The standard of these clubs is very high and all are encouraged to follow their own National Governing Body guidance, and seek to accredit with Clubmark (a national accreditation scheme recognising best practice)</p> <p>Increased access to water craft (inflatables\ hire craft) and paddleboards</p>	<p>Molesey, Weybridge, Walton Rowing Clubs</p> <p>Weybridge Sailing Club</p> <p>Sea Scouts</p> <p>Elmbridge Canoe and Kayak Club</p> <p>School rowing clubs</p> <p>Thames Regional Rowing Council.</p> <p>Uniformed associations (Scouts\ guides etc)</p> <p>Recreational users</p>	<p>All participants</p> <p>Beginners who are new to the sport and unaware of the risk</p> <p>Recreational users of hire craft may not be as familiar with water risks. Local boat hire tend to provide good PPE</p>	<p>Continue to work with the Borough's sports clubs to encourage best practice and to seek clubmark accreditation (EBC)</p> <p>All water based activity clubs to give consideration to effective means of calling for help when on the river (i.e. whistle, torch, accessible phone). <b>RNLI</b></p> <p>Risk assessment for rowing clubs agreed through British Rowing to be submitted to EA for agreement. <b>(EA)</b></p> <p>Paddle safely\paddle responsible <a href="https://gopaddling.info/stay-safe-on-the-water/">https://gopaddling.info/stay-safe-on-the-water/</a></p> <p>Raise awareness of the paddlers code, promoting through all agencies channels <a href="https://paddlerscode.info/">https://paddlerscode.info/</a></p>

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<p><b>Swimming pools</b> The Borough has a range of providers offering access to high quality swimming facilities and a programme of swimming lessons through schools and private tuition to teach young people to swim</p>	<p>Swimming facilities are available to the public across the Borough: Xcel Leisure Complex Hurst Pool Other providers Colets Health &amp; Fitness Club David Lloyd Club (Weybridge Brooklands) Notre Dame School Nuffield Health (Surbiton) Pavilion Sports &amp; Fitness Club Claygate community pool</p>	<p>New swimmers  younger children</p>	<p>The Council's leisure contractor Places for People (PFP) currently offers free swimming for under 8s (when accompanied by an adult) <b>(EBC)</b></p> <p>11 schools currently use Xcel and 13 schools use Hurst Pool. The majority are Elmbridge schools. PFP to target Elmbridge schools who currently do not utilise their swim lesson scheme to see if they can be accommodated. <b>(EBC)</b></p> <p>As a part of the PE and Sport Premium Funding, updated guidance from the Department for Education requires Schools to publish how many pupils within their year 6 cohort are meeting the national curriculum requirement to swim competently, confidently and proficiently over a distance of at least 25 metres, use a range of strokes effectively and perform safe self-rescue in different water-based situations. <b>(Schools)</b></p>
<p><b>Ponds\ open water</b></p> <p>In total Elmbridge is responsible for out and maintains 49 Deep Water Risk assessments, which are reviewed at least every 2 years (or in the case of an incident or change to the physical nature of the site), and are monitored through the Council's Covalent performance management software.</p> <p>There is an increased risk during extreme cold periods where people believe it is safe to walk on the ice</p>	<p>Littleheath pond  Black pond</p>	<p>Unsupervised children  Young People</p>	<p>Mitigation measures on Elmbridge sites have included cutting back vegetation to avoid inadvertent slips into deep water and the provision of warning signage at certain locations, e.g. Littleheath and Thames Ditton slip. <b>(EBC)</b></p> <p>All partners should reinforce the dangers of deep or fast flowing water and implementation of a No Swimming Policy where appropriate and following a suitable risk assessment. <b>(ALL)</b></p> <p>EBC write to the residents of the adjacent properties to Littleheath pond reminding them of the risks from the deep water and the potential for very cold water from „Thermal Inversion“- If residents continue to use their leisure craft on this stretch of water it is strongly recommended the suitable life saving equipment is worn at all times and that young persons are supervised’.</p> <p>Signage to be erected on frozen ponds to warn of the dangers of thin ice and dogs on leads (see CFO stock posters). <b>(EBC\ SFRS)</b></p>
<p><b>Angling</b></p>	<p>River Thames</p>	<p>Anglers</p>	<p>Communications about public rescue when in water (SFRS\RNLi)</p>

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<p>Elmbridge is a popular fishing destination along the length of the Thames and in many of the larger ponds.</p> <p>There is an increased risk of fishermen, especially when under the influence of alcohol, of inadvertently falling in to the water with inappropriate clothing.</p>	<p>Littleheath Pond</p> <p>Black pond</p> <p>Albany reach\ Cigarette Island</p>		<p>Messaging to anglers about water safety to be included as a part of their license application. Life preservers. <b>(EA)</b></p>
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**Appendix 1: Table of information detailing drownings and recorded near misses in Elmbridge 2021 to present**

(It should be noted that near misses are rarely recorded but previous research suggests there is likely to have been at least one near miss for every fatality).

Date	Incident	Location	Did they enter the water deliberately or accidentally?	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Causes
07/08/2021	Female threatening to jump	Hampton Court Br	Deliberate	f			Area searched, no trace
29/09/2021	Vulnerable female	Hampton Ct Br	Deliberate	f			stood down pre launch
01/11/2021	Suicidal male	Hampton Ct Br	Deliberate	m			stood down pre launch
13/11/2021	female on wrong side of bridge railings	Hampton Ct Br	Deliberate	f			Attended, stood by until secured by police
12/02/2022	Vulnerable female	Hampton Ct Br	Deliberate	f			Stood down on route
06/03/2022	Vulnerable female (known)	Hampton Court area	Deliberate	f			Attended, searched. Stood down by police
17/06/2022	Female in the water	Hampton Court		f			Attended. Found treading water, subject known, apparently suicidal. Protracted negotiation, suffered cramp, throw bag deployed and pulled alongside boat, assisted ashore and handed over to police
1/07/2022	Drowning: Young male (14 y.o) jumped in off bridge at Taggs Island. Not thought to be a strong swimmer.	Taggs Island	Deliberate	M			
18/07/2022	13 yr old not seen to resurface after jumping in off a bridge	Taggs Island	Deliberate		13		Attended, searched area downstream of Ash Island (LFB and other blue light services searched above the island). Stood down. Body recovered by divers next day
1/8/22	Drowning: Swimmer in the Thames crossing water between Albany reach\ Hampton Court Palace	Albany reach	Deliberate	M			
1/8/22	Drowning: Members of the public reported that a man had gone under water in the river but had not resurfaced. the River Thames near to Desborough Sailing Club in Shepperton. 3 people entered the water. 2 got into difficulty.	Point meadow	Deliberate	M			
14/08/2022	Person seen to disappear underwater	Hampton Court					Attended, and with fire and ambulance boats made a search of the scene. Stood down after 90 mins. Body recovered by divers later that night

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23/08/2022	Female being restrained	Hampton Court Br	Deliberate	f		Attended, started search. Found in train station by police
12/10/2022	12 yr old threatening to jump	Hampton Court Bridge	Deliberate		12	Attended, searched locality. Stood down after subject located away from vicinity by police
10/11/2022	body in the water	Hampton Court				Location changed to Garrick's Ait, lifeboat stood down and incident reassigned to fire brigade. Later found to be a log and weeds
17/11/2022	Submerged vessel drifting downstream towards weir	Molesey Lock Weir	accident			Attended, searched, no vessel found. Stood down
06/01/2023	Boat adrift in strong river flow, distressed female on board	Between Hampton Court and Thames Ditton Island	accident	f		Attended, vessel located at Thames Ditton Island, in precarious position. Engine restarted, lifeboat crew placed on board, escorted to Molesey Lock
08/05/2023	Vulnerable older missing male	Langdon Park area	Deliberate	m		Attended, commenced search and located male (with a police officer) at Tamesis. Evidence he had been in the water. Gave support ashore (inc blanket) until ambulance arrived
14/05/2023	Kayak crew trapped at weir (downstream side)	Molesey Lock Weir	accident			Attended, secured vessel and then with the aid of boat 2 towed the craft and occupants to safety
24/07/2023	Person in the water	Hampton Court, opposite the River Ember				Attended. Dog owner had gone into the water after her dog. Had been recovered prior to arrival of ILB. Fire Service in attendance
13/09/2023	Barge with passengers on board had struck lock gates, seven persons reported injured	Molesey Lock	accident			Attended, with police, fire and ambulance. Barge wedged against gates, with 14 persons on board. Assisted in moving barge to shoreside and evacuation and care of casualties (2 to hospital, several others with minor injuries)
12/11/2023	Male threatening to jump into the river	Near Thames Ditton Island	Deliberate	m		Attended, searched. Police & Fire present. Found away from the river
18/11/2023	Three children on a submerged vessel	Near Hampton Court	accident			Stood down on route after police located the children away from the boat
04/12/2023	Distressed young woman near the water	North of Teddington Lock, on the Surrey Bank	Deliberate	f		Searched downstream from Lock, located casualty on riverbank. Stood by until casualty removed by police away from the river

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16/01/2023	Person in sinking or otherwise unsound vessel	Woodstock lane		f			Person In or Risk of Entering Water
16/01/2023	Person in sinking or otherwise unsound vessel	Woodstock lane		M&F			Person In or Risk of Entering Water
31/03/2023	Person in or on top of vehicle that is surrounded by moving or rising water greater than (2) foot deep	New Road, Esher		m		67	Flooding, Evacuation
01/04/2023	From widespread flooding, e.g. flooded street or field.	Woodstock lane		f		28	Evacuation From Water, Person In or Risk of Entering Water
01/04/2023	Person in sinking or otherwise unsound vessel	Molesey Lock					Rescue or Evacuation From Water, Person In or Risk of Entering Water , No Casualties
08/04/2023	Person in or on top of vehicle that is surrounded by moving or rising water greater than (2) foot deep	Walton anglers		m		84	Rescue or Evacuation From Water, Person Not In or Risk of Entering Water
30/04/2023	Other	Sunbury weir					CANAL BOAT STUCK ON WEIR - WEIR GATES CLOSED BY LOCK GATE KEEPER - BOAT ABLE TO SELF RESCUE WITH SUPPORT
27/10/2023	Person in river, canal, loch (open to the sea), sea or estuary or other waterway (moving water)	River wey, Mill Lane		f		91	Rescue or Evacuation From Water, Person In or Risk of Entering Water
12/11/2023	Other	Albany reach					Rescue or Evacuation From Water, Person Not In or Risk of Entering Water , No Casualties.
18/11/2023	Other	cigarette Island					Rescue or Evacuation From Water, No Casualties.
22/11/2023	Person in river, canal, loch (open to the sea), sea or estuary or other waterway (moving water)	Desborough island		m		20	Rescue or Evacuation From Water, Person In or Risk of Entering Water Casualty Male aged 20, Hospital - Injury Slight,
07/12/2023	Person in river, canal, loch (open to the sea), sea or estuary or other waterway (moving water)	Hurst meadows		m		60	Rescue or Evacuation From Water, Person In or Risk of Entering Water Casualty Male aged 60, Hospital - Injury Serious,
10/01/2024	Overtured kayak	Taggs Island	Accident				After debate over whether or not anyone was with the kayak (eventual decision it

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							was possible), launched. SFRS present. Stood down on route
06/04/2024	Vessel adrift (in the fairway)	Near Hampton Court					Attended, searched, vessel found moored up on riverbank (assuming this was done by a passing vessel)
14/05/2024	Vulnerable person	Hampton Court					Attended. With other blue light services searched vicinity. Nothing found, stood down (LOM in attendance as JESIP representative)
20/05/2024	Vulnerable female	Hampton Court Bridge		F			Stood down on route by police, casualty had left the location
26/05/2024	Female threatening to jump	Hampton Court Bridge		F			Stood down on route by police. Casualty detained and in their care
14/06/2024	High risk missing person	Hampton Court Area					Whilst on route to this shout, the lifeboat was reassigned to the 2316 shout as that was assessed as being of higher imminent risk. This casualty was subsequently found safe and well by police
19/7/24	Walton rowing club- collision with boats that are moored without consent blocking channel( near miss)	Desborough Cut	Accident			F	Near miss- kayakers did not enter water
11/10/2024	Person missing from capsized vessel (Weybridge Rowing Club)	Sunbury Weir		M			Launched to assist Surrey FRS (and other blue light services) after the initial incident. Completed a search from Teddington to Molesey Lock and Molesey Lock to Sunbury Weir. Person not located, stood down
27/10/2024	Female threatening suicide	Hampton Court		F			Attended along with LFB, LAS, police. LFB co-ordinated response. Extensive search of the riverbank (using two boats) and the shore. Casualty subsequently located away from the river. Stood down

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29/11/2024	Narrowboat stuck on the moorings at Hampton Court	Hampton Court				<p>Attended, with LFB. In the high river flow a poorly secured occupied narrowboat had drifted above the mooring platform. Owners feared grounding. Water depth below vessel measured, lifeboat declined to tow and owner advised on setting better mooring lines. Stood down</p>
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Appendix 2 Annual communications plan 2025

	Campaign	Dates	Lead agency	Link
January				
February	Runners and walkers	20-26 Feb	EA	
March	Anglers safety Surrey youth games booking		EA Active Surrey\ EBC	
April	Water safety week Junior citizen water safety	24-30 April	CFOA	
May	Respect the water Rookie lifeguard courses Promote paddlers code ahead of summer	May - Sept	All  EA\ EBC	<a href="https://paddlerscode.info/">https://paddlerscode.info/</a>
June	Respect the water Drowning prevention week Wild water awareness raising EA letters to schools Float to live Surrey youth games swimming festival Safer Thames campaign (Samaritans)	May – Sept 12-19 June	All RNLI SFRS  Active Surrey\ EBC	
July	Respect the water Multi agency school visits	May - Sept	All	
August	Respect the water Swim safe	May - Sept	All RLSS	
September	Respect the water Don't drink and drown	May - Sept	EBC	
October				
November	Dog walkers ice campaign	Nov – Dec	EBC	
December	Don't drink and drown	Nov – Dec	EBC	

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Appendix 3 **Social Media Channels**

	Twitter	Facebook	Snapchat\ instagram	Other
Environment Agency	<a href="https://twitter.com/envagency">https://twitter.com/envagency</a>	<a href="https://en-gb.facebook.com/environmentagency">https://en-gb.facebook.com/environmentagency</a>		<a href="https://www.instagram.com/envagency/">https://www.instagram.com/envagency/</a>
Elmbridge Borough Council	<a href="https://twitter.com/ElmbridgeBC">https://twitter.com/ElmbridgeBC</a>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/MyElmbridge/">https://www.facebook.com/MyElmbridge/</a>		
Surrey Fire and Rescue	<a href="https://twitter.com/SurreyFRS">https://twitter.com/SurreyFRS</a>	<a href="https://en-gb.facebook.com/SurreyFRS/">https://en-gb.facebook.com/SurreyFRS/</a>		
Surrey Police	<a href="https://twitter.com/SurreyPolice">https://twitter.com/SurreyPolice</a>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/SurreyPolice">https://www.facebook.com/SurreyPolice</a>		<a href="https://www.instagram.com/surreypolice/">https://www.instagram.com/surreypolice/</a>
RNLI	<a href="https://twitter.com/rnli">https://twitter.com/rnli</a> <a href="https://twitter.com/rnli_teddington">https://twitter.com/rnli_teddington</a>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/rnli">https://www.facebook.com/rnli</a>	<a href="https://www.instagram.com/rnli/">https://www.instagram.com/rnli/</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/user/officialrnli">https://www.youtube.com/user/officialrnli</a>
RLSS	<a href="https://twitter.com/RLSSUK">https://twitter.com/RLSSUK</a>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/RLSSUK/">https://www.facebook.com/RLSSUK/</a>	<a href="http://www.rlss.org.uk/instagram/">http://www.rlss.org.uk/instagram/</a>	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/user/RLSSUK">https://www.youtube.com/user/RLSSUK</a>
ROSPA	<a href="https://twitter.com/rosipa">https://twitter.com/rosipa</a>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/rosipa">https://www.facebook.com/rosipa</a>		

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## Appendix 4 Existing resources

Youth Messaging

<https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/activity-sheets-and-posters>

<https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/teaching-packs/decision-making>

<https://rnli.org/youth-education/educational-visits>

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/595017/Preventing\\_unintentional\\_injuries\\_guide.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/595017/Preventing_unintentional_injuries_guide.pdf)

RNLI **Water Safety Workshop** – for use by partner agencies / teachers

### Resource Downloads

<https://rnli.org/youth-education>

### Water Safety Education Workshops - Decision Making Videos

Suggested age groups (not limited to)

3-7 age group	<a href="#">A day at the beach</a>
3-7 age group	<a href="#">Going for a walk with teddy</a>
7-11 age group	<a href="#">Inflatables</a>
7-11 age group	<a href="#">Red Flag</a>
11-14 age group	<a href="#">Inland Open Water Swimming</a>
11-14 age group	<a href="#">Tombstoning</a>
11-14 age group	<a href="#">Red Flags</a>

### You Tube Videos for children to learn water safety skills

#### How to FLOAT

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odWm3DeRFIA>

#### How to TREAD WATER

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QAjDqzN5Lc>

#### How to teach SIGNAL FOR HELP

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZJ1Eno0TFk>

#### How to teach PERSONAL SURVIVAL STROKE

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kGXVCJP0d6A>

Additional partner agency **Drowning It's Up to You**

Attached booklet has all relevant messages for young people.

Respect the Water

<http://www.respectthewater.com/>

<http://www.respectthewater.com/know-what-to-do/dont-end-up-in-trouble/>

<https://rnli.org/pages/beach-safety/beach-safety-resources>

Programmes

<https://swimsafe.rnli.org/>

<https://qopaddling.info/stay-safe-on-the-water/>

<https://paddlerscode.info/>

**School swimming guidance –**

<http://smartfuse.s3.amazonaws.com/445780ab19820fef0cf0e4d19f5d77ee/uploads/2019/01/Curriculum-Swimming-water-safety-guide-2.pdf>

River levels\ flow

information on river levels and flow data in the borough on the Thames:

<http://www.gaugemap.co.uk/#!Map/Summary/1224/1352>

**Samaritans**

<http://www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help-you/what-speak-us-about/i-want-kill-myself>

**British rowing?**

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