



lifesaving times

www.lifesavers.org.uk



Welcome to the third issue of Lifesaving Times, and once again a big thank you to those of you

who have contacted us.

Your support helps us to continue our work ensuring your constituents know how to keep themselves and their loved ones safe in and around water - and what to do if an accident occurs.

This summer we experienced some of the most extensive floods ever seen in this country. Despite some heroic rescues, it highlighted that, as a whole, the UK is unprepared for such incidents. This is something that we are looking to tackle head-on. We will keep you informed.

Thanks to our inclement climate, however, fewer people were tempted to go near water, so the drowning figures were low. The important thing, though, is that people don't become complacent and forget how important water safety is.

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Life's a beach

We all like to be beside the seaside - and often take our safety for granted when we are on the beach.

The coast is fun for families, but also fraught with hidden dangers, and it's hard to know just how safe different locations are. The only sad certainty is that each year the UK sees avoidable shoreline deaths. An average of 20 per cent of Great Britain's drownings occur in the sea.

Despite this, the worrying truth is that beach operators, which include local authorities and private operators, do not, by law, need to provide lifeguard cover or safety equipment.

All beach operators must carry out a risk assessment, which will pinpoint exactly what measures are needed to make the area as safe as possible. But because there is no legal obligation to provide the service, there is no extra funding available for safety procedures, leaving many operators unsure of their requirements and less able to deliver.

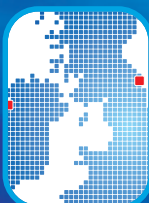
This is where you can help. Please read on to find out how you can support us to fill this gap, and save lives.



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Please read on to find out more about how The Royal Life Saving Society UK can help operators save lives.

We'd also like to take this opportunity to wish you and your constituents a happy, safe and hopefully flood-free autumn.

Many thanks.

Di Standley

Chief Executive, RLSS UK

Call to action

To ensure the public's safety, what can you do?

- Put pressure on the Government to recommend that coastal local authorities undertake in-depth beach risk assessments that are specific to their area.
- Push the Government to advise local authorities to invest in a beach lifeguard service if their risk assessment deems this to be necessary.
- Advise local authorities of their beach lifeguarding options - a one-size fits all approach is not always best.
- Call on the Government to ensure that sufficient resources for beach lifeguards are provided.
- Contact us for further information at distandley@rlss.org.uk

Early Day Motion



An Early Day Motion, raised in the last Parliamentary session, exists on beach lifeguarding.

This correctly highlights the issues surrounding beach safety. On behalf of everyone who visits the seashore we would like to thank Julia Goldsworthy, member for Falmouth and Cambourne, for bringing this to the House's attention.

Thanks must also go to everyone who has signed this motion. It is vital that the safety of the nation is realised and discussed by the country's decision-makers.

Points of note

However, there are some matters that we would like to add to the agenda. Firstly, it is important to note that the RNLI is not the only source of beach lifeguarding.

As each area is geographically peculiar and each coastal landowner contends with individual concerns, we believe it is essential that landowners can select the right beach lifeguarding

service for themselves. In many instances the most effective and cost-efficient scenario is for local authorities to run their own beach lifeguard service, with professional input and back-up from bodies such as, but not exclusively, ourselves.

In our view, the best people to run lifeguard services are local people who understand the issues and specific dangers of each site. The Royal Life Saving Society UK conducts and trains organisations to undertake their own beach risk assessments and then trains local authority lifeguards to conduct a service that is specific to them.

The same issue of individuality relates to beach risk assessments. As each area is distinct, to be rigorous, the assessments must not be generic, but must reflect the nature of their environment.

Following this method, the local authority thus boasts its own in-house expertise that is tailor-made to the location. We strongly believe that this is the best and most scrupulous system.

Beach safety in action

As the UK's governing water safety body, RLSS UK has more than 100 years' of drowning prevention experience. We would like to share this with beach owners.

Below are some examples of how we have worked with local authorities.

Coleraine, Northern Ireland

Two years ago Coleraine Borough Council asked us to help set up a beach lifeguard service. Our experts drew up a development plan.

This year, Coleraine Borough Council has jet skis, a quad bike and 25 trained beach staff covering five busy beaches - leaving them better equipped to cope.

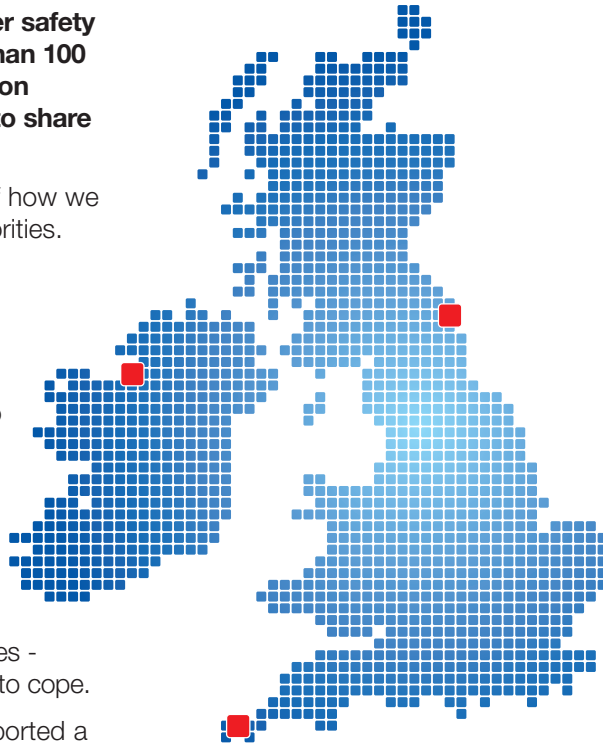
Coleraine coastguard has reported a marked reduction in call-outs since the service was instigated.

Hartlepool, County Durham

In 2001 Hartlepool Borough Council stopped providing beach lifeguards. Tragically, following this an eight-year-old boy drowned. After a public outcry, the local authority turned to us for help.

We conducted a risk assessment on the town's beaches and gave detailed recommendations. The lifeguard service was reinstated, based on our bespoke procedures. Our personnel advised what equipment was needed and trained the lifeguards, and provided the service with the skills to conduct their own training from then on.

Debbie Wood, beach safety officer at Hartlepool Borough Council, comments: "Thanks to RLSS UK we have a top notch service that we control. My advice to other authorities is don't wait for the worst to happen. Take action."



Penwith, Cornwall

As a tourist destination, it is vital that visitors are safe at Penwith. RLSS UK has worked with Penwith District Council for more than 40 years to ensure that there is a high-quality beach lifeguard service.

Phil Drew, the council's beach, pools and transport manager, said: "It is not rescues that show how good lifeguards are - it is the lack of rescues that need to be made thanks to protection measures. In July this year I understand that on one day there were about 70 saves made on some beaches in Cornwall. On our 15 beaches we only needed to conduct one save. I am proud of that - prevention is everything.

"Working with RLSS UK means that not only are we supported to best practice standard, but as we manage the service we keep our costs down for the rate payers."

Why bother?

Last July six-year-old Callum Jones, from Wrexham, drowned at Barmouth, Gwynedd, after being swept out to sea.

This is the type of needless death that we are trying to prevent.

Bear in mind, a beach safety service should not be judged on the number of 'saves' made. In many instances, if lifeguards are properly trained, these incidents should not occur in the first place.

Flooding media tips

With flooding on the increase, if a flood occurs in your constituency, you could help RLSS UK by gaining media exposure.

You could give advice that prevents future deaths. Tips you could give include:

- If your locality is likely to flood you will be contacted by the Floodline Agency. If you are advised to leave your home, do so immediately.
- Advise everyone to remain at least three metres from the water. It is hazardous and likely to be contaminated.
- If you see someone struggling in the water, never put yourself in danger. Call the emergency services and monitor the situation from a safe place.

RLSS UK trains thousands of bystanders in essential life-saving skills.



Help us to help your constituents

As a charity we rely on public support, and as an MP you are in a unique position to relay our messages to the Government and your constituents.

Remember, more than 500 people in the UK drown every year - please help us to ensure that it doesn't happen to one of your constituents.

We can send you information and brief you on how you can take action on our behalf. Any help you can give us could save a life.



MP focus

In this edition, Alistair Carmichael, MP for Orkney and Shetland, shares his concerns on water safety.

"Representing island communities, and having been brought up on an island, I know only too well the dangers that can be associated with water, especially the sea.

"The issue is pertinent to Scotland. Figures presented to the Scottish Parliament in 2001 showed while Scotland represents 10% of the UK population, it has 15% of the drownings. The figures also indicated that the incidence of drownings was on the increase in Scotland but falling elsewhere in the UK. This is a worrying trend and one which we must address. I would always urge my constituents, and anyone visiting my constituency, to follow water safety advice.

"Only by making sure we, and those around us, know the safety rules will we start to cut down on fatalities."

Contact us

Thank you for taking the time to read this bulletin. Once again, we'd like you to help us to spread the safety message to all your constituents. If you would be willing to help us in any way, please contact Di Standley, Chief Executive of the Royal Life Saving Society UK, at dstandley@rlss.org.uk or call

01789 773994. We look forward to hearing from you.

A further edition of Lifesaving Times is due out later in the year. If you would like us to address a topic, or if you have views that you would like to share, please contact Nikki Cheung at n.cheung@bridge-group.co.uk