



**NFCC**  
National Fire  
Chiefs Council

## Campaign Toolkit



# Drowning Prevention and Water Safety Week

**29 April - 5 May 2019**

For participating fire and rescue services



## Key Messages and Audiences

**Being near water is perceived as a low risk activity and water related activities as high risk. Statistics demonstrate this is not the case and nearly 50% of people who drown had no intention of entering the water.**

### Key messages

Drowning in the UK is amongst the leading causes of accidental death

In 2017 255 people accidentally drowned - 50% of these people were taking part in everyday activities near water such as walking, running, cycling and fishing.

We are asking people expect the unexpected and be aware of the everyday risks of being near water

People can make changes to their behaviour which may reduce their risk of drowning

Knowing how to respond quickly, safely and appropriately can help save lives

Drowning prevention and raising awareness is better than response and rescue or recovery

We are asking people to be **'Be Water Aware'**

Don't assume you're not at risk of drowning because you don't intend to go in the water

**The campaign will focus on raising awareness with the following groups:**

- **Runners and Walkers** - This group has the highest incidence of accidental drowning year on year in the UK. In 2017 this group accounted for about 42% of people who accidentally drowned (106 people)
- **People on a night out** - 100 people drowned in 2017 with alcohol and/or drugs in their system. These fatalities do fall under the runners and walkers category. Focus on young adults, especially students.
- **Away From Home** - Anecdotally NFCC are aware that the risks of drowning are higher when people are less familiar with the area. Spain also has a high incidence of tourists drowning so we are keen to encourage people to take water safe information and behaviour with them wherever they are.

NFCC's commitment to drowning prevention is underpinned the National Drowning Prevention Strategy and and our inclusion as members of the National Water Safety Forum

## #BeWaterAware

Although these resources are primarily for the campaign week please feel free to use them, the # and messages throughout the year.



# Safety Advice

Ahead of campaign week on your website

## What to do if you fall in the water - Float to live - RNLI

There are many resources you can use to support this message and they can be found here:

<https://rnli.org/pages/respect-the-water-resources/national-campaign-resources>

RNLI are happy for fire services to use these resources as needed on websites or social media throughout the year.

NFCC supports RNLI messaging to float to live. Their focus is on coastal water but the messages can be used inland too. Everyone who falls unexpectedly into cold water wants to follow the same instinct, to swim hard and to fight the cold water. But when people fight it, chances are, they lose. Fight the instinct to panic or swim. Lie back and keep your airways clear, push your stomach up and extend your limbs moving hands and feet to help you float. Try to take and control the effects of cold water shock such as the gasping reflex. Once your breathing is controlled call for help and if possible try making your way towards safety.

**If you find yourself unexpectedly in the water, do as little as possible, and float.**

### Key messages

- Call 999 or 112 - straightaway. If you don't have a phone shout for help - you may have to look for help but do not enter the water.
- If you are near the coast ask for the coastguard, if you are inland ask for fire service and ambulance.
- The emergency services will need as much information as possible to pinpoint where you are, look for landmarks, signs on bridges or use your mobile phones location app or map to help
- Don't hang up – stay on the line but try and continue to try to help the person if appropriate.
- Encourage them to try and float on their back - if there is rescue equipment nearby throw it to them.
- When you have made the call shout for help from anyone who might be close by.
- Human nature says you are likely to want to attempt to help while rescue services are on their way. **Never enter the water to try and save someone.** This usually ends up adding to the problem. If you go into the water you are likely to suffer from cold water shock which will leave you unable to help even if you are a strong swimmer.

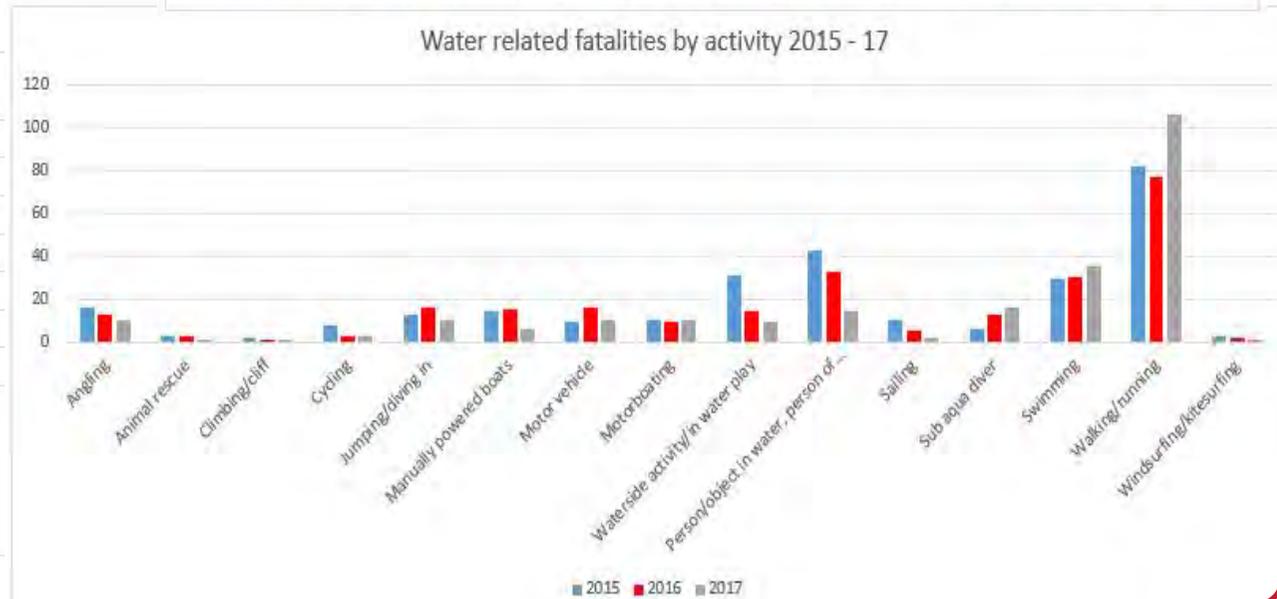
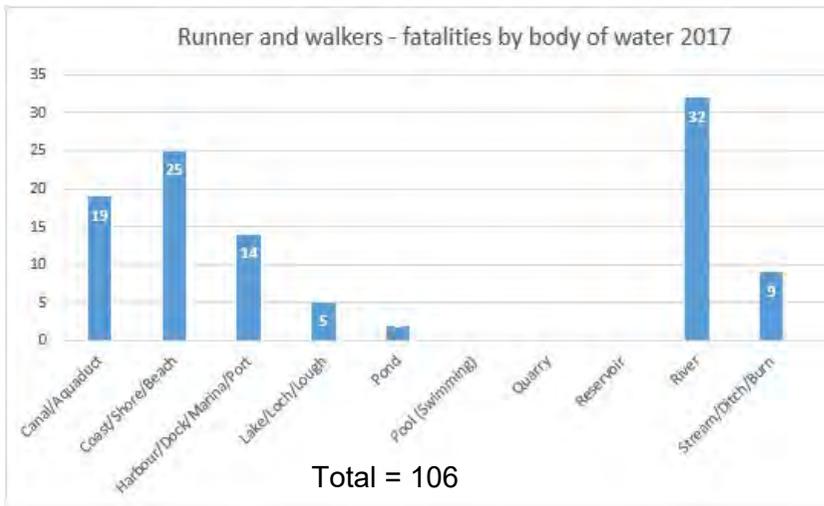
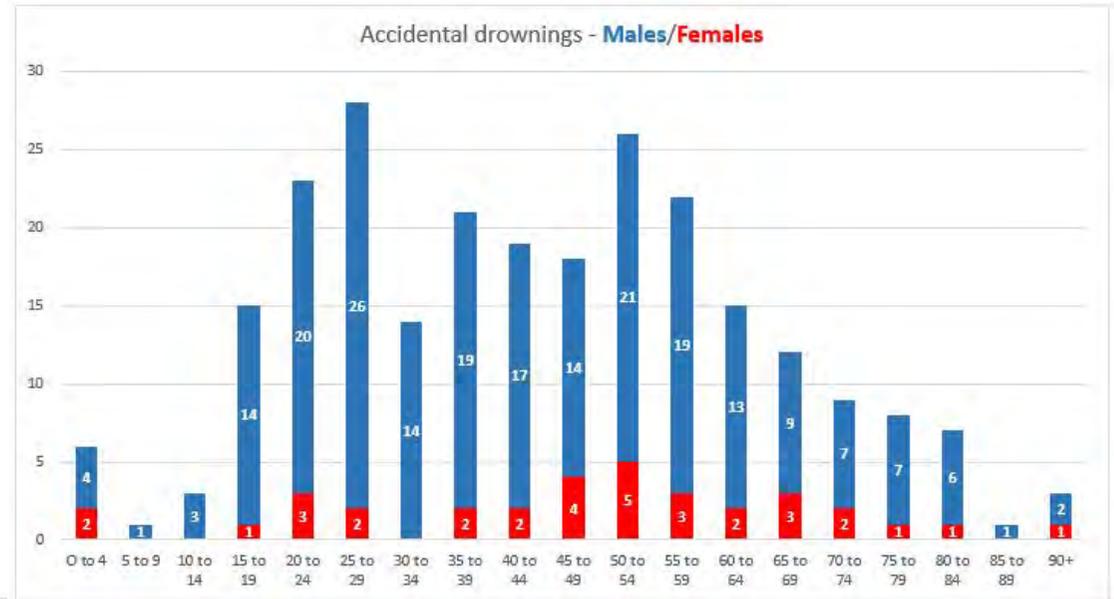
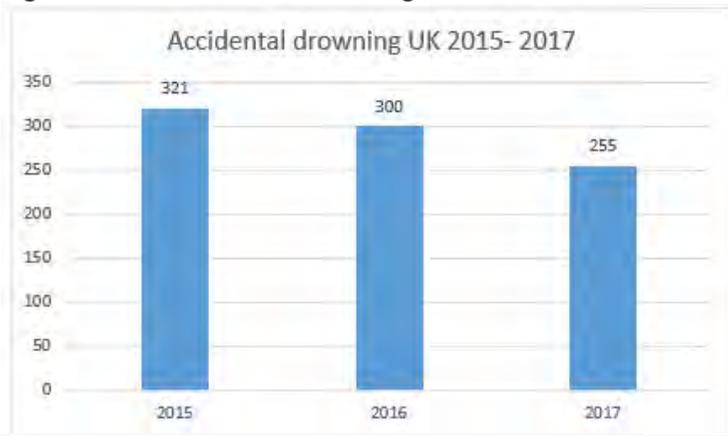


# Statistics - 2017

The total number of water related fatalities in the UK in 2017\* was 592  
255 of these fatalities were accidental drownings

Statistics are taken from WAID annual fatal incident report. The latest data is from 2017. This report is attached to this toolkit and a link is at the bottom of this page.

- There has been a 20% drop in accidental drownings since 2015
- Males consistently have the highest incidence of drowning
- Running and walking near water are the activities that have the highest incidence of drowning



\*WAID annual fatal accident report 2017 <https://nationalwatersafety.org.uk/WAID/reports-and-data/>

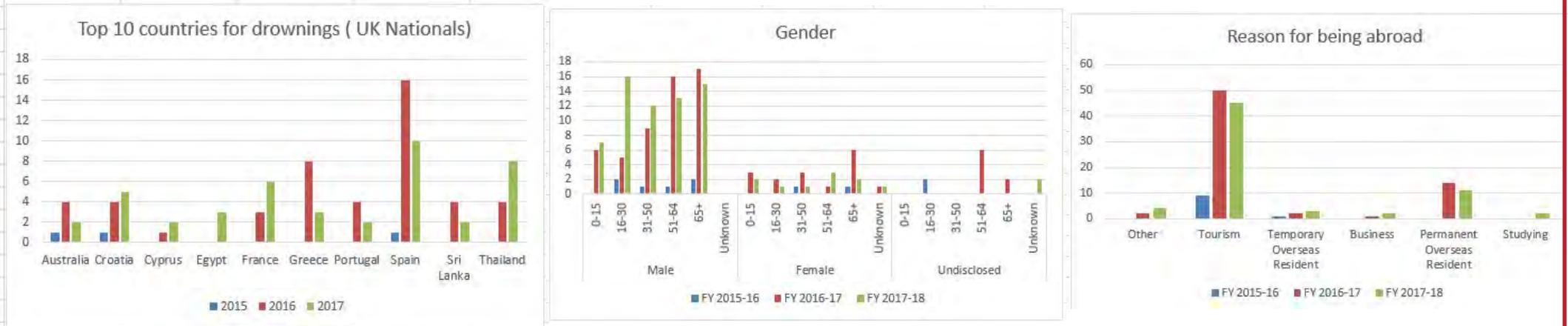


# Statistics - continued

WAID data does not include UK nationals who have drowned abroad, which we do know is an issue. NFCC submitted an FOI to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to gather data.

They held the following information: Number of deaths and country of death, age and gender breakdown and reason for being overseas.

The request submitted covered 2015 -2017. Details of the return are attached to this spreadsheet and summarised below:



- In 2017 75 UK nationals were reported to have drowned whilst abroad
- Nearly 70% of these people were tourists
- 85% of UK nationals that drowned abroad were male
- The greatest number of drownings are in Spain (top destination for holidaying British).

Drowning prevention data is also collated in Spain, but note that WAID and FOI data runs by financial year and the Spanish data runs by calendar year and does not include migrants or refugees entering Spain via the sea. The data can be used to track overall trends in drowning. For information about this data see <http://www.ahogamiento.com/> full report for 2017 can be downloaded here (it is in Spanish!) <http://ahogamientos.blogspot.com/2017/09/datos-provisionales-2017.html>

2017 (Calendar year)

- 544 fatalities - 434 were male
- Most occurring in the sea ( 78%)
- Under 14s - 60% drown in swimming pools ( lack of adult supervision identified as reason)
- 25% of people who have a drowning incident ( Fatal or not ) are not Spanish nationals. 132 were fatalities.

Also note that as of this year in England water rescues are being reported as part of the Home Office non- fire incident statistics, more information here [www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/News/nfcc-respond-to-non-fire-incident-statistics/220530](http://www.nationalfirechiefs.org.uk/News/nfcc-respond-to-non-fire-incident-statistics/220530) and data sets here [www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables#non-fire-incident](http://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fire-statistics-data-tables#non-fire-incident)



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# Launch - Monday 29 April

## NFCC Activity

- Each service will have been written to by NFCC Lead for Drowning Prevention and Chief Fire Officer for East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service - Dawn Whittaker leads on campaign
- NFCC will look to secure coverage in national press, we may need input from FRSs to work with the Water Safety lead.
- NFCC will contact stakeholders and members of NWSF to gather more national support for the campaign and resources will be made available to them.
- If you have organised any events or activities please let us know so we can tweet about them (you will need to keep a record of any events for the evaluation)

## Suggestions for FRS activity

- Please issue a press release to your contacts ahead of launch day. See overleaf for suggested release. Feel free to create your own and include a local case study but please reference the fact that this is a nationwide campaign and other FRSs will be taking part. Please mention NFCC in your release
- Make it local - this toolkit is guide, if elements are not suitable for your area feel free to use your own information. Use your statistics and case studies to make the message local.
- Posters can be edited to make them tailored to your needs - contact NFCC if you need assistance.
- Please let us know if you secure regional TV or radio coverage email [monica.perez@nationalfirechiefs.org.uk](mailto:monica.perez@nationalfirechiefs.org.uk) so we can share this on our social media channels

## Suggested Social Media Posts

Fire Services are taking part in @NFCC\_FireChiefs Drowning Prevention Week 29 April - 5 May #BeWaterAware  
How can you help reduce the number of drownings in the UK? Look out for #BeWaterAware and be aware of the risks  
[www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk/strategy/](http://www.nationalwatersafety.org.uk/strategy/)  
This week is @NFCC\_FireChiefs Drowning Prevention Week. Fire and Rescue Services are working with @NFCC\_FireChiefs to raise awareness and reduce the 255 accidental drownings we saw in 2017 in the UK #BeWaterAware

## Launch Tweet - Please schedule for 9am Monday 29 April

**This week is @NFCC\_FireChiefs Drowning Prevention Week. Look out for information and advice from @XXXFRS (name of your FRS) #BeWaterAware**





### **Be Water Aware is vital information if you don't intend to go in the water!**

**(Name of your FRS)** is supporting the National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) Be Water Aware campaign. The week long campaign runs from 29th April - 5 May 2019 and is a national campaign which aims to highlight the risk of accidental drowning.

Half of accidental drownings happened in 2017 when people didn't even intend to go in the water. Activities such as running, walking, fishing and cycling near water can put you at risk of drowning.

In 2017:

- 255 people accidentally drowned in the UK
- Around 50% of these people just happened to be near water
- About 85% of these fatalities were male
- In addition 75 UK nationals, mainly tourists, drowned whilst abroad in 2017

NFCC's Drowning Prevention and Water Safety Lead, Chief Fire Officer Dawn Whittaker, said:

" Most people would be shocked to hear that those people who drowned just happened to be taking part in everyday activities near water, like going for a run or walk.

They are unaware of the risks and are totally unprepared for the scenario of ending up in the water. By highlighting this issue and making sure simple safety messages reach them we hope to reduce the number of these needless and preventable deaths."

#### **Fire and Rescue Service advice:**

- If you are going for a walk or run near water stick to proper pathways and stay clear of the waters edge
- Make sure conditions are safe, avoid walking or running near water in the dark, slippery or in bad weather
- If you've had alcohol don't enter the water, avoid walking alone and avoid routes near water
- Never enter the water to try and help a person or animal - always call 999 and use any water rescue equipment if it is available
- If you are spending time near water - whether at home or abroad make sure you are familiar with local safety information and children are fully supervised

The fire service has successfully reduced the number of fire deaths by focusing on prevention work and now we must apply the same principle to tackling drowning. Response is not enough - we must prevent drownings.

#### **Note to Editors;**

Fatality statistics from the National Water Safety Forum's Water Incident Database (WAID) and FOI FCO Ref 1149-18

The National Water Safety Forum (NWSF) is the UK body which represents UK organisations with an interest in water safety and is committed to reducing drowning fatalities. With a core of around 40 organisations and a network of a further 300.



# Runners and Walkers 30 April & 2 May

## NFCC Activity

Guides for runners and walkers have been produced (Indesign files) Please feel free to use your own local images for the front and update the info provided with anything relevant to your area.  
A beach guide is also available

## Suggested Tweets

Runners and walkers have the highest incidence of accidental drowning in the UK - 106 people died in 2017 because they fell in the water whilst out for a run or a walk #BeWaterAware

If you enjoy a run or a walk near water would you know what to do if someone fell in or if you fell in? Find out what you should do (Link to advice on your webpage) #BeWaterAware

Never enter the water to rescue your dog - who will rescue you? Most dogs manage to scramble out - many owners are not so lucky #BeWaterAware

If your dog loves water make sure you can control him on the lead otherwise you could end up in the water too. Take a look at this rescue and advice from @ManchesterFire  
[www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVX3GAMm\\_AI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVX3GAMm_AI) #BeWaterAware

If you enjoy a walk or run near water take extra care after bad weather and make sure your route is still safe #BeWaterAware

## Suggestions for FRS activity

- Use social media to raise awareness to this audience - tag in local walking and running groups
- Use the information in this toolkit to create your own walking and running safety guides to distribute to local groups or use the guides included
- Work with organisations or councils that manage popular routes near water to raise awareness and improve safety around these sites. It is worth making your fire service and organisations in your area aware of RoSPA's - Managing safety at inland waterways <https://www.rospa.com/leisure-safety/water/inland/>
- Arrange a safety demonstration of what to do in an emergency in a local area popular with runners and walkers  
Include information for dog walkers, they are not only at risk from trips or falls but they may attempt to rescue a pet in difficulty which is very risky

## Video content

Please let us know if you have any video content fire services can share. Please feel free to use the following as part of the campaign and beyond:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVX3GAMm\\_AI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVX3GAMm_AI) #BeWaterAware  
<https://youtu.be/TzT0YfvLeh0>  
<https://youtu.be/NjNy9PO8bh0>  
<https://youtu.be/Y8plZoTZyKA>  
<https://youtu.be/L01XePKe5Ik>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3qjHehRnDM&t=12s>  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hLWICwDpR8>



## The Message

Runners and walkers are consistently the group most at risk of accidental drowning.

### Why is this?

They are not prepared to enter the water, so are likely to wearing clothing not suitable for the water. Water in the UK to remains cold even on very warm days and this leads to cold water shock. Alcohol and/or drugs can be a factor as people are not only more likely to take risks when under the influence of these substances they then have reduced motors skills if they enter the water. It is believed pre-existing medical conditions can play a part in drowning ( either as a reason for entering the water or not being able to self rescue)

### Behaviours:

Often solitary - two-thirds of analysed coastal walking fatalities were alone at the time of the incident

Runners often distracted by their activity and may not notice the hazards

Lack of awareness of risks of being near water - they don't realise drowning could affect them

This figure will also include those people making their way home after nights out

### Safety Advice:

Make sure your walk or run is appropriate for your fitness level even if you are just taking a leisurely stroll

Consider joining a running or walking group

Be aware and take notice of any warning signs

When running or walking next to water, stay clear of the edges

River banks and cliff edges may be unstable and give way - particularly after bad weather

Wear appropriate footwear and clothing - even if you are just going to stretch your legs

Take a fully charged mobile phone and check signal strength, know how to use it and who to call in an emergency (999 Fire or

Coastguard depending on where you are)

Look out for trip or slip hazards - pay attention to your footing

Stick to proper pathways

Don't walk or run next to water if levels are high

Make sure you know exactly where you are - consider something like an OS locate app for a smart phone or a map

Don't assume just because you have walked or run a route many times before it is still safe

Avoid walking or running near water in the dark



# Away from home 1 & 5 May

## NFCC Activity

- NFCC will approach and encourage companies to include drowning prevention and water safety information on their websites
- We will be promoting the Swim safe sessions which start to be promoted in April and run through the summer.
- Some guides have been produced which can be printed out or information used online.  
Please feel free to edit images and use local landmarks to make relevant to local area.

## Suggestions for FRS Activity

- Add information to your website. If you are in an area popular with tourists can you provide water safety information to holiday lets/hotels/B&Bs
- Use information in this pack to remind people to Be Water Aware throughout the year - bank holidays, during the summer and when we have good weather forecast
- The information for 2019 sessions is due to go live in mid April
- If there are any sessions in your area you can assist in promoting to your local community and you can post on the day. To do this post on NFCC water safety group as swim safe will be providing us with details of local coordinators. RNLI will incorporate into PR & SM activity.

## Suggested Tweets

Even if your child can swim you must supervise them - half of children who drown have some swimming ability #BeWaterAware

Whether you are going on a beach holiday in the UK or abroad, take a minute to find a lifeguarded beach and obey the safety flags. It's safer to #BeWaterAware

Spain is the most popular destination for holidays. Around 25% of people who drown in Spain are tourists - worth making sure you #BeWaterAware before you jet off

84% of UK nationals that drowned abroad in 2017 were men.  
85% of accidental drownings in the UK in 2017 were men. Don't take risks around water and #BeWaterAware

In 2017 75 UK nationals drowned abroad - 70% of these were tourists (rather than residents)  
1/4 of drowning victims in Spain are not Spanish nationals. More information can be found on statistics page in this toolkit.

At the moment we only know where drownings occurred but not where the person was from. Anecdotally we do know you are at a greater risk of drowning if you are not familiar with the area. Fire services may want to consider where their local community are likely to spend time near water during the holidays. You may be landlocked for example but know your community are within easy travel of coast.



People often choose to spend their holiday time near water - whether that is in the UK or abroad, near the coast or inland beauty spots. Even if your local risk profile for drowning is low in your area please spread awareness of the risk of drowning. Lack of local knowledge about an area combined with a relaxed outlook can mean an increase risk of drowning.

#### **Advice for the beach**

- Secluded beaches are not safe beaches - use a life guarded beach during patrolled hours. If you have children they are like a second set of eyes however, it is important to remember that it is up to you to correctly supervise children not the lifeguard. UK - <https://rnli.org/find-my-nearest/lifeguarded-beaches> Spain -<http://jav.cruzroja.es/appjv/consPlayas/consultalncio.do>
- Dress your children in something nice and bright/ distinctive – it is easier to keep an eye on them.
- Make sure your children know what to do or where to go if they get lost – agree a meeting point.
- Check tides. These can change at different times of the year - It might have been safe last time you holidayed here - doesn't mean it is this time
- Be aware of rip tides and currents - they can drag you out to sea and are almost impossible to swim against - <https://rnli.org/safety/know-the-risks/rip-currents>
- Look for safety information, this might be local signs or flags on display at the beach and obey them
- If in doubt, don't risk it.
- Never enter the water after drinking alcohol.

#### **Advice for the pool**

- Alcohol should be avoided – never swim after drinking and don't drink next to the pool – it is very easy to feel drowsy or fall asleep after drinking in the sun- you may not notice a child enter the water.
- Check the rules for pools before you go on holiday in some countries pools should be fenced off
- Don't think arm bands or a rubber rings prevent drowning
- Clear trip hazards (such as toys) from around the pool
- Never leave a child unsupervised near or in a pool – not even for a second
- Don't assume you will hear if there is a problem – children can slip below the surface silently
- Don't assume because a hotel pool has an attendant or lifeguard you don't need to supervise – and remember a pool attendant does not always mean a trained lifeguard
- Designate someone to keep an eye on the kids (take turns)– don't assume that because there are a group of adults someone will notice a child falling in or struggling in the water.
- If your villa pool is not fenced consider taking portable door alarms on holiday - they only cost a few pounds but may warn you if a child has decided to sneak out to pool while you are distracted.

The WAID fatality data does not include UK citizens that drown abroad so the actual number of deaths of UK citizens is higher than that represented in WAID. FCO results suggest an additional 75 people drowned abroad in 2017.



# Young Adult Drinkers 3 & 4 May

## NFCC Activity

- NFCC have written to all universities. A copy of letter and the document which accompanied it - 'The Families' Perspectives' - are in the water safety workplace sharepoint site.  
It outlines steps universities they can take to address student drownings, including working with FRSs. See over for the five recommended steps and short advice for FRSs relating to them.
- Visuals have been created to support messages below - use them to accompany messages below - you can create your own or localise any statistics.

## Suggested Tweets

If you're on a night out tonight plan your route home now. Make sure it's away from water 40% of accidental drownings in 2017 involved drink and/or drugs #BeWaterAware

If you're out with your mates make sure you don't end up leaving them on their own. Make sure you stay together and get home safely #BeWaterAware

If a friend is unsteady on their feet after a night out, don't let them see themselves home. Help them get home safely and take a route away from water #BeWaterAware

If you've had a drink, don't take the scenic route by the river.

One slip and you could easily drown #BeWaterAware

Daniel miraculously survived a drowning incident on a night out.

One step in the wrong direction near water and he nearly lost his life. In 2017 255 people were not so lucky after accidentally entering the water #BeWaterAware <https://youtu.be/z3qjHehRnDM>

<https://youtu.be/z3qjHehRnDM>

## Suggestions for FRS Activity

- Work with high schools, colleges and universities in your area to raise awareness of drowning risks. Some universities may be in contact via NFCC in response to the letter sent. If you haven't heard please make contact directly. You don't have to wait until students are at university to start the messages.
- See the five steps on the next page - these are the asks from NFCC to universities which fire services could assist them with if needed.
- How about a night out to spread the word in your area? We would also encourage fire services to speak to staff at local clubs, pubs and bars near water. Particularly door staff who may not realise the danger of ejecting young people from the premises alone.
- You could consider a local campaign such as Kent FRSs 'Got Ducked Fell In' and look out for RLSS Don't Drink and Drown - details in NFCC water safety workplace

## Daniel's Story - Video content

Daniel survived a drowning incident on a night out. The story of his rescue has been made into a video by East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service.

There are two versions of the video for you to use, both available to download from NFCC Youtube channel

**Long version - <https://youtu.be/4hLWICwDpR8>**

**Short version - <https://youtu.be/z3qjHehRnDM>**

Use on social media and your websites as part of the campaign week and beyond



## Five Steps for Universities:

- 1. Universities should include in their student information and induction packs information about water safety and drowning prevention.** You can include resources or information from the NFCC toolkit or create your own localised resources. **Make them aware of the National Drowning Prevention Strategy.** You may wish to consider a local campaign for students such as 'Got ducked, fell in' which was run by Kent Fire and Rescue Service - information is in Firepro and Water Safety workplace groups.
- 2. To ensure risk assessments of bodies of water within the university estates are undertaken with clear action plans in place to reduce risk.** RLSS offer water safety consultancy services and can help support with risk assessments if more specialist advice is required. **RoSPA's water safety at inland waterways** would be good to signpost universities to.
- 3. To engage with national awareness raising campaigns – there are several of these each year, including the RLSS UK 'Don't Drink and Drown' campaigns.** Water safety campaigns from NWSF members run throughout the year. the 2019 dates for **'Don't Drink and Drown' are 12-19 September 2019 and 2-8 December 2019** . As above you can also consider a localised campaign if you think your area needs it.
- 4. Assess and communicate safe walking routes in the area after a night out and provide advice and guidance to students during Fresher's week and during peak periods of risk such as Christmas parties, or post exams.** You could this by being present at Fresher's week and at student nightspots for example. Actively promote routes away from water and work with community partnerships to assess and address local risks <https://www.local.gov.uk/topics/community-safety/water-safety-toolkit>
- 5. To consider making available student training for lifesaving, first aid and resuscitation skills. These are widely available and can be free through local responder agencies.** RLSS, Red Cross, St John Ambulance even your service may offer this.

## Messages:

Getting home safely messages (avoiding certain routes/not being alone) have tended to be drummed into females but statistics show these are exactly the messages men need to hear to prevent drowning. Drowning statistics show more males than females drown.

Alcohol reduces inhibitions and can lead to risk taking behaviour

Alcohol will impair judgment and control

Likely to be dark and night time so fewer people to see you in distress

## Safety Advice:

Stay with your group and don't wander off if you become separated

Keep an eye on any friends who are worse for wear and make sure you help them home

Avoid walking near water even if the path is lit, you may not realise how unsteady on your feet you are

In the dark you may not see trip hazards or even the water's edge

Make sure you store a taxi number in your phone and some emergency money at home so you can pay. If the money is at home you can't lose it or accidentally spend it

Plan how you are getting home before you start your night out