

Press release

2 May 2023

Scotland's Drowning and Incident Review becomes available across Scotland

An innovative system has launched this week to reduce accidental drowning deaths by analysing the circumstances around past water-related fatalities, in what has been hailed one of the world's first.

The Drowning and Incident Review (DIR) has been created by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), in partnership with Water Safety Scotland (WSS). It aims to reduce accidental drowning deaths by 50 per cent by 2026 and lessen the risk among the highest risk populations, groups and communities.

Until now, the circumstances in many water-related fatalities have been unknown and the risk factors are unclear. On average, 96 people lose their lives due to a water-related fatality each year in Scotland.

The principal aim of the DIR is to gather all relevant data and information in order to systematically review each accidental water-related incident with a view to prevent a future occurrence. The review has been piloted extensively and evaluated with a recent publication in *BMJ Injury Prevention*.

The benefits of DIR are anticipated at both local and national level in Scotland. It will provide insight into water-based risks by local area, ensuring that those best placed to mitigate these risks are involved in the process and kept informed. Nationally, the enhanced data capture is anticipated to lead to the development of better-informed national strategies to tackle the issue of drowning prevention.

Carlene McAvoy, Leisure Safety Manager of RoSPA and founder and secretariat of Water Safety Scotland said, "DIR has been specifically created for Scotland and is one of the first of its type in the world. It will be used as an important tool in Scotland to enable learning from incidents and mitigate the risk of future incidents. This supports the overarching aim of Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy, to reduce accidental drownings by 50 per cent by 2026."

James Sullivan, Station Commander at SFRS and chair of Water Safety Scotland, added, "DIR provides a clear and consistent format for partners to review water related incidents and gain an understanding of contributory factors. This enhanced knowledge will enable a focussed approach to be taken on preventative measures both locally and nationally throughout Scotland".

DIR is endorsed by lead Search & Rescue Partners; Scottish Fire & Rescue Service (SFRS), Police Scotland (PS), His Majesty's Coastguard (HMCG), and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) as well as key partners in Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS) and Public Health Scotland (PHS).

The DIR process goes live this week and can be used via Water Safety Scotland for any accidental related fatality.

-ENDS-

For further press information please contact: Jessica Barker: jbarker@rospa.com, 07719 059 414, or Joe Tinkler: jtinkler@rospa.com, 07785 540 349.

Notes to editors

- Water Safety Scotland was founded by RoSPA in 2014 and is a partnership organisation whose purpose is to influence, coordinate and lead the aims set out in [Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy](#).
- RoSPA is a not-for-profit organisation that has worked for more than 100 years to help people recognise and reduce their risk of accidents, at home, on the road, at work and at leisure. Our goal is to enable everyone to live their lives to the full, safely.
- Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy targets a reduction of 50 per cent in the number of accidental drowning deaths, against a three-year average baseline of 96 (from 2013-2015). The Interim Review of the strategy was led by RoSPA and can be accessed here: <https://watersafetyscotland.org.uk/media/1985/interim-review-scotlands-drowning-prevention-strategy.pdf>
- The Evaluation of DIR can be accessed online here: <https://injuryprevention.bmj.com/content/early/2022/12/22/ip-2022-044785>
- The 2021 trend report can be accessed online here: <https://www.watersafetyscotland.org.uk/practitioners-hub/water-safety-data/data-reports/>
- The WAID tables can be accessed online here: <https://nationalwatersafety.org.uk/waid>

The total figures for Scotland in 2021 (105 fatalities) include: accidental: 58, crime suspected: 1, not recorded: 25, suicide suspected: 21