

# Safer and Stronger Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

**Open Water safety Update  
September 2023**

**Kevin Lough, Corporate Health, Safety and  
Compliance Manager**



# Open Water Safety Governance



**Durham City Safety Group**

**Durham**  
County Council

*Altogether Better Policing*

**Durham**  
University

**DURHAM**  
**STUDENTS'**  
**UNION**  
*Enabling Students*

**DURHAM**  
**CATHEDRAL**  
*THE HEART OF THE CITY*

**ROSPA**  
*The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents*

**County Durham Open Water Safety Group**

County Durham and Darlington  
**Fire and Rescue Service**

**Durham**  
County Council

**DURHAM**  
**CONSTABULARY**

**NORTHUMBRIAN**  
**WATER**

**ROSPA**  
*The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents*



# The national picture

- There were 226 accidental drowning fatalities in UK for 2022 which is a reduction on 3 year average of 251.
- 212 fatal incidents were caused by suicide
- 83% of accidental fatalities were male
- Males 20-29 and 50-59 were the highest group for accidental fatalities
- 60% of accidental fatalities happened at inland waters
- Recreational activities accounted for 58% of accidental fatalities  
58 accidental fatality reports noted the presence of drugs or alcohol
- The rate of accidental drowning has decreased slightly since 2018 (0.40 per 100,000) to 0.34 in 2022

# County Durham

Year	Durham City Centre			County Durham (Exc. Durham City centre)		
	Near miss	Injury	Fatality	Near miss	Injury	Fatality
2013/14	13	1	1	3	1	2
2014/15	5	1	4	5	2	3
2015/16	3	1	0	8	5	2
2016/17	2	1	0	1	2	1
2017/18	2	3	0	3	5	0
2018/19	3	6	1	1	1	2
2019/20	2	4	0	6	3	1
2020/21	2	0	0	8	3	2
2021/22	9	4	0	7	1	1
2022/23	2	0	1	7	5	3



# County Durham vs National Statistics

- Fatality rate of 0.75 per 100,000 compared to 0.34 per 100,000 at a UK level in 2022
- Reflecting an increasing trend of suspected suicide related incidents
- Zero fatalities in summer period 2023 despite July/August being statically highest months where fatalities occur
- Zero coastal fatalities despite nationally accounting for 39% of all accidental drowning deaths
- No known open water swimming related fatalities- given the widespread media and leisure industry reports regarding the psychological and physical benefits of open water swimming as a recreational activity, this is an area that requires monitoring in County Durham going forward.



# Durham City

- Continued emphasis on partnership working and collective responsibility
- RoSPA independent risk review action plan delivered
- New education and awareness initiatives for hub team and various partners/licensees
- Throw line rescue equipment training
- Continued investigations of incidents and near misses to ensure controls remain effective
- Regular monitoring and inspection of city centre river routes and control measures

**ROSPA**  
The Royal Society for the  
Prevention of Accidents





# County Wide

- ✓ Cold Water Shock 'Dying to be cool' Campaign delivery via new video in 2023
- ✓ Promotion of national campaigns
- ✓ Extensive social media at risk periods
- ✓ Plan for education and awareness again in 2023/24
- ✓ Re-assessment of priority locations across county
- ✓ Investigations and assessment of public rescue equipment
- ✓ Monitoring of high footfall locations in peak periods
- ✓ Throw line training
- ✓ Upgrading of public rescue equipment

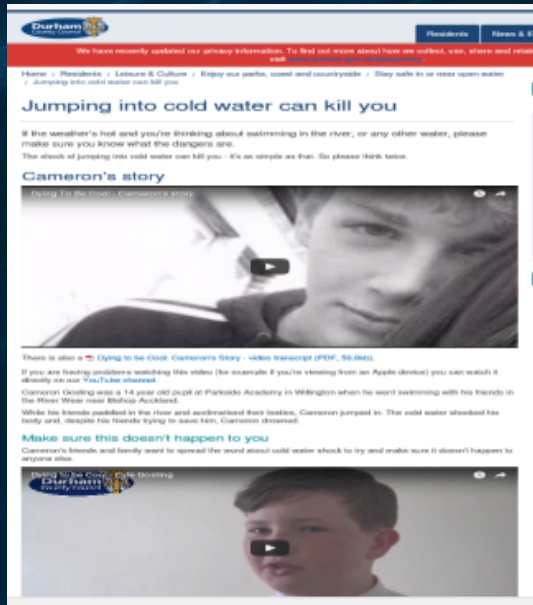




# 2023 'Dying to be Cool' campaign



- New video produced for use for all schools who may not be able to accommodate assembly delivery
- Pre-summer period focus
- Work with local AAP coordinators
- Coincided with national drowning prevention week and world drowning prevention day
- Partner comms and promotion
- Fiona Gosling fronting campaigns along with police and fire and rescue officers





# Looking Forward

- Working closely with public health around suicide prevention and mental health
- Continued partnership approach important
- Revision of action plans at city centre and county wide level
- Education, awareness and utilising national campaigns and initiatives
- Re-assessment of previous risk assessments
- Investigation of all incidents and near misses
- Identification of new and emerging trends and causation factors
- Working with developers and designers to ensure water safety related risks are managed
- Monitoring and evaluating effectiveness of existing controls
- Review of public rescue equipment and provision of training for first responders, businesses and communities