

Developing a water safety policy



Evaluation Report 2021

Supported by



water safety
Scotland

Background

On average, 50 people accidentally drown in Scotland each year and a further 29 people take their own lives around Scotland's waters. In January 2018, Water Safety Scotland released Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy which includes a key objective to “**develop water safety across Scotland's 32 local authority areas and promote the development of water safety policies**”. Within this, there are two key activities:

- Encourage all local authorities to develop a water safety policy
- Support local authorities in the development of a water safety policy

In 2018, RoSPA released “[Local Authority Approaches to Managing Water Safety – Scotland Five Years on](#)”. This was a five-year follow-on study from the original research, which took place in Scotland in 2013. Overall, as in 2013, a mixed picture was found - several local authorities were addressing water safety but there was still very little consistency or uniformity.

In response to this research and to implement the Strategy in Scotland, RoSPA and RNLI held a water safety workshop on April 9th 2019 to help local authorities understand water safety policy, the barriers to implementing a policy and other key information and advice. The reports from this workshop can be found online: <https://www.rospa.com/about/around-the-uk/scotland/the-management-of-water-safety.aspx>

RoSPA and RNLI held another workshop on the 15th January 2021 to further help local authorities understand and develop a water safety policy.

The workshop

The workshop was held online on January 15th 2021 and featured presentations on the following:

- Understanding the duties and land ownership related to water safety risk (RoSPA)
- The importance of campaign inclusion in a water safety policy (RNLI)
- Bristol Harbour Experience (Bristol City Council)
- Linking education and swimming to a water safety policy (RLSS UK)

Overall 18 people attended with 14 different local authorities represented.

Evaluation approach and methods

The evaluation approach uses the Scottish Community Safety Network (SCSN) and Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) evaluation framework. The prevention activity which is relevant to this workshop relates to **professionals, partners and service providers**. The evaluation focusses on the short term and medium term outcomes (see figure 1).

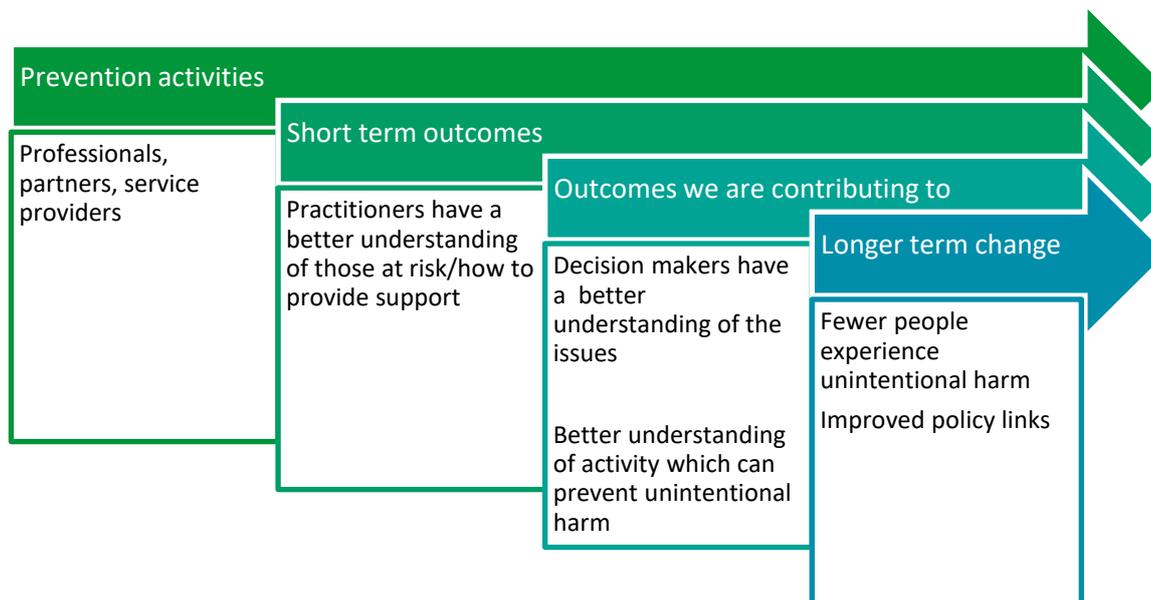


Figure 1: Professional, partners and service providers' outcomes

Short-term outcomes

The main short-term outcome was **practitioners have a better understanding of those at risk/how to provide support**. The key indicators concentrated on for this outcome were:

Better understanding of those at risk/how to provide support

- I know what's happening in my area/ *I have relevant data for my area*
- We share learning about unintentional harm within our team

On average, post evaluation respondents gave 4 out 5 stars for the workshop.



Relevant Data

Participants were asked whether their local authority was signed up to WAID (Water Accident Database)

WAID is a web-based system designed to accept data from a wide range of data sources either through direct entry via the web or bulk uploads. It is designed to search the data for multiple records of a single incident which will then be 'merged' into a single 'Incident Record'. Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy suggests the use of WAID data as the agreed source for fatality data for consistency across the country.

Three participants were signed up to WAID.

Sharing learning

77 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that they would share learning from the workshop within their teams, whilst a further 15 per cent agreed that they would share learning.

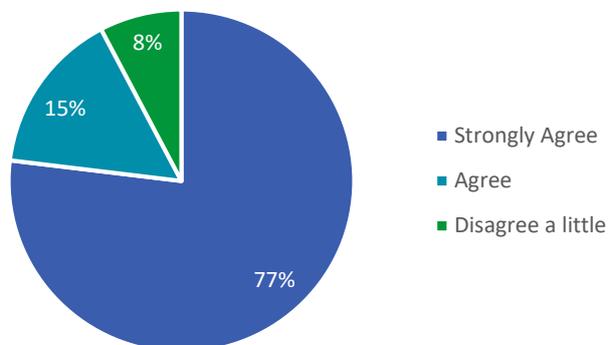


Figure 2: Plans to share learning from the event with local team (post n = 13)

Ability to identify risks

85 per cent of those in attendance felt positive after the workshop with regards to their confidence to identify risks associated with water.

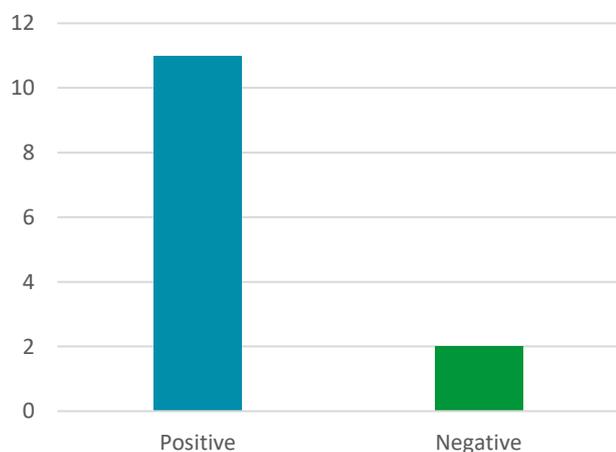


Figure 3: Confidence in ability to identify risks associated with water (post, n – 13)

Medium-term outcomes

The main medium-term outcomes for the workshop were:

- Decision makers have a better understanding of the issues
- Better understanding of activity which can prevent unintentional harm

Indicators relevant to the medium- term outcomes:

Decision makers have a better understanding of the issues

- Decision makers focus on prevention activity
- Prevention of unintentional harm is reflected through policies and strategies

Decision makers have a better understanding of activity which can prevent unintentional harm

- Decision makers focus on prevention
- Decision makers/non specialist partners or practitioners are able to articulate why prevention is important

Focus on prevention

A water safety policy is a key preventative process which can help to reduce the risk of fatal drownings and accidental incidents.

Participants were asked about their understanding of the need for a water safety policy (figure 4). Positive responses e.g. “I’m pretty sure I know about this” increased after the workshop whilst negative responses, “I really need help in understanding this” decreased.

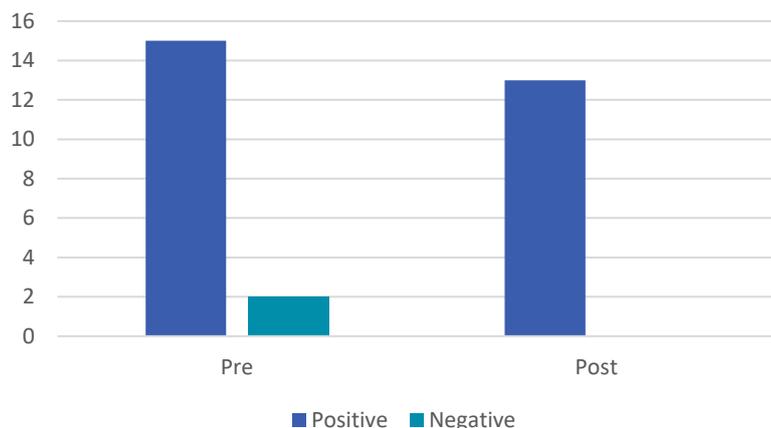


Figure 4: Understanding of the need for a water safety policy (pre n = 17, post n = 13)

Participants were also asked about the need to focus on prevention activity. All respondents gave positive responses both pre and post workshop suggesting that the importance of drowning prevention is well established.

Policy and Strategy

Only one participant came from a local authority who had a water safety policy in place. Nine local authorities noted their intention (post workshop) to develop a policy whilst three noted they were currently developing one.

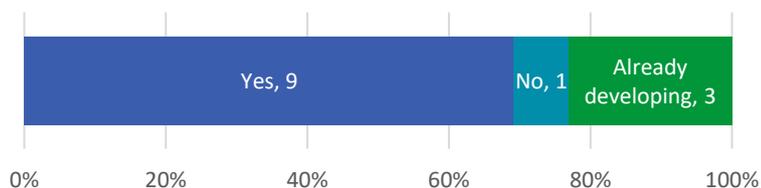


Figure 5: Status of water safety policy (post n = 13)

Key discussions and next steps

There were three main discussion points in the workshop:

- Who should be responsible for a water safety policy in the local authority
- What concerns you about writing a water safety policy – expertise, resources and time
- What would help – guidance and previous ones

RoSPA and RNLI have agreed to continue supporting the need for water safety policies in Scotland. All participants received RoSPA’s [guidance for inland water management](#) as well as the equivalent [beach safety guidance](#). A publically available example of a water safety policy was also shared.



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