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Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service 🌐 rbfrs.co.uk



FAO Parents / Carers

Reference Water Safety Advice
Email huttk@rbfrs.co.uk
Date 4th June 2026

We are deeply saddened by reports that 13 young people have tragically lost their lives during the recent holiday period in open water incidents across the UK. These heartbreaking events highlight just how dangerous open water environments can be, even when they may appear safe.

As the weather becomes warmer, we know that many children and young people are naturally drawn to rivers, lakes, canals and other open water areas. While these places can seem calm and inviting, they can also present serious and often hidden dangers.

Most drownings involving young people are preventable, yet 88% occur without adult supervision. The majority take place in everyday inland locations (84%), with risk peaking between May and August (71%). Most concerning, the National Child Mortality Database reports a 67% increase in drowning deaths among 13 to 17 year olds in recent years, highlighting the urgent need to equip young people with the knowledge and awareness to stay safe near water. Figures provided by the Royal Life Saving Society UK

We kindly ask for your support in speaking with your young person about the risks of swimming or playing in open water without appropriate supervision. Even strong swimmers can get into difficulty due to cold water shock, hidden currents, uneven ground and submerged hazards. It is also important to talk with your child about what to do in an emergency, including how to stay calm, float if they get into difficulty and how to call for help.

To support parents and carers, the Royal Life Saving Society UK provides a wide range of practical, easy-to-use resources designed to help families talk about water safety. These materials are age-appropriate and include guidance, videos and activities to help children and young people understand the risks of open water, build confidence and learn what to do in an emergency.



Please visit: www.rlss.org.uk > [Water Safety](#) > [Advice For You](#)

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) also offers a range of accessible resources to support families in understanding key water safety messages, including the 'Float to Live' technique and awareness of cold water shock - a major contributing factor in many drowning incidents. Their guidance helps parents and carers explain how floating on your back can control breathing and prevent panic if someone unexpectedly enters the water, while also highlighting the physical effects of cold water immersion. Through videos, campaigns and simple step-by-step advice, the RNLI empowers families to build young people's confidence and resilience around water, ensuring they know how to respond calmly and effectively in an emergency.



Please visit: www.rnli.org > [What We Do](#) > [Safety](#)

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Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) also provides advice on how to react and respond in an emergency, alongside practical tips for staying safe in and around water.



Please visit: www.rbfrs.co.uk > [Your Safety](#) > [Water Safety](#)

Having these conversations at home can make a real difference in helping children and young people make safer choices and reduce the risk of accidents. Starting these conversations early can help young people build awareness and develop safer habits, giving them the confidence to make better choices as they grow older.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

Open water is very different from swimming pools - it may look calm but can be dangerous	Never go into open water alone or without supervision	Choose safer places to swim, such as lifeguarded beaches, pools, or designated swimming areas	Avoid taking risks or giving in to peer pressure	Understand the dangers of cold water shock	Know what to do if you get into trouble e.g. Float to Live	Know what to do if someone else is in trouble e.g. call 999, never enter the water and throw something that floats
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Please remember that drowning is preventable. By working together to support, guide and educate our young people, we can empower them with the skills and awareness they need to make safer choices and stay safe around water.

Thank you for your continued support.

With warm regards,

Kasia J Hutt

Kasia Jaworski Hutt

Safety Education Co-ordinator and School Lead



Chief Fire Officer - Wayne Bowcock

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