

1

Background

Drowning can happen silently and is preventable. In England, the number of child deaths due to drowning doubled between 1 April 2019 and 31 March 2023. The highest rate of deaths occurred in children under 5, followed by children aged 15-17 ([NCDM Drowning Report 2024](#)).

Between 2019 and 2022, over half of drowning deaths occurred during summer months and most commonly occurred inland ([NCDM Trauma Thematic Report](#)). 83% of these children were not under adult supervision at the time of their death. 57% of children aged 10-17 were accompanied by a peer and not a responsible adult.

2

Why it matters

Drowning is recorded as one of the leading causes of child trauma related deaths within England.

It is important that professionals working with children and their families support the spread of water safety messages. This includes water safety in the home, water safety [on holiday](#) or away from the home, and open water safety.

You can help to keep children safe by raising awareness, promoting water safety messages, and educating children and families.

3

Information

[The NCMD](#) recorded the lack of adult supervision in child deaths due to drowning as a significant risk and highlighted the need for children and young people to be always supervised by a responsible adult in and around water.

The levels of water competency in older children and the accessibility of swimming lessons for children was seen to be a risk within reviewed deaths.

4

Younger Children

The NCMD highlighted the link between the absence of supervision and child deaths by drowning. Below the age of 5, drownings commonly occurred in baths. Bath seats provide a false sense of security that a child is safe; they should not be used as a safety device. [RoSPA](#) and [CAPT](#) advise against the use of bath aids, highlighting that supervision is key.

5

Older Children

Of deaths that occurred in [open water](#), more deaths occurred inland (such as lakes and quarries) than in coastal settings. It is important that children understand the dangers of open water swimming, particularly [cold water shock](#), as well as the effects of using [drugs and alcohol near or around water](#).

It is also important that children are water competent and are aware of how to help themselves and others in danger. The [RNLI Float to Live campaign](#), the [Royal Life Saving Society \(RLSS\)](#) and [Stay Wise](#) have resources around water safety and water competence.

7

Resources

- [RoSPA's Bath Advice](#)
- [CAPT Fact Sheet](#)
- [Healthier Together, NHS](#)
- [CSAP's Top Tips for Water Safety within the home environment](#)
- [RLSS Parent Resources](#)
- [LFRS Water Safety](#)
- [RLSS Booklet Education Resources](#)
- [RLSS Water Safety on Holiday Advice](#)
- [Respect the Water](#)

6

What to do

Support parents and families to keep babies and children safe in and around water by:

- Promoting water safety messages and share resources.
- Share key messages throughout the year.
- Educate children on how to keep themselves safe.
- Raise awareness of what to do in an emergency.
- Be a [water smart school](#).
- Utilise risk assessment tools.

