

The Management of Water Safety in Scotland's Local Authorities



Preliminary Evaluation Report

Supported by





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Lifeboats

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 agreed to hold the very first policy orientated workshop with the aim to help local authorities understand water safety policy, the barriers to implementing a policy and to share key information and advice.

The workshop

The workshop was held in Perth on April 9th 2019 and featured presentations on the following:

- Issues to consider when developing your local policy - RoSPA
- Water Safety in Perth and Kinross, Perth and Kinross Council
- Coastal risk processes, RNLI

Overall, 24 attended with 15 local authorities represented at the workshop.

75 per cent of those in attendance thought the workshop was 'very good' whilst a further 25 per cent thought it was 'good'.

Evaluation approach and methods

In 2019, The Scottish Community Safety Network (SCSN) and Evaluation Support Scotland (ESS) sought partners and practitioners to help develop an evaluation framework to support practitioners in measuring the impact of their work to tackle unintentional injury. RoSPA, as part of this development, agreed to test the evaluation framework with its workshop on the management of water safety in Scotland's local authorities.

The workshop links well to the evaluation framework. The prevention activity which is relevant to this workshop is **professionals, partners and service providers**. The table below shows the relevant outcomes and longer term change that this workshop will help to contribute towards.

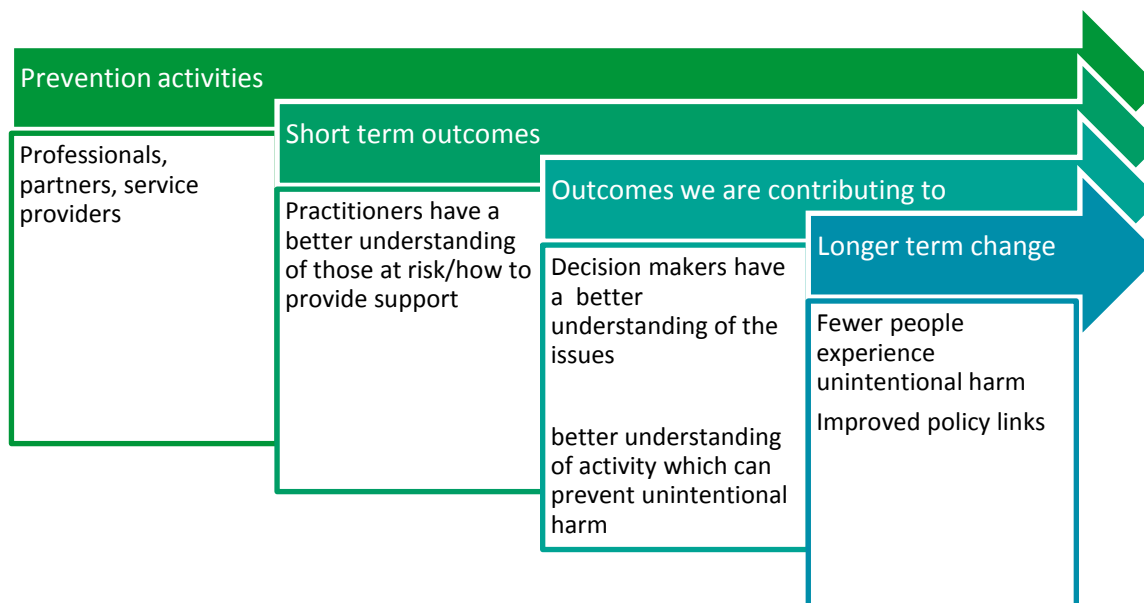


Figure 1: Professional, partners and service providers' outcomes

The following methods were used for the evaluation workshop:

- Questionnaires were issued to attendees before and after the workshop. 15 respondents answered the pre questionnaire and 16 answered the post questionnaire. A 3 – 6 month delayed questionnaire will provide follow up questions to gather feedback on the medium term impact
- A desktop search on any newspaper articles, press mentions and social media
- Interest in signups to WAID will be monitored for 6 months after the event
- 'Sticky wall'/post it note exercise during the workshop to collect comments

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 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
- Ability to identify risks
- We share learning about unintentional harm within our team

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.

Only one participant was signed up to WAID. However, thirteen participants noted that they planned to sign up to WAID after the workshop which shows clear interest and engagement in the data needed to help build an evidence base to make a water policy happen.

Signups to WAID will be monitored and reported on by September 2019 in order to see how many participants attempted to gather the relevant data to help understand drowning risk in their areas.

Ability to identify risks

87 per cent of those in attendance felt positive with regards to their confidence to identify risks associated with water. This increased from 80 per cent prior to the workshop.

Confidence to identify risks

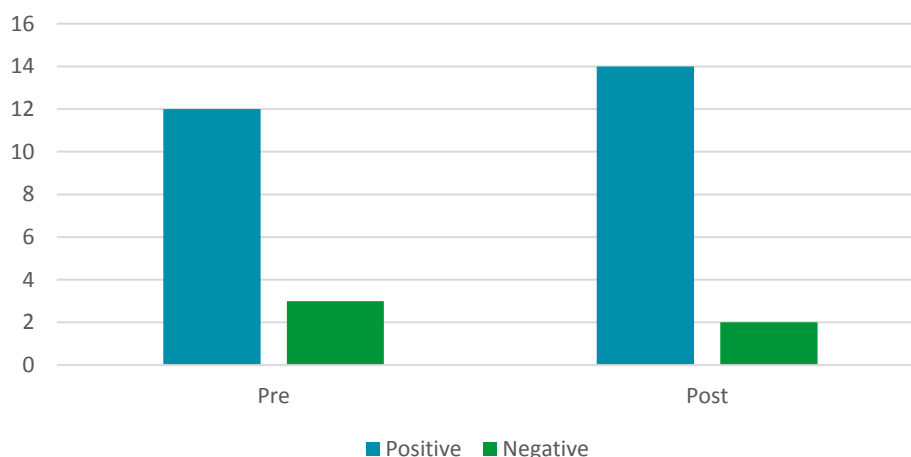


Figure 2: Confidence in ability to identify risks associated with water (Pre n = 15, Post n = 16)

Sharing learning

81 per cent of respondents strongly agreed that they would share learning from the workshop within their teams, whilst a further 13 per cent agreed that they would.

Sharing learning from today

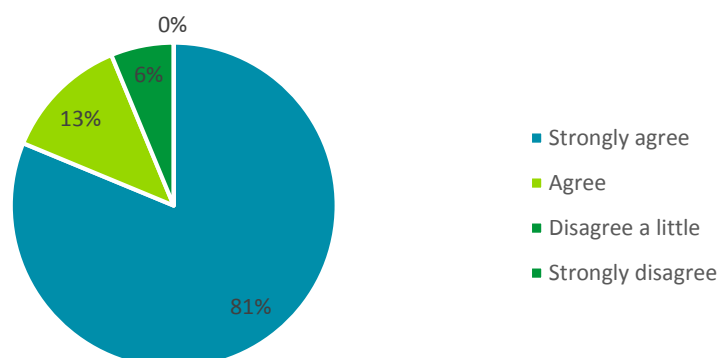


Figure 3: Plans to share learning from the event with local team (post n = 16)

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
- Newspaper articles/press mentions

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
- Newspaper articles/press mentions

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 and the need to focus on prevention activity (figures 4 and 5). 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. This suggests that understanding of this preventative activity increased as a result of the workshop.

Need for a water safety policy

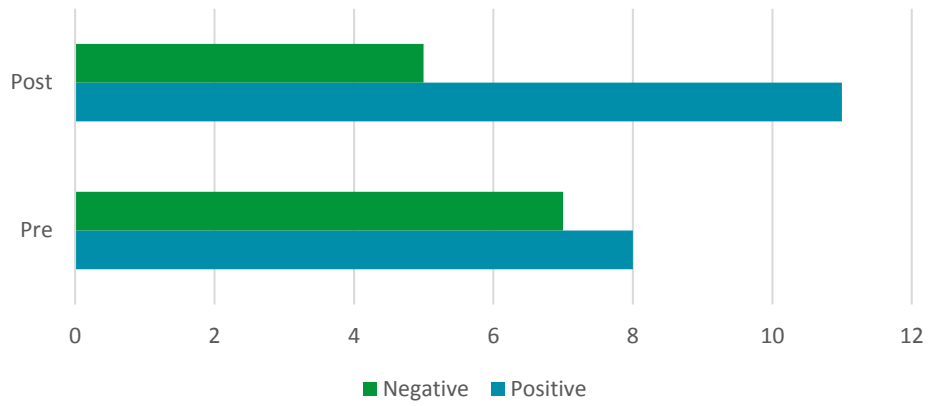


Figure 4: Understanding of the need for a water safety policy (pre n = 15, post n = 16)

Need to focus on prevention activity

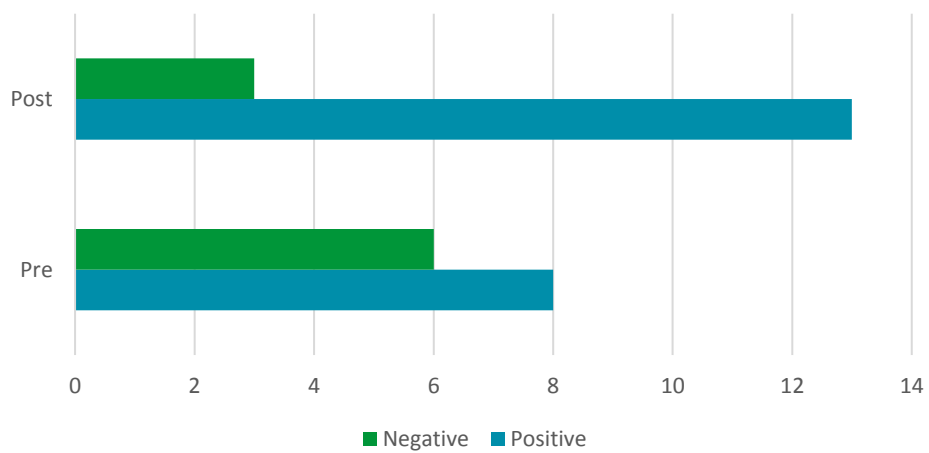


Figure 5: Understanding of the need to focus on prevention activity (pre n = 14, 1 N/A, post n = 16)

Confidence to focus

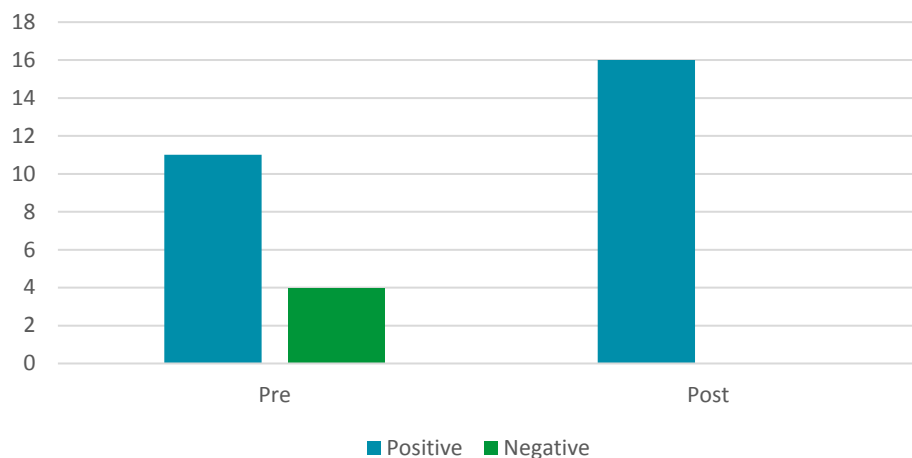


Figure 6: Confidence about focussing on the prevention activity of developing a water safety policy (pre n = 15, post n = 16)

Policy and Strategy

Only one participant came from a local authority who had a water safety policy in place. Eleven local authorities noted that they planned to develop a policy.

RoSPA will get in touch with participants by September 2019 to ascertain whether they are currently developing a policy or strategy.

The importance of prevention

Respondents were asked during a discussion exercise what they were taking away from the workshop. Answers tended to focus on the importance of prevention with many noting the following:

- The importance of a water safety policy
- The need for data and the importance to sign up to WAID
- The need to find a water safety champion within their workplace to take forward the policy

News

A press release on the workshop and the importance of water safety policies was released by RoSPA and can be accessed here: <https://www.rospace.com/media-centre/press-office/press-releases/detail/?id=1627>

Other mentions of the workshop were found here:

- Radio interview with Clyde FM
- RoSPA blog
- SCSN website
- Homeward (RoSPA Scotland publication)

There was also social media interest. RoSPA put out two tweets about the workshop.



3256 Impressions

126 Engagements

42 Likes

11 Retweets

Key discussions

There were two main themes that emerged through the questions and discussions at the workshop. The first centred on national guidance.

RoSPA has released guidance for inland water management. This can be accessed online: <https://www.rosipa.com/leisure-safety/water/inland/>. However there is no national guidance for beach and coastal waters (although an outdated Safety on Beaches: Operational Guidelines was published by RoSPA in the 2004). Participants were keen for this document to be updated and match the current inland guidance.

There was also suggestion for an update of the RNLI signage guidance (in consultation with MCA and RoSPA).

Secondly, participants felt that there was a need to raise the issue of a water safety policy at senior management levels, CEO levels and at a political level.

Next steps

The next steps for this work are as follows:

- WAID signups will be monitored until September 2019 (RoSPA)
- Local authorities present will be contacted by RoSPA by September to see whether they are developing a policy
- Monitoring of beach risk assessment interest over the next 6 months (RNLI)
- RoSPA and RNLI will work together to consider political and top management buy-in for water safety policies in Scotland



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