



Developing a water safety policy: a workshop for local authorities



Evaluation Report

Supported by



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, the research showed a mixed picture. Several local authorities were addressing water safety but there was still very little consistency or uniformity across Scotland.

In response to this research and to implement the Strategy in Scotland, Water Safety Scotland hosts an annual workshop aimed to help local authorities understand water safety policy, the barriers to implementing a policy and to share key information and advice.

The workshop

The 2022 workshop was held in Perth on November 8th and featured the following presentations:

- *What WSS can offer local authorities* – Carlene McAvoy and James Sullivan
- *Overview of Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLNPA) water safety policy* – Leigh Hamilton
- *East Lothian approach to water safety* – Eamon John and Jenny Hargreaves

The invitation to attend was issued to all thirty-two local authorities, with ten local authorities represented on the day via eighteen individual attendees.

This report highlights attendees' opinions of the workshop, as well as the impact it has had on their intention to develop a water safety policy and general knowledge of water safety.

Evaluation approach and methods

A questionnaire was issued to attendees via email before and after the workshop. 14 respondents (78%) completed the pre-workshop questionnaire and 9 (50%) completed the post-workshop questionnaire.

Results

WAID

We wanted to capture information about how many local authorities are aware of/signed up to the Water Incident Database (WAID). 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 enable a search of 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.

Two respondents were signed up to WAID pre-workshop, with the majority answering 'don't know'. However, the workshop has brought WAID to the attendees' attention. Thus, signups to WAID will be monitored in order to see how many participants attempt to gather the relevant data to help understand drowning risk in their areas.

Understanding of water safety policies and the prevention of drowning fatalities

89 per cent of those in attendance felt they understood the need for developing a water safety policy. This increased from 57 per cent prior to the workshop. Similarly, 89 percent of attendees felt they understood the need for focus on drowning prevention activity after the workshop (an increase from 64 per cent pre-workshop).

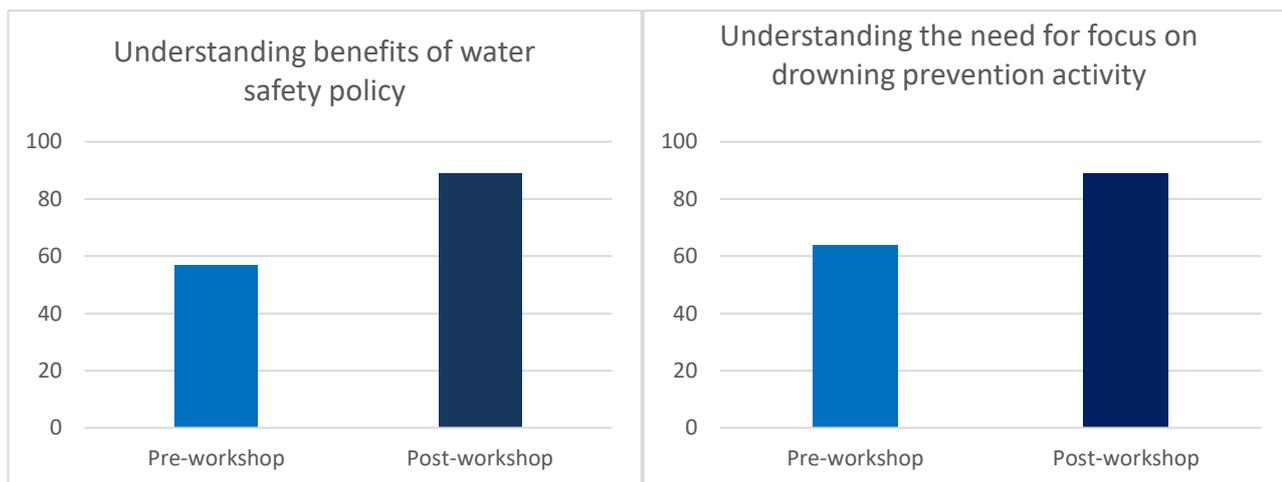


Figure 1: Learned understanding of benefits of water safety policy Figure 2: Learned understanding of need for focus on drowning prevention activity

Personal learning and sharing the learning

It is positive to note that 100 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more confident about focusing on the prevention activity of developing a water safety policy. 89 per cent also agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more confident in their ability to identify risks associated with water.

It is encouraging to learn that, having attended the workshop, 100 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they would share learning from the workshop within their teams.

Development of a water safety policy

A water safety policy is a key preventative process which can help to reduce the risk of fatal drownings and accidental incidents. Of the nine local authorities that responded following the workshop, seven (78%) stated that



they did intend to develop a water safety policy and were happy to stay in touch with Water Safety Scotland to inform the organisation of policy progress.

Comments from participants

Respondents were asked to provide comment, good or bad, on the workshop as a whole:

"The presentations and discussions were quite practical, it was useful to hear how other authorities/organisations are approaching, or have already approached, the creation of a water safety policy and how they tailored a similar approach to their needs and specific issues. It was also reassuring to find out that the majority of attendees were in a similar position of being very early on in the planning stage"

"Good to know so much has been done already - as a team effort (multi discipline) I'm happy to contribute to a water safety policy for my organisation."

"[will] consider reviewing the input from external Water Safety Policy providers"

Summary

The evaluation of WSS local authority workshop has shown that an event such as this is very worthwhile as it allows the dissemination of information about the support that is available, both in terms of documentation and guidance and also shared experience of those who have already developed a policy.

The results of the questionnaires are encouraging as they strongly indicate that learning has taken place and will be shared among colleagues. In addition, there is strong evidence to suggest that a high percentage of the local authorities in attendance intend to develop their own water safety policy.

For these reasons, Water Safety Scotland will continue to offer a water safety policy workshop on an annual basis.



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