



accidents don't have to happen

Inflatables Campaign

Scotland 2019



Version: 1 Date: March 2020



Inflatables Campaign

Background

Inflatables come in a variety of sizes and designs and can be appealing to children and adults alike. Inflatables are becoming more popular in social media and although suited to the pool, they can be dangerous when used at the beach. This is because strong water currents and coastal winds can easily sweep inflatables out to the sea. There have also been cases of people panicking when this occurs and abandoning the inflatables, which leads to the sudden immersion of them into cold water (increasing the risk of Cold Water Shock).

Anecdotal feedback from local areas suggested that inflatable use at certain beaches across Scotland was increasing. As a result RoSPA, RNLI, HMCG (Her Majesty's Coastguard) and The Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland (SCOTSS) teamed up to raise awareness of the dangers of inflatables before a fatality occurred.

From 2014 – May 2019, RNLI attended 37 call outs in Scotland due to inflatable devices.

Data on inflatables was not routinely collected by HMCG until 1st January 2019 but HMCG did record 10 call outs in Ayrshire alone in May 2018 and June 2018.

This project had two aims:

- Raise awareness of the dangers of inflatables
- Research and formally test a number of inflatables

The campaign officially launched in June 2019. The information in this report features information from June – September 2019.

This report will consider each of these two aims and evaluate the impact the campaign has had.

Awareness raising campaign

Overview

The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the dangers of inflatables, with a view to decreasing the number of emergency calls, incidents and near misses involving inflatables in Scotland between June and September 2019.



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A number of activities were undertaken to ensure this aim was met. These included:

- A blog on inflatables was published during June and can be accessed online here: <https://www.rospace.com/lets-talk-about/2019/June/Keep-inflatables-for-the-pool>
- Social media posts were created and images for partners and third parties to promote the campaign across Facebook, Twitter and Instagram with key safety messaging
- A press release was put out on August 1, 2019 to highlight the campaign and associated safety messaging. It can be accessed online here: <https://rnli.org/news-and-media/2019/august/01/leave-the-inflatables-in-the-pool-or-on-instagram>
- A photo call to develop and distribute the press release



Messaging

Our key messaging priorities included:

- Inflatable toys are not suitable for use at the beach and we would urge parents not to take them to the beach.
- If you do choose to take inflatables to the beach, these toys should be securely tethered to the shore, and they should certainly not be used when the wind is blowing away from the beach or in large waves.
- Ensure children are closely supervised
- Whenever you take to the sea we recommended that you wear a personal floatation device such as a lifejacket or buoyancy aid
- If you spot an inflatable drifting at sea, or one you are using is blown away, you should report it to the Coastguard on 999 immediately, giving as much information as possible. This will mean the toy can be recovered and prevent a larger search being launched.

Sample social media asset usage:



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Social media results

The social media assets were created to be shared by others and so it is challenging to estimate the potential reach of the social media activity with real accuracy. The numbers below represent a best estimate based on link clicks on the social posts created, and engagement rates taken from a social media benchmark report.

Because engagement rate includes all types of engagements (likes, shares etc as well as clicks), and because the social assets were often used without the tracking link, the estimated reach numbers below are very much on the conservative side of things.

Channel	Bitly link clicks	Engagement rate*	Estimated reach**
Facebook	270	0.09%	300,000
Instagram	34	1.6%	2,125
Twitter	161	0.048%	335,416
Total	465	NA	637,541

*Engagement rates are taken from Rival IQ's 2019 social media benchmarking report looking at Facebook, Twitter and Instagram metrics from 1,800 organisations across 12 industries including non-profit. They define engagement rate as the number of measurable interactions (likes, shares, clicks etc.) divided by followers.

** based on the engagement rate definition, reach is calculated as link clicks x 100 divided by engagement rate.

Below are some analytics results of from the RoSPA website page that the social posts linked to.



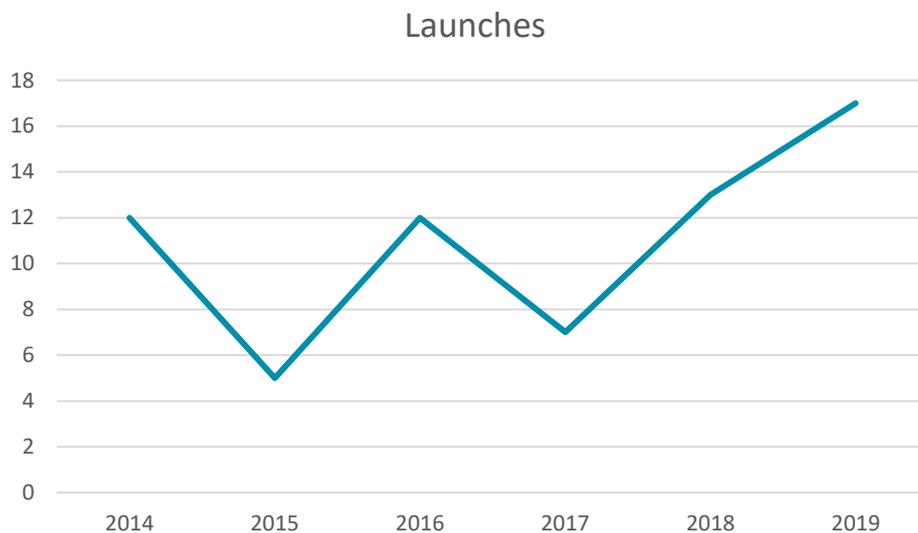
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Metric	Result	Comment
Average time on page	00:50	For traffic that was not proactively looking for info on inflatable usage, this is a reasonable length of time for web page visitors to be on the page.
Bounce rate	52.08%	Compares favourably to main RoSPA inflatables page bounce rate of 57.14%.
Age	25-34 – 13% and 35-44 – 40%	These figures would suggest that 50%+ were approximate 'parent age'
Gender	Female - 51.3% and Male 48.7%	Page visitors were well balanced in terms of gender.

Call outs

From 2014 –2018, RNLI attended 37 call outs in Scotland due to inflatable devices. Call outs have gradually increased since 2014.

2019 recorded 17 call outs – 10 within the campaign period (June – September). It is unclear whether the number of calls outs would have remained the same or been higher without the campaign.



HMCG data showed that over the 2019 period that there were 52 call outs due to inflatables. Anecdotal evidence from HMCG stations across Scotland suggest a small reduction during the campaign period although this could also have been due to weather conditions.

Discussion



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Overall the project was successful in spreading safety messages on the issue of inflatables. The project reached an estimated total of 637,000 people.

There was national up take of the social media assets suggesting the topic is important to wider areas within the UK.

The project was run through partnership working on a limited budget which suggests that it is a model which could be repeated and applied to any water safety issue.

Partners within the project agreed a number of suggestions which could improve the project (or similar projects) in the future. These include:

- A case study which could have been beneficial for both media and social media content
- Outreach to third parties such as Scottish Swimming and Scottish Water, as well as local authorities, should be considered in the future to help reach the target audience
- Capacity and work priority dependent, content could be developed during real time to respond to and raise awareness of issues and incidents as they arrive
- Survey activity for measuring awareness and understanding of the inflatables issues in the target audience
- Website content to be developed further to be more engaging.

Inspection of inflatables

In addition to raising awareness of the potential dangers of inflatables, the campaign focused on researching and testing a number of inflatables. Our key objectives for this included:

- Research the current standards available relating to inflatables
- Test the inflatables to the found standards.

Current standards

There is a wide variety of inflatable products sold for use in water. It is important to be clear on the intended use of each item as the requirements will differ between toys, floating leisure articles and buoyancy aids for swimming. Floating leisure articles are intended for adult use and may use BS EN ISO 25649 as a route to compliance with General Product Safety Regulations, whilst toys may use BS EN 71 as a route to compliance with Toy Safety Regulations 2011.

The relevant regulation could therefore be the Toy Safety Regulations 2011, the Personal Protective Equipment Regulations 2016 or the General Product Safety Regulations 2005, depending on the circumstances. Products may, therefore be CE marked or not, depending on their function and presentation.

Testing



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Coordinated by SCOTSS, eight authorities across Scotland participated in the project examining a large range of products including armbands, swim seats, float vests, long flotation devices 'noodles', kick boards, animal shaped floats to hold on to or sit on, swim rings, floats, doughnuts, boats and baby neck floats.

A total of 270 items were examined from over 50 retailers including online retailers.

24 items were submitted to the Public Analyst for formal testing of which 15 failed.

- 8 of these failures were on labelling only
- 7 of these failures were on safety and labelling.

Whilst the overall failure rate is low (15 failures from 270 items examined is 5.5%) the consequences of safety failures in inflatable products can be significant.

In most cases action was taken by way of making referrals to the relevant Trading Standards teams for compliance advice, however, in two instances the matter has been taken up directly with the importer based in the Netherlands. In a further two instances inflatables were removed from sale on online platforms and units were voluntarily surrendered to Trading Standards with formal warnings issued.

In one of the most significant failures, 1,538 unbranded units (baby neck rings) were removed from a number of online platforms and have been referred for further ongoing targeting. These traders were almost exclusively outside the EU.

In specific relation to adult inflatables, which were the subject of the RoSPA campaign, some items were found which did not feature the required labelling, including pictograms regarding appropriate use and consideration of environmental factors thus contravening BS EN ISO25649.

Christopher Bell, chair of the SCOTSS Product Safety Group, said:

“Through the actions of local Trading Standards teams, this project has prevented an estimated £3.5 million in injury and associated costs.

Our advice remains that consumers should take great care when purchasing, especially online, and satisfy themselves as to the safety of any items which they purchase, particularly as they will be used in the water. We recommend only purchasing from established suppliers, and make doubly sure when purchasing online that you have all of the information about the importer into the EU.

It is not currently clear whether the standards relating to adult inflatables need to go any further than they do already, however, interested parties can participate in standards development through BSI.

I am delighted at the positive campaign RoSPA's team in Scotland ran to alert users to dangers posed by inappropriate use of inflatables. Critical consideration of these factors by users remains absolutely key to their safe use.”



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Next steps

The suggested next steps for the future of this awareness raising campaign are as follows:

- Partners to discuss future plans for continuation of the campaign for summer 2020
- Consider feasibility of capturing monthly data on inflatables in order to see emerging trends
- Consider the development of a code of practice for sellers and manufacturers on inflatables.





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RoSPA Head Office

28 Calthorpe Road
Birmingham
B15 1RP
☎ +44 (0)121 248 2000

RoSPA Scotland

43 Discovery Terrace
Livingstone House
Heriot-Watt University Research Park
Edinburgh
EH14 4AP
☎ +44 (0)131 449 9378/79

RoSPA Wales

2nd Floor
2 Cwrt-y-Parc
Parc Ty Glas
Cardiff Business Park
Llanishen
Cardiff
CF14 5GH
☎ +44 (0)2920 250600

General Enquiries

☎ +44 (0)121 248 2000
☎ +44 (0)121 248 2001
✉ help@rospa.com
🐦 twitter.com/rospa
📘 facebook.com/rospa
🌐 linkedin.com/rospa

www.rospa.com

Registered Charity No. 207823
VAT Registration No. 655 131649

