

The Management of Water Safety in Scotland's Local Authorities



Medium Outcome Evaluation Report

C McAvoy, November 2019

Supported by



Background

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 on April 9th 2019 with the aim to help local authorities understand water safety policy, the barriers to implementing a policy and to share key information and advice.

This helped further **Scotland’s Drowning Prevention Strategy’s** objective to “support local authorities in the development of a water safety policy”.

Evaluation approach and methods

In order to evaluate the workshop and its short term and medium term outcomes, RoSPA agreed to use the Scottish Community Safety Network’s (SCSN) and Evaluation Support Scotland’s (ESS) evaluation framework.

The prevention activity of the workshop was focused on: **professionals, partners and service providers**. The table below shows the relevant outcomes and longer term changes that this workshop will help to contribute towards.

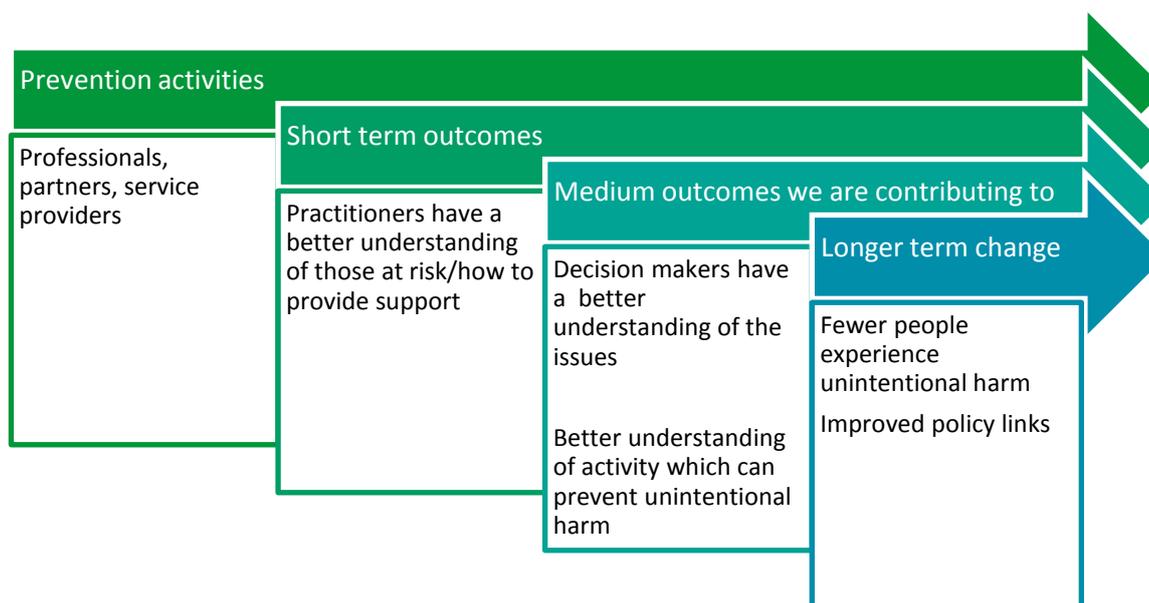


Figure 1: Professional, partners and service providers’ outcomes

The short-term outcomes were detailed, analysed and evaluated within the preliminary report, which can be accessed [here](#).

This report concentrates on the medium term outcomes.



Medium-term outcomes

The 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 and covered here:

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

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

Data in this report

We sent out an online survey to help measure the medium term outcomes around six months after the April workshop. Nine local authorities that attended the original workshop responded. The following results therefore add up to nine unless otherwise stated.

Focus on prevention - data

A key short term outcome focussed on understanding those at risk by having appropriate data. This also helps the medium term outcome by ensuring focus on preventative activity within the current areas. Signing up to WAID highlights the importance of water safety and local authorities' commitment to data in order to gather the intelligence to help prevent drownings.

Prior to the workshop, only one local authority present was signed up to WAID. Since then, eight local authorities have said they are either already signed up to WAID or are in the process. This provides a good indication of the commitment to data and intelligence of decision makers to help ensure a focus on the prevention of drownings.

Focus on prevention – the need for preventative activities

Positive responses were received immediately after the workshop on the understanding of the need for a water safety policy and the need to focus on prevention activity. This was measured again six months later to ascertain if understanding of the issues was still high. As can be seen below, the majority of responses were



positive, suggesting that the workshop has had a lasting impact on participants and their understanding of water safety policies and the need for prevention.

Understand the need for a water safety policy

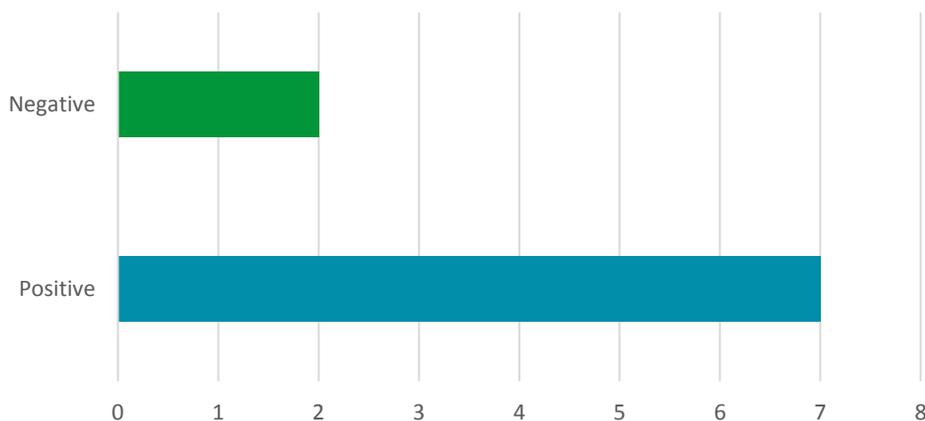


Figure 2: Understanding of the need for a water safety policy (n=9)

Understand the need to focus on prevention activity

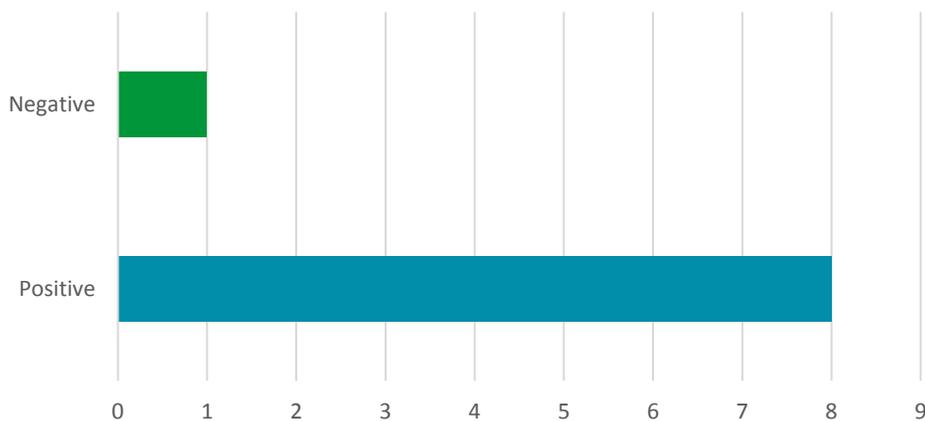


Figure 3: Understanding of the need for a water safety policy (n=9)



Policy and Strategy

One of the key medium-term outcomes was to measure if the topic has been reflected through policies and strategies.

RNLI data showed that no local authority had asked for a beach risk assessment since the April workshop. However, water safety policies increased.

Prior to the workshop, only one participant came from a local authority which had a water safety policy in place. **Eleven local** authorities noted that they planned to develop a policy directly after the workshop.

Of the nine local authorities that participated in the six month survey, **five** local authorities said they were currently developing a water safety policy, whilst three said they were not (one did not answer- see figure 4).

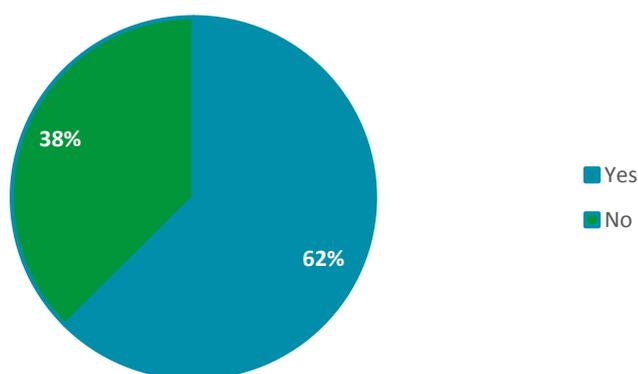


Figure 4: Local authorities that are developing a water safety policy (n = 8, 1 non response)

Case Study: East Ayrshire

East Ayrshire is an inland area with many lochs, rivers, reservoirs and water filled voids such as old quarries and mines. Over the past five years, there have been five drowning fatalities within the area.

East Ayrshire Council developed a Water Safety Policy in 2019. Prior to the Policy being implemented Services adopted a structured risk based approach to identify hazards and implement practical and reasonable control measures for open water.

Partnership work with RoSPA on Child Safety led to further communication regarding RoSPA's commitment to Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy which helped focus the need for a Water Safety Policy. East Ayrshire Council recognised that there was a requirement to investigate all open water within the Council's control and develop a Policy to provide guidance to services that have responsibility for inland waters.



The Policy aims to:

- Provide guidance and support to services that have responsibility for inland waters
- Provide practical and proportionate control measures in order to reduce the risk of drowning
- Promote and develop water safety education and water safety awareness initiatives within education establishments and local communities
- Highlight and raise awareness through national water safety campaigns such as Drowning Prevention Week
- Provide suitable learning environments, such as swimming pools and managed outdoor learning activities

Developing the Policy

The Policy took four months to develop and utilised a number of resources including Managing Safety at Inland Waters . A local water safety group has been established with representatives from: Police Scotland, Fire and Rescue, Coastguard and Hillhouse Quarry to help take forward water safety including education within schools.

Practice

The Policy was communicated and distributed to all departments within the Council who manage inland areas of water. It has been put into practice by ensuring risk assessments are carried out to identify hazards in and around the water, with appropriate measures to reduce or eliminate the risk being implemented. An example of the Policy being put into practice was the development of a suite of risk assessments for the Leisure Trust for Dean Park which has duck ponds, bogs etc. Similarly, the local water safety group delivered Water Safety Presentations to all Secondary Schools in the Summer.

Case study provided with kind permission from East Ayrshire Council.

Conclusion and next steps

Overall, the workshop appears to have been a success. The six months results have shown a lasting impact of the workshop and local authorities' focus on preventive activities. The following is therefore recommended for the future:

- RoSPA and RNLI to work together to consider political and top management buy-in for water safety policies in Scotland
- RoSPA and RNLI to consider the feasibility of an annual policy workshop for local authorities.





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