
Water Safety Partnership

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Background

- The Reading Community Safety Partnership recommended Reading would benefit from a Water Safety Partnership which met for a third time on 11th July 2024
- The CSP can provide leadership and support
- Other strategic partnerships may need to be involved incorporating elements of water safety into its planning
- Development of a Water Safety Plan will be the primary objective of the partnership supported by a range of forums



Purpose

The Reading Water Safety Partnership is a partnership with three core partners of the Reading Community Safety Partnership - Thames Valley Police, Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and Reading Borough Council who are committed to working together to try to prevent as many water-based fatalities and injuries on or around Reading's water ways.

Reading as a town benefits from having several water ways, linked to the river Thames, the Kennet and Avon Canal and the Holy Brook, that are a signature attraction for the area and enjoyed by local people and visitors alike. However, the presence of so many water ways present several risk factors that mean the potential for serious injury or fatality is high.

Data

There is currently no universally agreed mechanism for collecting statistics on water related deaths; on Reading's waterways there are believed to have been several fatalities or serious injuries on or near to the water, many reported in the local media in the last year.

However, these incidents are not reflected in nationally collected data held by the National Water Safety Forum, suggesting there may be variations in how and where water related fatalities are recorded.

Total number of incidents in Berkshire categorised as 'Rescue of Person from water'

Calendar Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total number of incidents	33	27	24	28	36

Data continued

**Total number of incidents in Berkshire categorised as
'Rescue of Person from water'**

Unitary Breakdown	Calendar Year									
	2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
WEST BERKSHIRE	6	18%	3	11%	3	13%	1	4%	7	19%
READING	9	27%	11	41%	4	17%	12	43%	10	28%
WOKINGHAM	8	24%	5	19%	5	21%	4	14%	1	3%
BRACKNELL FOREST	-	0%	1	4%	1	4%	-	0%	2	6%
WINDSOR AND MAIDENHEAD	7	21%	7	26%	10	42%	6	21%	15	42%
SLOUGH	3	9%	-	0%	1	4%	5	18%	1	3%

Water Related Deaths – last 12 months

Age	Date of Death	Location of Death
59	02/08/2021	Kennet River, Holy Brook, Reading
40	08/12/2021	River Thames. Near Tesco's Napier Road, Reading
68	29/12/2022	River Thames, Caversham Bridge, Reading
10	21/08/2023	River behind Elgar Road, Reading
67	06/10/2023	River Thames, Scours Lane, Tilehurst, Reading
21	14/02/2024	River Kennet, Kennet Walk, Reading
42	15/03/2024	Fobney Lock, Island Road, Reading Royal Berkshire Hospital (location of incident near Fry Island Bowls Club, near
55	29/04/2024	Brigham Road)
22	28/05/2024	River Thames off the middle of Caversham Bridge Reading

Thames reached the highest level in Reading, in more than 100 years this winter

Data and knowledge gaps

We need to know:

- Who owns each section of Reading's waterways?
- What are the areas of highest risk?
- How do seasonal factors impact on water safety?
- What safety provisions are in place and in what location; what are the gaps?
- What is the take up of swimming lessons in Reading?
- What education programmes are there on water safety?

Objectives

1. Promote and develop water-safety education and initiatives within Reading with particular emphasis on the most at-risk groups identified through incident data and local knowledge.
2. Proactively promote public awareness of water-related risks and ensure a consistent message through campaigns and communications.
3. Share best practice and resources across the Borough (and beyond) highlighting a multi-agency approach to water safety.
4. To be the focal point in responding to water related incidents in Reading and undertake a 'safety review' of the location.

Objectives continued

5. Work with partner organisations and neighbouring local authorities to gather and improve data involving water incidents in Reading, to inform a targeted approach to water safety.

6. Improve local data gathering of incidents involving water in the Reading area.

7. Align to objectives of neighbouring local authorities with shared water ways, share data and develop consistency in training, risk assessment and response.

Partners (core)

- Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Reading Borough Council Officers
- Reading Borough Council Lead Member for Environmental Services and Community Safety (relevant lead member)
- Councillor(s) representative from a waterways ward
- Brighter Futures for Children
- Thames Valley Police (Reading Local Police Area)
- South Central Ambulance Service
- District Enforcement
- The Environment Agency
- The Canal and River Trust
- Kennet and Avon Canal Trust
- British Water Ways
- Community Representative

Stakeholders

- Education Services (supporting Schools and Colleges)
- Water Rescue and Training Group representatives
- River User Group representatives
- Community Water Based Sports Group representatives

Stakeholders (wider)

- Communities themselves
- Users of the water ways for leisure or work
- Residents living on or close to a water way
- Businesses on or involved in water related activity

Agreed Approach

- Create a **water safety plan**, that aligns to a range of existing strategic partnerships
- Identify location of greatest risk and concern
- Agency and board member risk registers updated to reflect water safety risks
- Core Partners meet to review plan and commission learning on incidents that take place
- Core Partners lead and contribute to local audits of water safety along our water ways
- A community forum of stakeholders is established inclusive of users of the waterways, with input from Councillors.
- An Annual Report is provided to **Community Safety Partnership and other boards (on request)** on actions completed within the plan.
- Convene a delivery group to steer the plan.