

Water Safety Scotland  
[info@watersafetyscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@watersafetyscotland.org.uk)  
Monday 3rd April

Dear Colleague,

### **Partnership Approach to Water Safety**

I am writing to you on behalf of Water Safety Scotland (WSS) to update you that we have established, or are in the process of establishing, a Partnership Approach to Water Safety (PAWS) Group within your area. The formation of a PAWS Group in all areas of Scotland is a part of the [Community Safety Minister's Action Plan on Water Safety](#).

PAWS is a multi-agency approach to improving water safety that has three key stages:

- **Prevention**  
Pro-active activities that reduce the likelihood of a water emergency occurring by raising awareness of safety issues, and by educating the public on how to be safe in and around water.
- **Improved Incident Response**  
Effective response to water emergency incidents through multi-agency exercises and training the public how to react to incidents safely via the Waterside Responder Scheme.
- **Review of significant events**  
Implementation of the WSS Drowning & Incident Review \* (DIR) after significant incidents to ensure learning from water emergency incidents to gain an understanding of the contributory factors and make interventions that may prevent similar events from occurring.

Within your area the PAWS partners will work together to achieve these aims and will utilise the assets, skills, and experience that they possess to deliver co-ordinated and meaningful engagements within your community.

The availability of this group will also enable you to task them to look at any specific water safety concerns that you may have and to ensure that pro-active water safety measures are being advanced.

The success of the Drowning & Incident Review (DIR) is dependent upon coherence within PAWS Groups and we would request your support in their adoption and adherence to this process through the CPP. DIR aims to go live in early May.

Can I ask that you allow for the PAWS Chair to establish a reporting line into your CPP on the activities that they undertake to ensure that you are sighted on any identified risks within your area, what actions they are taking to address them, and to provide the support of the CPP should it be required?

If you require any further information on who your PAWS Chair is, or on the Drowning & Incident Review, please contact us at [info@watersafetyscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@watersafetyscotland.org.uk)

Yours sincerely,



Carlene McAvoy – Secretariat/Founder

\* Drowning & Incident Review (DIR)

WSS via RoSPA and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), developed the Drowning and Incident Review (DIR) process for accidental water-related fatalities in Scotland.

DIR aims to gather data and understand the contributory factors of a water-related incident to help gain a better understanding of how to prevent similar incidents occurring in future.

This has tangible benefits locally and nationally.

Locally:

- Partners gain insight into the risks in their area
- The people best placed to address these risks are involved in the process and therefore kept informed
- Local knowledge can be employed to ensure improved water safety outcomes in the specific area

Nationally:

- Previously unavailable information will be reported to WAID and held there
- National strategy can be better informed due to enhanced data capture

Why do we need DIR?

Every year, on average, there are around 20 fatalities where we have limited information e.g. no outcome known. Due to the legal structure in Scotland, not all fatalities have Fatal Accident Inquiries so there could be vital information missing that could potentially prevent future fatalities.

What does DIR cover?

DIR can be used for fatal incidents located both inland and in coastal waters and also for near-miss incidents where these are either attended by emergency services or are reported.

DIR does not cover: Boating and commercial incidents, deaths by suicide, deaths in employment, deaths where crime is suspected.

Research into DIR was undertaken in 2022 and has been published in BMJ Injury Prevention: <https://injuryprevention.bmj.com/content/early/2022/12/22/ip-2022-044785>