

15 January 2018

## **Drowning Prevention Campaign**

### **Purpose**

For direction.

### **Summary**

The LGA has been working with the National Water Safety Forum on drowning prevention. The paper proposes a campaign – aimed solely at our members – to raise awareness of the need to act on this issue, in particular in relation to our role as duty holders under the Health and Safety at Work Act.

### **Recommendation**

That the Safer and Stronger Communities Board approve the proposed campaign.

### **Action**

Officers to proceed as directed.

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### **Background**

1. In November 2016, the Safer and Stronger Communities Board (SSCB) agreed to:
  - 1.1. Work with the National Water Safety Forum (NWSF) and its members, including the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), to support existing campaigns and educational work and to support the Forum's objectives;
  - 1.2. Continue to seek examples of water safety best practice and to publicise these on the LGA website;
  - 1.3. Work to encourage councils to share data for inclusion on water related incident data (WAID) and to consider joining the National Water Safety Forum;
  - 1.4. Encourage councils to have a community-level risk assessment and water safety plan and to in turn encourage local recreational activity organisations to have a clear strategic risk assessment and plans that address key risks;
  - 1.5. Make the case for a session on water safety at the LGA's 2018 annual conference; and
  - 1.6. Work with the NWSF and other partners to encourage central government to do more to raise awareness of water safety issues.
2. The LGA has subsequently:
  - 2.1. Supported the NWSF in attempting to improve data by lobbying the Home Office. Our LG Inform colleagues have been in discussion with the NWSF as to how we can support improved data for WAID and we have raised this with the Home Office in connection with its attempts to make fire and rescue service data more transparent.
  - 2.2. Published a water safety toolkit for councils on the LGA website, along with best practice case studies.
  - 2.3. Had an SSCB representative (Cllr James Dawson) speak at the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) water safety conference.
  - 2.4. LGA communications have supported drowning prevention campaigns by the RNLI, the Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) and the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC).
  - 2.5. An unsuccessful bid was made for a session on water safety at the 2017 LGA conference.
  - 2.6. Policy and communications have supported Rother DC in dealing with the consequences of drownings at Camber Sands in summer 2016.

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3. The LGA has been invited to join the separate coastal and inland groups of the NWSF. The Coastal Special Interest Group (SIG) will attend the next coastal meeting with officers and SSCB water safety champions will attend the next inland group meeting.
4. We would like to work with RoSPA and Swim England to facilitate more water safety being taught in schools. We have prompted the idea on our website but have not had the capacity recently to pursue this more actively. There may be some challenges around the LGA commenting on curriculum content. There may be opportunities to work with the Culture, Tourism and Sport Board here.
5. The following issues have emerged as potential focuses for future activity on this topic:
  - 5.1. There is some uncertainty around water safety responsibilities placed on councils as duty holders under the Health and Safety at Work Act.
  - 5.2. Although our toolkit was well received, there is insufficient awareness of it among LGA members.
  - 5.3. The term 'water safety' is confusing for some as it is seen as relating to drinking water. Drowning prevention is clearer.
  - 5.4. We have also become aware of the worrying case in Maldon where a local amenity has been lost as a result of safety issues:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maldon\\_Marine\\_Lake](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maldon_Marine_Lake).
6. It is therefore proposed that the Board approve a drowning prevention campaign aimed at LGA members. The aim of this campaign would be to raise awareness among councils of:
  - 6.1. The issue in general.
  - 6.2. The availability of resources to support drowning prevention.
  - 6.3. The need to work with partners on this issue.
  - 6.4. The need to consider councils as duty holders.
  - 6.5. The importance of including drowning prevention messages in school swimming lessons.
7. The proposed elements of the campaign include:
  - 7.1. It will be linked to one of the major national water safety campaigns.
  - 7.2. Refreshing and promoting our toolkit and case studies.
  - 7.3. Producing information for councils as duty holders and incorporating this role into the toolkit.

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- 7.4. Bidding for an innovation zone slot at the LGA conference, possibly around the establishment of a regional water safety group in the East Midlands (depending on timing, this may not be part of the campaign as such).
- 7.5. A piece in First (this would need to avoid duplication of last year's piece).
- 7.6. A social media 'event' sharing best practice. Linked to one of the main campaigns, this could involve a day on which councils tweet about their drowning prevention work.
- 7.7. Councils writing to schools in the run-up to one of the national campaigns about the need to include cold water shock in swimming lessons (possibly sending a letter from the SSCB Chair and NFCC President).

### **Implications for Wales <sup>1</sup>**

8. Officers have drawn WLGA attention to the proposed campaign and will liaise over Welsh involvement, should the WLGA wish to be involved.

### **Financial Implications**

9. This work would be undertaken using existing budgets, with most work expected to take place in the next financial year.

### **Next steps**

10. If the Board approves the campaign in principle, the next step will be to discuss with our NWSF partners how we can work together and to obtain detailed advice on the duties of councils as Health and Safety at Work Act duty holders. We will also discuss curriculum issues with LGA colleagues.

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<sup>1</sup> The WLGA pays a membership fee to the LGA on behalf of all Welsh councils and we lobby for them on "non-devolved" issues - e.g. DWP work. The WLGA provides "top-slice" for workforce support, but none for "improvement".