

ROSPA
*The Royal Society for the
Prevention of Accidents*



Local Authority Approaches to Managing Water Safety



About

Background

Scotland is the northern third of the United Kingdom and is covered with the most mountainous terrain in the UK. Surrounded by the North Sea, the Irish Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, these waters support both economic activities such as fishing, aquaculture and leisure activities such as sailing, surfing and diving. With numerous rivers, burns and roughly 25,000 lochs spread across the entire country, such landscapes have made tourism and water related activity an important part of the Scottish economy allowing it to generate funds of up to £4 billion a year.

In 2011 there were a total of 108 drowning and water-related deaths in Scotland: a quarter of the United Kingdom's total of 407 for that year. Although lower in absolute terms, a recent report found that the male adult drowning rate in Scotland is some 2-3 times higher than equivalents in England.

About RoSPA Scotland

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents' (RoSPA) mission is to 'save lives and reduce injuries'. The society seeks to effect change through the promotion of key issues and by providing relevant services in all aspects of safety.

RoSPA is committed to the aims of the 'Scottish National Outcomes' agenda, contributing to the improvement of safety on our roads, and in our homes and workplaces. The agenda has recently been expanded to incorporate water safety.



Key Findings

Introduction

Responsibility for managing water safety has been a key RoSPA policy issue for some time. It is a particularly difficult question to address because of the myriad of landowners and agencies involved.

This report is a first in a series, preceding a similar exercise in England and Wales during 2013. The objectives of this work are:

- To understand what policy arrangements and commitments local organisations, particularly local government, have made towards managing water safety
- To understand how these commitments have been interpreted, and identify barriers to effective action
- To identify good practice and gain further insight into the issue.

Each of Scotland's 32 local authorities participated in the research and provided a useful local baseline for future work. This short report presents selected results, discussions and recommendations. A copy of the full report can be obtained by emailing help@rospa.com.

We hope our findings will inform local and national level approaches to better address drowning and water related harm - a continuing and disproportionate burden for Scotland.

Key Findings

Managing water safety ranked as being very or quite important in relation to other service demands among 70 per cent of authorities, however less than half had a policy level commitment on the issue.

More than two thirds of authorities were aware of groups that covered water safety issues, and 80 per cent worked with multiple agencies and external organisations. However, more than half of local authorities said they did not have a specific person or group who took control.

Almost half of authorities reported that they had not run a specific water safety information campaign in the last three years, but more than half had provided information to key groups. Many local authorities said they tended to work with outside agencies and organisations on the issue, with some running or supporting campaigns. In addition, some local authorities included water safety advice on their websites. The vast majority, however, did not.

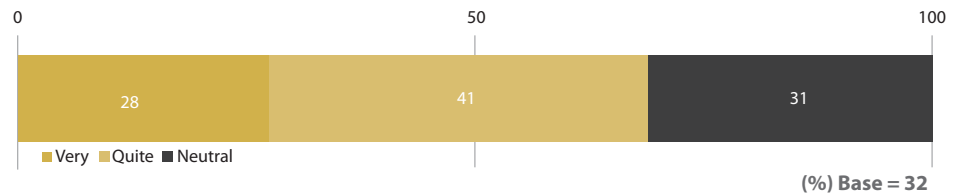
Overall, we found a mixed picture; several authorities were addressing water safety, but there was little in the way of uniformity or issues considered strategically.

Recommendations

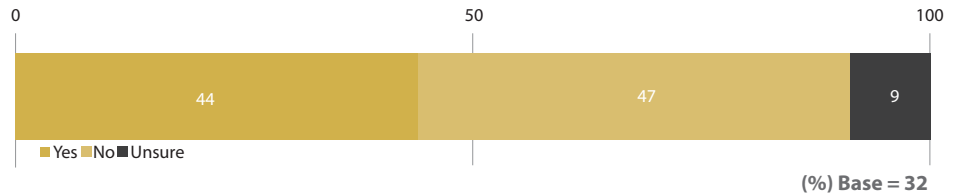
- There is currently a clear need for local authorities to work together on this issue, sharing good practice, challenges and success
- Further work on policy development, identifying and profiling key at-risk groups, is required.
- There is much to be gained from a joint approach to the communication of key risks, however this requires both operational and strategic support.

Survey Responses

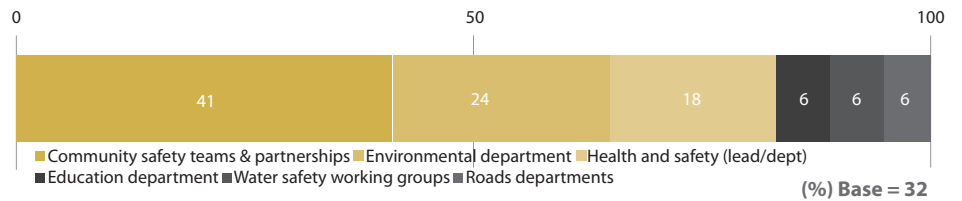
Relative importance of managing water safety



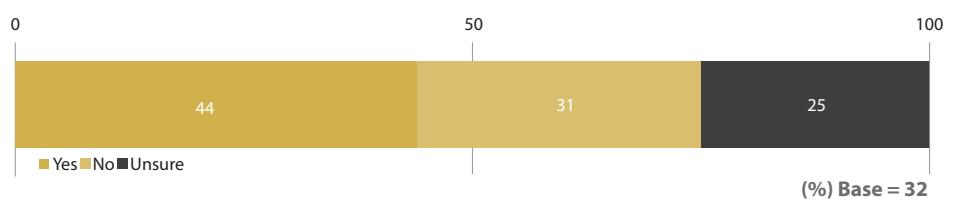
Is there an identifiable lead on water safety issues?



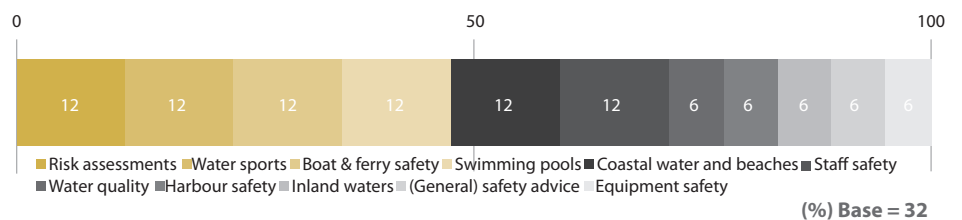
Involvement in managing water safety



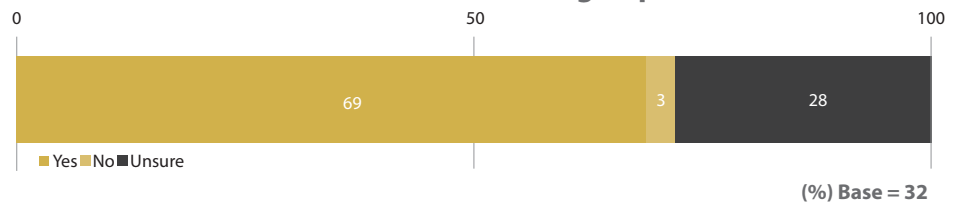
Inclusion of water safety issues within your policies



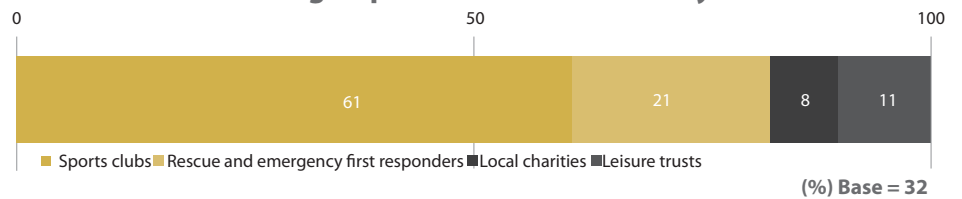
Included in water safety policy



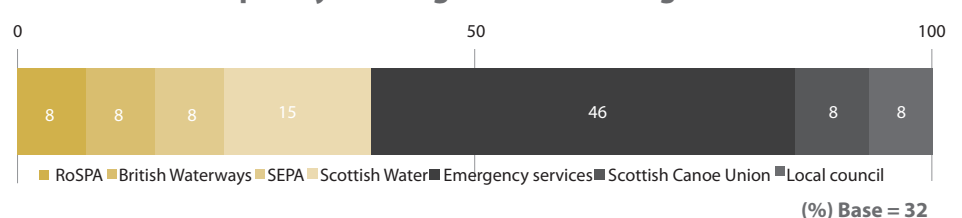
Involvement with local groups



Local groups involved in water safety



Frequently cited organisations and agencies



A copy of the full report can be obtained by emailing help@rospa.com

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