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# RNLI LIFEGUARDS

REPORT 2023

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# INTRODUCTION

**This report is a testament to the amazing work delivered by RNLI beach lifeguards in 2023. During the season, they provided 204,056 supervised beach patrol hours, responded to 14,213 incidents, and aided 19,979 people.**

The work of the RNLI lifeguard service begins before the need for rescue. Every year, lifeguard-supported education programmes inform children and adults how to keep themselves safe at the beach ahead of, and throughout, the season.

This proactive approach to beach safety management is also demonstrated by the number of preventative actions RNLI lifeguards carry out each year. In 2023, they initiated **almost 3M (2,989,928) preventative actions**.

Analysis of the statistics from this year shows a link between weather and incidents. Lower beach visitor numbers and incidents during what would normally be peak season correlate with the unusually wet weather we experienced last summer. And the higher rates of beach visitors and incidents correlate with the better weather at the beginning and end of the season.

In 2023, we continued our focus on the following **four priorities for the RNLI lifeguard service**:

1. To continue to provide high quality lifeguard and beach safety services.
2. To develop a sustainable funding model.
3. To ensure a pipeline of lifeguards to maintain service provision.
4. To provide optimum solutions for beach safety to local authorities and landowners.

The beaches and coastlines around the UK and Channel Islands are wonderful places. And it is an honour and a privilege to provide lifesaving services to the communities that live, work, and play around them.

In what continues to be a difficult financial environment, we will be working harder than ever with our partners to ensure beach visitors have access to lifeguarded beaches.

**14,213**  
INCIDENTS

**19,819**  
INCIDENT ACTIONS

**19,979**  
PEOPLE AIDED



**204,056**  
SUPERVISED BEACH  
PATROL HOURS

# HOW WE SAVE LIVES

We know that early intervention is crucial in our mission to save every one. The RNLI RISE model – Rescue, Influence, Supervise and Educate – is a methodology that is helping us to achieve our mission, from preventing an incident to making a successful rescue possible.

## Rescue

Assistance	3,694
Rescue	2,597
Lives saved	86

## Influence

Method	RNLI	Non-RNLI
Beach safety assessments (full/5-year and annual reviews)	181	13
Beach safety signage reports	11	7
Public rescue equipment reports	1	5
Coastal safety quick scans*	2	10

\*A coastal safety quick scan is a snapshot safety assessment of a beach or coastal location.

## Supervise

Contracted supervised beach patrol hours	204,056
Preventative actions	2,989,928
Casualty care and minor first aid	8,716
Search	175
Near miss	1,750
Missing/found	1,257
Non-aquatic assistance, including from sandbanks	765
False alarm	75
Animals	163
Other	198

## Educate

Water safety programme	Numbers
Lifeguard engagement	118,000+ under 18s given water safety advice at over 800 schools
Swim Safe	14,000+ children aged 7–14 participated at 14 sites
Local ambassadors	1,000+ in light-touch volunteering roles
Water safety workshops	1,000+ schools, colleges and youth groups visited by volunteers

These figures are correct as at 31 December 2023.

# Lifesaving in numbers

## Beach Safety Auditors

Name of team/role	Number of qualified Beach Safety Auditors
Lifeguard Services Team	5
Regional Lifeguard Leads	7
Lead Lifeguard Supervisors	27
Seasonal Supervisors	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>

In 2024, we aim to run training courses to both grow the number and retain the competency of qualified Beach Safety Auditors, in line with robust assurance practices and to mitigate the natural attrition of risk assessors.

Name of external qualification	Number of Beach Safety Auditors with external qualifications
National Examination Board in Occupational Safety and Health (NEBOSH)	7
Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH)	61
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH)/Institute for Outdoor Learning (IOL)	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>76</b>



## Beach safety assessments

Report type	RNLI beaches		Non-lifeguarded beaches	
	Number of reports in 2023	Total number of live reports*	Number of reports in 2023	Total number of live reports*
Full/5-year beach safety assessment	41	242	13	298
Annual review of beach safety assessment	140	242	0	0
Signage report	11	186**	7	291
Public rescue equipment report	1	145***	5	192
Coastal safety quick scan****	2	2	10	170*****

\* Live reports are those that are still in date but required no action in 2023.  
 \*\* Not all locations allow beach safety signage.  
 \*\*\* Not all locations are suitable for public rescue equipment.  
 \*\*\*\* A coastal safety quick scan is a snapshot safety assessment of a beach or coastal location.  
 \*\*\*\*\* This figure is for reports held centrally. Historical reports will not be added as they are considered out of date.  
 All figures shown above are up to 13 December 2023 unless otherwise stated.

# BEACH SAFETY SERVICE DELIVERY

The RNLI offers a beach safety assessment consultancy service to all local authorities and private beach owners.

## Beach safety assessments

The assessment process is designed to help facilitate a comprehensive beach safety management strategy by highlighting hazards and assigning ratings and suggested control measures.

A full beach safety assessment is completed for any new potential RNLI lifeguarded beach, and every 5 years for each RNLI lifeguarded beach thereafter. Each assessment is reviewed annually.

In 2023, we worked on internal assurance of our own Beach Safety Auditors. As risk assessors, they must meet defined annual criteria when submitting internal and external reports and attend training to retain competency and mitigate skill fade. As part of their continued development, the Beach Safety Auditors who qualified in 2022 completed field assessments and full write-ups of their findings into our suite of reports. Coastal training and development took place in the following RNLI regions: North and East England; Wales, West England and the Isle of Man; South East England; and South West England.

During the summer, we maintained 100% compliance on all our beaches for Beach Safety Assessment reports. These are requested by landowners, local authorities and other external partners, such as the police and courts, when required. They are the basis for understanding the situation on the coast when it comes to strategic planning, service level assessments, distribution of equipment and training needs.

We contributed to the RNLI Coast Review process, worked closely with independent assurance teams, advised owners of non-RNLI beaches, and visited coastal communities that had been advised to conduct risk assessments by third party groups.

2023 was a consolidation year while we continue to raise our own standards for reports. It also saw us begin trialling alternative methods for data collection to complement the development of our Geographic Information System (GIS). Working with the Spatial Analysis



**99%  
DELIVERY  
AGAINST  
CONTRACT**

The RNLI endeavours to provide a 100% service delivery against contract. In 2023, we achieved 99% by providing 204,056 out of 205,912 contracted supervised beach patrol hours, despite some localised recruitment challenges.

Lead from our Analysis and Data Science Team, we began developing GIS mapping in 2022 to digitise the way we access and represent data about beach type, report locations and risk scores.

Our use of mobile applications to speed up the collection of data in our field work is progressing. We're working to ensure that we can begin using this method in new ways to compare risk nationally in an objective way, and potentially realise unseen trends and patterns by looking at large data sets.

## Beach safety service development

Although the total number of RNLI beach lifeguard units in 2023 was 242, recruitment challenges meant there was no lifeguard service at three of these units – Berrow in Somerset, Bexhill-on-Sea in East Sussex, and Minster-on-Sea in Kent.

### In 2023, we completed:

- **18 signage reports** – 11 for RNLI lifeguarded beaches and 7 for other locations. This brings the total number of signage reports to 466.
- **6 public rescue equipment (PRE) reports** – 1 for an RNLI lifeguarded beach and 5 for other locations. This brings the total number of PRE reports to 337.
- **12 coastal safety quick scans** – 2 for RNLI lifeguarded beaches and 10 for other locations. A coastal safety quick scan is a snapshot safety assessment of a beach or coastal location.
- **3 full/5-year beach safety assessments (BSAs)** at new locations. This brings the total number of locations with a full/5-year BSA report to 543.

*All figures shown above are up to 31 December 2023 unless otherwise stated.*

# LIFEGUARD STATISTICS OVERVIEW



**19,979  
PEOPLE  
AIDED**

**ALMOST 3M  
PREVENTATIVE  
ACTIONS**

**86  
LIVES  
SAVED**

Lifeguards	Number
Incidents	14,213
Lives saved	86
People aided	19,979
Incident actions	19,819
Preventative actions	2,989,928

*These figures are correct as at 10 January 2024.*

# SUMMARY OF INCIDENTS ATTENDED, PEOPLE AIDED AND INCIDENT ACTIONS TAKEN BY LIFEGUARDS

Lives saved	86
Rescue	2,597
Assistance	3,694
Casualty care	1,339
Minor first aid	7,377
Search	175
Missing/found	1,257
Non-aquatic assistance	765
Near miss	1,750
False alarm	75
Anti-social behaviour	343
Animals	163
Other	198

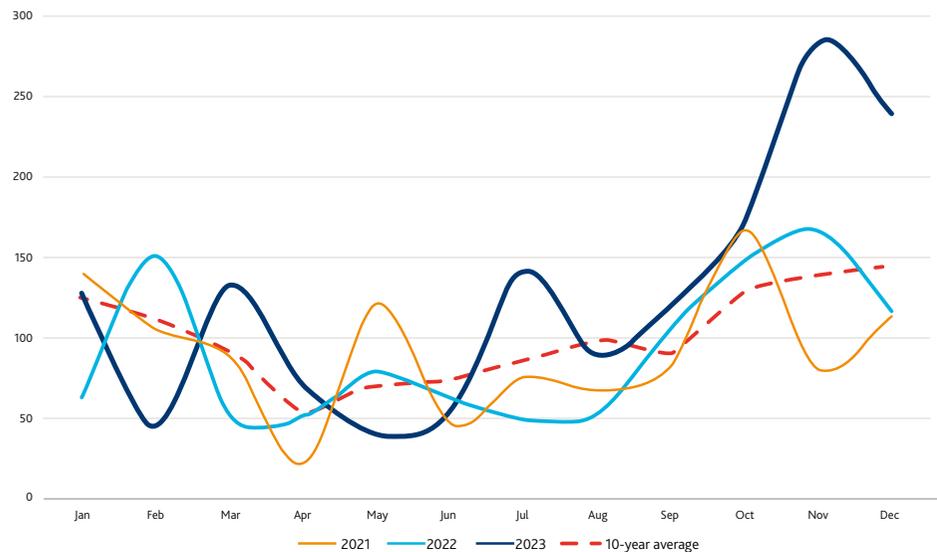
	Ireland	North and East England	Scotland	South East England	South West England	Wales, West England and Isle of Man
Incidents	189	1,859	197	2,167	7,501	2,300
People aided	314	2,181	613	2,436	10,398	4,037
Total incident actions	315	2,151	591	2,424	10,523	3,815
Preventative actions	225,159	445,378	43,292	396,614	1,297,382	582,103
Lives saved	4	13	0	14	38	17
Rescue	32	156	5	168	1,933	303
Assistance	87	281	146	332	1,816	1,032
Casualty care	16	222	13	269	613	206
Minor first aid	107	1,028	77	1,055	4,124	986
Search	1	38	2	30	57	47
Missing/found	12	154	7	360	528	196
Non-aquatic assistance	4	45	9	28	124	555
Near miss	0	136	307	51	971	285
False alarm	0	2	1	12	38	22
Anti-social behaviour	50	52	21	70	112	38
Animals	1	19	3	6	58	76
Other	1	5	0	29	111	52

These figures are correct as at 10 January 2024.

# LIFEGUARD RESCUES AND ANALYSIS

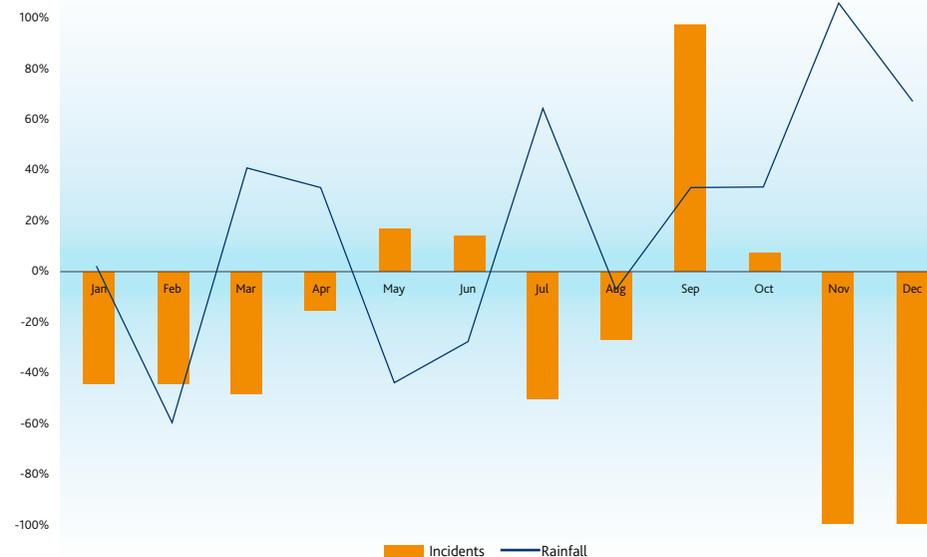
In 2023, we saw the lowest number of incidents in a season since 2009. This excludes the 2020 season, which was affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. This correlates with poor weather conditions in July and August. The rainfall graphs below illustrate the assumption that the weather was a contributing factor.

UK rainfall in mm by month throughout 2021–2023



July saw a 39% increase in rainfall from the average across the UK. August was significantly higher than 2022, with rain further increasing above the average through to December.

Percentage variance of average lifeguard incidents and rainfall in 2023



Lower beach visitor numbers and incidents during what would normally be peak season (July–August) correlate with the poor weather at this time. The higher rates of beach visitors and incidents correlate with the better weather at the beginning and end of the season.

# TRAINING

**The services we provide would not be possible without trained and competent lifeguards. The Lifeguard Assessor Trainer Team and the coastal teams provide training across a range of disciplines to ensure the best possible service to those who visit RNLI lifeguarded beaches.**

## Training highlights

- Targeted support is provided throughout the season, and each year training resources are developed, updated or refreshed.
- Support from the Lifeguard Assessor Trainer Team is given to ongoing and bespoke regional and national lifeguard training demands in multiple locations, to allow the delivery of a lifeguard service.
- National Vocational Beach Lifeguard Qualification courses (NVBLQ) – the national standard for beach lifeguarding – are delivered in areas as needed.
- Commercial training and assistance with a range of other commercial events help to generate income. In 2023, commercial training included three rescue watercraft (RWC) courses for the military.
- Learning resources supporting the delivery of lifeguard training are provided to all lifeguard trainer assessors. Online assessment tools are created and updated based on detailed analysis of data generated from training events and incident reports.
- Feedback from training activities allow for the development of new procedures and interventions, ensuring the safety of our lifeguards and the robustness of our training.
- Lifeboat volunteers are trained and assessed on the use of rescue watercraft (RWC) and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs).
- A range of external, industry-standard qualifications are gained by the Lifeguard Assessor Trainer Team to enable wider compliance, assurance and certification across the lifeguard service. These include RYA (Royal Yachting Association) Personal Watercraft Instructor and RYA Marine Radio SRC (Short Range Certificate) Assessor.
- The development of a new lifeguard competency framework is now complete, ready for use in the 2024 season. This new framework will focus on a lifeguard's practical skills in the environment they work in.
- A new Training Working Group was established at the end of 2023 to ensure a renewed focus on meeting the operational needs of the service.



**Centralised training, assessments and verifications delivered during 2023:**

Course title	Number of lifeguards trained and assessed/upskilled
Centralised College Operational Leadership Course (for senior or prospective senior lifeguards)	120
Centralised College Operational Admin Course (for lifeguard supervisors)	14
Coastal Lifeguard Trainer Assessor (TA) Verification	72
Coastal Lifeguard Supervisor Induction	123
Coastal Lifeguard Royal Yachting Association (RYA) Marine Radio Short Range Certificate (SRC) Online Course	22
Lifeguard Experience Day Event (for volunteers and staff across the RNLI)	31 candidates
Generic and lifeguard-specific TA Course – coastal and centralised	24
Lifeguard Equipment TA Course	34

These figures are correct as at 31 December 2023.

**Coastal training, assessments and verifications delivered in 2023:**

Course title	Number of qualified lifeguards
Coastal Lifeguard Induction (including volunteer, volunteer support and volunteer assistant lifeguards)	Every lifeguard (1,600+) receives bespoke induction training
Coastal Operational Command Assessment	637
All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Operator Course	679
Four-wheel Drive (4WD) Operator Course	728
Inshore Rescue Boat (IRB) Crew Course	271
IRB Helm Course	195
Rescue Watercraft (RWC) Operator Course	410



# OUR PEOPLE

**Whoever we are and wherever we're from,  
we stand together as one crew.**

The RNLI aims, without prejudice, to save every one. And we use this same philosophy to reach all communities through our recruitment campaigns and the public we serve to ensure the sustainability of our lifeguard service.

We are committed to celebrating diversity in our workforce and seek to deliver a safe, progressive, and accommodating working environment.

The RNLI encourages active participation in a range of support networks, including:

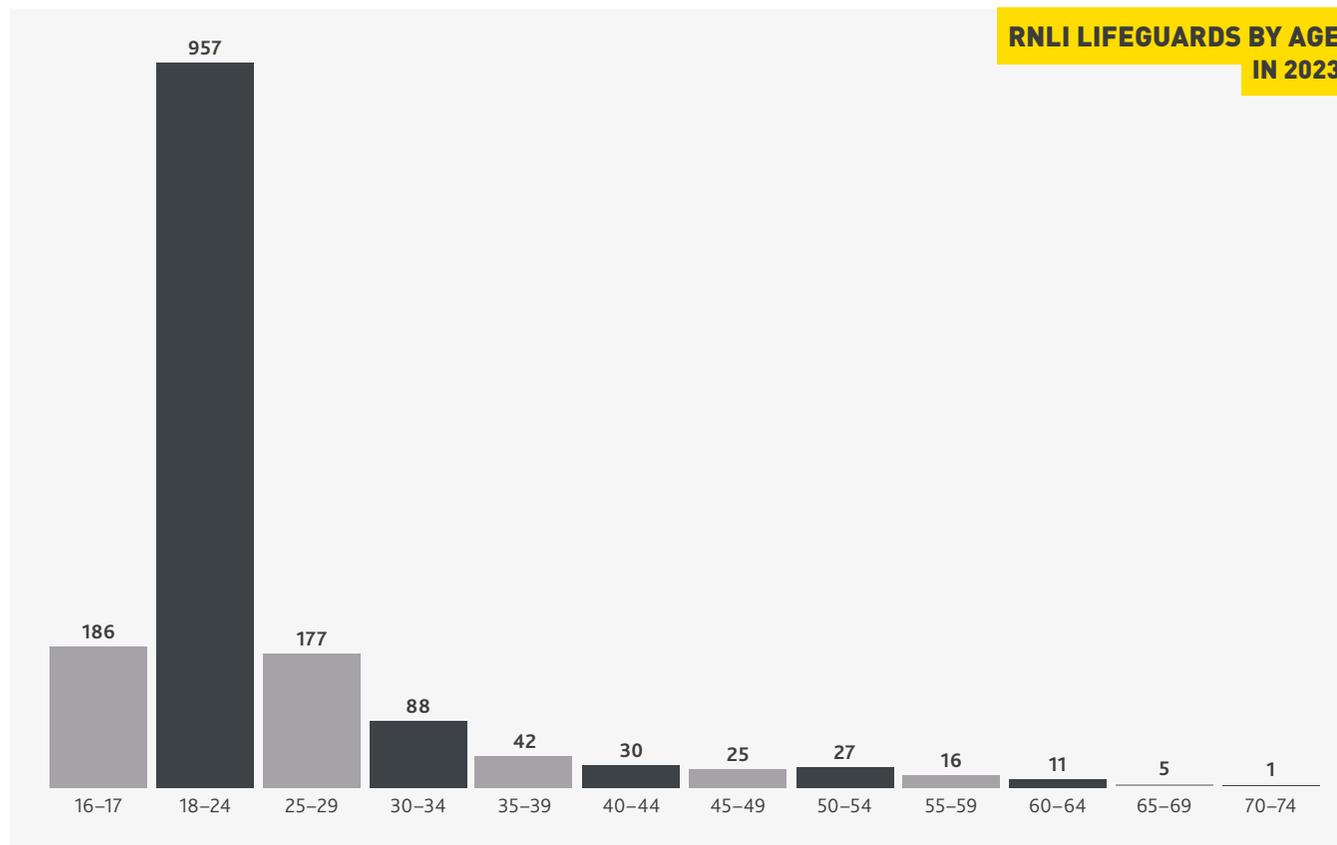
- Disability Network
- Race Equality Network
- Harbour Network (LGBT+)
- Young People's Network (formerly Young Professionals' Network)
- Women in Lifeguarding
- Training Working Group
- Equipment Working Group
- Anti-social Behaviour Working Group.



Female lifeguards in West Dorset in 2022

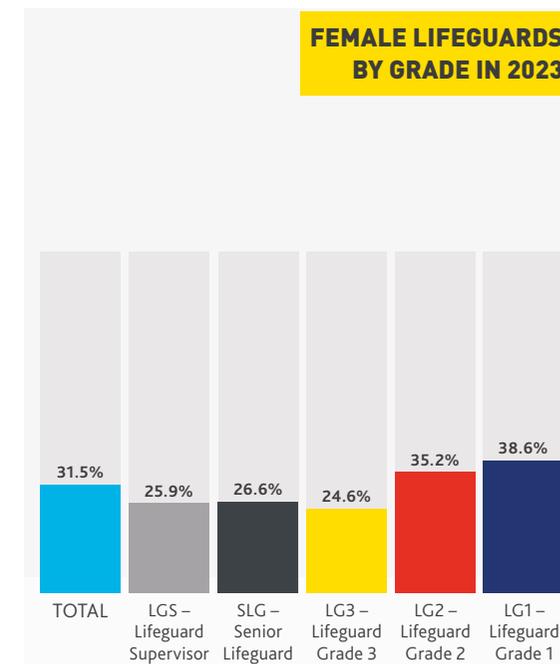
Belfast Pride

# Equity, Diversity and Inclusion



2023 saw noticeable increases in the youngest and some of the older age groups: 16-17 (186 in 2023/174 in 2022), 45-49 (25 in 2023/21 in 2022), 50-54 (27 in 2023/25 in 2022), 60-64 (11 in 2023/9 in 2022), 65-69 (5 in 2023/3 in 2022).

The figures in these graphs are correct as at 1 August 2023.



The percentage for each grade refers to the number of lifeguards within that grade.

**In 2023, 31.5% of all RNLI lifeguards were female. This is up from 29.2% in 2022.** There were also noticeable increases in the number of female senior lifeguards (26.6% in 2023/22.3% in 2022) and lifeguard supervisors (25.9% in 2023/20.3% in 2022).

Lifeguard levels	Number of lifeguards	Percentage of lifeguards
Lifeguard Grade 1 (LG1)	404	26%
Lifeguard Grade 2 (LG2)	398	25%
Lifeguard Grade 3 (LG3)	276	18%
Seasonal Senior Lifeguard (SLG)	429	27%
Seasonal Lifeguard Supervisor (LGS)	58	8%

The figures in this table are correct as at 1 August 2023.

Not all lifeguards are recruited for the year, so this data provides a snapshot view only. We aim to monitor our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) profile year on year so that we can begin to draw strategic objectives and provide support and development initiatives accordingly.



### Anti-social behaviour

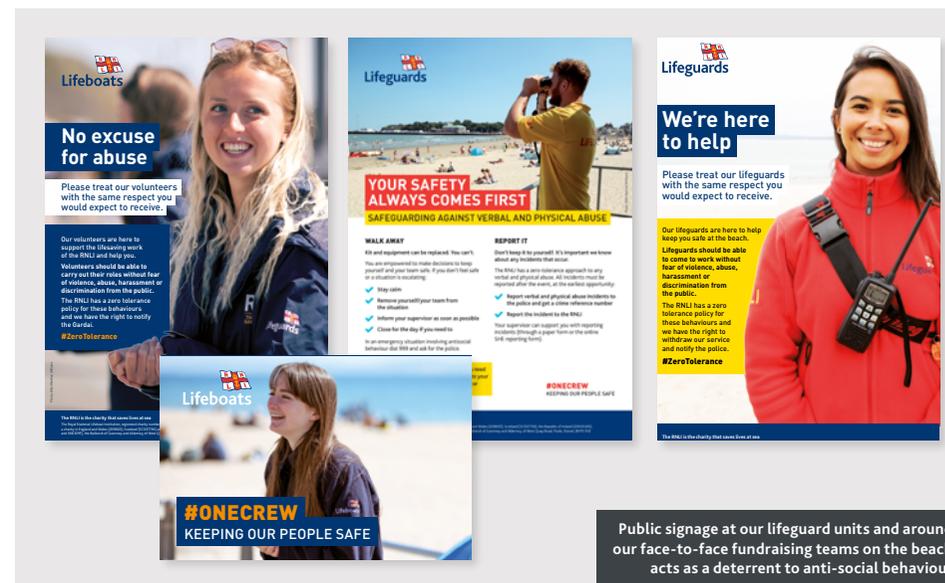
Sadly, the increase in anti-social behaviour and criminal offences that we have seen over the past few years continued in 2023. This is often targeted at RNLI volunteers and staff, including lifeguards, or our equipment and property.

The safety and welfare of our people always comes first, and the RNLI has a zero-tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour and criminal offences.

Lifeguards and face-to-face fundraising teams receive personal safety training and guidance as part of their regular training and inductions. In addition to the operating procedures and risk assessments we have in place, we also work with local authorities to improve the risk controls on the beaches we patrol.

Our zero-tolerance stance is clearly displayed on public signage at our lifeguard units and around our face-to-face fundraising teams on the beach to help discourage anti-social behaviour.

The RNLI provides welfare support for anyone affected by an incident. And there is also an RNLI Anti-social Behaviour Working Group to monitor trends, so we can respond to the challenges we face and share learnings across the organisation and with partners.



# WATER SAFETY PROGRAMMES

In 2023, water safety and lifeguard teams around the UK and Ireland continued to work with others, prioritise risk, and positively educate all in our mission to save every one.

## Working with partners

We re-filmed our Float to Live assets to incorporate the new research conducted by the University of Portsmouth's Extreme Environments Laboratory. Following this research, we updated our advice on how to Float to Live:

- Tilt your head back with ears submerged.
- Relax and try to breathe normally.
- Move your hands to help you stay afloat.
- It's OK if your legs sink – we all float differently.
- Spread your arms and legs to improve stability.



The messaging on our Float to Live assets appears in English and Welsh. We continue to explore ways to diversify our messaging to be more inclusive to all.



## 'The advice of Float to Live was an absolute lifesaver'

The RNLI's updated Float to Live advice helped save the life of Tina West when she was on holiday in Cornwall. Tina was paddling near Godrevy Beach when she was suddenly swept out of her depth. Back on the beach, Tina's husband raised the alarm.

Thankfully, Tina remembered the Float to Live advice she'd seen on the big screen at her local cinema in Portsmouth. This helped Tina stay calm until RNLI Lifeguard Tarryn Brown came to her rescue on a rescue watercraft.

'The advice of Float to Live was an absolute lifesaver,' says Tina. 'I was having a conversation with myself, and it just allowed me that opportunity to think. I remember thinking I can do this as long as I need to, until someone comes to get me.'

'It took us a few minutes to see her – she was really far out,' recalls Tarryn. 'When we got there, Tina was just floating on her back – she wasn't fighting the current – which conserved her energy and potentially saved her life.'



In 2023, over 14,000 young people aged 7-14 participated in free Swim Safe sessions with the RNLI and Swim England



The **summer water safety campaign** was delivered for the first year with no budget, apart from a very small test in Merseyside using Maritime Coastguard Agency (MCA) paid media. Results from our survey at the end of the summer showed that awareness of the campaign's Float to Live message was maintained year-on-year in both the UK and Ireland. Message recall was strongest for those who visit the coast more often and who are also aware of the RNLI.

This also highlights the essential part our partners and local ambassadors play in amplifying water safety messages to the public. With the support of RNLI lifeguards, we recruited over 250 new **volunteer local ambassadors** in 2023.

**250+**  
NEW VOLUNTEER  
LOCAL AMBASSADORS  
RECRUITED TO AMPLIFY  
WATER SAFETY  
MESSAGES AT THE COAST

**14,000+**  
YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 7-14  
PARTICIPATED IN  
**SWIM SAFE**

**118,485**  
SCHOOLCHILDREN GIVEN  
WATER SAFETY  
**ADVICE**  
BY RNLI LIFEGUARDS

**Swim Safe** was delivered at 14 sites over the summer in collaboration with Swim England. Over 14,000 young people aged 7-14 participated in the free open water sessions, which were delivered at inland and coastal locations. The programme was run with the dedication and support of delivery partners, community volunteers, RNLI lifeguards and water safety teams. A special thanks to the lifeguard team in Scotland for their support in delivery in 2023.

### Water Safety Live Event

At the end of May, we held the very first **Water Safety and Lifeguards Live Event** under the stars at Bridlington Lifeboat Station in East Yorkshire.

This was a great opportunity for both teams to come together ahead of the busiest part of the season. It also shone a light on the fantastic partnership work between our water safety and lifeguard teams, both locally in the region and in other areas. This work is helping us to reach new audiences, drive recruitment, deepen our connection within lifesaving operations, and ultimately save more lives.

One of the innovative ways the teams worked was through the development of a digital safety sign on Crantock Beach that gives safety advice outside of lifeguarding hours.

### Working with teachers and young people

During the 2023 summer season, RNLI lifeguards across the UK visited primary and secondary schools, providing 118,485 children with key safety advice for when visiting the coast with their families. Lifeguards led the delivery of **Meet the Lifeguards** sessions, **Lifeskills** and **Crucial Crew** schemes, and at scenarios in community safety centres.

**Free water safety workshops** were available to download on RNLI.org in 2023. The packs are designed to equip young people and their families with essential and lifesaving water safety skills like Float to Live and how to call for help in an emergency. RNLI lifeguards feature throughout the resources to reinforce key information.

Water safety volunteers delivered over 1,700 **face-to-face water safety workshops** to young people over the course of the summer, working with children in schools, colleges and youth groups.

**Special thanks to all the lifeguard and water safety teams that supported the delivery of water safety programmes in 2023.**

**1,700+**  
**WATER SAFETY  
WORKSHOPS**  
DELIVERED TO  
SCHOOLS,  
COLLEGES  
AND YOUTH GROUPS

# FUNDING

**As a charity that's independent of government, the RNLI is always looking for sustainable solutions and opportunities to support the delivery of our world-class lifesaving service, both now and in the future. We are very keen to work with our corporate network to create mutually beneficial and bespoke partnerships.**

## Funding the lifeguard service

Due to the economic challenges in 2023, we are working closely with our existing partners, while striving to forge new commercial partnerships, to develop funding for the essential lifeguard service we provide.

Funding provides the training that maintains our lifeguards' skills and fitness, and that keeps them safe when rescuing those in trouble in the water. It provides the kit that protects them from the elements and the coastal environment. And it provides and maintains the facilities and equipment they need to save lives on the beach.



## The brand behind our lifeguard service

For 2024, we're inviting companies to express their interest in joining us on the frontline as the lead sponsor of the RNLI lifeguard service. This is the first time we've sought a corporate partnership of this kind.

As part of our lifesaving team, the lead sponsor's brand will be behind every preventative action, every rescue and every life saved by RNLI lifeguards.

In return, they'll receive a bespoke package to meet their organisation's strategic objectives and bring significant returns on their marketing investment. This will include their brand featuring across our lifeguarding assets on the beach, boosted by both digital and traditional media and unique face-to-face engagement.

If your company is interested in becoming the brand behind the RNLI lifeguard service:

- Scan this QR code with your mobile device to watch our video and find out more.



**SCAN ME**

- Or visit [RNLI.org/BeTheBrand](https://RNLI.org/BeTheBrand).

If you would like to talk to us about sponsoring the service, please email [Abbie\\_Hawkins@RNLI.org.uk](mailto:Abbie_Hawkins@RNLI.org.uk). Thank you.

## FACE-TO-FACE FUNDRAISING

**Our in-house team of face-to-face (F2F) fundraisers act as ambassadors for the RNLI. They are thoroughly trained on what the charity does on an international, national and local level. This means that wherever the conversation flows, they can find a connection and a relevance to inspire every single person they meet about the RNLI.**

The F2F Team not only ensures a valuable regular giving channel for the RNLI, but also speaks confidently about how people can help to keep themselves safe around water.

The team has always shared key water safety messages, and throughout 2023 they engaged with over 275,000 adults and young people right up until Christmas.

Over the last 5 years, our F2F fundraisers have spoken to over 1.2 million people with targeted and relevant safety messages, leading to lifesaving behaviour change. This is crucial for our drowning prevention work.

Our F2F Team work collaboratively in the local community working alongside RNLI volunteers, lifesavers and partners – each supporting the other to achieve their goals.

Working like this enables the team to inspire new supporters, who in 2023 contributed over £2.3M in their first year to the RNLI through monthly direct debits. This type of secure regular income is so important for the RNLI. It builds on the great work of our volunteer fundraisers, who raise awareness of the RNLI each and every day.

2023 saw our F2F fundraisers at many new and existing locations throughout the UK and Ireland, all year round, from January through to December. These included beaches, lifeboat stations, event venues, leisure centres, shopping centres and garden centres.

A number of RNLI lifeguards joined the F2F Team for the winter months to continue their lifesaving work with the RNLI. They were a great asset to the team.

**275,160**  
**ADULTS AND CHILDREN**  
EDUCATED ABOUT WATER  
SAFETY BY F2F TEAMS  
**ALL YEAR ROUND**



RNLI face-to-face fundraisers on Portrush Beach

# RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**In 2023, we began a review of lifeguard training to ensure we are delivering effective, comprehensive training that equips our lifeguards with the skills and competencies they require in the most efficient way possible.**

RNLI lifeguards are seasonal, often working 3–6 months of the year between April and September. At the start of each season, every lifeguard receives full induction and competency training across a wide range of skills. These include rescue and open water swimming, casualty care and life support such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and the operation of powered watercraft.

The two-thirds of lifeguards who return for another season receive the same breadth induction over a shorter training period, and currently there is also a 90-day reassessment during the season for critical safety competencies.

Our review of lifeguard training is looking to establish what best practice looks like and to understand how the RNLI approach compares to other organisations.

The critical questions we want to answer are:

- What is the best approach to training that represents both the best value for money for the RNLI while keeping lifeguards and the public safe?
- What is the optimum frequency for training and skills refresh programmes to maintain critical safety skills?
- How do we ensure that skills taught at the start of the season do not fade if some lifeguards don't need to use them for a period of time?

## Data collection through image recognition

We continued our research project with Surline in 2023, which is looking at the use of image recognition technology to save costs, reduce time-consuming paperwork, and increase data quality within lifeguard operations.

Image recognition technology allows us to count beach visitors and capture the number of incidents attended by lifeguards, including when these incidents happened.

Knowing that the number of incidents is higher at a certain time of year and day means RNLI lifeguards are forewarned of these peak times and can better plan their patrols.

In trials so far, image recognition technology has worked across busy and quiet beaches, narrow and wide beaches, and locations with low (micro) and high (macro) tidal ranges. In 2023, this pilot scheme was rolled out on a further 10 beaches in Northern Ireland.

## Using drones to help save lives

Working in partnership with the Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK), we began trialling the use of a new emergency response drone, which RLSS UK has developed with Eagle Eye Innovations (EEI).

The drone rescue service was trialled on Crantock Beach in North Cornwall. The River Gannel runs through the middle of this broad beach, making access across it and to the water's edge difficult for lifeguard patrol vehicles, particularly at low tide.

The waterproof drone, manufactured by Swell Pro, allows the lifeguards to undertake rapid observations across a wide area. Lifeguards can then give proactive safety advice to the public via the drone's integrated speaker system. The drone also has the potential to deploy lifesaving equipment such as inflatable buoys.

## Evaluation of 2023 research

We are currently analysing the data and evaluating the results of these trials over a wider geographical area, which we will use to inform our planning for 2024.

We will also look at how we can scale the use of these and other technologies to improve our service delivery. Further updates will be provided in subsequent annual reports.



RNLI lifeguards prepare to launch the emergency response drone

# MEDIA

During the 2023 season, the RNLI Media Engagement Team continued to raise awareness about RNLI lifeguards, the lifesaving work they do and the importance of beach safety.

## Highlights

- *The Guardian* spend a day with RNLI lifeguards on Cornwall's Perranporth Beach to understand what lifesaving equipment is used during patrols to keep the public safe. It includes an interview with Lifeguard Supervisor Tom Houghton.



Play it safe  
**'We can be in the sea in seconds': an expert guide to the RNLI's life-saving kit**

24 July: *The Guardian* feature an article about a day they spent with RNLI lifeguards on Perranporth Beach in June to learn about their vital lifesaving equipment. Pictured is RNLI Lifeguard Supervisor Tom Houghton.

- The RNLI's lifeguard hut features on Channel 4's programme *Britain's Best Beach Huts*. Lifeguard Chris Lewis explains the specifications of the hut and how it helps RNLI lifeguards with their patrols.



25 July: One of the RNLI's longest-serving lifeguards Chris Lewis appears on Channel 4's programme *Britain's Best Beach Huts* where he explains the importance of RNLI lifeguard huts

- *The One Show* spend time at Bournemouth Beach at Easter to see the training RNLI lifeguards undertake to prepare for the season. They follow this with a visit to Weymouth Beach in the summer to witness how all the training is put into practice during lifeguard patrols.



14 September: RNLI Lifeguards Cameron Jacobie, Hayley Webb and Holly Barden are presented with the 2023 Alison Saunders Award for rescuing a group of people who had capsized in their boat off the Wirral coast in April 2022

- *iNews* report on the 2023 Alison Saunders Award, which is presented to RNLI Lifeguards Cameron Jacobie, Hayley Webb and Holly Barden for their bravery in rescuing a group of people who had capsized in their boat off the Wirral coast in April 2022.

- *BBC Online* feature an article on 65-year-old John Irwin who is one of the oldest RNLI lifeguards in Northern Ireland.



15 October: Accomplished masters swimmer John Irwin swaps retirement for lifeguarding with the RNLI, completing his first summer season on County Down beaches at the age of 65

- *Sky News* cover a piece about the RNLI's and Swim England's free Swim Safe sessions. They also highlight the work RNLI lifeguards do to look after children on the beach.

**Social media**

Our social media followers across Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and TikTok continued to show positivity towards the RNLI and our lifeguards.

- A lifeguard quiz to launch lifeguard recruitment on Twitter achieved a reach of 43,500. The quiz performed better than the video used the previous year, which shows that fun, interactive content resonates with our target audience.
- Trialling TikTok and adopting current trends worked very well. The Coolest Summer Job trend had a reach of 95,000. Cutting together different clips in a short, vibrant video allowed us to showcase the benefits of being an RNLI lifeguard and include a call to action.
- TikTok also came second behind Instagram for RNLI job application referrals, outperforming LinkedIn and Twitter.
- We held an Instagram Live Q&A with Crosby Lifeguard Alistair Cunningham to dive into what it takes to become a lifeguard and to talk about his experience. With a reach of 24,000, 179 viewers when live, and lots of comments from potential candidates, it really shows the value of this type of content.



**Media coverage**

At the end of 2023, media coverage was calculated to provide an insight into the public relations (PR) activity and media coverage secured during the year. A total of 3,418 items of print, online and broadcast coverage was recorded for lifeguards from 1 January to 31 December 2023, giving our target audiences 3.4B opportunities to see them.

**Advertising value equivalent**

Calculating the equivalent monetary value of achieved PR and communications compared to paid-for advertising is notoriously difficult. However, the advertising value equivalent (AVE) can provide a useful benchmark. From 1 January to 31 December 2023, the advertising value of the 3,418 items of lifeguard coverage was estimated at more than £10M.

**3.4 BILLION OPPORTUNITIES CREATED FOR TARGET AUDIENCES TO SEE OUR MEDIA**

# NEWS

**RNLI lifeguards returned to the water and the headlines in 2023 amid another busy season. Here is just a snapshot of some of the lifesaving rescues they were involved in, alongside highlights of their critical work to raise awareness and share water safety messages.**

**30 MARCH**

**RNLI lifeguards prepare for the season**

The RNLI launches the new lifeguard season with various media opportunities at beaches across the UK to witness lifeguards going through their paces. Journalists are given the chance to speak with lifeguards and see what training they go through to prepare for patrols. Statistics from 2022 are revealed, which show more people than ever visited an RNLI lifeguarded beach that year.

**24 MAY**

**Our annual RNLI Float to Live campaign is launched**

Float to Live, the RNLI's annual water safety campaign, is launched with updated advice ahead of the second May bank holiday. The 2023 campaign focusses on the rescue of Tina West, who used the Float to Live technique to save her own life. Tina was swept out of her depth while paddling near

Godrevy Beach in Cornwall. RNLI Lifeguard Tarryn Brown was on duty that day and helped to pull Tina to safety. The campaign receives coverage across national and regional media outlets, from broadcast channels to newspapers.



24 May: Tina West helps to launch the annual RNLI Float to Live campaign after she used the advice to keep herself alive

**31 MAY**

**Seven rescued in one day by south-east Devon lifeguards**

Warm weather and challenging conditions, including strong winds and rip currents, lead to a number of rescues in one day during the Whitsun half term school holiday.

RNLI lifeguards in Teignmouth, Dawlish and Exmouth have to respond quickly when a number of children get swept out to sea and desperately need their help.

**13 JUNE**

**Lifeguards in Scotland speak to 2,000 children**

Pupils from over 40 schools throughout Fife, Dundee and Edinburgh learn how to be safe near the water over the summer during fun and interactive visits by RNLI lifeguards. The schoolchildren not only learn key water safety advice, but they also get to ask the lifeguards questions about their lifesaving role.



13 June: Martin McQueenie is one of many RNLI lifeguards who help to deliver vital water safety advice to over 2,000 schoolchildren throughout Fife, Dundee and Edinburgh

**2 JULY**

**Paddleboarders rescued by Skegness lifeguard**

RNLI Lifeguard Isaac Banham rescues two stand-up paddleboarders after they're caught by strong winds and flipped off their boards at Skegness Beach in Lincolnshire. Seventeen-year-old Isaac acts quickly and paddles out on a rescue board to the casualties, who have been blown around 500m outside of the red-and-yellow flags.



2 July: RNLI Lifeguard Isaac Banham, 17, rescues two stand-up paddleboarders in strong winds at Skegness Beach

**31 JULY****Norfolk lifeguards save baby's life**

RNLI Lifeguards Theo Maun and Max Sterry from West Runton Beach spring into action when an 18-month-old baby becomes unresponsive and in desperate need of medical attention. Theo and Max give oxygen to baby Macie, who is struggling to breathe, and stay with her until the ambulance arrives.

**8 AUGUST**

31 July: RNLI Lifeguards Theo Maun and Max Sterry from West Runton Beach save the life of 18-month-old Macie when she begins struggling to breathe. Macie is pictured with her mum Alice and Theo.

**RNLI trial use of drone on Cornwall beach**

The RNLI, supported by the Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK), trial an emergency response drone on Crantock Beach

in Newquay. The River Gannel runs through this broad beach, making access across it and to the water's edge difficult for lifeguard patrol vehicles, particularly at low tide. The drone is tested to see if it will allow the lifeguards to undertake rapid observations across a wide area and give proactive safety advice to the public using the drone's integrated speaker system. Regional ITV and BBC outlets run the story and interview Newquay lifeguards.

**9 AUGUST****Yorkshire lifeguard rescues two children from rip current**

Sixteen-year-old Riley Billany is on patrol by Whitby Pier when he and fellow RNLI Lifeguard Rob Stephenson are alerted to two young children being pulled further out into the water by a rip current. Riley swiftly attends to the casualties with a rescue tube and manages to safely assist them back to an area of water where they can stand.



9 August: RNLI Lifeguard Riley Billany, 16, rescues two young children from a rip current by Whitby Pier

**20 AUGUST****Off-duty RNLI lifeguard family save three swimmers in Cornwall**

A family of off-duty RNLI lifeguards save the lives of three swimmers on holiday at Treyarnon Beach outside of patrol hours. RNLI Lifeguard Issey Barnes notices three swimmers near the rocks on the south side of the beach. On her way over to the group, she notices one of the swimmers (a young boy) is waving in distress while the other two are being smashed against the rocks. Issey immediately signals to her two sisters Maisie and Scarlet, and her father Gareth, who are also all RNLI lifeguards. As a family, they work together to save the lives of the three swimmers.



20 August: A family of RNLI lifeguards save three swimmers at Treyarnon Beach while off duty. Pictured left to right: Sisters Masie, Scarlet and Issey Barnes with their dad Gareth.

**29 AUGUST****Age is no barrier**

A lovely story of 53-year-old RNLI Lifeguard Digby Ellis-Brecknell is picked up by Jersey media. Digby joined as a lifeguard in 2023, following in his son's footsteps to show there is no age restriction when it comes to being a lifeguard. If you keep yourself fit and healthy, feel confident in the water, and are keen to build your personal skills, he says it's a fantastic opportunity.



29 August: At 53, RNLI Lifeguard Digby Ellis-Brecknell proves age is no barrier by following in his son's footsteps

# MAP OF CURRENT RNLI LIFEGUARDED BEACHES



To see a map of all current RNLI lifeguarded beaches in the UK and Channel Islands, **scan this QR code** with your smartphone or tablet or visit [RNLI.org/map](https://www.rnli.org/map).

## SCAN ME



Once the map has opened:

- Use the search box to find a specific beach, or zoom in and out using the + and - function to view the station, support centre and unit information.
  - Select a beach for a breakdown of its information.
- To view lifeguarding dates and times, select a beach, scroll to 'Unit Operating Times', select 'View', then 'Find my nearest lifeguarded beach' and this link will take you to this information on [RNLI.org](https://www.rnli.org).
- Layers can be switched on or off using the Map Layer menu. 

# RNLI LIFEGUARDED BEACHES IN 2023

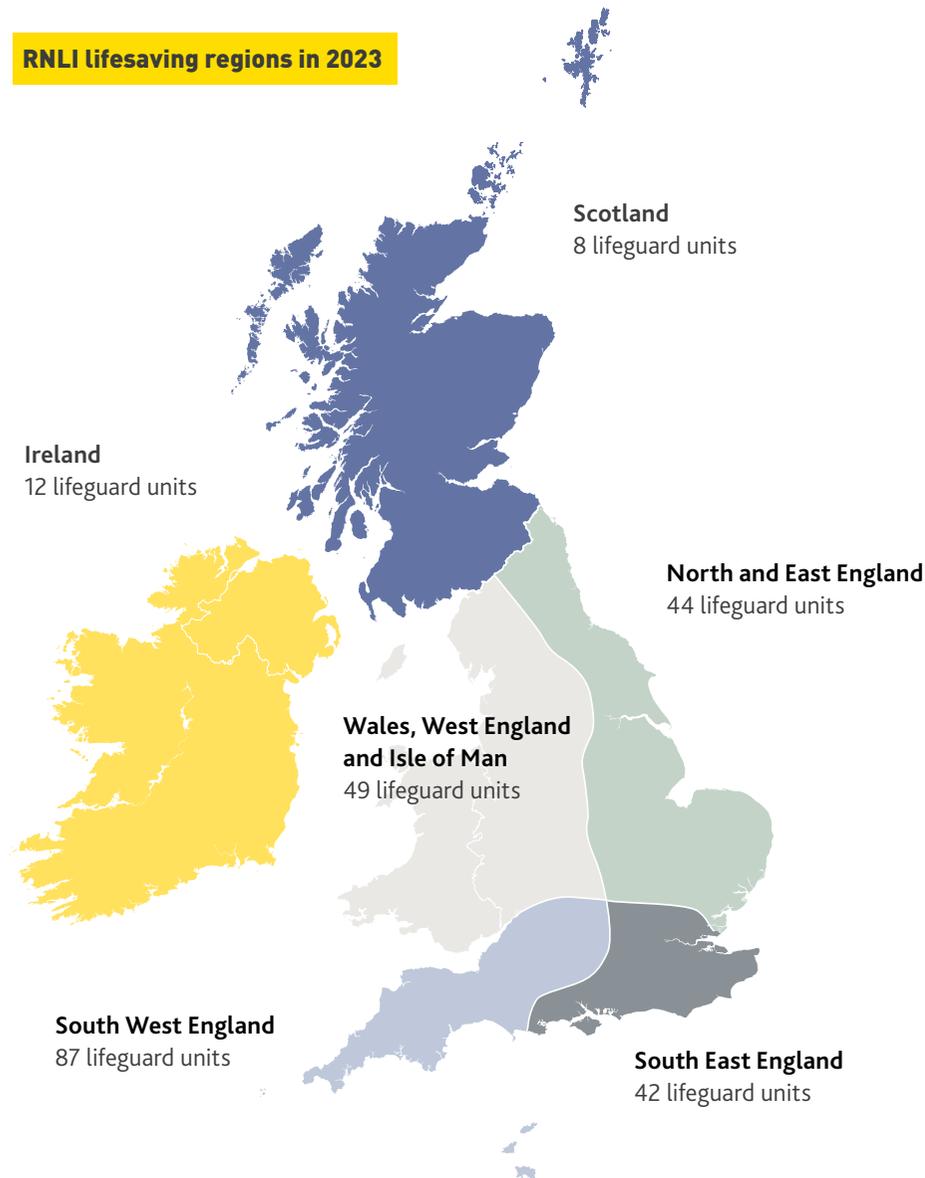
Support centre and lifesaving region	Beach name
<b>– SCOTLAND –</b>	
<b>Glenrothes</b>	Aberdour Silver Sands, Broughty Ferry, Burntisland, Coldingham Bay, Elie Harbour, Leven, St Andrews East Sands, St Andrews West Sands
<b>– NORTH AND EAST ENGLAND –</b>	
<b>Boldon</b>	Cats and Dogs, Cullercoats, King Edward's Bay, Roker, Sandhaven (Centre Beach), Sandhaven (Mowbray), Seaburn, Tynemouth Longsands, Tynemouth Longsands North, Whitley Bay, Whitley Bay North
<b>Catfield</b>	Cromer East, Cromer West, East Runton, Gorleston, Great Yarmouth, Hemsby, Lowestoft North, Lowestoft South, Mundesley, Sea Palling, Sheringham East, Sheringham West, Southwold North, Southwold South, Wells-next-the-Sea, West Runton
<b>Scarborough</b>	Belvedere, Bridlington North, Bridlington South, Cayton Bay, Filey, Hornsea, Redcar, Runswick Bay, Saltburn, Sandsend, Scarborough North Bay, Scarborough South Bay, Whitby, Withernsea
<b>Skegness</b>	Mablethorpe, Skegness, Sutton-on-Sea
<b>– WALES, WEST ENGLAND AND ISLE OF MAN –</b>	
<b>Bridgend</b>	Coney/Sandy Bay, Llantwit Major, Ogmere, Rest Bay, Southerndown, Trecco Bay, Whitmore Bay (Barry)
<b>Cardigan</b>	Aberporth, Aberystwyth North, Aberystwyth South, Borth, Clarach, Llangrannog, Newport Sands, New Quay Harbour, Poppit Sands, Tresaith
<b>Formby</b>	Ainsdale, Crosby, Formby, Southport
<b>Haverfordwest</b>	Broad Haven, Newgale Central, Newgale North, Newgale South, Nolton Haven, Whitesands
<b>St Asaph</b>	Prestatyn, Rhyl

Support centre and lifesaving region	Beach name
<b>Swansea</b>	Aberavon, Amroth, Caswell, Coppet Hall, Freshwater West, Langland, Pembrey, Pendine Sands, Port Eynon, Saundersfoot, Tenby Castle, Tenby North, Tenby South, Three Cliffs
<b>Wirral</b>	Harrison Drive, Leasowe Bay, Moreton, New Brighton (Perch Rock), The Plateaux, West Kirby
<b>– SOUTH EAST ENGLAND –</b>	
<b>Chichester</b>	Bognor Regis, Eastney, Littlehampton East (East), Littlehampton East (West), Southsea Central, Southsea East
<b>Hastings</b>	Bexhill-on-Sea*, Camber Central, Camber West, Hastings Pelham, Hastings Pier, Marina St Leonards
<b>Poole</b>	Alum Chine, Avon, Boscombe East, Boscombe West, Bournemouth East, Bournemouth West, Branksome Chine, Durley Chine, East Cliff, Friars Cliff, Fisherman's Walk, Highcliffe, Manor Steps, Sandbanks, Shore Road, Southbourne, Swanage
<b>Ramsgate</b>	Botany Bay, Broadstairs (Viking Bay), Joss Bay, Leysdown-on-Sea, Margate Main, Minnis Bay, Minster-on-Sea*, Ramsgate, Sheerness, St Mildred's, Stone Bay, West Bay (Thanet), Westbrook Bay
<b>– SOUTH WEST ENGLAND –</b>	
<b>Bude</b>	Black Rock, Crackington Haven, Crooklets, Northcott, Sandymouth, Summerleaze, Widemouth
<b>Dawlish</b>	Dawlish Warren, Exmouth, Sandy Bay, Teignmouth
<b>Hayle</b>	Beach View, Carbis Bay, Godrevy, Gwenver, Gwithian North, Gwithian South, Hayle Towans, Marazion, Mexico Towans, Perranuthnoe, Porthcurno, Porthkidney, Porthmeor, Porthminster, Sennen, Upton Towans
<b>Helston</b>	Gunwalloe, Gyllyngvase, Kennack, Poldhu Cove, Polurrian Cove, Porthleven, Praa Sands

Support centre and lifesaving region	Beach name
<b>Jersey</b>	El Tico (formerly known as St Ouen's Bay), Grève de Lecq, Le Braye, Plémont, St Brelade's Bay, Watersplash (formerly known as Watersplash, St Ouen's Bay)
<b>Kingsbridge</b>	Bantham, Bigbury-on-Sea, Blackpool Sands, Challaborough, Hope Cove, Sedgewell Cove (Bigbury-on-Sea), Slapton Sands (Monument)
<b>Mullacott</b>	Berrow*, Brean, Burnham-on-Sea, Croyde, Sandymere, Westward Ho!, Woolacombe
<b>Newquay</b>	Crantock, Fistral, Great Western, Lusty Glaze, Mawgan Porth, Porth, Tolcarne, Towan, Watergate Bay
<b>Padstow</b>	Booby's, Constantine, Harlyn, Polzeath, Porthcothan, Trebarwith, Trevone, Treyarnon
<b>Perranporth</b>	Chapel Porth, Holywell Bay, Perranporth, Perran Sands, Porthtowan, Portreath, St Agnes
<b>Torpoint</b>	Freathy, Seaton, Sharrow, Tregantle, Tregonhawke
<b>Weymouth</b>	Greenhill, Lyme Regis (Cobb), West Bay (Dorset), Weymouth (main)
<b>– IRELAND –</b>	
<b>Ballymoney</b>	Ballycastle, Benone Strand, Castlerock, Cranfield, Downhill Strand, Murlough, Portrush East Strand, Portstewart Strand, Tyrella, West Strand Blackrocks (formerly known as Portrush West Strand), West Strand Harbour (formerly known as Portrush West Harbour), Whiterocks

*\*Although the total number of RNLI lifeguarded beaches in 2023 was 242, recruitment challenges meant there was no lifeguard service on three of these beaches - Berrow in Somerset, Bexhill-on-Sea in East Sussex, and Minster-on-Sea in Kent.*

## RNLI lifesaving regions in 2023



Although the total number of RNLI beach lifeguard units in 2023 was 242, recruitment challenges meant there was no lifeguard service at three of these units – Berrow in Somerset, Bexhill-on-Sea in East Sussex, and Minster-on-Sea in Kent.

### **North and East England lifesaving region**

The number of lifeguard units reduced to 44 in 2023 from 45 in 2022 as Ingoldmells is no longer an RNLI lifeguarded beach.

### **South West England lifesaving region**

The number of lifeguard units reduced to 87 in 2023 from 88 in 2022 due to Teignmouth North and South Beaches merging as Teignmouth Beach.

### **South East England lifesaving region**

The number of lifeguard units reduced to 42 in 2023 from 43 in 2022 as Canford Cliffs is no longer an RNLI lifeguarded beach.

Historically, the RNLI Lifeguard Operations Centre in Bournemouth has been included as a lifeguard unit. However, as it's a centre and not a lifeguarded beach, it has been excluded from this and subsequent reports.

# OUR PARTNERS

**At the RNLI, we believe even one life lost to drowning is one too many. But we can't save every one alone.**



We're proud to work in partnership with local authorities, beach owners, lifeguard training providers and specialist organisations to make our beaches safer. And we would like to thank our partners for their ongoing commitment to beach safety and our mission to save every one.





North Tyneside Council



**ALSO IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:**

- Arun District Council
- Bourne Leisure, Sandy Bay
- North Yorkshire Council
- Parkdean Resorts (Croyde)

**TRAINING PARTNERS:**





# Lifeguards

Royal National Lifeboat Institution  
West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1HZ  
Email: [lifeguards@rnli.org.uk](mailto:lifeguards@rnli.org.uk)  
[RNLI.org](http://RNLI.org)

Logos: BCP Council (Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole); Bridgend County Borough Council; Carmarthenshire County Council; Causeway Coast and Glens District Council; Ceredigion County Council; Cornwall County Council; Denbighshire County Council; Dorset Council; Dundee City Council; East Devon District Council; East Lindsey District Council; East Riding of Yorkshire Council; East Suffolk Council; Fife Coast and Countryside Trust; Great Yarmouth Borough Council; Green Sefton Council; Hastings Borough Council; Lusty Glaze Beach Resort; Lyme Regis Town Council; National Trust; Neath Port Talbot Council; Newry, Mourne and Down District Council; North Norfolk District Council; North Tyneside Council; Parkin Estate Limited (Woolacombe); Pembrey Country Park and Beach; Pembrokeshire County Council; Pendine Community Council; Perranzabuloe Parish Council; Portsmouth City Council; Ports of Jersey; Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council; Rother District Council; Salcombe Harbour Authority; Scottish Borders Council; Somerset Council; South Hams District Council; South Tyneside Council; Sunderland City Council; Swale Borough Council; Swanage Town Council; Swansea Council; Teignbridge District Council; Thanet District Council; Torridge District Council; Vale of Glamorgan Council; Watergate Bay Hotel; Weymouth Town Council; Wirral Borough Council.

Photos: Channel 4, RNLI/(Arun Gray, Callum Robinson, Chris Taylor, Claire Fitzpatrick-Smith, Daniel Bedwell, Iona Hamilton, Jimmy Young, Nathan Williams, Scotland Lifeguard Team, Stuart Montgomery), *Sky News*, *The Guardian*, Ted Morgan, Toni Carr

## The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution, a charity registered in England and Wales (209603), Scotland (SC037736), the Republic of Ireland (CHY 2678 and 20003326), the Bailiwick of Jersey (14), the Isle of Man (1308 and 006329F), the Bailiwick of Guernsey and Alderney