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Water is Everywhere... what can we learn about water safety and other subjects in partnership with the RNLI?

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Also RNLI Volunteer Administrator and Fundraiser



Photo: 20-month-old child, exploring the beach

If you live by the sea or waterways, you may have a firm understanding of and respect for the water. Some families that you work with may own boats, fish for a living or work with and support one of the charities such as RoSPA or RNLI. Almost all families will have visits to the coast or have a paddling pool at home.

The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) was founded in 1824 and set out to save lives at sea. Now, in addition to supporting fisherfolk and sailors, their work includes supporting a variety of coastal leisure activities such as paddleboarding and bathing or raising awareness of water safety. In addition, they offer a Swim Safe programme for 7-14 year olds. Not only does this give young people the opportunity to test and improve their swimming ability in a different aquatic environment, but it is hoped that their families will also receive the water safety messages.

So, what would be relevant to you working in the Early Years? The RNLI also has an education option which spans key stages and offers many learning opportunities for our young children as well as safety messages for our families. The offer most relevant for the readers of this e-magazine is the 3-

7 age band (RNLI Lifeboats, 2022). It includes free downloadable resources, lesson plans and links to curricula from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

One example from this education offer, recommended by Elliot Rogers (RNLI Water Safety Delivery Support) is the RNLI water safety passport (RNLI Lifeboats, 2022a). This teaches children key safety lessons for which they can earn stamps and a personalised certificate. One resource is a story called 'a Day by the Water' in which children learn about Choppy the Cat and Ruff the Dog, and their misadventure in the park.

It would be worth checking out these resources, or perhaps create your own. Recently one nursery setting was visited by a lifeboat volunteer. They wanted to share their own work with this volunteer which included activities around the story of 'The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch' (Armitage, 2017). These activities included floating and sinking, pulleys, model-making and sandwich-making. Children made boats out of cardboard boxes and took teddy sailing – before enacting rescues.

In Northumberland there are 6 RNLI lifeboat stations (Blyth, Newbiggin, Amble, Seahouses, Craster and Berwick). There is also one museum (at Bamburgh) dedicated to Grace Darling. The RNLI Education Programme includes activities around this famous woman (RNLI Lifeboats, 2022b). Education visits to schools / community settings have now recommenced and you can book a presentation using this link: <https://rnli.org/youth-education/educational-visits/arrange-a-youth-education-presentation>.

You may know about these services already, and that is super. However, many of our families are unaware. Furthermore, it is often those without the lived experience and understanding of the dangers of water who get into trouble in water. 'Respect the Water' is a message which originated in the RNLI and this begins with early learning.

Further Reading:

Armitage, R. and Armitage, D. (2017) *The Lighthouse Keeper's Lunch*. London: Scholastic

RNLI Lifeboats (2022) Lower Primary Aged 3-7. Available at: <https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/lower-primary>

RNLI Lifeboats (2022a) Water Safety Passport 1. Available at: <https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/lower-primary/water-safety-passport-1>

RNLI Lifeboats (2022b) Grace Darling: Topic Pack. Available at: <https://rnli.org/youth-education/education-resources/lower-primary/topic-pack>

RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) (2022) RoSPA. Available at: <https://www.rospa.com/>



Photos: 4-year-old learning to paddleboard under the guidance of his Aunty (who is a RNLI helm)

Note:

‘Almost half of the people who drown never meant to enter the water. Many of these people were taking part in everyday activities, such as walking. They may have fallen into water or attempted to rescue someone else in need of help’ (RNLI, 2022).