



**Greater Manchester**  
Water Safety Strategic  
Partnership Strategy

March 2024

A future without drowning



# Introduction

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**The Greater Manchester Water Safety Strategic Partnership (GMWSSP) was established in response to the risk of drowning in the region. The Partnership is made up of stakeholders from Greater Manchester’s local authorities, emergency services and landowners, as well as national water safety experts. This strategy identifies the aims of the Partnership from 2023-26.**

Tragically, on average, around 400 people drown around the UK every year and a further 200 take their own lives on our waters. This does not include the number of fatalities that occur when our residents are on holiday or travelling outside of the UK. Many of these deaths are preventable. The Partnership believes more can be done to reduce this loss of life.

The Partnership’s mission is to improve water safety in Greater Manchester, working towards a future without drowning.

# Context

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**Despite its reputation as a city region, Greater Manchester has an extensive network of rivers, canal, lakes and reservoirs. Figure 1 below identifies the distribution of water and water-related incidents across the region.**

Rescue from water is one of the most common life-risk Special Service Calls that Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service (GMFRS) attends, and accounts for a relatively high number of fatalities and casualties. In 2021/22, more people drowned in our waterways than died in fires.

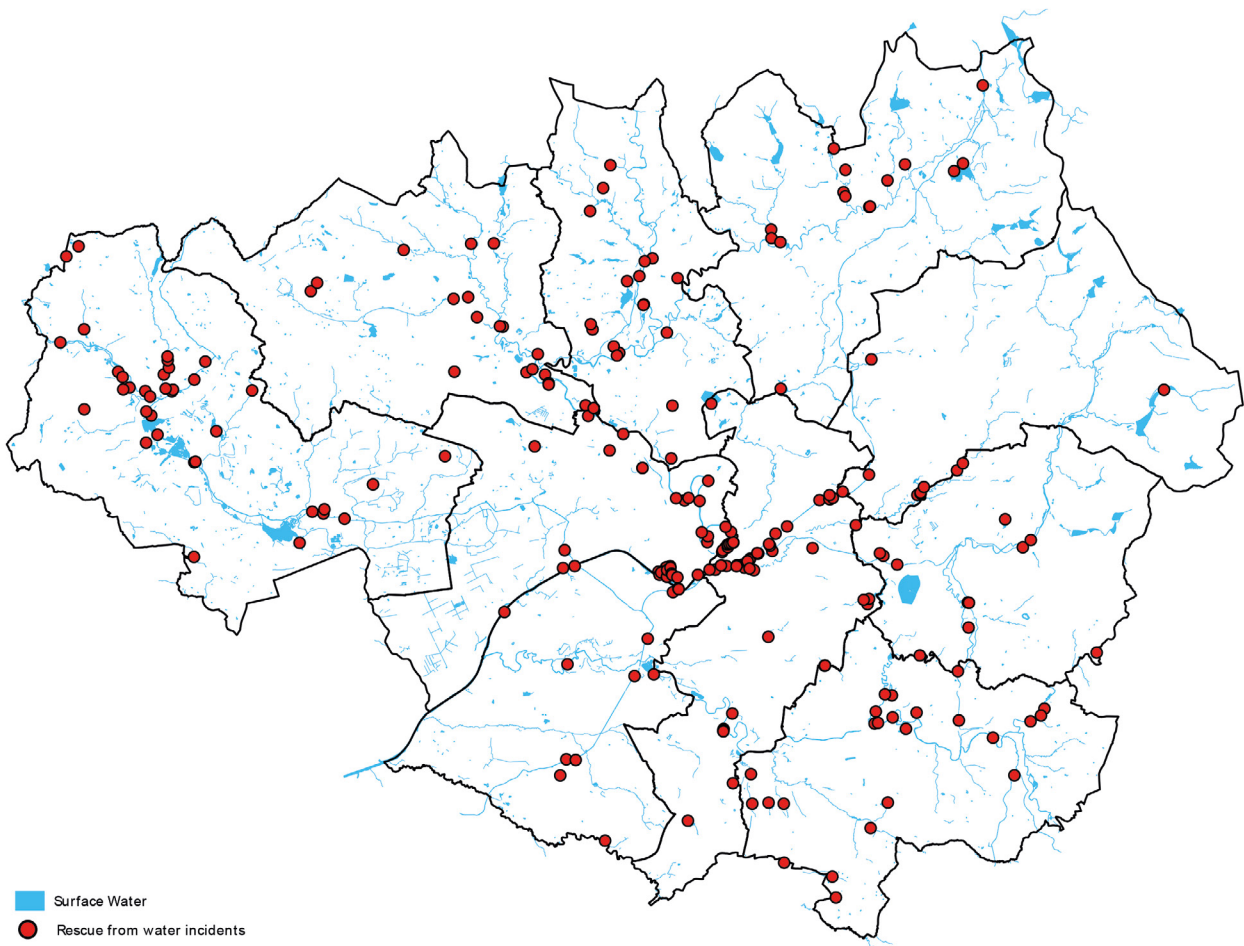


Figure 1: Surface Water in Greater Manchester and GMFRS rescues from water

# Strategic aims

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**The aims of the GMWSSP and this strategy are to:**

- Reduce the number of drownings in Greater Manchester (GM).
- Ensure residents and visitors are safe around water when they are in GM.
- Ensure GM residents are safe around water wherever they are.
- Increase awareness of the risks of open water.
- Help people enjoy water related activity in a safe manner.

# Priorities and methodology

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## This strategy will be delivered around three key pillars:

- **Information** – Research and engagement to better understand the risks and help drive the water safety agenda.
- **Education** – Education and campaigns to share our understanding with our communities.
- **Protection** – Practical initiatives to make our communities safer in and around water.

This strategy lasts for three years, to align the work of the GMWSSP with the National Water Safety Strategy. We will produce a three-year Action Plan to formalise the delivery of our priorities and the necessary evaluation and governance.

## Information

- Better understand the causes of drowning.
- Better understand how the climate emergency and changing weather affects behaviour in or near water.
- Better understand the impact of drink and drugs on people's ability to swim and survive in water.
- Better understand water-related suicide.
- Engage with government and others (including landowners where appropriate) to prioritise water safety.
- Engage with government and others to include water safety as part of the school curriculum across Greater Manchester (GM).
- Develop and embed a consistent and flexible approach to water safety in GM.
- Enable better data analysis and sharing between partners and identify at-risk groups.
- Set strategic direction and support local Community Safety Partnerships and Water Safety Partnerships.
- Share best practice.
- Embed evaluation of initiatives internally and independently.
- Consider and share emerging research, proposals and incidents relating to water safety.
- Identify funding streams to support water safety in GM.

## Education

- Promote consistent safety campaigns, messaging and behaviour change initiatives, set out in a campaigns calendar.
- Promote consistent educational materials and school interventions incorporating national messaging.
- Promote educational materials for parents.
- Utilise StayWise platform for campaign materials and educational resources.
- Understand the causes of drowning and work collaboratively with agencies dealing with related vulnerabilities.
- Communicate how the climate emergency and changing weather affects behaviour.
- Communicate how drink and drugs impact on people's ability to swim and survive in water.
- Help implement and promote national water safety initiatives and messaging.
- Promote water safety when residents are outside GM.
- Develop and work with high profile water safety advocates.
- Work with water leisure organisations to promote water safety.

## Protection

- Explore and install safety infrastructure, utilising cost-saving procurement methods.
- Explore how to design out risk.
- Help deliver local risk assessments of waterways in each district.
- Promote greater access to swimming and water survival lessons for all young people and children.
- Explore and promote leisure opportunities for young people.

## Strategic outcome

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Reduce the number of drownings in Greater Manchester.



A future without drowning

**For more information**

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