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Midlothian kids take part in in biggest ever water safety lesson

HUNDREDS of young swimmers in Midlothian are to get a lesson covering self-rescue and life-saving skills in the largest coordinated water safety lesson ever seen in Scotland.

Lessons under the National Learn to Swim Framework, which involve children locally, are being specially adapted to include key water safety guidance as part of the Royal Life Saving Society UK's Drowning Prevention Week which runs from 14th-24th June.

Scottish Swimming and Scottish Water – who are partners in Learn to Swim - have joined with the Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK), the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), Leisure Trusts and Aquatic providers to deliver these exclusive lessons just before the summer holidays.

Up to 75,000 children on the Learn to Swim Framework up and down the country will be getting into the pool to learn the Water Safety Code: Stop and Think, Stay Together, Float, Call 999 or 112.

They will also learn the importance of floating if they ever fall in cold water and the meanings of different flags if they are at the beach.

Lesson plans, games and tutorial videos have been created and sent to the 37 Leisure Trusts and aquatic providers who deliver the Learn to Swim classes in Scotland, to ensure the lessons are delivered in a fun, engaging and educational way.

The latest figures from the National Water Safety Forum show that, in 2018, a total of 263 people lost their lives to unintentional drowning in the UK, of which 46 were in Scotland.

Sharon MacDonald, Director of Development at Scottish Swimming, said: "Swimming is an essential life skill which helps children to be safer in and around water. Ahead of the summer holidays we want children to have fun and enjoy swimming but to also have the knowledge on how to look after themselves and others.

"It has been great to work with Scottish Water, RLSS and RNLI to make this water safety lesson happen and I especially thank our partner Leisure Trusts and Aquatic Providers who are committed to delivering these key water safety skills to children from pre-school upwards at the start of summer."

To reinforce the water safety message at home, parents will also have access to a host of RNLI and RLSS water safety information and resources available on the Scottish Swimming Microsite in partnership with Scottish Water – www.learntoswim.scot.

Every child will also be given a water safety leaflet provided by the RNLI to support the lesson and give children the knowledge and advice to continue enjoying a range of water environments safely.

Brian Lironi, Director of Corporate Affairs for Scottish Water, said: "The Water Safety lessons are a fabulous addition to the Learn to Swim programme. We are delighted so many children across Scotland are already able to enjoy the benefits of swimming – and so these new lessons will give them additional skills should they ever find themselves in danger.

"Water can often look harmless but there are many hidden dangers, so we are totally focused on doing what we can to make sure that parents and children stay safe around rivers, reservoirs and lochs this summer."

Beeslack Community Lifelong Learning, said: "We're proud to be getting involved in this fantastic initiative. It's great that, as we teach the sport, we're also covering the valuable skills that will make sure that children know how to stay safe in and around the water."

The Learn to Swim Framework aims to teach over 100,000 kids to be confident, safe and competent swimmers by 2020.

Robert Gofton, CEO of RLSS UK commented: "We're delighted to be working with Scottish Swimming, Scottish Water and RNLI this year for Drowning Prevention Week and are confident that this partnership will help people learn the skills they need to stay safe and enjoy the water. We urge as many people as possible to take advantage of the activities being run and learn what could be potentially lifesaving skills."

Laura Erskine, RNLI Youth Education Manager for Scotland & Tyne and Wear said: "Educating young people about water safety is fundamental to saving lives and is a core part of RNLI prevention work. We are excited to have collaborated with Scottish Swimming, Scottish Water and RLSS to provide important water safety messages to 75000 young people, enabling them to be safe and have fun in, on and around water. The more young people we can engage with, the more lives we can save now and in the future"

The RLSS UK's annual Drowning Prevention Week will take place between June 14 and 24, 2019.

The campaign aims to reduce the number of drownings in the UK by showing people how to be safe and have fun near water.

Drowning Prevention Week is a campaign created by the RLSS that aims to reduce the number of drowning and non-fatal drowning incidences that occur in the UK every year, by showing people how to be safe and have fun near water.

ENDS

Notes to Editor:

About Scottish Swimming

Scottish Swimming is the national governing body for swimming and aquatics in Scotland. Scottish Swimming represents our clubs, swim schools, aquatic disciplines, athletes, coaches and thousands of talented and committed volunteers across the entire swimmer pathway. We are focused on delivering in the following key areas to reach our vision to ensure that everyone can swim: learn to swim, participation in aquatic activities, club development, coaching partnerships and performance. Further info at www.scottishswimming.com

About Scottish Water

Scottish Water provides vital water and waste water services, essential to daily life, to 2.52 million households and 153,000 business premises across Scotland. At the heart of our business is everyone who lives and works in communities across Scotland. Every day we deliver 1.38 billion litres of clear, fresh drinking water – enough to fill over 540 Olympic swimming pools. We also take away and treat 929 million litres of waste water and help protect the environment across Scotland – every day of the year. More at www.scottishwater.co.uk

About RLSS

The Royal Life Saving Society UK (RLSS UK) is the Drowning Prevention Charity and the UK's leading provider of water safety and drowning prevention education. Over 700 people drown in the UK and Ireland every year and many more suffer injury, some life-changing, through non-fatal experiences. More people die from drowning in the UK and Ireland than from domestic fires or cycling accidents.

About RNLI

We are the RNLI: the charity that saves lives at sea. Every day of every year, people of all backgrounds get into danger in the water. It's a problem that we're here to tackle. Our volunteer lifeboat crews provide a 24-hour rescue service in the UK and Ireland, and our seasonal lifeguards look after people on busy beaches. Our Flood Rescue Team helps those affected by flooding. RNLI crews and lifeguards have saved over 142,200 lives since 1824 but we're more than a rescue service. We influence, supervise and educate people too. Our Community Safety teams explain the risks and share safety knowledge with anyone going out to sea or to the coast. And our international teams work with like-minded organisations to help tackle drowning in communities at risk all around the world.