

FACTSHEET 2024

# WE ARE THE RNLI

THE CHARITY THAT SAVES LIVES AT SEA



**RNLI lifeboat volunteers and lifeguards rescue thousands of people and save hundreds of lives around the coasts of the UK and Ireland every year. In 2023 alone, they saved 355\* lives and helped 30,713 people.**

Our lifesavers will always be there to help those in danger in the water. But too many lives are still being lost. Around 138\*\* people die accidentally in UK and Irish coastal waters every year. Globally, there are 235,000\*\*\* drowning deaths each year.

It's a huge problem, but one we're determined to tackle. Our vision is to save every one.

The RNLI works with communities and partners – in the UK, in Ireland and worldwide – to prevent people from getting into danger before they need our help. We do this by raising awareness of drowning and promoting safer behaviour around water.

As an emergency service and a charity, we depend on trained and committed volunteer lifesavers. As we strive to save

every one, we also depend on thousands of dedicated volunteer fundraisers. RNLI lifesaving is powered by the funds they raise, together with supporter donations.

\* Had it not been for the intervention of the RNLI, emergency services and/or a third party, a life would've been lost.

\*\* UK average (115 people) from the Water Incident Database (WAID) 2020–22. Republic of Ireland pro-rated average (23 people) from Water Safety Ireland (WSI) 2020–22.

\*\*\* Global Health Estimates 2020, World Health Organization.



## LIFESAVING TRAINING

Many of our volunteer crew members join with little or no maritime experience, so training is essential. We provide them with comprehensive training and recognised qualifications in everything from boathandling and navigation to first aid and sea survival.

All RNLI lifeguards hold an internationally-recognised beach lifeguard qualification. They also undergo regular training and fitness tests.

Our high training standards are maintained and developed with the help of the staff and facilities at the RNLI College in Poole, Dorset, and the National Maritime College of Ireland (NMCI) in Ringaskiddy, County Cork, which complement training around the coast.

The RNLI College also provides accommodation, classrooms and distance-learning resources. Its Sea Survival Centre, with state-of-the-art lifeboat simulator, wave tank and live engine workshop, gives our crews hands-on experience.

## Our lifeboat crews

**Our volunteer lifeboat crews are ready to launch 24/7 from lifeboat stations around the UK and Ireland.**

Our lifeboat volunteers have all kinds of backgrounds and jobs. At a moment's notice, they readily exchange work, comfort or sleep for cold, wet and fatigue.

They spend many hours of their own time training together so they can meet the dangers and challenges they face on search and rescue missions at sea.

### RIVER THAMES

There are four lifeboat stations on the tidal River Thames – at Teddington, Chiswick, Tower and Gravesend. Due to the river's heavy traffic and fast-flowing waters, crews at three of these stations must launch within 90 seconds of the coastguard's request. So instead of being

on call and paged to emergencies, our lifeboat crews at Chiswick, Tower and Gravesend are on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To provide this vital lifesaving cover on the River Thames, these crews operate a shift system made up of full-time helms and volunteers.

### ON SHORE

Volunteer shore crew are a vital part of the rescue team. They help with the launch and recovery of the lifeboat, sometimes carrying out challenging tasks such as tractor launches in powerful breaking waves. They are described by lifeboat crews as the 'unsung heroes' of our rescues.

IN 2023



**9,192**  
LIFEBOAT  
LAUNCHES

**10,734**  
PEOPLE  
AIDED

**269**<sup>\*</sup>  
LIVES  
SAVED



**29**  
PEOPLE  
AIDED EACH DAY  
ON AVERAGE

Barry Dock lifeboat crew aboard  
their D class inshore lifeboat  
*Frances Mary Corscaden D-820*

\*Had it not been for the intervention of the RNLI, emergency services and/or a third party, a life would've been lost.

## LIFESAVING EQUIPMENT COSTS

LIFEBOAT CLASS	
Shannon class	£2,781,000 (€3,136,000)
B class	£322,000 (€363,000)
D class	£101,000 (€114,000)

This is what it costs to build the lifeboat, deliver it, and make it ready for service.

TRAINING COSTS	
Average annual training cost for a crew member	£1,450 (€1,673)

CREW KIT COSTS*	
Drysuit for an inshore lifeboat (ILB) crew member	£805 (€929)
Thermal suit for ILB crew member	£150 (€173)
Layered clothing and boots for an all-weather lifeboat (ALB) crew member	£1,600 (€1,846)**
Lifejacket	£590 (€681)***
Helmet	£350 (€404)
Gloves	£25 (€29)

\* These are recommended retail prices. We always try to get the best price for all kit and equipment. Where possible, we negotiate a lower cost.

\*\* Includes outer jacket, salopettes, mid jacket, merino top and bottom, gilet and wellies.

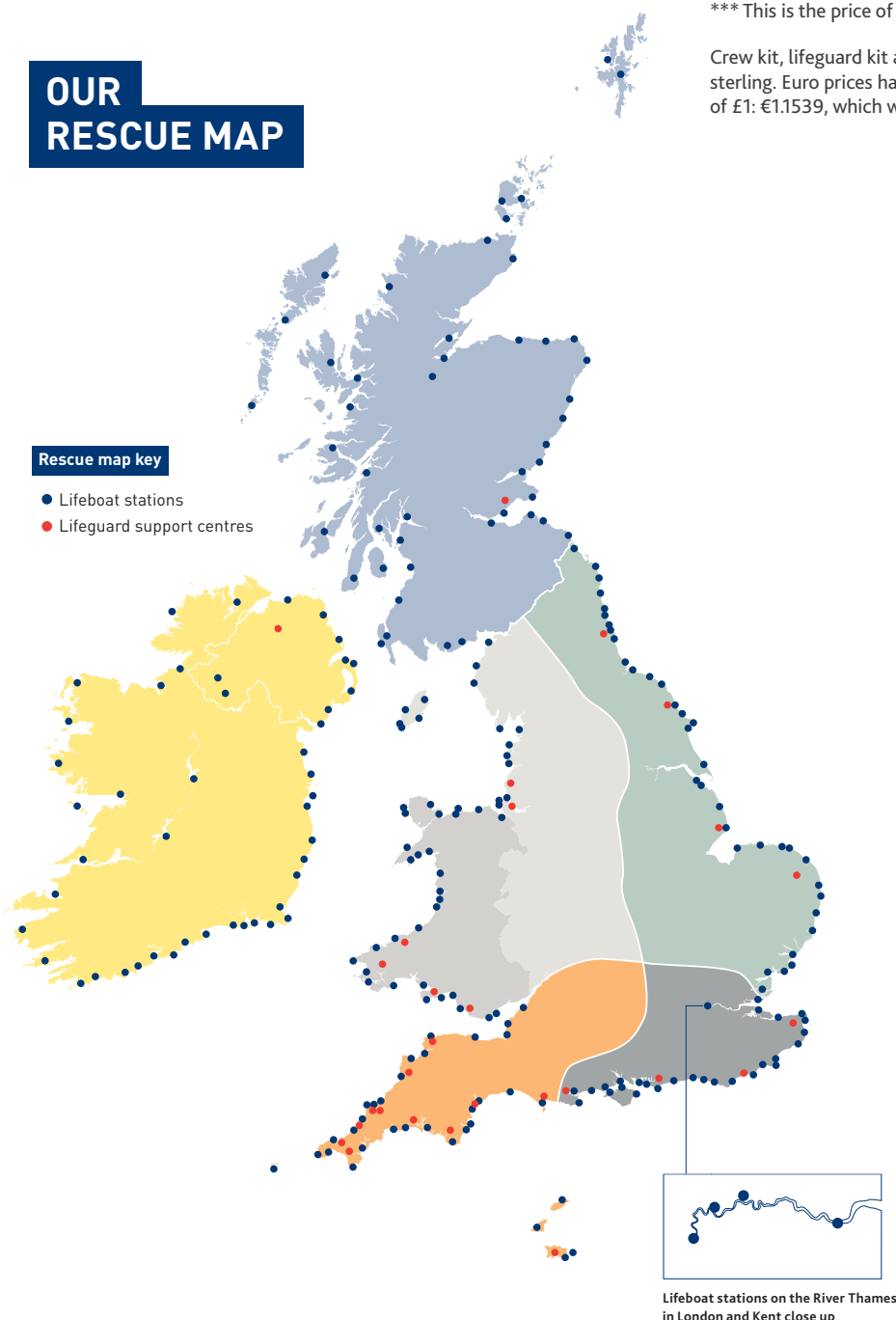
\*\*\* This is the price of similar items, as the supplier does not sell to retail.

Crew kit, lifeguard kit and lifeboats are bought in the UK in pounds sterling. Euro prices have been calculated using an exchange rate of £1: €1.1539, which was correct in December 2023.

## OUR RESCUE MAP

### Rescue map key

- Lifeboat stations
- Lifeguard support centres



Lifeboat stations on the River Thames in London and Kent close up

### RING OF SAFETY

There are 238 lifeboat stations around the UK and Ireland, covering 19,000 miles of coastline. They include four on the River Thames and five inland: at Loch Ness in Scotland, Carrybridge and Enniskillen in Northern Ireland, and Lough Derg and Lough Ree in the Republic of Ireland. We have 441 lifeboats and 7 hovercraft (including relief fleet vessels). RNLI lifeguards patrol more than 235 UK and Channel Island beaches.

The demands of saving lives on the water constantly evolve, and so we regularly review our lifeboat and lifeguard provision.



Dover RNLI's new lifeboat station on the Marina Curve, built as part of the Port of Dover's Western Docks redevelopment project



# 2023 lifesaving statistics

There were fewer lifeboat launches and lifeguard incidents in 2023 than in 2022. This was probably due to poor weather in July and August, and a higher than average rainfall throughout the year. However, it was the second busiest year for launches in the past decade, and 75% of all lifeguard incidents occurred during June, July and August.

## LIFEBOATS: BY RNLI LIFESAVING REGION

Lifesaving region	Launches	Lives saved*	People aided	Hours at sea by vessel	Hours at sea by crew	Crew assemblies
South East England	2,839	93	4,397	3,259	15,110	249
Wales, West and Isle of Man	1,593	60	1,731	2,154	9,927	346
South West England	1,505	34	1,432	2,110	10,147	147
Scotland	1,251	15	1,093	2,034	10,283	149
North and East England	1,041	33	779	1,428	5,924	241
Ireland	963	34	1,302	1,363	6,456	96
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,192</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>10,734</b>	<b>12,348</b>	<b>57,847</b>	<b>1,228</b>

## LIFEBOATS: BY CLASS

Lifeboat	Launches	Lives saved*	People aided	Number of vessels used	Hours at sea by vessel
B class	2,991	63	3,100	123	3,398
D class	2,660	91	2,025	140	2,685
Severn	933	30	2,383	41	1,971
E class	848	20	426	4	529
Tamar	545	17	721	27	1,138
Shannon	525	22	995	44	1,174
Trent	494	13	803	30	961
Hovercraft	103	6	70	7	115
Mersey	60	6	45	8	139
A class	18	0	8	3	12
Rescue watercraft	10	0	3	1	19
Other	2	1	150	2	201
Y class	2	0	5	1	2
XP class	1	0	0	1	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,192</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>10,734</b>	<b>432</b>	<b>12,348</b>

## LIFEBOATS: BY CASUALTY TYPE

Casualty type	Launches	Lives saved*	People aided
People†	3,887	85	4,011
Powered boats	1,272	62	2,885
Miscellaneous‡	1,360	5	67
Sailing	900	0	1,683
Manual watercraft	512	34	620
Suspected self-harm§	485	69	307
Commercial	384	14	1,161
False alarm	303	0	0
Animals	89	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,192</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>10,734</b>

\*Had it not been for the intervention of the RNLI, emergency services and/or a third party, a life would've been lost.

† Anyone without a craft or in unknown activity. People accounted for 42% of all launches.

‡ Including aircraft, body recoveries, distress signals, motor vehicles, objects in the sea, small craft, criminal activity and unknown.

§ Self-harm accounted for 3% of the people we assisted. The number of these incidents was the highest since 2018.



St Helier lifeboat crew aboard their Tamar class all-weather lifeboat George Sullivan 16-12



# Our lifeguards

RNLI lifeguards – highly trained and professional – advise, supervise and rescue people on beaches around the UK and Channel Islands.

They are responsible for making beaches a safer place, so visitors can enjoy their time at the coast and return home safely at the end of the day. When someone's in danger in the water, seconds count and lifeguards are often the first on hand to help. Lifeguards must be able to reach people in trouble quickly.

Each lifeguarded beach is equipped with rescue boards, rescue tubes, first aid kits, defibrillators and other items of

essential lifesaving equipment. Some also have inshore rescue boats, rescue watercraft and four-wheel drive vehicles.

All RNLI lifeguards hold an internationally-recognised beach lifeguard qualification. They also undergo regular training and fitness tests.

Local authorities and beach owners contribute to the RNLI's costs, which helps to cover lifeguard wages.

## LIFEGUARD KIT COSTS\*

Wetsuit	£250 (€288)
Binoculars	£149 (€172)
Sunglasses	£55 (€63)
Rash vest	£60 (€69)
Swimsuit	£60 (€69)
Trunks	£41 (€47)

\*These are recommended retail prices. We always try to get the best price for all kit and equipment. Where possible, we negotiate a lower cost.

Lifeguard kit, crew kit and lifeboats are bought in the UK in pounds sterling. Euro prices have been calculated using an exchange rate of £1: €1.1539, which was correct in December 2023.



The world's longest-serving lifeguard Chris Lewis is presented with his Guinness World Record on Bournemouth Beach. Chris started lifeguarding in 1965 when he was 16 years old. He became an RNLI lifeguard in 2001 when we launched our lifeguarding service.

## LIFEGUARDS: BY RNLI LIFESAVING REGION

Lifesaving region	Preventative actions	Incidents	Lives saved*	People rescued	People aided	Casualty care	Minor first aid	Searches
South West England	1,297,382	7,501	38	1,933	10,398	613	4,124	57
Wales, West and Isle of Man	582,103	2,300	17	303	4,037	206	986	47
South East England	396,614	2,167	14	168	2,436	269	1,055	30
North and East England	445,378	1,859	13	156	2,181	222	1,028	38
Scotland	43,292	197	0	5	613	13	77	2
Ireland	225,159	189	4	32	314	16	107	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,989,928</b>	<b>14,213</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>2,597</b>	<b>19,979</b>	<b>1,339</b>	<b>7,377</b>	<b>175</b>

Lifesaving region	Missing and found	Non aquatic assists	Near misses	False alarms	Antisocial behaviour	Animals	Other
South West England	528	124	971	38	112	58	111
Wales, West and Isle of Man	196	555	285	22	38	76	52
South East England	360	28	51	12	70	6	29
North and East England	154	45	136	2	52	19	5
Scotland	7	9	307	1	21	3	0
Ireland	12	4	0	0	50	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,257</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>1,750</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>198</b>

\*Had it not been for the intervention of the RNLI, emergency services and/or a third party, a life would've been lost.



# Our fleet

We have two types of lifeboat: all-weather and inshore. The craft on service at a particular station depends on geographical features, the kind of rescue work carried out and the cover provided by neighbouring stations.

RNLI designers and engineers meet the changing needs of the lifeboat service by developing new classes of lifeboat and making improvements to existing ones.

There are currently 441 lifeboats in service across the UK and Ireland, including the relief fleet, comprising 160 all-weather lifeboats and 281 inshore lifeboats. In addition,

there are 7 rescue hovercraft – 4 at stations and 3 in the relief fleet.

Hovercraft are ideal in tidal mudflats and other areas that are inaccessible to lifeboats.

The relief fleet vessels replace a station's regular craft during routine maintenance or emergency repairs.

Our lifeguards use two types of

powered craft – inshore rescue boats and rescue watercraft.

RNLI technicians, including mechanics, boatbuilders, electricians and painters, build and maintain our lifeboats at our All-weather Lifeboat Centre in Poole, Dorset, and at our Inshore Lifeboat Centre in Cowes on the Isle of Wight.

## All-weather lifeboats

All-weather lifeboats are capable of high speed in tough conditions. They can reach miles offshore and be used in all weathers. They are inherently self-righting after a capsize and fitted with navigation, location and communication equipment.



### SHANNON

The Shannon is the newest lifeboat in the fleet. It is driven by waterjets, making it highly manoeuvrable. It can spin on the spot! Waterjets also mean it can save lives in shallower water, where traditional propellers would hit the bottom and get damaged. It's named after Ireland's longest river.

**Entered fleet:** 2013  
**Length:** 13.6m  
**Speed:** 25 knots  
**Range:** 250 nautical miles  
**Construction:** fibre-reinforced composite (FRC)  
**Crew:** 6  
**Weight:** 18 tonnes  
**Launch:** slipway, carriage or moored afloat



### TAMAR

Developed with crew comfort and safety in mind, the Tamar was the first lifeboat to be fitted with an integrated electronics system called SIMS (Systems and Information Management System) allowing crews to operate the lifeboat from the safety of their shock-absorbing seats. It's named after the River Tamar. Last built in 2013.

**Entered fleet:** 2005  
**Length:** 16.3m  
**Speed:** 25 knots  
**Range:** 250 nautical miles  
**Construction:** FRC  
**Crew:** 7  
**Weight:** 32 tonnes  
**Launch:** slipway or moored afloat



### SEVERN

This powerhouse of the RNLI fleet is our largest lifeboat. It's capable of towing large vessels out of danger and comes into its own when taking on the worst sea conditions on long offshore searches and rescues. It's named after the longest river in the UK. Last built in 2004.

**Entered fleet:** 1996  
**Length:** 17.3m  
**Speed:** 25 knots  
**Range:** 250 nautical miles  
**Construction:** FRC  
**Crew:** 7  
**Weight:** 42 tonnes  
**Launch:** moored afloat



### TRENT

The Trent was our first lifeboat capable of 25 knots and a range of 250 nautical miles. It was also one of the first to have the distinctive 'hard chine' angled hull designs. This shape provides protection from damage in shallow water and makes recovering casualties easier and safer. It's named after the River Trent. Last built in 2003.

**Entered fleet:** 1994  
**Length:** 14.3m  
**Speed:** 25 knots  
**Range:** 250 nautical miles  
**Construction:** FRC  
**Crew:** 6  
**Weight:** 28 tonnes  
**Launch:** moored afloat



### MERSEY

This lightweight lifeboat was specially designed for fast launch and recovery from a beach with a tractor and carriage – though it can also be launched from a slipway or afloat. It's named after the River Mersey. Last built in 1993.

**Entered fleet:** 1988  
**Length:** 11.62m  
**Speed:** 17 knots  
**Range:** 140 nautical miles  
**Construction:** aluminium or FRC  
**Crew:** 6  
**Weight:** 14.3 tonnes  
**Launch:** carriage, slipway or moored afloat



Cardigan RNLI's D class inshore lifeboat John Darbyshire D-845 during a launch and recovery exercise



## Launching

There are four main ways of launching an all-weather lifeboat: from a mooring, alongside a pontoon, down a slipway, or from a carriage hauled across the beach. Shore crew help with slipway and carriage launches.

Our D class inshore lifeboats can usually be launched from a trolley. The larger B class Atlantics are launched using a tractor-hauled drive-on drive-off (DoDo) carriage, shore-mounted crane (davit), modular

floating pontoon or floating boathouse. E class inshore lifeboats – used exclusively on the River Thames – are moored afloat.

Hovercraft can launch from any flat area, such as a car park or beach, provided there is enough room.

The RNLI builds and maintains launch and recovery systems at our Clayton Engineering factory in Knighton, Wales.



New Quay RNLI's Shannon class all-weather lifeboat *Roy Barker V 13-48* being recovered onto the Shannon Launch And Recovery System (SLARS)

## Inshore lifeboats

Inshore lifeboats are designed for rescues closer to shore – in shallow waters, in surf and near rocks.



### B CLASS

The third generation of the B class, the Atlantic 85, is the fastest and busiest lifeboat on the coast. Named after Atlantic College in Wales where these rigid inflatable lifeboats (RIBs) were first developed, it's designed to save lives in shallower water and inaccessible areas. It also has fantastic towing power and can handle challenging open sea conditions.

**Entered fleet:** Atlantic 85 - 2005 (75 - 1993, 21 - 1972)  
**Length:** 8.44m  
**Speed:** 35 knots  
**Endurance:** 3 hours max  
**Construction:** fibre-reinforced composite (FRC)  
**Crew:** 3-4  
**Weight:** 1.8 tonnes  
**Engine:** 2 x 115hp  
**Launch:** carriage, floating boathouse or davit



### D CLASS

The D class inflatable lifeboat has been the workhorse of the RNLI since the 1960s. Highly manoeuvrable and speedy, this pocket rocket is ideal for searches and rescues in the surf, shallow water, close to cliffs, among rocks, and in confined locations such as caves.

**Entered fleet:** 1963  
**Length:** 5m  
**Speed:** 25 knots  
**Endurance:** 3 hours max  
**Construction:** Hypalon-coated polyester  
**Crew:** 3-4  
**Weight:** 500kg  
**Engine:** 1 x 50hp  
**Launch:** trolley or davit



### E CLASS

Designed for the challenging conditions of London's River Thames, the E class is the James Bond of lifeboats. It's the fastest lifeboat in the RNLI fleet and waterjets instead of propellers give it incredible manoeuvrability. For the quickest possible launch, our E class lifeboats always lie afloat alongside our two busiest stations, Tower and Chiswick.

**Entered fleet:** 2002  
**Length:** 11.05m  
**Speed:** 40 knots  
**Endurance:** 3 hours at maximum speed  
**Construction:** Glass composite and a solid closed-cell foam collar with polyurethane (PU) covering  
**Crew:** 4  
**Weight:** 7.8 tonnes  
**Launch:** moored afloat

## Lifeguard craft



### RESCUE WATERCRAFT (RWC)

The RWC is a modified personal watercraft, equipped for search and rescue, and has been used by RNLI lifeguards since 2003. It can be deployed rapidly, and is highly manoeuvrable and responsive in surf. Driven by waterjet, the RWC can be operated safely around people in very shallow waters without the hazard of moving propellers.

**Length:** 3.37m  
**Construction:** glass-reinforced plastic  
**Crew:** 2  
**Engine:** 1 x 1,049cc  
**Launch:** trolley



### INSHORE RESCUE BOAT (IRB)

These small inflatable personal watercrafts are used by our lifeguards to reach casualties in the surf, fast. They are highly manoeuvrable and responsive, and usually operated by two people: one focused on controlling the craft, the other on finding and helping casualties. A few of our lifeboat crews also use IRBs.

**Entered fleet:** 2001  
**Length:** 3.88m  
**Speed:** 26 knots  
**Endurance:** 20 nautical miles  
**Construction:** Hypalon-coated fabric  
**Crew:** 2  
**Weight:** 165kg  
**Engine:** 30hp outboard with propeller guard  
**Launch:** trailer, trolley



## HOVERCRAFT

The lift created by the hovercraft fans makes it fly over mud, sand and shallow water, reaching areas that lifeboats can't.

**Entered fleet:** 2002  
**Length:** 8.04m (including skirt)  
**Speed:** 30 knots  
**Endurance:** 3 hours at maximum speed  
**Construction:** marine grade aluminium with moulded FRC  
**Crew:** 2-4  
**Weight:** 3.86 tonnes  
**Engine:** 2 x 1.9 turbo diesel  
**Launch:** bespoke transporter

There are 441 lifeboats and 7 hovercraft in service (including the relief fleet):  
**160 all-weather lifeboats and 281 inshore lifeboats**



# Water safety

Around 138 people\* die by accident in UK and Irish coastal waters each year. Men and boys over 15 are most at risk.

These eight activities account for the majority of coastal incidents and deaths: sailing and motorboating, walking, paddleboarding, waterside and in-water play, swimming, kayaking and canoeing, commercial fishing, and angling from a boat.

These 11 areas account for 51% of accidental coastal deaths: Cornwall, Devon, Gwynedd, East Sussex, London/Thames, Kent, Hampshire, Essex, Dorset, Cork, and Highlands.

We prioritise our water safety work accordingly, so we can reduce risk, prevent serious incidents and save lives. You can help by sharing these top safety messages with others:

## FLOAT TO LIVE

If you find yourself in danger in the water:

- Tilt your head back with your ears submerged.
- Relax and try to breathe normally.
- Move your hands to help you stay afloat.
- It's fine if your legs sink, we all float differently.
- Practice floating in a local pool if you can.

If you see someone in trouble at the coast:

- **Call 999 or 112 and ask for the coastguard.**
- **Carry a means of calling for help** and keep it on you at all times.
- Remember to **check the weather forecast and tide times** before heading out.

## ACTIVITY TIPS

- **Sailing and motorboating:** Wear a lifejacket or buoyancy aid, ensure everyone onboard knows how to call for help, get appropriate training, and check your engine and fuel before every trip.
- **Swimming:** Wear the right equipment (wetsuit, bright hat and tow float) and acclimatise slowly.
- **Visiting the coast:** Swim at a lifeguarded beach, between the red-and-yellow flags.
- **Paddleboarding:** Wear an appropriate leash and flotation device, keep a means of calling for help on you, and avoid going out in offshore winds.

Find out more at [RNLI.org/safety](https://RNLI.org/safety).

# Young people

RNLI lifeguards and water safety volunteers deliver lifesaving education to children on the beach, in lifeboat stations, in schools, in colleges and at youth groups around the UK and Ireland. We support teachers and youth leaders with free resources and lesson plans. Find out more and download our materials at [RNLI.org/education](https://RNLI.org/education).

## SWIM SAFE

Children aged 7–14 can learn how to stay safe in open water by taking part in free, practical Swim Safe sessions. Swim Safe – a partnership between Swim England and the RNLI – takes place every summer at inland and coastal sites throughout the UK. Learn more at [swimsafe.org.uk](https://swimsafe.org.uk).

\* UK average (115 people) from the Water Incident Database (WAID) 2020–22. Republic of Ireland pro-rated average (23 people) from Water Safety Ireland (WSI) 2020–22.





## International

A shocking 235,000 people drown worldwide each year – around one person every 2 minutes. And 227 children under the age of 15 drown every day.\* These are preventable deaths and we believe this needs to change.

The RNLI's international work is a small but important part of what we do. We work with partners globally, and in countries where drowning is a significant problem, to raise awareness, carry out research, and find ways of saving more lives.

Last year, less than 2% of our total charitable spend was on our international work. We received funding for this work from the overseas aid budgets of the Irish and Isle of Man governments.

### IN 2023

- We helped over 9,000 children aged 6–12 to graduate from a series of swimming lessons in Bangladesh. And we helped keep over 11,000 young children safe from drowning through community-based crèches running at peak drowning-risk times.
- In Tanzania, we worked with a local partner to test buoyancy device prototypes and improve weather reporting for fishing communities.
- We welcomed 15 candidates from eight countries to the Leaders in Lifesaving course at the RNLI College in Poole, Dorset.
- We worked with the governments of Ireland and Bangladesh to help secure a first-ever resolution on global drowning prevention at the World Health Assembly in Geneva.

## Our volunteers

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our charity – 97% of our frontline lifesavers are volunteers. They include more than 5,700 lifeboat crew members, over 4,000 shore crew (including station management) and 98 lifeguards. Thousands more dedicated volunteers raise funds and awareness, give water safety advice and help in our shops, museums and offices.

Find out more at [RNLI.org/volunteer](https://RNLI.org/volunteer).

## Governance

The RNLI's work is overseen by the charity's trustees and council members – volunteers who lend their skills and experience to help govern the RNLI.



\* Global Health Estimates 2020, World Health Organization.

## Our support network

The RNLI could not run effectively without its support staff, based around the UK and Ireland.

The RNLI Support Centre in Poole, Dorset, stores and distributes the items needed to run all our lifeboats, stations, lifeguard units and regional support offices. Specialist engineers, surveyors, technicians and training experts look after the requirements of stations in their region. Other staff include experts in lifeboat design, marketing, IT, HR, safety and many others who support our volunteers.

Fifteen candidates from eight countries visited the RNLI to participate in the Leaders in Lifesaving course





## Our proud history

Sir William Hillary founded the RNLI in 1824. The Royal National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck, as it was called then, organised dedicated lifeboats for volunteer crew to help save those in trouble at sea.

Our Heritage Team cares for objects and archive materials to preserve the history of the RNLI and to inspire future generations of supporters and lifesavers.

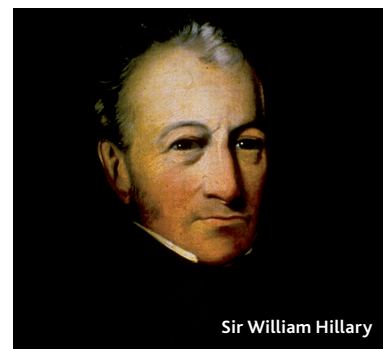
The RNLI manages museums and visitor centres around the UK, and collections at the RNLI Support Centre in Poole, Dorset. Historic items are also displayed in many of our lifeboat stations.

External heritage funding has supported the redevelopment of museums celebrating

the life of Grace Darling, at Bamburgh, and the RNLI's most decorated crew member Henry Blogg, at Cromer.

Eastbourne, Whitby, Poole and Salcombe museums are set in their original boathouses. The Historic Dockyard Chatham holds the RNLI Historic Lifeboat Collection, and the RNLI's Seawatch Centre at Moelfre tells the story of local maritime and lifeboat history.

Find out more and plan a visit to any of these venues at [RNLI.org/heritage](https://www.rnli.org/heritage).



Sir William Hillary

**1824**  
**THE YEAR**  
**THE RNLI**  
**WAS FOUNDED**



**146,000+**  
**LIVES SAVED**  
**SINCE 1824**



With three Gold and four Silver RNLI Medals for Gallantry, Cromer Coxswain Henry Blogg is the RNLI's most decorated lifeboat volunteer



The RNLI Historic Lifeboat Collection at the Historic Dockyard in Chatham, Kent, has the UK's largest collection of historic lifeboats

**RNLI**  
**200**  
1824-2024

### 200 YEARS – AND COUNTING

In 2024 we mark the RNLI's 200th anniversary – we remember our remarkable history, celebrate the modern lifesaving service we provide

today, and look forward to inspiring future generations of lifesavers and supporters as we move into the next 200 years. Visit [RNLI.org/200](https://www.rnli.org/200).

### NOTABLE ANNIVERSARIES IN 2024

- 200th anniversary of the founding of the RNLI (4 March 1824)
- 140th anniversary of the original RNLI flag design (1884)
- 50th anniversary of the RNLI moving the Support Centre to Poole, Dorset (1974)
- 40th anniversary of Storm Force membership (1984)
- 20th anniversary of the opening of the RNLI College (2004)





# HISTORY OF THE RNLI



The charity's name is changed to the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI).  
Cork lifejackets are issued to crew members for the first time.



The *Zetland* lifeboat launches on her last mission, after 78 years' service.



The first RNLI street collection is held in Manchester.



Lifeboats from Cadgwith, Coverack, the Lizard and Porthleven rescue 456 people from the stricken liner *Suevic*.



The Irish Free State, which later becomes the Republic of Ireland, is founded. The RNLI continues to support the new state's lifeboat crews.



Young lifeboat volunteers are again called away to war. By the end of the Second World War in 1945, RNLI crews have saved 6,376 lives.



Cromer Coxswain Henry Blogg is awarded his third RNLI Gold Medal after going to the aid of a stranded convoy. He remains the RNLI's most decorated crew member.



Elizabeth Hostvedt of Atlantic College becomes the first official female crew member at the RNLI.



The eight crew of the Penlee lifeboat *Solomon Browne* are lost as they attempt to save those onboard the coaster *Union Star*.



RNLI lifeguards begin patrolling beaches in South West England. The service is expanded to other areas in the following years.  
The first inland lifeboat station is established at South Broads.



Rod MacDonald becomes the first RNLI lifeguard to be awarded an RNLI Medal for Gallantry, for saving a swimmer off Fistral Beach, Newquay.



The RNLI Memorial, remembering all those who have died while trying to save lives at sea, is unveiled at the RNLI Support Centre, Poole.



It's the RNLI's 200th birthday. With you by our side, we commemorate our past, celebrate modern-day lifesavers and inspire a new generation.

1790

The first purpose-built lifeboat, designed by Henry Greathead, is stationed at South Shields.



1824

The Royal National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck is founded by Sir William Hillary (pictured).  
The Institution's first Gold Medal is awarded to Charles Fremantle for his efforts to save the crew of a wrecked brigantine off the coast of Hampshire.



1838

Grace Darling and her father, a lighthouse keeper, rescue survivors from the *Forfarshire*, wrecked on the Farne Islands. The Darlings are awarded RNLI Silver Medals and become national celebrities, focusing public attention on saving lives at sea.



1861

Whitby lifeboat capsizes and 12 out of 13 crew drown. The sole survivor, Henry Freeman, is the only one wearing a lifejacket.



1886

Twenty-seven lifeboatmen lose their lives from the Southport and Lytham St Anne's lifeboats while on service to the German barque *Mexico*.



1899

Lynmouth's lifeboat is dragged for 11 miles over Exmoor to launch to the aid of a vessel in distress in a gale.



1914

As lifeboatmen are called away to the First World War, the average age of crews increases to over 50. During the war years (1914-18), lifeboats are launched 1,808 times and save 5,332 lives.



1936

Ballycotton Coxswain Patrick Sliney is awarded the Gold Medal after he and his crew spend 49 hours at sea in a gale and bitter cold to save the crew of the Daunt Rock lightship.



1940

Nineteen RNLI lifeboats help evacuate Allied troops from Dunkirk.



1963

Inflatable lifeboats are introduced to the RNLI fleet to help deal with the growing number of incidents close to shore. Today's D class lifeboats are direct descendants.



1979

Humber Coxswain Brian Bevan is the first crew member to be awarded RNLI Bronze, Silver and Gold Medals in the same year.



1995

The RNLI's Sea Safety campaign is launched, with the aim of preventing seagoers from getting into trouble in the first place.



2002

Four lifeboat stations are established along the River Thames.



2005

Helm Aileen Jones becomes the first female crew member to be awarded an RNLI Medal for Gallantry.



2015

The All-weather Lifeboat Centre opens in Poole. The RNLI now builds and maintains its own all-weather lifeboats.



Photos: Norman Fitkin; The Imperial War Museum; RNLI; Grace Darling Museum; Steve Guscott; Derek King; Nigel Millard; Nathan Williams; Whitby Literary and Philosophical Society; Whitby: Carl Wilson

For more information visit [RNLI.org/heritage](https://www.rnli.org/heritage)



# Money matters

As a charity, we rely on voluntary donations to power our lifesaving work – as we have done for 200 years.

We are separate from the coastguard and independent of the government. We can only continue to save lives now and in the future thanks to the generosity of our wonderful supporters.

Volunteer groups all over the UK and Ireland fundraise throughout the year. This includes Mayday – the RNLI's annual fundraising campaign, which takes place during the month of May.

However you choose to support the RNLI, you can be sure you will make a lifesaving difference.

## MAKE A DONATION

There are many ways you can give to the RNLI, including setting up a monthly gift, supporting an appeal, making a one-off donation, and giving through your charitable trust or foundation.

Visit [RNLI.org/donate](https://RNLI.org/donate).

## RAISE MONEY

Take part in an organised fundraising event, or plan one of your own – from challenges and sporting activities to coffee mornings and social events.

Visit [RNLI.org/fundraising](https://RNLI.org/fundraising).

## LEAVE A GIFT IN YOUR WILL

Gifts in Wills are our crews' protection at sea. In 2023, 66% of our net income was from legacies. This means that 6 in 10 lifeboat launches were possible thanks to the generosity of supporters leaving us a gift in their Will. Visit [RNLI.org/legacy](https://RNLI.org/legacy).

## BECOME A MEMBER

RNLI membership is one way of giving to the charity on a regular basis. View the different membership options and their benefits at [RNLI.org/membership](https://RNLI.org/membership).

## SHOP WITH US

All profits from the purchase of RNLI products, whether from our shops, retail branches or website – at [shop.RNLI.org](https://shop.RNLI.org) – go towards funding our lifesaving work.

## DONATE IN MEMORY

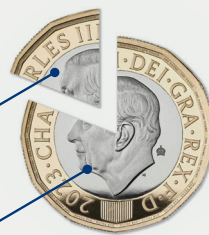
Support the RNLI by donating in memory of a loved one. Through our Launch a Memory campaigns, more than 60,000 loved ones' names have been added to the letters and numbers that identify Shannon class lifeboats.

Visit [RNLI.org/LaunchAMemory](https://RNLI.org/LaunchAMemory).

## WHERE YOUR MONEY GOES

19p/19c in every £1/€1 donated is used to generate more funds

81p/81c funds our lifesaving activities



Figures taken from the RNLI Annual Report and Accounts 2023

# £191.2M/€220.6M COST TO RUN THE RNLI IN 2023

## PARTNER WITH US

If you have a connection with a national company that could support the RNLI, please email our National Partnerships Team at [corporate@RNLI.org.uk](mailto:corporate@RNLI.org.uk).

## INSPIRE FUTURE GENERATIONS

Storm Force is our membership club for young people under 11. It teaches children about water safety and inspires them to become an RNLI supporter, volunteer or lifesaver themselves one day.

Visit [RNLI.org/StormForce](https://RNLI.org/StormForce).

## Royal National Lifeboat Institution

West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1HZ  
0300 300 9990 (from the UK), 01 511 9836 (from Ireland)  
and +44 1202 663234 (from any other country)  
[RNLI.org](https://RNLI.org)

## To give through your charitable trust or foundation:

Please call our Trusts and Grants Team on 01202 336088 (from the UK) and +44 1202 336088 (from Ireland and any other country) or email [trusts@rnli.org.uk](mailto:trusts@rnli.org.uk).

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

New Quay crew onboard their Shannon class all-weather lifeboat *Roy Barker V 13-48*

## CONNECT WITH US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Join more than 1.25M supporters following @RNLI across social media.



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