



David John Rowlands AM

Chair – Petitions Committee

National Assembly for Wales

Cardiff Bay

CF99 1NA

Date: 22/3/19.

Dear David John Rowlands,

Thank you to your committee and team for the support afforded us regarding the **petition P-05-868 entitled 'Water Safety, drowning prevention and the effects of cold-water shock to be taught in all schools in Wales.'**

As an independent water safety and drowning prevention charity in Wales, the five families we support all wanted to submit this petition (in line with another family in England) increasing awareness around the dangers of open water. In Wales we are never more than a mile away from a body of open water, the cold-water threshold is considered 12 degrees or below and this is standard in Wales for most of the year.

While the final total of this welsh water safety petition is not as high as we would have liked, we are proud to have provided a marker as to record where Wales as a nation is in regards delivering on the World Health Organization's recommendations that every country should have a water safety plan and how Welsh Government and it's statutory partners are fulfilling their responsibilities in achieving this on all levels.

In the charity's and families experience over the last four years (since Cameron Comey was swept away from Carmarthen in a tidal river and was never recovered.) there is not a cohesive plan for the delivery of effective drowning prevention at this time. It is our hope that the new Water Safety Wales group set up by South Wales Fire & Rescue Service and other organizations, will drive this agenda forward – like the Water Safety Scotland group which is years ahead of Wales in its structure, interventions and activity.

In 2015 a review was published by Public Health Wales - www.wales.nhs.uk/sitesplus/888/page/84337



where they reviewed patterns, causes and trends of child deaths in Wales (under 18, after October 2009) or where the child resided or died in Wales. Several recommendations were made and we are of the opinion that more work needs to be done before organizations like RoSPA, Water Safety Wales, the Royal Life Saving Society and others can deliver a cohesive Water Safety Plan for Wales in partnership with all who have an interest in drowning prevention work in Wales. The recommendations are below, and I would urge Welsh Government to ensure all are met.

- Organizations in Wales should have common messages on water safety, appropriate to the setting
- There are interventions that may encourage safer swimming or prevent unintended contact with water, like self-latching gates around pools
- Education on how pool-based lessons relate to open water could be included in Welsh Government efforts to ensure every child in Wales is able to swim
- Planning is needed in Wales to take forward the UK national drowning prevention strategy (2016–2026) goal of producing publicly available community-level risk assessment and water safety plans
- Holidaymakers at home and abroad could be encouraged to be more aware of water safety, supported by the tourist industry routinely providing advice and guidance on water safety
- There are opportunities to improve sharing of data, and to look at how information is communicated to support prevention, including reports by coroners
- Appropriate support for those involved in drowning events in Wales is important.

With all the austerity cuts implemented in Wales over the last 8 years or so, there is a real and enduring paucity of drowning prevention work where we see community councils, PCSO's, schools, town and county councils struggling to deliver community safety interventions and seeking support from our charity as the awareness of drowning prevention or funding is non-existent as far as they are aware. The activity we have delivered to date has spawned wider interventions and we have indeed worked with Welsh Government to deliver a new Emergency Services Slipway at Abergwili in the Towy Valley.

Carmarthenshire Water Safety Partnership will continue to deliver a range of interventions to maintain a voice for families who have lost their children and young men to drowning, offer financial and emotional support to anyone effected by loss, raising awareness of mental health and water related self-harm, the unwanted, repeated and consequence free vandalism of public rescue equipment in Wales, community interventions to maintain (with local councils) a dynamic water safety presence in South West Wales, community events to deliver water safety messages to all in attendance (Carmarthen River Festival) and partnership work with organizations to deliver a range of campaigns in our communities.



Kind regards,

Adam Whitehouse

Chair

Carmarthenshire Water Safety Partnership