Association of British Paediatric Nurses
www.abpn-uk.com
Committed to promoting the development of children's nursing through evidence based information about practice and education

Press release: embargoed until 00.00hrs 24th July 2026

World Drowning Prevention Day 25th July 2026

This year the World Drowning Prevention Day theme is *"unite to turn the tide."* It focuses on uniting government leadership, multisectoral collaboration, investments, and evidence-based action. The Association of British Paediatric Nurses (ABPN) is proud to stand alongside local and national organisations to unite to promote prevention and raise awareness of water safety for children and young people.

The World Health Organisation states that drowning claims 236,000 lives every year.[1] Drowning is one of the leading causes of death globally for children and young people aged 1-24 years and is the 3rd leading cause of unintentional injury death, accounting for 7% of all injury-related deaths.[1] More than 90% of drowning deaths occur in rivers, lakes, wells, domestic water storage vessels, and swimming pools in low- and middle-income countries, with children and adolescents in rural areas disproportionately affected. Established by the United Nations in 2021, the day highlights the tragic impact of drowning and promotes lifesaving, evidence-based solutions to prevent these deaths.

In May, we saw the very sad news that 7 young people had drowned in one week in the UK. According to the National Child Mortality Database, in 2025 there were 31 child deaths due to drowning incidents.[2] This is not just in open waterways, but in the home (bath-tub) and garden (Hot-tubs and paddling pools), with teenagers and the under 5s equally at risk. A lapse in concentration and undertaking another task whilst supervising a child in, on near, water can lead to dire consequences. Significantly, 88% of child drownings occurred in the absence of adult supervision.[3]

Drowning prevention week in the UK is 13th June – 20th June 2026 during which, the Royal Life Saving Society promote everyone to "*enjoy water safely."* With the school holidays approaching and heatwaves increasingly likely, teaching children how to float and swim is vital. Equally critical is the supervision of children and young people around water, ANY water (home or other), and particularly those children and young people who are vulnerable due to age, or additional needs, for example[3].

Children's nurses play a vital role in improving outcomes by:

- Promoting water safety supervision and initiatives both in homes, and in open areas.
- Supporting and signposting families to know the hazards even in shallow water and in particular: bath tubs, paddling pools as well as ponds and lakes.
- Urging policymakers and local areas to adopt water safety policies and prevention initiatives.

- Importantly, they should themselves be aware of the dangers around water and refresh themselves on the water safety code.

The ABPN believes that

- Supervision of the child / young person around water is crucial, no matter the situation or the child's swimming ability or knowledge.
- Covering wells, using doorway barriers and playpens, fencing swimming pools and otherwise controlling access to water hazards greatly reduces water hazard exposure and risk.
- Every child should have the opportunity to learn to swim and receive water safety education at primary school.

"This is something that I never wanted to recount but I do so in memory of sweet B, and her devoted parents. It took place over 25yrs ago but is still as vivid today.

B very tragically drowned due to a moment's inattention at a family BBQ. At 2½ years old, B was inquisitive, curious and had a sunny disposition. She snuck inside and opened the sliding door to the hot-tub where she had previously liked the bubbles and the warm water. By the time it was noticed she was missing, it was sadly and tragically too late for B. Despite initial return of spontaneous circulation, she did not resume consciousness and died 2 days later in PICU. Her parents and many of the guests had not had alcohol; this was an awful accident. Please always supervise children around water and make no assumptions that someone else is watching."

Ellie Forbes, ABPN Honorary Secretary, Member and Children' Nurse

REFERENCES:

1. World Health Organisation (2026) Drowning Factsheet: World Drowning Prevention Day
2. National Child Mortality Database (2025) Child drowning deaths 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2024 Child drowning deaths – 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2024
3. National Water Safety Forum (2015) A future without drowning: The UK National Drowning Prevention Strategy 2016-2026 uk-drowning-prevention-strategy.pdf

Notes for editors

The term child refers to infants, children, young people and young adults up to 25 years of age.

The ABPN recognises that primary and community services, as well as child public health and mental health services, including school nurses and health visitors also have a key role in supporting children, young people and families.

The ABPN is the oldest children's nursing association in the world, established in 1938. Our wide membership includes experts in clinical practice, education, leadership and research.

www.abpn-uk.com

Blue Sky: @abpn-childnurse.bsky.social
Facebook: Association of British Paediatric Nurses
Tik Tok: @ABPN_ChildNurse
YouTube: @ABPN_ChildNurse
Instagram: @ABPN_ChildNurse
LinkedIn: Association of British Paediatric Nurses