

Lifeguard Service Monitoring Report 2023 - Wirral



1. Summary

This report details the service levels and provisions of the RNLI Lifeguard service in the Wirral area for the 2023 season.

In its 9th year, the RNLI has continued to provide a lifeguard service, with the management team overseeing the service on behalf of Wirral Borough Council. The management team comprised Lucy Tilston (Lead Lifeguard Supervisor Wirral & Denbighshire), Olivia Davies (Lifeguard Supervisor Wirral & Denbighshire – 8 months), Amelia Burnett (Lifeguard Supervisor Wirral & Denbighshire – 7 months), Sadie Lee (Lifeguard Supervisor Wirral & Denbighshire – 4 months), and Peter Rooney (Regional Lifeguard Lead).

This season, we adopted a collaborative approach by combining areas for the Seasonal Supervisor roles to enhance support and experience for the Wirral and Denbighshire Lifeguard Service. The success of this approach has led us to plan for its continued implementation in the future.

Beneath the management team, our Senior lifeguards are responsible for daily operations at each beach, upholding the exceptionally high standards set. The senior team comprised lifeguards:

- Richard Webster
- Cameron Jacobie
- Niamh Wylde
- Anna Underwood
- Dominic Bell

We operated our service on the below beaches:

- New Brighton
- Plateaux
- Harrison Drive
- Leasowe Bay (Peak Season)
- Moreton
- West Kirby

It's essential to highlight that the statistics for this year are significantly lower when compared to previous years. The reason behind this discrepancy is a modification in the way the RNLI records daily statistics for 2023. In contrast to the past practice of documenting visitor numbers every two hours (six times daily), the new approach no longer includes visitor numbers but focuses on capturing a snapshot of water users or face-to-face interactions twice a day. This alteration has significantly influenced the statistics we currently collect, making them incomparable to those of previous years. It's important to note, however, that this change does not impact other data categories, such as minor first aid, casualty care, missing persons, etc.

2023 was the fourth year of the service during the current pandemic (COVID -19). Four years on and this still brought a continuation of challenges for the RNLI and

Lifeguard service. Although recruitment has been challenging, we still successfully recruited 12 new lifeguards this year (11 of them being full-time Lifeguards). With support from the Denbighshire Lifeguards during the early season, this helped us continue to run a successful and full capacity service. To achieve this, we ran 5 lifeguard courses (NVBLQ) to fill the scheme of compliment. We will be running early season NVBLQ courses (February half term & Easter) to put us in a good position for 2024 season.

The RNLI provided comprehensive induction training for full-season lifeguards in March and April, including an additional program to accommodate the main season and a final peak season induction just before July. The training covered the RNLI Casualty Care for Lifeguards course, advanced first aid with oxygen therapy and defibrillator training approved by the British Paramedic Association, health and safety training, manual handling, familiarisation, and training with other SAR organizations (HM Coastguard, RNLI Lifeboat Stations across the Wirral), team-building exercises, and extensive local familiarization on the beaches.

Lifeguard facilities and staffing levels vary across the Wirral and are detailed below. All beaches, at a minimum, operate with rescue tubes, fins, and paddle boards.



New Brighton

During the peak season, a five-person lifeguard team operates from Fort Perch Rock to Egremont Slip. Three team members work from a mobile unit on the promenade in front of the Floral Pavilion, equipped with an ATV, RWC, and mountain bike. At specific times of the day, dependent on the tide, lifeguards raise red and yellow flags to establish a secure bathing zone for the public. This group also monitors the back of the Fort area in collaboration with the Plateaux Lifeguard team. The remaining two lifeguards patrol from a 4x4 stationed outside the Black Pearl, conducting roving patrols down to Egremont along the promenade and keeping a watchful eye on mud and tidal cut-off areas. The RWC, visible from the water, also patrols from the Fort groyne to Egremont. A Senior lifeguard is stationed on New Brighton beach, ready to provide support to the adjacent Plateaux beach if needed. The introduction of new fast-release bridals for the RWC has enhanced its launch effectiveness, particularly during spring tides on the beach.

This year the New Brighton Lifeguards encountered a notable level of activity, albeit with slightly lower statistics compared to the previous year, 2022. Similar to all the Lifeguarded beaches across the Wirral, this decline can be linked to adverse weather conditions, the implementation of a new daily log format, and the easing of travel restrictions.

New Brighton Lifeguards have efficiently managed 71 incidents, rescuing 13 people and 2 animals, offering assistance to 14 individuals, and aiding 83 people. Notably, the New Brighton lifeguards have successfully prevented over 15,596 incidents, highlighting their dedication and competence. Over the year, New Brighton Lifeguards addressed 8 significant Casualty Care incidents and 27 minor First Aid situations. All Wirral Lifeguards consistently utilised the 111-emergency line for secure discharges. During the earlier summer heatwave, New Brighton Lifeguards exhibited exceptional diligence, remaining active and ensuring the safety of all beach users.

A continued close working relationship with New Brighton Lifeboat Station and Wirral CRT has been a great benefit to this service, as a collective we work well together which has been demonstrated in all the major incident's lifeguards have responded to this year, as well as organising effective training exercises together. We are currently planning multi-asset training exercises for 2024



Plateaux

During Peak season Plateaux is a 3-person beach operating from Perch Rock Fort to Hole in the Wall. The unit is located on a concrete slab on top of some rocks adjacent to the Fort. This team will also keep an eye out on the back of the Fort area (Brazil Bank) in conjunction with the New Brighton Lifeguard team. At specific times of the day (tidal dependant) the lifeguards will clear public from the Sandbanks (there are 4 large sandbanks in total on this beach, from Portland slips to Brazil Bank) and will then raise the red and yellow flags to create a safe bathing zone for the public to use. The ATV was used as a roving patrol vehicle. The rescue board was then positioned as close to the tideline as possible and ready to use in an emergency if needed.

On Plateaux Beach, Lifeguards have effectively managed 67 incidents, rescuing 3 people and 2 animals, providing assistance to 4 individuals, and aiding 148 people. Notably, the Plateaux lifeguards have successfully prevented over 11,903 incidents, showcasing their dedication and competence. Throughout the year, Plateaux Lifeguards have handled 6 significant Casualty Care incidents and 31 minor First Aid situations. All Wirral Lifeguards have utilised the 111-emergency line for safe discharges. During the earlier summer heatwave, Plateaux Lifeguards demonstrated exceptional diligence, remaining busy and ensuring the safety of all beach users.

Plateaux Statistics



Harrison Drive and Leasowe Bay

These two beaches were initially patrolled together with two lifeguards until the peak season, at which point the staffing increased to four, and the beaches were separated into distinct patrols. Two lifeguards operated from a 4x4, patrolling the Leasowe area and using the vehicle as a base to maintain a safe bathing area. The other two lifeguards operated from the Harrison lifeguard tower, keeping watch on the "North Bank", and conducting foot, bike, and ATV patrols down to the Hole in the Wall. During the peak season, a mountain bike was stationed at Harrison Drive to facilitate quick response and attendance to incidents for non-vehicle lifeguards.

One significant challenge faced by the lifeguards this year was the increased need for sandbank clearance. The beaches' ever-changing topography led to the identification of four new sandbanks at Harrison in addition to the North Bank. This posed a considerable challenge on busy days, particularly during the earlier heatwave. Lifeguards were also alerted to thick mud created from a waste pipe between the Lifeguard Tower and the Hole in the Wall, and observations were consistently maintained throughout the season.

In a notable incident during the peak season, lifeguards at Leasowe Bay successfully performed a water rescue, extracting a casualty from the water behind the groyne. A 16-year-old lifeguard bravely swam over 200m to reach the struggling casualty and safely brought them back to shore in challenging conditions. Casualty Care was administered on the scene until the arrival of the ambulance, and the individual expressed gratitude later.

The combined efforts of Harrison and Leasowe Lifeguards have adeptly managed 75 incidents, including the saving of one life, the rescue of 11 people and 11 animals, offering assistance to 18 individuals, and providing aid to 250 people. It is worth noting that the Harrison & Leasowe lifeguards have effectively thwarted over 13,292 incidents, underscoring their dedication and competence. Over the course of the year, the Lifeguards addressed 6 significant Casualty Care incidents and 12 minor First Aid situations. All Wirral Lifeguards consistently utilised the 111-emergency line for secure discharges. During the preceding summer heatwave, Harrison Lifeguards showcased exceptional diligence, remaining engaged and ensuring the safety of all beach users.

In contrast to the 2022 statistics, it's evident that Harrison and Leasowe Lifeguards have handled a higher number of incidents this year.

The Northern Kite Surf School and The Leasowe Bay Chilly Dippers continue to gain popularity. The Lifeguard Service has maintained a close collaboration with the RNLI water safety team, jointly identifying high-risk periods at Leasowe Bay before the peak season. Together, we have offered safety guidance in that area.

Both Leasowe and Harrison Lifeguards have worked very close with New Brighton Lifeboat Station, Hoylake Hovercraft and Wirral CRT this year during incidents and maintained a great relationship.

Harrison Drive Statistics

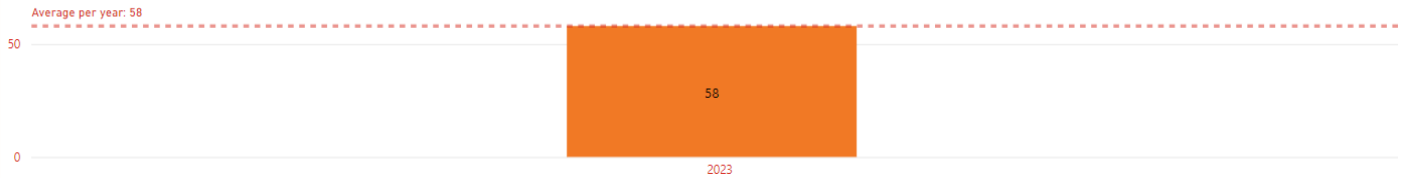


Lifeguards Overall Since 2001

Overall Lifeguard Statistics since 2001. (These are fixed statistics and cannot be filtered)

2.0.1 Incidents	2.0.2 Lives Saved	2.0.3 People Aided	2.0.4 Preventative Actions
303,031	2,000	406,077	10,633

2.0.6 Total LG Incidents by Year



2.0.7 Lifeguard Incident and Incident Actions

Year	Total LG Incidents	Total Aided	Lives Saved	Rescue	Assistance	Cas care	Minor FA	Search	Missing/ Found	Non Aquatic Assist	Near Miss	False Alarm	Anti Social Behaviour	Animals	Other	Total Preventative Actions
2023	58	222	0	5	9	4	7	0	1	54	37	1	1	11	2	10,633

Leasowe Bay Statistics



Lifeguards Overall Since 2001

Overall Lifeguard Statistics since 2001. (These are fixed statistics and cannot be filtered)

2.0.1 Incidents	2.0.2 Lives Saved	2.0.3 People Aided	2.0.4 Preventative Actions
303,031	2,000	406,077	2,659

2.0.6 Total LG Incidents by Year



2.0.7 Lifeguard Incident and Incident Actions

Year	Total LG Incidents	Total Aided	Lives Saved	Rescue	Assistance	Cas care	Minor FA	Search	Missing/ Found	Non Aquatic Assist	Near Miss	False Alarm	Anti Social Behaviour	Animals	Other	Total Preventative Actions
2023	17	28	1	6	9	2	5	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	4	2,659

West Kirby

In the peak season, West Kirby operates with a five-person team equipped with a 4x4, ATV, and an RWC. Given the challenges posed by the Island chain, a senior Lifeguard is on duty daily. A lifeguard unit is strategically placed in the car park near West Kirby marine lake, serving as an observation point for the beach and offering a reference for the public seeking tidal advice regarding the Island chain. Additionally, it provides first aid and communication services in case of emergencies. The 4x4 is positioned on Hilbre Island, functioning as a base of operations for Lifeguards working on the tideline with all necessary rescue equipment. The ATV serves as a patrol vehicle, while the RWC is positioned as close to the tideline as possible, ready for emergency launch. During an 8.5-meter tide, the RWC effectively patrols and guides individuals off the lake walk to prevent them from being stranded by the tide.

Throughout the season, there has been a rise in incidents involving mud recovery near the West Cheshire Sailing Club jetty.

West Kirby Lifeguards have efficiently managed 40 incidents, rescuing 2 people and 2 animals, offering assistance to 71 individuals, and aiding 170 people. Notably, the West Kirby lifeguards have successfully prevented over 16,006 incidents, highlighting their dedication and competence. Over the year, West Kirby Lifeguards addressed 5 significant Casualty Care incidents and 11 minor First Aid situations. All Wirral Lifeguards consistently utilised the 111-emergency line for secure discharges. During the earlier summer heatwave, West Kirby Lifeguards exhibited exceptional diligence, remaining active and ensuring the safety of all beach users.

Maintaining a strong and ongoing collaborative partnership with West Kirby, Hoylake Lifeboat Station, and Wirral CRT has proven to be highly advantageous for our service. As a collective, we exhibit excellent teamwork, evident in our effective response to major incidents throughout the year, as well as our coordinated efforts in organizing impactful training exercises. In May, West Kirby Lifeguards played a crucial role in supporting the RNLI annual duck race on the marine lake, contributing to a collective fundraising effort that successfully raised £4000 for the appeal. Looking ahead, we are currently in the process of planning multi-asset training exercises for the year 2024.

West Kirby Statistic



Moreton

In the height of the season, Moreton functioned as a three-person beach team, equipped with an ATV and Mountain Bike. The unit was stationed on the promenade, adjacent to Moreton Common Carpark near the Green Hut Café. Lifeguards conducted roving patrols from the Leasowe Castle promenade to Barbour's Folly Groyne. At specific times determined by the tide, the lifeguards cleared the public from the extensive Sandbanks (comprising three large sandbanks in total) and then raised red and yellow flags, designating a secure bathing zone for public use.

The Moreton Lifeguards effectively managed 42 incidents, involving the rescue of 14 animals, assistance provided to 5 individuals, and aid given to 77 people. Notably, the Moreton lifeguards have successfully prevented over 7,927 incidents, showcasing their dedication and competence. Throughout the year, Moreton Lifeguards addressed 1 significant Casualty Care incident and 13 minor First Aid situations. All Wirral Lifeguards consistently utilised the 111-emergency line for secure discharges. During the earlier summer heatwave, Moreton Lifeguards displayed exceptional diligence, staying active and ensuring the safety of all beach users.

The Moreton Lifeguards have fostered a strong collaboration with Hoylake Lifeboat Station and Wirral CRT. Their collective synergy has been notably evident in various incidents, such as a unique occurrence when a sheep became stranded on a sandbank. Despite the unusual nature of this incident, all teams collaborated seamlessly to ensure the safe and prompt extraction of the sheep from the bank.



Any other business:

At the commencement of the season, all RNLI Lifeguard units reported their staffing levels, equipment details, and daily operational hours to the UK HMCG. On various occasions, the HMCG tasked the lifeguards to respond to incidents. The lifeguards collaborated closely with the Wirral HM Coastguard Rescue team, as well as the local RNLI Lifeboat and Hovercraft Stations, participating in both incident responses and training activities.

An especially valuable exercise involved the Lifeguards working with New Brighton Lifeboat, practicing the transfer of casualties from a rescue board to the boat. This exercise proved highly effective and was subsequently applied in an actual incident a week later.

The school education initiative 'Meet the Lifeguards' resumed this year, and the Wirral Lifeguard and Water Safety team successfully visited over 40 schools, engaging with 7,526 pupils over a four-week period in May 2023. Their diligent efforts led to Wirral Lifeguards achieving the highest number of school visits in the entire Wales & West region. The team aims to replicate this success in 2024.

The Alison Saunders Award was bestowed upon several of our Wirral Lifeguards this year in recognition of their exemplary rescue off Harrison Drive in April 2022 (please refer to the attached citation). Additionally, they were honoured with a Chief Executive Commendation for the exceptional efforts displayed during the same rescue.



Merseyside police commendations:

In January 2023, our Senior Lifeguard Cam, along with fellow RNLI members, received commendation from the Merseyside Police Chief Constable. This recognition was in acknowledgment of their actions during an incident that took place in July 2022.

In November 2023, Cam was also invited to attend the National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) annual Police Public Bravery Awards. During the event, he was honoured with a silver medal for his commendable actions on that day.



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3. Performance

Carry out a Risk Assessment to identify hazards and determine a series of control measures to mitigate against the 'risk'. These control measures to include where appropriate: provision of public education; safety literature; information and warning signs; zoning; barriers; trained surveillance; first aid; lifeguards (inc. lost children service); and, appropriate equipment, as set out in Schedule 1	Not Achieved	Achieved	Exceeded
		E	
	Risk Assessment to be reviewed annually and any changes reported to Wirral MBC. Next risk assessment review to take place in Jan 2024.		
Provide a beach safety and rescue service covering a period defined in the Risk Assessment, normally from May to September but which may be reduced or extended either way by agreement with LA based on the Risk Assessment.	Not Achieved	Achieved	Exceeded
		E	
	Service provided across the area as described in services agreement.		
Provide a beach safety and rescue service on the beaches covering a series of Operational Areas (Beach, Normal and Extended) as agreed with the LA and as set out in Schedule 2.	Not Achieved	Achieved	Exceeded
		E	
	Operational areas as agreed and amended in consultation with stakeholders.		
Provide a beach safety and rescue service in accordance with the Local Operating Procedures as set out in Schedule 3.	Not Achieved	Achieved	Exceeded
		E	
	Local operating procedures created, reviewed, and updated, copies of which have been made available. Any adjustments reported through end of season report and meetings.		
Ensure the service is provided in accordance with the criteria to comply with the European Blue Flag and/or Seaside Award standards where necessary.	Not Achieved	Achieved	Exceeded
		E	
	Lifeguard service provided at agreed designated locations.		

Complete incident reports, daily logs and staffing level records on a daily basis to be made available to the LA on request and included in an annual report to the LA.	Not Achieved	Achieved	Exceeded
		E	
	Achieved. No information requested.		
Observe the provisions of the LA's Health and Safety at Work Policy and Safety Working Practices together with the best practice lifeguarding principles ("Safety on British Beaches") wherever appropriate.	Not Achieved	Achieved	Exceeded
		E	
	Achieved. Nothing to report.		
Ensure lifeguards observe high standards of courtesy and consideration towards members of the public at all times.	Not Achieved	Achieved	Exceeded
		E	
	All lifeguards employed by RNLI are required to undertake induction training and customer care.		
Inform the LA's appropriate officer responsible for environmental services regarding any beach cleaning requirements or pollution incidents.	Not Achieved	Achieved	Exceeded
		E	
	Achieved		
Ensure that so far as reasonable all public relations, incident data, publicity and media releases are agreed between the parties beforehand.	Not Achieved	Achieved	Exceeded
		E	
	Achieved.		
Recognise the Local Authority on all signs	Not Achieved	Achieved	Exceeded
		E	
	PRE and signage have been conducted by the RNLI and will be brought up at the end of season meeting with Wirral MBC to discuss future.		
Keep the lifeguarding service fully insured for public liability and employer's liability risks as appropriate to a minimum cover in each case of £20 million for any one claim.	Not Achieved	Achieved	Exceeded
		E	
	Achieved.		

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2023 service levels

Area	Beach Name	Equipment	Easter Cover	No LG's	Full Start	No LG's	Main Start	No LG's	Peak Start	No LG's	Late Season	No LG's	Season End
Wirral	New Brighton	4x4, ATV, Bike & RWC	Yes	4	22 nd April	4	27 th May	4	1 st July	5	3rd September	4	24 th September
	Plateaux	ATV	Yes	2	22 nd April	2	27 th May	2	1 st July	3	3rd September	2	24 th September
	Harrison Drive	4x4/ATV	Yes	2	22 nd April	2	27 th May	2	1 st July	2	3rd September	2	24 th September
	Moreton	ATV + Trailer & Bike	Yes	2	22 nd April	2	27 th May	2	1 st July	3	3rd September	2	24 th September
	West Kirby	4x4, ATV & RWC	Yes	4	22 nd April	4	27 th May	4	1 st July	5	3rd September	4	24 th September
	Leasowe Bay	4x4	No	0	NA	0	NA	0	1 st July	2	N/A	0	N/A

Variations in service levels and season dates

SEASON:	Easter Cover	Full Season (wknds)	Main Season	Peak Season	Late Season (wknds)
DATE:	01/04/23-16/04/23	22/04/23-21/05/23	27/05/23-25/06/23	01/07/23 - 03/09/23	09/09/23-24/09/23
INDUCTION:	March	March/April	May		

2024 service levels

Area	Beach Name	Equipment	Easter Cover	No LG's	Full Start	No LG's	Main Start	No LG's	Peak Start	No LG's	Late Season	No LG's	Season End
Wirral	New Brighton	4x4, ATV &RWC	30 th March	4	TBC								
	Plateaux	ATV	30 th March	2									
	Harrison Drive	4x4/ATV	30 th March	2									
	Moreton	ATV + Trailer	30 th March	2									
	West Kirby	4x4, ATV &RWC	30 th March	4									
	Leasowe Bay	4x4	No	0									

Variations in service levels and season dates

Easter Cover 30/03/2024 – 14/04/2024
 Full season (weekends only)
 Main season
 Peak season
 Late season (weekends only)

4. 201 Recommendations

Following a successful 8th season of operations in the Wirral area, RNLI Lifeguards make the following recommendations for approval by Wirral MBC, in preparation for the 2022 season:

- **Maintain current operational manning levels (as described) for each beach in the Wirral area**
- **Continue to display temporary operational signage daily across the season**
- **Continue to monitor Lifeguard staffing and equipment levels across the coast and notify the management team of any recommended changes.**
- **Review the outcomes and recommendations of the 2023 signage audit.**

5. Report Appendix

Definitions of search and rescue criteria

Rescue – where a lifeguard responds to a person at risk, and physically returns them to shore or transfers them to another craft.

Major First Aid – where a lifeguard treats a patient who is at risk due to sickness or injury and has called in external assistance.

Assistance – where a lifeguard aids a person in the sea who is at very little risk, but if left, would be at risk later.

Search – an organised search with other SAR units for a missing person either at sea or on land – includes body recovery

Near Miss – any occurrence where a person might have been injured by watercraft i.e., powered or otherwise

Life Saved – if the lifeguard had not intervened, life would have been lost.