



# Cold Water Shock – When Fun Turns Fatal – teacher notes

We are hoping you will show our film to your students, either in class or during an assembly. Below are some key discussion and learning points that help back up the film.

- It can be very tempting to jump into rivers and lakes to cool off when the weather is hot. However, open water can often be much colder than expected and there can be hidden risks beneath the surface.
- Rather than open water, we would encourage young people to use supervised venues such as public swimming pools, lidos or lifeguarded beaches where possible. Lakes, rivers and reservoirs can contain hidden debris, sudden drops, strong currents and extremely cold water, even during periods of hot weather.
- One of the biggest dangers is cold water shock. Entering cold water suddenly can cause an involuntary gasp response, panic and difficulty breathing, which can quickly lead to someone getting into trouble, even if they are a confident swimmer. This is sadly what happened to Jack.
- It is also important to remember that open water can be deeper than expected, with unseen hazards below the surface. Things like rubbish, shopping trolleys and rubble can be hidden beneath murky water and could easily trap or injure someone. The water may also look calm on the surface, but there may still be strong undercurrents, particularly near locks and weirs, which can pull even strong swimmers into difficulty.
- Statistics indicate that child drowning deaths in England have doubled since 2019-20. Between April 2019 and March 2024, a total of 165 children lost their lives to drowning, with teenagers aged between 13 and 17 having the highest drowning rate. In Cambridgeshire there were nine in-water deaths last year (April 2025-March 2026), compared with seven the previous year.
- Despite the risks, some people may still choose to enter open water. If you do find yourself in difficulty, remember to '**Float to Live**'. Tilt your head back, keep your ears submerged and try to control your breathing. Once the effects of cold water shock begin to pass, gently move towards safety or call for help.
- Try and go swimming with someone else, so you can assist each other or call for help if you do get into difficulty. If you see someone else in trouble near water, call for help immediately by dialling 999. Never try and carry out a rescue yourself, you could put yourself in danger too. You can try and find



something to throw to them to use as a float or to pull them in if they are near to the edge and it's safe to do so.

- Put a marker on the bank in line with the point the person was last seen.
- A really useful tip to help pinpoint your location is giving a what3words reference. This is easy to do by downloading the app before heading out and encouraging everyone in your group to do the same, making a note of where you're swimming. The app is free and available to download on any mobile device.

We are very keen to capture the impact the film has, so if possible, can you please fill in this short form after you have shown it: <https://bit.ly/4uElKTm>