

# CDOP Newsletter

for professionals

## Home-drowning prevention • Upcoming training courses

Issue 1

The Redbridge Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) was formed in 2008 and meets several times a year to review all child deaths in the borough. Its cross-disciplinary team of professionals identifies any lessons learnt and makes recommendations to the LSCB on how to improve children's health and wellbeing and how to prevent future child deaths. This is the first CDOP newsletter for frontline staff. The information will be available to professionals on [MARCo](#). A parent-friendly version of this newsletter is available as a leaflet at children's centres and online at [FIND](#).



## Keeping children safe around water

What do these things all have in common?



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**Tragically**, these are all places where children and babies have died in home drowning accidents. **In autumn 2014, the national newspapers picked up on the story of a three-year-old boy who drowned in his grandparents' garden pond<sup>i</sup>.** His devastating death, along with those of dozens of other UK babies and toddlers could have been avoided. This is why Public Health England has made preventing home drowning a priority (See PHE's online report: [Reducing Unintentional Injuries In And Around The Home – June 2014](#)).

The message is simple:

- All water in the home and garden is potentially dangerous
- Babies and children need to be supervised at all times when they are in or near water

An American study showed that out of 136 families, only half of them had received information from health professionals about water safety at home and only around a third of them had been told about bath time safety for babies<sup>ii</sup>. **We in Redbridge want to do better!**

# Why do children drown at home?

Children are curious. If they see a pond with fish in it, they will want to reach in and touch the fish. However, they do not have the physical skills to get out of trouble if they fall into water, which is why drowning can happen in even an inch or two of water. Despite a toddler's increased mobility, their co-ordination and stability is still poor and they are unaware of danger.

Babies drown silently and without a struggle. That is why even diverting attention for one minute to read a text message while the baby is in the bath can be fatal as the parent/carer will not know that the baby is in trouble. **It is essential for parents/carers to have their full attention on the baby and to never leave a baby alone in water – even for a few seconds.**

## Advice for keeping the home and garden safe

### Bath time



Remind parents/carers to prepare everything in advance, so that they will not need to leave the room during bath time. They should go to the toilet first, turn off any cooking, have towels, nappies, lotion and other equipment at hand and not answer the phone or door during bath time. If they need to leave the room, they should wrap the baby up and take the baby with them. **Keeping safe during bath time is simple: parents/carers must keep the baby with them at all times and have 100% of their focus on the baby.**

Bath seats are not safety devices. In fact, an American study showed that 17% of baby bath drownings happened when parents left their baby unsupervised in a bath seat. Infants can slide, wriggle or fall off the seats and if they become submerged, the seat will trap them underwater. Babies need to be watched by a responsible adult. The same study showed that 39% of bath drownings happened when babies were left in the care of their slightly older siblings<sup>iii</sup>.

### Garden ponds



Did you know that 39% of British children who drowned at home, drowned in a garden pond?<sup>iv</sup>. Garden ponds are the leading cause of home drowning for toddlers. For this reason, **the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) advises parents of young children to completely fill in their garden pond.**

It is equally important to make sure that children cannot get into neighbours' gardens, if they have ponds or pools. It is essential to **be extra vigilant** when visiting friends

and family who have water features in their gardens and to **never leave a child in their garden without supervision.**

If filling in a garden pond is not an option for the parent/carer, the next best thing is to make it as inaccessible as possible, for example, using rigid mesh and suitable fencing. Please refer them to [RoSPA's factsheet](#) (see resources) for detailed information on how to do this.

### Buckets and paddling pools



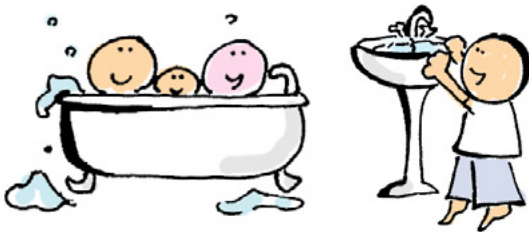
These need to be emptied after use and not left outside where they can accumulate more water. In a three-year period, 58 children in the USA drowned in buckets left around the home<sup>9</sup>.

### Toilets and bathrooms



The majority of children drown in toilets by falling in head first. Prevent this by putting childproof locks on toilet lids and using safety locks on toilet and bathroom doors.

### Baths and sinks



The same rule applies, empty them straight away.

### Rainwater storage tanks



Keep them covered at all times and make sure that the lid is firmly sealed.

## Who is supervising?

Most drownings happen when a child is left with an inexperienced carer or when the parent/carer is stressed, rushed and has their attention on too many things at once. **Remind the parent/carer of the importance of giving their child their full attention when they are in or around water and giving the same instructions to anyone looking after their child.**

## First-aid training

Learning baby and infant first aid could save a child's life as quick action is very important after a child goes underwater. Refer parents/carers to the resources overleaf for information on local classes.

## Look for childproofing gaps in the home

Recommend that parents/carers get on their hands and knees to explore their home and garden from a curious child's perspective. What else may be dangerous? What can they do to upgrade their childproofing?

# RESOURCES

For information on making garden ponds as safe and inaccessible as possible, please consult [RoSPA's guidance](#)

Contact the local [Children's Centre](#) for details about free, upcoming first-aid trainings for parents.

The Red Cross runs regular First Aid For Baby and Child Courses in [Barking](#)

## To apply for the upcoming LSCB training course

on understanding consanguinity  
(cousin marriage and its link with inherited disorders),  
please see the LSCB Training Programme at  
[Redbridge LSCB Training Courses, 2014-15](#)



<sup>i</sup> HARLEY, N. (2014) Boy 3, died in grandparent's pond. *The Telegraph*. [Online] September 26. Available from: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/law-and-order/11123262/Boy-3-died-in-grandparents-pond.html> [Accessed: October 20, 2014].

<sup>ii</sup> LEE, L.K. & THOMPSON, K.M. (2007) Parental survey of beliefs and practices about bathing and water safety and their children: guidance for drowning prevention. *Accident Analysis & Prevention*. 39(1). p58-62.

<sup>iii</sup> SOMERS, G.R., CHIASSON, D.A. & SMITH, C.R. (2006) Pediatric drowning: a 20-year review of autopsied cases: III. Bathtub drownings. *American Journal of Forensic Medicine & Pathology*. 27(2). p113-116.

<sup>iv</sup> THE ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF ACCIDENTS. (2008) *Pond and Garden Water Safety* [online]. Available from: <http://www.rosipa.com/leisuresafety/adviceandinformation/watersafety/pond-garden-watersafety.aspx> [Accessed: October 20, 2014].

<sup>v</sup> UNITED STATES CONSUMER PRODUCT SAFETY COMMISSION. (2002) *CPSC Warns: Pools Are Not the Only Drowning Danger at Home for Kids - Data Show Other Hazards Cause More than 100 Residential Child Drowning Deaths Annually* [online]. Available from: <http://www.cpsc.gov/en/Newsroom/News-Releases/2002/CPSC-Warns-Pools-Are-Not-the-Only-Drowning-Danger-at-Home-for-KidsData-Show-Other-Hazards-Cause-More-than-100-Residential-Child-Drowning-Deaths-Annually/> [Accessed: October 20, 2014].

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