

ARE on behalf of South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue

2 July 2021

Dear Parents / Carers / Students

As you may have heard in the news, over the late May Bank Holiday weekend our crews were called to an incident in which a 16-year-old boy tragically drowned in Ulley Reservoir, Rotherham, despite the best efforts of emergency services on scene.

This was an extremely sad incident that served as a stark reminder of how dangerous open bodies of water – such as lakes, quarries and reservoirs – can be. Our thoughts and sympathies today remain with the boy's family.

However, our thoughts are also with parents of children right across South Yorkshire, such as yourself, and using the tragic event at Ulley as our motivation, we are asking that you speak to your kids about water safety at your earliest convenience.

Our key messages, for children of all ages across the county, are as follows:

- You should never jump, dive or 'cannonball' into open bodies of water such as lakes and quarries – you don't know what's underneath the surface and could end up suffering from cold water shock
- Cold water shock is where the sudden change in temperature, from being in warm weather to cold water (even in summer open water can be extremely cold), causes your body to shut down and stops even strong swimmers
- You should only swim where its safe and legal – the swimming baths, outdoor lidos and other sites where lifeguards are present
- Don't give in to peer pressure from your friends to jump into the unknown, and never swim after having consumed alcohol
- Should you get into trouble in the water you should float to live – try to stay calm and just focus your energy on floating and shouting for help – until support arrives

Clearly, we do not want children to be scared of safe swimming. In fact, quite the opposite – we actively encourage parents to take their children for organised swimming lessons, where possible.

We also recognise that organised open water swimming, be that in land or on the coast, has a wide array of physical and mental health benefits – and can be done safely.

However, we have seen countless examples this year already where groups of young people have been jumping into open bodies of water.

This is absolutely not acceptable and can put them at risk in lots of different ways. Not only is there cold water shock, but often these lakes and quarries are on private land.

We want people across South Yorkshire – young and old – to enjoy and respect water safely, and we thank you in advance for your support.

Yours Faithfully

Joe McCreesh

Sheffield Neighbourhood Fire Community Safety Officer
South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue