



Lifeboats



FACTSHEET May 2020

WE ARE THE RNLI

THE CHARITY THAT SAVES LIVES AT SEA



RNLI volunteer lifeboat crews and lifeguards are busier than ever, rescuing thousands of people and saving hundreds of lives around the coasts of the UK and Ireland every year. In 2019 alone, they saved 374 lives and helped over 38,700 people.

Our lifesavers will always be there to help those in danger in the water. But too many lives are still being lost. Around 150 people* die accidentally in UK and Irish waters every year. Globally, there are 320,000 drowning deaths each year**.

It's a huge problem, but one we're determined to tackle. Our vision is to save every one, which you can read more

about in *Our Watch*, the RNLI's strategic intent document.

The RNLI works with communities and partners – in the UK, Ireland and worldwide – to prevent people from getting into danger before they need our help. We do this by creating greater awareness of drowning and promoting safer behaviour around water.

As a modern emergency service, and a charity, we depend on trained and committed volunteer lifesavers. As we strive to save every one, we also depend on thousands of dedicated volunteer fundraisers. The funds they raise, together with supporter donations, powers RNLI lifesaving.

*UK average (131 people) from the Water Incident Database (WAID) 2016–18. Republic of Ireland average (23 people) from Irish Water Safety (IWS) 2011–15.

**Global Health Estimates 2016, World Health Organization.

Our lifeboat crew

Our volunteer lifeboat crews are ready to launch 24/7 from lifeboat stations around the UK and Ireland

Lifeboat crew members have all kinds of backgrounds and jobs – from teachers to tattooists, farmers to pharmacists. At a moment's notice, they readily exchange work, comfort or sleep for cold, wet and fatigue.

They spend many hours of their own time training together so they can meet the dangers and challenges they face on search and rescue missions at sea.

RIVER THAMES

The RNLI also provides a search and rescue service for the tidal reaches of the River Thames. There are four RNLI lifeboat stations on the Thames – at Teddington, Chiswick, Tower and Gravesend. The last three are all crewed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by full-time helms and volunteers. Teddington is crewed entirely by volunteers who operate on the RNLI's crew pager system.

TRAINING

Today, only 1 in 10 of our volunteer crew members has a maritime profession, so training is essential. Crews don't just learn boathandling skills – they learn everything from navigation and engine repair to first aid and sea survival. We provide them with comprehensive training and recognised qualifications.

These high standards are maintained and developed with the help of the training staff and facilities at the RNLI College in Poole, Dorset, which complements training around the coast. This central facility also provides accommodation, classrooms and distance-learning resources. The Sea Survival Centre with its state-of-the-art lifeboat simulator, wave tank and live engine workshop give our volunteers hands-on experience.

Lifeboat volunteers need and deserve the very best training and equipment to

keep them safe when they launch to the rescue. That's only possible thanks to our generous supporters.

ON SHORE

Volunteer shore crew are a vital part of the rescue team. They help with the launch and recovery of the lifeboat, sometimes carrying out challenging tasks such as tractor launches in powerful breaking waves. The support of shore crew is especially valued on a difficult or long shout. They are described by lifeboat crews as the 'unsung heroes' of our rescues.

OUR SUPPORT NETWORK

The RNLI Support Centre in Poole, Dorset, stores and distributes the items needed to run all our lifeboats, stations, lifeguard units and support offices in the UK and Ireland.

Specialist engineers, surveyors, technicians and training experts look after the requirements of stations in their region.

IN 2019



8,941
LIFEBOAT
LAUNCHES

9,379
PEOPLE
AIDED

220
LIVES
SAVED

26
PEOPLE
AIDED EACH DAY
ON AVERAGE

LIFESAVING EQUIPMENT COSTS

LIFEBOAT CLASS	BUILD & DELIVERY ¹	THROUGH-LIFE ²
Shannon (ALB)	£2,131,000 (€2,503,000)	£3,506,000 (€4,119,000)
B class (ILB)	£276,000 (€324,000)	£816,000 (€958,000)
D class (ILB)	£86,000 (€101,000)	£267,000 (€313,000)

¹ This is the cost of building and delivering the boat to station, including crew training costs

² This is the cost of the boat for its entire useful life, including all refits and maintenance

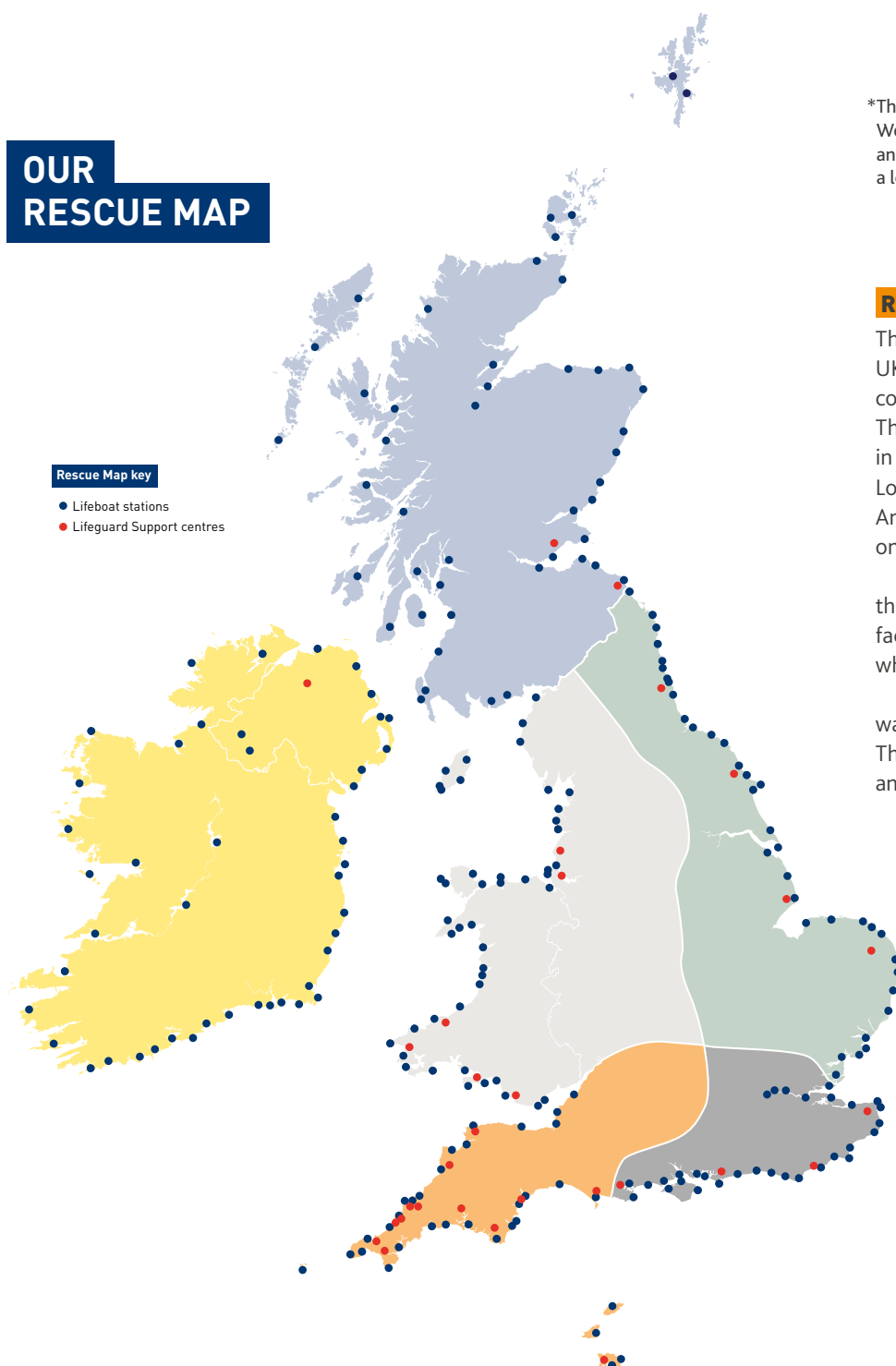
ALL-WEATHER LIFEBOAT CREW KIT

Helly Hansen layered clothing and boots	£1,500* (€1,764)
Lifejacket	£480 (€564)
Helmet	£260 (€305)
Seagoing gloves	£25 (€30)

INSHORE LIFEBOAT CREW KIT

Drysuit, including boots	£800 (€941)
Lifejacket	£480 (€564)
Helmet	£260 (€305)
Thermal suit	£230 (€270)
Gloves	£25 (€30)
Balaclava	£20 (€23)

OUR RESCUE MAP



*This is the recommended retail price (RRP).

We always seek to obtain the best price for all kit and equipment. Where possible, we will negotiate a lower cost, so may not always pay the full RRP.

RING OF SAFETY

There are 238 lifeboat stations around the UK and Ireland, covering 19,000 miles of coastline. They include four on the River Thames, and five inland – at Loch Ness in Scotland and Carrybridge, Enniskillen, Lough Ree and Lough Derg in Ireland. And RNLI lifeguards operate at busy times on 248 UK and Channel Island beaches.

The RNLI is responsible for maintaining these lifeboat stations and beach lifeguard facilities, building new or replacement ones when required.

The demands of saving lives on the water constantly evolve – and so do we. This means we regularly review our lifeboat and lifeguard provision.

Our lifeguards

RNLI lifeguards – highly-trained and professional – advise, supervise and rescue people on beaches around the UK and Channel Islands

They are responsible for making beaches a safer place, so visitors can enjoy their time at the coast and return home safely at the end of the day.

Each lifeguarded beach (called a lifeguard unit) is equipped with rescue

boards, rescue tubes, first aid kits, defibrillators and various other items of essential lifesaving equipment. Some are also equipped with inshore rescue boats, rescue watercraft and four-wheel-drive vehicles.

TRAINING

Lifeguards must reach people in trouble quickly. When someone's in danger in the water, seconds count and lifeguards are often the first on hand to help. All RNLI lifeguards hold an internationally recognised beach lifeguard qualification. As well as having vital lifesaving skills, they must be able to complete:

- a 400m pool swim in under 7½ minutes
- a consecutive 25m underwater and 25m surface pool swim in under 50 seconds
- a 200m beach run in under 40 seconds.

IN 2019

29,334
PEOPLE
AIDED 

 **17,356**
INCIDENTS

154
LIVES
SAVED 

LIFEGUARD KIT COSTS	
Full wetsuit	£250 (€295)
Binoculars	£100 (€117)
Sunglasses	£45 (€53)
Rash vest	£60 (€70)
Swim suit / trunks	£60 (€70)



They are responsible for **making beaches a safer place**, so visitors can enjoy their time at the coast and **return home safely** at the end of the day.

Sharing our experience

Around 150 people* die by accident in UK and Irish waters each year. Half of those who drown never intended to enter the water

WATER SAFETY

From our analysis, we know that 51% of the total annual accidental coastal deaths occur in just 11 out of the 79 coastal counties across the UK and Ireland. We also know men over 35 are the most at risk group. By working with our partners, the RNLI helps improve safety on and beside the water.

We're asking the public to help save more lives by sharing some simple survival skills:

- If you find yourself in the water unexpectedly, fight your instincts and float until the effects of cold water shock pass.
- If you see someone else in trouble at the coast, call 999 or 112 and ask for the coastguard.

COASTAL WALKING SAFETY TIPS

- Be wary of all edges around the sea and waterside.
- Always take a means of calling for help.
- Check the weather and tide times.

ACTIVITY TIPS

Swimming – swim at a lifeguarded beach, between the red and yellow flags.

Angling from rocks – always wear a lifejacket and carry a means of calling for help.

Kayaking – always carry a means of calling for help and keep it within reach.

Scuba diving – check that you're fit to dive.

Sailing and motorboating – always wear a lifejacket or buoyancy aid, ensure everyone onboard knows how to call for help, get appropriate training, and check your engine and fuel before every trip.

Know what to do – visit [RNLI.org/safety](https://www.rnli.org/safety).

*UK average (131 people) from the Water Incident Database (WAID) 2016–18. Republic of Ireland average (23 people) from Irish Water Safety (IWS) 2011–15.



Our fleet

We have two types of lifeboat – all-weather and inshore. Depending on geographical features, the kind of rescue work and cover provided by neighbouring stations, different classes of all-weather and inshore lifeboat serve different locations

RNLI designers and engineers meet the changing needs of the lifeboat service by developing new classes of lifeboat and making improvements to existing ones.

There are 445 lifeboats (including relief fleet) on service, comprising 164 all-weather lifeboats, 274 inshore lifeboats and 7 hovercraft. RNLI hovercrafts can operate

in tidal mudflats and other areas that are inaccessible to inshore and all-weather lifeboats.

The relief fleet vessels are ready to replace operational craft during routine maintenance or emergency repairs. Our lifeguards use two types of powered craft – inshore rescue boats and rescue watercraft.

Since 2015, the RNLI has built and maintained all-weather lifeboats under one roof at our All-weather Lifeboat Centre in Poole, Dorset. Our Inshore Lifeboat Centre in Cowes on the Isle of Wight supplies and maintains over half the RNLI's inshore lifeboats, as well as our seasonal lifeguard units.

All-weather lifeboats

All-weather lifeboats are capable of high speed in offshore conditions and can be operated safely in all weathers. They are inherently self-righting after a capsized and fitted with navigation, location and communication equipment.



SHANNON

Introduced in 2013, the Shannon is the newest lifeboat in the fleet. Propelled by waterjets, she has greater speed and manoeuvrability and can operate in shallow waters and confined spaces. Specially designed seats and SIMS (see Tamar panel) improve crew safety.

Length: 13.6m
Speed: 25 knots
Range: 240 nautical miles
Construction: fibre reinforced composite (FRC)
Crew: 6
Weight: 17 tonnes
Launch: slipway, carriage or lying afloat



TAMAR

Introduced in 2005, the Tamar is designed to be launched from a slipway, but can also lie afloat. A computerised Systems and Information Management System (SIMS) allows many of the onboard controls to be operated from any position and the crew can remain in their ergonomic seats for longer, further improving their safety.

Length: 16m
Speed: 25 knots
Range: 250 nautical miles
Construction: FRC
Crew: 6
Weight: 30 tonnes
Launch: slipway or lying afloat



TRENT

Trent has the same hull shape as the Severn class but is smaller. The sheerline sweeps down for ease of survivor recovery. Last built in 2003.

Length: 14m
Speed: 25 knots
Range: 250 nautical miles
Construction: FRC
Crew: 6
Weight: 27.5 tonnes
Launch: moored afloat



MERSEY

Introduced in 1988 as the RNLI's first 'fast' carriage lifeboat, the Mersey can also lie afloat or slipway-launch if required. Last built in 1993.

Length: 12m
Speed: 17 knots
Range: 140 nautical miles
Construction: aluminium or FRC
Crew: 6
Weight: 13 tonnes
Launch: carriage, slipway or moored afloat



SEVERN

Introduced in 1995, the Severn is still the largest lifeboat in the fleet. She carries a Y class inflatable that can be launched with a crane. Last built in 2004.

A programme of upgrades will give the Severn a new lease of life as she approaches the end of her operational life. She will be fitted with more modern technology and have significant safety enhancements. This will ensure she can continue to meet the demands of some of the most challenging stretches of coastline and be fit for purpose for another 25 years.

Length: 17m
Speed: 25 knots
Range: 250 nautical miles
Construction: FRC
Crew: 6
Weight: 41 tonnes
Launch: moored afloat



Launching

There are three main ways of launching an all-weather lifeboat: from a mooring, down a slipway, or from a carriage hauled across the beach. Shore crew help with slipway and carriage launches.

Our D class inshore lifeboat can usually be launched from a trolley. The larger B class Atlantics are launched using a tractor-hauled drive-

on drive-off (DoDo) carriage, shore-mounted crane (davit) or floating boathouse. E class inshore lifeboats – used exclusively on the Thames – are moored afloat.

Hovercraft can launch from any flat area, such as a car park or beach, provided there is enough room. Specialist transporter vehicles move them between sites.

Inshore lifeboats

Inshore lifeboats are designed for rescues closer to shore – in shallow waters, surf and near rocks.



ATLANTIC 85 (B CLASS)

Introduced in 2005, this B class is larger than the Atlantic 75, has a faster top speed, radar, VHF direction finder, provision for a fourth crew member, and more survivor space.

Length: 8.5m
Speed: 35 knots
Endurance: 3 hours max
Construction: FRC
Crew: 3–4
Weight: 1.8 tonnes
Engine: 2 x 115hp
Launch: trolley, floating boathouse or davit

ATLANTIC 75 (B CLASS)

This rigid inflatable lifeboat replaced the Atlantic 21 in 1993. Crew can right the craft using an inflatable bag should it capsize, and the engines are inversion-proofed to restart from wet.

Length: 8m
Speed: 32 knots
Endurance: 3 hours max
Construction: glass-reinforced plastic (GRP)
Crew: 3
Weight: 1.7 tonnes
Engine: 2 x 75hp
Launch: trolley, floating boathouse or davit



D CLASS

Introduced in 1963, the D class has evolved into a highly capable modern lifeboat. It is the workhorse of the RNLI's fleet and is ideal for working close inshore, near rocks or in shallow water in moderate conditions.

It can be righted by the crew if it capsizes and a customised version forms part of the RNLI Flood Rescue Team's fleet of boats.

Length: 5m
Speed: 25 knots
Endurance: 3 hours max
Construction: Hypalon-coated polyester
Crew: 2–3
Weight: 436kg
Launch: trolley or davit



E CLASS

Introduced in 2002, the E class is the fastest lifeboat in the RNLI's fleet. It uses waterjets rather than propellers and is designed especially for use on the River Thames, where it's stationed.

Length: 9m
Speed: 40 knots
Endurance: 4 hours at maximum speed
Construction: aluminium alloy with closed cell polythene foam collar
Crew: 3
Weight: 3.5 tonnes
Launch: moored afloat

HOVERCRAFT

Introduced to the fleet in 2002, hovercraft can operate in areas of mud, sand and very shallow water – useful for shoreline searches.

Length: 8m
Speed: 30 knots
Endurance: 3 hours at maximum speed
Construction: marine grade aluminium with moulded FRC



Crew: 2–4
Weight: 2.4 tonnes
Engine: 2x75hp
Launch: bespoke transporter



Photo: RNLI/Nigel Millard

Lifeguard craft



RESCUE WATERCRAFT (RWC)

Fast, agile and durable, the RWC is easy to launch and can get through surf quickly. The RNLI's RWCs have a rescue sled and the waterjets mean that it is easy and safe to manoeuvre close to people in the water. Mainly used at lifeguarded beaches, there are a few at lifeboat stations.



INSHORE RESCUE BOAT (IRB)

Introduced in 2001, IRBs are hand-built at the RNLI's Inshore Lifeboat Centre in East Cowes. Sturdy enough for heavy surf conditions, IRBs are still light enough for just two people to launch.

There are 445 lifeboats (including relief fleet) on service, comprising 164 all-weather lifeboats, 274 inshore lifeboats and 7 hovercraft.

Our people

The RNLI is unique – as a modern emergency service, and as a charity. We rely on people from all walks of life, with a huge range of skills and experience, to keep our lifesaving service running

OUR VOLUNTEERS

Over 95% of the RNLI's people are volunteers.

From lifeboat crew, lifeguards and shore crew to fundraisers, safety advisers and education presenters – thousands of dedicated RNLI volunteers save lives, raise funds, raise awareness, and help in our museums, shops, visitor centres and offices. They are at the heart of the RNLI; without them we couldn't carry out our vital lifesaving service.

OUR STAFF

The RNLI could not run as effectively as it does without its staff, based around the UK and Ireland and at the RNLI Support Centre in Poole, Dorset. Staff members include those with expertise in subjects such as lifeboat design, engineering, training, surveying, marketing, IT, HR, safety, and many others who support our volunteers on the front line.

GOVERNANCE

The RNLI's work is overseen by the charity's trustees and council members - volunteers who lend their skills and experience to help govern the RNLI.



Photos: RNLI/Harrison Bates



Photo: Stephen Duncombe

95%
OF RNLI PEOPLE
ARE VOLUNTEERS

5,500+
VOLUNTEER
OPERATIONAL CREW



2,800+
VOLUNTEER
SHORE
CREW



109
VOLUNTEER
LIFEGUARDS

International

Our founder, Sir William Hillary, had the vision that we should 'extend our views [of drowning prevention] from our own immediate coasts, to the most remote quarters of the globe, and to every neighbouring state'. These values are still as important today. Our work overseas is helping to save some of the 320,000 lives lost to global drowning each year

The RNLI works with partners globally and in countries where drowning is a significant problem – to elevate the issue onto the global agenda, widen the research base and grow skills. Also to identify cost effective and practical solutions to save more lives. In 2019, this included projects in Bangladesh and Tanzania.

IN 2019

We helped:

- 12,098 children to learn to swim
- 42,032 children and community members learn about water safety
- to keep 8,993 children safe from drowning by providing working parents with free, supervised childcare
- to support a lifeguard service in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, where lifeguards rescued 54 people and took 351,931 preventative actions.

COSTS

In 2019, we spent £3.7M on our international lifesaving work – about 2% of the RNLI's total charitable spend. This includes money received from the Isle of Man International Development Fund and the UK Department for International Development.

*Global Health Estimates 2016, World Health Organization.



Photos: RNLI/Harrison Bates

**320,000
PEOPLE DROWN
WORLDWIDE
EACH YEAR***

90%
OF THESE
DEATHS
OCCUR IN
LOW- OR MIDDLE-
INCOME COUNTRIES*



**DROWNING IS THE LEADING
KILLER OF CHILDREN AGED
1-17 IN BANGLADESH***



Photo: CMB Akash

Children and young people

RNLI lifeguards and education volunteers deliver lifesaving education to help keep young people safe in, and near, the water

Learning takes place on the beach, in lifeboat stations, in schools, colleges and at youth groups.

Children aged 7-14 can learn how to stay safe in open water by taking part in free, practical Swim Safe sessions. Swim Safe is a partnership project between Swim England and the RNLI.

Downloadable resources for teachers and youth leaders can be found at RNLI.org/education.

Storm Force, our membership club for young people, inspires and educates 7 to 11-year-olds. It also sows the seed for children to become RNLI supporters, volunteers or lifesavers in later life.



Safety tips for children

If you are in and around the water, always remember to:

1. stop and think
2. stay together
3. float
4. call 999 or 112 and ask for the coastguard.

Find out more at RNLI.org/education.



Our proud history

Sir William Hillary founded the RNLI back in 1824. The Royal National Institution for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck, as it was called then, organised dedicated lifeboats for volunteer crew to help save those in trouble at sea

Our heritage team cares for objects and archive materials to preserve the history of the RNLI, and to inspire future generations of supporters and lifesavers.

The RNLI manages museums and visitor centres around the UK, and collections at the RNLI Support Centre in Poole, Dorset. Historic items are also displayed in many of our lifeboat stations.

External heritage funding has supported the redevelopment of museums

celebrating the life of Grace Darling, at Bamburgh, and the RNLI's most decorated lifeboatman Henry Blogg, at Cromer. Housed in modern buildings, they feature family-friendly displays.

Eastbourne, Whitby and Salcombe museums are set in their original boathouses while Chatham Historic Dockyard holds the RNLI Historic Lifeboat Collection. Find out more and plan a visit at [RNLI.org/heritage](https://www.rnli.org/heritage).



1824
THE YEAR THAT
THE RNLI
WAS FOUNDED

OVER 143,000
LIVES SAVED SINCE
ITS FORMATION



Photos: Norman Beckett Studios, RNLI

Money matters

As a charity, we depend on donations to power our lifesaving work. We can only continue to save lives now, and in the future, thanks to the generosity of our wonderful supporters

FUNDRAISING

In 1891, the RNLI became the first charity to organise a street collection, marking the beginning of a strong fundraising tradition. Today, we remain separate from the coastguard and independent of government, so we rely on the generosity of our supporters to fund our work.

Fundraising groups throughout the UK and Ireland organise all sorts of fundraising activities, year-round. From coffee mornings to quiz nights, rambles to races, and more. Many have close links with their local lifeboat stations.

All money raised through Mayday, our national fundraising campaign, pays for vital kit for our volunteer lifeboat crews. In 2019, the campaign raised over £605,800 (€712,700).

You can support us by taking part in an organised fundraising event, or planning one of your own. Visit [RNLI.org/fundraising](https://www.rnli.org/fundraising) for ideas and more information. Or, to donate, visit [RNLI.org/donate](https://www.rnli.org/donate).

GIFTS IN WILLS

Legacies are much more than gifts in Wills – they are the RNLI's lifeline. They account for 66% of raised voluntary income, meaning that more than 6 out of 10 lifeboat launches are only possible thanks to gifts left to the RNLI in supporters' Wills.

In 2019, the RNLI received £126.5m raised through legacies (€148.8m).

Visit [RNLI.org/legacy](https://www.rnli.org/legacy) for more information about leaving a gift to the RNLI in your Will.

RNLI SHOP

RNLI shops are run entirely by volunteers. They boost funds and public support and can be found at many lifeboat stations. They stock a range of RNLI-related and other products, with all profits going towards the charity's lifesaving work. We also have an online shop at [shop.RNLI.org](https://shop.rnli.org).

MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

Supporters are the lifeblood of the RNLI, making one-off or regular donations throughout the year. Many supporters choose personal challenges to raise funds, or sign up for one of our membership options: Shoreline, Offshore, Governor or Storm Force (for children under the age of 11). For more information, go to [RNLI.org/membership](https://www.rnli.org/membership).

The RNLI also relies on other organisations for support – such as companies and trusts. Company employees can support us through payroll giving.

WHERE YOUR MONEY GOES

13p in every £1 donated is used to generate more funds



87p in every £1 funds our lifesaving activities

Figures taken from the RNLI Annual Report and Accounts 2019

In 2019

£181.5M (€213.5M)
cost to run the RNLI

£52.4M (€61.6M)
raised through donations

£126.5M (€148.8M)
raised through legacies

Royal National Lifeboat Institution
West Quay Road, Poole, Dorset, BH15 1HZ
0300 300 9918 | [RNLI.org](https://www.rnli.org)



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Photo: Nick Mailer

The RNLI is the charity that saves lives at sea
Royal National Lifeboat Institution, a charity registered in England and Wales (209603),
Scotland (SC037736), the Republic of Ireland (20003326) and the Bailiwick of Jersey (14)