COMMONWEALTH DROWNING PREVENTION

Annual Report and Accounts

2025

Drowning

The process of experiencing respiratory impairment from immersion/submersion in liquid



The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that there are 300,000 annual drowning deaths worldwide.



Children aged under 5 years account for nearly a quarter of all drowning deaths.

Drowning is the fourth leading cause of death for children aged 1–4 years and the third leading cause of death for children aged 5–14 years.



92% of drowning deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries.

Contents

	Page
Message from the Commonwealth President HRH Prince Michael of Kent GCVO	1
Message from the Deputy Commonwealth President Dr Stephen Beerman	2
Trustees' Report	
Charity Information and Overview	3
Governance	4
Members	6
Our Charitable Purpose, Mission, Vision, Motto, Scope and Values	7
Our Strategic Priorities 2024-2026	9
Our Achievements 2025	11
Our Plans for 2026	24
Financial Summary	25
Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities	26
Accounts	
Independent Examiner's report to the Trustees	28
Accounts to the year ended 31st December 2025	29



KENSINGTON PALACE,
LONDON, W. 8.

This year, the Society continued its important work in Drowning Prevention across the Commonwealth – notably with the launch of the second issue of the Commonwealth Drowning Factsheet on World Drowning Prevention Day. This publication highlights the extent of the issue that our members strive to overcome each year and is a useful tool when speaking with collaborators.

The Drowning Prevention Development Workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa, was well attended and enabled participants to build on the work done at the 2024 event. The sharing of knowledge, skills and expertise between our member organisations and partners is key to growing the capabilities and impact of our Society.

I would like to thank Navarino and Laerdal Medical for their ongoing support, particularly through the provision of manikin kits to improve CPR education in remote communities.

In July, I was pleased to see Dr. Stephen Beerman move into the role of Deputy Commonwealth President, having served as Deputy Commonwealth President Designate during the customary transitional year. I thank Clive Holland, Past Deputy Commonwealth President, for his many contributions to the Society over the past 13 years which have built the capacity and sustainability of the organisation, facilitating and empowering the Society's officers to build a better future. Thanks also to Emma Harrison who left our organisation after 18 years as Operations Manager, a key role in supporting our members and delivering on important projects to take the Society forward.

I was also delighted to hear of the success of the 2025 Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships that were hosted by RLSS UK in Swansea, Wales in July. It was good to see so many teams, athletes and officials from across the Commonwealth taking part in this exciting and enjoyable event. We look forward to confirming arrangements for the 2027 RLSS Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships.

2026 will see the Society embark on a strategic planning process that will set the priorities and actions for the next three years. Once again, the process will be in consultation with all our member organisations around the Commonwealth to ensure our plan reflects their requirements and wishes. I look forward to seeing the outcome of this piece of work.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all members, supporters and volunteers for their valuable contributions to the Society.

HRH Prince Michael of Kent GCVO
Commonwealth President

Message from the Deputy Commonwealth President

The first half of 2025 was an exciting time for the Society in terms of being able to support our members with new programmes and resources. The long-awaited Lifesaving Sport for All programme launched in February, providing members with a tool to engage and inspire people of all ages and abilities to participate in lifesaving sport. This was followed by revised editions of the Survival Swimming Guide, Bronze Medallion Guide and Bronze Medallion Instructors Manual in May.

July marked the end of an era for the Society, as Clive Holland completed his term as Deputy Commonwealth President after 12 years. During this time, Clive built good working relationships with a number of RLSS partners, championed initiatives to facilitate the Society's expansion and excelled at paying tribute to its history. The Society also said goodbye to Emma Harrison, who had been a key part of the Society's administrative function for 17 years. On behalf of the Society, I extend my gratitude to both Clive and Emma for their significant contributions over many decades and facilitating a smooth transition process.

During the first six months in my role as Deputy Commonwealth President, I was privileged to attend two significant events: the Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships in July and the Africa Drowning Prevention Development Workshop in October.

As with previous Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships, the event in Swansea, Wales saw exciting competition and wonderful camaraderie amongst the participants. We were thrilled to see so many officials make the journey to ensure the event ran smoothly. Thank you to everyone involved and to RLSS UK for hosting this great event.

The Africa Workshop took place in Johannesburg, building on the learnings from the previous workshop which took place in 2024. This was another successful event, thanks to the remarkable efforts of Norman Farmer and members from Lifesaving South Africa. We are grateful to everyone involved for their dedication and support.

I was also pleased to attend the World Conference of Drowning Prevention in November. This was an opportunity to meet representatives from many of our member organisations, reconnect with collaborators and learn from a number of expert speakers.

As a Headquarters team, we continue to rely heavily on the support of our volunteers across the Commonwealth - many of whom lead the workstreams of our strategic plan – as well as that of our partners and sponsors. I send my sincere thanks to them all for everything they do for the Society. We would not achieve all that we do without their continued commitment and enthusiasm for our cause.



Dr Stephen Beerman
Deputy Commonwealth President

Charity Information and Overview

Registered Name:	The Royal Life Saving Society
Working Names:	RLSS, RLSS Commonwealth, Commonwealth Drowning Prevention, Commonwealth Lifesaving
Registered Charity:	Charity Commission England and Wales, Charity Number 306094
Accredited Commonwealth Organisation	CAO 979
Registered with the Fundraising Regulator	Registered with FUNDRAISING REGULATOR
Registered Address:	Red Hill House, 227 London Road, Worcester, WR5 2JG, United Kingdom
Patron:	HM King Charles III
Commonwealth President:	HRH Prince Michael of Kent GCVO
Deputy Commonwealth President:	Clive Holland *(until July 2025)* Dr Stephen Beerman *(from July 2025)*
Treasurer:	Clive Patrickson PhD *(until July 2025)* Kevin Waterman *(from July 2025)*
Portfolio Directors:	*Honorary Executive Director* Norman Farmer AM ESM *Director of Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships* Anne-Maree Gardiner AM *Director of Drowning Data* Dr Aminur Rahman DCM PhD *Director of Lifeguard Solutions* Nick Grazier *Director of Digital Resource Platform* Robert Reid *Director of Lifesaving Sport Development* *Rebecca* Boyd *Director of Youth Development* Bhavik Barochia *Director of Governance & Compliance* Cavell Burchell *Director of Strategy* Clive Patrickson PhD
Operations Manager:	Emma Harrison *(until August 2025)* Sarah Peiris *(from June 2025)*
Operations Assistant:	Esther Groves
Society Bankers:	Lloyds Bank, PO Box 1000, Andover, BX1 1LT
Independent Financial Examiner:	Richard Oddy FCA
Honorary Legal Advisor:	Alastair Collett

RLSS Board of Trustees



Chair

Dr Stephen Beerman
from July 2025



Treasurer

Kevin Waterman
from July 2025

Elected Trustees

Asia Pacific



Alexandra Ash
Australia



Geh Cheow Mei
Malaysia



Sanath Wijayaratne
Sri Lanka

Europe & Africa



Bryan Finlay
United Kingdom
until October 2025



Dylan Tommy
South Africa



Nkatha Hellen Muthomi
Kenya

Canada & Caribbean



Robert Clark
Canada



John MacFarlane
Jamaica



Evelyn-Marie Day
St Lucia

Appointed Trustees



Clive Holland
Past Deputy Commonwealth President (from July 2025)
UK



Clive Patrickson PhD
Director of Strategy
Australia



Jonathan Bruce
Youth Trustee
St Lucia



Dr Stephen Beerman
Director for Advocacy (until July 2025)
Canada

Board Members

Norman Farmer AM ESM
Executive Director
Australia

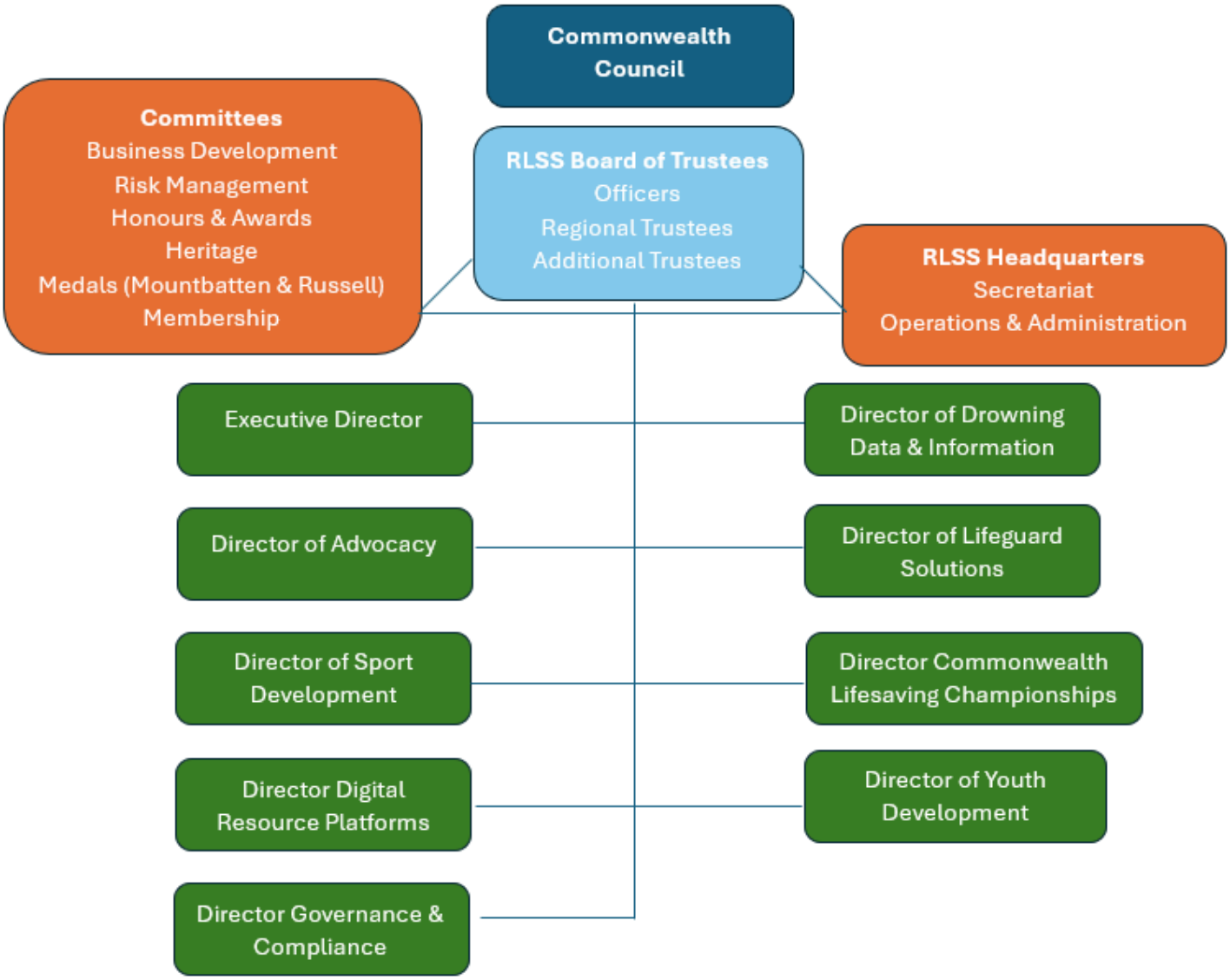




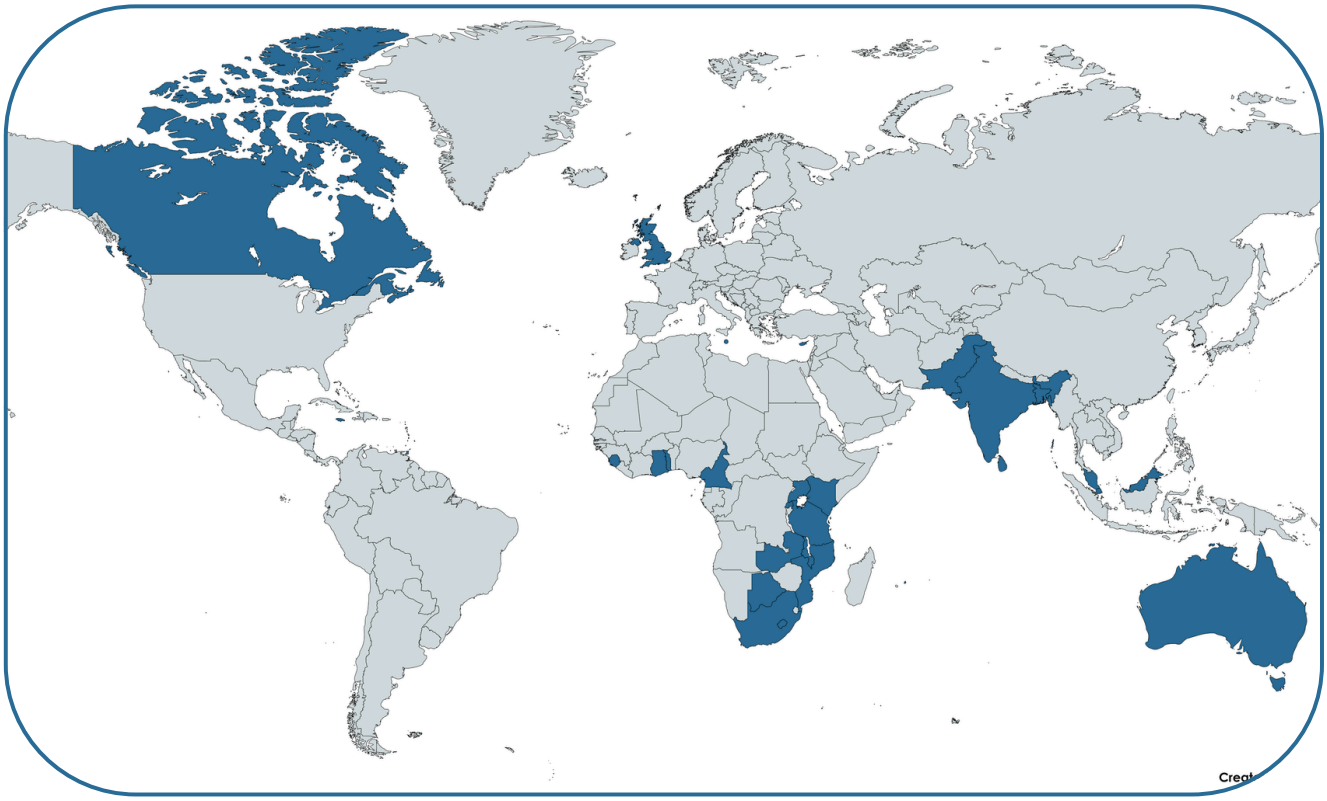
Cavell Burchell
Director Governance & Compliance
UK

Trustees are appointed or elected in accordance with our Regulations to be representative of the range of our network. All Trustees have participated in an induction programme to acquaint them with the responsibilities of trustees and update them on current aspects of our work.

Governance


Commonwealth Council
Committees
Business Development
Risk Management
Honours & Awards
Heritage
Medals (Mountbatten & Russell)
Membership
RLSS Board of Trustees
Officers
Regional Trustees
Additional Trustees
RLSS Headquarters
Secretariat
Operations & Administration
Executive Director
Director of Advocacy
Director of Sport Development
Director Digital Resource Platforms
Director Governance & Compliance
Director of Drowning Data & Information
Director of Lifeguard Solutions
Director Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships
Director of Youth Development

Our Members



Africa Members
Botswana
Cameroon
Ghana
Lesotho
Kenya
Malawi
Mauritius
Mozambique
Rwanda
Sierra Leone
South Africa
Tanzania
Togo
Uganda
Zambia

Asia Pacific Members
Australia
Bangladesh
Brunei
India
Malaysia
New Zealand
Pakistan
Singapore
Sri Lanka

Canada & the Caribbean Members
Barbados
Canada
Cayman Islands
Jamaica
St Lucia
Trinidad & Tobago

Europe Members
Cyprus
Gibraltar
Malta
United Kingdom

Our Charitable Purpose

The Royal Life Saving Society provides public benefit as a charity through reducing drownings and the impact of drownings in the community across the Commonwealth.

Our Trustees have complied with their duty in accordance with the Charities Act 2011 to follow the Charity Commission's guidance on the operations of this public benefit.

Our Mission

Commonwealth Drowning Prevention

Our Vision

No person in the Commonwealth should drown

Our Motto

Whomsoever you see in distress, recognise in them a fellow human being
Quemcunque Miserum Videris Hominem Scias

Our Scope

"Drowning Prevention"
All activities that contribute to the saving of life in, on and near water

"Commonwealth"
All nations that are recognised at any given time by the Commonwealth Secretariat including overseas territories, protectorates and dependencies that are recognised at any given time by Commonwealth Sport

Our Values

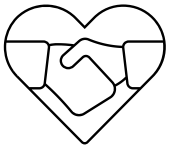
Consistent with the principles outlined in its Royal Charter, Mission, Vision and Motto, and the Charter of the Commonwealth, the RLSS shall undertake its activities in accordance with the following Values:



Family
We are a Family with common heritage and values that works to achieve our mission through a common drowning prevention bond.



Working Together
The Society is 'Our' organisation, and our strength comes from sharing and working together.



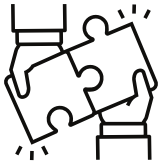
Mutual Respect
We embark on our tasks with honesty and mutual respect for the skills, knowledge, and experience that we all bring.



Learning
We foster a commitment to curiosity and continual learning to help us in achieving our tasks.



Equity, Diversity & Inclusiveness
In all activities, we actively embrace the concepts of equity, diversity, and inclusiveness, enabling participation despite economic adversity.



Collaboration
We include, welcome and work collaboratively with organisations and personnel throughout the Commonwealth in achieving our mission.

RLSS Positioning Statement

RLSS provides leadership by facilitating drowning prevention, lifesaving, and lifesaving sport activity under the brand of The Royal Life Saving Society (RLSS) throughout the Commonwealth through its Members. The RLSS also fosters and facilitates exchanges and collaboration between RLSS Members and companion organisations.

Strategic Priorities 2024-2026

Supporting World Health Assembly Resolution "Accelerating action on global drownng prevention"

The 76th World Health Assembly on 29th May 2023 adopted a resolution to "accelerate action on global drowning prevention", committed the WHO, and compelled others, to work together to raise awareness of the need for drowning prevention globally, nationally, and locally. This "call to action" is the stimulus for the RLSS and its Members to work collaboratively and with international organisations and governments to focus on reducing the drowning toll.

Member Capacity Building & Sustainability

Achieving our mission depends upon the RLSS having strong and well-organized Members in each Commonwealth country. The Members will work together over the strategic period to strengthen the smaller, lower-resourced Member organisations to be stable and well organised, have a deeper human resource pool and be financially sustainable. In addition, RLSS will seek ways to expand its work into Commonwealth countries that do not have an RLSS presence.

Resource Sharing

The RLSS family has a wealth of physical or digital resources that have been developed in multiple countries, and highly talented volunteer and paid personnel. These resources have been shared over many years on an informal basis, a process that has helped support the retention of the common educational heritage. There is a strong desire, and an efficiency imperative, to make this sharing easier and better coordinated, to minimize duplication of effort. The RLSS will facilitate this through the introduction of a digital resource sharing platform.

Sport Development

Sport has been an integral element of the RLSS fabric since shortly after its inception over 130 years ago. It has been a source of engagement of youth, development of skills, and the identification of emerging leaders. It remains a core element of the RLSS activities in many Member organisations, but innovative technologies now provide an opportunity for extension and expansion. The RLSS will enhance its sport development pathways through Lifesaving iSport, Lifesaving Sport for All and biennial Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships.

Strategic Priorities 2024-2026 cont

Youth Development

The engagement and development of young leaders is considered essential for the future development of Member organisations and the Society at large. It has been a strategy for the past 10 years, although it is now recognized that there are more opportunities for their engagement. The RLSS will facilitate youth development with a clearer youth engagement strategy and through use of relevant platforms to build youth networks.

Supporting Membership Development

The RLSS works primarily with organisations committed to drowning prevention and lifesaving in countries in the Commonwealth of Nations (currently 56 nations). Currently, the RLSS works with its 34 member organisations.

The organisation's greatest asset is its network of family Members, with common mission and heritage, located in many Commonwealth countries. This brings talent and resources that can be readily shared with each other. A primary task for the RLSS is to facilitate the development of Member organisations, and work with potential new Members, through collaboration within the values of the RLSS.

Good Governance and Structure

Good governance practices and procedures will enable RLSS to achieve its objectives by creating clear lines of authority, enabling issues to be escalated and resolved. It will also give senior leaders the opportunity to guide the direction of projects, programmes, and activities, including retaining and building connections with others, especially the Royal Household, Commonwealth Secretariat and World Health Organization (WHO).

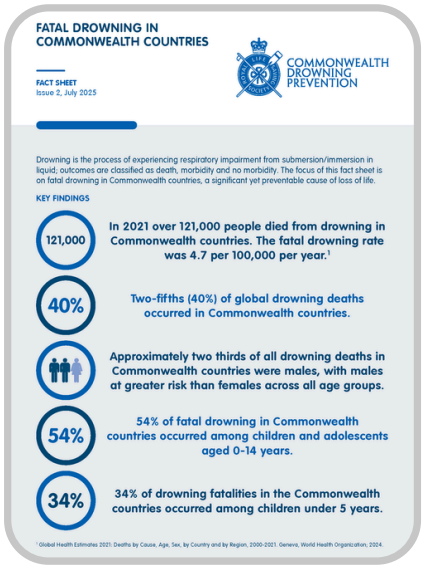
Efficient and Effective Management and Administraiton

The RLSS will have effective and efficient administrative systems and a small central headquarters operation that coordinates support for the work of the RLSS in conjunction with the Members.

Our Achievements 2025

Commonwealth Fatal Drowning Factsheet 2025

To mark World Drowning Prevention Day 2025, we launched the second issue of the Commonwealth Fatal Drowning Factsheet. The Factsheet illuminates fatal drowning in Commonwealth countries – a significant yet preventable cause of loss of life. We actively encourage our members to download and use the report in their advocacy efforts.


FATAL DROWNING IN COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES

FACT SHEET
Issue 2, July 2025

COMMONWEALTH DROWNING PREVENTION

Drowning is the process of experiencing respiratory impairment from submersion/immersion in liquid; outcomes are classified as death, morbidity and no morbidity. The focus of this fact sheet is on fatal drowning in Commonwealth countries, a significant yet preventable cause of loss of life.

KEY FINDINGS

121,000 — In 2021 over 121,000 people died from drowning in Commonwealth countries. The fatal drowning rate was 4.7 per 100,000 per year.[1]

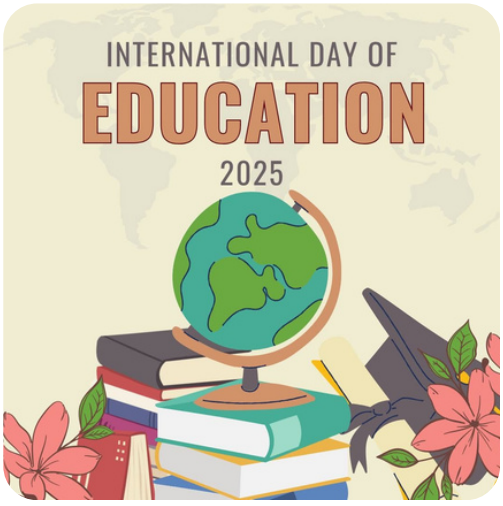
40% — Two-fifths (40%) of global drowning deaths occurred in Commonwealth countries.

Approximately two thirds of all drowning deaths in Commonwealth countries were males, with males at greater risk than females across all age groups.

54% — 54% of fatal drowning in Commonwealth countries occurred among children and adolescents aged 0-14 years.

34% — 34% of drowning fatalities in the Commonwealth countries occurred among children under 5 years.

[1] Global Health Estimates 2021: Deaths by Cause, Age, Sex, by Country and by Region, 2000-2021. Geneva, World Health Organization; 2024.



International Day of Education

In partnership with the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), RLSS hosted an event in London focusing on 'Integrating Drowning Prevention and Education' on 24th January 2025. The event sought to increase awareness and encourage action on the need to integrate drowning prevention interventions in education initiatives. Speakers included representatives from RLSS, RNLI, the World Health Organization, RoSPA/Water Safety Scotland and the University of Leicester.

World Drowning Prevention Day - 25 July

Once again RLSS and its members promoted the importance of drowning prevention through social media, practical demonstrations, special events and online presentations.





World Drowning Prevention Day 25/07/2025



Supporting CPR Education in Low Resourced Countries

RLSS Commonwealth - in partnership with its members RLSS Australia and Lifesaving South Africa, and supported by Navarino and Laerdal Medical – provided more than 20 Laerdal Mini Anne Plus (10) resuscitation manikin kits to enable improved CPR education and training programmes for remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia and remote communities in South Africa. This project also provided better understanding of the specific CPR education needs, cultural needs and challenges in indigenous and/or remote peoples communities.

Drowning Prevention Development Workshop

A workshop was held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 17th to 20th October 2025. The purpose of the workshop was to build on drowning prevention developments at and since the 2024 Africa Drowning Prevention Development Workshop, fostering the sharing of knowledge, skills and expertise between RLSS member organisations from low- and middle-income countries in Africa in an effort to build their respective drowning prevention capability.

The objectives of the Workshop were to:

- Provide practical guidance on the use of the 2023 World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolution Accelerating Action on Global Drowning Prevention, and the WHO Global Status Report on Drowning Prevention 2024 and the 2025 WHO African Region Status Report on Drowning Prevention for advocating to government Ministries and NGOs for action to prevent drowning.
- Improve understanding of the drowning prevention capacity and capability of lifesaving organisations in targeted Commonwealth countries and how they can enhance their sustainability.
- Enhance sharing and collaboration between all RLSS members thereby strengthening the drowning prevention network across Africa.
- Raise awareness of the 2022 WHO Practical Guidance documentation and highlight resources to support implementation of the guidance.
- Expand knowledge and practical experience of survival swimming and CPR training and how they both contribute to a reduction in drowning in each nation.
- Provide additional Laerdal Mini Anne Plus (10) CPR manikin kits to expand CPR education in Africa.











Representatives from RLSS member organisations in Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Tanzania, Togo and Zambia in Johannesburg to collectively contribute to improved understanding of drowning prevention efforts to address the high burden of drowning. Individuals from a prospective member organisation in Mozambique also joined. We were also pleased to welcome representatives from WHO Regional Office for Africa, The Panje Project and RNLI. Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, representatives from our member organisations in Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Uganda were unable to attend as anticipated.

RLSS acknowledges the invaluable support of Lifesaving South Africa in particular from LSA President Winston Meyer, past LSA President Dhaya Sewduth, General Manager Helen Herbert and Director of Lifesaving, Melvyn Shaw.

World Drowning Prevention Conference (WCDP)

The Conference was held in Egypt in November 2025, bringing together academic scientists and applied practitioners from more than 50 countries to share accomplishment and challenges in the global drowning prevention effort.

RLSS Commonwealth was strongly represented, with member organisations contributing to the content and culture of the event in significant ways: Dr Justin Scarr, RLSS Australia CEO, was the Conference Chairperson; Dr Colleen Saunders of Lifesaving South Africa was on the Conference Advisory Committee; RLSS UK attended with a large delegation.



We continued to award the WCDP Scholarship which was launched in 2023 to enable young people from our member organisations to attend and present at WCDP. The scholarship for 2025 was awarded to Dr Yeasir Iftekhar of Bangladesh and Rajeshwari Kannan of India.

2025 Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships

The 2025 Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships, hosted by RLSS UK, was held in Swansea, Wales from 10th to 13th July 2025. This event was sanctioned by the International Lifesaving Federation (ILS) and the Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF).

180 athletes participated in the Championships, representing 11 countries: Australia, Canada, England, Kenya, Mauritius, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Wales.

The overall results for the Championships were as follows:

National Team
1. England
2. South Africa
3. Australia

Development Team
1. England
2. Australia
3. South Africa











The Langland Bay Cups, awarded to the highest point scoring male and female athletes, were presented to Braydon Woodford and Chelsea Jones, both from Australia.
The Mrs William Henry Cup, awarded to an individual from a developing lifesaving sport nation who is identified through a culmination of points scored and engagement during the Championships, was presented to Hiruna De Silva from Sri Lanka.













RLSS Programme and Resource Review

Lifesaving Sport for All

The Lifesaving Sport for All programme launched in February 2025, having been developed over four years and piloted by our members in Cameroon and Kenya. This resource aims to introduce a basic level of lifesaving sport for all ages based on skills education, gaining life saving knowledge and competence, and enhancing these skills through friendly competition. A hard copy manual was designed and sent out to all our members.

We congratulate our member in Cameroon and its President, Justin Bakinga, for continued promotion of Lifesaving Sport for All throughout 2025.

Lifeguard Reciprocity Project

This project, which aims to help lifeguards with RLSS certifications who wish to transfer their skills to work in another RLSS member country, continued in 2025. Project involvement remains between Australia, Canada, South Africa and the United Kingdom with processes in each country being refined.

Survival Swimming Guide and Bronze Medallion

The revised guides were launched to our members in May 2025 via a virtual meeting, providing an overview of both programmes and how they can be used as well as holding a Q&A session.
The Bronze Medallion is the Society's oldest award having been introduced in 1892 and has been reviewed numerous times during that period. Under the leadership of Perry Smith from Canada, a working group and the Commonwealth Headquarters team reviewed the Bronze Medallion Guide and Instructors Manual.

In 2016, as part of the Society's 125th Anniversary celebrations, we launched the RLSS Survival Swimming programme. Under the leadership of Shayne Baker from Australia, the programme was reviewed and updated. We have continued to work with the RNLI on the co-development of technical toolkits, designed to provide detailed, practice-oriented support in specific areas of the WHO practical guidance where implementers had identified a need for greater technical clarity.

Other Notable Achievements

Youth Advisory Board

Under the guidance of the Director of Youth Development, the Youth Advisory Board met on a number of occasions to consider a youth strategy and aligned ways of working. These include frequency of meetings and collaborative platforms such as Whatsapp for chat, Slack for projects and Google Drive for file storage.

Advocacy

We continue to build relationships with both new and established partners in the drowning prevention space and related networks. In 2025, we met with representatives from the WHO regional offices for Africa and the Caribbean.

Content Management System (CMS)

We are continuing to make some minor adjustments to the system in readiness for members to upload items to this platform in 2026.

The Russell Medal Book

To mark the 25th anniversary of the Russell Medal, the RLSS Heritage Committee produced a commemorative booklet including details on the story of the medal, its inscription and production, and the awarding process. The booklet also contained the citations for all Russell Medal recipients to date, which we hope will inspire all members and result in a greater number of future nominations.

Member Outreach

Certification in Zambia

At the end of August, an in-person capacity-building training programme supported by Deon Woodley from Lifesaving South Africa was held. This comprehensive and hands-on training equipped the RLSS Zambia team with the skills and confidence to effectively respond to a wide range of aquatic emergencies, with eight candidates receiving the Bronze Medallion.

Honours

Higher Society Honours awarded in 2025:

Honorary Life Governor

Barbara Costache - Canada

Nicole Liddell - Canada

RLSS Diploma

In 2025, we received one nomination for the Diploma which was unfortunately not awarded by our Honours reviewers.

Research Honour

We were delighted to once again recognise three leading drowning prevention researchers whose achievements have contributed to our global drowning prevention mission. In 2025, the Research Honour was awarded to:

Dr Amy Peden (Australia)

Epidemiology of drowning, risk factors and prevention strategies

Dr Aminur Rahman (Bangladesh)

Community-based child drowning prevention programme

Dr Tessa Clemens (Canada)

Addressing social and structural barriers to reduce drowning risks across diverse communities

RLSS Awards and Medals

2024 Mountbatten Medal

The 27th March 2024 was a clear and sunny day at Alongside Whalebone Pier, Durban, South Africa but the beaches had been closed for swimming after a nearby cyclone. The waves were 6-8ft rough surf with powerful rip currents.

Braedon Powell, who was 15 years old at the time, spotted a man being swept out to sea. He grabbed a pink rescue buoy, jumped over the railings and entered the violent and treacherous surf. Braedon swam out through the massive waves and secured the victim. He started towing the man to shore but they were frequently dragged and held underwater by the currents. Braedon eventually got close enough to the shoreline where bystanders managed to grab the casualty. Braedon was pulled back out to sea again and had to fight hard to reach safety, injuring himself as he clambered over the rocks. Due to Braedon's immediate action and bravery, the man survived the ordeal.

For his quick and courageous actions, Braedon Powell was awarded the 2024 Mountbatten Medal.



2024 Russell Medal

On 24th March 2024, Cosette Palmer was out kayaking with her fiancé off the coast of Dawesville (Western Australia). Cosette's fiancé embarked on a deep free dive.

After some time, Cosette noticed her fiancé at a distance from their kayak, face down and unresponsive. Unable to lift their anchor, Cosette swiftly cut the rope and paddled toward her fiancé . Despite her small frame, with incredible strength and determination, she managed to lift him, still wearing his heavy diving weights, onto the kayak.

Realising the severity of the situation, Cosette activated their EPIRB and called 000 for assistance, before commencing CPR. Cosette's efforts continued for over 15 minutes until Mandurah Volunteer Marine Rescue arrived. The crew immediately lifted the casualty onto their rescue vessel, continued CPR and applied a defibrillator. Their efforts persisted for approximately 40 minutes.

Despite the tireless work of Cosette and the rescue team, the casualty could not be revived.

For her calm and courageous actions, Cosette Palmer was awarded the 2024 Russell Medal.





RLSS Awards and Medals

HRH Prince Michael of Kent Certificate of Merit

The 4th February 2023 was a clear, sunny day. At approximately 3:30pm, Paul Criddle was near to the Old Fremantle Traffic Bridge (Swan River, North Fremantle, Western Australia) when he was made aware that a young girl had been attacked by a shark and was floating unresponsive approximately 50 metres from shore.

Despite the perilous circumstances and the risk to his own life, Paul did not hesitate to act. Paul dove into the river without a moment's hesitation. Paul swam out to reach the severely injured girl and brought her back to shore. There, Paul initiated First Aid procedures. Tragically, despite best efforts, the young girl could not be revived and lost her life.

Paul received the Gold Cross Bravery Award at the Royal Life Saving WA Bravery Awards in 2024. Although the incident occurred in 2023, the coroner's report wasn't released until 2024 which delayed the nomination process.

For his quick and courageous actions, Paul Criddle was awarded a HRH Prince Michael of Kent Certificate of Merit for Bravery.

RLSS Headquarters, Governance and Administration

We have continued to develop our internal processes and policies and continually monitor our risk management through our Risk Management Committee and the Board of Trustees.

During 2025, the RLSS continued to improve its governance and systems by reviewing and updating our Regulations, reviewing the Risk Register on a quarterly basis and a range of policies that has included:

- Anti-Harassment and Bullying Policy
- Complaints Handling Policy
- Privacy and Data Protection Policy
- Social Media Policy

Our Board of Trustees meets quarterly via electronic format.

The Business Development Committee, made up of the Chief Executive Officers from our four larger Members, met periodically during 2025 to discuss various matters and offer advice to the Trustees.

Our Membership Committee continues to meet quarterly to review various membership issues and consider new membership applications.

The Society's Portfolio Directors meet quarterly to update on the progress under their activity within our Strategic Action Plan.

It is expected that Advisors will be appointed in 2026 to further support the delivery of the 2024 to 2026 Strategic Action Plan workstreams.

Collaboration

Drowning is a complex public health problem which goes without recognition or attention in many areas of greatest need. Indeed, it has been called a hidden epidemic. There are more 'at risk' populations in the world needing drowning prevention assistance than there are organisations focused on providing help. The RLSS Commonwealth drowning prevention mission needs collaboration from all national, regional and international organisations and governments to be most effective – cooperating fully for the benefit of people worldwide to reduce the global burden of drowning. Strong partnerships are key to achieving our aim of eliminating drowning in the Commonwealth and have enabled us to support our Member Branches in low resourced settings.

In 2025, key partnerships for RLSS included:

The Commonwealth

A voluntary association of 56 independent countries that are united by values enshrined in the Commonwealth Charter.

As an Accredited Organisation, RLSS continues to engage with various groups within the Commonwealth such as the Independent Forum of Commonwealth Organisations (IFCO) and the Commonwealth Communicator's Group (CCG).

World Health Organization (WHO)

The RLSS has actively supported engagement with the WHO around the Global Status Report on Drowning Prevention and encouraged members on the advice of the WHO and how to support their in-country collaborative efforts.

International Life Saving Federation (ILS)

Both RLSS and our member organisations are represented on the ILS Board, Commissions and Committees, strengthening opportunities for effective collaboration.

The ILS sanctioned and endorsed our 2025 Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships.

We continue to collaborate with the **Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI)** and maintain regular dialogue of matters of mutual interest. Planning for a joint workshop in the first half of 2026 is in the early stages.

RLSS is most grateful for the ongoing support from **Laerdal Medical**. In 2025, we continued to focus on the development of our content management system that will support all our members through resource sharing.

As previously mentioned, Laerdal were a key partner in the CPR manikin kit roll out to 25 RLSS members across the Commonwealth.

In 2025, **Ruth Lee Limited** attended the Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships and kindly donated rescue manikins to our members in Kenya, Mauritius and Singapore. These manikins were shipped and received by our members during 2025.

Our relationship with **Navarino**, a leading maritime technology partner, was established in 2024. In 2025, their contribution supported the development workshop in Johannesburg and the presentation of a set of resuscitation manikins to a local primary school in Swansea as part of wider activities around the Championships.

And most importantly, our **RLSS Member Branches** continue to work at the national and community level to reduce drowning through:

- Researching drowning and aquatic emergencies to inform practice.
- Targeted community-based Drowning Prevention projects.
- Training the community and professionals in lifesaving skills for prevention and emergency response.
- Engaging young people in lifesaving and drowning prevention.
- Using the sport of lifesaving to further develop skills and techniques for rescue.
- Monitoring and risk assessing aquatic environments to guarantee safe participation in safe aquatic environments.

Several of our Members also carry out outreach work in nearby countries which widens the impact of our organisation.

Acknowledgements

The Society's achievements would not have been possible without the support of and contribution from the following people who have given their time and expertise.

Immediate Past Deputy Commonwealth President

In July, RLSS duly recognised the outstanding service provided by Clive Holland during his 12 years as Deputy Commonwealth President. Clive came to the role during a period of change and provided valuable leadership and guidance.
Thank you, Clive.

Operations Manager

After 17 years with RLSS in administrative roles, including Operations Manager, Mrs Emma Harrison finished with RLSS in August 2025. Dr Beerman, incoming Deputy Commonwealth President, extended 'a huge thank you' on behalf of the Commonwealth Council, the Board of Trustees and all members. Dr Beerman noted Emma 'had been the face of the organisation over many years and RLSS has grown to what it is today due to her hard work'.
Thank you, Emma.

Portfolio Directors

- Norman Farmer AM ESM – Honorary Executive Director
- Anne-Maree Gardiner AM – Director of Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships
- Dr Aminur Rahman DCM PhD – Director of Drowning Data & Information
- Rob Reid – Director of Digital Resource Platform
- Rebecca Boyd – Director of Sport Development
- Cavell Burchell – Director of Governance and Compliance
- Dr Stephen Beerman – Director of Advocacy
- Clive Patrickson PhD – Director of Strategy
- Nick Grazier – Director of Lifeguard Solutions
- Bhavik Barochia – Director for Youth Development

Committee and Working Group Chairs

- Dr W. Clive Patrickson PhD – Business Development Committee
- Robert Clark – Heritage Committee
- Dr Richard Franklin – Diploma Committee
- Dr Stephen Beerman – Advocacy Steering Group

Our Committee and Working Groups are composed of members from Australia, Canada, ILesotho, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Singapore, South Africa, St Lucia and the UK - we are extremely grateful to all the members for their valuable contributions.



Our Plans for 2026

We will have effective and efficient administration systems that support the Society's operations and activities. This will be achieved through:

- Operating a Headquarters with good practice business systems and staffing within our means and supported by volunteers and others to ensure the Strategic Action Plan is implemented.

- Having a system of honours, used in all Member organisations, to recognise the valuable contribution by the volunteers.

- Administering and supporting the committees and working groups that the Board considers necessary from time to time including Heritage, Diploma and the provision of awards.

- Exploring multiple ways of working together as a family, embracing large, medium and small member organisations.

- Develop our communications strategy to include staying up to date with latest communication channels that use real-time and online technology.

Specific Plans for 2026

- To pilot the RLSS Lifesaving iSport inter-organisation level pool lifesaving competitions held at aquatic facilities during pre-determined dates with competitors' performances compared with other lifesavers – all without travelling outside their local community.

- Working with members in the Americas, plan and deliver a Caribbean Regional Development Workshop.

- To assist with the planning and delivery of the 2027 Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships.

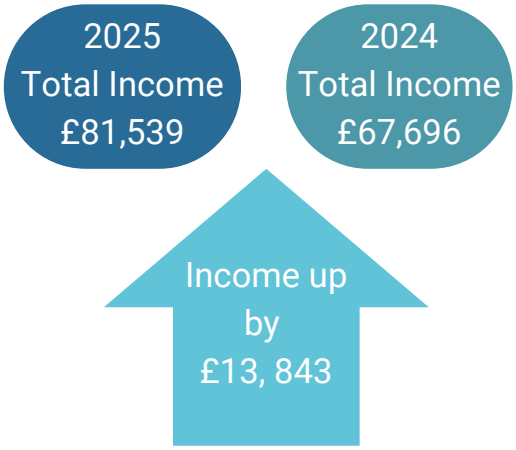
- To continue to support World Drowning Prevention Day and encourage and assist our members to contribute to the work of the WHO.

- To support the Youth Advisory Group that meets regularly to ensure youth engagement in drowning prevention interventions and RLSS programmes and governance.

- To encourage and support use of the content management system by our members and provide training and assistance to ensure all members utilise and benefit from the platform.

Financial Summary

Income



As with previous, years, much of the RLSS's income is member payments from the three largest members branches (Australia, Canada and the UK).

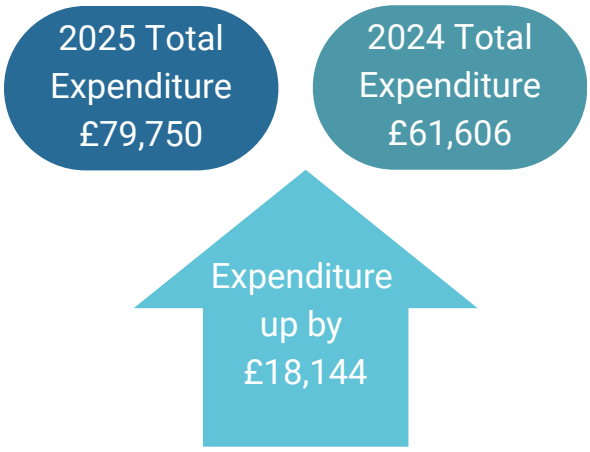
We will continue to look at diversifying income streams and funding opportunities.

Our largest branches have made commitments to continue to support the administration of the Society, allowing any raised funds to be spent on programmatic activity.

Expenditure

Most RLSS expenditure finances the valuable work of RLSS Headquarters (staff and running costs).

Expenditure was higher than forecast due to recruitment and subsequent increased staff costs. There were also three exceptional events in the year: the CPR kit distribution and associated workshop - funding for this was taken from our Regional Development Fund, a designated fund set aside to fund regional activities to support our members; costs relating to the Commonwealth Lifesaving Championships; and costs relating to the World Conference on Drowning Prevention, including scholarships..



Donors & Funders 2025

The Royal Life Saving Society wishes to thank the following individuals and organisations for their most generous donations, sponsorships and grants during 2025.

The Privy Purse
The Edinburgh Trust
Royal Life Saving Society Australia
Lifesaving Society Canada
RLSS UK
Laerdal Medical
Navarino
Ruth Lee
Princess Charlene of Monaco Foundation
Commonwealth Sport
Synagee
TownsWeb Archiving
Clive Holland
John Long
James McClelland

Reserves Policy

RLSS has a Reserves Policy aimed at ensuring the financial sustainability of the Society. As at the end of 2025, we had £87,082 of general reserves and this meets the Society's Reserves Policy of two years core funding (excludes project work).

Over recent years, RLSS has managed to increase its financial reserves through the continued contributions from major branches, increased contributions from member organisations, grants and sponsorships and good fiscal management. This allows us to offer reduced membership fees to our members who struggle financially.

In 2022, we set up a Regional Development Fund that is to support regional work carried out in conjunction with our major branches. The total amount in this fund, and our other designated and restricted funds, totals £57,274 at the end of 2025. Some of the fund was used to host the Regional Development Workshop in Johannesburg and to roll out the manikin kit distribution to our members.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

In relation to the following financial statements of the Royal Life Saving Society to year end 31 December 2025

In accordance with the Charities Act 2011, the Trustees have prepared the following Financial Statements which give a true and fair view of the Charity's financial activities during the year 2025 and of its financial position as at 31 December 2025. In preparing these Financial Statements, best practice has been followed and suitable accounting policies have been consistently applied.

Applicable accounting standards and the Statement of Recommended Practice "Accounting and Reporting by Charities" 2005 have been followed.

The Financial Statements have been independently examined by Richard Oddy FCA after he was given access to all relevant financial documents, general correspondence and Minutes of all Society Committee meetings.

Signed on behalf of the Society Trustees



Dr Stephen Beerman
Deputy Commonwealth President
31st December 2025



Kevin Waterman
Treasurer
31st December 2025

COMMONWEALTH DROWNING PREVENTION

Financial Statements

For the year ended 31st December 2025

Report to the trustees of The Royal Life Saving Societyand to theCommonwealth Council

On accounts for the year ended 31 December 2025

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended 31 December 2025as set out on pages 3 and 4.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed: 

Richard Oddy FCA

Date:5 June 2026

Charity name

The Royal Life Saving Society

Charity No.

306094

Receipts & Payments Accounts

From	Period start date	to	Period end date
	1/1/2025		31/12/2025

Section A Statement of Receipts & Payments

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Expendable endowment funds	Permanent endowment funds	Total funds current period	Total funds last period
	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
A1 Receipts						
Donations and Legacies	16,214	-	-	-	16,214	7,563
Donations	-	494	-	-	494	-
Grants	-	-	-	-	-	2,390
Other Trading Activities	-	-	-	-	-	-
Membership	43,397	-	-	-	43,397	36,985
Resource Income	1,623	-	-	-	1,623	735
Sponsorship	18,000	-	-	-	18,000	17,000
Investments	239	-	-	-	239	228
. . Interest Received	1,572	-	-	-	1,572	2,796
A1 Sub total	81,045	494	-	-	81,539	67,696
A3 Payments						
Charitable Activities	-	-	-	-	-	-
Charity Management & Administration	45,310	-	-	-	45,310	34,234
Commonwealth Development	24,359	447	-	-	24,806	26,942
Lifesaving Sport	4,545	-	-	-	4,545	-
Member Branch Development	4,088	1,000	-	-	5,088	430
A3 Sub total	78,302	1,447	-	-	79,750	61,606
Total payments	78,302	1,447	-	-	79,750	61,606
Net receipts/(payments)	2,742	(953)	-	-	1,789	6,090
Surplus/(deficit) for year	2,742	(953)	-	-	1,789	6,090
A6 Cash funds last year end	135,074	6,263	-	-	141,337	135,247
Cash funds this year end	137,816	5,311	-	-	143,127	141,337

Royal Life Saving Society

For the period from	01/01/2025	To	31/12/2025

Section B Statement of assets and liabilities at the end of the period

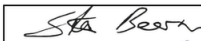
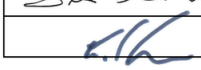
Categories	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B1 Cash funds	Cash at bank	137,816	5,311	-
	Total cash funds	137,816	5,311	-

	Details	Unrestricted funds to nearest £	Restricted funds to nearest £	Endowment funds to nearest £
B2 Other monetary assets	None	-	-	-

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B3 Investment assets	Quoted investments			
	Roya Life Saving Society Fund	Unrestricted	-	4,371
	Russell Medal Fund	Resticted	-	14,117

	Details	Fund to which asset belongs	Cost (optional)	Current value (optional)
B4 Assets retained for the charity's own use	None	Unrestricted		

	Details	Fund to which liability relates	Amount due (optional)	When due (optional)
B5 Liabilities	Payroll liability	-	-	

Signed by one or two trustees on behalf of all the trustees	Signature	Print Name	Date of approval
		Dr Stephen Beerman	10/09/2026
		Kevin Waterman	10/09/2026

The Royal Life Saving Society
Commonwealth Headquarters
Red Hill House
227 London Road
Worcester
WR5 2JG
United Kingdom

Telephone: +44 (0)1905 958444
Email: commonwealth@rlss.org.uk
Website: www.rlsscommonwealth.org

COMMONWEALTH
DROWNING
PREVENTION