Dear Parents/Carers,

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue would like to bring to your attention the associated dangers relating to young people entering open water. As the warmer weather is now upon us we would like to guide you to some water safety advice for your children and young people.

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

- **Tombstoning**: - You should never jump, dive or 'cannonball' into open bodies of water such as rivers, lakes, quarries and oceans– you don't know what's underneath the surface and as the water's depth is constantly changing, there is a serious risk of life changing injury.
- **Cold water shock**: - In South Yorkshire we are losing on average 5 young people per year to this reaction. The UK is a cold-water country which means no open water is above 15 degrees. A public swimming pool is between 26-28 degrees. Fatalities are caused by the cold temperature and how it affects someone entering the water. Firstly, it causes a deep intake of breath (Gasping). Dirty water will usually be mixed with the air breathed in, which potentially will cause secondary drowning and possibly infection. All a person's blood will be directed to their core to protect their major organs. This takes blood from their arms and legs which are needed for swimming. This makes it very difficult for someone to swim and we have solid evidence to suggest this is how lives are being lost.
- **Infection: -** Water borne diseases are often life changing. Our open waters contain raw sewage as you may have seen in the news recently. Diseases you can catch are **Hepititus A & C**, **Weils** (from female rats urine), **E-coli**, **Botulism**.
- **Debris: -** In all our open water sites we have found floating driftwood, shopping trolleys, broken glass and weeds and reeds (vegetation) which can affect your ability to get out and also cause serious injury.
- You should only swim where it's safe and legal – the swimming baths, outdoor lidos and other sites where lifeguards are present. Or join an open water club like Manvers at Dearne. "Swim your swim" are a national open water group who you can find online.
- Don't give in to peer pressure from your friends to jump into the unknown
- Should you get into trouble in the water you should float to live (starfish position facing upwards) – try to stay calm and just focus your energy on floating and shouting for help until support arrives.
- If you see someone in trouble in water give the above advice. Call 999 and ask for the Fire service. Keep your eyes on them until we arrive.
- **What 3 words**: - Please make all young people aware of this app. Download to their smartphone to help with location as often these areas are remote.

We recognise that organised open water swimming, be that in land or on the coast, has a wide array of physical and mental health benefits in a safe environment.

If you are visiting the coast this year, please stay safe. Children should be supervised by an adult at all times. Only swim where Lifeguards are present, and observe the coloured flags.

Educational websites: - **www.rlss.org.uk** open water, **www.rnli.org** coastal water. Both have excellent resources around water safety with interaction for children

Kind regards,

WM Shelley Carr – Community Fire Safety Doncaster