



# THE BIG QUESTION

# DROWNING TRAGEDIES



itv NEWS



# Water Safety Awareness

## Why is it essential to teach water safety?

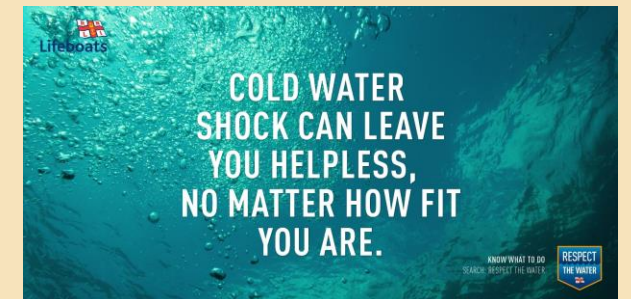
- Every year several young people drown in water incidents across the UK
- The highest risk group is aged 15 to 24
- In 2020 nationally, 47 young people aged 15 to 24 lost their lives in a water incident. 9 people died in drowning incidents just over the half-term break due to the hot weather
- In a number of cases, young people did not have the knowledge and understanding of cold water shock and the hidden dangers below the surface

# Water Safety Awareness

## Cold Water Shock

When you jump into open water, it is much colder than you think!

- Cold water shock is the body's involuntary response to being suddenly or unexpectedly immersed into cold water of around 15°C or lower
- Any temperature below 15°C is defined as cold water and this will seriously affect your breathing and capability to move
- The reactions of the body may be muscle spasms and/or hyperventilation



# Water Safety Awareness

## Cold Water Shock

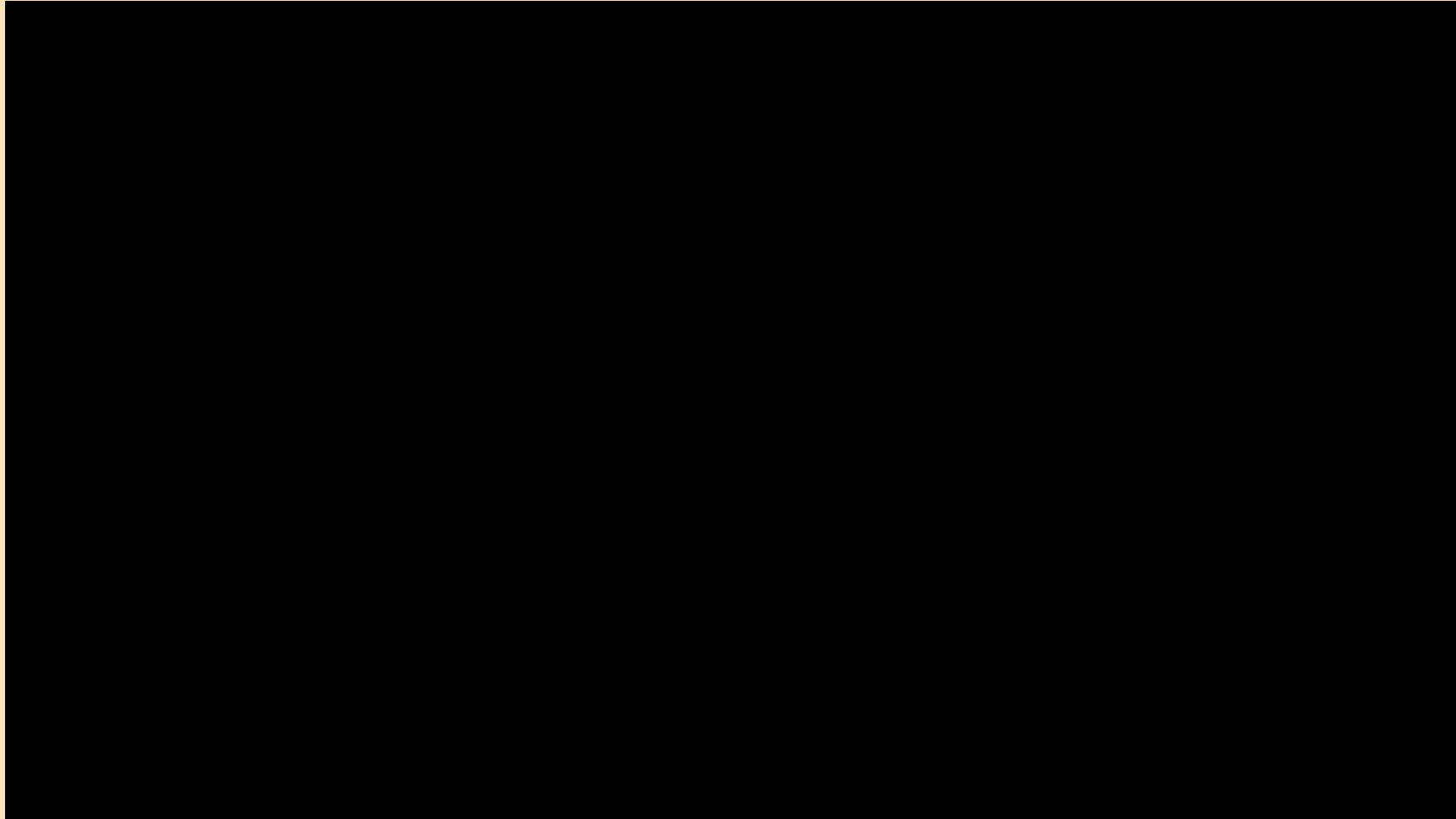
Cold water shock can:-

- Drastically reduce your ability to hold your breath underwater, roughly from a minute to less than 10 seconds
- Induce vertigo, as your ears are exposed to cold water, meaning you cannot tell the difference between up and down

Remember... water can  
be even colder than you think!

# Water Safety Awareness

## Cold Water Shock



# Water Safety Awareness

## Jumping Into Water (Tombstoning)

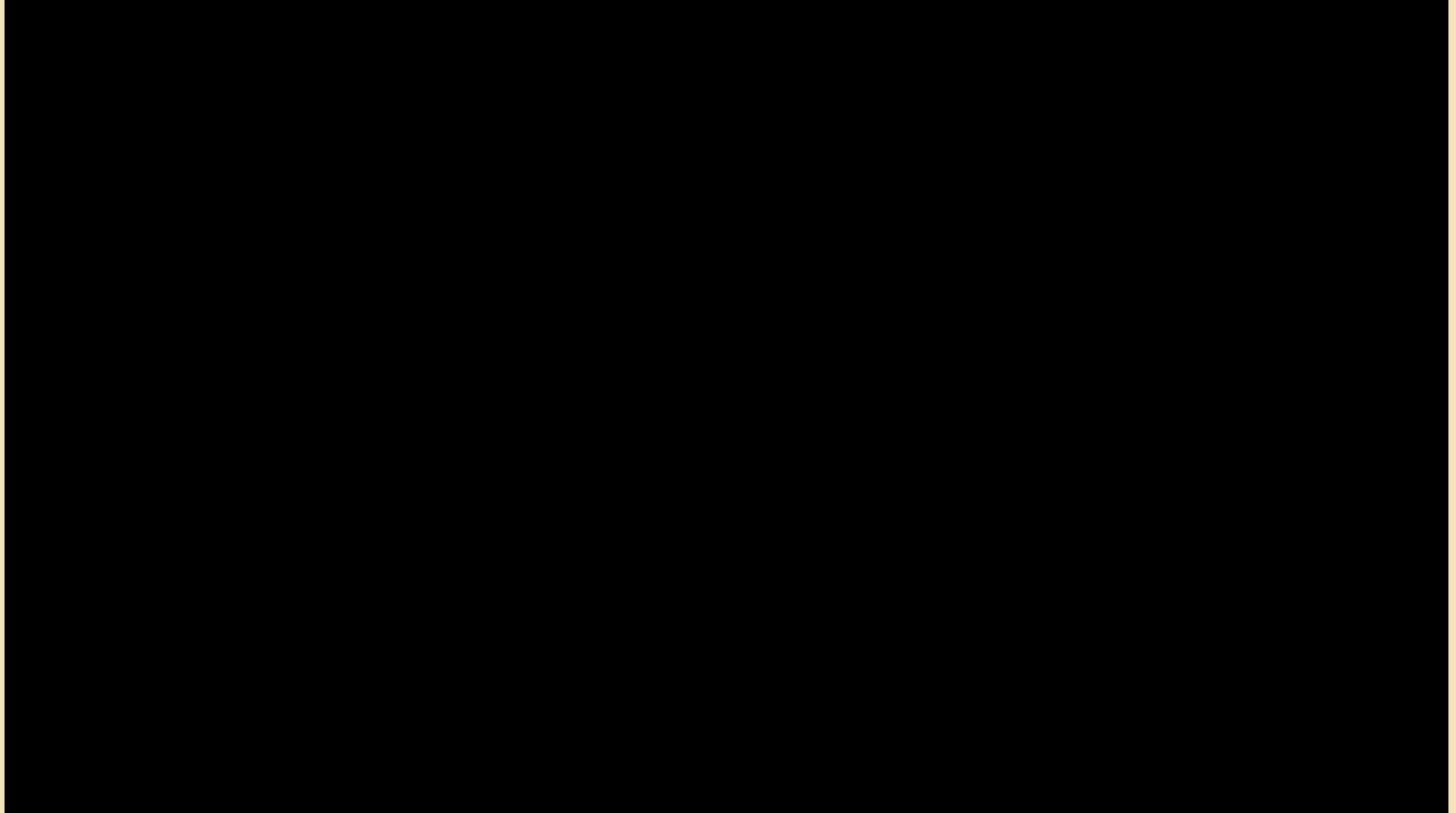
- When you watch the next clip, please consider how far you would go under the water if you jumped in?
- The clip was filmed in a clean swimming pool, which has no weeds, mud or silt at the bottom - all of these could hold you under the water and make it harder to swim
- If you were going into open water, would you know how deep it would be in a river or a lake? It may not be as deep as you think!
- The water may be fast flowing, not just on the surface but also below

Take a moment to think...

What else could be hiding below?

# Water Safety Awareness

## Jumping Into Water (Tombstoning)



# Water Safety Awareness

## Jumping Into Water (Tombstoning)

- Watching the clip, the person stepping off the three metre board hit the bottom of the pool, which is 3.5 metres deep
- The higher you jump from, the deeper you will go under the water
- Is the water deep enough? Some canals and rivers may only be 1 to 2 metres deep!
- Think about the water we have around us - it is not clean like in the diving pool and may have things below
- In the next two slides you will see examples of things taken out of the River Thames in Reading... look closely at what was found...

**Tombstoning** is the act of jumping in a straight, upright vertical posture into a body of water from a high jumping platform, such as a bridge, cliff or harbour edge and is extremely dangerous!

# Water Safety Awareness

## Hidden Dangers



These items  
were taken  
out of the  
River Thames  
in Reading.

# Water Safety Awareness

## Hidden Dangers



These items were taken out of the River Thames from directly under Caversham Bridge in Reading

This post was pointing directly upright under the water's surface

# Water Safety Awareness

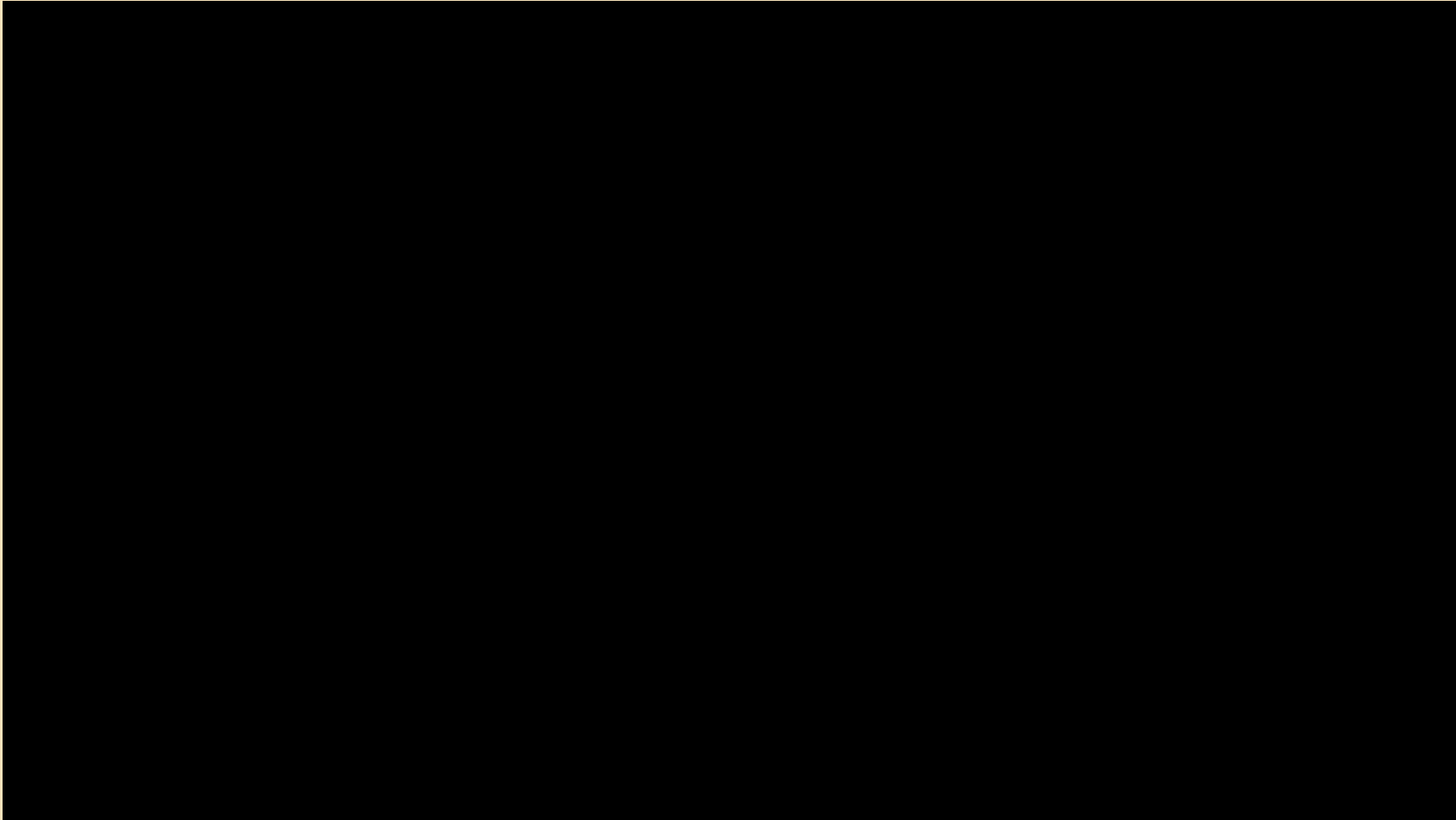
## Hidden Dangers

- Now you have seen what may be hidden below the surface, think about the what else you get could get stuck in, for example, weeds, mud or the fast flowing water
- We will now watch the dive clip again... please consider:-
  - The items that came out of the River Thames
  - The potential effects of Cold Water Shock
- Remember a swimming pool...
  - Has clean, clear water, allowing you to see below the surface
  - Does not have a current that can sweep people away
  - Will always display how deep the water is
  - Is kept at an average temperature of **26°C to 28°C**



# Water Safety Awareness

## Jumping Into Water (Tombstoning)



# Water Safety Awareness

## Dangers of a Weir

- A weir is a barrier across the width of a river or canal that alters the flow of the water, usually resulting in a change to the height of the river level
- Even though the water around weirs can often appear relatively calm, they can be extremely dangerous places to boat, swim or wade:-
  - The water flow around a weir is extremely fast
  - It is nearly impossible to swim away from a weir, as the water keeps pulling you back and under the water like a washing machine

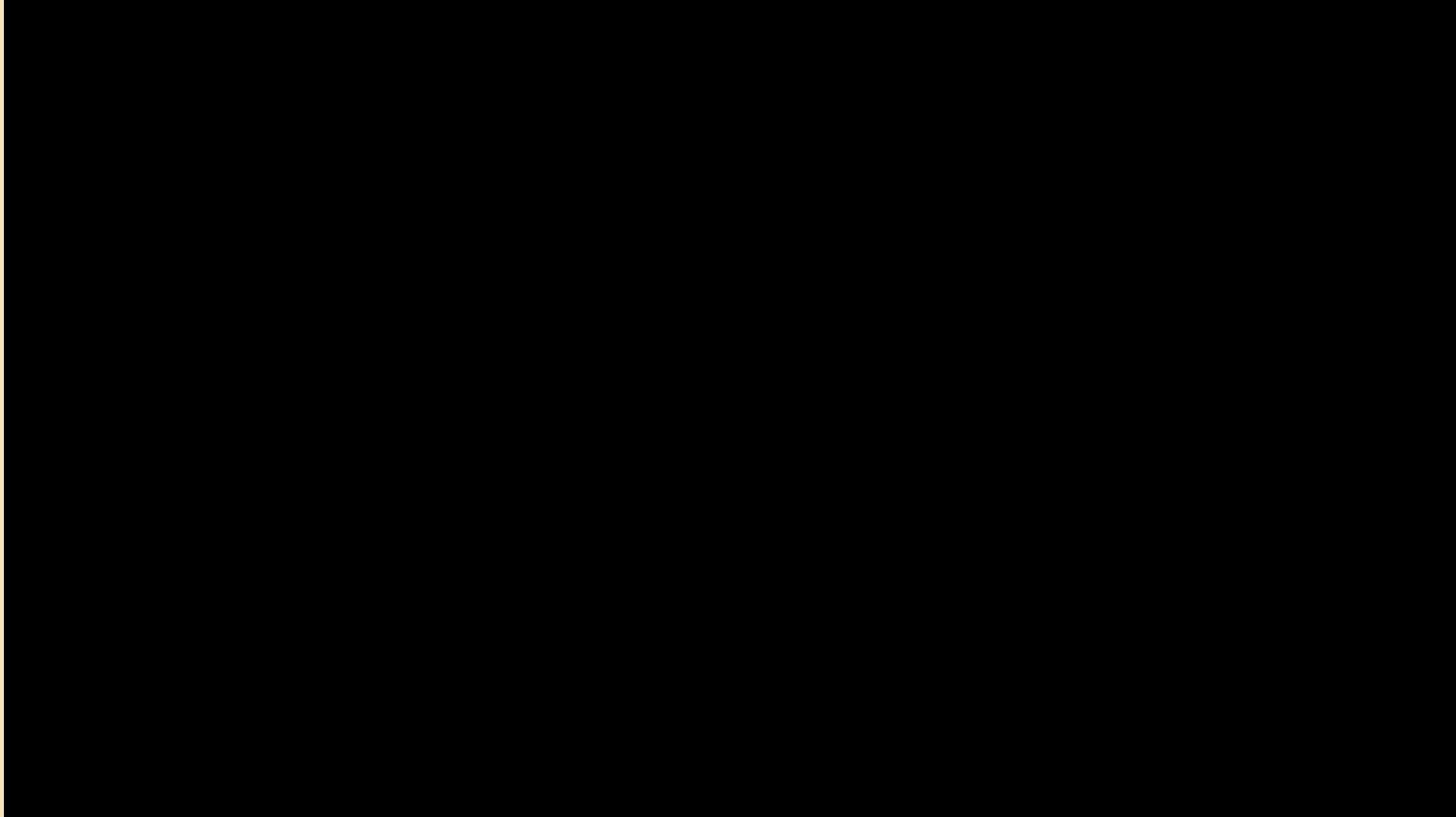


In the next clip, watch how the footballs keep being pulled back into the weir.

Note: in the clip no people are in the weir - only objects being washed along by the flood water

# Water Safety Awareness

## Dangers of a Weir



# Water Safety Awareness

## What to do in an Emergency

- Call 999 and ask for the Fire Service or the Coastguard if you are at the coast
- Give an accurate location, look for identifying landmarks or display boards
- If you are using an app to locate yourself, pass on the information to the Emergency Services
- Shout loudly for help - someone may be around to help you
- Shout to the person - if they can talk, it means cold water shock has passed, so can be encouraged to swim to the side
- Float to Live: If you fall in, fight the urge to panic or swim immediately. Float on your back for about 90 seconds until the cold water shock passes before calling for help or swimming to safety.
- Use a throwline / life-ring if available or a stick / scarf to pull them to the bank
- Never jump in to get them out - cold water shock affects even the best swimmers and you could become a second casualty

# **Debate: Should all secondary schools teach swimming lessons?**

**Team A:** Argues that swimming lessons should be taught in all secondary schools

**Team B:** Argues that swimming lessons should only be taught in primary schools



All primary schools must provide swimming instruction either in Key Stage 1 or Key Stage 2. In particular, pupils must be able to swim competently to at least 25 metres



# THINK, PAIR, SHARE



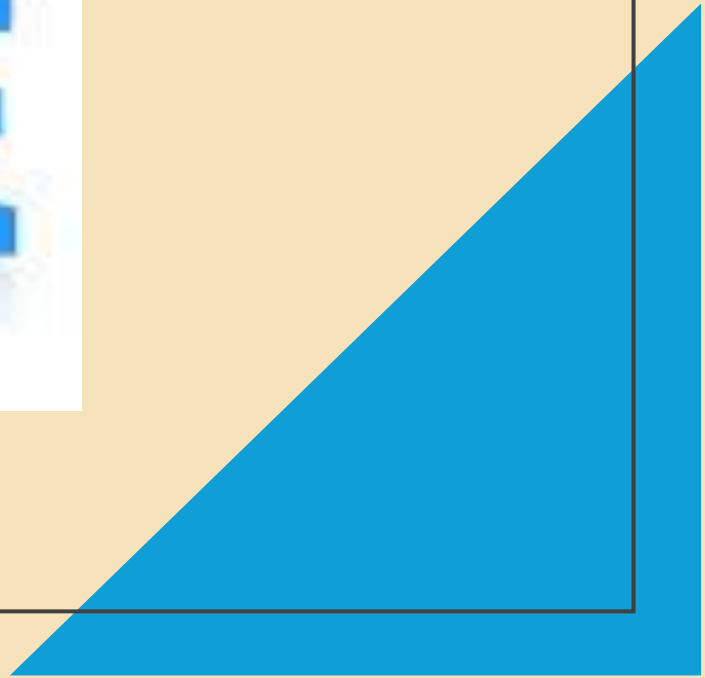


# Arguments that swimming lessons should be taught in secondary schools

- 1. Life-saving skill** Swimming is a core safety skill, not just a sport. Many drownings happen among teenagers who *can* swim a bit but lack confidence, stamina, or water-safety awareness.
- 2. Inequality in access** Not all families can afford private lessons or have access to pools. School provision helps level the playing field.
- 3. Physical and mental health benefits** Swimming is low-impact, great for fitness, and can support mental wellbeing, especially for students who don't enjoy traditional team sports.
- 4. Reinforcement of primary school learning** Many students either don't reach the national curriculum standard in primary school or forget skills by adolescence. Secondary lessons could close that gap.
- 5. Supports wider water safety education** Lessons can include cold-water shock, open-water risks, and rescue basics. All of these are highly relevant during heatwaves.

# Arguments that swimming lessons should only be taught in primary schools

- 1. Cost and logistics** Hiring pool time, transport, and qualified instructors is expensive. Many schools don't have nearby facilities.
- 2. Curriculum pressure** Secondary schools already struggle to fit everything in. Adding swimming could push out other subjects or reduce PE variety.
- 3. Responsibility of primary schools** Swimming is already part of the primary curriculum. Some argue the focus should be on improving provision earlier, not shifting responsibility to secondary schools.
- 4. Not all students need it** Some teenagers already swim competitively or confidently. Mandatory lessons could feel repetitive or waste time for them.
- 6. Most drowning victims can swim** Many people who drown actually know how to swim, but real-world emergencies (cold-water shock, currents, exhaustion, panic) can overwhelm even strong swimmers.



# If you're struggling with debate...

## Confident & Direct Starters

“I strongly believe that...”

“It’s clear to me that...”

“There’s no doubt in my mind that...”

## Analytical & Evidence-Based Starters

“The evidence suggests that...”

“Studies have shown that...”

“Based on what we’ve learned, it seems that...”

## Thoughtful & Reflective Starters

“From my perspective...”

“I understand both sides, but I think...”

“After considering the facts, I feel that...”

## Curious & Open-Minded Starters:

“I’m still thinking about this, but right now I believe...”

“I’m open to changing my mind, but currently...”

“This is a tricky issue, but I lean towards...”

# Let's vote: Should secondary schools teach swimming lessons?



Follow this link to vote on this week's debate topic:

[Should secondary schools teach swimming lessons? – Fill out form](#)

