

## Crucial Crew

Crucial Crew is a nationwide event promoting personal safety for children in the top year of Primary School. Different organisations participate to each cover such topics as making a 999 call, water safety, road safety, internet safety, first aid, fire safety, etc.

Nine River Stour Trust volunteers, who would usually be found on a trip boat, volunteered to take part in Sudbury's Crucial Crew week in 2022 (16th-20th May). One of our volunteers, Steve Waters, has kindly provided this report.

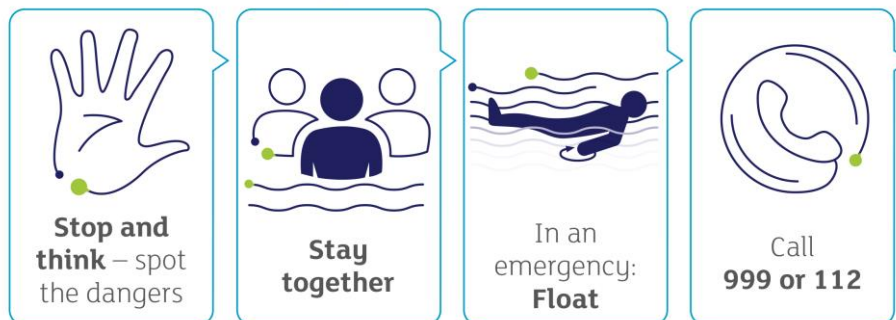
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The aim of Crucial Crew is to provide a fun and stimulating environment for children to:

- become more aware of personal safety
- learn how to react correctly to dangerous and threatening situations
- understand the role of emergency support services and how and when to contact them
- be aware of their own actions and the safety of others

There were nine safety themes/scenarios covered in 'stations' dotted around the venue covering fire (they had the fire brigades mobile smoke room), drugs and alcohol, bullying (presented by 6th form drama students), online safety, reporting telephone emergencies, medical recovery position and basic resuscitation as well as water safety (overseen by River Stour Trust). These scenarios

## Water Safety Code



lasted about 15 minutes for 18 groups of 7-8 youngsters per day.

We started by asking the youngsters if they could swim and it was really pleasing that about 98% said they could. We then asked a series of questions to see what they already knew about water safety and give our advice.

### Questions such as:

- *What did they need to do before they went out for a walk?*

Most of them gave the correct answer of telling someone where they're going and what time they expect to be back. We highlighted hazards on the river to avoid and ran through the trip and slips hazards they could encounter along a river bank. This included using a mobile phone too intently potentially causing an accident like falling in the river. They were more concerned that their phone would get damaged by the water than the risk of drowning! We advised them to keep 1m away from the edge (protecting themselves and their precious phones!).

- *What would they do if a friend fell in or if they came across someone in the water?*

We wanted the answer that they would phone 999 or 112, along with advice to have the location app, What3Words, on their phone so they can easily give their precise location.

Of course, it was also as important to ask them what they *wouldn't* do. We explained that it was not the best course of action to attempt a rescue by jumping in themselves. Instead to help by using a long branch or knotting together jumpers to make a crude rope. This led to a discussion on where and how to throw a life ring. We had one to show them so they could understand it's quite a solid thing that would hurt someone if it hit them.

Their favourite part of the scenario came next- role play and active participation! The group undertook rope throwing to act out rescuing someone from the water. This was done with two volunteers- victim and rescuer.



They learnt that lying in a floating star shape, if the water was deep, is an essential skill if you find yourself in the water unexpectedly as it could save your life. The rescuer, was taught to make sure the rope was thrown on the upstream side of the victim, not forgetting to have a holding hand and a throwing hand. We stressed the importance of warning the victim before throwing the rope and crucially remembering to keep hold of the rope end! Also, how the person in the water should hug it and not put it over their heads, as this causes them to lift their arms up and sink. The rescuer would get their body weight low and make sure they were standing on a good bit of solid ground and slowly pull the victim to the shore. This was done with gusto by some groups, it looked like the victim was about to water ski!

### We had a brief look at warning signs:

- Black triangles with a yellow background warn of hazards.
- Red circles with a white background and a red diagonal stripe tell you not to do something.
- White object on a blue background tells you to do something and is mandatory.
- Black object on a white background is for information.



A quick recap before emphasising the importance of washing hands after contact with river water and, if they had fallen in, a shower as soon as they got home was required. We told them to look for signs of the flu because that could be a sign of Weill's disease. They should go to the doctors and explain they'd been in contact with river water.

In total, there were 18 groups of 7-8 youngsters giving a total of about 144 youngsters for the day, 720 for the week. It's amazing that 13,000 youngsters have been through the training over the 21 years that the event has been running!

At first, I had trouble getting the sequence of information into my head, but by the 18<sup>th</sup> group it was nearly there! Fortunately, seasoned Crucial Crew attendee and Trust volunteer, Anne Lowe, was on hand to take over or prompt where needed. It was very rewarding and entertaining, with the children giving some very interesting answers and sharing their personal experiences.