RLSS DEFRA Inland First Responder Course

Course Content Summary

Classroom Topics Include:

- Water risk management (legislation, agency policy, risk assessments)
- Environmental awareness (hydrology, river structures, hazardous environments)
- Rescue principles (casualty approach, emergency actions, communication, zoning)
- Health risks (cold water immersion, drowning response)
- Equipment knowledge (PPE fitting, maintenance, rescue aids)

Practical Elements Include:

- Defensive and aggressive swimming techniques in water
- Casualty search, approach, and recovery
- Land-based and in-water use of throw bags
- Group-based wading techniques (line astern, wedge)
- Inflatable/platform work
- Rope and line work (e.g., tension diagonals)
- Fitness assessment via 50m swim test

Expected Hazards

Participants should be aware of the following risks associated with this course:

- **Cold water exposure:** leading to hypothermia or cold shock
- **Fast-moving or still water hazards:** including entrapment, debris, or unstable banks
- **Water quality hazards:** including exposure to bacteria, pollutants, or algal blooms — cuts or ingestion increase risk of infection (e.g., Weil's disease/Leptospirosis, gastrointestinal illness)
- **Slip, trip, and fall risks** around water entry/egress points
- **Manual handling risks** during casualty recovery
- **Equipment-related injuries**, such as improper use of ropes or throw bags
- **Fatigue or strain** during swimming or wading exercises

Risk Management Measures

- Dynamic and pre-course risk assessments are conducted.
- All practical elements are supervised and managed by qualified instructors.
- Welfare facilities are provided on site with additional hand washing stations.
- PPE, including helmets, buoyancy aids, drysuits, is mandatory.
- All instructors are first aid trained.
- Participants are encouraged to speak up if they feel unsafe or unwell.

Participant Requirements

- You must be water-confident and medically fit to undertake strenuous activities.
- You should bring appropriate personal items (see kit list in joining instructions)
- All required safety equipment will be issued on-site and fitted by instructors.