



WHY TRANSFORM SWIMMING?

KEY LEARNING FROM SPORT ENGLAND'S SWIM PILOTS

Swimming offers huge potential for supporting people to become active.

It is the biggest participation sport in England but the number of people taking part has been in decline in recent years.

By radically transforming swimming we can realise its potential – kick-starting a revolution in how communities access and use their pools.

We can modernise swimming – broadening from a traditional lessons and lanes style offer to a new proposition where pools are **activity spaces** in the heart of their local community.

Drawing people in to have fun, get active, and be part of their community.

To do this successfully pools need to be relevant to their local community. It is vital to understand what customers and potential customers really want, not what we *think* they want.

Doing local research is crucial. Only then can we design activities, facilities and customer experiences that will appeal to local people – breaking down their barriers to using the pool, and building its appeal as an activity space.

By being more creative in our approach and considering every aspect of the customer journey, from home to the pool and back again, we will entice more people in to the pool, and keep them coming back.

If we do this, swimming can be transformed. The effect can be significant.

OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS SPORT ENGLAND HAS INVESTED IN A NUMBER OF SWIM PILOTS TO TRY OUT NEW APPROACHES; TAKING RISKS AND BEING CREATIVE TO FIND OUT WHAT WORKS TO TRANSFORM SWIMMING.

SWIM LOCAL

Rolled out small-scale changes to make the pool more appealing to local communities and to improve the customer experience

THIS GIRL CAN SWIM

Attracted more females to the pool

DISABILITY SWIM

Attracted more disabled people to the pool

ADULT LEARN TO SWIM

Encouraged adult non-swimmers in to the pool

RULE THE POOL

Tested the potential to engage swimmers with gamification technology

FIVE ACTIONS TO TRANSFORM SWIMMING

From relatively small-scale investments in a selection of complementary initiatives, bespoke to individual pools, the Swim Pilots:

RELEVANT & ACCOUNTABLE

Made pools more relevant and accountable to their local community

SWIMMING OFFER

Modernised their swimming offer and used the pool as an activity space

CUSTOMER JOURNEY

Perfected the end-to-end customer journey

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Reached out to their local community

SOCIAL VALUE

Maximised the social value of swimming and their pools

THESE ACTIONS LED TO...

POOLS BECOMING 'COMMUNITY CENTRES'

A place to have fun and socialise

Employing a more representative mix of people

Welcoming volunteers from the local community



Working smarter with public sector partners to tackle social issues

Supporting delivery of local strategic priorities:
Physical Health
Mental Health & Wellbeing
Personal Development
Community Development
Economic Development

HAPPIER STAFF

Morale and job satisfaction boosted through: investment in training and development; the challenge of new ways of working; and pride in improved facilities and experiences

MORE PEOPLE IN THE POOL

In particular people from under-represented groups

17% INCREASE

People swimming in Swim Local communities (compared to 2% decline nationally)

146,000

Extra session visits at This Girl Can Swim and Adult Learn to Swim pools

1,650

Extra disabled swimmers at five Disability Swim pools

HAPPIER CUSTOMERS

14% INCREASE

Satisfaction with facilities at Swim Local pools (compared to 6% decline nationally)

10% INCREASE

Satisfaction with overall experience at Swim Local pools

90%+

This Girl Can Swim, Disability Swim and Adult Learn to Swim attendees satisfied with their session

INCREASED INCOME

From swim memberships, casual swimming and bookings for new classes and activities

£116,000 INCREASE

Additional annual income at four North Tyneside pools

£50,000 INCREASE

Additional annual membership income at two South Somerset pools



THEY TAUGHT US...

The Swim Pilots proved to be a rich learning opportunity – from their successes and also from when something didn't go to plan.

WE HAVE DISTILLED

10 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

FOR TRANSFORMING SWIMMING FROM THEIR EXPERIENCES:



COMMUNITY INSIGHT

It is essential to start a swimming transformation by gathering **insight** from the local community and its needs – identifying **specific target audiences** who could be encouraged to be more active at the pool



NO ONE THING

No one thing can transform participation – a **package of complementary interventions** will be necessary



BESPOKE SOLUTIONS

The package of interventions required will be **different for each pool**



TRAINING & RECRUITMENT

It is essential to invest in recruitment and training to support **staff** to develop the **capacity, attitude and skills** needed for the transformation



SHARED VISION

A strong **evidence base** is key to developing a clear vision of success which staff, senior management and local influencers are happy to champion – even if it is controversial to begin with



CUSTOMER DATA

Good customer **data collection and analysis** is essential for tracking whether participation is increasing among the target audiences



CULTURE CHANGE

Transforming swimming requires **culture change**; which needs to happen within owner and provider organisations and in the leisure centre, as much as in the local community



TIMESCALES

Timescales need to account for unexpected delays and the time it takes to remove barriers, especially when recruitment, new technology and procurement are involved



COMMUNICATION

On-going internal and external **communication** is essential



TIME

There is no quick fix to transform swimming – **it will take time**



TRANSFORMING POOLS...

ELAINE, SALFORD

Due to a visual impairment Elaine mainly used her leisure centre membership to access its sauna – until an Activator peaked Elaine’s interest in swimming by showing her how SwimTag could synch with her voice-activated phone.

Elaine is now a regular swimmer – using SwimTag to push her to do a little more each time. So much so, she completed Salford’s two month 16km Grand Canyon Challenge in just one month!

SEFTON

Sefton used the pool as part of the school holiday Park Nights initiative – a Police & Crime Commissioner funded programme to reduce antisocial behaviour. So on a Friday night teenagers were having an Ibiza Pool Party – rather than hanging out on the streets at a loose end.

HAMBLETON

“We need to change perceptions about what swimming can be.”

TRANSFORMING SWIMMING

TO FIND OUT MORE
DIVE INTO OUR TOOLKIT

Use what the Swim Pilots learnt to help transform your pools.

www.sportengland.org/know-your-audience/demographic-knowledge/popular-activities/swimming#tools_and_resources

