

SWIM ENGLAND

# Access Aquatics

STRATEGY 2023-2033

## Our Vision

**“Championing a healthy and successful nation through swimming”**

The ability to swim is a life-skill that is essential to keep us safe in, on and around water. It is one of the nation’s most popular recreational activities enjoyed by millions of people in England each year and is uniquely placed to tackle inequalities and support health and wellbeing given its accessibility to people of all ages and abilities. On top of this, it is made up of four amazing Olympic and Paralympic sports with our network of clubs and talent pathways supporting people to realise their full potential in the water.

## The Challenge

**Aquatics is one of the nation’s greatest assets but it is under threat and faces some chronic challenges:**

Approximately one quarter of 11 year-olds do not meet the curriculum target of being able to swim 25m or rescue themselves from water – a figure that almost doubles for children from some ethnically diverse communities and for those from areas of greater deprivation.

- People from diverse ethnic communities are less likely to take part in aquatic sports or become members of Swim England.

- In learning from other sports and looking hard internally we know that we must continue to evolve our approach to supporting the welfare of all those who participate in aquatics and in particular safeguarding young people within our sport.
- The economic climate is creating challenges for all organisations within the sector and adds to the pressure on clubs and pools to achieve financial sustainability.
- Facilities for our sports and activities are declining with the nation predicted to be short of the equivalent of eight hundred 25m pools by the end of the decade.
- The sector is experiencing a workforce shortage, in particular amongst swimming teachers.

Our strategy for the next decade takes on these challenges, recognises that there will be others to come in the future, and seeks to ensure that aquatics truly is safe and **accessible for all**.

## **Our Mission**

**“Improve the health and success of the nation by enabling access to aquatics for all”**

Our mission is to make our sports and activities accessible, inclusive and safe for everyone. We will champion our sports and work with and empower our partners to tackle inequalities; remove the barriers to participation currently experienced by people and communities; provide a governance structure that ensures great, safe experiences and enable everyone to reach their full potential in the water.

For everyone to benefit from aquatics, there is much work to do to engage groups such as people from ethnically diverse communities, people within the LGBTQ+ community, disabled people and those with long-term health conditions and those from lower socio-economic groups who we know are under-represented within the aquatics community. Whilst we have taken action to better understand the needs of these

groups, it is a journey and we are at the beginning. We are committed to better understanding the needs of these particular groups and taking positive action to address the issues, to tackle inequalities and drive meaningful change. We have developed broad principles that will set out how we will approach this important work, the impact of which will be measured through our Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

Similarly, there is also much more to do to ensure the culture of aquatics at all levels is one that has inclusivity, welfare and safeguarding at its heart.

## Strategic Priorities

We have focused on **WHAT** takes place in the water, **WHO** is participating in and delivering aquatics and **WHERE** activity takes place. This has led to three key priorities:

### Capability

### People

### Water

## 1. Capability

**Being able to swim is essential to access aquatics.**

**Our guiding objective is:**

To reduce the number of children that are unable to swim by **50%** whilst reducing inequalities in swimming attainment amongst under-represented groups. **Our target is to see a move from the current 72% attainment rate to an 86% rate (568,000 children) for the Key Stage 2 standards for swimming by 2033 with a disproportionate increase in attainment rates for under-represented groups. (Currently 58% diverse ethnic communities, 69% disabled people, 62% lower socio-economic groups IMD 1-3).**

**That will be a great start on which to build our wider aspirations:**

- Swimming remains a national activity of choice for people's health and wellbeing leading to longer, happier, healthier lives. We will ensure it is recognised as creating substantial savings for local community health and wellbeing budgets and the overall NHS budget. **We will move from having 7 to 850 pools with Water Wellbeing accredited delivery in place.**
- A network of financially robust clubs with the structure and partnerships in place to support their long-term future. Furthermore, we want to ensure that club offerings in local areas are diverse and give opportunities for participants from all backgrounds to access our aquatic sports and follow a pathway that suits them. **Increase club membership from 167,845 members to 200,000 with a greater number of members from under-represented groups. (Currently 8.2% diverse ethnic communities, 1.4% disabled people, 11.6% lower socio-economic groups IMD 1-3).**
- A talent system for all our sports that promotes medal-success and proactively engages and encourages participants with high potential from diverse backgrounds to fulfil that potential and ensure that our senior national teams become increasingly representative of the community. **There will be an increase in the proportion of participants from under-represented groups on talent pathways. (Currently 10% diverse ethnic communities, 2% disabled people (outside of para-swimming), baseline for lower socio-economic groups to be set in Autumn 2023).**

## 2. People

**It is people that take part in aquatics and enable it to happen.**

**Our guiding objective is:**

To promote and uphold a safe, positive, welcoming and inclusive culture and environment at all levels of aquatics to ensure everyone is able to enjoy the water.

## Our aspirations are:

- To understand the barriers to participation that currently exist, particularly amongst communities that have traditionally been left behind and support the sector to dismantle these. This will foster a welcoming and inclusive environment at all levels of aquatics and see **an increase in the proportion of people from under-represented groups taking part. (Currently 9.1% / 670,083 diverse ethnic communities, 13.5% / 1,000,335 disabled people, 19.5% / 1,440,746 lower socio-economic groups IMD 1-3).**
- To govern a sport and a regulated workforce that are highly respected, deliver great experiences and ensure the aquatic sector is fully representative of the nation and communities it serves. **All aquatics deliverers will be enrolled on a nationally regulated scheme and there will be a greater number of people from underrepresented groups within the workforce. (Currently 5% diverse ethnic communities, 11% disabled people, 13% lower socio-economic groups IMD 1-3).**
- To ensure that the highest safeguarding standards and welfare support are ingrained throughout the sport, from grassroots to performance level, as set out in our **Heart of Aquatics** safeguarding, welfare and culture plan.

### **This will include:**

- commissioning independent experts to undertake a comprehensive, independent listening exercise.
- ensuring standards of safeguarding and welfare are embedded across all of Swim England's affiliated or associated organisations.
- as an organisation, operating to the highest of standards across the sporting world.
- undertaking a review of safeguarding and welfare practices taking place across third party/local authority schemes.

### 3. Water

## An essential ingredient for being active in the water... is water!

### Our guiding objective is:

To ensure the country has a network of sustainable pools that provide enough water space to support all aquatic activities.

We are aware that this is perhaps the most challenging of all our focus areas as it is furthest from our control and requires the greatest level of investment. It is however vital to the success of the strategy so we will take on the challenge and work with a coalition of partners to advocate for and engender change.

We will campaign to improve water availability, especially in the most economically disadvantaged areas of the country and we will work with the sector to stimulate the development of energy efficient, environmentally and financially sustainable pool solutions.

### Our aspirations are:

To collaborate with partners to campaign and advocate for the provision of enough safe and sustainable facilities and access to open water to support all aquatic activities. Given the challenges facing our pool stock, it will be critical to work with all relevant partners to maximise the efficient use of pool-time. In particular, we want to achieve the following:

- **Maintaining an adequate supply of appropriate, publicly available, water space of at least 12 square metres per 1,000 head of population to support all aquatic activities.** As an example, this equates to a town of 40,000 people having access to a 25m x 6 lane pool and a learner pool. It should be noted that this a national average and will vary subject to local conditions.
- **Protect the national sport infrastructure, at least maintaining the current number of 50m pools, 10m diving platforms and deeper water facilities capable of hosting artistic swimming and water polo competitions.**

## Underpinning Activity

In order to deliver on the three strategic priorities, we will ensure that we have a solid platform on which to build.

This includes:

- A **financially robust** approach – We will deliver activities that both support the delivery of this strategy and deliver a surplus. As a charity, we will reinvest 100 per cent of this into achieving our strategic objectives. Further information will be developed as part of our Commercial Strategy.
- The highest standards of **governance, compliance** and **environmental sustainability** – Swim England will meet nationally recognised standards; to ensure we operate in a robust and transparent way, aid us building trust with partners, and to ensure we can access the support that is critical to delivering this strategy.
- **People** that can make a difference – We will invest in our professional and volunteer workforce to ensure they have the tools and support to deliver impact and serve our communities over the course of the strategy period.

## Making a Change

We have looked at WHAT takes place, WHO does it and WHERE it takes place. In order to make an impact and ‘turn the dial’ in these critical areas, we will be clear on HOW we set about making an impact. We recognise that bringing this strategy to life will be a collaborative effort as we work with and through our partners, stakeholders and member organisations to promote aquatics.

**Making a change will require us to do things differently. We have identified four key areas that can make a huge impact:**

1. **Consistent collaboration** – A collaborative approach will enable us to make progress on the critical issues. We will strengthen our sphere of influence across the sector by effective utilisation of existing relationships and collaborating with new partners and

community groups. We will increase our impact by being really clear on where we lead activity, where we partner with others and where we make a difference by influencing and supporting.

- 2. Extending our advocacy and influencing** – We have learned through the pandemic period that we can have a really powerful voice in the media and with government but we also understand that it can be stronger still by consistently working in alignment with our partners. We will use our position to co-ordinate and magnify the voice of the sector, promoting aquatics and lobbying for change at both national and local level.
- 3. Being a learning organisation** – We will gather robust data that gives us the ability to define the problems we are addressing, measure our progress and empower our partners. We will be humble in recognising that we don't always get things right and that we can always do better. Furthermore, we will be agile, taking a 'test and learn' approach to projects, rolling activities out and learning what worked and what didn't before expanding them.
- 4. Focusing and aligning activity** – We will co-ordinate and concentrate our resources in order to make a tangible difference to the priority areas or issues. We will make choices that enable us to focus on delivering impact. We will challenge ourselves to ensure all of our activity is taking us towards delivery of the strategic objectives.

## **Immediate Action**

**Access Aquatics sets out our 10-year strategy to champion a healthy and successful nation through swimming.**

**The critical actions below will lay the foundations to realise this vision and underpin the successful delivery of the overall strategy.**

**In addition to these actions, we will focus our existing activities to ensure that they align with this strategy and deliver maximum impact in our ambition to tackle inequalities so that everyone can access aquatics.**



## **1. Implementing Heart of Aquatics**

Delivering on the commitments within our Heart of Aquatics safeguarding, welfare and culture plan to ensure all our sports and activities are safe, welcoming and inclusive.

## **2. Partnerships and Data**

Accelerating our work in tackling inequalities by developing new partnerships, collecting data and insight, identifying relevant impact measures and scoping a place-based approach to making aquatics more inclusive.

## **3. Digital transformation**

Build a stronger connection with the aquatics community by upgrading our digital presence, creating an improved, engaging and more accessible user experience for all.

## **4. Governance**

Ensuring that our governance systems and processes across the sport, reflect best practice and the needs of the aquatic community.

# **Our Commitment**

**We are committed to promoting our great sports that can help England be a healthier and more successful nation. We will deliver on the key strategic priorities of Capability, People and Water to make this happen. By focusing our efforts and working with our partners and stakeholders we will open up...**

## **Access to Aquatics for All**

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