



Inclusion in the Learn to Swim Programme

A guide for swimming coordinators, teachers and assistants
delivering mainstream lessons which include learners with
special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND)



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Introduction

This guide contains information on how to deliver a fully inclusive Learn to Swim Programme. It will equip you with useful tools and knowledge to be able to better support your learners with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) on their swimming journey.

Our research shows that 84 per cent of parents who have children with a health condition and/or disability would consider enrolling their child on swimming lessons outside of school.¹ Yet children and young people with a SEND are less likely to report that they enjoy or feel confident in taking part than those without.²

Similarly for adults (16+ years), Sport England statistics reveal that around one third of our adult population (that's one in five) has a limiting physical disability, learning difficulty and/or health condition,³ with less than half engaging in sport and physical activity, compared to over 60 per cent of the general population.⁴

We believe everyone should have the opportunity to reach their full potential in swimming. To achieve this, all learners need access to the best possible teaching.

We hope this guide will help swimming coordinators, teachers and swimming assistants better prepare their programmes and facilities to ensure an inclusive approach to learning to swim.

¹ Swim England Parents and Curriculum Swimming Research (2018)

² Sport England Active Lives Children and Young People Survey (2019)

³ Sport England Mapping Disability: The Facts (2016)

⁴ Sport England Active Lives Survey report (2017/2018)

Chapter 1: Swimming teacher roles and responsibilities

The Equality Act (2010) makes it illegal to discriminate against anyone based on certain beliefs, attitudes or characteristics. When delivering a swimming lesson, teachers should ensure equal opportunities are given to all learners and those with SEND are supported appropriately.

All swimming lesson providers should have a clear process for supporting and including learners with SEND in their offering. Swimming teachers should be aware of these processes.

As the national governing body for swimming, we have an Equality and Diversity Policy. Teachers should check their employer's equality and diversity policy and follow procedures fully. You can find our policy on our website: swimming.org/swimengland/equality-and-diversity.



Questions to ask...

"What disabilities can I see?"

"What disabilities can't I see?"

"What extra planning preparation and support (if any) may I need to do to support a learner with those needs in my lesson?"

Note: If you haven't already done this as part of your teacher training, this may be a useful activity for your next teachers meeting.

Learner profiles and assessment of need

Before starting swimming lessons it's really important teachers understand the needs and abilities of their learners. This can be done in a number of ways.

| Method | Advantages | Disadvantages |
|--|---|---|
| <p>Learner enrolment form to include space for SEND information and medical information. This feedback is then shared with the teacher in the register or using another method, such as a tablet or online register.</p> <p>Sites must comply with data protection laws and ensure any information disclosed is kept confidential, and only shared with relevant people such as the assistant teacher or helper.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrated into booking process. • Time-efficient. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May only record detail of medical condition/disability and not the type of support the learner may need. • Doesn't support the teacher if more information is required to help a learner progress. • Dependent on learner, parent or carer sharing necessary information. |
| Detailed learner profiles for those with SEND who may need additional support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allows crucial information to be gathered about the additional support learners with SEND may need to progress through the programme. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent on learner, parent or carer sharing necessary information. |
| One-to-one learner assessment sessions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for the teacher to see the learner's ability in the pool and help identify support required. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be time-consuming. |

The learner's age, swimming experience and personal aspirations around swimming should also be factored in during any assessment.

Many sites use a combination of the above methods. We recommend using a learner profile, if a learner, parent or carer declares a SEND that will impact on their ability to learn to swim. This can include a Learner Consultation Form, which gathers additional information on the learner's needs in relation to their swimming experience. It helps teachers plan and prepare their lessons better for the learner with SEND, as well as other learners on the programme. The most important factor is communicating with the learner and responsible adult to get the right information. We have included printable templates for the Learner Consultation Form at the end of this chapter. It is also available to download from our website: swimming.org/swimengland/learner-consultation-form.



Top Tip

Not all learners with SEND will need extra support in a learn to swim environment. If in doubt, speak to the learner, parent or carer.

Additional medical needs

Some conditions may present a medical concern in a swimming pool environment. For example, learners with epilepsy will require a knowledgeable spotter; learners with heart conditions may require a medical certificate before exercising. Other conditions that may require medication, medical knowledge or support can include asthma, diabetes, cystic fibrosis or anaphylaxis.

Further information on any conditions can be found from disability-specific organisations and charities. Please see the reference list at the back of this guide.

Health and safety

The safety of learners and teachers is paramount in any swim session. Some learners may need more specialist support/equipment, or may have more challenging behaviour.

In these cases, a risk assessment should be carried out to consider potential additional risks for learners, teachers and assistants in the water.

Risk assessments should be completed in accordance with each lesson provider's policies and procedures.

Communication with parents and carers

Parents and carers who recognise and disclose a learner's SEND can be a fantastic resource for teachers on how to make sure their learn to swim lessons are enjoyable and successful.

There are a number of areas to be cautious of and seek further support if required from swimming coordinators and specialist SEND advisers:

1. **For children.** Not all parents/carers will be aware their child has a SEND. If a parent/carers does not disclose anything at the time of booking it's important to proceed with caution when speaking to them about any concerns over progress or behaviour. Appropriate questions may include: "Is there anything we can do to help your child progress?" or "Do you feel they're enjoying their swimming lessons?" Leading questions like these will help to gain additional information that may not have previously been disclosed about a child's development or swimming, and steer how to support. Where appropriate, express concern and empathy if they're not progressing or are difficult to manage, but be aware the parent/carers may not agree or offer any support. Teacher meetings may be useful to discuss how to manage these situations.
2. **For all.** Not all parents/carers will acknowledge or disclose a SEND. As above, it's important to ask some careful leading questions to try and gather more information.
3. **For all.** Some parents/carers may be cautious and nervous. This is normal. Teachers need to be mindful of this but allow the learner to explore their own abilities in a safe environment.

Once a relationship is established, it's important to remain cautious and not make too many assumptions around a learner's development. Everyone is different. Try and work with parents/carers to make sure their learner is progressing and enjoying the swimming environment. All decisions around the best way to deliver the Learn to Swim Programme should be learner-focused. If this message is conveyed clearly to parents/carers from the offset, it will help with successful communication throughout the Programme.

Learner Consultation Form

Dear Parent / Carer,

Thank you for joining our Learn to Swim Programme.

Before we get started, we need some additional information about any impairment, health condition, special educational need and/or disability (SEND) your child/person you care for has that may impact on their learning experience. This information will help us make sure we can deliver the best possible swimming lessons for your learner.

Please read the form below and record any additional information we need to be aware of.

If there is no additional information please sign and return the form in the section outlined.

Please feel free to contact our swimming lesson coordinator if you'd like to discuss the form or need help completing it.

Name:

Name of emergency contact:

Emergency contact number:

Name of centre:

1. Has your child/person you care for been swimming at this pool before? Did they need any additional support to help them get in and out of the pool or to help them stay safe? Please detail if extra support is required.

2. Has your child/person you care for had any swimming lessons before and if so, what stage did they reach and what awards did they receive? Please also let us know the level of support they had in these lessons.

3. Does your child/person you care for require any additional support?



4. Please supply further information on the learning style of your child/person you care for, and how to motivate and encourage them i.e. information on interests, likes/dislikes and hobbies.

5. What is/are the most effective communication method(s) to ensure your child/person you care for gets the most out of their lessons?

6. Is there anything in the swimming pool/learn to swim environment that may cause your child /person you care for additional anxiety? Do you have any suggestions about how we can help to reduce this?

7. Is there any other information you'd like to share about your child/person you care for? e.g. Do they require additional support in school, or have they got a statement of SEND?

8. Please detail any behaviour support plan that is in place for your child/person you care for.

I confirm I have no additional information I wish to share.

Name of parent/carer

Signed by parent/carer

Date

Any information disclosed is maintained on our database and only accessible to our teachers, coordinators and assistants in accordance with data protection.

Chapter 2: Class structures and programming

On completing a learner profile and/or after a learner assessment, we recommend that each learner is placed in an appropriate setting.

Where possible, all learners should be included in mainstream swimming lessons. Some learners may have additional requirements to help them be included. Examples are listed below.

- Quieter pool times or quieter pools to avoid excessive noise and distraction.
- Access to beach-style entry/exit areas to help access in and out of the pool.
- Access to shallow/deep water.
- Access to hoist/specialist changing facilities.
- Specialist prescription goggles.
- Mats on poolside to assist entry and exit.
- Additional floatation equipment to support balance.
- Use of a swimming assistant in the water.
- A clear visual timetable for the lesson.
- Communication/flash cards to use throughout the lesson.
- Smaller class sizes.
- Certificates and badges with braille.



Top Tip

Many learners with SEND will be able to swim independently, and some will make their own adaptations to their learning/skill development without any support.

When mainstream lessons may not suit the learner's needs

Where a learner with SEND attends mainstream lessons, they may need adaptations as part of the lesson and may need to complete a learner profile (covered in chapter 1) so the teacher can gather information to help with lesson delivery.

Learn to Swim providers should follow a clear programme that supports all learners, regardless of their SEND. Wherever reasonable and practical, learners should be integrated into the mainstream setting available. Be patient. Integration into mainstream classes may take time and learners may still require extra support.

Below are some examples of when learners may need additional support beyond a mainstream session.

- Some learners may find a larger class of 8-12 too busy or too noisy.
- Learners with sensory processing imbalances or those who are easily distracted may benefit from smaller group tuition or a quieter lesson.

- Some learners with more complex learning and/or physical disabilities may need a more simplistic aquatic skills programme. Learners with significant coordination problems and/or those who struggle to follow basic instructions may need a separate swimming programme. Their ability to learn the core aquatic skills could be significantly impaired by their disabilities.
- Some learners may be particularly nervous of trying swimming and may need additional support to help overcome any anxieties at an early stage, but then may be able to return to mainstream learning.
- Other learners, particularly those with mobility issues may need a warmer pool to allow them to spend any length of time in the pool.



Mainstream lesson with additional support assistant



Additional one-to-one or small group sessions



Parents/carers as support



Disability-specific swim sessions

The images above provide some examples of how learners who struggle with mainstream Learn to Swim lessons can have their needs met in other ways.

Mainstream lessons with an additional support assistant

Additional support can vary. A learner who has visual impairment may just need a prompt to remind them when they get near to the pool wall. Some learners need more prompts/support so a one-to-one in the water may assist learning.

Many swim schools now provide swimming assistants in the water in the early stages of the Learn to Swim Programme. This may be sufficient for some learners who just need additional support when they start in a new class or setting but progress easily once settled.

Parents and carers as support

Some swim schools encourage parents and carers to support children or adults with SEND in the water, under the supervision of a teacher. This is a reasonable option if the role of the parent/carer is carefully discussed and agreed on, to make sure they help and encourage their learner to progress at all times.

It's important they only work with their own child or adult, and other parents/carers are aware of their role. A basic induction is important to cover health and safety and the roles and responsibilities of the parent/carer. With reference to children, if the parent/carer is only working with their own child, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check isn't essential.

Teachers need to be aware that parents, carers and swimming assistants are a valuable asset in any lesson, and as the teacher it's important to enable this person to help the learner to progress.

Additional small group lessons and one-to-one lessons

Small groups and one-to-one lessons can also help learners who struggle to progress in a mainstream environment. Some learners may benefit from "booster" or "crash course" type sessions to help them achieve a new skill.

Many Learn to Swim providers offer these sessions, however they can be more costly. This cost shouldn't just be the responsibility of one party if it's going to be sustainable. Parents, carers, swim schools, charities and other partner organisations should all work together to make sure everyone can access swimming lessons and progress.

Disability-specific swimming lessons

These sessions can be run in a variety of ways to meet different needs. Some are social, fun splash sessions for families to relax and enjoy the support of the water. Others are run as more informal swimming lessons with experienced teachers. Where possible, basic core aquatic skills should be taught.

Peer group lessons

Some learners may not be progressing at the same speed as their peers.

Swimming coordinators should be mindful that some learners will be very socially aware and concerned if they're placed in a younger class structure because of their ability.

Where possible, learners should be kept in similar groups to their peers. Discussions with parents/ carers may also help address this.

Teacher consistency

All learners benefit from the consistency of the same swimming teacher to help them progress. Some learners with additional needs may struggle with change. An example may be learners on the autistic spectrum.

If you are aware of a learner who struggles with change, make sure they are notified when there's a change of teacher before they attend their lesson. If they choose not to attend it may be appropriate to offer some reimbursement on the cost of the lesson.

Swimming providers and teachers have a duty of care to either provide, or if pool design/time doesn't suit, be aware of other facilities available locally to make sure all learners are given the opportunity to learn to swim. Please see our 'Further support, links and resources' section at the back of this guide where you will find some helpful websites.



Questions to ask...

"What types of swimming lessons and support are available at my Learn to Swim site?"

"Are there options for extra support in the water?"

"How do I make sure each learner is in the right type of lesson for their need?"

Chapter 3: Inductions

Dry land inductions

Whatever swimming environment a learner is entering, a dry land induction can really help reassure them and make sure their first swimming lesson is successful. This induction involves a visit to the pool before the learner is expected to get in the water. This can help a learner with SEND:

- find their way round the facility
- increase awareness of the changing facilities and options for entry to the pool
- familiarise themselves with the new sounds, smells and lighting at the pool
- increase their understanding of what a swimming lesson is and the format of a lesson, to help build a story book
- meet swimming teachers, swimming assistants or lifeguards who may be involved in supporting the learner
- talk about any concerns, swimming experiences or key areas they may need support with.

The dry land induction can also be an opportunity for the teacher to meet the learner and parents/carers, and assess their needs in person. They can then add any more relevant information to the learner profile.



Top Tip

A story board may help those with learning difficulties to understand activities. It is a good way of simplifying verbal instructions in a different format.

Visual online guide

Many facilities have a gallery of photos on their website to help learners with SEND feel more at ease before their first visit. This may be useful for learners with mobility needs or those who use visual timetables to plan and prepare their daily activities.

Photos or videos may include the pool, changing areas, reception area and any access areas and pool entry options.

For some learners and their families actually getting to the pool may be a worry, so additional information about parking, specific changing rooms and other access facilities may help.






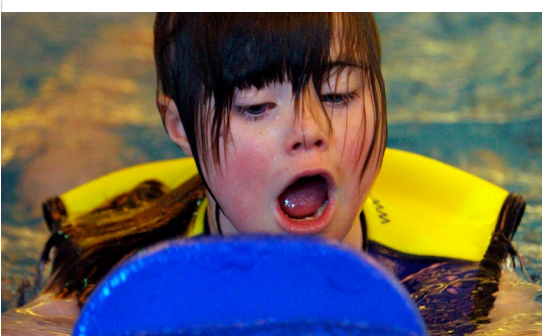
Planning

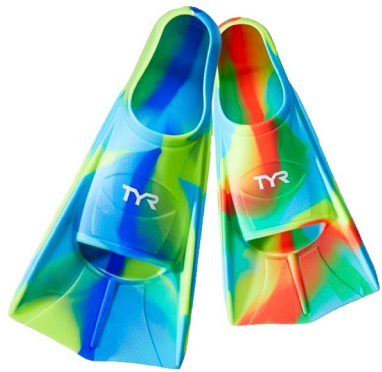

Once additional information has been gathered on the learner's needs and a class structure has been identified, it's useful for a teacher to plan and consider how they may be able to adapt provision to provide support.

Adaptations

Specialist swimming equipment is rarely required for learners with SEND but a more flexible approach to delivery often helps.

Equipment

| Equipment and key benefits | |
|---|--|
| <p>Arm bands and float discs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop early confidence and independence. • Buoyancy can be reduced as confidence grows. • Lessons become active. • They're non-restrictive. |  |
| <p>Noodles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage a flat position in the water. • Allow early kicking skills to develop. • Allow concentration on specific actions. • Can be adapted to suit very small hands. |  |
| <p>Egg flips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage breathing through the mouth at the surface of the water. |  |
| <p>Toys</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage water confidence (watering cans and squirters can be used for games). • Pushing/pulling objects can introduce arm actions. • Can be used as objects to chase. |  |
| <p>Sinking objects, e.g. bricks, hoops, novelties</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage submerging and opening the eyes under water. • Can be used to develop other skills e.g. colours, counting. |  |
| <p>Floatation equipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can help to encourage a more streamlined position. • Helps with buoyancy and water confidence. • Arms and legs are able to move freely. |  |

| Equipment and key benefits | |
|---|--|
| Fins <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Can help propulsion for those with muscle weakness, mobility issues or limb loss. Learners are likely to find short fins with a soft blade easier to kick with than longer fins and/or splitfins.• Fins adapted specifically for those with limb loss or mobility issues are also available. These may be custom-made by prosthetics clinics, or web searches which include key words such as 'adapted swim fins' can return some helpful results. |  |
| Shark fin <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The learner is completely buoyant in the water.• Can be used with other floatation equipment.• Helps build water confidence.• Allows free movement of arms and legs. |  |

Handling

Before assisting and handling think about:

- the task
- the individual
- the load
- the environment.

Swimming teachers should seek advice from their provider around manual handling and potential load. You can find out more about this from our website: swimming.org/swimengland/worker-health-and-safety.

Teachers also need to be aware of, or attend, safeguarding training as appropriate.

Chapter 4: Delivery- core aquatic skills additional considerations

Before starting any swimming lesson with new learners, don't hesitate to check if they have any injuries or concerns before they start.



Top Tip

Don't be afraid to try different pieces of equipment or teaching practices. And always ask for feedback from learners on how they found the activity.

There's a good chance that a learner might not have tried certain aquatic skills in the Learn to Swim Programme before. So it's fine to ask them, "What do you need in order to be able to try and do this (the skill)?" They may have their own ideas on how they want to get in, how it may be easier to do a push and glide, etc. The considerations detailed below will give you an idea, but the learner will know best.

Entries

- Make sure any learners with balance difficulties are offered assistance when walking on a wet poolside.
- Learners with lower limb impairment may need an assistant, prosthesis or an alternative assistant (chair, skateboard etc.) at the poolside.
- Take care when a learner with paraplegia or those with minimum control over their limbs are entering the water, as abrasions may be caused.
- Park wheelchairs parallel to the pool and make sure the brakes are on.
- Be aware of learners who may have seizures. One-to-one spotters are required for those with epilepsy.
- Walk on the side of the pool where the learner is entering when assisting them, to stop them falling in.
- The safety of learner and helper is of paramount importance. Ask for help or further training if in doubt.
- Beach landing access and hoists may be necessary.
- Some learners with mobility issues may find a mat on poolside more comfortable for entry.
- Allow learners with processing disorders, where appropriate, more time to enter the water.

Exits

- Make sure that any learners with balance problems are offered assistance when walking on a wet poolside.
- Learners with lower limb impairment may need an assistant, prosthesis or an alternative assistant (chair, skateboard etc.) at the poolside.
- Take care when a learner with paraplegia or those with minimal control of their lower limbs are exiting the water, as they may get abrasions from the pool floor.
- Park wheelchairs parallel to the pool and make sure that the brakes are on.
- Be aware of learners who may have seizures.
- Beach landing access and hoists may be necessary.
- Some learners with mobility issues may find a mat on poolside more comfortable for exit.

- Walk on the side of the pool where the learner is exiting the water when assisting them, to stop them from falling back in.
- The safety of both the learner and helper is of paramount importance. Ask for help or further training if in doubt.
- For learners who need additional support through the changing area, think about how and when to safely return them to their parent/carer.

Buoyancy and balance

- Learners with low muscle tone, muscle weakness, conditions which affect mobility and/or with limb loss may need additional support to maintain the correct body position. Propulsion may also be impaired.
- Strokes may need to be adapted to help balance. Floats and/or fins can be used initially to help buoyancy and balance.
- In the water, learners must adapt to a new set of skills to move around. Some learners may find themselves more buoyant because of the balance of muscle tone and fat. Once initial water confidence has been developed with or without floatation equipment, practise will allow learners with the intellectual ability to develop the skills to learn how to adapt their strokes and facilitate better balance.

Rotation and orientation

- Mobility restrictions and uneven body shapes can impact on the ability to rotate in the water. The head is key to successful rotation and learners with flexibility in their neck and shoulders should be able to successfully rotate. Additional limb movements will help to speed these rotations up.
- Encourage learners to look in the direction they want to rotate. Learners who struggle with balance may need additional support. Basic mushroom floats, log rolls and direction changes will help develop these skills.

Aquatic breathing

- Breath control is an essential skill in swimming, and learners need to master blowing, getting their faces wet and basic voluntary submersion. These skills need to be broken down into smaller steps for any new learner. Learners with more severe impairments may rely on floatation equipment for longer to facilitate balance and aquatic breathing, but should still be encouraged to develop other skills where possible.

Travel and coordination

- Different impairments can impact on travel and coordination in different ways. As with any learner, skills can be broken down to basic levels, such as:
 - walking or jumping across the pool
 - pushing from the wall
 - regaining stand position from front floatation
 - learning to use limbs (where applicable) to facilitate propulsion
 - sculling exercises
 - leg-only drills.

By practising these skills, many learners will begin to feel how they can use and adapt their body appropriately in the water.

- Some learners with stiff and painful joints from conditions like arthritis, rheumatism and cerebral palsy may find smaller movements easier. Always check, as some conditions may cause mobility to vary from day to day.
- Some learners may have low or poor muscle memory, which can impact on their ability to remember new skills. In these cases lots of repetition will be required and practise between lessons where possible.

Streamlining

- Effective streamlining is supported by good buoyancy, balance and coordination of arms and legs. Learners who have impairments which impact on their limbs and balance may need more support and adaptations to help them with streamlining. Learners with poor muscle tone may continue to struggle in this area.
- Smaller steps can be established by concentrating on the skills that they can do well. Floatation equipment may also support and develop push and glide skills.

Water safety

- We encourage the teaching of basic water safety and pool rules early on in the Learn to Swim Programme.
- Pool rules should apply to all learners. If a learner is likely to be unable to follow the safety rules at a pool, additional support may be required.
- Where unsure of a learner's ability a learner assessment may help to ensure they are steered towards the right lesson environment.
- Parents and carers need to be aware that even though a learner may be able to swim in a swimming lesson, it doesn't always mean the learner (particularly if they are new to swimming) can adapt to different pools and different environments. It is important that parents/carers are reminded to check and follow water safety messages away from the pool.

Health and fitness

- Health and fitness is an important part of anyone's life. Learners with SEND should be encouraged to lead an active and healthy lifestyle. Swimming teachers and coordinators are responsible for making sure programmes are inclusive, and that as many people as possible are offered the opportunity to learn to swim.
- Signposting learners to other opportunities, either in swimming or other sports, is important. This keeps things varied and interesting and may help their progression in your programme.
- Those with learning difficulties may be less aware or able to care for themselves and may need prompts to remind them to do basic tasks. These may include using the bathroom before swimming or having a drink if doing a longer swim session.
- Those with learning difficulties may benefit from the use of a story board to help explain the importance of health and fitness and routines.

Chapter 5: Practical considerations

Core aquatic skills: entries and exits

Entries

| Action | For whom | Condition(s) | Advantages | Disadvantages | Help |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|---|
| Use of hoist. | Learners who require maximum assistance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cerebral palsy. • Quadriplegia. • Tetraplegia. • Advanced arthritis. • Advanced multiple sclerosis. • Atrophy/dystrophy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure. • Less pain. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not always available. • Slow, suspended entry. • Learner may feel undignified. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Banana board may be required to assist. • Learner to slide from wheelchair to hoist. • Advice from an occupational therapist may be required. |
| Steps. | Learners with lower or one-side-of-body strength. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hemiplegia. • Single-arm amputees. • Learning disabilities. • Arthritis. • Polio. • Legg-Perthes. • Atrophy/dystrophy. • Mild multiple sclerosis. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usual method of entry available in most pools. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slippery. • Steep. • Small footholds. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant can steady/support by standing behind the learner with their hands holding the rails under the learner's arms for safety. |
| Swivel entry with/without support. | Learners with good upper body strength. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paraplegia. • Diplegic cerebral palsy. • Learning disabilities. • Polio. • Legg-Perthes. • Atrophy/dystrophy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence. • Common method of entry. • Widely available. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rough pool sides can cause abrasions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant can use hands to support at waist level and steady entrance to water. • Cover poolside with mat, towel or chamois to avoid abrasions. |

| Action | For whom | Condition(s) | Advantages | Disadvantages | Help |
|--|---|---|---|---|--|
| Forward entry from poolside with/ without support. | Learners with sitting balance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paraplegia. Cerebral palsy. Non-weight bearing learners. Legg-Perthes. Atrophy/dystrophy. Moderate multiple sclerosis. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum or minimum support can be given. Leads to more independence. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rough pool sides can cause abrasions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hands should be on assistant's shoulders and there should be support at waist level initially. Can reduce to hand on elbow, then hand on hand, and eventually independence. |
| Diving (sitting). | Learners with good control when sitting on blocks. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower limb amputees. Dysmelia. Multiple sclerosis (dependent on ability). Atrophy/dystrophy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An easy manoeuvre from sitting on poolside or sitting on blocks. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional water depth required for diving may be an issue. Extra precautions need to be taken to check the learner is allowed to dive. Rough surfaces on some blocks can cause abrasions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blocks can be covered with a non-slip, non-abrasive material (e.g. a mat, towel or chamois). <p>Note: In competition, use of thick mats/towels to prevent abrasions on poolside or diving blocks is illegal. Legal materials include thin mats/towels or a chamois.</p> |
| Diving (standing). | Learners with ability to stand on blocks with/ without support. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amputees. Cerebral palsy. Learning difficulties. Visually impaired. Hearing impaired. Atrophy/dystrophy. Multiple sclerosis. Hemiplegia. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fastest entry for competition. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some learners may find blocks awkward to get on to. Additional water depth required for diving may be an issue. Extra precautions need to be taken to check the learner is allowed to dive. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance may be required when mounting the block. Some learners may require support at hip level to control balance during dive preparation. |

Exits

| Action | For whom | Condition(s) | Advantages | Disadvantages | Help |
|--|---|--|---|---|---|
| Use of hoist. | Learners who require maximum assistance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cerebral palsy. • Quadriplegia. • Tetraplegia. • Advanced arthritis. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure. • Less pain. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not always available. • Slow when cold. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helpers required in pool and on poolside. |
| Steps. | Learners with lower or one-side-of-body strength. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hemiplegia. • Single arm amputees. • Learning difficulties. • Arthritis. • Mild multiple sclerosis. • Atrophy/dystrophy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usual method of exit available in most pools. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slippery. • Steep. • Small footholds. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant required to support learner from behind, holding through their arms to hand rails. • Helper to be available on poolside. |
| Push up to poolside (forwards). | Learners with good upper body strength. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paraplegia. • Cerebral palsy. • Diplegia. • Leg amputees. • Learning difficulties. • Moderate multiple sclerosis. • Atrophy/dystrophy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence. • Common method of exit. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rough poolside can cause abrasions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use mat/towel to cover poolside. • Help from behind at waist level from within the water. |
| Use of poolside corner to push up (backwards). | Learners with good upper body strength. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paraplegia. • Cerebral palsy. • Diplegia. • Leg amputees. • Learning difficulties. • Atrophy/dystrophy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independence. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differing heights of poolside at corners. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use mat/towel to cover poolside. |

**Top Tip**

Parents/carers may feel learners aren't able to perform certain skills. Likewise, some teachers may also assume learners aren't able to complete certain skills. Remember not to make any assumptions about a learner – and keep challenging learners to develop new skills by adapting teaching delivery.

Stroke and kick development

Body position

| Characteristic | Common for | Teaching points | Condition(s) | Positives | Negatives |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|--|---|
| Rolls to left or right. | Learners with one side of the body stronger than the other. | Experiment with one or two of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On back, turn head away from roll. • On front, look to direction of roll. • Keep arm action slightly under body. • Keep a wider arm entry. • Breathe to weaker side initially. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cerebral palsy. • Hemiplegia. • Stroke. • Amputees. • Legg-Perthes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlining (once the correct position is achieved). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-compensation will cause excessive roll. |
| Stays upright. | Learners who are top heavy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use floatation equipment to help teach rotational skills, balance and aquatic breathing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achondroplasia. • Down syndrome. • Hydrocephalus. • Double leg amputees. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfortable. • Easy propulsion. • Works towards safe conventional swimming position. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear may be introduced by placing emphasis on developing a conventional swimming position too early. |
| Hips high, legs drag low. | Learners whose hips are almost above the water line and who are unable to move their legs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise or lower the head depending on the stroke being performed and whether on the back or front. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spina bifida. • Paraplegia. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlining. • Less resistance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty seeing direction and obstacles. • More effort required for breathing. (Possibly better to breathe every second stroke in breaststroke). |

Leg action

| Characteristic | Common for | Teaching points | Condition(s) | Positives | Negatives |
|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| No propulsion. | Learners unable to alter leg position or use them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exaggerate a lower head position to achieve streamlining. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paraplegia Spina bifida. Double above- knee amputees. Cerebral palsy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlining. Less resistance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More effort required for breathing. More work for arms. |
| No leg propulsion but minimum control of trunk and legs to be able to hold in one position. | Learners with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> co-ordination difficulties no lower body movement/ control inability to perform legal leg kick. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use any leg movement for balance (leg drills should be attempted) or drag legs for less resistance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cerebral palsy. Diplegia. Hemiplegia. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamlining. Less resistance. Improving muscle tone and core stability. Works towards legal leg kicks for breaststroke and butterfly. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More work for arms. |
| Propulsion from one leg only. | Learners able to use only one leg for propulsion through loss of limb, disability or hip restriction. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Figure of eight or cross centre line kick. One leg held still, other leg used. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Single leg amputee. Dysmelia. Cerebral palsy. Hemiplegia (especially in butterfly). Arthritis. Achondroplasia. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger propulsion. Assists balance. Legal stroke. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strain at hip level. Illegal in butterfly competition if legs cross (flutter kick). |
| Propulsion or balance obtained from one/two shorter limbs. | Learners of restricted growth or loss of lower limbs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach usual leg kick and drills using (adapted) fins. May be used for balance only when unable to kick. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Double/single below-knee amputees. Achondroplasia. Dysmelia. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assists balance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None |

Arm action

| Characteristic | Common for | Teaching points | Condition(s) | Positives | Negatives |
|---|---|--|--|---|---|
| Single arm propulsion. | Learners with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • upper limb loss • one arm restricted when attempting work with both arms (e.g. in butterfly). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach as if limb was there. • Find position for the other arm that causes less resistance. • Use drills for both arms independently. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single arm amputee. • Dysmelia • Hemiplegia. • Stroke. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps propulsion. • Legal stroke. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May cause excessive roll. |
| No arm propulsion on front. | Learners with upper limbs missing or restricted. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use water (float initially) as a pillow, with head to side. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dysmelia. • Double-arm amputee. • Cerebral palsy. • Quadriplegia. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develops strong kick and aquatic breathing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulties judging direction and/or breathing. |
| Wide arm entry. i.e. arms entering water outside the shoulder line. | Learners with restricted balance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse use as wide arm entry may be improving balance. Correct only as appropriate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leg amputees. • Cerebral palsy. • Diplegia. • Restricted balance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More effective balance. • Better propulsion (when roll is controlled). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can result in a shorter pull if not accompanied by a roll. |
| Arms crossing the centre line under the body in front crawl. | Learners with excessive snaking of body. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discourage pull across the centre line of body. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cerebral palsy. • Hemiplegia. • Stroke. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streamlining. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty moving in a straight line. • Excessive head roll. |

Arm action

| Characteristic | Common for | Teaching points | Condition(s) | Positives | Negatives |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|
| Narrow arm entry. | Learners with restricted balance. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyse use as narrow arm entry may be improving balance. Correct only as appropriate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learners with limited core stability. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More effective balance. Better propulsion. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can bring shoulders out of line. |
| Breaststroke arms with leg drag. | Learners with leg drag through lower limb loss or paralysis. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use continuous stroke when there is no leg kick to keep stroke moving. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paraplegia. Cerebral palsy. Diplegia. Quadriplegia. Dysmelia. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continual forward movement. Improved aquatic breathing. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires considerable arm effort and breath-timing. |
| Sculling in backstroke. | Learners with leg drag. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allow initially to keep afloat where there is no leg movement. Lose as soon as possible to keep continuous stroke. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Paraplegia. Cerebral palsy. Diplegia. Quadriplegia. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More effective stroke. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can become a habit. Restricts stroke once established. |
| Double arm backstroke, with head often extended under the water to maximise streamlining. | Learners with balance and co-ordination difficulties on the back. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use to gain maximum propulsion from arms when leg kick is weak or unpredictable. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cerebral palsy. Quadriplegia. Ataxic cerebral palsy. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improves balance. Better propulsion from arms. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breath-timing can be difficult. |

Breathing

| Characteristic | Common for | Suggestion | Condition(s) | Positives | Negatives |
|------------------------------------|--|--|--|---|--|
| Choking, spluttering and coughing. | Learners who have difficulty swallowing and blowing, and/or those coping stiffness and pain. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach on back. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athetoid cerebral palsy. • Arthritis. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier position to breathe. • Less pain. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unable to see what is going on around. • Requires effort to regain standing position. |

Timing

| Characteristic | Common for | Suggestion | Condition(s) | Positives | Negatives |
|---|--|--|---|--|--|
| Difficulty controlling stroke as a whole. | Learners whose movements and breathing are out of synchronisation and/or those with poor core control. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance often dictates the most effective combination. • Work on whole - part - whole of stroke. • Make stroke as efficient as possible. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All abilities and conditions. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swimming to maximum ability. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May cause snaking of the body and/or excessive roll. |

Chapter 6: Additional considerations

Visual impairments

- Learners may need to be guided around the facility to orientate themselves.
- Use manual demonstrations in full view of all, together with clear auditory instructions.
- Wear contrasting clothes to the environment such as a lighter or darker t-shirt. This will help visually impaired learners follow demonstrations.
- Singing and music can help establish and develop rhythm for all learners.
- Use music originating from the same place to help orientation.
- Use a tapper to notify the learner when nearing the end of the pool.
- Learners who wear glasses may have severe difficulties once they remove them. Prescription goggles are available.

Hearing impairments

- Use clear and accurate demonstrations.
- Use of photos, diagrams and/or flash cards may help.
- Make sure the learner can see your face for lip reading. You may need to move into a lower position on poolside.
- Some learners can pick up rhythm (e.g. of a drum) to help with timing.
- Learners who use hearing aids become more impaired when they remove them for swimming.
- Some learners may have implants to help them hear. Parents, carers and/or learners should be aware if the external components are water compatible and suitable for swimming before enrolling on swimming lessons. Teachers may need to check this at the point of induction and prompt the child or adult to remove them if not.
- Does the learner use sign language? If so, clarify which form they prefer to use. (i.e. British or Makaton).

Learning disabilities

- Break skills down into small parts.
- Photos, diagrams, flash cards and/or music may help with communication and understanding.
- Use continual repetition in a variety of ways to achieve the same ends.
- Use movement exploration and a games approach.
- Ensure high standards of personal discipline.
- Use accurate demonstration, pictures and basic signing to reinforce verbal instructions.
- Allow time for steps to be learned and repeat them often.
- Use praise to reinforce small steps - verbal praise, 'thumbs up' and smiles work well.
- Does the learner use sign language? If so, clarify which form they prefer to use. (i.e. British or Makaton).



Top Tip

Seek medical advice before teaching diving or butterfly to learners with down syndrome or visual impairment.

Behaviour management

Managing difficult behaviour in a swimming lesson is crucial to ensure learners benefit the most from the time available in the lesson.

Positive behaviour can be encouraged if a teacher can:

- create a calm environment
- be a good role model and acknowledge learners as good role models
- use positive teaching with positive reinforcement
- enforce boundaries with both rewards and penalties
- encourage learners to think before they act.

Not all lessons will run smoothly and adaptations need to be made when things aren't working well. Some learners may struggle more to concentrate, others may struggle to complete tasks and lose motivation.

Strategies to keep learners engaged may include:

- rewarding them at the end of a session with a favourite toy/game/certificate
- using a story board to show order of activities
- allowing them more time to practise skills if they're not progressing, instead of moving on to new activities
- using "Now and Then" cards to encourage learners to do one skill before they get a reward
- sharing pool rules and/or lesson rules with parents/carers and asking for their support if learners aren't engaging.



Top Tip

If in doubt ask swimming coordinators and parents/carers for their ideas on how to help the lessons run smoothly.

Chapter 7: Learn to Swim Programme implementation and considerations for learners with SEND

The Swim England Learn to Swim Programme is an inclusive, world-renowned programme, helping children and adults of all ages and abilities to achieve their aquatic potential. It includes four progressive frameworks, which teach fundamental movement skills, core aquatic skills and different aquatic disciplines. The frameworks are:

- Pre-School Framework
- Learn to Swim Framework Stages 1-7
- Aquatic Skills Framework (Learn to Swim Stages 8-10)
- Adult Swimming Framework.

It's a fantastic experience that opens up new possibilities for everyone, as well as supporting their confidence, enjoyment and safety in the water. Implementing the Learn to Swim Programme will add variety to your sessions and enhance your learners' experience.

Learn to Swim Awards

Swim England Learn to Swim Awards are a great way to keep your learners motivated throughout their swimming journey. Our Awards scheme includes both 'core' and complementary Awards, which cater for all abilities. We recommend that where a learner is physically unable to ever achieve an outcome/Award as specified, an adaptation should be made and the Award then granted based upon the achievement of the adaptation. It must be stressed, however, that as the teacher you have a considerable responsibility to ensure that high standards are maintained. It is preferable for a learner to spend a long time achieving success than to be presented with an Award which has not been earned.

Below are some additional reminders on how the Learn to Swim Programme should be implemented, and how it can be adapted for learners with SEND.

Pre-School Framework

This is the first section of the Learn to Swim Programme. It promotes early water confidence and helps younger learners develop basic motor skills with the support of an adult. The Discovery Duckling Awards, Duckling Awards and I CAN Awards in the Pre-School Framework are an ideal starter for pre-school children aged 0 to five years. They offer a gentle introduction to the skills developed later on in the Programme.

I CAN Awards

These are complementary Awards within the Pre-School Framework. They sit alongside the Framework's core Awards – Discovery Duckling and Duckling – and recognise when learners make single achievements and smaller steps. Examples include blowing bubbles or floating on their backs. I Can Awards can be offered at any point and for any outcome in the Pre-School Framework.



Learn to Swim Framework Stages 1-7

The Learn to Swim Framework has seven key Stages. Typically, to complete this Framework, a learner must achieve all outcomes within each Stage. It's possible that some learners, because of their SEND, are unable or find it difficult to achieve all outcomes. In these cases, adaptations can be made so that learners continue to be supported and can progress through their swimming journey. These adaptations are detailed below:

Physical disabilities

Where a learner is physically unable to ever achieve an outcome listed, the Award should be granted based on the achievement of the remaining outcomes. In preparation for the next Stage, a note should be shared with other teachers explaining a suitable adaptation for the outstanding outcome.

Learning difficulties

If a learner requires additional time to achieve an outcome, the swimming coordinator should look to adapt delivery to provide extra support. This can be done with supplementary one-to-one sessions or a small class structure, for example. Stages 1-7 Awards should not be given if a learner is unable to achieve an outcome at first, unless there's a physical disability. Instead, to keep learners motivated, complementary Awards such as the Alpha Step Awards and Water Skills Awards are available.

Peer group lessons

Some learners may not be progressing at the same speed as their peers. Swimming coordinators need to be mindful that some learners will be very socially aware and concerned if placed in a younger class structure because of their ability. Where possible, learners should be kept in similar groups to their peers. Discussions with parents and carers may also help to address this.

Alpha Step Awards

These Awards support learners new to the Learn to Swim environment who may need rewarding for making smaller steps during their swimming journey. They can be used in both inclusive mainstream and specialist disability swim sessions. These three Awards complement Learn to Swim Stages 1-7.



Water Skills Awards

These Awards complement the core aquatic skills developed during Learn to Swim Stages 1-7. They encourage confidence, competence and versatility in the water. There are seven Awards, each with ten skills for learners to try. Learners can attempt all ten, but to achieve the Award, they only need to complete eight of the skills.



Aquatic Skills Framework (Learn to Swim Stages 8-10)

The Aquatic Skills Framework (Learn to Swim Stages 8-10) gives learners the chance to specialise in different aquatic disciplines. Awards are available to support the Framework and the same criteria as above should be used to support learners with SEND in achieving their Awards.

Adult Swimming Framework

The Adult Swimming Framework is an all-inclusive offer for adults learning to swim. The Framework is flexible to cater to each individual adult and should be delivered in a supportive encouraging way to meet the needs of any adult learner.

Full information on the Learn to Swim Programme, including where to find supporting resources to help with successful delivery of the Programme can be found on our website:

swimming.org/swimengland/teaching-swimming-hub



Chapter 8: Exit routes

Club

Swim England accredited clubs in the local area can offer exit routes for learners who would like to specialise in diving, synchronised swimming, competitive swimming, water polo or open water swimming. The following links will help you find appropriate Swim England clubs to help further develop swimming ability:

swimming.org/sport/how-to-become-a-competitive-swimmer

swimming.org/sport/disability-swimming-hub-clubs

Para-swimming

If a learner is progressing through their Learn to Swim Programme and enjoying their swimming, it might be useful to signpost them to Para-swimming. Para-swimming is the competitive discipline for learners who have a physical, visual or intellectual impairment.

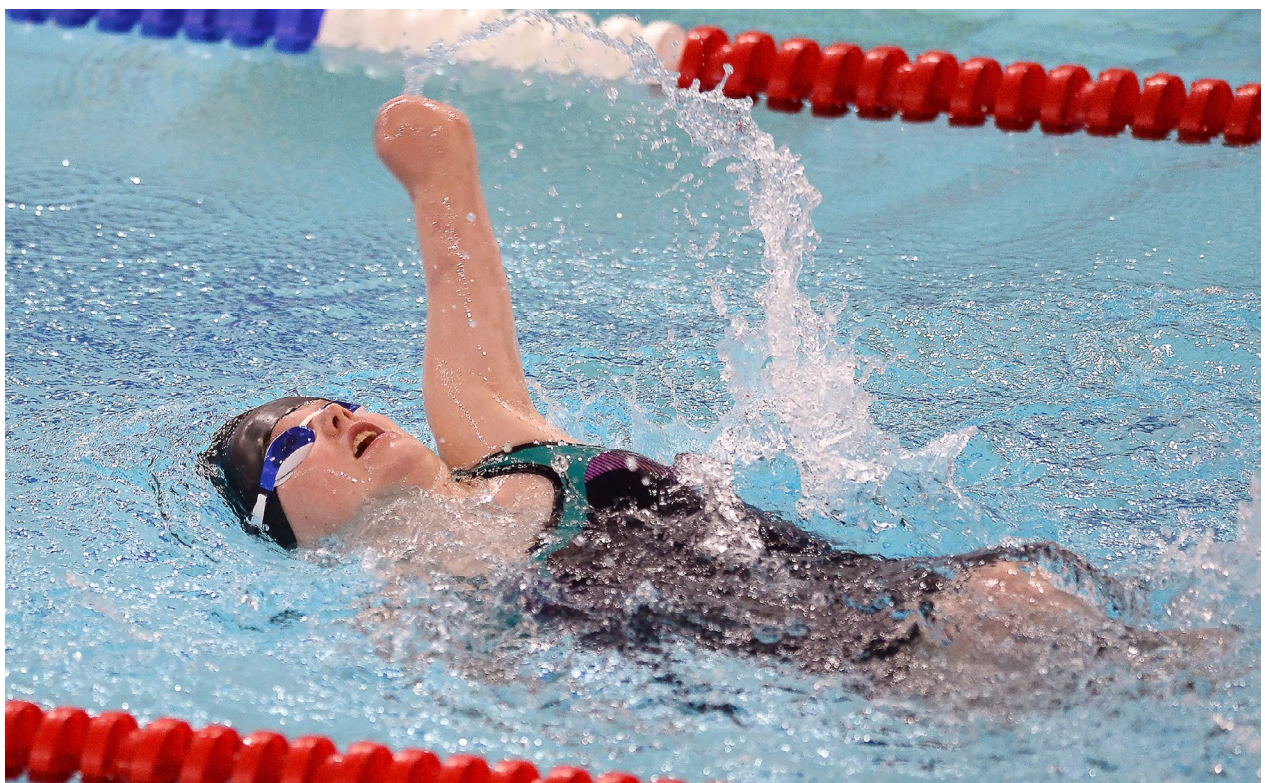
The first step they need to take is to complete a learner identification tracker form, which can be downloaded from our website. Once we have received the form, if eligible, the learner will be invited to events happening in their region and offered guidance on how to progress in para-swimming:

swimming.org/sport/para-swimming-advice

Teacher training

We provide continued professional development (CPD) courses to support teachers in their delivery of the Learn to Swim Programme. You can find more information on our CPD hub:

swimming.org/ios/continual-professional-development



Appendix: Further guidance and support

Thank you for reading our guide and helping to improve Learn to Swim experiences for children and adults with additional needs.

There is plenty more guidance and support out there to help you develop inclusive swimming programmes, or programmes for other types of sport and physical activity.

Visit our Inclusion Hub to discover more information and resources like this: swimming.org/inclusion.

On our hub, you'll also find links to other trusted organisations who support professionals like you, as well as children and adults with different needs, and those who care for them.

To go directly to this list of organisations, visit: swimming.org/swimengland/useful-links-inclusion.