

# How transforming the swimming experience can grow participation numbers

## Leicester City Council: Swim Leicester brand

### Background

Leicester City Council leisure services provision had been focused on high profile sports such as rugby, football and cricket. There was no real profile for swimming. The council had been challenged to make £200k worth of savings in leisure services and asked Swim England to help undertake a strategic audit and review of its swimming offer.

### Challenges

**A full aquatic audit across four out of seven sites in 2014 revealed:**

- All sites were working independently, each running a different pool programme – there was no consistent standard of delivery.
- This made it difficult to book lessons – research showed only 20% of 5 to 11 year olds were able to book onto the Council's learn to swim programme.
- The learn to swim programme had great potential to grow:
  - By unifying their sites and swimming offer, the council could offer 4,000 extra learn to swim places to primary age children.

- By changing their programme at prime time (4–6pm) – from 1:1s to class lessons – learn to swim had the potential not only to offer more places but to generate an extra £125k per year, with no staff changes or recruitment needed.

### Approach

The City Council wanted to increase participation numbers and improve the swimming ability of young children in the area. The new strategy proposed significant changes and improvements across all three frontier areas

- Creating a single swimming brand for all sites.
- Improving and integrating management processes to improve operational efficiency.
- A focus on increasing participation in the younger market.
- Opportunities to improve the pool timetables and increase financial income.

**“We’ve been working closely with Swim England to improve our approach. As a result, our new Swim Leicester programme will offer more spaces, more teachers and more time slots at our seven pools, giving parents and carers more choice about where and when their child learns to swim. The council is committed to supporting every child in Leicester to learn to swim.”**

**Assistant City Mayor,  
Cllr Piara Singh Clair** 



Prime time pool programme changes are estimated to generate an extra **£125k** per year

Swim Leicester brand is delivering a **consistent standard** of swimming lessons

Council plans to increase learn to swim places to **4,000** (over 5 year period)

**Find out more:**

If you are interested in getting more involved with a similar project, please contact [strategicpartnerships@swimming.org](mailto:strategicpartnerships@swimming.org)

## How transforming the swimming experience can grow participation numbers

### Leicester City Council: Swim Leicester brand

#### Frontier One – awareness and relevance

The authority created a new 'Swim Leicester' brand and launched it via:

- A high profile launch by Olympic swimmer Joe Roebuck.
- Posters, pull-up banners, advertising on city council staff payslips, in local newspapers and radio, via the Swim England website, on social media, plasma screens in the libraries and city hall.

To boost engagement, the City Council also:

- Created five mascots designed by school children to relate to a target swimming group, for use in centres and external community engagement events.
- Gave each child on the LTS programme a branded swimming kit bag, swim hat and free access to public swimming sessions.
- Promoted their direct debit scheme offering new sign ups four free family passes to encourage family swimming across the city.

#### Frontier Two – environment

- Internal procedures were unified and linked across all 7 sites to ensure the brand and lessons benefitted from consistent delivery and improved processes.
- The Council purchased new pool equipment for swimming lessons and developed a games pack for teachers to use. Teachers also had a new 'uniform' in brand colours.
- Site facilities were improved, with one site providing a café area for parent to relax in whilst they waited for their children in lessons and wifi across all centres to support operation.
- The welcome area across the sites was made more visible – with noticeboards displaying staff profiles, customer service training for all staff and a new Parent Guide was created.
- Customer service training for all staff.
- Mayor became an ambassador.

#### Frontier Three – tailoring the offer

- The audit identified significant financial improvements could be made if Leicester City Council made some changes to their current pool programming.  
This included:
  - Swapping 1-1 lessons held during prime time (4-6pm) to full classes.
  - Retaining swimmers beyond stages 5 and 6 by highlighting the additional awards they could achieve.
  - Opportunities to take personal survival, rookie lifeguard and competitive swimming.
  - Improving relations with local schools and extending lessons to the recommended 30 minutes (rather than 20 mins).
  - Adult LTS offer to encourage family swimming.

#### Results

- 'Swim Leicester' brand is now delivering a consistent standard of swimming lessons for learners at all sites.
- Standardised procedures have improved communications – each site is aware of what sessions are being delivered every day, at each time and can link availability across the city.
- Each swimming stage is colour coded and extends from the hat colour to the booking system and timetable.
- Session names have been reduced from 40 to 14. A new 'family swim' session has been introduced across the sites and there are plans to review adult learn to swim lessons.