

Inclusive Behaviour Change Research

Swim England Insight

Overall aims

- This research looks at how to get people swimming, through the lens of **disability**
- It aims to develop Swim England's knowledge of disabled people to support business development of swimming products & inform organisational strategy
- It has been designed to grow participation among a disabled audience **who may not engage in swimming currently**

Methodology

Research audience

- Consumers with impairments; two thirds were accompanied by friend/ relative
- Majority were **potential swimmers** (open to swimming), some current swimmers
- Age splits of 25-44 yrs (Younger), 45-70 yrs (Older), and spread of SEG & ethnicity

VI – not blind, but partially sighted

HI – not deaf, but hard of hearing

PI – reduced mobility and use aids to support activity – stick, scooter etc

Some consumers had more than 1 impairment

Research design

- **Review of existing research**
- **Consumer missions:** potential swimmer/swimmer + a friend/ relative took part in:
 1. *Swimming Scrapbooks* – understand swimming triggers and barriers, & what swimming can learn from their other activities and habits
 2. *Swimming Visits* – explore the complete swimming journey in-context, identifying needs and opportunities at every stage
 3. *Swimming Activity Ideas* – understand relevance and appeal, identify how to optimise
- Conducted **interviews with staff** to explore training needs & opportunities

The opportunity for growing swimming

On the surface, swimming is recognised to offer relevant benefits:

Relaxation and enjoyment
including relieving pain

Less risky fitness activity (low impact) - reinforced by health care professionals

Once in the water, swimming delivers much deeper rewards:

Independence
Feeling free in water & able to do movements impossible on land

Empowerment
A time to just feel like yourself, not your impairment

Social connection
Belonging to a community of fellow swimmers

Our audience experience an **EQUALITY IN THE WATER** that they can miss taking part in other activities & in life in general

The opportunity for growing swimming

- **Relevant benefits already exist** for disabled people to swim, arguably more than we see with non-disabled people
- An **opportunity to make use of powerful rewards of independence, empowerment & social connection**, e.g. in marcomms and through activities
- **Everyday social influences** can play a key role along the behaviour change journey: important to consider role of a disabled person's wider social network (friends, family etc.) in strategies to trigger & sustain swimming

Key behavioural challenges for growing swimming

4 Key behavioural challenges

1. People can lack confidence and self-belief

2. Disability swimming sessions can lack personal relevance but non-disabled swimming is not inclusive

3. Staff are not primed to serve 'invisible' needs

4. The swimming routine can induce stress and anxiety

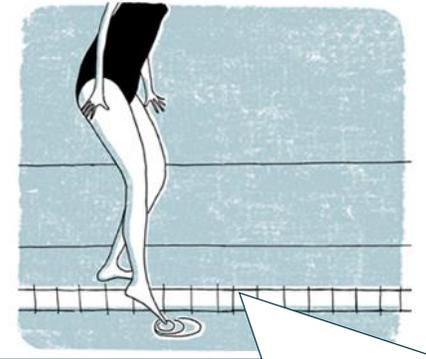
1 – Disabled people can lack confidence and self-belief

Swimmers and non-swimmers lacking confidence in their ability is exacerbated with an impairment:

People can question their ability to swim since acquiring an impairment – may have also lost swimming/general fitness or fear risking pain or injury

People with congenital disabilities may have dropped out of swimming lessons at a young age if their needs were not adequately catered for, so have not developed the skills to swim confidently

Can fear not coping & having to rely on others
= loss of independence



“I got bored of swimming lessons when I was about 8 years old – I couldn't see what the teacher was showing us so I gave them up.” VI



An opportunity for sessions that help build confidence & maximise independence

2 - Disability swimming sessions can lack personal relevance



This audience can resist being labeled as 'disabled'

Being disabled can cue feelings of vulnerability and feeling different - many fear that their impairment will take over their identity and independence

"When the sloping steps aren't in use I have to use the hoist. I hate being craned out, I'm not disabled." PI

People actively avoid situations where they may need to PUBLICLY explain their impairment or ask for additional support, including asking for concessions

Non-disabled people

Disabled people

A messy grey area which is not catered for (in many areas of life) & can create specific barriers around swimming

2- but non-disabled swimming is not inclusive

Non-disabled people

Disabled people

A messy grey area which is not catered for (in many areas of life) & can create specific barriers around swimming



Swimming sessions are **expensive**

On **RESTRICTED INCOMES**: may not have the same opportunities to work

NOT ACCESSING CONCESSIONS AVAILABLE: can resist identifying themselves as 'disabled'; relatives/friends do not access 'Carer' concessions as don't feel this fits their role

Further expense of **travelling** to/from pool



Reframe concessions to increase relevance



A **smaller window in the timetable** to swim



Exclusive or 'disabled' sessions can lack relevance, but public sessions can be too busy and stressful

Non-exclusive sessions are not always marketed in an inclusive way: people are often unable to access key swimming communications



Increase visibility of inclusive sessions on offer

3 – Staff are not primed to serve invisible needs

2 factors can limit provision for people with hidden impairments or undisclosed specific requirements:

Dominant staff anchors:

- Exclusive disability sessions
- People with a carer/assistant
- Specialist facilities – e.g. accessible changing room, hoist

Default behaviours:

1. Offer to help only when someone asks or is 100% certain they need it
 - Tend to **assume provision is ok otherwise** (vs. checking/offering)
2. Call in manager or disability coordinator when faced with an access question that falls outside dominant anchors

*“The rules change so it’s always good to check – I’d **rather radio the manager to be sure.**” Front of House*



Opportunity for training & environmental prompts & cues to reset anchors & disrupt default behaviours

3 – Staff are not primed to serve invisible needs

Training tends not to change anchors or default responses & may even have reinforced them

- Front of house and poolside staff typically receive one-off 'disability awareness' training at some stage*
- Frontline staff struggle to cite how training has helped them practically, beyond being mindful of language they use & knowing who internally to contact about a disability-related enquiry
- A take-out actually can be to 'hang back' & let the customer come to you rather than risk causing offence – going against what staff normally consider to be good customer service

*"You need to do something with the training as soon as you had it or **drip-feed the training to keep the focus and confidence**. It needs to be constantly at the forefront as part of customer service and not an add-on – **adapting to the person in front of them**." Manager*

*"I think **good customer service is all about asking customers if they need help** when you think they might need it... Most of the time disabled people will ask if they need anything extra - **I wouldn't normally think to approach them to ask if they need help, especially as I don't want to offend**." Lifeguard*

4 - The swimming routine can induce stress and anxiety

A combination of factors undermine the swimming reward:

BEFORE

- Working out logistics
- Hard to find information
- Inaccessible formats

"It's not perfect but I'm just used to it all now." PI

DURING

- Difficult journey to pool
- Lack of / recessive signage or guidance from staff
- Unsupportive changing/poolside environment
- Potentially intimidating swimming experience

AFTER

- Lack of clear signage back to changing room / showers
- Showers & cubicles not optimised for impairments

The same barriers are felt more acutely with potential swimmers. They are **less problematic with people who have become FAMILIAR** with the overall experience.

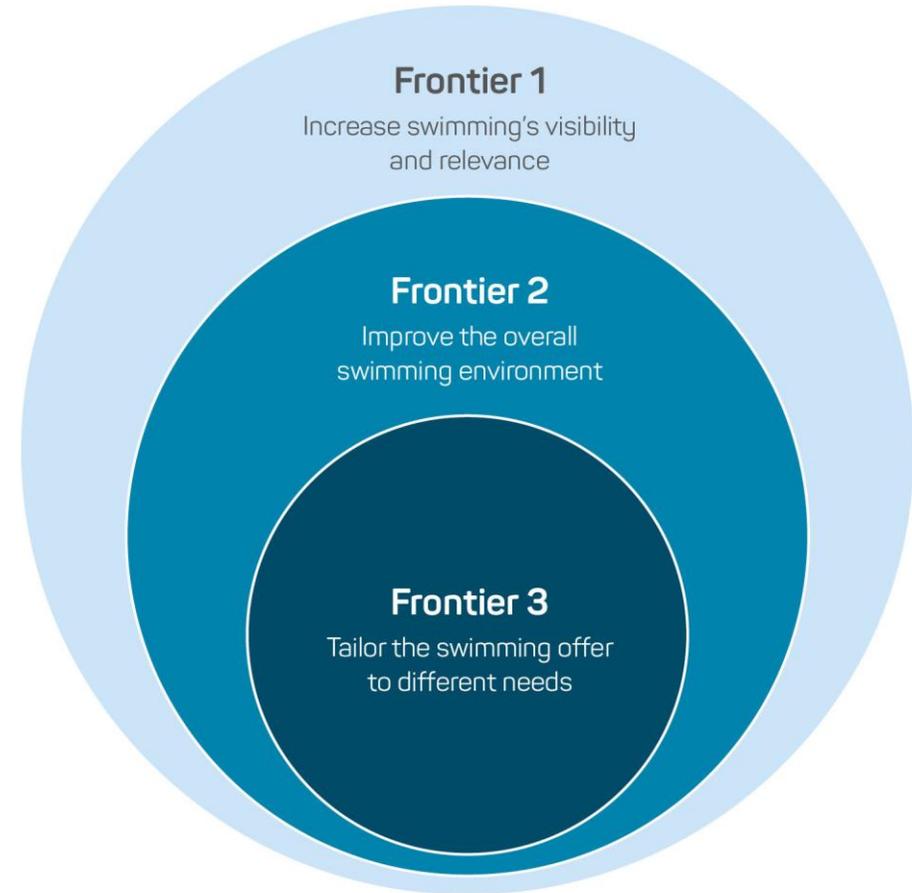


Important to reduce EFFORT wherever possible & build FAMILIARITY with the environment

A framework to get people
swimming

A framework for growing swimming

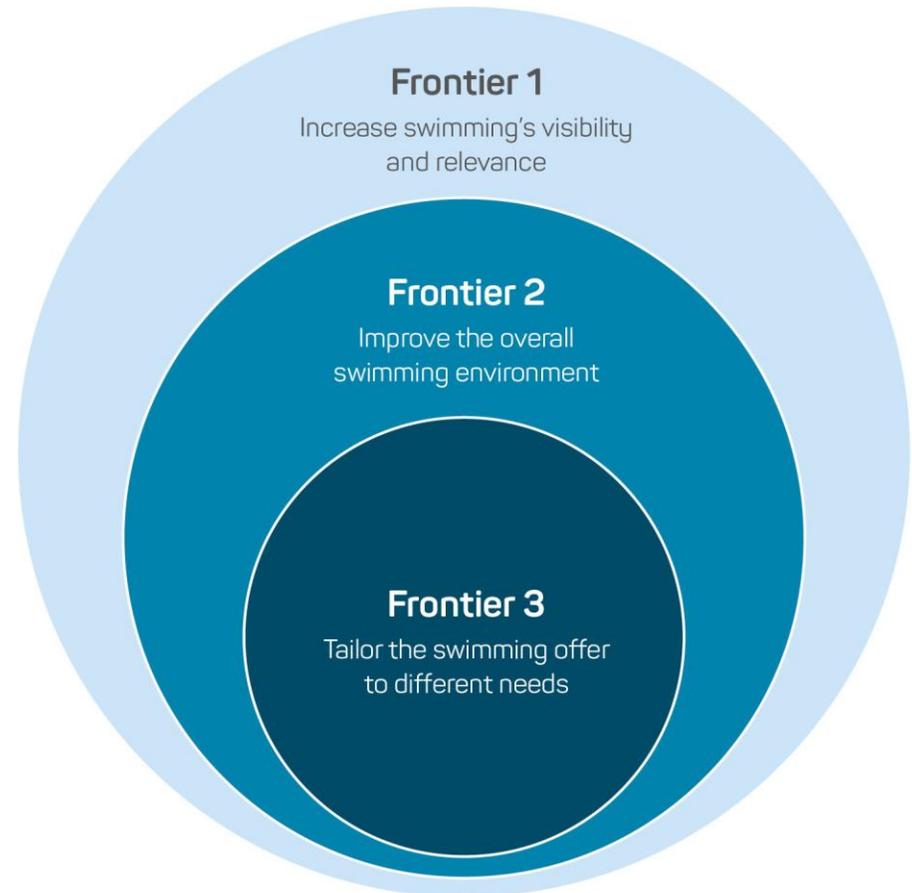
- Each frontier represents an opportunity to grow swimming
- Critical to address ALL 3 FRONTIERS to bring in new audiences and retain existing audiences



Frontier 1 – Swimming awareness and relevance

AWARENESS:

- Accessibility of communications
- Prime inclusive swimming - with staff & customers



Thought-starters for increasing awareness

Ensure **reduced effort** and **accessibility** across all communications



Ensure leaflets, timetable, cards, posters etc. are optimised for Visually Impaired:

- ✓ **Matt-finish (vs. shiny)** - e.g. Swimfit gym cards & posters
- ✓ Strong **colour contrast of text** vs. background
- ✓ **Avoiding small fonts & faint text** - larger text versions displayed around reception
- ✓ **Resolution of images & files** high enough to blow up on screen / mobile phone



Make it easy to find and search for key swimming specific information through website:

- ✓ **Ensure to include** – e.g. quieter times to swim, facilities, timetable, prices incl. concessions)
- ✓ **Have accessibility section on website** – e.g. “the little things you might like to know” page to help ease the swimming journey / routine

“The website didn’t have a section that said just ‘swimming’...I had to follow a link about kids’ swimming lessons to get to pool info.” VI

Thought-starters for increasing awareness

Use centre environment to **PRIME inclusive swimming with staff & customer**



Highlight specific features that create a supportive environment (e.g. able to store aids, like sticks, poolside) - through photos & posters around reception



HEALTH SPECIFIC recommendations:

- GP / PT / Physio referrals & recommendations
- Weight loss groups e.g. Slimming World
- Patient/patient family support groups, hospital outpatient services e.g. Lower Vision Clinic



Promoting disability activities around entrance can also offer reassurance (even if someone would not participate in an Exclusive Disability session themselves)



Clearly display price list (incl. concessions) & consider REFRAMING who is eligible for concessions, e.g.:

- Anyone with an impairment & health condition vs. 'registered disabled'?
- Relative or friend of someone who needs support to swim vs. 'carer'?

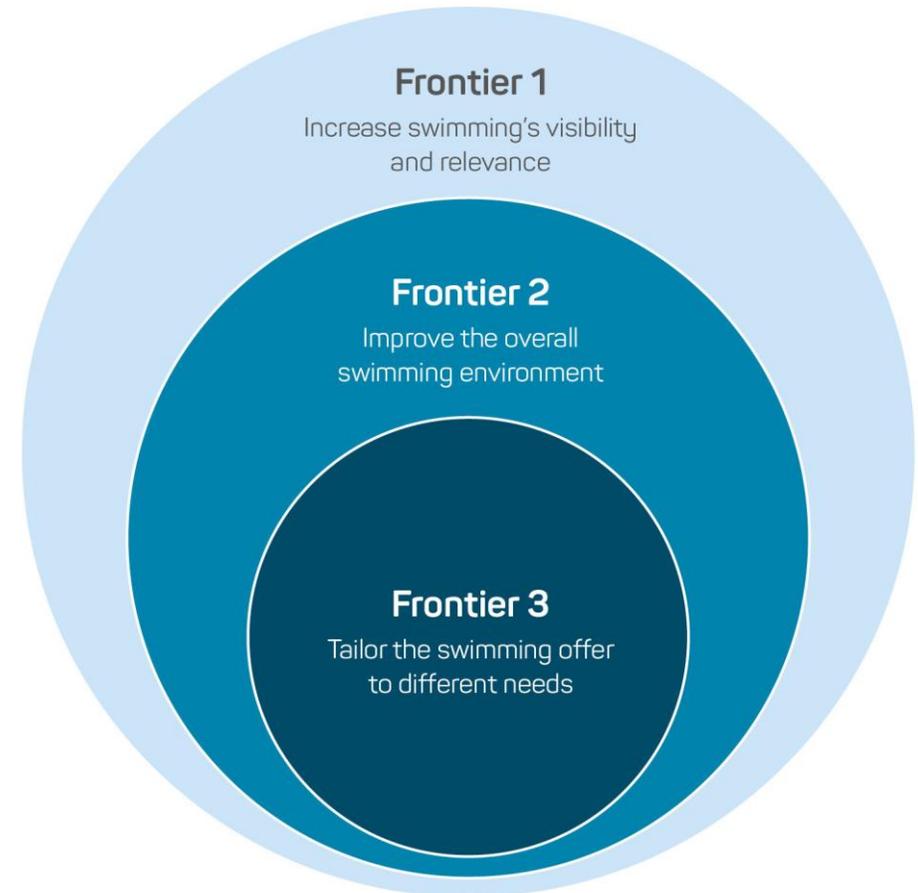


FRAME explicitly around how water creates comfortable and safe environment for people with impairments / injury / health conditions through supporting 90% of body weight

Frontier 2 – Improve overall environment

DRIVE AN INCLUSIVE CULTURE VIA:

- Inviting and reassuring environment
- Empowered and primed staff – ready to meet a range of needs



Thought-starters for an inviting environment

Easing navigation for everyone

Signage – use familiar symbols in places where people expect to see them – e.g. on vs. above the door

Contrasting floor colour / texture to signal change – e.g. marking poolside from pool edge

Good lighting - particularly changing rooms where light can be variable

Clearer markings to help guide swimmers in the water (VI) e.g bright markers, 5,10m etc

Avoiding non-reflective signage –
e.g. esp. on health & safety information

**Offer inductions to allow customer
to become familiar with facility**

Colour cues to chunk up the environment
– e.g. colour coded lockers & cubicles in
changing room



Thought-starters for an inviting environment

Safe & supportive infrastructure to facilitate independence



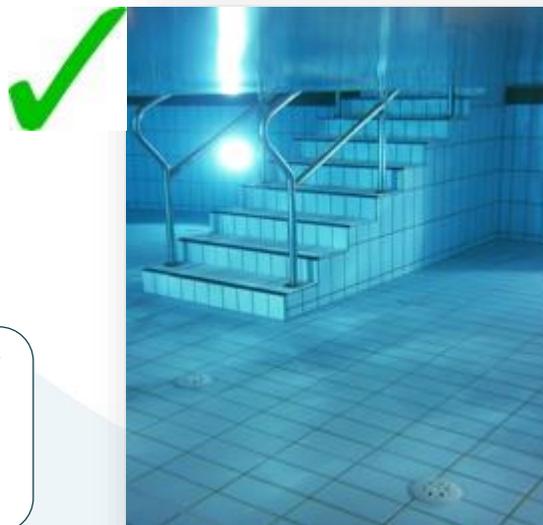
Handrails & other furniture for support



*"The hot shower was a nice relaxing end to my swim – I could have stayed in a bit longer but I started to get a bit unsteady on my feet, a **handrail would have been useful.**" PI*



Options for how to get into pool – e.g. sloping steps & ladder each provide easier access depending on needs



Floats/noodles near entrance to pool – for easy and normalised access



Thought-starters for empowered, primed staff



Prompts & tools to support confident customer interactions across the journey.
Comms that are both customer & staff facing can help support usage (vs. staff manual)



Connect staff training to ongoing tools they can use – e.g. displaying staff checklist of top 5 things to remember for **ALL** customers - including: *not assuming timetable etc. is accessible; checking needs & asking open questions*



Specific training on the need to be proactive with ALL customers.
May be required to overcome default behaviour to 'hang back' if unsure



Up-skilling staff, e.g. new 'poolside coach' roles
(gym floor equivalent) beyond lifeguards could help recognise & better support individual needs

*"We have our Normal Operating Procedure book behind reception but it's massive! I'd **prefer just to call the manager.**"*
Front of House

Frontier 3 – Tailoring the swimming offer

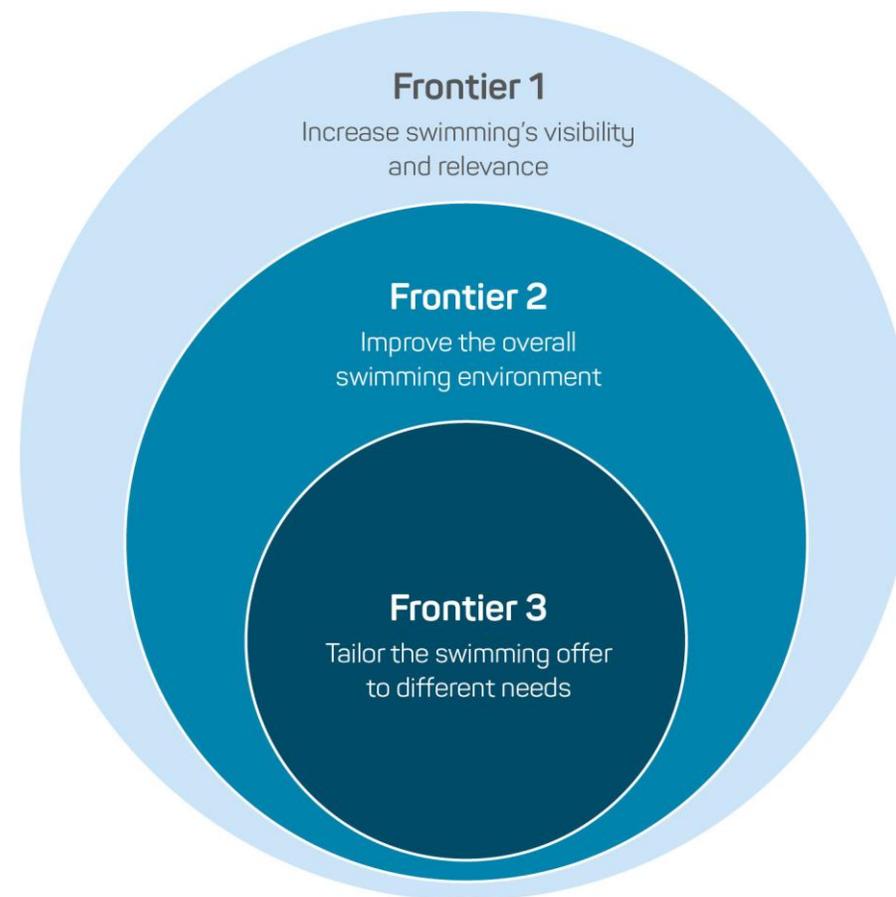
STRESS FREE SWIMMING: relaxed swimming sessions (& quiet lane swimming)

SKILLS REFRESH & HONING TECHNIQUE:
Be a Better Swimmer MOTs

STRUCTURED SOCIAL FITNESS: Swimfit Gym (& Aqua Fit)

These ideas share 3 broad characteristics:

1. Open to all
2. Linked to clear benefits
3. A structured experience



Stress free swimming

A session with relaxation at its core has broad appeal

OPEN TO ALL

- ✓ No lanes and 'at your own pace' = no competition – heightening equality in water

LINKED TO CLEAR BENEFITS

- ✓ 'Gentle swim' reduces fear of injury or pain and an atmosphere conducive to building confidence

STRUCTURED EXPERIENCE

- ✓ 'Adults only' reassures unconfident swimmers who worry about getting splashed or colliding with children in the pool; & ease the routine (less noisy all round)
- ✓ Soft music adds a fun element – showing a different side to swimming, disrupting latent negative past experiences

WATCH OUTS & OPPORTUNITIES:

- ! 'Dimmed' lighting is very off-putting for visually impaired people
- ! Important to not assume all disabled people want a relaxed session – lack of lanes for 'real swimming' can put off fitness focused
- In absence of lanes, other pool furniture may be more important to support orientation

Skills refresh and honing technique

Instruction to improve technique & confidence appeals but a series of sessions can feel like a big commitment

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Structured social fitness

Social fitness appeals but can be perceived to be too difficult

OPEN TO ALL

- Reassurance is required around tailoring of sessions - **important to highlight alternative/progressive exercises** - ensuring an **'equal' workout**

LINKED TO CLEAR BENEFITS

- ✓ **Piggybacks current gym/circuits behaviours**, driving familiarity and appeal

A STRUCTURED EXPERIENCE

- ✓ Strong appeal for a **structured instructor-led session to get a full body workout**, esp. fitness focused and people trying to lose weight

WATCH OUTS & OPPORTUNITIES:

- ! Swimfit cards can allude to **complexity** – (VIs quickly dismiss as too much hard-to-read text, exacerbated by shiny finish)
- Poolside exercises in swimsuit can be off-putting for more body conscious **but T-shirts could reassure**

Social swimming experiences

Ideas with less potential on their own but potential to link with other activities

Swimming Meet Ups:

LINKED TO CLEAR BENEFITS

- Appealing *when linked to structured sessions* (e.g. Swimfit Gym or Aqua Fit) or *piggybacking existing groups* with a shared purpose, e.g. Slimming World
 - ✓ Triggering swimming & *leveraging commitment*
 - ✓ Making swimming *more of an event* & worth the effort - socialising afterwards = *positive PEAK END memories*
- Relies upon an inviting café to informally meet

Swimming Buddies:

A STRUCTURED EXPERIENCE

- More appealing if framed as a *soft personal trainer / motivator* with some swimming expertise to offer (similar to Be A Better Swimmer Honing Technique)
- ! Swimming with a buddy can be *associated with less independence & feel contrived* – hard to see how the relationship would work

“I would want to get on and swim, not just chat. You need to know someone fairly well to know boundaries.” VI



Watch out around engineering social swimming for its own sake

Open Days to showcase and reassure around suitability of activities

A spontaneous appetite for a 'practice run' to gain confidence in the environment & with specific sessions before committing - especially 'newer' activities where customers can doubt the personal relevance

Knowing or seeing other people 'like me' taking part & enjoying it can offer reassurance & prime participation

Opportunity to leverage family, friends & professionals as Word of Mouth promotional channels



"I found out about the open day on their Facebook page and the tour of the new pool was enough to make us go back and try some sessions." VI

**COME ALONG TO OUR
OPEN DAY**

"I saw them doing an Aqua Zumba session when I was in the pool which is something I would never normally consider but after a while of watching it I got quite into it! I think giving people a chance to have a look or try something would be great."

VI, PI, HI

