



## top tips for pool providers

If you run a swimming pool or are responsible for organising activities or group sessions, this Top Tips Guide will give you useful information and ideas to help get families involved in Swim4Life.

From advice on advertising to making sure your changing rooms are as family-friendly as possible, these tips will help make your pool a great place for kids and their parents/carers to come and be more active.

### 'Selling' swimming to families

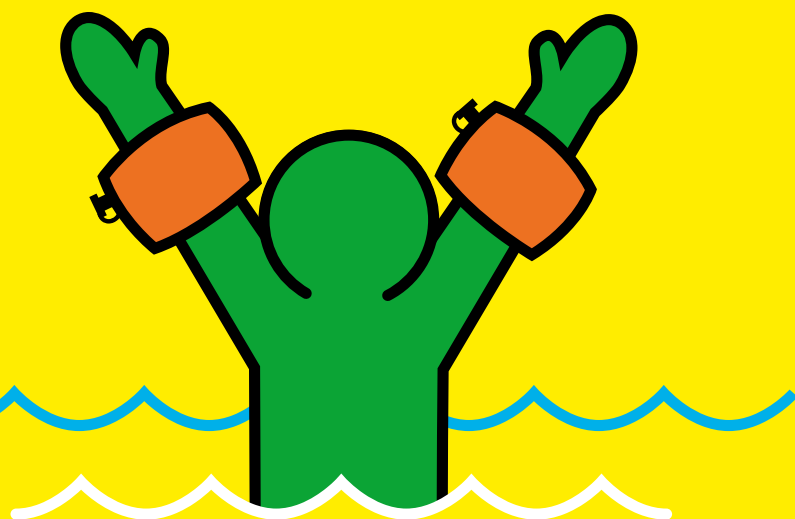
The main things to think about when promoting your pool and the activities on offer are:

- Who are my customers?
- Where do they live?
- What are their reasons for going swimming?
- What sort of advertising are they likely to see, e.g. posters, radio etc.?

Knowing the answers to these questions will help you decide the best way to advertise your pool and get as many people through your doors as possible. And for Swim4Life in particular, there are some ways you can talk about the benefits of swimming that should persuade them even more to get into the water:

- Family time!
- Water activities are fun!
- Swimming is a life skill!
- Swimming keeps you active!

These are all catchy reasons why swimming is a great activity and can be used as headlines on posters and leaflets to encourage people to come to your pool.



# it pays to advertise

People who are new to the pool often say that they didn't know what was on at the pool, or even where it was. So it makes sense to publicise that you're running sessions that are great for families and groups, as well as telling people where the pool is.

But remember that things like poor-quality photocopied leaflets and posters within the swimming pool aren't going to reach many non-swimmers. They also won't grab people's attention as much as a nice colourful poster that really gets your message across. And it doesn't have to cost the earth to advertise your pool creatively either.

## Here are some good ways of telling families about swimming:

- Contact your local papers and make it easy for them to talk about your pool. You can write an article, give them quotes (either from you or someone whose life has been changed by swimming), send them photos and explain how it links in with other stories they may have featured.
- Give information about your swimming activities to the local authority newsletter – they often go to every household.
- Get the information out to groups or schools to put in their own newsletters, or ask them to hand out flyers.
- Get in contact with local businesses, youth groups, school networks etc. – they could put information about your activities on their websites, for example.
- Think about what you call your sessions and how you promote them. For example, calling a session 'parent and child' might stop a grandparent from coming.
- Being at a community, sports, or health-themed event will raise the profile of your pool and give people a chance to meet some of the staff to ask questions.
- You could get out into the local community by going to local family groups or children's centres to talk about swimming, inviting them to come down to the pool. And a quick chat with someone who's anxious about swimming can really calm their fears.
- If your pool is part of a leisure centre, then advertise to those visitors too. They can spread the word about the pool to their friends or family.
- Putting advertisements into magazines and newspapers is a direct route, but it can be expensive. If you do advertise, spend wisely – make sure your ad goes on pages your new customers are likely to read, or in the radio slots they are likely to listen to.

Above all, keep the message simple. Try to include all the main points, such as session times, cost, location of the pool and contact details, but make sure it includes where to go for more information.

# programmes for everyone

If you're trying to attract new families to the pool, the tips below will help you think about families and which programmes will work best for them.

- Try and have a varied swimming programme that will allow you to cater for a range of different interests and abilities. Consider sessions like family aqua-fit, adult-child sessions or family fun swims, as well as access to the open 'public' swim times.
- 'Public swim' isn't the most exciting pool session name, so think about how you might rename sessions on the pool programme so that people know they are family friendly. The trick is to have something catchy but not so creative that people don't realise it's for them!
- If your session is aimed at families, think about who will be using the changing rooms before and after the family session? Will there be enough lockers and space for everyone? Or do you have family-only changing facilities you can offer?
- Make the most of your pool space. Consider sectioning off separate areas so lots of equipment can be in the pool at the same time for the different activities.
- 1 in 5 adults in the UK are unable to swim, and this is likely to affect their confidence in bringing their family to the pool. Why not consider offering separate adult and junior lessons at the same time? This is especially easy to do if you have a main and a learner pool.
- Think about which activities are happening in the small pool when lessons or club swimming are taking place in the main pool. Could you add a family session to the programme so that other family members can go swimming instead of waiting on the balcony?
- Some people feel quite self-conscious when they go swimming. Consider relaxing your swimwear policy so people can cover up a bit more by wearing light leggings or a tight t-shirt for example.
- You could run family sessions during the pool's quieter times to bring in more people. Why not contact local community groups and see if these times would work for them? They may already be looking for support with Change4Life!

# meeting families' needs

Receptionists, lifeguards, teachers, cleaners and the general facilities can all affect our experience at the pool. So it's a good idea to make sure that staff are trained and feel confident they can help families have a great time.

- If you are running sessions that are led by a swimming teacher, it's worth making sure they are friendly and enthusiastic about working with children. There are many qualifications and CPDs available in a range of water-based activities, such as mini-polo, snorkelling and flip 'n' fun, but personal skills are almost as important as professional qualifications. You can find out more about swimming qualifications in the 'Useful links' section of the Swim4Life Local Supporter's Guide.
- Think about training your staff so that they can talk to new swimming families about the facilities and what is on offer. They might want to know things like are there family changing facilities? Are there other sessions that they might find fun? Is there a crèche? And could crèche staff be trained so they can join in family sessions to encourage play in the water?
- Also make sure that you offer healthy food and drink options in your cafe and/or vending machines so everyone can eat healthily after they've had fun in the pool!

## Who can you partner with?

Partnering with local voluntary and community groups can bring more families to your pool. They often work with the families you want to get swimming, so it's worth contacting as many as you can and encouraging them to Swim4Life!

You could also get in touch with organisations like the local authority and PCTs. And don't forget local children's centres, nurseries, out of school groups, family support services and community and voluntary organisations. And don't forget they could all be good places to find new people who are keen to get into the water.

Don't forget about all the fun **Swim4Life Games** - which you can download [here](#). You can also go onto the website and see videos of some of the games being played. Watch the games [here](#).

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