Devon's Swim Festival & Swim CPD Series

With swimming pools closed or subject to restrictions over the course of 2020/21 - 2021/22, swimming provision was massively affected. Data projected that by 2025/26, 3 in 5 children will leave primary school unable to meet the national curriculum requirement. Ensuring children have the vital life skill of swimming and water safety is particularly pertinent in a coastal county like Devon.

SGOs across the county, along with Active Devon, created two parallel swimming offers in the summer term of 2021/22 for schools to combat this decline: one for pupils and one for teachers. A Swim Festival and a Swim CPD Series were available free of charge to all schools across Devon. The Swim Festival provided a brilliant opportunity for SEND and primary pupils to take part in a fun-filled and confidence building #UnitedbyB2022-themed festival. Throughout the day, they took part in the Aqua Splash Swim Festival and two drop-in sessions - a Creative Station and Dance Station. The Aqua Splash Swim Festival was designed to include non-competitive fun activities using equipment in a team environment.

Swim Festival & CPD Series

Objectives

- Swim Festival: build confidence to engage in physical activity and play with others, improve problem-solving skills and mental health and well-being, and raise self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-worth.
- Swim CPD Series: increase school staff confidence to deliver/support delivery of swimming after a large gap, provide a refresher for school staff, and improve school swimming delivery

Who was the target audience and how were they engaged?

The team informed schools of the participation criteria in advance of the events. The Swim Festival saw pupils spend time in the pool joining in non-competitive activities. Two drop-in stations were situated within the venue for pupils to join at any point throughout the day - these sessions encouraged relaxing and socialising, with the option to join in the arts and crafts available, or dance to music.

The Swim CPD Series were a mix of virtual and face-to-face practical sessions for school staff to rebuild confidence in delivering swimming sessions. These sessions were delivered by Swim Devon and focused on health and safety, teaching non-swimmers, and providing staff with hands-on experience.

Why was the activity unique?

The events were a collaborative effort from the county's School Games network, young leaders, and local partners including the local council and local businesses. The team began outlining ideas in January 2022 and ensured a school consultation was undertaken to collect school feedback.

As part of the **Swim Festival**, participants also got the opportunity to see The Queen's Baton up close and personal and meet Perry, the B2022 Commonwealth Games mascot!

What was the impact felt in schools and by CYP?

A total of 40 schools accessed the Swim CPD Series, and 150 SEND and primary pupils took part in the Swim Festival.

Feedback collected before and after the Swim Festival showed pupils were initially excited but nervous which evolved to feelings of both happiness and sadness that the event was over; one pupil felt "on top of the world" by the end of the day! School staff reflected to the team they overheard pupils had the "best day ever" on the journey back to school. Feedback on the Swim CPD Series showed the staff valued the sessions and found them highly informative.

Why is this an example of School Games best practice?

This offer to both schools and staff utilised local knowledge and resources to tackle a problem which will be felt over the next few years - this approach allowed the team to overcome most of the challenges a project of this size posed. It also resulted in strong and trusted relationships between the participating schools and local SGOs, allowing in-depth insight into the challenges local schools face with returning to swimming delivery.

Partnership working with both the Devon School Games network and Swim Devon has resulted in a local SGO area swim festival offer and an ongoing CPD programme for 2022/23.

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