

SWIMMING WITHOUT BARRIERS

Executive Summary & Key Findings

Believed to be the first report of its kind in the UK, Swimming Without Barriers brings together the experiences of both parents and carers of children and young people with SEND and swimming teachers, providing valuable insight into the barriers families face when accessing swimming lessons, alongside the challenges and opportunities experienced by those delivering inclusive swimming.



THE RESEARCH



Parents and carers surveyed



Swimming teachers and aquatic professionals surveyed



Total participants



Swimmers represented through the teaching workforce

HEADLINE FINDINGS

PARENTS

72%

of children represented in the survey are **not currently attending swimming lessons**.

74%

cannot currently **swim 25 metres unaided**.

64%

of parents described local swimming provision as **not very inclusive or not inclusive at all**.

96%

said they would be **more likely to choose a swimming teacher with specialist disability swimming training**.

TEACHERS

96%

have **taught a child with SEND**.

42%

have **turned away a child** because they did not feel equipped to provide the support required.

79%

do **not currently hold a specialist disability swimming qualification**.

98%

believe **more specialist training opportunities are needed**.

FIVE THINGS WE LEARNED

01

ACCESS IS THE BIGGEST BARRIER

Families are not struggling because they lack interest in swimming. They are struggling to find suitable opportunities that meet their child's individual needs, with availability, affordability, accessibility and confidence in provision all influencing participation.

02

INCLUSION STARTS WITH CONFIDENT TEACHERS

Parents consistently described the positive difference made by teachers who understand individual needs, adapt lessons and create supportive learning environments. Teacher confidence plays a significant role in building family confidence.

03

THE WORKFORCE ALREADY EXISTS

Swimming teachers across the UK are already supporting children and young people with SEND every day. The research confirms that greater investment in funded training, specialist qualifications and professional development could significantly increase the confidence and capability of the existing workforce, helping more children access inclusive swimming opportunities.

04

GOOD PRACTICE IS ALREADY HAPPENING

The research identified many examples of excellent inclusive swimming taking place across the UK. Sharing successful approaches, practical ideas and lived experience can help more providers build confidence and strengthen inclusive practice.

05

COLLABORATION WILL DRIVE CHANGE

Improving inclusive swimming is not the responsibility of one organisation alone. Meaningful progress will depend on continued collaboration between families, teachers, providers, governing bodies, charities, training organisations, funders and partners working towards the same goal.

FIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

01

STRENGTHEN THE WORKFORCE THROUGH TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

Expand access to specialist qualifications, continuing professional development and funded learning opportunities to build teacher confidence and increase inclusive swimming provision.

02

EMBED INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

Support teachers to adapt lessons, make reasonable adjustments and create welcoming environments where every child has the opportunity to succeed.

03

SHARE GOOD PRACTICE

Encourage organisations to share successful approaches, practical resources and case studies that help strengthen inclusive swimming across the sector.

04

USE EVIDENCE TO DRIVE LONG-TERM IMPROVEMENT

Continue using research and lived experience to inform workforce development, investment and future initiatives that improve inclusive swimming opportunities.

05

HELP FAMILIES MAKE INFORMED CHOICES

Make information about accessibility, facilities, lesson formats and teacher qualifications easier for families to access when choosing swimming provision. working towards the same goal.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SEND ARE NOT ASKING FOR DIFFERENT OPPORTUNITIES. THEY ARE ASKING FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES.



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Swimming Without
Barriers Report or go to
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