

Free Swimming

An Evaluation of the Welsh Assembly Government's Initiative

Nicola Bolton, Steve Martin, Melissa Anderson,
Bev Smith and Chris Jennings



sports council wales
cyngor chwaraeon cymru

Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru
Sponsored by
Welsh Assembly Government



Nicola Bolton, Melissa Anderson, Bev Smith and
Chris Jennings: Cardiff School of Sport, UWIC
Steve Martin, External Adviser

The evaluation of the Free Swimming Initiative was managed and supported by
the Sports Council for Wales on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government.

The contents of the report reflect the views of the evaluation team, not the Sports
Council for Wales.

Price: £3.00, February 2008

ISBN: 1-871553-05-09

Research and Evaluation Section, Sports Council for Wales
Sophia Gardens, Cardiff CF11 9SW

Tel: 0845 046 0023 Fax: 0845 846 0014

e-mail: research@scw.org.uk www.sports-council-wales.org.uk

© Sports Council for Wales 2008

Contents

Executive Summary	4	List of Figures	
Chapter 1 Introduction	7	Figure 1. Location of Participating Pools in Wales	8
Background to the Free Swimming Initiative	7	Figure 2. Age of Children Participating in Free Swimming	13
The Wider Context	9	Figure 3. 60+ Free Swimming Participation – Unstructured and Structured Swims	19
The Evaluation Programme	9		
Scope of this Report	10	List of Tables	
Chapter 2 Impacts of Free Swimming	11	Table 1. Total Annual Funding for the FSI	9
Increased Participation: 16 and Under Age Group	11	Table 2. Total Number of Free Swims by Holiday Period and Year	12
Increased Participation: 60+ Age Group	18	Table 3. Proportion of Children Involved in Different Kinds of Swimming	14
Chapter 3 Limitations of Free Swimming	22	Table 4. Availability of Free Swimming in 2006 for 60+	18
Introduction	22	Table 5. Activities Offered as Part of the 60+ Scheme	19
Reasons for Non-Participation	22	Table 6. Non-Participation in Free Swimming by 7-11 Year Olds	22
Marketing and Promotion	25	Table 7. Reasons Cited by Adults 60+ Who Expressed an Interest in Swimming More Often	23
Value for Money	26		
Chapter 4 Management of Free Swimming	27		
Introduction	27		
National Implementation	27		
Local Implementation	29		
Chapter 5 Summary and Implications for Future Policy	32		
Key Findings	32		
Implications for Future Policy	33		
References	36		
Interim Evaluation Reports	36		
Evaluation Steering Group	37		
Evaluation Team	37		
List of Participating Organisations	38		
Individual Contributors	39		

Executive Summary

Free swimming in Wales is a Welsh Assembly Government initiative comprising two separate, but related schemes. Free entitlement has been offered, on a pilot basis, since the summer of 2003 to those aged 16 and under during school holidays. A second pilot scheme has operated since November 2004, offering free swimming to the 60+ age group outside the school holidays.

The Free Swimming Initiative (FSI) in Wales has been evaluated since November 2004. The evaluation has been led by a team of researchers from Cardiff School of Sport, UWIC and overseen by the Free Swimming Evaluation Steering Group, chaired by the Sports Council for Wales. In addition to this final report, the evaluation team has produced five interim reports and a summary report.

Key Findings

The Effectiveness of the Pilot Process

- The piloting process has proved effective. It has provided a good test of the impact of providing free swimming. It has highlighted a number of important lessons about the management of free swimming at national and local level.

Participation

- The provision of free swimming has increased participation among the 16 and under and the 60+ age groups.
- More than half of children in Wales aged between 10 and 14 have participated in free swimming sessions, and it has been especially popular among 11-13 year olds.
- The 60+ scheme has led to an increase in the number of swims, largely by encouraging existing swimmers to participate more frequently.
- Participation in the 16 and under scheme peaked in 2004-05.
- The vast majority of free swims provided for both the 16 and under and the 60+ scheme remain unstructured, but there has been an increase over

the last two years in the number of structured swims.

- The rise in the number of children aged 16 and under who have participated in structured swimming sessions, up from 24,000 in 2004-05 to 71,000 in 2006-07 is significant.
- Where structured sessions have been offered they have often led to links to existing swimming clubs and in some instances to the formation of new clubs.
- Free swimming has had a positive impact on participation among 'hard to reach groups', especially those living in Communities First areas.
- Participation by people with disabilities has been patchy and has varied considerably between local authorities. There is little evidence that authorities have sought pro-actively to work specifically with people with disabilities in the 60+ age group.

Free Entitlement and Barriers to Participation

- The provision of free swimming was an important factor in encouraging more young people to swim and 60+ participants to swim more often.
- For most people cost was not seen as the only or most important barrier to their participation. Other factors such as the location of the pool; the times when free swimming was available; the desire to avoid noisy over-crowded pools; and a dislike of swimming were all significant deterrents to participation.
- Simply providing free sessions is not, therefore, enough to secure participation by the majority of the eligible population.

Target Groups

- The initiative has increased participation among both of the target age groups.
- Most local authorities now provide a year-round entitlement to free swimming for the 60+ age group. But free swimming is not generally being made available to children outside of school holidays.

Marketing and Promotion

- The marketing and promotion of the FSI has been variable and has had limited national impact. Most of those who have participated in free swimming reported that they learned about it by word of mouth or through local marketing by local authorities.

Management Issues

- The FSI was designed by the Assembly Government and implemented by the 22 local authorities in Wales. The policy guidance issued by the Assembly Government was designed to be flexible and this resulted in considerable variations across Wales in the ways in which the initiative has been implemented. Most local authorities have been committed to the initiative. Some have struggled to meet the minimum provision required, but others have exceeded it.
- There have been improvements over the pilot period in the management of free swimming – at both national and local levels. These have included: clearer aims and objectives; improved local data collection; an increased emphasis on structured activity and targeting of specific groups; and improved communication between officers within local authorities.
- There are valuable lessons to be learnt from these improvements – both for any extension of free swimming and for the management and delivery of other national pilot initiatives.

Climbing Higher

- Following publication of the Assembly Government's Climbing Higher strategy, free swimming now needs to be seen as part of a wider portfolio of activities designed to deliver on new physical activity targets and needs to be better integrated with other Assembly Government policies as well as being sensitive to particular localities.

Implications for Future Policy

The evidence from the evaluation highlights a number of potentially important implications for future policy.

Funding

Core funding for free swimming has remained unchanged during the pilot. There is a need to take account of the current financial pressures facing local authority providers and the results of the pilot suggest there are five important issues to consider:

- There is a need to review the total amount of core funding. The amount established for the pilot has remained unchanged, although some additional

bid funding has been made available. The costs of operating pools and leisure centres have increased so it is appropriate to review the overall funding available to local authorities.

- The basis upon which funding is allocated between authorities also needs to be reviewed. The formulae served a useful purpose at the outset but do not provide a sound basis on which to 'roll out' free swimming beyond the piloting phase.
- If free swimming is to be placed on a firm footing, there is a need to provide medium term financial security so that local authorities can plan ahead and identify priorities.
- In future, consideration should be given to linking payments to authorities and their ability to perform against agreed outcomes – both in terms of the quantity of increased participation and the quality of the sessions that are offered by pools.
- There should be stronger incentives for individual leisure centre managers to make a success of free swimming.

Delivery

The delivery of free swimming has been based on annual policy guidance approved jointly by the Assembly Government and local authorities. The evaluation highlighted eight important issues in relation to delivery:

- Ensure greater ownership of free swimming and more engaged leadership at the national level and to make the roles and responsibilities of the Assembly Government and the Sports Council for Wales (SCW) more explicit.
- Enhance local commitment and capacity to implement free swimming effectively including putting in place more robust local management frameworks which are capable of effective planning, target setting, measuring and reporting outcomes.
- Policy makers may wish to review the two target age groups that have been the focus of the pilot.
- Consider extending entitlement for young people outside of school holidays in order to encourage year round physical activity.
- Allow local authorities more discretion to tailor free swimming to local needs and priorities. This will require more pro-active strategies to ensure that 'hard to reach' groups are able to benefit from free swimming.
- Consider increasing the range of activities available free of charge in order to increase physical activity among those not interested in swimming. Some successful local initiatives involved the introduction of new programmes combining swimming with

other activities and/or a focus on wider lifestyle and educational issues such as healthy eating.

- Ensure new developments are complementary to existing initiatives. There are several initiatives currently being developed by local authorities on behalf of the Assembly Government and the SCW. It is important that free swimming is integrated with them and the overall Climbing Higher strategy.
- Sustainable participation requires an emphasis on developing better club links and creating wider partnerships. The links between free swimming, swimming clubs and other sporting and non-sporting community based organisations needs to be planned and developed.

Strategy

There is a need to ensure greater clarity of objectives and better integration with other policies and programmes which are designed to increase physical activity. This means aligning free swimming with relevant Assembly Government strategies, especially Climbing Higher which is intended to be the cornerstone strategy for sport and active recreation in Wales over the next 20 years.

Rather than as a standalone intervention the evaluation of the FSI has demonstrated it should be seen as part of a portfolio of initiatives designed to increase physical activity. Local authorities will need to prepare a local sport and physical activity strategy that includes, but is not focused solely on swimming or other aquatics activities. For some authorities this may result in a continued and possibly expanded focus on swimming, but others may wish to put the emphasis on dry side activities.

It will be important to build stronger links between free swimming and other networks of community based activities and organisations. This implies a need to increase the number and range of activities available (including other water-based activities and also dry side sports), to target the clients more specifically and to build sustainable partnerships.

Chapter One – Introduction

Background to the Free Swimming Initiative

Following the elections in 2002, the Assembly Government committed itself to provide, “free access to local authority swimming pools for children in the school holidays and older people” during term time (Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) 2003). A pilot scheme involving ten local authorities was launched in the Easter holidays in 2003 (although Torfaen was already operating a limited scheme whereby free swimming entitlement was linked to a library card). The scheme was subsequently extended and all 22 local authorities implemented free swimming for children during the summer school holidays in 2003. A report on the summer scheme, prepared by the Sports Council for Wales (SCW) and the Wales Local Government Data Unit, concluded that it had been a success (SCW 2004a). In November 2004, the Assembly Government introduced a second free swimming scheme for older people aged 60 and over, ‘60+ free swimming’. Together these two schemes became known as the Free Swimming Initiative (FSI). Both strands were operated as a national pilot until 2007 and have been delivered through a partnership between the Assembly Government (which has provided the funding and set the overall framework through annual policy guidance notes) and local authorities (which have developed local plans for the implementation of the initiative in their areas).

Minimum Provision

The policy guidance notes established by the Assembly Government in consultation with local authorities set out the minimum provision for the two schemes and are subject to annual approval. Although they have remained broadly consistent over time there have been some adjustments. For example there has been a recent focus on making provision for Welsh speakers, a growing emphasis on structured activities and a shift away from delivering local galas and attending the national gala (referred to elsewhere in this report as the National Aquatics Festival).

The current minimum provision expected from local authorities for the 16 and under scheme during all school holidays is:

- Free swimming (free splash and/or free structured activities) will be provided for a minimum of 50% of all public swimming session times across the authority area.
- A minimum of 1 hour a day per local authority will be dedicated to a free structured activity programme for targeted groups (e.g. ethnic minority communities, swimming lessons through the medium of Welsh, sessions for disadvantaged children, introduction to other aquatic activities). Following customer evaluation of the FSI, all parties associated with the initiative **wish to encourage a greater proportion of structured activity** (emphasis in original).
- At least one of the above sessions should be a dedicated structured session for children with a disability. Authorities are encouraged to provide support and incentives for carers of children with a disability.

The current minimum provision expected from local authorities for the 60+ scheme is:

- **As a minimum**, free swimming for adults aged 60 and over during all public swimming sessions **outside school holidays** (emphasis in original). Local authorities are encouraged to extend the provision to all public sessions throughout the year where this is possible.
- A minimum of 1 hour per day per local authority, and a minimum of 1 hour per week per pool, will be dedicated to a free structured activity session such as swimming lessons, aqua aerobics / aqua chi. These activities should be targeted locally and ensure inclusive provision to, for example, people with a disability, ethnic minority communities, Welsh speakers, and other individuals and groups according to local circumstances, needs and priorities.
- Authorities are encouraged to provide support and incentives for carers of older people and those who facilitate access to the local free swimming programme.

- A key role for local authorities and their dedicated Free Swimming Co-ordinators will be to engage with the public generally and especially with individuals and communities that are most difficult to reach and most in need.

Participating Pools

The number of pools involved with the FSI has changed over time because of pool closures (three permanent and seven temporary), two new pool openings, three pools that underwent complete refurbishment and one open air pool which only operates during the

summer holidays. Typically around 120 pools have been involved at any one time (see Figure 1). The majority are owned and directly managed by the local authorities themselves although there is variation in the arrangements depending on whether the pool is a stand alone facility, part of a leisure centre/complex, or attached to a school/education site. The areas where pools have management arrangements that are outside local authority control are:

- Ceredigion – where there are four pools managed independently from the local authority and each other.

Figure 1: Location of Participating Pools in Wales



- Neath Port Talbot – where pools are managed by a trust.
- Denbighshire – where there are two pools managed by Clwyd Leisure which has been involved at various times in the FSI.

Funding

The total annual funding for the FSI from the Assembly Government is outlined in Table 1. Core funding for the 16 and under scheme was £2.4 million annually and for the 60+ scheme the amount was £1 million annually. There have been additional monies that local authorities could bid for. In 2004-05 there was an additional £856k and in 2006-07 there was an additional £1.5 million. A further £100,000 was used by the Assembly Government to support marketing, publicity and the evaluation.

The funding includes, therefore, a combination of core funding and additional monies. The core funding for the 16 and under scheme is allocated according to a formula based on population size and levels of deprivation. The formula for the 60+ scheme takes account of population size, deprivation and the proportion of elderly people living alone. In 2006 the funding for the 16 and under and the 60+ came together as one grant to provide greater flexibility to local authorities. But the size of the core budget has remained unchanged since the start of the pilot. Additional funding to local authorities has been made available via a bidding process.

Table 1: Total Annual Funding for the FSI

Annual Funding	Amount £m
2003-04	2.5
2004-05	3.9
2005-06	3.5
2006-07	5.1
Total	15

Source: Welsh Assembly Government

The Wider Context

Sport and physical activity has an important role in contributing to the wider social agenda (Coalter 2001) including in particular, improving health. The health benefits associated with a physically active lifestyle are well documented and have been emphasised in a range of policy statements including in particular the Chief Medical Officer's report for England in 1998 and more recently Sir Derek Wanless' report. It is widely accepted that regular physical activity by adults can reduce the risk of premature death and the incidents of some chronic diseases and some types of cancer. For children and young people regular exercise can improve

development and reduces the likelihood of becoming overweight and obese.

But data shows that few people are participating sufficiently often to make a difference to their health. This has led to a renewed emphasis by the Government and other relevant organisations on the benefits of exercise and a range of new programmes and interventions designed to encourage it. In Wales, the launch of Climbing Higher and Climbing Higher – Next Steps (WAG 2005, 2006) established a far reaching and ambitious range of targets for developing sport and active recreation in Wales. There are 16 specific targets designed to contribute to two over-arching aims, namely:

- To raise physical activity among children (five times 60 minutes of physical activity a week); and
- To raise physical activity among adults (five times 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a week).

In 2006, the SCW launched its policy document (SCW, 2005b) as a response to this agenda. It clearly established its support for Climbing Higher and recognised the need to shift towards engaging new client groups and new activities but not at the expense of pursuing their traditional sports focus.

The Evaluation Programme

Following an initial evaluation of the implementation of the 2003 Easter and 2004 summer programmes (SCW 2004a), in November 2004 a team of researchers from Cardiff School of Sport, UWIC was invited to undertake an independent, longer term evaluation of the FSI up to 2007. This had two main objectives:

- To assess the management and implementation of the FSI in real time in order to help guide policy makers in fine tuning the initiative as it developed; and
- To assess the extent to which the initiative led to increased participation in swimming by the two target groups.

Evaluating the potential health gains associated with the FSI was explicitly outside the study's terms of reference.

The evaluation has been overseen by the Evaluation Steering Group chaired by the Research and Evaluation Manager at the SCW which included representatives of the Assembly Government, Local Government Data Unit and the SCW.

In line with the objective of helping to inform the on-going implementation of the initiative, the research team has produced regular interim reports that have

considered a range of management and operational issues including:

- First interim report, January 2005 – which evaluated the management of and participation in free swimming for the 16 and under age group in the October 2004 half term and assessed the overall management of the initiative to date based on a series of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, representing the following organisations: Assembly Government; SCW; Welsh Amateur Swimming Association (WASA); Federation of Disability Sport Wales (FDSW); Chief Officers of Recreation and Leisure (CORL); and Local Authorities.
- Second interim report, October 2005 – which reported the findings of surveys based around the two schemes, interviews with local authority officers, quantitative data on levels of participation and analysis of local authorities' plans for the implementation of the initiative.
- Third interim report, February 2006 – which reported the findings of the National Aquatics Festival, the survey of local authority leisure centre managers, and updated figures on participation rates.
- Fourth interim report, May 2007 – which provided an in-depth case study of the 60+ component of the initiative, and evaluated the free swimming policy for people with disabilities.
- Fifth interim report, October 2007 – which reported on the findings of the 2006-07 centre managers' survey, the 2006 school survey of year 8 and year 10 pupils, the interviews undertaken with local authority officers and the local authority delivery plans.

The evidence for these reports has been gathered by the evaluation team through:

- Co-ordination, management and analysis of data collected by local authorities relating to the take-up of free swimming at all participating pools in Wales.
- Two surveys, undertaken in 2005 with year 8 pupils and in 2006-7 with year 8 and year 10 pupils.
- A survey of users aged 60+ undertaken in 2005.
- Two surveys undertaken (2005 and 2006) of local authority leisure centre and pool managers.
- Initial stakeholder interviews (from December 2004 to January 2005).
- Interviews undertaken with a cross section of officers from six local authorities (from May to July 2005).
- Interviews and focus groups with officers from all 22 local authorities (from November to December 2006).
- Survey of all Disability Sport Officers (from December 2005 to February 2006) and their

involvement with the FSI, plus five follow-up interviews (August 2006).

- Case study research using interviews and focus groups to explore issues concerning non-users of the 60+ scheme (from March to September 2006).
- An analysis of the National Aquatics Festival based on surveys of participants, a questionnaire to local authority team managers and stakeholder interviews (from October to December 2005).
- Case study and good practice analysis from across Wales (April 2007).
- Analysis of the local authority plans for 2004-05, 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-08.
- Investigations of analogous schemes in other parts of the UK (from July to September 2006).

In addition, the evaluation has drawn on secondary data including in particular the longitudinal participation data collected by the Sports Council for Wales biennially.

Scope of this Report

This final report provides an overall assessment of the implementation and management of the FSI and its impacts on participation. The remainder of the report is in four main chapters:

- Chapter 2 analyses the impacts of free swimming;
- Chapter 3 reports on the limitations of the initiative;
- Chapter 4 assesses its management – at national and local level;
- Chapter 5 presents a summary of key findings and discusses their implications for future policy.

Chapter Two – Impacts of Free Swimming

Increased Participation: 16 and Under Age Group

Availability of Free Swimming

The FSI has operated every school holiday period during the year for a total of between 11 and 13 weeks as follows:

Whitsun Half Term Holiday	1 Week
Summer Holiday	6 Weeks
Autumn Half Term	1 Week
Christmas Holiday	2 Weeks
Spring Half Term Holiday	1 Week
Easter Holiday	2 Weeks

The variation in the number of weeks is accounted for by the Christmas period, when many pools are closed temporarily to undertake small scale maintenance.

Participation

Since the introduction of the FSI, there has been an increase in the numbers of summer holiday swims taken by the 16 and under age group.

In 2002 the year before the implementation of the FSI, there were a total of 387,000 swims taken by the 16 and under age group during the summer holidays (SCW 2004a). In 2003 the total number of free swims in the summer holidays was 560,000. There has been a decline over the following two years, but in 2006-07 (the last year for which figures are available) levels of participation nevertheless remained higher than they were in 2002.

The total number of free swims peaked in 2004-05 when there were 830,000 free swims during the year – an average of approximately 75,000 swims per week. In comparison in 2005-06, there were a total of 760,000 holiday swims, an average of approximately 69,000 swims per week. In 2006-07 there was a total of 700,000 swims, an average of 64,000 swims per week (Table 2).

If free and paid swims (junior summer totals) are taken together there has been a significant increase in swimming during summer holidays. In the summer of 2006 there were 400,000 free swims and 165,000 paid swims representing a 46% increase on the total number of swims in 2002.

Equal numbers of girls and boys have participated in the FSI.

Taking the national statistic for the 16 and under population of Wales (606,600 – Office for National Statistics, 2006) and comparing this to the total number of free swims recorded by local authorities, the ratio is approximately 1.4 swims for 2004-05, 1.3 swims for 2005-06 and 1.2 swims for 2006-07 for each member of the population aged 16 and under.

The highest ratio of swims per young person was in Blaenau Gwent and Gwynedd, where there were more than two swims per young person in 2006-07. Amongst local authorities with a low ratio of swims to population were Newport, Swansea, Carmarthenshire and Conwy that recorded between 0.5 and 0.6 swims for each young person.

The decline in the number of free swims between 2004 and 2006-07 is due in part to its declining 'novelty value'. Other free swimming schemes, such as Glasgow's, have experienced a similar decline. Other factors include: difficulties with data collection; the closure of pools (two of which were facilities serving more than just a local market); changes to programming by some local authorities, and a shift from unstructured in favour of structured sessions.

Unstructured and Structured Swims

Data supplied by local authorities show that over 90% of free swimming for this age group has been in the form of unstructured sessions. This is supported by the recent leisure centre managers' survey that indicated 90% of managers provided free splash opportunities.

The evaluation's pupil survey in 2006 found that 61% (n=701) of young people participating reported that they 'splashed around' whilst 35% 'played with

inflatables.' Just over half of the respondents (54%) reported swimming widths or lengths and 11% participated in water sports other than swimming.

However, as noted above, there has been a growing emphasis on developing structured opportunities. They doubled from approximately 24,000 in 2004-05 to almost 50,000 in 2005-06. In 2006-07 there were approximately 71,000. Whilst this shift towards structured sessions will reduce the total number of swims (a concern raised by the pool and leisure centre managers in 2005 and 2006), the expectation is that it increases the likelihood of achieving sustained longer term participation.

CASE STUDY 1

Focus on Structured Activities in Denbighshire

Since the start of the FSI, Denbighshire has focused on providing structured activity for the 16 and under age group rather than 'free splash'. A part time swimming development officer was employed prior to the launch of the FSI and the post was subsequently turned into a full time appointment. The importance of having a development officer in place to co-ordinate a structured programme was viewed as essential.

Free structured activities are offered both during the holidays and school term time, with 16 sessions offered each week across the authority during school term time (snorkelling, mini water polo, parent and toddler sessions, swimming club sessions, disability swimming sessions). The majority of sessions are booked to capacity. The additional term time opportunities are seen as a means of developing free swimming and making it sustainable.

During each year of the scheme between 2004-05 and 2006-07, the local authority has experienced an increase in both structured swims and free splash, amounting to a total increase of 69%.

The Age of Children Participating

There is variation in terms of age in the take-up of free swimming for young people. The FSI has made the greatest impact with 11-14 year olds (i.e. years 6 to 9), attracting 68% to swim in the previous holiday period (Figure 2). This compares to only 43% reporting participation among the 7-10 year olds and 50% of those aged 15-16 (SCW 2004b, 2006). The evaluation's survey of year 8 and year 10 pupils corroborates this pattern (Fifth Interim Report). It showed 70% of year 8 and 47% of year 10 pupils had participated in the FSI in the past year. It is noteworthy that children aged 11 to 14 are more independent, mobile and able to visit the leisure centre without necessarily having to rely on parents either for transport or for being present while they swim. Unlike older children, many in this age group also still see swimming as a 'fun activity'.

Although age was an optional category for data returns from local authorities, just over half did provide data and these showed that during 2004-05 and 2005-06 plus 2006-07, just under half of all participants were aged between 8 and 11 whilst a further third were aged between 12 and 16. Children aged 7 years and under accounted for the lowest proportion of swimmers. This can be explained in part by the requirement for under 4's to have an equal ratio of one adult to one child. In addition accompanying adults have to pay (unless it is part of a specific authority initiative) and there is a perception among adults that free swimming sessions were over-crowded, noisy and dominated by older children. So some parents of younger children prefer to avoid free sessions.

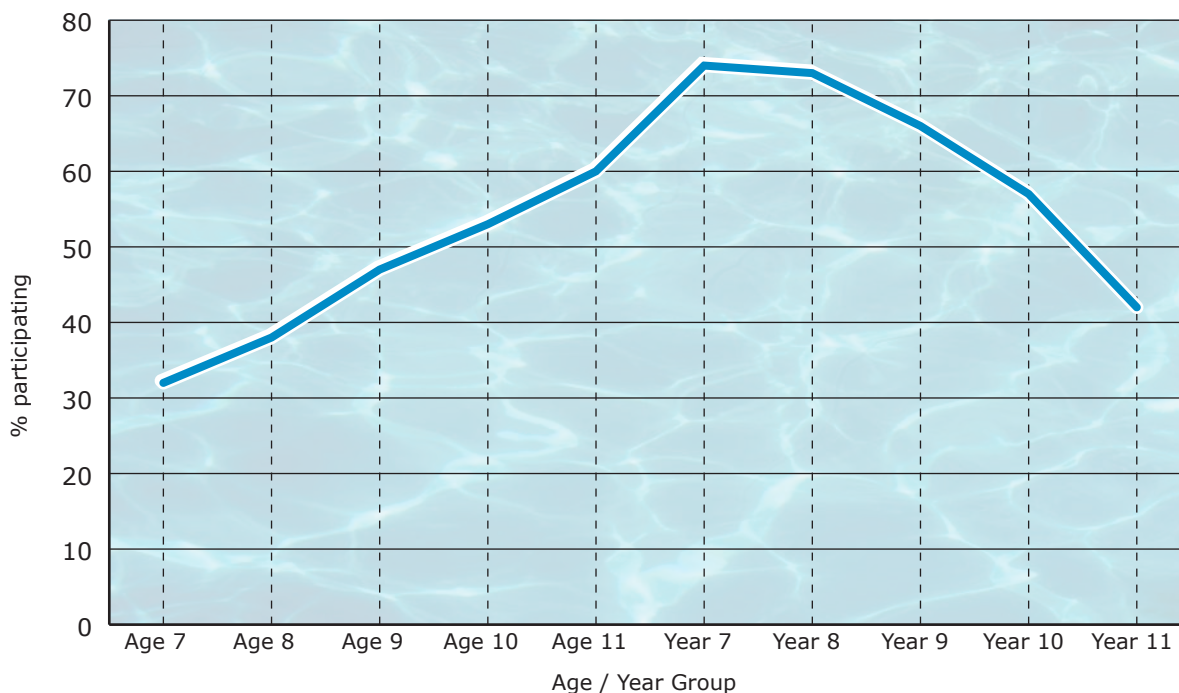
Some local authorities have pro-actively targeted younger swimmers and teenagers. Swansea has developed a 'splash extra' session when part of the pool is cordoned off enabling parents to exceed the 1:1 ratio because additional lifeguard support is provided. Rhondda Cynon Taff (RCT) focused on family swimming by linking free swimming to other activities such as free five-a-side, squash etc. More details are given in Case Study 2.

Table 2: Total Number of Free Swims by Holiday Period and Year – Unstructured and Structured Swims Combined (16 and Under)

	2003	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07
Easter	-	130,000	130,000	120,000
May Half-term	-	55,000	65,000	50,000
Summer	560,000	500,000	425,000	400,000
October Half-term	-	60,000	60,000	50,000
Christmas	-	15,000	10,000	17,000
February Half-term	-	70,000	70,000	65,000
Total	560,000	830,000	760,000	700,000

Source: Local Authority Data Returns

Figure 2: Age of Children Participating in Free Swimming



Sources: SCW 2004b, 2006

CASE STUDY 2

Rhondda Cynon Taff – Family Swimming

Following the initial launch of free swimming for the 16 and under age group, the novelty of free splash dropped away and it was apparent that families were often reluctant to attend busy public swimming sessions. In an attempt to increase participation and encourage family group participation, RCT introduced multi activity family sessions in the Easter holidays of 2006. The 'High 5' scheme allows free family access (for up to 2 adults and 4 children) to the following activities during all school holidays:

- Open access swimming 11am to 4.30pm weekdays
- Structured swimming classes
- Open access sports facilities between 9am and 5pm weekdays
- Sports classes

The scheme also allows groups from the voluntary sector or community organisations to access free of charge, including groups from RCT's Children's Services.

Development officers whom we interviewed drew attention to a range of challenges involved in attracting teenagers. One explained:

"Canoeing and things like that do work with 13 year olds because it interests them. Swimming on its own – no. When I have done octopush, aqua hockey and canoeing that works well ... Girls are not interested in swimming, so it is more dance orientated activities that will possibly work. It is trying to think outside the box."

At Lampeter pool (a voluntary managed pool in Ceredigion) the manager invested in equipment and introduced pool disco nights. Details of this are outlined in Case Study 3.

CASE STUDY 3

Teen Discos at Lampeter

In an attempt to attract young people to the centre and make use of free swimming sessions for teenagers, Lampeter Pool in Ceredigion introduced pool discos. The manager used his small capital fund to invest in a sound system, spot lights and floating lights and ran twice weekly disco sessions during the summer evenings of 2005 and 2006.

There was a positive response and it was especially popular with teenage boys. The manager felt although there were issues with the light summer evenings it proved particularly good during the Autumn, winter and spring periods when the days are shorter. He commented,

"It has brought the teenagers in. They don't want to come to climb over inflatables, they don't want to come to swimming lessons, they don't want to do canoeing, snorkelling; they don't want those activities that we put on. They wanted something else and, with this, you have dim lighting, music ... it's a social occasion."

As an independent pool, Lampeter has struggled to attract sufficient funding to maintain some other elements of its programme, but other local authorities have taken up the idea and have since been awarded funding for light and sound equipment.

activities (e.g. sailing, rowing, wind surfing, canoeing) identified in the proposed curriculum for Key Stages 2-4.

Table 3 shows that the FSI has provided additional swimming opportunities to 11-16 year olds with 63% swimming through the FSI, whereas only 40% are involved in swimming as part of the school curriculum. The pattern reverses for the 7-11 year olds when two thirds go swimming as part of their school curriculum, but just less than 50% participate in the FSI (SCW 2004b, 2006).

Whilst swimming is a Key Stage 2 curriculum requirement, many children have insufficient opportunity to learn to swim while at primary school. Many local authorities have used the FSI as a catalyst to address this issue and have provided swimming lessons either fully subsidised or partially subsidised. Bridgend and Monmouth for example have targeted school children who are unable to swim and their particular initiatives are highlighted in Case Study 4.

CASE STUDY 4

School Swimming – Monmouth and Bridgend

In liaison with the School and Student Access Unit, Monmouthshire sent a free swimming lesson application to all children and young people who were in receipt of free school meals or were in the care of Social Services. Take-up and day to day attendance were monitored closely and eligible children are identified on an annual basis.

Bridgend followed Monmouthshire's approach and the swimming development officer forwarded 3000 letters to parents of children in receipt of free school meals, offering one week's free swimming lessons in the summer holidays and advertising the concessionary rate for regular swimming lessons. In addition, Bridgend created a partnership bringing PESS (PE and School Sport programme) and free swimming together by offering free lessons at the end of the summer term to primary school aged children who could not swim one length and lived in the Ogmor Vale area. The manager of the local pool, Llangeinor identified an increase in participation during the summer period following the intensive course.

Physical Literacy and Swimming

Swimming is recognised as a life skill and forms an important part of a young person's physical literacy (Department for Education and Skills and Department for Culture, Media and Sport 2003). In Wales, proposed changes to the physical education curriculum to take effect in 2008 (WAG 2007) emphasised the importance of swimming in skill development and as relevant to all four areas of experience – health, fitness and well being; creative activities; adventurous activities and competitive activities. It is then seen both a relevant activity in its own right and as a gateway to a range of other swimming related activities (e.g. synchronised swimming, diving) and to a range of adventurous

Table 3: Proportion of Children Involved in Different Kinds of Swimming

Age	Curricular %	Extra Curricular %	Regular Extra Curricular %	Club %	Regular Club %	FSI %
7-11 (2006)	62	31	23	41	40	48
11-16 (2004)	40	12	7	22	15	63

Sources: SCW 2004b, 2006

Note – 'Regular' is defined as at least ten times per year

Free Swimming as a Catalyst for Development

The FSI has made an impact in terms of increasing the number of visits to local pools and leisure centres. The SCW's own participation surveys have shown that more than half of 7-16 year olds visit their local leisure centre at least once a week and this suggests that unlike older people, the venue itself does not represent a barrier to participation (SCW 2004b, 2006). This suggests also there is the potential to develop swimming and other physical activities based at these venues and seek to develop new clubs and extend the membership of existing clubs. The importance of socialising was demonstrated by our 2006 young people's survey that found that 89% of respondents travelled to a pool with friends (Fifth Interim Report).

The FSI has been the catalyst to other sport and physical activity opportunities including water polo, snorkelling, canoeing, life-guarding and synchronised swimming. As one sports development officer who was interviewed reported, the FSI was essential to these developments:

"It is not just swimming for me. It is aquatics. My structured sessions have increased membership of the canoeing club, we have a water polo club which we never used to have, we have a synchronised club being set up, which would have never happened if it hadn't been for free swimming."

A similar development has been the growth of water polo in Wales among young people which has been as a direct consequence of the FSI. Such has been its growth that in South Wales a grant was recently awarded to support a league involving 10 local authorities. Further good practice is illustrated in Case Study 5 where Carmarthen and Newport have placed an emphasis on developing canoeing and synchronised swimming clubs respectively.

In summary, the longer term impact of more structured developmental approaches could be far more significant over time in terms of changing behaviour and offering long term sustainable physical activity opportunities than unstructured 'splash' sessions and the effectiveness of the FSI should not be judged, therefore, simply in terms of the numbers which have participated. The type and quality of the experience they have is also important.

CASE STUDY 5

Club Development: Carmarthenshire and Newport

A partnership between Carmarthenshire Leisure Department and the Llandysul Canoeing Centre has seen the introduction of free canoeing taster sessions during the school holidays at five pools across the authority. The short term aim is to promote the sport and provide sufficient opportunities to enable young people to participate in a safe, indoor environment. In the longer term it is hoped that canoeing can be established at club level in each pool, with talented individuals being fed into the Llandysul outdoor centre. In addition, the creation of a canoe polo league will maintain interest and assist the local authority in reaching its Climbing Higher targets.

A target of 200 new club members per year across the five pools has been established. During all school holiday periods, free sessions will be held by qualified instructors to attract new members. But it has proved difficult to secure pool time and some managers have been reluctant to store equipment.

Newport recognised the increasing drop out rate for teenage females as an issue. The development officer addressed this by introducing synchronised swimming sessions, initially as a pilot, during the summer holidays in 2005.

Following the popularity of the activity, regular sessions were introduced at the South East Wales Regional Pool in January 2006 and a Welsh Amateur Swimming Association affiliated club was established. The club now has 51 female members, all aged between 5 and 13, a team of qualified coaches, officials and volunteers, and an effective development pathway in place. The club hosted the first Welsh synchronised swimming competition in June 2007 with over 60 participants.

The FSI has provided the ideal opportunity to introduce and develop this activity through taster sessions, the purchase of specialist equipment and increased promotion and awareness.

Newport has also established a water polo club as a result of successful free holiday sessions and is now setting up a weekly disability session following on from the success it had in the summer.

Free Swimming and 'Hard to Reach Groups'

The free swimming policy guidance requires local authorities to make provision for children with disabilities and other 'hard to reach groups' such as Ethnic Minority Communities (EMC) and those living within Communities First areas. Local authorities were not required to supply data relating to take-up by specific groups of children and young people, and it is difficult, therefore, to evaluate quantitatively the impact of the FSI on 'hard to reach groups.' Other data collected as part of the evaluation, however, do provide some interesting insights into this issue.

The disability review and the centre managers' surveys suggest that the impact of the FSI on those aged 16 and under who have disabilities has been variable. Although most stated they provided free swimming opportunities in line with the policy guidance (local authority delivery plans), fewer than half of the respondents to the leisure centre managers' survey in 2006 reported that proactive steps had been taken to attract children with disabilities. Where initiatives have taken place these included: almost half establishing dedicated sessions for children and young people with a disability; one fifth liaising with Disability Sport Development Officers; and almost one fifth offering free pool time to existing clubs and groups.

Examples were outlined in the disability review undertaken as part of the Fourth Interim Report and the Vale of Glamorgan's approach together with Gwynedd's are outlined in Case Study 6.

CASE STUDY 6

Disability Sessions

In 2006 the Vale of Glamorgan established sessions to promote swimming tuition to children with disabilities. After consulting the Federation of Disability Sport Wales, the disability sport officer undertook a marketing campaign with posters, banners and application forms to promote free swimming. Although a few of the participants were attending an existing session, the majority were new participants and had been introduced to the sport as a consequence of the FSI. Over the six week period, all children were offered instruction and every child improved with some going on to join the local club for children and adults with disabilities.

In Gwynedd dedicated free swimming sessions for children with a disability are held at all 7 pools. Sessions vary between some having light instruction and others being promoted as open sessions. Although the sessions remain in place the number of participants attending sessions is reported to be disappointing.

There is evidence that the FSI has attracted children and young people from socially deprived areas to participate in swimming. Just over half of the respondents in the 2006-07 centre managers' survey (54%, n =77) believed that the scheme was effective in attracting children from Communities First areas. In Flintshire, for example, all Communities First residents have priority booking to take advantage of the activity programmes at their pools.

According to the 2006 managers' survey, eleven local authorities have targeted specifically free swimming provision for children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. There are many examples of good practice and Case Study 7 illustrates RCT's outreach initiative. Although chief officers interviewed in 2006 commented on the challenges and difficulties of engaging with children from some of the Communities First areas, there was wide recognition that 'cost' can and does make a difference to these areas, even to the extent that there are children who cannot participate because they do not have swimming costumes and/or swimming trunks.

CASE STUDY 7

Communities First and Free Swimming in RCT

In liaison with Communities First and Health Promotion, the RCT leisure department launched a pilot scheme offering young people the opportunity to take part in a healthy eating scheme. Following free structured swimming and dry side activity sessions, participants are encouraged to make their own healthy lunches at the authority's leisure centres, as well as receiving information on nutrition. The scheme proved successful in Whitsun 2006 and was rolled out to five Communities First areas during summer 2006. The scheme aims to develop close links with local organisations and relies heavily upon volunteer assistance.

In contrast, only two local authorities, Cardiff and Swansea, have emphasised provision for children from EMC backgrounds (see Case Study 8). It should be noted that whilst ethnicity may not be an issue of high priority for some pools, all managers should be able to demonstrate this through a needs assessment (including latent demand) of their catchment area.

CASE STUDY 8

EMC Project in Cardiff

In liaison with Women in Action and other community groups, the manager of Maindy Pool established a number of women only sessions. These now operate at four pools in Cardiff and attract large numbers of female participants. This development formed part of an EMC three year development plan to promote swimming to women from EMC backgrounds. The scheme identified a group of women who would train as lifeguards (7 of whom became fully qualified and are now employed by Cardiff Council), employed an EMC outreach worker and installed blinds around the pool in Maindy.

The women only sessions are extremely popular, especially amongst those from EMC groups and now attract up to fifty individuals for each of the 8 sessions running each week. Links have been made to dry side activities and a weekly women's only morning is held at Maindy Pool that allows women to use the fitness gym and dance studio, in addition to the swimming pool. Women aged 60+ are entitled to free entry to all women only swimming sessions.

The manager of Maindy Pool believes that the impact of the scheme has been significant and that there is a successful balance to be achieved from effective community outreach work often resulting in increased financial revenue for the facility.

Following the success of these women only sessions, Cardiff Council has now employed a male EMC outreach worker. A further development is likely to be the development of Bollywood dance sessions across the city, providing additional physical activity opportunities.

Aquatics Festivals (National and Local)

The evaluation team studied the impact of the National Aquatics Festival that operated for three years between 2003 and 2005. The evidence indicated some impact in terms of providing publicity for the FSI and opportunities for children and parents to visit the National Pool in Swansea. There were also opportunities for children with disabilities to swim and compete alongside able bodied children. Support for the Festival was withdrawn, however, because the evaluation found that the majority of swimmers had not been identified through the FSI and that the effort required on the part of local authorities (some of which did not attend even though they received funding) and the WASA was disproportionate to the outcomes (Third Interim Report).

Some authorities have, however, developed local festivals. In 2006 Newport mounted its own Aquatics Festival (See Case Study 9) that encouraged swimmers who had participated in the FSI and this has been extended for 2007 to two festivals – one each in North and South Wales.

CASE STUDY 9

Community Aquatics Festival Newport, 2006 and 2007

Aware that a large proportion of children from deprived areas are weak or non-swimmers, Newport organised an aquatics festival which incorporated water-based events which did not require participants to be strong swimmers.

All team members had participated in regular free swimming sessions during the summer holidays. Members of the pools' teams were children who had attended free swimming structured sessions throughout the summer (underwater hockey, waterpolo, aqua aerobics and synchronised swimming) whilst the community teams were organised from those who registered an interest and attended weekly sessions at the Regional Pool in preparation for the event.

The Festival included four events: a mini waterpolo tournament; an obstacle challenge in shallow water; team relays; and a treasure hunt finale. The Festival involved 16 teams (a total of 200 children) four pool teams (Newport Centre, the Regional Pool, Maindy and Lliswerry), and 12 community teams which were organised by the community sports development officers. The Festival was sponsored by Uskmouth Power, providing goodie bags and refreshments and it was supported by national swimming celebrity, David Davies.

From this local festival the winning teams represent Newport and go through to the South Wales aquatics festival held between other local authorities during October half term.

Increased Participation: 60+ Age Group

Availability of Free Swimming

The policy guidance for free swimming for the 60+ population stated that it must be available outside all school holidays. In practice, however, 20 out of 22 local authorities in Wales now provide free swimming to people aged 60+ all year. One of the main challenges has been the actual number of hours available during the day given the different demands and issues associated with pool programming. For many pools, especially at the start of the FSI, times were restricted to early morning swims and evening swims with relatively few pools offering times during the day.

The centre managers' surveys (2005 and 2006) revealed that there had been some progress. The 2006 survey showed that 40% (n=74) of pools offered an average of nine hours of free swimming daily compared to only 27% offering the same amount of time in 2005. In terms of availability during the day, progress has been made here too. Table 4 shows that 79% and 91% (n=74) of managers indicated there were free swimming opportunities during the mornings (9.00am-12noon) and in the afternoons (2.00pm-6.00pm) respectively.

Although this issue requires further attention (see Chapter 3), in some authorities there has been a concerted effort to introduce programming changes thereby providing more available times for adult swimming sessions.

Participation Patterns

Between November 2004 and July 2007 the 60+ participated in just over one and a half million swims under the FSI with a split between men and women of 51% and 49% respectively. At the all Wales level, there is a pattern of increasing participation over time. In November 2004 the number of swims was 42,000. The peak periods for 60+ participating were in September 2006, October 2006 and January 2007 when 58,000 swims occurred. Overall the figures suggest a gradual

and sustained growth in the level of 60+ free swimming as demonstrated by Figure 3.

82% of managers reported (2006 survey) that the scheme was attracting newcomers and 92% thought it had led to an increase in frequency of swimming amongst existing users. The user survey undertaken during June 2005 emphasised that the majority of participants were existing swimmers who were increasing their physical activity levels. It showed that 79% were existing swimmers and 21% had not swum regularly prior to the FSI.

In terms of the number of swims in relation to the local population (all residents aged 60+) in 2006-07, the highest ratio of swims per person aged 60+ existed in Bridgend (2.1 swims), Newport (1.7 swims), Merthyr (1.1 swims) and Cardiff (1.1). The lowest number of swims compared to population was found in Carmarthenshire (0.4), Swansea (0.5), Ceredigion (0.5) and Wrexham (0.7).

Unstructured and Structured Swims

The vast majority (92%) of swims undertaken by this age group were unstructured i.e. the swimmer established their own exercise pattern without assistance. As with the 16 and under scheme, however, local authority data returns show an increase, over time, in the number of structured free swims.

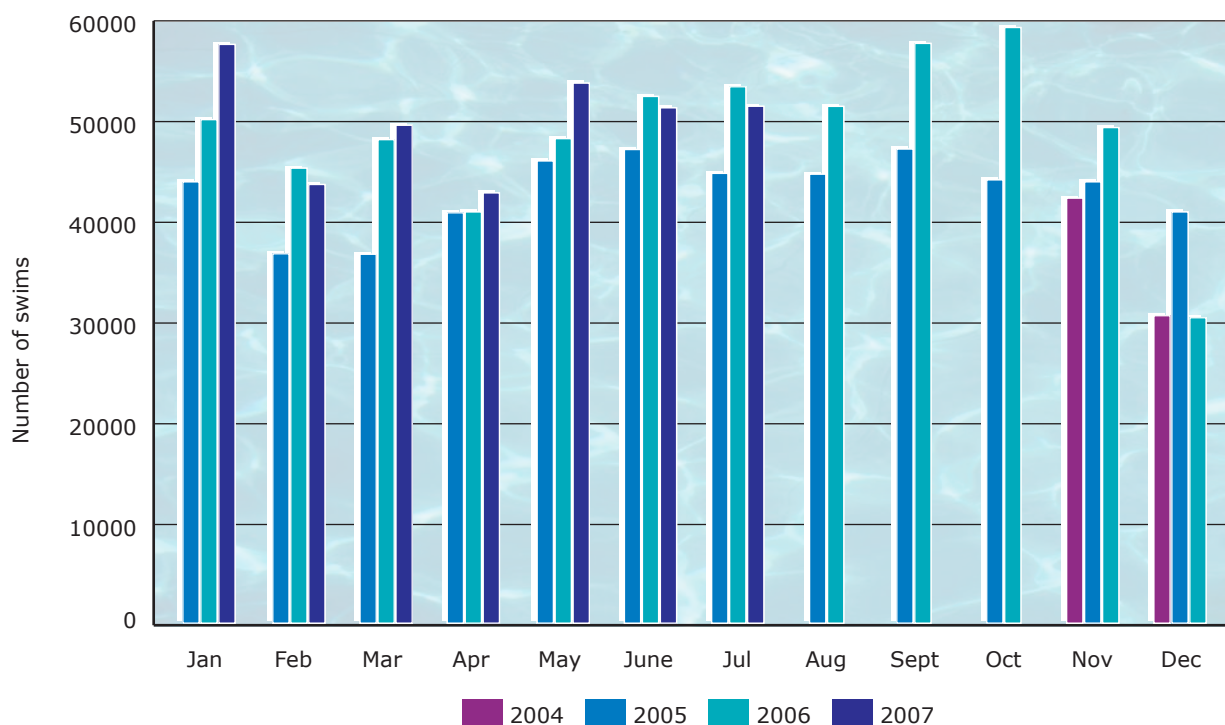
The centre managers' survey provided data about the activities offered to the 60+ age group in 2005 and 2006 (see Table 5). The results showed there had been an increase in the number of adult only sessions and swimming lessons (fully and partially subsidised). The table also revealed the decrease in the number of dedicated 60+ sessions.

Table 4: Availability of Free Swimming in 2006 for 60+

Time Periods	Average Number of Hours Available Per Day				
	None %	0.1-1 hour %	1.1-2 hours %	2.1-3 hours %	Over 3 hours %
6.00-9.00am	20	38	30	12	-
9.00-12 noon	33	23	17	27	-
12.00-2.00pm	11	32	57	-	-
2.00-6.00pm	9	16	23	25	27
6pm onwards	8	27	46	11	8

Source: Centre Managers' Survey, 2006

Figure 3: 60+ Free Swimming Participation – Unstructured and Structured Swims Combined



Source: Local Authority Data Returns

Table 5: Activities Offered as Part of the 60+ Scheme

Activity	2005 % (n=85)	2006 % (n=80)
Adult only sessions	75	89
Aqua fit	69	71
Free swimming lessons	58	65
Dedicated 60+ sessions	46	36
Dedicated 50+ sessions	38	36
Fitswim Wales	32	34
Aqua gym	11	13
Other	7	10
Partially subsidised swimming lessons	-	7

Sources: Centre Managers' Surveys, 2005, 2006
 Note – Respondents were able to select more than 1 multiple choice answer, therefore the sum of percentages will not equal 100

Interviews with development officers undertaken in 2006 revealed that where local authorities had specifically marketed new structured sessions (such as aqua aerobics), greater numbers of new participants had been recruited. Aqua fit is viewed extremely positively and is seen as one of the most positive impacts of the FSI. 91% of leisure managers believed that it was effective and two thirds believed the introduction of activities such as aqua fit and aqua gym had been attractive to new customers. They reported that classes were generally full, and demand was particularly high amongst females and the 60+ age group. Some interviewees also reported that 'non swimming types' attended aqua fit and aqua gym sessions (See Case Study 10).

CASE STUDY 10

Aqua Gym at Bridgend Recreation Centre

Utilising FSI bid funding, the installation of the aqua gym in 2005 in Bridgend Recreation Centre has proved to be extremely popular amongst the 60+ age group. The number of individuals accessing 60+ free swimming activities at the centre has increased by over 100% (from approximately 290 users in April 2005 to approximately 590 users in March 2007).

Evidence from those delivering free swimming in Bridgend suggests that the aqua gym has been successful in attracting new users and previously sedentary individuals to the centre. Take-up is particularly high among those involved in the local GP referral scheme. Aqua gym sessions are reported to be amongst the busiest pool sessions at the centre.

Swimming as a Social Activity

There is also strong evidence of the value of linking free swimming to other social activities. A number of local authorities have introduced a social element as a way of overcoming the perception that swimming is a rather solitary activity. Cardiff has addressed this issue by providing refreshments and encouraging participants to meet up and socialise following their aqua fit session (See Case Study 11).

CASE STUDY 11

60+ Swim and Social in Cardiff

Eastern Leisure Centre has established a 'post swim' club so that following their physical activity there are opportunities to mix and socialise. Aqua fit sessions have proved to be particularly popular amongst individuals aged 60+ and they now operate most weekday mornings, followed by a social gathering which offers refreshments. The FSI has acted as a catalyst to encourage many previous non swimmers to participate. Eastern Leisure Centre now reports 30-40 participants in each Aqua fit session and an increase of over 2000 swims between April 2006 and March 2007.

In addition to the regular programming, mini events have been held including a 'swim the channel' and an 'aerobathon' and usually these events are followed by a 'get together.' Working closely with the centre manager, the sports development officer views the social element as equally important to the physical activity undertaken.

In Merthyr the local authority responded to calls from the local community and provided transport to and from the pool and such has been its success, they have formed themselves into the 'Gurnos Splash Society' (further details are provided in Case Study 14).

Community Outreach Work

The 2006 managers' survey showed that three quarters had undertaken outreach work or liaison with partner organisations and this kind of activity has increased since earlier surveys undertaken in 2005 and 2003. Networking with other agencies and other departments within the local authority has been crucial to gaining a commitment to participate. One sports development officer who was interviewed, described the positive impact achieved by developing a more community oriented approach:

"Our outreach workers make an appointment to go visit old people's homes and that has worked really well. What we are finding is that we are getting a lot of people 70 and 80 coming now, which we never had before. Because they know they are going to have lessons and somebody will be there to help them down the steps and different things which they found to be barriers."

In Torfaen as part of promoting and raising awareness of the newly refurbished leisure centre (re-named a healthy living centre) an event was organised to attract older citizens living in the community. Further details are given in Case Study 12 which demonstrates the potential success from working with a targeted approach.

CASE STUDY 12

Senior Citizens' Tea Dance and Roadshow, Torfaen

In February 2007 older people living in sheltered accommodation across Torfaen were invited to a tea dance at Pontypool Healthy Living Centre, with the aim of improving accessibility to the centre. Transport, refreshments and dancing instruction was provided free of charge and organisers used the opportunity to give a tour of the new centre and make individuals aware of the facilities and activities available to them, in particular free swimming. Approximately eighty individuals, aged between 55 and 90 attended and through questionnaires, reported that they had thoroughly enjoyed the event.

Approximately half of those attending the event reported that transport was a problem and would otherwise have prevented them visiting the centre. If transport was provided respondents indicated a willingness to come again and to try new activities and said that they would be interested in participating in swimming, aqua aerobics and low impact exercise.

Since then, an aqua fit group has been established. Following its success, a 'keep warm this winter' event is planned for autumn 2007, followed by further roadshows.

Chapter Three – Limitations of Free Swimming

Introduction

As shown in Chapter 2, there is strong evidence that the FSI has increased participation. Over half of Welsh children aged between 10 and 14 have participated in free swimming sessions and it has proven especially popular among 11 to 13 year olds, with over two thirds in this age group attending sessions. Nonetheless, a significant proportion of children and a majority of the 60 + age group have not taken advantage of the FSI. This Chapter explores the reasons for this and the implications for marketing and promotion of the initiative.

Reasons for Non-Participation

Non-Participation by Children and Young People

The 2006 survey of year 8 and year 10 pupils found that 42% of respondents had not participated in the FSI during the previous year. Non-participation was higher among the year 10 pupils (53%) than year 8 pupils (30%). The principal reasons reported by both groups for non-participation were a lack of awareness (42%), lack of interest in swimming (20%) and nobody to go with (18%).

Data from the SCW survey of 7-11 year olds revealed a similar pattern (SCW 2006). It found that 53% of interviewees had not participated and, as with our survey, the main reason they cited for non-participation was that they were unaware of the FSI (Table 6). Almost a fifth said that they had not gone because there was no-one to accompany them. Taken together these findings highlight the importance of raising awareness of free swimming among children and the adults (parents, guardians and older siblings) who younger children rely on to take to and supervise them at the pool.

Table 6: Non-Participation in Free Swimming by 7-11 Year Olds (Easter 2006)

Reason given	%
I did not know about it	56
I had nobody to go with	19
I don't enjoy visiting the pool	5
I can't swim	9
Not enough time/too busy	4
Parents too busy/nobody to take me	1
On holiday/elsewhere	3
Too far away/can't get there	1
Did not want to	1

Source: SCW 2006

Note – Respondents were able to select more than 1 multiple choice answer

Non-Participation by People Aged 60+

As described in Chapter 2, levels of participation among the 60+ population have been much lower than among children, but they have increased gradually over time. The 60+ user survey, undertaken in 2005, revealed that 21% of participants had taken up swimming as a result of the initiative.

SCW data shows that the level of participation in swimming generally (not just free swimming) among those over the age of 15 stands at 12%, whereas for those aged 60+ the figure is half this and the proportion progressively drops with age (SCW 2005a). Importantly, the data also revealed that the level of latent demand for swimming among people aged 60+ is low (8%). The reasons respondents gave for non-participation are different to those cited by children (Table 7).

Table 7: Reasons Cited by Adults Aged 60+ (Participants and Non-Participants) Who Expressed an Interest in Swimming or Swimming More Often

Reason given	% (n=474)
Not fit enough	23
Don't have enough time	20
Lack of facilities/clubs in area	17
Haven't got round to it yet	12
Family commitments	10
Too far/difficult to travel to facilities/club	4
Too old	4
Not confident enough	3
Costs too much	3
Too much effort/can't be bothered	2
Clubs don't cater to my level	1
Too busy at work	1
Would rather do other things	1
Not good at sport	0

Evidence from an evaluation case study of the operation of the 60+ scheme in Blaenau Gwent showed that the main reasons for a lack of participation in free swimming were: a lack of interest in swimming; a lack of skill (due to poor health, disability, inability to swim); a lack of awareness of the scheme; and a lack of transport (see Case Study 13).

CASE STUDY 13

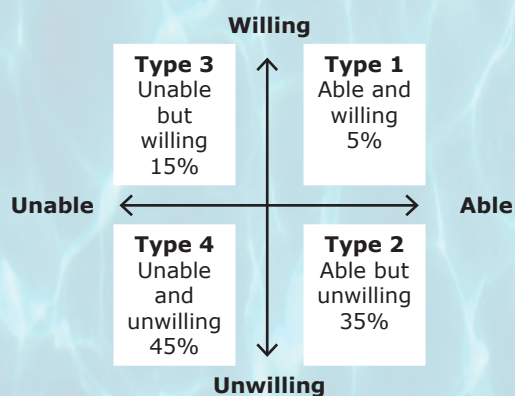
Problems with Engaging the 60+, Blaenau Gwent

Case study research undertaken in Blaenau Gwent (Fourth Interim Report) highlighted the problems involved with engaging older people. The older people participating in the research revealed that the main barriers to participation in 60+ free swimming were a lack of awareness of the FSI (three quarters of non-user respondents were not aware of it), an inability to swim (55% could not do so) and a lack of interest in swimming as an activity.

Transport and the location of the sports centre were also regarded as problematic for many older people who may consider participating in sport and physical activity. Although none of the non-user respondents had visited the new, award winning leisure centre in Abertillery, all of them reported that they regularly engaged in social and active leisure activities (although several were limited by their health).

In summary, the research conducted revealed that most people aged 60+ were divided between on the one hand, 'unable and unwilling (45%)' and on the other hand 'able but unwilling (35%)' to participate in free swimming (illustrated below). There are many barriers and personal reservations, other than cost, that affect participation. The findings challenge whether large numbers of new swimmers aged 60+ could be attracted to swimming. Also, providers need to challenge their approach, if new participants are attracted to take advantage of their free entitlement.

Older people and Free Swimming – a behaviour typology



Adapted from Adams & West, 2006

Free Entitlement to Swim

The FSI was designed as a pilot to test out whether providing a free entitlement encouraged people to undertake more physical exercise. Many of the local authority officers whom we interviewed (especially chief officers) were sceptical of the value of universal free entitlement. They believed that particularly among the 60+ age group free entitlement had increased the frequency of swimming by existing participants rather than attracting new users. As one chief officer whom we interviewed put it:

"The only area where the 60+ has really worked is in aqua aerobics. It is a session like that ... otherwise they are the same swimmers. I don't think we have hardly attracted any new swimmers. We charged £1.10 a swim and if you speak to most people, it wasn't the barrier."

The SCW data also suggests most people do not see the cost of swimming as a barrier (Table 7). Nevertheless, centre managers saw the increased frequency of swimming among this age group as being an achievement. Just under two thirds reported that it was the most successful aspect of the 60+ scheme.

Cost was recognised as a more important issue for the 16 and under scheme (especially some of the hard to reach groups including adults and families). The 2006 survey of year 8 and year 10 pupils showed that three quarters responded positively to the concept of 'free' activity and that it had encouraged them to participate more often. Year 10 pupils were more sensitive to this issue and 80% said that they would swim less often (or give it up altogether) if they had to pay. But cost was clearly not the only barrier, particularly for those from families on lower incomes many of whom had not had sufficient opportunity to learn to swim. As one sports development officer told us:

"For a lot of children the only chance they can learn to swim in my authority is through the school because the parents can't afford it and my authority has a lot of deprived areas. That would be a maximum of two weeks in a year and that is no good. So, therefore they can't swim, they can't access free swimming, they can't do my structured sessions, families don't take them because they are from deprived areas and don't do this..."

But, as noted above, there is evidence that some adults choose to avoid free swimming sessions, preferring to pay for their children to swim in order to avoid what they regard as the noisier, busier periods when it is offered free universally to all children aged 16 and under.

Accessibility of the Pools

Evidence from the young people's surveys (2005 and 2006) and the 60+ survey (2005) revealed the importance of proximity to a pool as a factor which influenced participation. The young people's survey demonstrated a split between those who walked to the pool and those who visited the pool by using a car. Some officers emphasised this point during interviews, suggesting the rural population especially experienced difficulties in accessing pools.

A few authorities have provided transport, but this has been on an ad hoc basis and has met with mixed results. One local authority in North Wales (Gwynedd) initially provided free buses for children during the summer holidays, but the take-up was so low, it was discontinued. In contrast there are some good examples in other authorities where transport has been identified as a barrier by local communities wishing to access the 60+ scheme – see Case Study 14. By addressing this issue, a new clientele has been attracted to take advantage of free swimming. However, less than one in four respondents to the managers' survey in 2006 thought the provision of free transport would assist the FSI.

CASE STUDY 14

The Gurnos Splash Society, Merthyr Tydfil

Following the closure of a community pool in Merthyr in 2005, a partnership led by the facility manager and involving the 3G Development Trust, the Neighbourhood Learning Scheme and Merthyr Tydfil Council sought an alternative way in which older people could access free swimming. Utilising FSI funding, free transport was provided for all senior citizens living in the Gurnos Estate to and from Aberfan & Merthyr Vale Community Centre.

The group originally only used the pool during public swimming time, but in order to stimulate interest, it has since been extended to include an Aqua fit session prior to the public swim, followed by refreshments in the café. Between 25 and 40 individuals regularly attend each session.

The group have recently become fully constituted as the Gurnos Splash Society and with assistance from community funding sources, now self-funds the transport.

A further accessibility issue, especially relevant to the 60+ scheme, has been the availability of the pool. Availability is often limited because pools are used for school swimming on weekdays during term-time. As a result, free swimming is restricted to early mornings,

lunchtimes and evenings. Although, as noted above, there has been some progress in addressing this issue, it remains a challenge for many pools, especially those tied to educational agreements and/or school sites. This has resulted in a perception among the 60+ population that opportunities to participate are limited and restricted to unsociable times, given their age and lifestyle. As one chief officer explained to us:

"The problem I think we have with real growth on the 60+ side is access during the school day. Three of our pools are on dual use sites and getting access during the school day is challenging. The school governors basically see the school and leisure centre and everything else as theirs during that period and it is really hard to negotiate access ... We think if we could get some morning sessions that would make a difference. We have actually tried to impress upon the schools that this is the case but we are meeting resistance."

The Choice of Swimming as the Activity

Swimming as an activity does not have universal appeal. Thus even if all other barriers were removed, some who are eligible to access their free entitlement would still choose not to swim.

For some, swimming up and down lanes is boring. The leisure centre managers' survey reveals the low participation in Fit Swim (formerly WASA Challenge), a self assessment package designed by WASA for all ages to encourage the swimming of lengths and to improve times and distances.

Interviews with local authorities indicated that there has been a lack of interest among swimming clubs in engaging proactively in the FSI and attracting participants to club sessions. This was illustrated by the experience of the National Aquatics Festival. One of its aims was to create links from the free swimming summer programme to the local clubs, but a review of the 2005 Festival demonstrated that (with the exception of water polo) it relied heavily on taking children who were already within the club system. From the Assembly Government's viewpoint, this has been seen as both a weakness and a disappointment. Officials had anticipated there would be far more synergy between the local authority, the governing body and the local club structure. Overall local swimming clubs have not engaged with free swimming and there have been only a few cases of partnership although there are signs of this changing, for example in Carmarthen, where the development officer has a remit to work with and develop club swimming.

The 60+ scheme has faced similar challenges. The SCW biennial adult participation survey demonstrates low demand for swimming among the older population (8%)

and low attendance (only 17% of the adult population) at local leisure centres. In spite of the known benefits of swimming for older people (Lawton et al 1995) many do not like it and would prefer to have access to other dry side sporting and recreation opportunities, as reported in the 2005, 60+ user survey. Many within this age group are unable to swim and consider themselves too old to learn. One chief officer was acutely aware of the barriers associated with the 60+ scheme stating:

"I can see why (the minister) has tried to push swimming for the 60+ because it is a safe exercise and less strenuous than somebody being daft enough to play squash for the first time in their life or whatever. But more effort needs to be put in, both centrally and locally, and that will involve resources, about breaking down people's preconceptions of what swimming might be like for them ... if you go back 35 years to what swimming was like for them it doesn't bear thinking about really."

There are also issues regarding body image, the design of changing facilities which often require sharing with young people (especially those which have high usage from schools during the day) and accessibility of the facilities. These issues were identified in the Blaenau Gwent research (see Case Study 13), in which many interviewees were neither aware of the existence of a new pool in Abertillery nor of the existence of free swimming for the 60+ population.

Marketing and Promotion

The FSI budget has always included a sum for national marketing and branding of the FSI and although data shows that overall there is a high awareness among the 16 and under age group, the evidence suggests that the marketing of the FSI has had only a limited impact.

As noted above, SCW data and our own surveys show that a significant proportion of children are unaware of the initiative. The young people's survey found that 42% of respondents did not participate because of a lack of awareness. Moreover, just under a third of those who had participated (31%) had only found out about the initiative when visiting the pool to swim and a further 31% found out from friends. Less than a fifth (just 18%) said that they had been made aware of free swimming by promotional material.

Interviews undertaken with local authorities highlighted doubts about whether the branding for the 16 and under scheme was suitable for older children. But the leisure centre managers' survey indicated that local marketing had taken place, and some local authorities have been particularly proactive in drawing attention to the FSI and several used mascots (for example, Huw the Duck in Gwynedd and Owain the Octopus in Conwy) to attend

public venues and promote the FSI. Gwynedd has developed a varied programme to market the scheme and their programme is highlighted in Case Study 15.

CASE STUDY 15

Gwynedd – Marketing

Between Easter 2006 and Whitsun 2007 a free swimming promotional tour of twenty primary schools was undertaken. A promotional mascot Huw Hwyaden / Huw the Duck was developed and visited schools, providing information on local free swimming opportunities, pool safety and the importance of leading a healthy lifestyle. In order to record new free swimming attendances, children were given a ticket which was to be presented at the pool in exchange for a swimming session.

Gwynedd monitors free swimming attendances through a free swimming card and as part of this initiative, has recorded which school each child attends. This has enabled the Free Swimming Co-ordinator to evaluate the effectiveness of the Huw Hwyaden promotional tour and identify schools and areas which require additional targeted promotional work. The authority has also been able to track national curriculum achievement in swimming and free swimming participation levels at individual schools.

The Huw Hwyaden promotional tours have encouraged over 1500 additional children to participate in free swimming in the local authority. Between 2005-06 and 2006-07 there has been a 22% increase in free splash attendances amongst the 16 and under age group and a 47% increase in the total number of free swimming attendances (free splash and structured activities).

However, there has been very little pro-active marketing of the 60+ scheme. Only 5% of centre managers indicated that they had undertaken specific marketing initiatives for the 60+ age group (Fifth Interim Report).

Interviewees also highlighted a lack of national marketing for the 60+ scheme and a lack of consistency and frequency regarding production of newsletters and other promotional activities as problematic. They were unsure when publications were going to be issued and the overall impression of the national marketing was an undue emphasis on producing banners and bus posters leading up to the summer holiday free swim period.

Value for money

Judging the value for money provided by the FSI is beyond the scope of our evaluation. However, it is an important issue which deserves more attention in the future.

The cost per swim of the FSI as a whole would be difficult to establish because of the lack of verified user data for the early years of the initiative. Moreover, even if an overall figure could be calculated it would not provide a good measure of effectiveness for two reasons. First, structured swimming costs more than unstructured swimming but is more likely to achieve sustainable increases in participation. Second, securing participation among 'hard to reach' groups is likely to have been more expensive but may represent better value for money in terms of achieving some of the Assembly Government's objectives in relation to the Climbing Higher strategy and pursuing social justice. These issues are clearly important if free swimming is to be extended beyond the pilot period. It will be important that the Assembly Government, SCW and local authorities collect reliable data on users which take account of both the quantity and quality of free swimming sessions. This would then allow for much closer alignment between results and payments to authorities and pools.

Chapter Four – Management of Free Swimming

Introduction

As described in Chapter 1, the evaluation of the FSI was designed to analyse two issues: its impact in increasing participation and the way it has been managed and implemented at national and local levels. Chapter 2 focused on the impact of the initiative and Chapter 3 has identified some of its limitations. This Chapter presents the key findings relating to the management of the FSI. This is important for two reasons. First, the findings highlight ways in which the management of free swimming might be improved in future. Second, the Assembly Government and local authorities may be able to glean lessons which are useful to the future design, management and implementation of other initiatives.

The Chapter first presents the key findings in relation to the national implementation of the FSI. It then focuses on the local implementation of the FSI by local authorities and centre managers.

National Implementation

Policy Guidance for Free Swimming and its Links to Climbing Higher

The policy guidance established by the Assembly Government set out the minimum provision required by each local authority and secondary criteria that required structured and targeted programmes and the collection of data. The details of the criteria were outlined in Chapter 1 and from the outset the Assembly Government explicitly emphasised the importance of achieving a balance between unstructured and structured free swim sessions.

Although relevant to both schemes, there has been a particular emphasis on the need for structured swimming for the 16 and under scheme. The policy guidance issued in 2004, stated that, "the ambition is to make the free swimming entitlement the basis for a new and constructive relationship with children and young people in Wales that fails if it simply proceeds on the basis of a 'free splash' in the local pool." The 2006-07 policy guidance went further stating, "Following customer evaluation of the FSI all parties associated with the initiative **wish to encourage a greater**

proportion of structured activity (emphasis in original)."

The policy guidance was approved annually at a Chief Officers of Recreation and Leisure (CORL) meeting and the Assembly Government consulted with this group regarding proposed policy changes and the funding formulae. Despite this collective decision making process, the Assembly Government has found it difficult to liaise with 22 different partners. Whilst some local authorities have argued for more flexibility, others have wanted more prescription. This issue was neatly summed up by one officer during the evaluation interviews:

"The policy guidance is about minimum provision ... You could actually do one hour of structured sessions a week and take all your free swim money, or, if you were keen and wanted to, you could put on ten hours of structured sessions a week for the same amount of money."

There have been other occasions when issues pertinent to particular authorities or small clusters of authorities (for example cross border usage within Wales, cross border usage from people outside Wales, participation by non local authority managed pools and the introduction of a leisure card) have been difficult to resolve to the satisfaction of all authorities and the Assembly Government has not provided guidance which some councils wanted.

The launch of Climbing Higher, Wales' 20 year strategy for sport and physical activity (WAG 2005), gave a further boost to the FSI. It was viewed as the 'flagship project' with WAG investing a total of nearly £15 million between 2003-04 to 2006-07. However, interviews undertaken with local authorities both in 2005 and 2006 highlighted concerns about whether the FSI in its current form could make a significant contribution to the two over-arching aims of 'Climbing Higher' namely:

- To raise physical activity among children (five times 60 minutes of physical activity a week)
- To raise physical activity among adults (five times 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity a week).

There were three main sets of concerns expressed to us.

First, the FSI applies to 16 and under only during school holidays and (in theory at least) to the 60+ only outside the school holidays. This may not stimulate regular, year round exercise (although in practice, as noted above, 20 out of 22 local authorities have incrementally extended free swimming for the 60+ so that it now covers school holidays as well).

Second, local authority interviewees frequently questioned the focus on the 60+ population, pointing out that other Assembly Government policies and initiatives are directed to the over 50s.

Third, stakeholders and local authority interviewees expressed doubt about the effectiveness of emphasising swimming as opposed to other forms of water-based and dry side activities. Interviewees (including users and providers) believed that increased participation in swimming could make a contribution to the achievement of the Climbing Higher targets, but because it will never appeal to the whole population, there were limitations. Whilst the policy guidance and funding criteria recognised this, there is scope to address this more explicitly by developing wider strategies (including dry side activities) that will hit the Climbing Higher targets by reaching wider audiences.

The Assembly Government, Local Authorities and other National Partners

The original implementation of the FSI was based on a partnership between the Assembly Government and local authorities. The Welsh Local Government Association was also involved in the early days, especially in relation to setting the funding formulae.

The FSI has succeeded in securing the participation of all 22 local authorities in Wales and all public pools. This is a considerable achievement which makes it unique in Western Europe. The early effort went into gaining 'all Wales' support for this flagship physical activity initiative. Most local authorities welcomed the additional funding associated with the FSI and although the formulae created 'winners' and 'losers' all agreed to participate. One chief officer interviewed by the evaluation team commented:

"I would say that bringing 22 authorities together to achieve something that is fairly consistent across the whole of Wales is quite an achievement ... and although we didn't feel the grant would cover the additional costs ... we felt on the whole it was better to go with it than against it."

Inevitably, implementing such an ambitious initiative has presented a number of significant challenges.

The main lines of communication were between the Sports Policy Unit of the Assembly Government and the CORL. The role of the chief officers was to take

responsibility for mounting and delivering the FSI in all public leisure venues across Wales. In addition, each local authority was expected to nominate a data co-ordinator who had responsibility for providing data to the Assembly Government. But there was confusion over their role, their lines of communication and there was only limited contact with these officers prior to the evaluation commencing. As a result each authority created its own monitoring system. This issue was addressed during 2005 by establishing a common data collection framework and in 2006 when data collection was further reviewed. Taken together these developments raised the importance of data collection and management. The Assembly Government expressed surprise at how difficult it appeared for chief officers in Wales to communicate the aims and objectives of the FSI to colleagues within their authorities.

There was also a FSI Working Party, chaired by the Head of Sports Policy and comprising representatives from the Assembly Government, local authorities (operational, developmental and policy) and other key partners including the Welsh Amateur Swimming Association and the Federation of Disability Sport Wales. Following the First Interim Report in 2005, the composition and terms of reference of this group were revised in order to provide greater clarity to those involved in the FSI. It was also an opportunity to bring the work of the Working Party closer to that of the Evaluation Steering Group, the latter being established during the summer of 2004 with a remit to oversee the evaluation and research process. Following a meeting in February 2006 however, the Working Party was not re-convened. In May 2007 a newly constituted group met with the intention to replace both the Working Group and the Evaluation Steering Group.

The SCW has had an ambiguous and at times confusing role in overseeing the FSI. In the early stages its Research and Evaluation Section took responsibility for the evaluation of the FSI including chairing the Evaluation Steering Group, and the Director of Participation and Physical Activity and Active Communities Regional Manager were involved in a limited way in some of the Working Party meetings. The SCW was also asked on an ad hoc basis to oversee the allocation of additional monies to local authorities.

This position changed in 2006 when, following a review of the management arrangements, the SCW was requested to support the implementation of the initiative (remit letter 2006-07 to the SCW, issued by the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport). The SCW issued a Heads of Agreement with all local authorities and tied the FSI more closely to Climbing Higher. As part of their role, the SCW established new timescales for delivery plans, funding and administered

the improvement fund (an additional £1.4 million made available to local authorities in 2006-07 to fund new developments). To assist, a Free Swimming Co-ordinator was appointed for two years. Some chief officers regretted the erosion of the direct relationship they had previously with the Assembly Government. But on balance, the injection of additional support appears to have been beneficial to the management of the FSI.

Funding

The funding made available to implement the FSI is based on a mix of core funding for the two schemes plus some additional bid funding in 2004-05, 2005-06 and 2006-07. As explained in the introduction, the funding formulae are largely based on the population of an area with some additional factors built in. Interviews undertaken with local authority chief officers revealed a perception among some that the FSI was based on an 'urban' rather than a 'rural' model as neither of the formulae takes account of other factors such as the number of pools or accessibility to them.

Our interviews with local authority chief officers (in 2005 and 2006) highlighted three concerns about funding:

- There has been a degree of uncertainty regarding future funding. As a pilot initiative local authorities have been unclear about its likely future direction (an issue which we raised in the Second Interim Report and again in 2006) and whether funding will continue. This has limited many authorities' ability to plan ahead effectively.
- The funding formulae are increasingly viewed as inappropriate. They served a purpose in the early stages, but it is felt that they are biased in favour of urban areas with relatively large populations and they fail to allow for the number of pools in an area. Nor are payments linked to performance in increasing participation, reaching disadvantaged groups or providing structured sessions.
- Whilst local authorities have been urged to develop and enhance the FSI year on year, the core funding has remained static (in real terms) throughout the pilot period. Chief officers and centre managers identified a number of additional running costs (including inflation, rising utilities, increased usage impacting on wear and tear) that authorities have had to meet. Whilst all chief officers were increasingly experiencing difficulties financing free swimming, the problems appeared to be more acute in rural authorities and those with voluntary managed pools and trusts.

Local Implementation

Implementation by Local Authorities

From the outset the FSI has engaged all 22 local authorities and they have taken responsibility for providing free swimming in approximately 120 public swimming pools across Wales. The tight timescale to implement free swimming has impacted on local authorities' ability to respond positively and in some cases to be proactive.

In terms of implementing the policy guidance there is evidence that most local authorities have met the minimum levels of provision stipulated and some have exceeded them (from analysis of local authority delivery plans and data returns), although the amount of free swimming has varied considerably between areas. Variation in the amount of free swimming offered and the take-up by participants has been a constant theme of the evaluation period. Variation has not been limited to an analysis between the 22 local authorities but between the pools within local authorities. Time has been a further dimension with differences emerging at different seasons and different years for particular pools and local authorities. These factors combined with the inadequate collection of user data at the outset, has made it difficult to establish patterns of usage by area.

Particularly in the early stages, many local authorities found implementation of the FSI difficult and were either unable to, or chose not, to:

- Provide data returns showing levels of participation
- Produce timely and relevant delivery plans
- Develop initiatives focusing on structured activities
- Target 'hard to reach' groups, especially those with disabilities
- Develop local galas and participate in the National Aquatics Festival.

Over the last three years there have been improvements in the management of the FSI (some of which have resulted at least in part from the findings of our interim reports). The introduction of a new system for collecting and collating user data has been noteworthy. Although a requirement for local authorities from the outset, no common system was established thereby resulting in 22 different types of data returns that measured different criteria. There was considerable confusion among data co-ordinators. In April 2005 a new system that focused on the 'lowest common denominator' to meet the minimum requirements for all local authorities was introduced. It was centrally co-ordinated and managed by the evaluation team. Over time, this led to far more consistent returns being made and the data management system of the FSI being far more robust and widely understood. A verification review, undertaken

by the Local Government Data Unit (LGDU 2006), found that there are nine different systems for recording usage ranging from pen and paper at some pools to specific till and/or computer systems.

Authorities were also required to prepare delivery plans. However, the lack of capacity within the Sports Policy Unit of the Assembly Government to advise and review plans meant that many saw these as little more than a bureaucratic exercise. Their submissions were not seen as a means with which to challenge and develop the local implementation of the FSI. This position was not helped by short notice given by the Assembly Government when announcing the planning timescales. An early review (Second Interim Report in 2005), demonstrated the shortcomings of the planning cycle and focused on the need to develop robust delivery plans. Analysis of the plans over a four year period have shown that there have been improvements but they remain variable in quality and most lack specific targets or measures with which local implementation could be monitored. Many local authorities still need to develop challenging targets and establish robust review mechanisms.

Implementation by Centre Managers

In the early days, most local authorities chose to deliver the 16 and under scheme primarily through unstructured 'free splash' sessions. Similarly, the launch of the 60+ scheme focused on existing public swim times rather than more innovative approaches. As such, the FSI was on the whole focused on operational logistics rather than developing new practices.

The centre managers' surveys undertaken in 2005 and 2006 demonstrated that authorities are clearer about the requirements of the FSI and its local implementation. In both surveys, managers reported few operational difficulties in implementing free swimming for the 60+ age group. In contrast though, the experience of the 16 and under scheme has been far more challenging. A more recent survey of centre managers, however, found that many of the difficulties experienced most keenly at the outset, including coping with large numbers of users, registration, and the behaviour of young people (SCW 2004), seem to have become less problematic. Most of these issues were now considered to operate smoothly and the current challenges were now seen as managing swimmers in reception areas and changing rooms on busy days and the behaviour of a small minority of users. There is evidence that some local authorities have been proactive in addressing issues of poor behaviour and have experimented in order to identify successful approaches (see Case Study 16).

CASE STUDY 16

Improving Behaviour, Wrexham Waterworld

In an attempt to improve the behaviour of children at Wrexham Waterworld, staff tried out two approaches:

- 1) In the summer of 2006, the majority of free swimming sessions were targeted towards particular groups, e.g. family groups, under 12s, disability sessions. Although this segmentation resulted in improved behavioural patterns, there was a reduction in attendance, probably because of confusion over the timetabling of sessions.
- 2) In the summer of 2007 it reverted to open access for all structured and unstructured swimming sessions. However, a banding system has been introduced, allowing swimmers a maximum of one hour in the pool. As a consequence, bathing loads have been controlled much more successfully, less pressure is placed on lifeguards and they are able to deal with problem children more effectively.

Adopting a Developmental Approach

A key determinant of success has been the extent to which local authorities have viewed the FSI developmentally, rather than as an administrative exercise. Where the emphasis has been placed on the former there is clear evidence of good practice emerging and the FSI has been adapted to take account of local needs.

Good practice has been established by many individual pool managers and we have highlighted a number of examples in Chapter 2. Many are very aware of their local market and developing a locally sensitive programme of activities, including some experimental and innovative programmes which have then been adopted elsewhere (for example, Case Study 4). But most authorities have reported that the individual pool managers see their role primarily as being to look after the overall needs of their centre and its users. They are unable to give sufficient attention to the FSI and they cannot easily co-ordinate development across the whole local authority area.

Thus, in spite of the personal endeavours of some of these individual managers to make the FSI a success, most local authorities have found it necessary to appoint an officer who has a specific remit to develop free swimming locally. This issue was first identified in our Second Interim Report in 2005. A majority of local authorities (16) currently employ development officers, some on a full time and some on a part time basis. Those without such officers are generally smaller

councils which have been unable to secure funding for posts from their own budgets, or the SCW.

Most chief officers and many pool managers see the role of the development officer as vital to the success of free swimming. They are typically responsible for developing a wide range of water-based activities and/or reviewing the teaching provision for swimming across the authority. Authorities with development officers have found it easier to co-ordinate activity and bring the different pool managers together to take on different aspects of the FSI. For example, although the Assembly Government initially had high expectations of local authorities, the national governing body and local clubs working together to create appropriate links, the lack of progress was a cause of concern and was identified as one of the barriers in Chapter 3. However, the appointment of development officers (some of which have only been in post a short while), suggest that this issue is now being addressed and could provide a further positive dimension. Progress has been made in Caerphilly where the development officer has reviewed and co-ordinated the different leisure centres' operations, which in turn led to the authority's swimming programme being re-organised with standardised swimming lessons and standardised qualifications being established for centre staff.

In other cases, officers have had responsibility for networking externally and developing links with other organisations. These developments often lead to the introduction of specific programmes. Interviews undertaken with development officers demonstrated the wide variety of organisations that were being used, many of whom would not have been identified in the past as traditional partners. This was especially relevant to the 60+ scheme.

Development officers also appear to have been particularly successful in developing programmes for 'hard to reach' groups. In terms of developing a plan, both Cardiff and Swansea appeared to achieve a comprehensive approach whereby all four specific target groups identified as part of the FSI had been addressed.

The need to integrate swimming development into an authority's overall management plan is critical. Development strategies must use existing data and knowledge; plan and set locally driven targets; monitor and review progress and develop a phased approach over time. Bridgend CBC represents a particularly strong example of how this approach has informed their development programme – see Case Study 17.

CASE STUDY 17

Using Management Information to Inform Sports Development, Bridgend

In 2004 and 2005 all free swimming attendances were recorded electronically, via a 'Bridge Card' held by all registered children. The data was recorded and analysed, enabling Bridgend CBC to evaluate more effectively the scheme and identify areas requiring future development.

In summer 2005, the evaluation of collected data showed that there had been a decrease in free splash participation and an increase in the demand for structured sessions. It also enabled the authority to analyse the age and gender breakdown of participants at pool level. As a result of its analysis the council implemented a number of improvements in 2006. These included:

- Improved marketing
- The introduction of structured sessions which attracted girls aged 14+
- Targeting of particular bus routes
- The introduction of designated family sessions
- Visits to primary and secondary schools and playgroups to promote the scheme.

Across the local authority area, free swims increased by around 88% in summer 2006 compared with summer 2005 unstructured swims increased from approximately 12,700 to 18,700 whilst structured swims increased from approximately 1,100 swims to 7,400 swims.

Chapter Five – Summary and Implications for Future Policy

Key Findings

The Effectiveness of the Pilot Process

- The piloting process has proved effective. It has provided a good test of the impact of providing free swimming. It has highlighted a number of important lessons about the management of free swimming at national and local level.

Participation

- The provision of free swimming has increased participation among the 16 and under and the 60+ age groups.
- More than half of children in Wales aged between 10 and 14 have participated in free swimming sessions, and it has been especially popular among 11-13 year olds.
- The 60+ scheme has led to an increase in the number of swims, largely by encouraging existing swimmers to participate more frequently.
- Participation in the 16 and under scheme peaked in 2004-05.
- The vast majority of free swims provided for both the 16 and under and the 60+ scheme remain unstructured, but there has been an increase over the last two years in the number of structured swims.
- The rise in the number of children aged 16 and under who have participated in structured swimming sessions, up from 24,000 in 2004-05 to 71,000 in 2006-07 is significant.
- Where structured sessions have been offered they have often led to links to existing swimming clubs and in some instances to the formation of new clubs.
- Free swimming has had a positive impact on participation among 'hard to reach groups', especially those living in Communities First areas.
- But participation by people with disabilities has been patchy and has varied considerably between local authorities. There is little evidence that authorities have sought pro-actively to work specifically with people with disabilities in the 60+ age group.

Free Entitlement and Barriers to Participation

- The provision of free swimming was an important factor in encouraging more young people to swim and 60+ participants to swim more often.
- For most people cost was not seen as the only or most important barrier to their participation. Other factors such as the location of the pool; the times when free swimming was available; the desire to avoid noisy over-crowded pools; and a dislike of swimming were all significant deterrents to participation.
- Simply providing free sessions is not, therefore, enough to secure participation by the majority of the eligible population.

Target Groups

- The initiative has increased participation among both of the target age groups.
- Most local authorities now provide a year-round entitlement to free swimming for the 60+ age group. But free swimming is not generally being made available to children outside of school holidays.

Marketing and Promotion

- The marketing and promotion of the FSI has been variable and has had limited national impact. Most of those who have participated in free swimming reported that they learned about it by word of mouth or through local marketing by local authorities.

Management Issues

- The FSI was designed by the Assembly Government and implemented by the 22 local authorities in Wales. The policy guidance issued by the Assembly Government was designed to be flexible and this resulted in considerable variations across Wales in the ways in which the initiative has been implemented. Most local authorities have been committed to the initiative. Some have struggled to meet the minimum provision required, but others have exceeded it.
- There have been improvements over the pilot period in the management of free swimming – at both national and local levels. These have included: clearer aims and objectives; improved local data

collection; an increased emphasis on structured activity and targeting of specific groups; and improved communication between officers within local authorities.

- There are valuable lessons to be learnt from these improvements – both for any extension of free swimming and for the management and delivery of other national pilot initiatives.

Climbing Higher

- Following publication of the Climbing Higher strategy, free swimming now needs to be seen as part of a wider portfolio of activities designed to deliver on new physical activity targets. It needs to be better integrated with other Assembly Government policies as well as being sensitive to particular localities.

Implications for Future Policy

The evidence from the evaluation highlights three key sets of issues which policy makers may wish to consider if free swimming is to be extended beyond the pilot period.

Funding

Future policy needs to take account of financial pressures on sport and recreation services. The Sports Policy Unit within the Assembly Government has increased central government funding for sport in Wales. There has been a decline, however, in national lottery funds and local authority leisure services have come under increasing financial pressure. As a discretionary service sport and recreation has long been an easy target for budget cuts in councils that are struggling to meet rising demands for other mandatory services. In the past, budget shortfalls in leisure services, were often solved by increasing charges. The introduction of free swimming has meant there has been less scope to raise income in this way.

Future policy should take account of five important issues relating to funding.

1. Reviewing the total funding available

During the pilot period core funding for free swimming has remained static whilst the costs of running facilities has continued to increase. Local authorities believed that if free swimming is to be rolled forward successfully there will need to be an increase in the funding available. There should be a systematic review, therefore, of whether this is the case and if so how much funding is needed to secure the future success of free swimming.

2. Reviewing the basis of the current funding formulae

There is widespread acceptance among local authorities that the original funding formulae were the most appropriate means of allocating funding during the pilot phase. However, many councils believe that if the initiative is rolled forward it will be important to review the basis on which funding is distributed.

3. Facilitating medium to long term financial planning

If free swimming is to be placed on a more permanent footing, it is important that councils are able to plan two to three years ahead and therefore know in advance how much funding will be available to them (subject to them being able to demonstrate that they have delivered agreed levels of performance). In return, local authorities and centre managers must take a more strategic approach to forward planning and the phasing in of more structured activities with better links to local clubs and other groups.

4. Linking payment to performance

During the pilot phase, authorities have received funding regardless of their performance in implementing free swimming. Future funding needs to be tied much more closely to results. Leisure centres and local authorities need to provide regular, accurate and up to date information on usage. The recording and reporting systems they use and the data returns they provide should be subject to independent checking and verification. Payments should be tied to performance in line with explicit agreements reached between the Assembly Government and each local authority which establishes clear objectives and outcomes. Performance needs to be assessed not just in terms of quantity but also the quality of provision in order to incentivise the development of structured activities and reward centre managers who do not rely solely on relatively cheap, 'splash' sessions.

5. Ensuring that funding reaches pools via incentives

During the pilot phase individual leisure centre managers lacked financial incentives to make a success of free swimming. Facility managers need to be incentivised more directly – either by paying a portion of the funding direct to individual pools or by requiring authorities to develop their own schemes for local managers in order to reward those who implement free swimming pro-actively.

Delivery of Free Swimming

The evaluation of the FSI pilot has highlighted eight important issues relating to the future delivery of free swimming.

1. Ensuring engaged leadership at the national level

Nationally, delivery of the FSI was hampered between 2003-2005 by ambiguity about the roles and responsibilities of the SCW and Assembly Government. The peripheral role of the SCW in the early implementation of the initiative marked a departure from other successful initiatives such as Dragon Sport and more recently '5x60'. This left the pilot initiative without a dedicated individual or team to provide the necessary degree of overview. Early signs suggest that the additional co-ordination and management input that has come about through the involvement of the SCW since mid-2006, has brought a sharper national focus.

2. Enhancing local commitment and capacity to implement free swimming

There has been considerable variability at the local level in the effectiveness with which free swimming has been implemented – between different local authorities and, in a number of instances, between pools within the same local authority area. The variability reflects in part the nature of the national guidance issued by the Assembly Government which left considerable scope for local interpretation. It also highlights the variable level of commitment to free swimming and in some cases a decision to ignore the expected levels of provision.

Where the FSI has been successful, authorities have viewed it positively as an intervention that needed to be tailored to the local context, and implemented in a flexible and developmental way, rather than one that was essentially procedural and administrative. The effectiveness of local delivery has been strongly influenced by the availability of appropriate staff within local authorities prepared to take a pro-active approach to developing the initiative in ways that address local needs and priorities. For some authorities this has meant the appointment of a development officer. For others it has involved the pool managers being actively involved in local promotion and targeting. For yet others, it has been about creating partnerships with other local authority departments and/or external organisations.

It will be important to ensure that authorities that currently lack this capacity are able to learn from good practice in order to increase their effectiveness in developing appropriate local strategies and targets for free swimming. National policy makers and/or the Welsh Local Government Association may wish to consider

ways of strengthening existing mechanisms for peer support and review among local authority officers and centre managers and for sharing good and innovative practices. There is also a need to ensure local authorities have established more robust management frameworks capable of planning, setting targets and ensuring there are appropriate mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation.

3. Review the target groups

Policy makers may wish to review the two target age groups that have been the focus of the pilot. It might also be appropriate to work with the target age groups and identify particular sections of the population most likely to respond positively to the provision of free entitlement.

4. Consider extending the entitlement among young people outside school holidays in order to encourage year round physical activity

The Climbing Higher targets require regular physical activity among children and young people. To achieve this, entitlement under the FSI may need to be extended to times outside school holidays – in particular, after school and at weekends.

5. Tailor the initiative to local needs and priorities

The evaluation showed that some local authorities did not prioritise 'hard to reach groups.' It may be that the most effective way to ensure targeting is to invite local authorities to determine the most appropriate recipients of free swimming in their areas. This would mean emphasising local priorities by moving away from a 'one size fits all' approach towards the development of local strategies that are tailored to the needs of particular communities and localities.

6. Increasing the range of activities

There are also opportunities to extend the range of activities that may attract new users who currently do not exercise because they dislike swimming. Some of the most successful local initiatives have involved the introduction of new programmes combining swimming with other activities and/or a focus on wider lifestyle and educational issues such as healthy eating.

7. Ensuring that new developments are complementary to existing initiatives

There are several initiatives that are currently being developed by local authorities on behalf of the Assembly Government and the SCW. It is important that free swimming is integrated with them and the overall Climbing Higher strategy.

8. Achieving sustainable participation by creating club links and wider partnerships

Sustainability is a recurring challenge and the need to make links to develop club based opportunities will be important to its future. Access to a good supply of local coaches and motivators is one way to achieving sustained participation. It is also important to extend partnerships to non-sporting organisations which have access to key client groups who could be attracted to participating in sport and physical activity.

Clarity of Objectives and Explicit Links to other Strategies and Policies

Finally, the evaluation of the FSI pilot has highlighted important issues relating to objectives of free swimming and its links to other policies.

1. Clarifying objectives

The objectives of the pilot initiative were not defined very clearly or explicitly. If free swimming is to be extended it will be important that these are clarified. And it will be important that these objectives are aligned with those of the Climbing Higher strategy (WAG 2005), Climbing Higher Next Steps (WAG 2006), the focus on physical literacy (that supports the national curriculum in the areas of swimming, outdoor education and skill acquisition), and strategies involving health promotion, including 'The Strategy for Older People in Wales' (WAG 2003).

The Assembly Government and SCW need to specify how free swimming is intended to contribute to these over-arching strategies and targets and to monitor its performance in these terms. Local authorities need to develop explicit local strategies that demonstrate the ways in which the delivery of Assembly Government sponsored programmes contribute to these plans, especially the targets set for Climbing Higher in ways that best match the needs of their areas.

2. Developing effective local strategies

Nationally and locally free swimming now needs to be seen as part of a portfolio of initiatives designed to increase physical activity, rather than as a standalone intervention. As part of Local Authority Partnership Agreements (a SCW led initiative), councils will need to prepare a local sport and physical activity strategy that includes, but is not focused solely on swimming or other aquatics activities. For some authorities this may result in a continued and possibly expanded focus on swimming, but others may wish to put the emphasis on dry side activities. All authorities will need to put emphasis on how best to reach groups that may not typically wish to engage in sport and physical activity – for example the 14-16 age group, the majority of whom

have not been attracted to participate in free swimming to date.

3. Strengthening links to community based activities and organisations

In order to achieve the Climbing Higher targets it will be important to build stronger links between free swimming and networks of community based activities and organisations. Whilst the process is likely to rely on providers, there should be far more opportunities to secure the active engagement of citizens and local communities. A community stakeholder strategy would ensure a more varied approach and result in a shift from supply led opportunities to demand led and needs led opportunities. There is a case for establishing a far reaching 'development menu' (especially in relation to young people) and this will be pivotal if physical activity is to be taken from childhood into adulthood (SCW 2005b). A further key role for providers will be to ensure that sound development principles are in place and that there are clear opportunities for participants to move up and across development pathways.

References

- Adams, L. and West, S. (2006) *Age Concern: Just Above the Breadline – Living on a Low Income in Later Life*, London: Age Concern.
- Coalter, F. (2001) *Realising the Potential for Cultural Services: The Case for Sport*, London: Local Government Association
- Department for Education and Skills and Department of Culture, Media and Sport (2003) *Swimming Charter*, Nottinghamshire: DfES Crown Copyright
- Lawton, J. Smith, F. D. and Way, V. (Eds) (1995) *Introduction to Swimming, Teaching and Coaching*. Loughborough: Swimming Times Ltd
- Local Government Data Unit (2006) *Free Swimming Initiative Data Quality Report*, Cardiff: LGDU
- Office for National Statistics (2006) *Registrar General's Mid-Year Estimates of Population 1991-2005*, Published 2006
- Sports Council for Wales (2004a) *Report to the Welsh Assembly Government on the Free Swimming Pilot – Summer Holidays 2003*, Cardiff: Sports Council for Wales
- Sports Council for Wales (2004b) *Active Young People in Wales*, Sports Update No. 58, Cardiff: Sports Council for Wales
- Sports Council for Wales (2005a) *Adult Sports Participation and Club Membership in Wales 2002/03*, Sports Update No. 57, Cardiff: Sports Council for Wales
- Sports Council for Wales (2005b) *Framework for the Development of Sport and Physical Activity: From Strategy to Action*, Cardiff: Sports Council for Wales
- Sports Council for Wales (2006) *Children's Participation in Sport and Activity in 2006*, Sports Update No. 63, Cardiff: Sports Council for Wales
- Welsh Assembly Government (2003) *Wales: A Better Country*, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government
- Welsh Assembly Government (2005) *Climbing Higher – The Welsh Assembly Government Strategy for Sport & Physical Activity*, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government
- Welsh Assembly Government (2006) *Climbing Higher – Next Steps*, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government
- Welsh Assembly Government (2007) *Physical Education in the National Curriculum in Wales, Key Stages 2-4, Consultation Document*, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government
- Welsh Assembly Government (2003) *The Strategy for Older People in Wales*, Cardiff: Welsh Assembly Government

Interim Evaluation Reports

- <http://www.sports-council-wales.org.uk/library-services>
- Bolton, N. Smith, B. Jennings, C. and Wall, M. (2005) *Evaluation of WAG's Free Swim Initiative 2004-2007 – First Interim Report*, Cardiff: InVEST, UWIC
- Bolton, N. Smith, B. Jennings, C. and Anderson, M. (2005) *Evaluation of WAG's Free Swim Initiative 2004-2007 – Second Interim Report*, Cardiff: InVEST, UWIC
- Bolton, N. Smith, B. Jennings, C. and Anderson, M. (2006) *Evaluation of WAG's Free Swim Initiative 2004-2007 – Third Interim Report*, Cardiff: InVEST, UWIC
- Bolton, N. Anderson, M. Smith, B. and Jennings, C. (2007a) *Evaluation of WAG's Free Swim Initiative 2004-2007 – 60+ Case Study of Blaenau Gwent – Fourth Interim Report*, Cardiff: InVEST, UWIC
- Bolton, N. Shami, R. Anderson, M. Smith, B. and Jennings, C. (2007b) *Evaluation of WAG's Free Swim Initiative 2004-2007 – Free Swimming Initiative: Developing Disability Sport – Fourth Interim Report*, Cardiff: InVEST, UWIC
- Bolton, N. Anderson, M. Smith, B. Jennings, C. (2007c) *Evaluation of WAG's Free Swim Initiative 2004-2007 – Fifth Interim Report*, Cardiff: InVEST, UWIC

The Evaluation Steering Group

Chair: Michael Shepherd (resigned Dec 05); Dr Rachel Hughes (from Feb 06)

Barbara Atton

Lowri Bunn

Sara Butlin

Arthur Emyr

Elaine Hopkins

Anne Layzell

Rebecca Mattingley

Jenny Murphy

James Owens

Steve Woodfine

Representatives from the Evaluation Team

The Evaluation Team

Dr Nicola Bolton Project Manager, Cardiff School of Sport, UWIC

Melissa Anderson Evaluation Assistant, Cardiff School of Sport, UWIC

Bev Smith Cardiff School of Sport, UWIC

Chris Jennings Cardiff School of Sport, UWIC

Professor Steve Martin External Adviser

Research and Administration from Cardiff School of Sport, UWIC

Dr Bill Davies

Carmen Hayes

Laurence Llewelyn

Dr Andy Miles

John Rawlins

Yvonne Saker

Romani Shami

Mike Wall

The Evaluation Team acknowledges the support given by Barbara King for transcription and Ceri Thomas at the National Aquatics Festival in 2005.

Participating Organisations

Aberaeron Leisure Centre	Cymmer Afan Comprehensive School	Milford Haven Leisure Centre
Abercynon Sports Centre	Cymmer Swimming Pool	Mold Sports Centre
Aberdare Swimming Pool	Denbigh Leisure Centre	Monmouth Leisure Centre
Aberfan and Merthyr Vale Community Centre	Denbighshire County Council	Monmouthshire County Council
Abergavenny Leisure Centre	Dwyfor Leisure Centre	Morrison Leisure Centre
Abergele Leisure Centre	East Radnor Leisure Centre	Nantyglo Leisure Centre
Abertillery Comprehensive School	Eastern Leisure Centre	Narberth Swimming Pool
Abertillery Sports Centre	Ebbw Vale Leisure Centre	Neath Leisure Centre
Afan Lido Leisure Complex	Edwardsville Swimming Pool	Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council
Amlwch Leisure Centre	Fairwater Leisure Centre, Cardiff	Newbridge Leisure Centre
Amman Valley Leisure Centre	Fairwater Leisure Centre, Torfaen	Newcastle Emlyn Leisure Centre
Arfon Leisure Centre	Federation of Disability Sport Wales	Newport Centre
Bangor Swimming Pool	Fishguard Sports Centre	Newport City Council
Barry Leisure Centre	Flash Leisure Centre	Newport International Sports Village Pool
Bedwas Leisure Centre	Flint Pavillion	Olchfa Community Pool
Bettws Leisure Centre	Flintshire County Council	Pembroke Comprehensive School
Blackwood Comprehensive School	Glaslyn Leisure Centre	Pembroke Leisure Centre
Blaenafon Leisure Centre	Gwaunfarren Swimming Pool	Pembrokeshire County Council
Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council	Gwyn Evans Leisure and Activity Centre	Penarth Leisure Centre
Brecon Leisure Centre	Gwynedd County Council	Pencoed Swimming Pool
Bridgend County Borough Council	Harlech Leisure Centre	Penlan Leisure Centre
Bridgend Recreation Centre	Haverfordwest Swimming Pool	Penllyn Leisure Centre
Bro Dyfi Leisure Centre	Hawthorn Leisure Centre	Pentrefafod Sports Hall and Pool
Bro Dysynni Leisure Centre	Hay Swimming Pool	Pentwyn Leisure Centre
Bro Ffestiniog Swimming Pool	Heolddu Leisure Centre	Penyrheol Comprehensive School
Bronwydd Swimming Pool	Holyhead Leisure Centre	Penyrheol Leisure Centre
Brynamman Open Air Pool	Holywell Leisure Centre	Plas Arthur Leisure Centre
Buckley Sports Centre	Isle of Anglesey County Council	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Builth Wells Sports Centre	Knighthon Sports Centre	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Caerphilly County Borough Council	Lampeter Leisure Centre	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Caerphilly Leisure Centre	Llandoverly Swimming Pool	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Caldicot Leisure Centre	Llandrindod Wells Sports Centre	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Cardiff County Council	Llandudno Swimming Pool	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Cardigan Leisure Centre	Llandysul Leisure Centre	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Carmarthen Leisure Centre	Llanelli Leisure Centre	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Carmarthenshire County Council	Llanfyllin Sports Centre	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Cefn Forest Leisure Centre	Llangeinor Swimming Pool	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Cefn Hengoed Comprehensive School	Llanidloes Sports Centre	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Cefn Hengoed Leisure Centre	Llanishen Leisure Centre	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Ceredigion County Council	Llanrumney High School	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Chepstow Leisure Centre	Llanrwst Swimming Pool	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Chirk Leisure and Activity Centre	Llantrisant Leisure Centre	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Clywedog Leisure and Activity Centre	Llantwit Major Leisure Centre	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Coedcae Comprehensive School	Lliswerry Leisure Centre	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Colwyn Leisure Centre	Local Government Data Unit	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Connah's Quay Sports Centre	Maerdy Pool	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Conwy County Borough Council	Maesteg Swimming Pool	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Corwen Leisure Centre	Maindee Swimming Pool	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Crymych Leisure Centre	Maindy Swimming Pool	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Cwmbran Stadium	Maldwyn Leisure Centre	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
Cwmtawe Comprehensive School	Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council	Plas Madoc Leisure and Activity Centre
		Swansea City and Borough Council

Tenby Leisure Centre
 The Pavillion
 The Vale of Glamorgan Council
 Tonyrefail Swimming Pool
 Torfaen County Borough Council
 Tredegar Comprehensive School
 Tredegar Sports Centre
 Tregaron Leisure Centre
 Treherbert Swimming Pool

Vale of Neath Leisure Centre
 Wales National Pool, Swansea
 Waterworld Leisure and Activity
 Centre
 Welsh Amateur Swimming
 Association
 Welsh Assembly Government
 Western Leisure Centre
 Wrexham County Borough Council

Ysgol Bro Myrddin
 Ysgol Gyfun Bro Morgannwg
 Ysgol Rhiwabon
 Ysgol Syr Hugh Owen
 Ystradgynlais Sports Centre

Individual Contributors

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

Sue Brosnan August 2006
 Andrew Gardner October 2005
 Karl Hale August 2006, March 2007
 Annette King August 2006
 Victoria Norman August 2006
 Ashley Owen November 2005, March 2007
 Kay O'Shea August 2006
 Lynn Phillips November 2006
 Glyn Williams November 2005
 Simon Williams November 2005, March 2007
 Cath Woods August 2006

Bridgend County Borough Council

Greg Allen November 2005, March 2007
 Anne Andersen January 2006, August 2006
 Lowri Bunn October 2005, November 2006
 David Howley November 2005, March 2007
 Jonathan Lewis November 2005, March 2007
 Karl Patterson November 2005, March 2007
 Linda Smith November 2005
 Paul Williams November 2005, March 2007

Caerphilly County Borough Council

Peter Gomer November 2006
 Sian Jones October 2005, November 2005,
 March 2007
 John Poyner November 2005, March 2007
 Bryan Reynolds November 2005, March 2007
 Jeff Reynolds November 2005
 Barrie Swift November 2006
 Paul Taylor January 2006

Cardiff County Council

Graham Bailey November 2005
 Shirley Bourge May 2005, October 2005,
 November 2006
 George Frantzeskou November 2006
 Trevor Gough May 2005,
 November 2006
 Anthony Hayes March 2007
 Dave Jackson October 2005, November 2005,
 March 2007, June 2007
 Keely Jones May 2005

Steve Moats November 2005
 Dawn Pinder November 2005, March 2007
 Chris Rees May 2005, November 2005,
 March 2007
 Nicky Thompson May 2005

Carmarthenshire County Council

Phil Edwards November 2005, March 2007
 Jackie Jeffrey October 2005
 Bleddyn Price November 2005, March 2007
 Lisa Pudner January 2006
 Fiona Pugh November 2005
 Russell Sparks August 2006

Ceredigion County Council

Martine Brandford November 2005, March 2007
 Alun Davies March 2007
 D. Davies March 2007
 Lloyd Davies May 2005
 Darryl Evans November 2006
 John Havard March 2007
 Ian Macken November 2006
 Trevor Miles May 2005
 Karen Rees Roberts January 2006
 Karen Roberts May 2005
 Jeff Saycell May 2005, November 2005
 John Whitworth November 2005, November 2006

Conwy County Borough Council

Chris Bowler November 2005
 Alun Evans November 2005, March 2007
 Paul Frost December 2006
 John Hardy December 2006
 Ian Martin January 2006
 Nia Williams October 2005, December 2006
 Paul Young November 2005

Denbighshire County Council

Haydn Gary Jones November 2005, March 2007
 Paul Harrison December 2006
 Tony Hughes December 2006
 Lucy Jones October 2005, November 2005,
 December 2006
 Stephen Owen November 2006, March 2007
 Adrian Roberts November 2005, March 2007

Federation for Disability Sport Wales (FDSW)

Jon Morgan	November 2004
Gerwyn Owen	November 2004, November 2005

Flintshire County Council

Sue Armstrong	November 2005
Joanne Edwards	January 2006
Mike Hornby	December 2006
Jeff Shields	November 2005, November 2006, March 2007
Christopher Travers	November 2005
Nik Turnbull	November 2006

Gwynedd County Council

Brian Evans	May 2005, October 2005, December 2006
Carys Ferris	March 2007
Sion Gwyn	December 2006
Alan Hughes	May 2005, December 2006
Bryn Hughes	November 2005, March 2007
Marianne Jackson	May 2005
Marcus Poltis	January 2006
Michael Roberts	November 2005, March 2007
Steven Smith	November 2005, March 2007
Mark Williams	May 2005, November 2005, March 2007
Teresa Williams	November 2005

Isle of Anglesey County Council

Dave Barker	December 2006
Mike Dilworth	November 2006, March 2007
Owain Hughes	December 2006
David Parry	November 2005, March 2007
Aled Roberts	November 2006
Joyce Stalman	October 2005
Jim Stuart	March 2007
Karen Williams	January 2006

Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council

Mark Crimmings	November 2005, November 2006, March 2007
Steve Davies	November 2006
Christopher Felton	October 2005
Huw Jackson	October 2005
John Sellwood	November 2006

Monmouthshire County Council

Nick Butler	November 2005
Richard Drinkwater	November 2006
Claire Lampan	August 2006
Paul Mansell	November 2005, March 2007
Ian Saunders	March 2007
Victoria Smith	January 2006

Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

Darren Evans	March 2007
Andrew Thomas	November 2006

Paul Walker	November 2005, March 2007
Chris Weller	October 2005

Newport City Council

Steve Bickerton	November 2006
Kelly Gaffney	October 2005, November 2006
Ffion Lloyd	November 2006
Steve McGrath	January 2006
Neil Sergeant	March 2007
Iain Varah	November 2004
Carl Williams	November 2005, March 2007

Pembrokeshire County Council

Darren Bowen	November 2005, March 2007
Julie Evans	March 2007
Sian Fair	March 2007
Lois Hilling	January 2006
Rhian McFarlane	November 2005
Gary Nicholas	November 2006
Chris Payne	November 2006
Jenny Price	November 2005, March 2007
Darryl Sable	November 2005, March 2007
Rob Thomas	November 2005, March 2007
James Walters	November 2005, March 2007

Powys County Council

Chris Bennett	November 2005
Stuart Bufton	March 2007
Rob Corson	November 2005, March 2007
Helen Cox	November 2005
Theresa Crowther	March 2007
Tim Davies	March 2007
Paul Griffiths	May 2005, November 2006
Adam Harries	November 2005, March 2007
Michael Haynes	May 2005, November 2005
Martin Hurst	November 2005, March 2007
Emma Lewis	March 2007
Ian Macken	November 2005
Neil Matthews	November 2006
Glen Nixon	November 2005, March 2007
Gwyn Owen	November 2005
Judith Phillips	March 2007
Kristian Phillips	October 2005
Rebecca Sutton	November 2005
Beverly Tucker	January 2006
Graham Williams	May 2005

Rhondda Cynon Taff County Borough Council

James Dobbs	November 2005, March 2007
Michelle Gibbs	January 2006
Mel Hinksman	November 2005, March 2007
Andrew Kirby	November 2005
Sarah Kochalski	November 2006
Andrew Morris	November 2005, March 2007
Craig Napper	October 2005, November 2006
T. Williams	November 2005, March 2007

Sports Council for Wales

Sara Butlin November 2004

Swansea City and Borough Council

Dave Aldridge November 2005
John Cheval October 2005
Iwan Davies November 2006
Jane Draper March 2007
Kieron Dunning November 2005
Liz Edmunds November 2005, March 2007
Dave Evans November 2004
Emma Evans March 2007
Christine George November 2006
Hywel George November 2005
Kath Hayler January 2006, August 2006
Clair Lewis November 2005, March 2007
Nik More March 2007
Dave Osborne November 2006

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Dave Knevett November 2006
Jamie Morgans November 2006
Scott Murray March 2007
Linda Ruston August 2006
Sandra Scott November 2005
Linda Smith November 2006, March 2007

Torfaen County Borough Council

Grenville Bolter January 2006
Sally Church May 2005, November 2006
Dave Congreve May 2005
Nick Evans May 2005, October 2005,
November 2005
Julian Smith November 2005, March 2007
Kathryn Williams March 2007

Welsh Assembly Government

Arthur Emyr November 2004
Elaine Hopkins November 2004
Stephen Woodfine July 2007

Welsh Amateur Swimming Association (WASA)

Robert James November 2005
Charlie Parker November 2004, November 2005

Wrexham County Borough Council

Ken Danskin November 2006
Mark Drew May 2005, November 2005,
March 2007
Dave Edge October 2005
Andy Harries November 2006, March 2007
Helen Laidler October 2005, November 2006
Amanda Roberts May 2005
Alan Watkin May 2005, December 2006
Hywel Williams May 2005

Local Authority Data Co-ordinators

Lyndsey Adams
Claire Beynon
Steve Bickerton
David Brown
Lowri Bunn
Amanda Challis
Sally Church
Teresa Ciano
Mark Crimmings
Ken Danskin
Steve Davies
Richard Drinkwater
Bernadette Elias
Darryl Evans
Wayne Evans
George Frantzeskou
Sion Gwyn
John Hardy

Paul Harrison
Martin Henry
Verity Hiscocks
Mike Hornby
Alan Hughes
Owain Hughes
David James
Ian Jones
Lee Jones
Lucy Jones
Andrew Kenyon
Sarah Kochalski
Angela Layton
John Lewis
Trevor Miles
Craig Napper
Gary Nicholas
Sue O'Brien

David Osborne
Gwyn Owen
Dave Parry
Karl Patterson
Kristian Phillips
Karen Rees Roberts
Jeremy Rowe
Ian Saunders
John Sellwood
Jeff Shields
Linda Smith
Gill Sweetland
Mally Tidswall
Andrew Walker
Paul Walker
Graham Williams
Hywel Williams
Nia Williams