

FREE SWIMMING PROGRAMME

Pot 1: Free swimming for those aged 60 or over

1. This is the minimum offer into which all local authorities can opt, if they so choose. From financial year 2009/10, Government will make available a total amount of £15m p.a. over two years. This is to allow those local authorities who wish to offer free swimming to those aged 60 or over to do so.
2. Local authorities should indicate to DCMS, by no later than 15 September 2008, whether they wish to take up this offer.
3. In order to keep the burden on local authorities to a minimum, the funding will be divided between participating authorities according to a simple formula based on the size of the local population aged 60 or over, and it will be distributed through a section 31 ring-fenced grant. An authority will receive a fixed amount, as set out above. Any remaining funds will be spent centrally on other relevant schemes.
4. Free swimming for those aged 60 or over is hereby defined as meaning that people in that age group who wish to swim at any time throughout the year, when they would normally be admitted to the pool for public swimming, and in accordance with local programming, should not be charged for doing so.
5. Those authorities who already make available a free swimming offer that would otherwise have qualified for funding may use their allocation on initiatives additional to their existing offer and designed either i) further to increase and sustain participation for those aged 60 or over (e.g. structured sessions or classes) and/or ii) to extend their existing programmes to wider groups of the population and move further towards a universal free swimming offer.

Pot 2: Free swimming for those aged 16 or under

6. Pot 2 is only available to those local authorities who choose the minimum offer of providing free swimming for those aged 60 or over and wish to provide an additional offer for those aged 16 or under. For these authorities we will make available an additional £25m revenue funding over two years to support free swimming for those aged 16 or under.
7. As for those aged 60 or over, we have made the qualifying criteria for the scheme correspondingly simple. Free swimming for those aged 16 or under means that people in that age group who wish to swim out of normal school hours throughout the year, when they would normally be admitted to the pool for public swimming, and in accordance with local programming should not be charged for doing so.
8. We have therefore written to eligible Chief Executives to ask them to submit an expression of interest, no later than 15 September 2008, if their authority has the ambition to provide free swimming for under 16s. For these authorities, Government will then provide details of their prospective allocation by 30 September. Authorities will then be invited to confirm, by 15 October 2008, whether they wish to participate in

this element of the offer. Their share of the fund will then be allocated and distributed through a section 31 ring-fenced grant.

9. Government hopes that local authorities will work creatively with local partners, including Primary Care Trusts, to access funds from other sources (such as Working Neighbourhoods Fund, Extending Activities, the Big Lottery Fund) as well as with commercial and third sectors, to maximise the impact across shared agendas.
10. Those authorities who already make available a free swimming offer that would otherwise have qualified for funding may use their allocation on initiatives additional to their existing offer and designed either i) further to increase and sustain participation for those aged 16 or under (e.g. structured sessions or classes) and/or ii) to extend their existing programmes to wider groups of the population and move further towards a universal free swimming offer.

Pot 3: Modernising pool provision – capital reward fund

11. In addition, Government is providing a total of £60 million capital for capital projects designed to modernise pool provision, which are integrated with providing free swimming as outlined above.
12. £10 million will be available in financial year 2008/09 to reward those authorities which sign up to both schemes as outlined above. Those authorities who confirm participation in both schemes as outlined above will receive a pro rata population-based share of the £10 million capital in financial year 2008/09. These funds can be used as project development costs for bids for financial year 2009/10 and financial year 2010/11. They cannot however be used for partnership funding for bids from financial year 2009/10 onwards.

Pot 4: Modernising pool provision – capital challenge fund

13. £25 million p.a. will be available in financial year 2009/10 and financial year 2010/11 to modernise pool provision and support more ambitious plans for swimming.
14. Sport England will administer the capital fund on behalf of the Government, and will publish a prospectus for bids for funding. Local authorities which have committed to pot 1 and pot 2 will be invited to submit costed plans for pot 4 by no later than 15 October 2008.