

Swim4Life Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Report

April 2009 - March 2010



UNIVERSITY OF
LINCOLN



Swim4Life Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Report October 2009

Table of Contents

1.0	Introduction	3
1.1	Project Outcome, Aims and Objectives	4
1.2	Countywide 16 and Under Participation	5
1.3	Individual District Participation	6
1.4	National and Regional Participation	14
2.0	Executive Evaluation Summary	16
2.1	Evaluation Overview	17
3.0	Key Findings and Supporting Research	18
3.1	Achievement Sources of Enjoyment	24
3.2	Social Sources of Enjoyment	26
3.3	Intrinsic Sources of Enjoyment	28
4.0	Evaluation Conclusion	32
5.0	Report Conclusion	33
6.0	Capital Fund in Lincolnshire	35
7.0	Free Swimming Lessons	37
8.0	Club Involvement	38
9.0	References	39

1.0 Introduction

The National Context

The National Governments ambition is to secure a lasting sporting legacy from London 2012. Swimming is one of the most popular participation sports in the country.

The free swimming philosophy is based on the concept that removing the barrier of entry charges will encourage more people to participate in swimming. Recent success in the swimming pool at the Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games has caught the attention of the nation and it is hoped that the 16s and under offer would pave the way for a future Rebecca Adlington or Dave Roberts to get into the sport.

Free swimming has also been used as a catalyst for involvement in other sports both wet and dry.

Following a successful pilot project in Wales, DCMS have taken the decision to launch a Nationwide Free Swimming programme. This includes both an over 60`s and a 16 and under provision.

DCMS provided funding for two key target markets

- Over 60`s
- 16 and under

The over 60`s project funding covered the costs to deliver the programme over two years. The 16 and under programme was significantly underfunded by approx £400,000 per annum. NHS Lincolnshire gave support to financing this shortfall. This was on condition that the project proves that it provided value for money.

Lincolnshire Context

Most swimming in the county has been offered at some form of cost. The provision for swimming has been delivered at a local level with no county wide coordination. 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)

Being able to swim is a key component for ensuring the safety of young people in Lincolnshire, primarily because access to natural water is easily available particularly with regards to the coastal areas. Lincolnshire for the most part has a good number of public swimming pools appropriately placed to service the local population.

Historically the number of people attending organised swimming sessions in Lincolnshire is in decline by approx 10% per annum.

In Lincolnshire there is consensus at senior executive level that providing free swimming for those people 16 and under could have a significant impact on increasing physical activity of the target audience.

The Lincolnshire Senior Cultural Officers Group (LSCOG) identified this project as significant and agreed to support the development and delivery of a county wide coordinated programme.

The project is the first time a swimming initiative has been coordinated to provide an offer that is available across Lincolnshire.

Swimming Health Benefits

Swimming is considered an ideal activity for children and those over 60. Water buoyancy protects joints etc from damage/trauma. Heart and lung activity is maximised during swimming exercise. The act of swimming promotes suppleness and muscle tone along with a positive self-esteem and mental wellbeing.



swim 4 life



Spending time in a group workout, whether water aerobics or a public swimming session is a great social outlet and good fun. Meeting new friends, swapping stories, challenging each other, and sharing in the hard work make swimming with others a rewarding experience.

Secretary of State for Health Alan Johnson said:

"Swimming is a great form of exercise and one that can be enjoyed by everyone whatever their age. With two thirds of adults and a third of children being either overweight or obese there really has been no better time to hit the pool." There is really no better encouragement than to offer this service for free.

Communities Secretary Hazel Blears said:

"...As leaders of their communities, councils have a key role to play in promoting healthy living by getting more people involved in local activities and encouraging regular exercise and it's clear that they see this scheme as a vital step toward achieving this. This is an opportunity to create a tangible local solution to local health issues and is a fine example of what real leadership is about."

1.1 Project Outcomes, Aims and Objectives

Outcomes

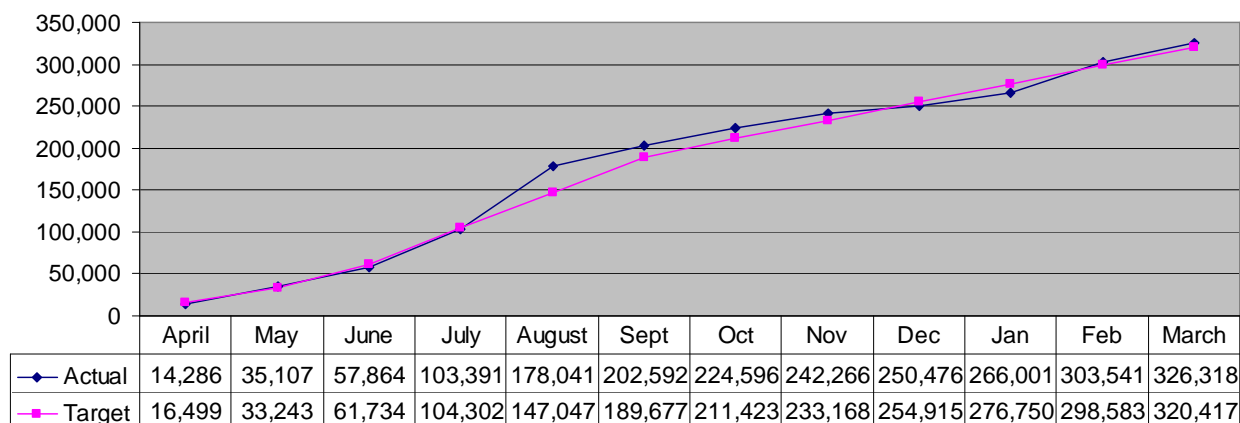
- Provide the opportunity for every young person of up to and including 16 years to enjoy swimming or water based fitness activities for health and fun
- Increased participation in sport and active recreation in Lincolnshire
- Reduced inequality through participation in sport and active recreation by under represented groups
- Improving health & wellbeing and tackling health inequalities

Objectives

Objective	Measure	Success achieved when (target)
Provide 320,417 free swims in the first year	Throughput	Achieved County number of Swim opportunities (see KPI's)
Monitor and record participation in year 1 to allow targets to be set for year 2	Registrations	Baseline figures for year 2 collated
People feel happier and more positive about their health	Sample Survey	Case Studies
Increase the numbers of participants with a disability	Registrations	Over 8% of participants have a self reported limiting disability

1.2 Countywide 16 and under participation

Overall



The figures are cumulative so by the end of March 2010 the people of Lincolnshire have swum 326,318 times.

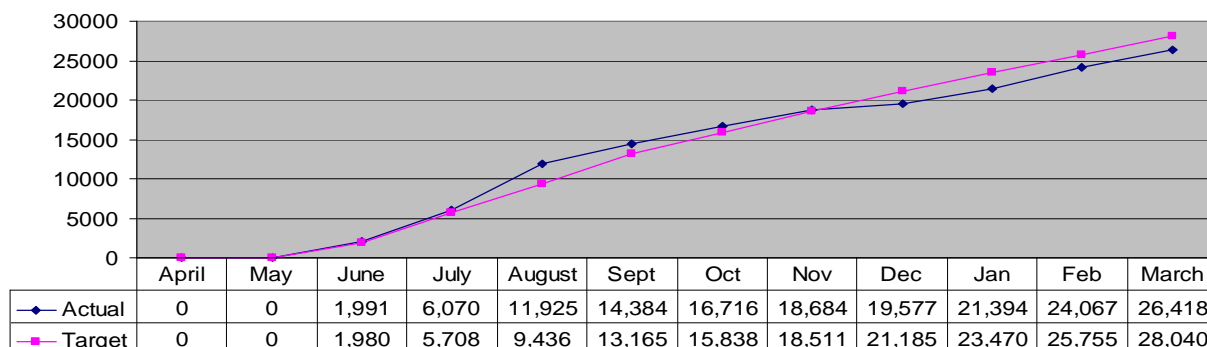
The project has seen a steady rise in throughput during the first 9 months. This was partly due to the staggered introduction of Swim4Life over the first 3 months of the year. The target figures also take into account the seasonal variation in swimming participation. The severe weather during December, January and February had an affect on the figures for that period.

Whilst the project has been initially slightly behind its throughput target, increasing awareness of the offer and the peak summer period have enabled it to end the year above its overall target.

The figures are throughput only so it is possible that people are participating more than once. There is anecdotal evidence that this is the case and documented in the social analysis of the project.

1.3 Individual District Participation

Boston



The Boston Borough Council project was late starting due to the wait for confirmation of funding.

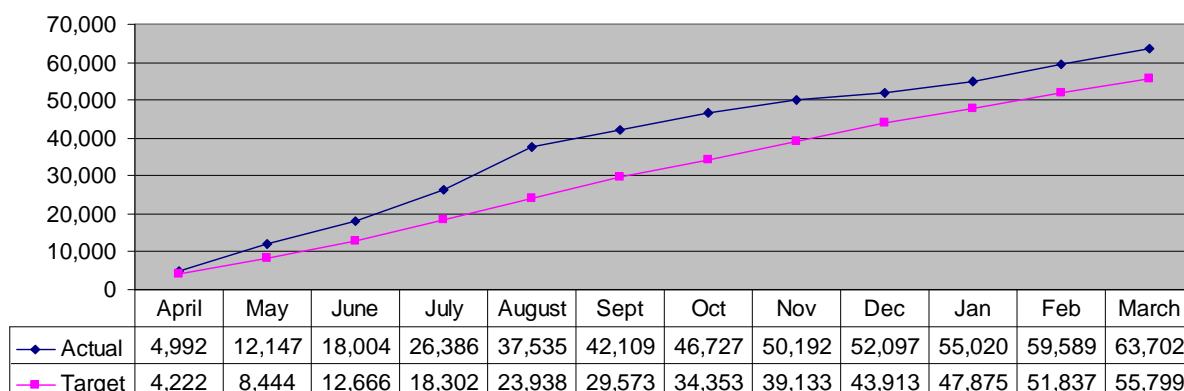
After the project started the Boston Borough Council made the decision to close the training pool. This significantly reduced the potential pool time available for all swimming activities by approximately 50%. Because of this situation throughput targets have been revised. By maximising the use of the remaining pool time the impact on the project has been minimised. This has had an impact on the funding allocation originally agreed.

Case Study: A Boston Mothers Story

My daughter who is 11 likes swimming but we could only afford to take her once a month. She registered for free swimming in July and joined a group of about 7-8 of her friends swimming twice a weekend for up to 3 hours a time. She now has become fitter and more toned dropping two dress sizes to a size 14. I wish I had the energy she now has.

She spends more time out playing as she is more confident in groups and is helping me with errands something she would not have done before.

City Of Lincoln



Yarborough Leisure Centre in particular has seen a dramatic increase and has found it necessary to extend public sessions to cope with the demand. City pool is only open on Sunday so has only a limited contribution to the figures. The city has to date provided just under 10,000 more swims than anticipated

Case Study

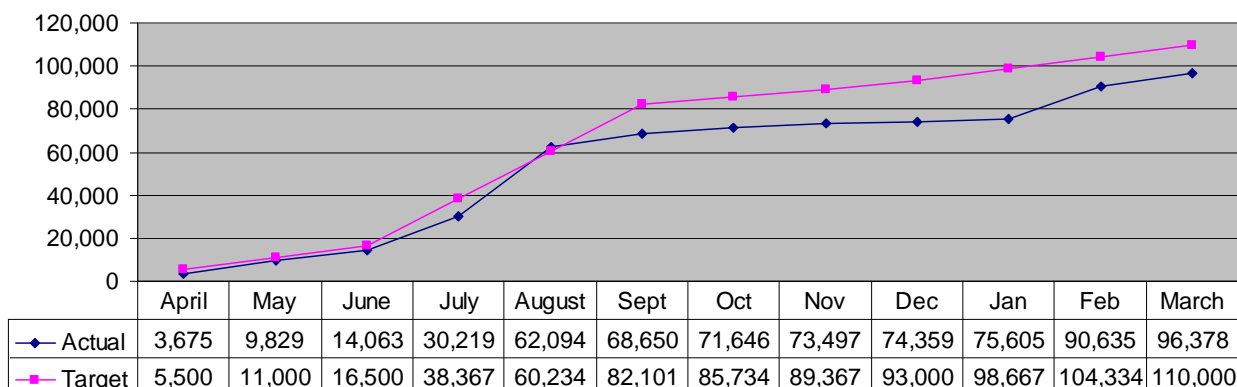
Female Swimmer aged 15-17

“I feel much more confident as I could only walk across a shallow pool before, so I didn’t go swimming and at school I used to always make an excuse not to go to swimming lessons. I can now swim 10m and got my badge last week. I feel much better, more confident and am looking forward to swimming with my friends.”

Male Swimmer aged 14

He wasn’t able to attend swimming due to cost. Since he joined on 5 July he has attended 41 days out of 87. He attends holidays; weekends and evenings. He tells the lifeguards he is making new friends and enjoying himself and is having a great time. He wasn’t able to swim 25m prior to gaining his free swim card but he can now swim 2 lengths of the pool (50m). He has gained such confidence that he can now dive from the side of the pool and from the small diving board. He has struggled with fitness as a youngster as he is allergic to the sun and is unable to play football or outdoor sports with his friends. Swimming has considerably improved his social life and confidence.

East Lindsey



All sites in East Lindsey have been busy with the Embassy pool in particular having its busiest August for 5 years. The delay in the opening of the Meridian Leisure Centre in Louth has had an effect on the overall figures but since its opening in February there has been a significant rise in numbers. The attendance figures were not helped by the severe weather conditions from December to February. By year end, East Lindsey have achieved 88% of the projected throughput target.

Case Study: Seathorne School

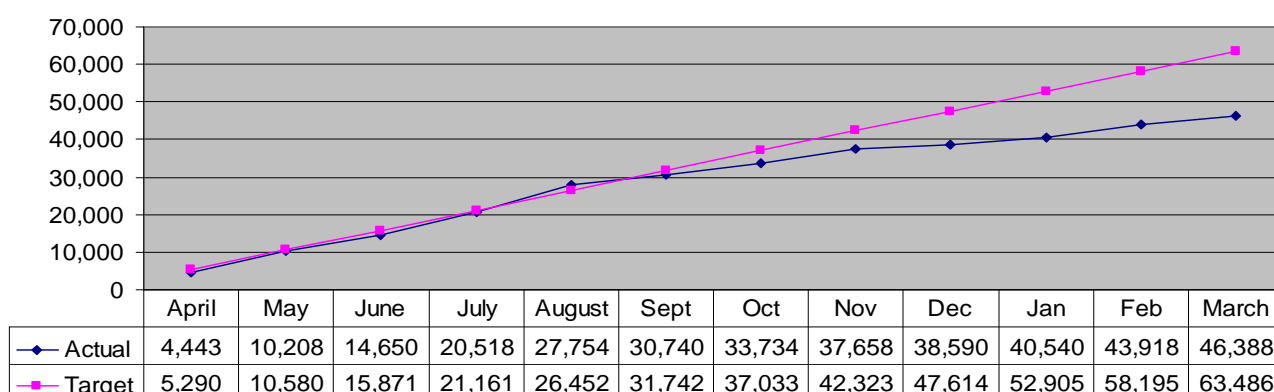
The school itself is situated within an area of high deprivation. The majority of the pupils would only visit the centre during the weekly school swimming lessons but due to the free swimming initiative, they were able to visit on a more regular basis, (most evenings and staying all day at weekends!)

In June the school attended the Aqua Splash festival. In past years, the school struggled and they very often came at the bottom end of the leader board. However, this year was different and they managed to achieve 1st place.

The success of the schools participation in the gala has enabled us to meet the main challenges for the service in delivering the corporate ambitions in respect of our ambition to 'Reduce Inequality and Improve Quality of Life', specifically our aim to 'broaden participation in sports, arts and leisure' and 'reduce health inequalities'.

These particular children are not currently having school lessons but are all still regulars at the pool and their swimming ability is now around stage 5. A great improvement in just a few months! They have not only improved their swimming/water confidence skills but they are also continuing to develop their social skills.

North Kesteven



Initially attendances at North Kesteven venues were strong with numbers as anticipated. Attendances peaked in August at 7,236 and fell by approx 50% in September, they recovered slightly in October and November but the severe weather in December saw attendances fall to an all time low for the year. By year end, North Kesteven have achieved 73% of the projected throughput target.

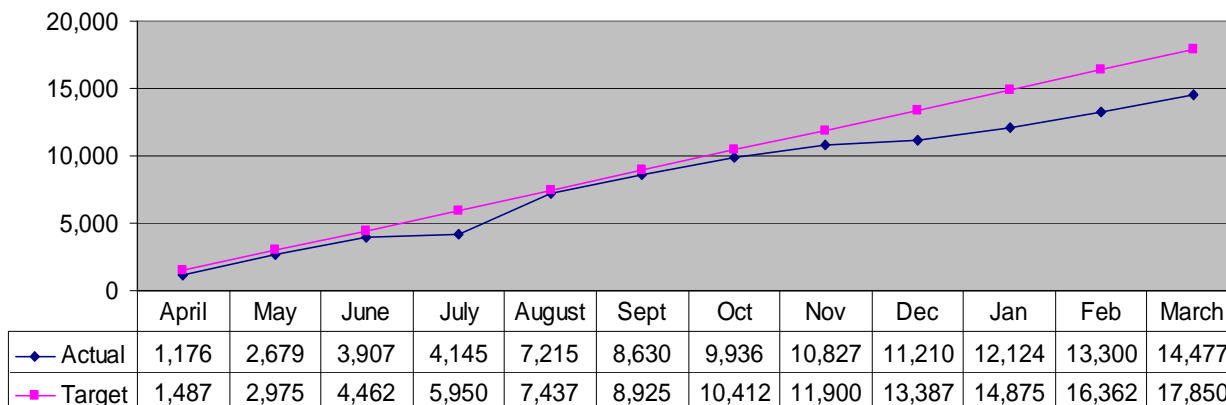
Case Study: North Kesteven Sports Centre

Situated in North Hykeham it has a large catchment area from the City of Lincoln to the rural areas of North Kesteven. It has a main pool and teaching pool and is used by Lincoln Vulcans and Lincoln Pentaqua swimming clubs.

A Single Parent

“I am a single parent and have three children aged 11 years 8 years and 6 years. I had not ever been to the North Kesteven Sports Centre until the free swimming started as I could not afford it. I was embarrassed as I did not know where to go but I registered and now go swimming with my children twice a week. I could not have done this if I had to pay. My children really enjoy it and we all go together. The youngest is much more confident in the water and we like the fun sessions.”

South Holland

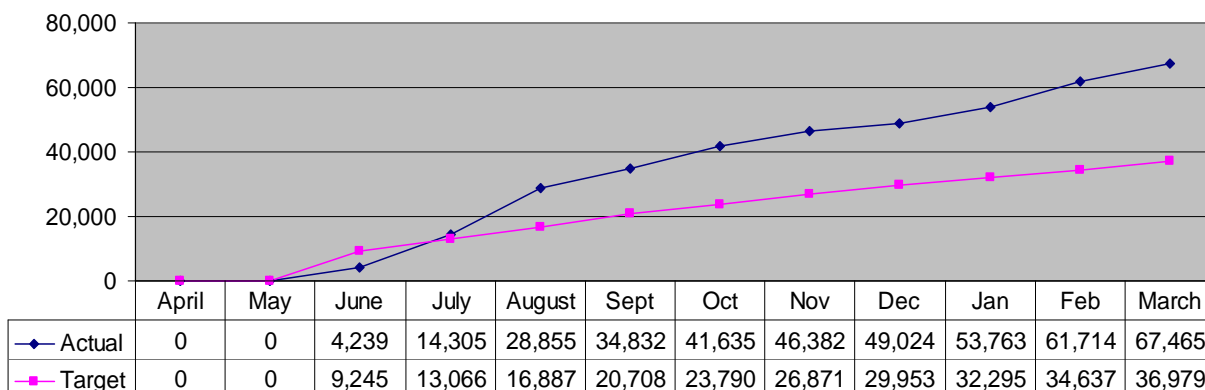


South Holland's funding from DCMS fully covered their projected costs so they have not asked for additional support. They have contributed to the development of the project by aligning to data collection protocols and marketing messages. Steady progress has been made against anticipated throughput despite some technical issues with the pool.

Case Study: Tale of two brothers

The brothers had only visited the pool only once in 2008. The data for 2009 shows that from April, they have visited 17 times. Free swimming has created an opportunity for the brothers to significantly increase their physical activity and their swimming has also improved tremendously since they have been able to access the pool more frequently.

South Kesteven

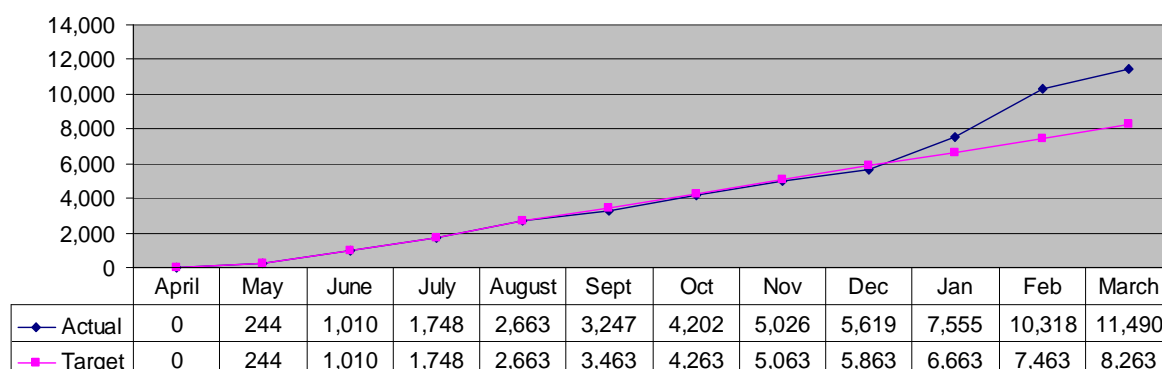


The South Kesteven project was late starting due to the wait for confirmation of funding. A significant increase in registrations continued through July and August with Grantham Meres performing exceptionally well (significantly above national Leisure Connection expectations). Registrations and participation have continued to rise across the district. South Kesteven have continued to achieve high attendances throughout the first year and by year end have achieved 182% of the projected throughput target.

Case Study: From a mother of a family in Grantham:

“I have two small children, one aged five and the other two. It used to cost us nearly £10 to go swimming, so we only used to go once a week in the school holidays. Since free swimming started we can now afford to go swimming twice a week or more and the whole family now goes instead of just me and the children. I have really noticed my five year olds confidence in the water improving and we really enjoy it as a family experience.”

West Lindsey



There was a change of contractors within the West Lindsey Leisure Centre which affected the programme within the early months. West Lindsey and its contractor felt throughput targets originally presented were unachievable and they were reviewed and amended with the new contractor committed to delivering the revised targets. The funding allocation was also amended accordingly.

There was a period of low attendances through the first half of the year but following a review of the services provided and the registration system in the centre, the revised targets have been surpassed.

Case Study: The following two case studies provide evidence that the project has a wider impact on family participation and also social skills and confidence.

A Gainsborough Family

“I use to have to pay £2.50 for myself and £1.20 for three of my children, which to come on a regular basis is quite expensive. We would normally only come once at weekend but now we come more often during the week and its great family fun time for us”

Gainsborough Mum

“My two Daughters started coming swimming at weekends with their friends and they were not the most of confident of swimmers, but this activity has enabled them to be more confident in water and also have great fun in trying”

16 and Under Free Swim Evaluation

2.0 Executive Evaluation Summary

The following evaluation work completed through the University of Lincoln, examined the success of the Lincolnshire 16 and under Free Swimming initiative.

The material contained in this report comprises initial quantitative questionnaires, qualitative research investigating the experiences of children and young people accessing the initiative, and qualitative research with parents of the identified under 16 participants.

Headline findings from the evaluative research demonstrated the potential for sporting commitment and long term participation and was reinforced through the young people indicating the following;

- The removal of cost has positively impacted upon participation and should it be reintroduced it is expected that frequency of attendance would decline.
(see section 3.0, page 17 for more details)
- Having fun was an integral part of their time at the pool which has a strong correlation with sporting commitment and long term participation.
(see section 3.1, page 23 for more details)
- Through attendance, playing games and chance meetings social identities have been created.
(see section 3.2, page 25 for more details)
- A desire to explore other sports and modes of physical activity and to participate more frequently.
(see section 3.3, page 27 for more details)

The evaluation has identified the current success of the Free Swimming initiative; however it is acknowledged that further investigation is warranted in order to fully appreciate its impact.

2.1 Evaluation Overview

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the Free Swimming initiative within Lincolnshire. The project mission is to increase participation in sport and physical activity for the 16 and under age group using swimming as the medium providing practical opportunities to support work in halting the rise in childhood obesity which is a major area of work for NHS Lincolnshire.

The use of questionnaires, focus groups and interviews were employed to explore and evaluate individual experiences and attitudes towards the initiative. Male and female under 16s accessing the Free Swimming initiative in the Lincoln and Louth area were sampled to complete the questionnaire (see figure 2.1 and 2.2 for participant details). Of those who consented a random sample (between 6 and 8) were invited to participate in the focus groups at their respective leisure facility. In addition to the focus groups with the young people, parents were invited to provide their views and opinions of how they perceived the initiative had impacted upon their children.

Age Group	10 - 12		13 - 14		15 - 16	
	Louth	Lincoln	Louth	Lincoln	Louth	Lincoln
	19	20	10	14	6	6

Figure 2.1 Distribution of Age from the Young People Sampled

Gender	Male		Female	
	Louth	Lincoln	Louth	Lincoln
	12	28	25	12

Figure 2.2 Distribution of Gender from the Young People sampled

3.0 Key Findings and Supporting Research

The World Health Organisation defines health as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’ (1948) and the benefits of child participation in any form of exertion cannot be underestimated within a physical, psychological or social context.

The use of swimming as a means of activity is unsurprising given the unique advantages of aquatic exercise which is highly recommended for children’s recreation (Sherrill, 2006). The sport simultaneously provides participants with; (proportional) usage of major muscle groups, aerobic fitness, development of flexibility and strength, coordination skills (required for multidimensional strokes) and is a sporting skill capable of staying with someone for a lifetime after the initial experience (Robertson-Wilson *et al.*, 2003). The sport is also a non-weight bearing activity which reduces the risk of injury (especially relevant to adolescents) and further encourages play which remains a fundamental necessity in children’s lives.

The physiological benefits cannot be considered in isolation of the intrinsic rewards. The effect of physical activity on the mental health and emotional well-being in adolescents has had significantly less attention than the adult population (Paluska & Schwenk, 2000). However, it is accepted that creating active leisure opportunities is an effective vehicle when intended to foster social youth development or ‘growth experiences’, on all levels (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009).

Government have recognised the implications of allowing children’s physical (and emotional) development to remain unmanaged and attempted to tackle the issue with initiatives underpinned by a number of manifestos targeting active youth participation (Physical Education, School Sport and Club Links, ‘Game plan’, ‘Playing to Win’, ‘Learning Through PE and Sport’, ‘Sporting Lives’). Swimming has been seen as an integral part in a number of these proposals with Government insisting it has a major role to play in the social, economic and environmental well-being of communities, identifying that every child should have the opportunity and access to

facilities, to learn to swim (DCMS, 2002). It is this issue of participation and how it can be sustained that becomes pivotal in determining the success of the Free Swimming initiative.

Figure 3.1 demonstrates the high number of children and young people who have already participated in the initiative within the Louth and Lincoln area.

Louth	1459
Lincoln	5982

Figure 3.1 Number of 16 Year Olds and Under Accessing the Scheme

Evidently there is no single variable that can explain and predict physical activity and exercise behaviour, however it is apparent that determinants must be considered in the context of personal, environmental and behavioural factors (Buckworth and Dishman, 2001).

Studies by Kirk *et al.* (1997) and Kay (2000) addressed external factors affecting children's sporting participation. This is significantly determined by a family's social class status and composition. Key information in each of these studies demonstrated that consistent participation requires the necessary disposable income to pay for facilities fees, kit and transport which are not always manageable.

In considering the impact of cost, completed questionnaires identified that a participation increase of 65% and 80% had been observed for Lincoln and Louth respectively, since the Free Swimming initiative launched. However Figures 3.2 and 3.3 identify conflicting responses when questioned whether they would continue to attend should cost be reintroduced.

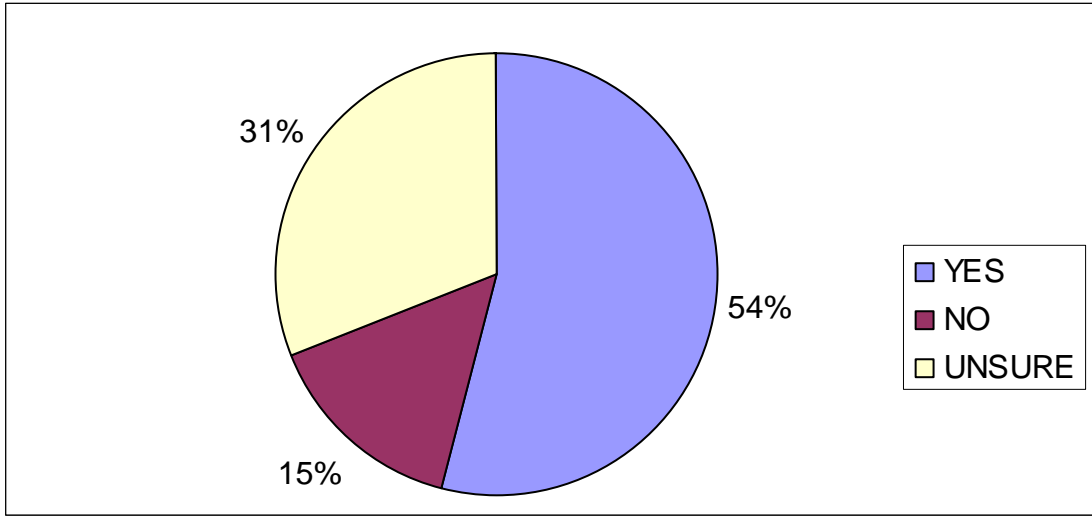


Figure 3.2 Responses to the question: If You Had to Pay to go Swimming Would You Still Go? Louth Area

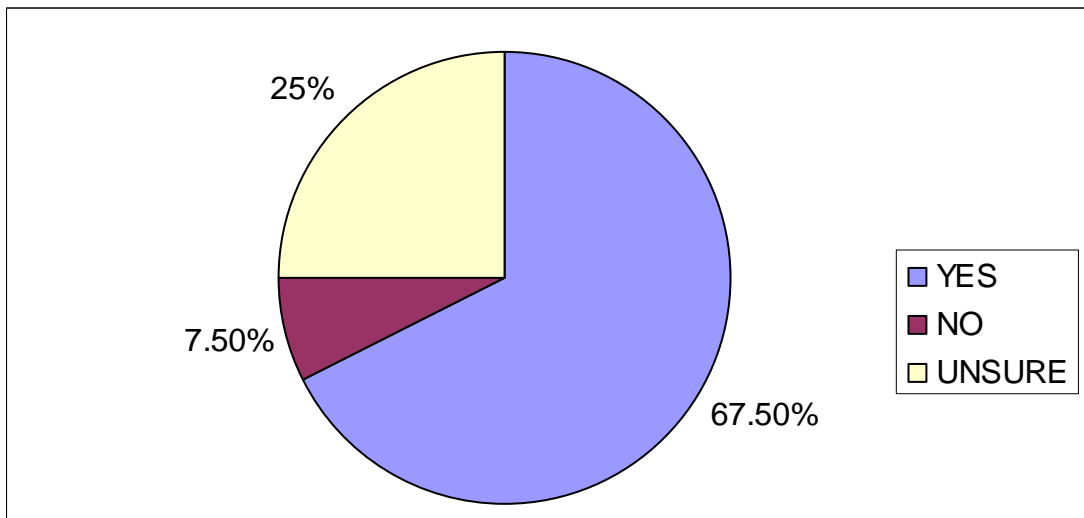


Figure 3.3 Responses to the question: If You Had to Pay to go Swimming Would You Still Go? Lincoln Area

It is important to note however that when questioned within the focus group. The young people, despite admitting they would still continue to attend swimming even if the cost was re-introduced, said it would not be as frequent with some suggesting they would decrease their attendance from three times a week to just once a week.

Duration and intensity of participation are equally important, specifically in light of current activity guidelines for children and young people. Guidelines suggest participation in a range of activities, at moderate intensity for at least sixty minutes during the course of a day (NICE, 2009). The children indicated that they would spend as long as they could in the water. The most frequent response across the two groups was 1.5 to 2 hours usually. There was a small difference in the participation patterns of the children in Louth when compared to the children in Lincoln. The children in Lincoln would often visit the pool more than once a day whereas many of the children in Louth visited every other day. This may have been indicative of the allocated swimming sessions at the two centres.

Most of the children spent their time in the pool doing a mixture of activities from swimming lengths to ‘splashing about’. The children of Lincoln defined ‘splashing about’ as jumping in, diving and playing games. The intensity of the sessions participated in can be clarified in the data collected from the questionnaires in figure 3.4 and 3.5.

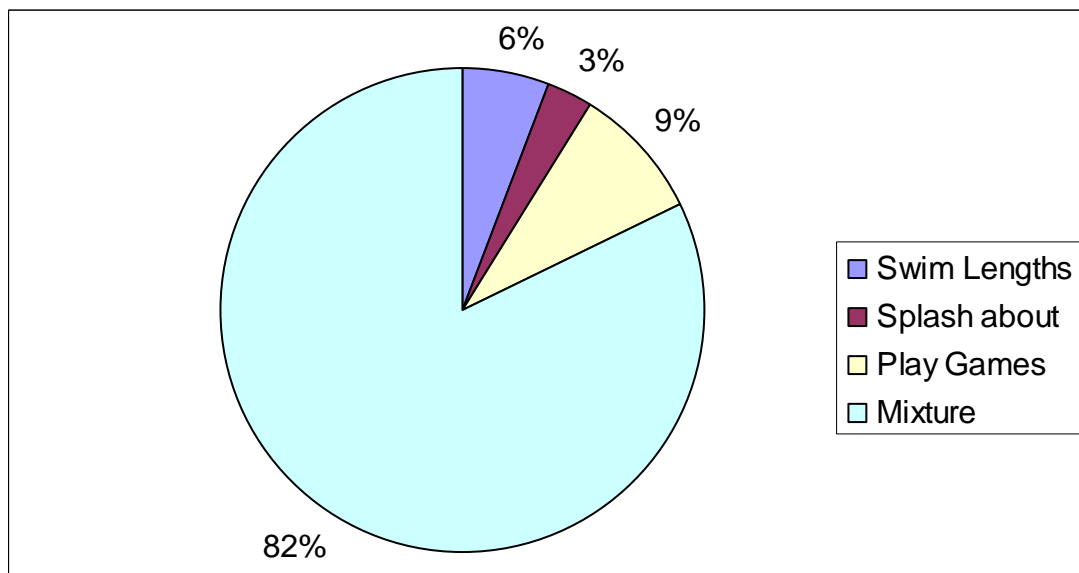


Figure 3.4 Distribution of Activities During the Free Swimming for the Louth Area

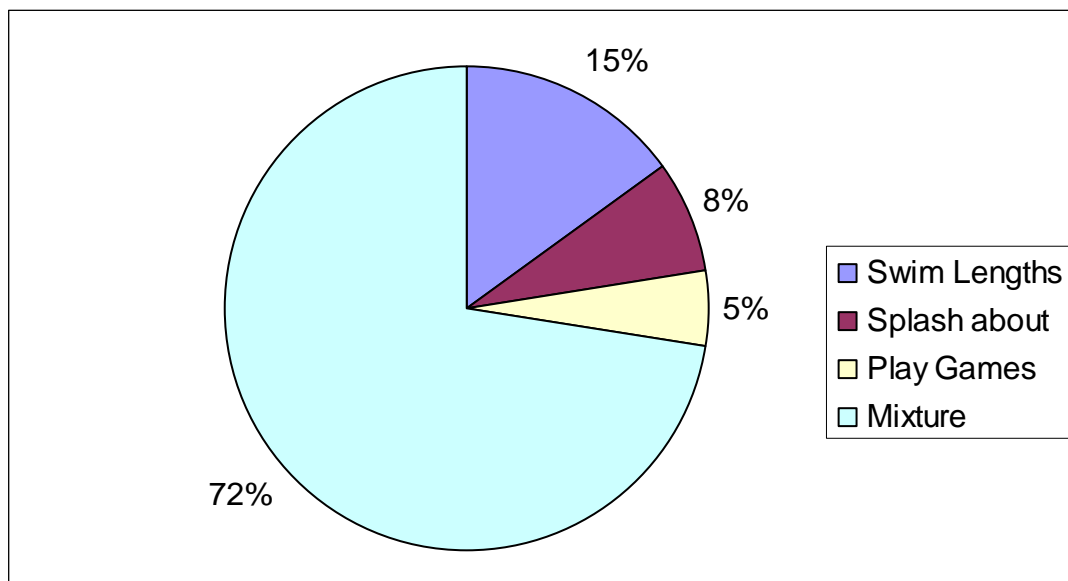


Figure 3.5 Distribution of Activities During the Free Swimming for the Lincoln Area

This evidence suggests that children and young people were in part meeting the recommended activity guidelines sufficient to benefit health through the reported frequency, duration and type of activities completed when attending the swimming sessions.

In determining the importance of sustained participation, the reasons that motivate this commitment must be explored. Perhaps the most common reasons for participation relate to physical competence, social acceptance and enjoyment (Fraser-Thomas et al., 2005).

Over the past 20 years, enjoyment has been consistently recognised by numerous researchers as the most important aspect of young people's experience of sport (Wankel & Kreisel, 1985; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986; Brustad, 1988; Scanlan & Simons, 1992; Weiss, 1993; Orlick & Zitzelsberger, 1996; Chalip & Green, 1998; Green, 2005; Weiss & Amorose, 2008). Enjoyment is a broad concept (often used interchangeably with the term 'fun' in the literature) which encompasses other inherent concepts such as 'intrinsic motivation and success'.

Weiss and Amorose (2008) have developed a conceptual model, the intention of which is to describe the various sources and consequences of ‘sport enjoyment’ (see figure 3.6). Although simplistic in its explanations, the model clearly highlights the wide variety of sources of enjoyment: from social recognition and friendships, to skill mastery and competence.

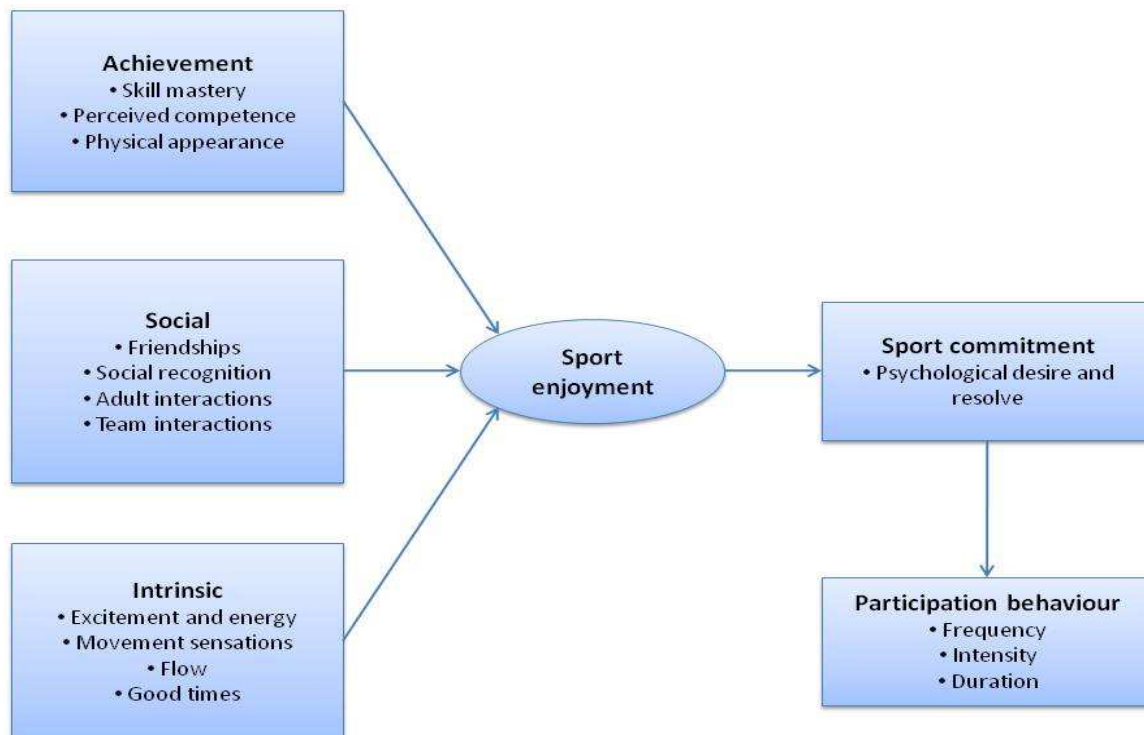


Figure 3.6: Schematic of the Sources and Consequences of Sport Enjoyment (adapted from Weiss and Amorose, 2008: 151).

Previous studies support the concepts involved within the enjoyment of sport, with the perceptions of competence and skill mastery, positive interactions with significant others (‘being with friends’, ‘being on a team’), and movement sensations (‘developing skills’, ‘excitement of sport’) all cited as important sources to long term commitment and participation within sport (Wankel & Kreisel, 1985; Scanlan & Lewthwaite, 1986; Scanlan & Simons, 1992; Coakley, 1986).

3.1 Achievement Sources of Enjoyment

All the participants within the focus groups considered the swim sessions to be fun and indicated that having fun was an integral part of their time at the pool. This was demonstrated by what the children were doing in the water within the free swimming sessions (refer to figure 3.4 and 3.5 for details).

The majority of the participants surveyed performed a mixture of activities, which included traditional swimming and development of technique / ability to having fun and playing games. Although there was no formal swimming instruction or teaching the participants expressed a change to their confidence within the water and a sense of achievement, that they had undertaken some form of physical activity that would potentially provide health benefits. This was supported by comments from the participants in both focus groups that at the end of their swim sessions they felt fitter and healthier. However, the participants struggled to explain how they felt healthier. As child x commented:

“Yeah I feel kind of healthier when I get out of the pool. I don’t know why but...”
(Focus Group Lincoln)

Whilst the participants struggled to articulate their immediate feelings of healthiness, they did feel that they had seen tangible improvements in their general fitness levels since the beginning of the free swim scheme:

“We, well me and my sister, ride, most of the time like ride our bikes to swimming from our house and I don’t know how but we’re out of breath...every time we bike more and more we just feel less tired every time.”
(Focus Group Lincoln)

In addition to the children’s perceived health benefits they provided anecdotal evidence as to how their time spent in the pool developed their swimming or diving skills as this discussion suggests:

What kind of things do you practice?

“Well at the moment tumble turns...I keep turning the wrong way. And dives in. I used to do a lot of belly flops. “

Are you improving the tumble turns?

“Yeah. I managed to do a couple of tumble turns and I’m getting much better at the jumping, the diving.” (Focus Group Lincoln)

Moreover children in both groups felt that the time they had spent in the pool had made them feel more confident in the water. For example child x commented:

“It helps me build up my confidence because like sometimes I’m scared of doing things.” (Focus Group Lincoln)

Child x felt that the swim sessions had left him/her:

“feeling more confident about going down to the bottom, right to the bottom of the deep end.” (Focus Group Louth)

Parental comments further supported the views of the young people of how achievement had been experienced, parent x provided the following comment:

“My eldest boy has dyspraxia and he has achieved his 25 metre (badge) having been stuck on his 5 metres for the past two years.” (Parent Interview Louth)

In relation to Weiss & Amoroses’ (2008) model there is evidence to suggest that the free swim scheme has left children with a sense of achievement and confidence with regards to swimming.

3.2 Social Sources of Enjoyment

Once involved in sport and physical activity children often cite friendship and socialising as a main source of enjoyment and motivation. Côté (2002) suggests that ‘social support’ from peers and affiliation with others’ are core factors in continued participation in sport. Corresponding values such as ‘companionship’ and ‘having things in common’ are noted, especially by girls, as positive dimensions of sports participation (Weiss *et al.*, 1996; Cox *et al.*, 2006). The findings of this evaluation suggest that the participants felt that the free swim scheme enabled them to build new friendships. Through playing games, and chance meetings a number of the participants felt they had made new friends and improved their social skills. Furthermore as many of the children attended the sessions with peers they felt it provided them with an opportunity to socialise within existing friendship groups (see figure 3.7 and 3.8 for details).

Most of the children spent some of their time ‘splashing about’ which often involved creating and playing games or competitions in the water. When child x was with friends he would create competitive situations like:

“who can do the best dive and who can do the best front flip and who can do the best running dive” (Focus Group Lincoln)

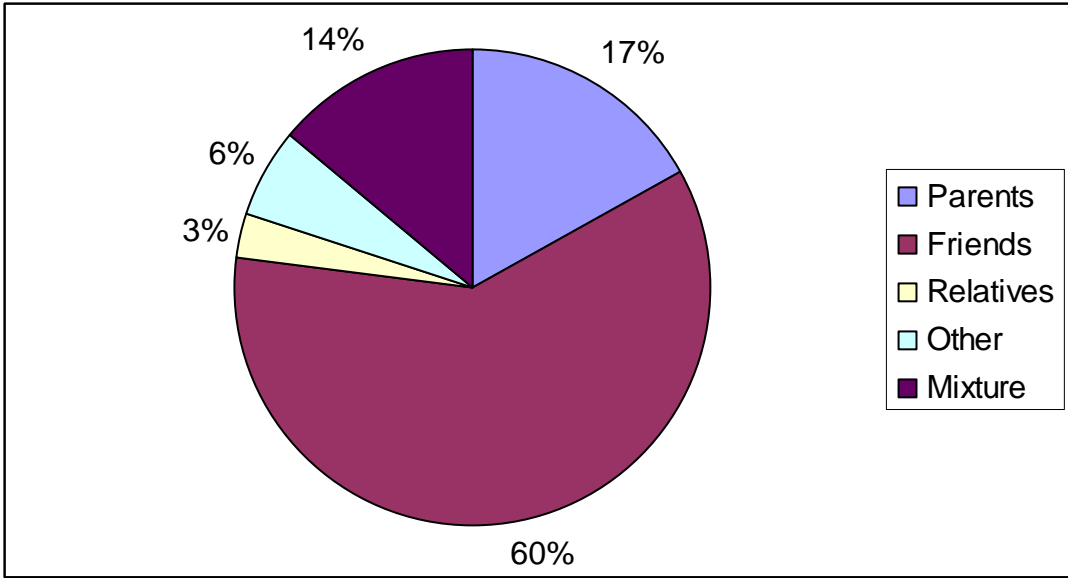


Figure 3.7 Distribution of who the Young People Attend the Free Swimming Sessions With: Louth Area

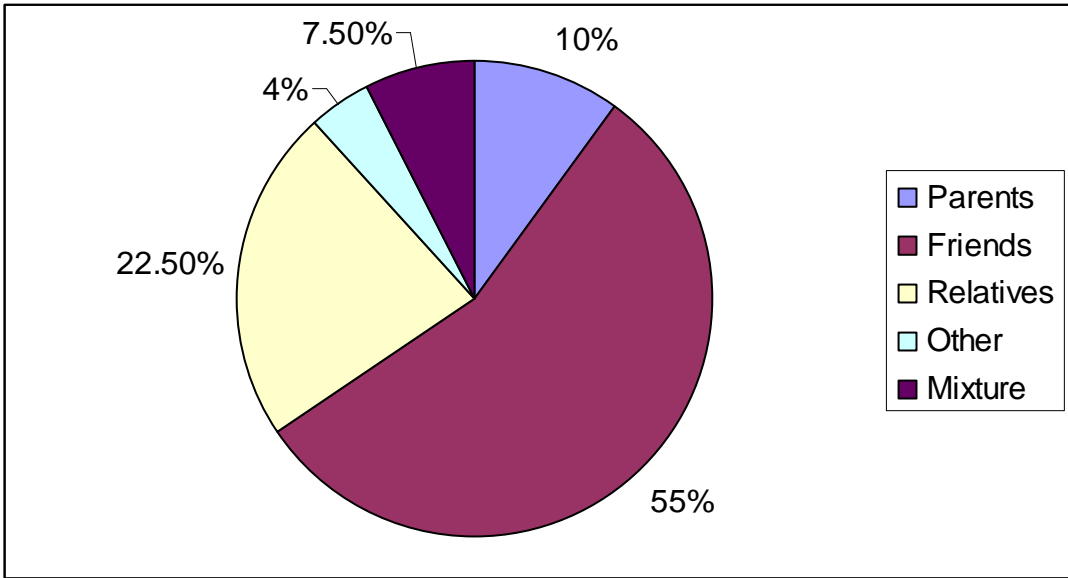


Figure 3.8 Distribution of who the Young People Attend the Free Swimming Sessions With: Lincoln Area

Previous studies have found 'sporting identity to be the strongest predictor of sporting commitment and stable participation (Lau, et al., 2006). Green (2005) for example, claims that the new role identities sport can provide are influential in decisions young people make to maintain participation. If identities are formed at an

early age, children will form partnerships with like minded individuals producing sporting commitment.

In addition, a few of the children noted that they would attend sessions with family. Therefore the swim sessions provided opportunities for the family unit to spend time together without financial burden. Child x used this opportunity to learn skills from her brother:

“I tend to do things that I don’t know with my brother and trying to work on them.”
(Focus Group Lincoln)

Parental comments further supported the views of the young people of how it has impacted upon them socially, particularly in terms of the family unit:

“They’re more relaxed. When they’ve been for a swim all the stress is out and everything and it makes it a lot easier at home.”
(Parent Interview, Lincoln)

“They are a lot more calmer, they don’t want to have squabbles, they seem more chilled with each other - so it is having an impact on family life.”
(Parent Interview, Louth)

3.3 Intrinsic sources of Enjoyment

As previously stated creating active leisure opportunities is an effective vehicle when intending to foster social youth development or ‘growth experiences’ (Fraser-Thomas & Côté, 2009). Growth experiences can be described as experiences that teach you something or expand you in some way, that give you new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of interacting (Dworkin *et al.*, 2003). These can be associated with the by-products of active play in the form of social success, positive peer relationships, increased confidence and self-esteem, leadership skills and learning (Wright & Côté, 2003; Larson, 2000).

The most common reasons for participation relate to physical competence, social acceptance and enjoyment, while the most commonly cited reasons for withdrawal (drop-out) are negative experiences (lack of fun, competence-skill imbalance, parental/coach pressure) (Fraser-Thomas *et al.*, 2005).

When asked how the young people felt after swimming many of the responses related to intrinsic feelings such as happiness or well-being. The young people linked these feelings to knowing that they have worked hard whilst swimming.

“Tired and happy because I’m happy that I’ve, what I’ve done.”

(Focus Group Lincoln)

As mentioned previously the young people described feeling healthier but many couldn’t explain how they felt healthier. A few of the young people did suggest that they felt healthier just by knowing that they have exercised:

“Cos you feel like you’ve done like, tired out like, your energy’s gone...so you feel healthier.”

(Focus Group Louth)

Some of the children in Louth also said that attending the sessions made them feel energised and wanting to do more exercise:

“I feel like I want to just like go out for a jog after like, another day.”

(Focus Group Louth)

As highlighted in previous sections the results from the evaluation indicate that the participants had experienced a number of sources of enjoyment, through achievement, socialising and intrinsic rewards. Moreover, data from this study supports Weiss & Amorose’s theory (2008) that through enjoying the swim sessions the children developed a level of commitment and desire to participate in sport (see figure 3.9 and 3.10).

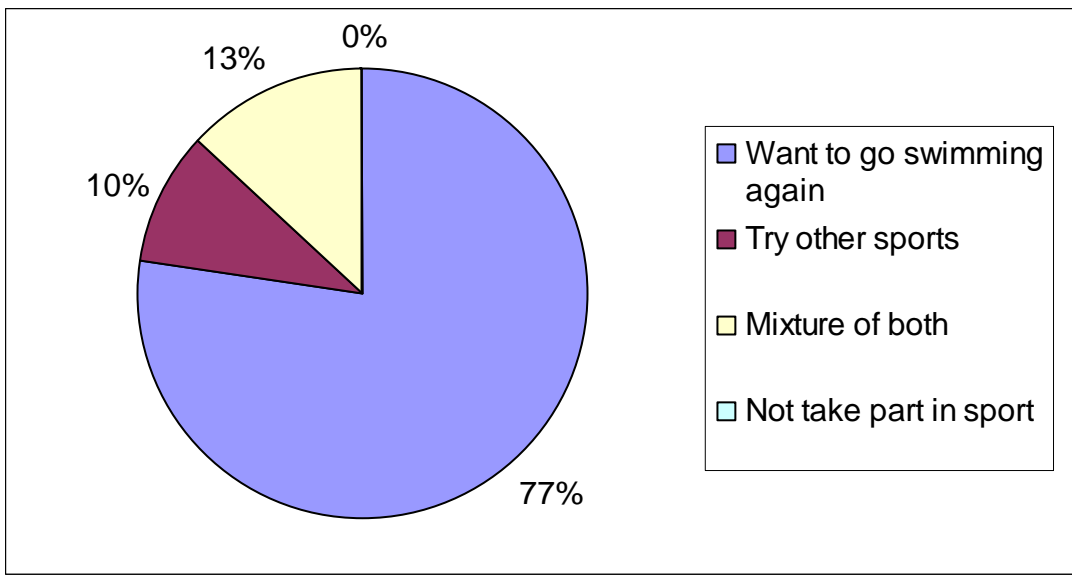


Figure 3.9 Perceptions on How the Free Swimming Sessions Effect the Participants Physical Activity Levels: Louth Area

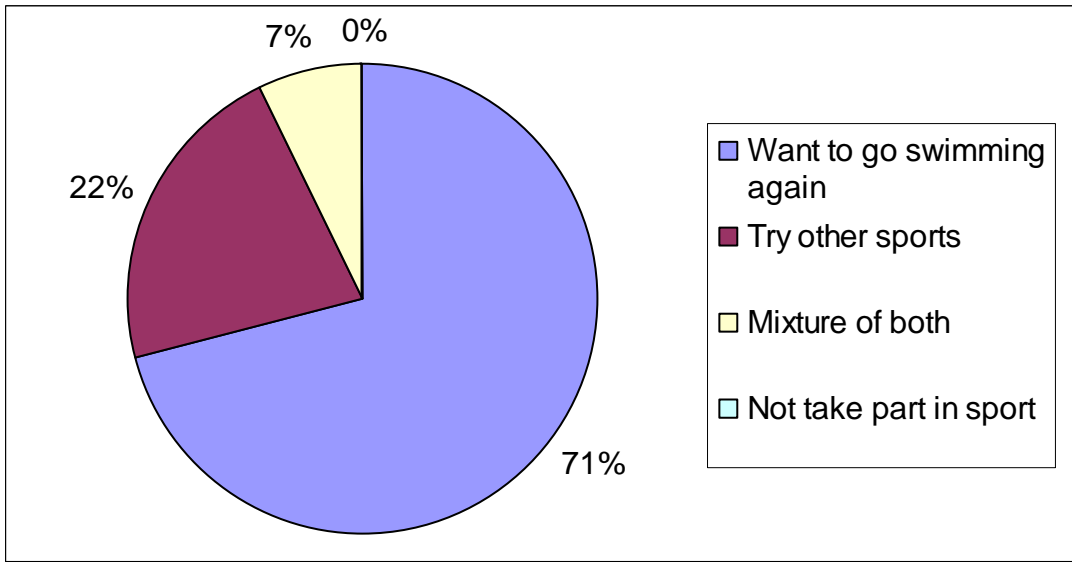


Figure 3.10 Perceptions on How the Free Swimming Sessions Effect the Participants Physical Activity Levels: Lincoln Area

In addition a number of the participants commented that they felt like doing more exercise after their time in the pool and that they had an increased confidence in other sporting situations:

“now I’ve got more confidence doing things at swimming, I’ve got more confident doing things outside, like when I go horse-riding I’ve got more confident on doing more things.” (Focus Group Lincoln)

This feeling of confidence also led to some children participating in more formal swimming and other related sports. For example child x felt that swimming had helped her get involved with triathlons:

“I wouldn’t have done that (triathlons) if I hadn’t have gone to the free swimming programme.” (Focus Group Lincoln)

Parental comments further supported the views of the young people of how it has effected the young people intrinsically, parent x provided the following comment:

“It has built her confidence up.... Her self esteem has improved loads and swimming has helped.” (Parent Interview, Louth)

“It’s been brilliant for her, confidence wise..... So it’s good.” (Parent Interview, Lincoln)

4.0 Evaluation Conclusion

The removal of the financial barrier has provided the opportunity for many more 16 and under to access physical activity sessions through the medium of swimming. In trying to determine the factors that lead to sporting commitment and long term participation the Weiss and Amorose (2008) model identified the key concepts of achievement, social and intrinsic sources of enjoyment. From the young people surveyed within this evaluation there is clear evidence that the individuals accessing the scheme are experiencing all aspects of enjoyment influencing their attitudes and providing positive changes to their sport and physical activity participation.

The findings are in agreement with previous studies that have recognised that the benefits (physical, mental and social) of swimming increase rapidly when long-term participation is continued (Cordain *et al.*, 1988; Donnelly, 1991). Whilst the scope of this research has been unable to determine specific health outcomes these have been clearly highlighted through the discussions with the young people and parents. Data exploring frequency, duration and intensity, provides evidence that young people are making significant contributions through the Free Swimming initiative to meet their current physical activity guidelines.

It is recommended that future research be conducted over a longer duration. It is hoped that this would allow the investigation of the areas explored within this report in greater detail and more specifically measurable health outcomes.

5.0 Report Conclusion

The case studies, data collection and focus groups provide evidence that;

- The removal of cost as a barrier, increases participation
- The initiative has increased the desire to participate more frequently
- Social interaction has improved and social identities have been forged
- People have improved their health in areas such as weight loss and increased their aerobic capacity.

The availability of free swimming for 16 and under has had a wider impact upon family swimming. Evidence from case studied indicates that families have used the initiative to subsidise family swimming. This increased the physical activity levels of adults as well as children and also had a positive impact upon family social interaction.

Once engaged in swimming participants have been energised to participate for longer and more frequently and also in other physical activity particularly walking and cycling

Large numbers of older children have formed groups to take advantage of the opportunities to swim. This has helped to develop their physical competence and to improved self esteem and social acceptance. This has been more marked among those people with low self esteem or limiting disabilities.

The primary goal of the project is to increase participation in fun-based physical activity, with related health and developmental benefits, using swimming as the main medium for delivery. From the evidence base currently available it would appear that the project is achieving its primary goal with the related health benefits. Taking the case study evidence of increased adult family swims into account the project has had a wider and greater impact than just on children.



The development of a countywide project has had significant impact upon relationships with partners at a local, regional and national level. A strong steering group for the project has been built around the financial sponsorship from the Department of Culture Media and Sport and NHS Lincolnshire. The partnership consisting of district leisure officers and their service provider partners together with the Amateur Swimming Association, the Lincolnshire Sports Partnership, NHS Lincolnshire and the Lincolnshire County Council has enabled Lincolnshire to be the second most successful group to leverage additional funding from the Free Swimming Lessons national initiative.

The Free Swimming Lessons national initiative is available through three funding Pots and below is the draw down to date:

	No. of Applications	Funding	No of new swimmers
Pot A	29	£7,250	348
Pot B	67	£16,750	710
Pot C	7	£2,450	70
Total	103	£26,450	1128

Other applications from Lincolnshire are being processed.

There is a real possibility that this money would be withdrawn if the Countywide programme of Free Swimming were to be halted through withdrawal of funding for the wider scheme.

6.0 Capital Fund in Lincolnshire

Boston

City of Lincoln

East Lindsey

North Kesteven

South Holland

The Castle Pool Modernisation Project looked to improve the standard and accessibility of the Castle Pool facilities in the face of a gradually declining usage due to an aging infrastructure. The project also supported the priority aims and objectives of South Holland District Council, its stakeholders and the DCMS's Free Swimming Programme.

The project involved capital works to provide improvements to the accessibility of the pool hall for persons with disabilities and/or limited mobility, School parties and the three swimming clubs that use the pool facilities. It further improved accessibility through upgrading half the car park, improvements to the reception, viewing gallery and the changing accommodation areas for all users. The project, over the longer term, will also see reductions to the operational carbon footprint of the building through further improvements to the roof insulation above the changing rooms, fixed plant that included the air handling system, heat exchanger pumps & pool water filters and the provision of upgraded swimming pool covers. One of the clubs using the facilities that caters for people with disabilities, also worked with the Council and Leisure Connection to secure funding for further equipment such as a whole body dryer and wall mounted changing units installed in the accessible changing accommodation.

Improvements to the Accessibility of the Pool Facilities included:

- A new Accessible Changing Room – Following advice from the ASA Technical Team and the removal of an old sauna cabinet, a new disabled wc and shower/changing facility, two new additional changing rooms, a drying area with an all body dryer and a communal locker area were installed. The existing showers in this area then upgraded and a further standard toilet added.
- Upgrading of the existing Changing Accommodation – The floors in all areas were upgraded with new vinyl safety flooring, the wall coverings in the shower

areas were also upgraded, the cubicles and seating in the female change were replaced and the changing areas redecorated throughout. A further all body dryer was installed in a general area disability changing cubicle.

- Upgrading of all Common Areas – New vinyl safety flooring was laid in all areas including the reception and first floor viewing balcony, new automatic entrance doors to reception lobby were put in following alterations to the glazed lobby and the areas of the car park that had degraded were resurfaced.
- Repositioning the Sauna – A new sauna cabinet was installed pool side complete with a new 3 phase electrical supply, shower and a rest area.

Improvements to the Environmental Conditions included:

- A new Air Handling Unit – A more efficient replacement unit was installed due to the existing unit coming to the end of its useful life.
- Upgrading the Pool Water Filters – The existing filters were refurbished and the filter media replaced.
- Replacing the Heat Exchanger Pump – A new pump was installed due to the existing unit coming to the end of its useful life.
- New Pool Covers – New electronically operated covers were installed for all three pool tanks.
- Additional Roof Insulation – Polystyrene insulation slabs laid on the existing flat roof were weighed down with gravel to increase the insulation of the roof.

South Kesteven

Funding bids were not successful.

West Lindsey

No funding was applied for.

9.0 References

Brustad, R. J. (1988), Affective Outcomes in Competitive Youth Sport: The Influence of Intrapersonal and Socialisation Factors, *Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 10, 307-321.

Buckworth, J., and Dishman, R. K. (2002), *'Exercise Psychology'*, Champaign, IL; Human Kinetics.

Chalip, L. and Green, C. (1998), Establishing and Maintaining a Modified Youth Sport Program: Lessons from Hotelling's Location Game, *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 15, 326-342.

Coakley, J. (1986), Socialization and Youth Sports, in Rees, R. and Miracle, A. (Eds.) *Sport and Social Theory*, Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Cordain, L., and Stager, J. (1988), Pulmonary structure and function in swimmers, *Sports Medicine*, 6, 271-278.

Côté, J. and Hay, J. (2002), Children's Involvement in Sport: A Developmental Perspective, In: Silva III, J. M. and Stevens, D. E. (Eds.) *Psychological Foundations of Sport*, London: Allyn and Bacon.

Cox, L., Coleman, L., Roker, D. (2006), Understanding Participation in Sport: What determines sport Participation among 15-19-year old Women. London: Sport England.

DCMS (2002), *'Testing the Waters': The Sport of Swimming*, HMSO: London.

Donnelly, P. M. (1991), Exercise induced asthma: the protective role of CO₂ during swimming, *The Lancet*, 337, 179-180.

Dworkin, J. B., Larson, R., Hansen, D. (2003), Adolescents' accounts of growth - experiences in youth activities, *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 32, 17-26.

Fraser-Thomas, J., Côté, J., Deakin, J. (2005), Youth sport programs: an avenue to foster positive youth development, *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 10, (1), 19-40.

Fraser-Thomas, J., and Côté, J. (2009), Understanding Adolescents' Positive and Negative Developmental Experiences in Sport, *The Sport Psychologist*, 23, 3-23.

Green, C. (2005), Building Sport Programs to Optimise Athlete Recruitment, Retention, and Transition: Toward a Normative Theory of Sport Development, *Journal of Sport Management*, 19, 233-253.

Kay, T., A. (2000), 'Sporting Excellence: A Family Affair?', *European Physical Education Review*, 6, (2), 151-170.

Kirk, D., Carlson, T., O'Connor, A., Burke, P., Davis, K., Glover, S. (1997), The Economic Impact of Families of Children's Participation in Junior Sport, *Australian Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, 29, (2), 27-33.

Larson, R., W. (2000), Towards a psychology of positive youth development, *The American Psychologist*, 55, 170-183.

Lau, P., Fox, K., Cheng, N. (2006), Analysis of Sport Identity as a Predictor of Children's Participation in Sport, *Paediatric Exercise Science*, 18, 415-426.

National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence. (2009). Promoting Physical Activity for Children and young People. London: National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence.

Orlick, T. and Zitzelsberger, L. (1996), Enhancing Children's Sport Experiences, in Smith, R. and Smoll, F. (Eds.) *Children and Youth Sport: A Biopsychosocial Perspective*, Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing.

Paluska, S., C., and Schwenk, T., L. (2000), Physical Activity and Mental Health, *Sports Medicine*, 29, (3), 167-180.

Robertson-Wilson, J., Baker, J., Derbyshire, E., Côté, J. (2003), Childhood physical activity involvement in active and inactive female adults, *Avante*, 9, 1-8.

Scanlan, T. and Lewthwaite, R. (1986), Social Psychological Aspects of Competition for Male Youth Sports Participants: IV: Predictors of Enjoyment, *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 8, 25-35.

Scanlan, T. and Simons, J. (1992), The Construct of Sport Enjoyment, in Roberts, G. (Ed.) *Motivation in Sport and Exercise*, Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

Sherrill, C. (2006), *Adapted Physical Education and Recreation: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, (6th ed.), New York: McGraw-Hill.

Wankel, L. and Kreisel, P. (1985), Factors Underlying Enjoyment of Youth Sports: Sport and Age Group Comparisons, *Journal of Sport Psychology*, 7, 51-64.

Weiss, M. (1993), Children's Participation in Physical Activity: Are We having Fun Yet? *Paediatric Exercise Science*, 5, 205-209.

Weiss, M., Smith A., Theeboom, M. (1996), "That's What Friends are For": Children and teenagers Perceptions of Peer Relationships in the Sport Domain, *Journal of sport and Exercise Psychology*, 18, 347-379



swim 4 life



Weiss, M. and Amorose, A. (2008), Motivational Orientations and Sport Behaviour, in Horn, T. (Ed.) *Advances in Sport Psychology*, Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.

World Health Organisation (WHO). (1948). Definition of Health – Official Records of the World Health Organisation. Switzerland: WHO.

Wright, A., and Côté, J. (2003), A retrospective analysis of leadership development through sport, *The Sport Psychologist*, 17, 268-291.