

Deaf-friendly swimming



Our vision is of a
world without barriers
for every deaf child.

Deaf-friendly swimming

The Me2 project is all about helping mainstream leisure providers to be deaf friendly through the provision of training, resources and support. This includes:

- swimming clubs
- learn to swim programmes
- swimming facilities.

Further details about the Me2 project can be found at www.ndcs.org.uk/me2.

This booklet is to help swimming teachers and coaches to include deaf children in swimming sessions. Throughout this resource we will use the term “coach” to refer to both teacher and coach.

By making **small** and **simple** changes you will be able to include deaf children and young people in your mainstream swimming sessions. Many of the tips you will find here will be beneficial to all the swimmers in your group, not just deaf children.

This booklet can also offer support to parents.

Real life story

Jack McComish (16) from Lanark is a deaf swimmer who competes at national and international level

Jack is profoundly deaf and wears a cochlear implant. Jack really enjoys swimming for Lanark Swimming Club and Great Britain Deaf Swimming Club (GBDSC). He has been swimming competitively for six years since learning to swim at his local council pool. Deafness does not affect his training as his coach writes the training set on a wipe clean board for him to read.

Jack is a Scottish junior champion in mainstream swimming, a Scottish age group champion and a Scottish schools champion. He has won many district titles and a bronze medal at the European Deaf Championships and at the World Deaf Championships. He has also won many medals at the British International Disability Swimming Championships in the deaf category. On top of this, Jack has competed for Scotland at the UK School Games.

Jack heard about deaf swimming club through another deaf swimmer at a disability meet and decided to get involved. He likes meeting other deaf swimmers and the opportunity to travel and compete abroad. He has made lots of friends through deaf swimming.

Jack encourages other deaf young people to get involved in swimming. His motto is “just do it and don’t let being deaf stand in your way”. His ambitions for the future are to keep competing at the highest level he can and win more Scottish titles. He hopes to go to Deaflympics in 2013 and would love to make the Commonwealth games in 2014 to compete against hearing swimmers.

Jack very much thinks of himself as a swimmer, not a deaf swimmer. He is in the Scottish development squad (alongside hearing swimmers) and he gets no special allowances because he is deaf. And that’s just the way he wants it.



From the ASA

“One of the wonderful things about swimming is the fact that it is a fully inclusive sport. The ASA, SASA and WASA work closely with British Deaf Swimming to ensure that Britain is represented at international deaf swimming championships.

Disability swimming isn’t just about competitions and elite performance – opportunities are available to all those who wish to participate in swimming in whatever capacity they choose, as athletes or volunteers. There are active programmes at both local and regional level and the sport is backed up by its own training framework.

British Swimming fully supports the development of this guidance document to help ensure that everyone has the opportunity to swim to their own potential and have access to a level playing field in disability swimming.”

David Sparkes,
Chief Executive Officer
British Swimming and the ASA



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Top tips for deaf-friendly swimming

Do

- ✓ Ask the child or young person how you should communicate with them.
- ✓ Make sure you have everyone's attention before speaking – try waving or stopping to get everyone's attention.
- ✓ Limit distractions! Move to a quieter part of the pool to explain things or brief children poolside when they can wear their hearing aids or cochlear implants.
- ✓ Speak clearly and naturally.
- ✓ Ensure the pool is well lit and any light is shining on your face (not behind you).
- ✓ Stand in one place and keep eye contact while talking (this might involve kneeling or sitting down).
- ✓ Use visual aids to help understanding – including directional lane boards, photos, pictures or video.
- ✓ Use gestures and demonstrations.
- ✓ Make the topic really clear and stick to the point.
- ✓ Ask the child or young person to repeat what you have said to check they have understood.
- ✓ Allow time for questions and clarification.

Don't

- ✗ Speak too slowly or shout! This will distort your lip patterns.
- ✗ Move around when you are talking – it will be very difficult to lipread.
- ✗ Cover up your mouth or talk with your whistle in your mouth.
- ✗ Give up. If stuck, try explaining in a different way, write it down or use pictures. Alternatively, get a competent swimmer to demonstrate for you.



Understanding deafness

NDCS uses the word ‘deaf’ to refer to all levels of hearing loss.

NDCS research shows there are more than 45,000 deaf children living in the UK. A further four babies are born deaf every day. It is highly likely that swim teachers, coaches or instructors will work with children who have a temporary deafness, such as glue ear, as well as children with permanent deafness.

It is important to be aware that every individual’s experience of deafness is different and the extent of people’s level of deafness varies. This means that there is a range in levels of deafness and a wide variety of equipment is available, such as hearing aids.

Further resources and information about deafness can be found in the *Making Activities Deaf Friendly* booklet which can be ordered for free from the Me2 team.



Levels of deafness

The definitions below are a simple way to understand different levels of deafness.

Me2

Level of deafness	
Mild (20–40dB)	<p>Children can usually hear everything that is said to them in a quiet room, but not if there is lots of noise present or they are far away from the person speaking.</p> <p>A child would not be able to follow a whispered conversation.</p> <p>Some children with mild deafness use hearing aids.</p> <p>A child with glue ear will usually have mild deafness.</p>
Moderate (41–70dB)	<p>Most children with moderate deafness use hearing aids.</p> <p>Without their hearing aids, they could hear most of what someone says to them in a quiet room as long as they speak clearly, but could not follow a conversation in a large group if there is lots of background noise (as can often be the case poolside) or they are far away from the person speaking.</p>
Severe (71–95dB)	<p>Most children with severe deafness use hearing aids and most can follow spoken conversation with one person in a quiet room when using them.</p> <p>Even with hearing aids they may need additional support following speech in background noise and in groups.</p> <p>Without hearing aids they may not hear someone talking to them but may hear some other louder sounds, like a lifeguard's whistle or a wave machine's siren.</p>
Profound (95dB+)	<p>Most children with profound deafness use either hearing aids or cochlear implants.</p> <p>Without hearing aids or cochlear implants they cannot hear someone talking but may be able to feel very loud sounds like lorries passing in the street.</p> <p>Even with hearing aids or cochlear implants they may need additional support following speech in background noise and in groups.</p> <p>Some profoundly deaf children will use signing as their main means of communication, and many others will use signing as a way to support their understanding of spoken communication.</p>



It is very rare for a child to have no hearing at all (total deafness) but this may be caused by a congenital (born-with) abnormality in the inner ear, for example because there is no cochlea or hearing nerve, or because the cochlea has suffered extensive damage caused by an illness such as meningitis. In these children a hearing aid or cochlear implant would offer no benefit and they will use sign language as their main means of communication.

These are very basic descriptions of the different levels of deafness. It is important to remember that every individual's hearing ability is different and may not easily fit into a certain bracket. A child's hearing may also be different in each ear. As a coach it is important to understand how much a deaf child or young person can hear and understand what their requirements are.

Types of deafness

There are two main types of deafness.

Conductive deafness – This is the most common type and occurs when sound cannot pass through the outer and middle ear to the cochlea and auditory nerve in the inner ear. This is often caused by fluid building up in the middle ear (known as 'glue ear').

Glue ear can cause temporary deafness and often clears up naturally after a short time. However, it can also develop into a long-term condition which requires surgical intervention such as grommets (see technology section for further details) or the wearing of hearing aids.

Sensori-neural deafness – This is usually caused by the loss of or damage to the hair cells in the cochlea, meaning that the cochlea is not processing the sound effectively. The deafness may be genetic (inherited) or caused by an illness or infection such as measles, mumps, rubella, cytomegalovirus (CMV) or meningitis. Sensori-neural deafness is permanent.



Impact of deafness

Children develop communication, learning and social skills in their day to day activities. The impact of deafness in these areas will be different for individual children. No two deaf children are the same but any level of deafness can affect a child's access to communication.

From a very early age we learn about speech patterns and sentence structures from listening to other people talking. Deaf children may have restricted opportunities to access spoken language and this can have an impact on their language development – speaking, reading and writing.

Deaf children usually hear some frequencies (pitch) better than others. This means they may not hear all the parts of every word that is spoken. For example, *m*, *b* and *d* are low frequency sounds and *s*, *f* and *t* are high frequency speech sounds. This means the deaf child may only hear part of the word.

For example: instead of hearing *swimming*, they might only hear *wimming* or instead of *next stroke front crawl*, they might only hear *ne roke ront crawl*

Some deaf children may not hear your whistle so you may have to use your whistle in conjunction with a flag, sign or gesture!

Deaf children may have a limited vocabulary because they do not hear different words being used in conversations around them and may not be confident that they have heard a new word correctly. This includes place names and technical terms that might be used in sessions or practices for example “*single arm fly*” or “*surface dive*”.

Some deaf children, because of their communication difficulties, may come across as quite shy or quiet. They may lack confidence or self-esteem and find it difficult to interact with others. Some deaf children will very confidently ask for clarification or for you to repeat what you have said or explain technical terms. However some will be too shy or embarrassed to ask you. It is really important that you check for understanding and gauge the child's understanding, for example monitoring their facial expressions and checking they are looking at you, while at the same time being careful not to single the deaf child out.

Learning styles

We all have different learning styles. Some people learn through listening or observing, while others learn from doing. Many deaf children are “visual” learners and learn through observing others, watching demonstrations, the use of visual cues such as flags, gestures and other visual aids. In this booklet we refer to lots of visual aids and cues that you can use poolside that will benefit deaf children and hearing class or group members too.

Remember a deaf child may

- not be able to hear enough to make sense of what is being said
- think that they have understood fully and not realise that they have missed out on important information (such as how to do a particular stroke or turn correctly)
- lack confidence or self-esteem.

Technology and swimming

There is lots of technology available to deaf children today through the NHS or privately. The main aids that deaf children use are hearing aids and cochlear implants.

- Hearing aids work by making the sounds going into the ear louder, making use of any residual hearing a child has.
- Cochlear implants use electrodes which are planted in the inner ear to provide electrical stimulation of the nerves that the brain interprets as sound.

Me2



A cochlear implant

Swimming and technology

Hearing aids and cochlear implants are expensive pieces of equipment and most are unfortunately not designed to be around water or submersed within it. We advise that you give any safety briefings dry side first before you ask children to take off their hearing aids or implants and that they are stored safely during the session.

If you want to review a session or discuss a technical move with a deaf child, try doing this dry side so that the child can wear their aids. Swimming pools have very poor acoustic conditions and all hearing aids and cochlear implants will amplify all sounds including background noises. It may be more appropriate to brief children in a quiet area such as a training room. If the centre has a hearing induction loop then this could be useful. Some children have the facility to turn their hearing aids on to the 'T' setting, meaning that within the loop area background noise is cut out and the child can hear the person wearing or speaking into the microphone more clearly.



A hearing aid

You may occasionally work with a child who has a waterproof hearing aid or cochlear implant that is suitable for swimming. However, they are not suitable for all types or levels of deafness and are not yet widely available to all deaf children. Several other models are described as 'water resistant'. These are particularly suitable for using poolside when there is risk of splashing but should not be used for swimming.

Swim moulds

Swim moulds are used for protecting the ears from water during bathing, swimming and water sports.

Swim moulds are recommended for:

- some children who have had surgery to insert a tiny plastic tube (grommet) into the eardrum to treat glue ear
- children who have recurrent ear infections or perforated eardrums (a hole in the eardrum).

Children may use mouldable 'ear putty' available from chemists or specialist swim shops, or may have custom-made swim moulds. Custom-made swim moulds are made for the individual child through taking an impression of the shape of the ears that is manufactured into a silicone swim mould.

Using ear putty or swim moulds

Remember that ear putty or swim moulds will temporarily increase a child's level of deafness so that a child with mild deafness, who may usually hear many sounds without their hearing aids, may hear even less.

It is advisable to wear a tight fitting swim cap or a neoprene headband while swimming. Children may use a thin layer of petroleum jelly (e.g. Vaseline) to help insertion of the mould and to maintain a good seal around the edge of the mould.

Ear putty and swim moulds should only be used on or near the surface of the water. They are not suitable for underwater swimming or diving.

Ear putty and swim moulds should only be used by the child they are purchased for and not shared.

Custom swim moulds need to be remade regularly for children as they grow to ensure they remain a good fit.

Types of swim mould

Swim moulds, like hearing aids, come in a range of different styles and colours. They may have small handles to allow easy insertion/removal and have a neck cord attached between the two. They are usually manufactured in a floatable material in case of loss from the ear.

If swim moulds are needed for medical reasons the NHS audiology department will normally make them for the child free of charge. They can also be purchased privately from audiology departments or private high street hearing aid dispensers.

Ear infections and swimming

Some children appear to be particularly susceptible to ear infection that is triggered by swimming. Germs may enter their ear via the ear canal, but also up the Eustachian tube that joins the back of the nose/throat area to the middle ear via water entering the mouth. Doctors cannot normally predict who these children are before it happens and the majority of ENT (ear, nose and throat) doctors recommend learning to swim and enjoying swimming early in life rather than worrying about potential ear infection that can usually be treated easily using antibiotics.





Deaf-friendly swimming

Before getting into the swimming pool

- It is important to find out how the deaf child communicates during swimming sessions or without their hearing aids or cochlear implants at home. Ask the child or young person directly, or their parents, the best way to communicate with them. While a child may be able to hear you with their aids and lipread you, many will not be able to access the same level of communication without them. If children do not use sign language and cannot lipread without their aids they will have very restricted communication.
- Hearing aids and cochlear implants should be removed after all safety instructions have been given before entering the pool. This may mean running your lessons or club sessions differently.
- Children should store their hearing aids and cochlear implants in a waterproof container or dry bag with their name on.
- When getting changed in cubicles many children will not be able to hear you knock on the door, nor gain your attention should they need it. To overcome safety issues with young children you should discuss options with the child's parents or carers beforehand. It could be a good idea for parents or carers to offer support in the changing rooms. Alternatively, all children could have a buddy or you could use the group or disabled changing cubicles. Other options may include not locking the cubicle doors. You may check them regularly to ensure that they are okay. Alternatively you may agree a signalling system which the child understands. This could be through the use of flags or flash cards on the floor under the door to check everything is okay.
- Deaf children with additional needs may need longer to get ready both before and after swimming.
- Who's who board – it is really helpful to have photographs of the swimming teachers/coaches with their names in reception so that children can see them beforehand.

Communicating during swimming sessions

- Swimming pools have a lot of background noise and poor acoustics. Children with a mild or moderate deafness who can usually hear you without their aids may find the environmental noises difficult. Children who use technology such as hearing aids will have removed them once they enter poolside. Agree with the group beforehand ways that you will let them know what is happening. Involve the child in this, along with the learning support assistants or parents, as they will have tips and advice from other sessions and activities.
- Use body language and gestures to demonstrate the strokes and what you would like the child to do. The ASA demonstrations can be found on the ASA website: www.swimming.org.
- You do not have to be an expert at sign language to convey what you are trying to say. Use the actions for the movements and also say the word at the same time. This will reinforce what you are asking the child to do. If you do know sign language or Makaton then use this too.
- You could agree on certain signs with your class or group. This can be a really good team building exercise and the children will have lots of ideas.
- Demonstrate correct technique in the pool yourself or use a competent swimmer to demonstrate the stroke prior to other swimmers being asked to complete it.
- Reinforce what you want swimmers to do through using visual aids where appropriate, including PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), Widgit symbols or using photographs. Make use of visual aids that you would traditionally find poolside, including lane directional boards or whiteboards, to write up session plans and sets. This will be beneficial to all children, not just those who are deaf. Try creating a visual timetable.
- Positioning of the swimming coach is important during the session. Ensure that the deaf child can see your body clearly as well as your lips. While coaching move along the poolside so instructions can be reinforced as required.



- When explaining something on a one-to-one basis, while swimmers are in the water it is helpful to get on their level by kneeling or sitting down to gain eye contact.
- Some deaf children, particularly beginners or nervous swimmers, may require additional support in the swimming pool. This may be to provide hands-on support or to provide communication support, including the repetition of instructions for lipreading or sign language, along with reassurance. Ideally, the additional support would be a Level 1 swimming coach, although they could be a learning support assistant or a volunteer who is familiar to the child and able to communicate with them. Some swim schools now have helpers or volunteers to help with this*.

*All people working with children and young people must be Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checked or in Scotland checked by the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) Scheme.

- Positioning deaf children within the lane is also important. Children should be grouped based on their ability; however they may benefit from following a hearing group member when undertaking a new skill or activity.
- Some deaf children may respond to routine in the pool, for example entering the same part of the pool or using the same lane. This may include using the lane nearest the side of the pool. This way you can easily gain the child's attention.
- Introduce the topic to the group and clearly explain what you are going to do. Lipreading is difficult, particularly with many distractions and is made harder when the speaker changes topic without introducing it first.
- If the swimming pool is really busy then try moving your group to a quieter area to give instruction or, if appropriate, bring the children poolside so they can gather close while you explain.
- If the young person prefers to use their hearing aids or cochlear implant to listen to the instructions, you may need to build in time in your session for them to get out of the water to put their hearing aid or cochlear implant in. They can then listen to the verbal instructions, remove their aids afterwards and re-enter the water. A nominated person, such as a parent or helper, could be at hand to pass over the aid to the young person. Alternatively, the young person could collect them directly from a dry area where their waterproof container or dry bag is kept. This would need to be in close proximity to the pool.

Ensure you include the deaf swimmer in all parts of the club or team including social activities.

Gaining attention

Gaining a deaf child's attention when they are in the pool can be problematic, particularly if they have swum off or if they have turned their back towards you. Acceptable strategies include:

- waving and using visual cues, such as flags or buoys
- splashing the water to gain the swimmer's attention (without splashing their faces)
- positioning adults around each side of the pool who can gain the child's attention on your behalf (making use of teaching assistants, lifeguards and other adult helpers)
- having an adult in the swimming pool who can assist (ideally a Level 1 coach)
- asking other group members to get the child's attention (or to swim after them if appropriate)
- using a buddy system for all the children to encourage them to work together
- positioning deaf children in the lane nearest the side of the pool.



Health and safety

There are a number of health and safety concerns that parents and coaches have about taking deaf children swimming.

- Lifeguards and coaches should be notified in advance that a deaf child is participating in the sessions. This will alert them to pay extra attention to the child and to make them aware that they may not hear auditory cues such as the lifeguard's whistle or the instruction to leave the swimming pool.
- Time should be built in for coaches to consult with parents, teaching assistants and deaf children themselves as to the best way to communicate with them. Risk assessments should reflect the needs of deaf children and should stipulate what controls are being put in place to ensure the safety of the child.
- Safety signals should be agreed with the group beforehand as it is particularly important to include stop, wait, jump, don't jump, get out of the water, etc.
- Group size/ratios – deaf children may benefit from being in a smaller group or for there to be additional coaches or helpers to help meet their communication needs.
- Some deaf children may have balance problems which are related to their deafness. This could affect the child in different ways. For example, it may appear that the child is clumsier than you would normally expect for their age or it could affect their ability to right themselves when underwater and find the surface. Discuss whether this may be a problem with the child's parents as it may be important to consider this when planning training sessions.

Deafness is not a health and safety issue and should never be a reason to exclude deaf children and young people from mainstream swimming sessions.

Learn to swim programmes

Having read the 'Communicating during swimming sessions' section by now you will have understood the importance of visual cues and aids to assist your lessons. We recommend that you consider the following when teaching learn to swim programmes.

- Include a question about deafness and communication on your registration forms. This will help you to plan for any deaf children who join your group. Contact the Me2 team at NDCS for help with correct terminology or come on a Me2 training course.
- Allow children to observe a session first or allow their parents to go poolside for their first lesson. This will help to reduce any anxieties that the child has about swimming and also help them to understand how the sessions work.
- Where possible, share notes with other coaches about children and their progress, especially if they are moving up to the next level or group. This is beneficial for all children, but particularly useful for passing on tips to teachers working with deaf children – especially if you have found a system that works for both you and the deaf child.

Recreational swimming including swimming parties

A lot of public swimming pools run recreational swimming programmes throughout the week, as well as additional sessions during school holidays and at the weekends. Many also run swimming parties which may include the use of inflatables. Lifeguards are employed to ensure the safety of swimmers and will ensure that swimmers follow the swimming pool code of conduct.

There are age requirements for recreational swimming, which are usually as follows (please check with your local swimming pool about their age requirements):

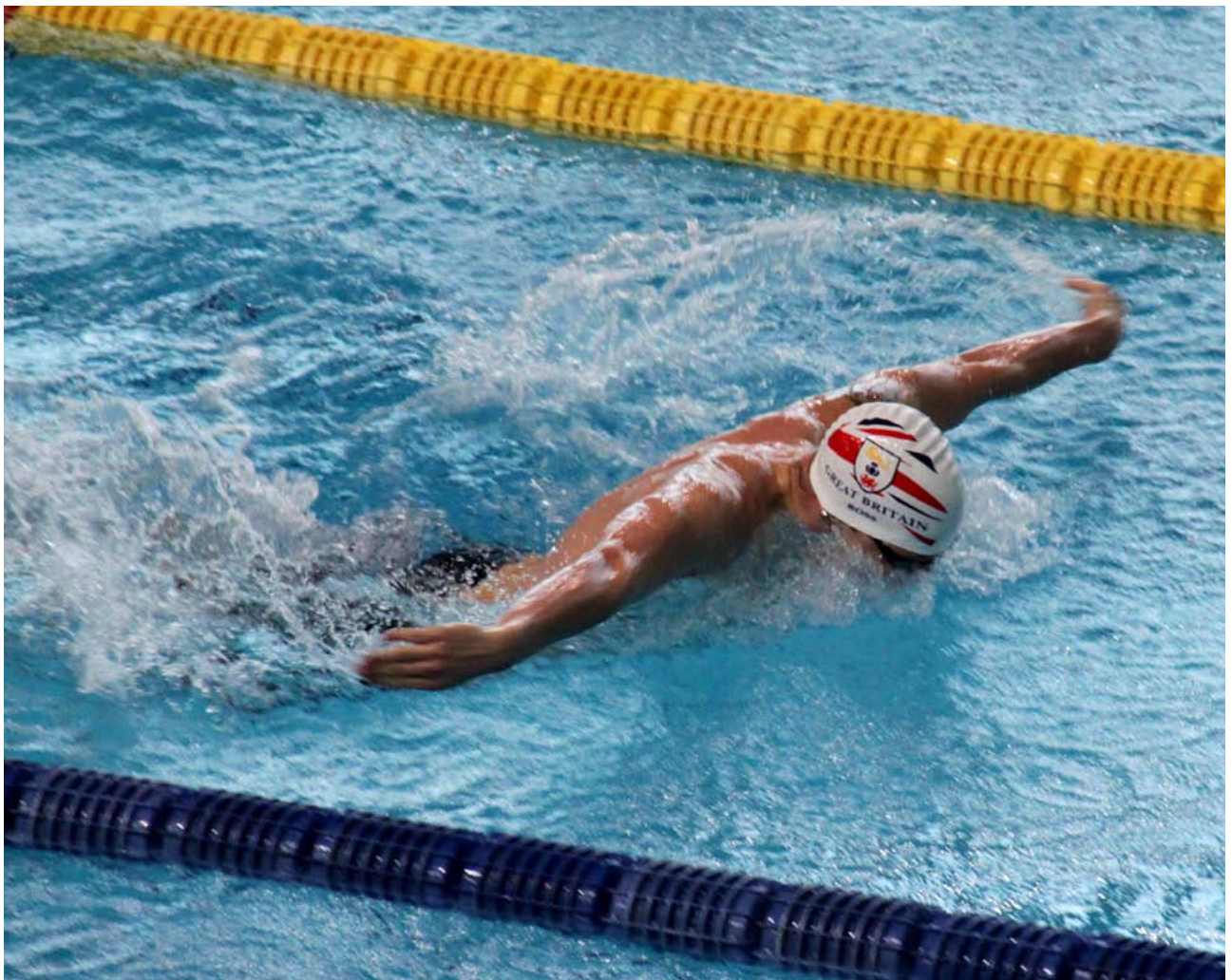
- ❖ children aged 8+ can swim unaccompanied
- ❖ under 8s must be accompanied by an adult aged 18+ (some pools operate from 16+)
- ❖ a maximum of two children can be supported in the water per adult.
- It is good practice to inform the lifeguards that the child is deaf and that they may not hear the whistle or verbal instructions. This alerts the lifeguard to pay additional attention to the deaf child and use visual signals such as raising an arm.
- If your child is 8 years or over, you should encourage them to inform the lifeguards of their needs before entering the pool.
- It is important that children are familiar with their swimming environment. If deaf children are swimming unaccompanied in a new environment for the first time, then ask a member of staff to give them a tour of the pool and facilities. It is particularly important to make them aware of emergency arrangements and things such as wave machines and the visual cues that the machine is starting.
- If attending a swimming party, the organiser should be informed that your child is deaf along with the lifeguards. A clear system should be agreed in the event of an emergency. This could be a visual cue or adopting a 'buddying' system.



Club and competitive swimming

In addition to the 'Communicating during swimming sessions' section you should consider the following in a club swimming or competitive environment.

- ❖ Using lane boards to write up the session plan – this is beneficial to all swimmers.
- ❖ Video analysis is a visual way of evaluating a swimmer's technique or performance. Through filming the session and playing it back to the swimmer you can use the video to pinpoint any areas for improvement directly to the swimmer. While the use of video recording is sometimes frowned upon in terms of swimming and child protection, it is a highly valid method of reviewing performance providing it is used in an honest and open way with the permission of parents and swimmers. It is important to gain consent both of parents and carers and the swimmer.



Competitions

It is important to notify organisers of competitions that a swimmer is deaf. When completing the competition entry form it is important to highlight:

- that the swimmer is deaf
- what adaptations may be required for them to participate i.e. strobe or touch start.

The referee should also be informed that there is a deaf swimmer participating. Deaf swimmers can download a Certificate of Disability from www.swimming.org. This is valid for two years and can be handed to referees.

Starting races

It is important to check what the swimmer can hear **without** the use of their hearing aids. Some deaf swimmers will be able to hear the starting pistol, others may not. It is important not to make assumptions.

We recommend that swimming championships of a county standard and above should all use the following to start a race:

- i) whistle/pistol
- ii) strobe light.

Where there is more than one deaf swimmer in a race we recommend that a strobe light is placed on their individual lanes. Where this is not possible due to the number of lights available or because of the needs of other swimmers (e.g. a swimmer with epilepsy), the touch start method should be used.

Strobe lights are placed on each lane and are activated at the same time as the starting pistol. Swimmers can look down rather than having to look at the pistol or wait for the touch, meaning they enter at the same time as the hearing swimmers.

Many facilities will have a strobe light system, however these are often only available for one lane. Before entering competitions, the swimmer and coach should inform the organisers that a strobe start system is required.

For further information please contact the National Governing Body (NGB). See the 'Useful contacts' section later on.

Where a strobe or light starter system is unavailable it is possible to use a touch start for deaf swimmers. This varies depending on the stroke and should only be used when deaf swimmers are unable to access other starting methods.

The touch start method

From the blocks/diving in

The swimmer assumes the 'set' position. An official places a flat palm on the back of the swimmer's calf. When the pistol is sounded, the official removes their hand to indicate that the race has started.

Backstroke – from inside the pool

The swimmer assumes the 'set' position with their hands on the pool side. An official places a flat palm on top of the hand of the swimmer's. When the pistol is sounded, the official removes their hand to indicate that the race has started.

Both of these adaptations must all be pre-agreed with the swimmer beforehand and we recommend that this is built into their training as a practice drill. There is inevitably a time delay between the pistol and the official reacting and thus removing their palm. This is a short term adaptation whilst the appropriate equipment is sourced.

Pathways for deaf swimmers

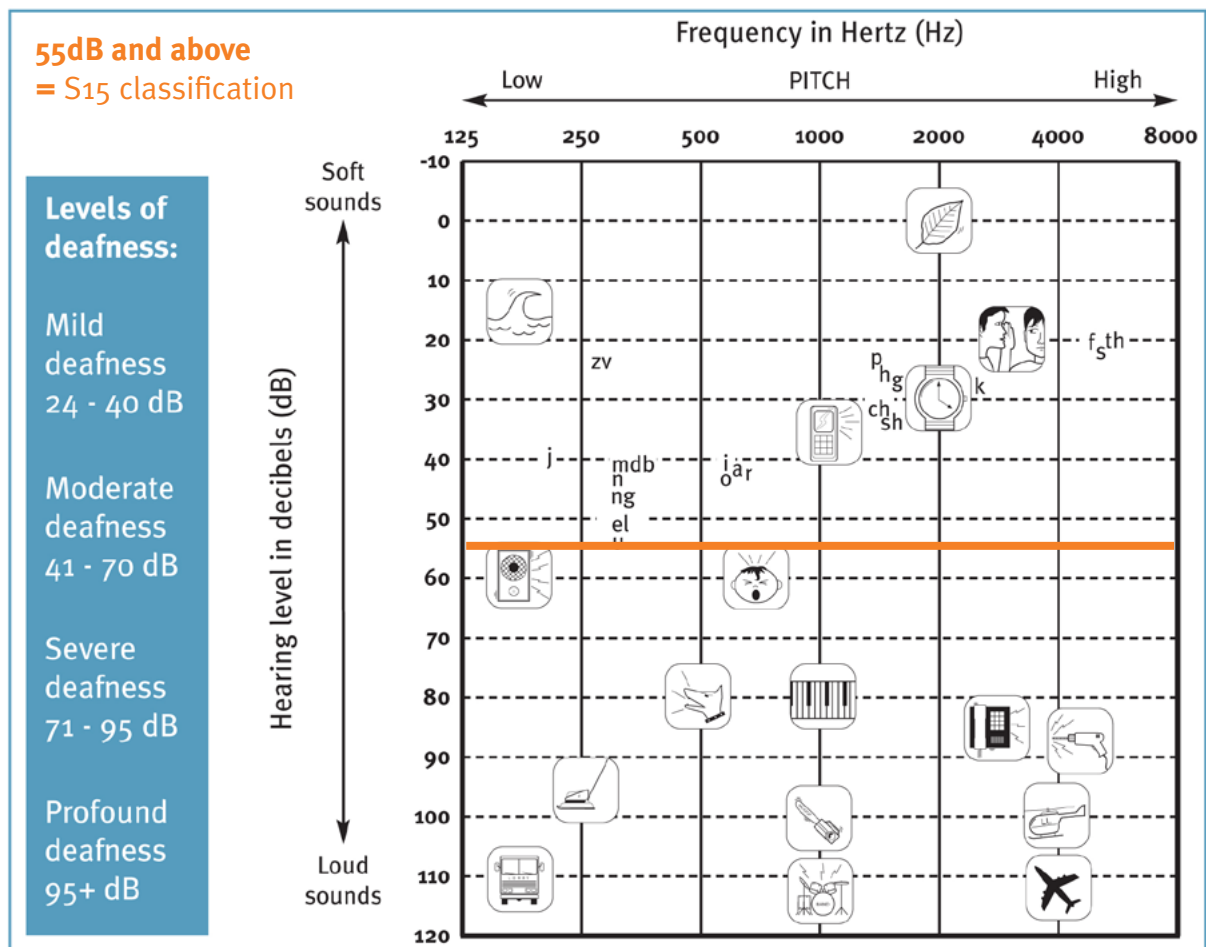
GB Deaf Swimming

The Great British Deaf Swimming Club (GBDSC) was set up originally by the British Deaf Sports Council who arranged for training and selection for the World Deaf Games, which is now known as the Deaflympics. GBDSC is affiliated to the Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) and selects swimmers for international competitions, from friendlies to major competitions such as the European Championships and the Deaflympics. GBDSC organises training sessions for deaf swimmers across the country and runs an annual swimming gala.

Deaf swimmers who have a hearing loss of 55dB or more in their better ear can be classified as an S15 to enable them to compete both nationally in pan-disability swimming championships and internationally in deaf swimming championships, including the Deaflympics.

For further information contact www.gbds.org.uk or www.ukdeafsport.org.uk.

Visual representation of the loudness and pitch of a range of everyday sounds



Swimming competition pathway

International

ICSD Deaflympics • Olympics

ICSD Deaf World Championships • FINA World Championships

EDSO Deaf European Championships • EDSO Deaf European Championships

Commonwealth Games (50m)

Domestic

GB Deaf Swimming Nationals • British International Disability Championships (50m)
British Championships (50m)* • Scottish National Championship (50m)*
ASA National Championship (50m)*

EFDS Swimming National Junior & Youth Championships (25m)
ASA Regional Championships (50m)* • Scottish National Championships (50m)

EFDS Swimming National Team Championships (25m)
EFDS Swimming National Junior & Youth Championships (25m)
ASA Regional Championships (50m)* • ASA Zonal Meets (50m)*

Home Nation/Regional Disability Championships(25m) • ASA County Championships(25m)*

Open meets

School / club galas

* In British, ASA, SASA, WASA and county championships deaf swimmers compete alongside hearing swimmers, therefore the S15 classification is not required.

Additional disciplines

Synchronised swimming

In addition to the 'Communicating in swimming sessions' section, here are additional tips to include deaf swimmers in synchronised swimming.

- ❖ Music carries better under the water than it does on land so some deaf children may be able to hear the music when they are submerged. Other deaf swimmers may be able to feel the vibrations under the water.
- ❖ Counting is a great way for those who cannot hear the music to keep the beat. This can be practised dry side as well as in the water.
- ❖ It is important that the swimmer memorises the song. This will help them with counting and learning the routine.
- ❖ Practice is important for all synchronised swimmers, but in particular for deaf swimmers.
- ❖ Deaf synchronised swimmers should start in solo routines or duets and work up to being part of a larger team.
- ❖ Team mates can help each other out to make sure that nobody loses their place during a routine.

Diving

In addition to the 'Communicating in swimming sessions' section, here are additional tips to include deaf divers in platform and springboard diving.

- ❖ Some deaf children may have balance problems which are related to their deafness. This could affect their ability to right themselves when underwater and find the surface or their skill with springboard diving. Discuss whether this may be a problem with the child's parents as it may be important to consider this when planning training sessions.
- ❖ Flip 'n' Fun is a great way to teach all children the skills for diving but is particularly important for deaf children. Remember to explain all instructions while the diver is wearing their aids and to agree signs and signals.

Water polo

In addition to the 'Communicating in swimming sessions' section here are additional tips to include deaf water polo players.

- ❖ Some deaf children may be unable to hear the whistle. This can be used in conjunction with signals such as a raised arm. There is currently technology under development such as 'Ref for the deaf', which is a vibrating waterproof alerter for the whistle.
- ❖ As water polo is a team sport it is essential as a team to develop hand signals and signs for terms used in the game. These can be used to the team's advantage when playing against hearing teams.
- ❖ Where possible, it is important to discuss tactics dry side so that the deaf player can use their hearing aids or cochlear implant.
- ❖ Make use of tactics boards or whiteboards to visualise what you are asking the team to do.

How do deaf children communicate?

The information below describes a variety of communication approaches that deaf children and young people use. Many children will use a combination of approaches when communicating.

Auditory-oral/oral approach – with the use of technology, such as hearing aids and cochlear implants, deaf children develop listening skills and spoken language.

Lipreading – this involves the ability to read lip patterns. However, many speech sounds look the same when spoken (e.g. float and boat) so it is difficult to rely on lipreading alone.

British Sign Language (BSL) – is a visual language using hand shapes, facial expressions, gestures and body language to communicate. BSL is an independent and complete language with its own vocabulary, grammar and structure. It also has regional dialects.

Sign Supported English (SSE) – uses signs taken from BSL in English word order but does not attempt to sign every word that is spoken.

Signed English (SE) – is an exact representation of the English language through the use of signs (taken from BSL). A sign is used for every spoken word. It is usually used in educational settings to develop written and spoken English skills.

Fingerspelling – is where each letter of the alphabet is indicated through using the fingers and palms of the hand. It is used for signing names and places or for a word that doesn't have a sign.

Makaton – is a sign system that is used with children and adults (deaf and hearing) who may have communication and/or learning disabilities (e.g. children with Down's syndrome). It uses speech together with signs (taken from BSL) alongside symbols and is grammar free.

Further resources and information about deafness can be found in the *Making Activities Deaf Friendly* booklet which can be ordered for free from the Me2 team at NDCS.

Me2

Real life story

Louise Halvey is a deaf swimming teacher

Louise was born with progressive sensori-neural deafness and is now severe to profoundly deaf. Louise coaches swimming at a club in London called Meaka Bears, in partnership with GLL. Louise has been swimming since she was a child. She has been teaching swimming for the past four years. Louise has her Level 2 swimming teacher qualification and would like to go on to swimming coaching and training swimming tutors in the future. Louise used to teach swimming in a hearing club but to deaf children. All the other teachers were in awe of how Louise taught in sign and wanted to incorporate it into their lessons.

In the future Louise would like to start up more classes specifically for deaf children and provide deaf awareness training to swimming coaches and teachers to help them to include deaf children in their classes. Louise would also like to encourage more deaf swimmers to become swimming coaches and teachers as positive role models. Louise is also a football coach and has great memories of doing her football coaching course through NDCS, so would love to see something like that for swimming in the future.

Louise would like to encourage deaf children to get in contact with their local club and swimming/sports centre, join up to lessons and explain to their teacher and class how to communicate with them best.

Louise thinks deafness is a definite advantage in sport as you can be really focused and not distracted by all your fans cheering you on.



Working with a communicator

If there is a deaf child or young person whose first language is BSL attending your swimming sessions, you may require the support of a volunteer communicator, communication support worker (CSW) or BSL interpreter to ensure they can fully communicate with the coach and the other swimmers. Similarly, a communicator may be required for classroom-based sessions or at swim club meetings.

Me2

Through using the tips and resource cards we would recommend wherever possible that you communicate directly with the deaf child or young person.

Access to communication is a right and allowing a communicator poolside is considered as a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010. This may be an NDCS volunteer, a parent, teaching assistant or interpreter.

Volunteer communicators – NDCS uses volunteers to communicate during children’s events and activities to sign instructions to the group. It is important to remember that they are not professionally-trained interpreters.

Level: Signature Level 2 or above.

Communication support workers (CSWs) – are mainly based in educational settings and help communication between deaf students and hearing tutors.

Level: A minimum of Signature Level 2, but ideally Level 3, and working towards or having the Edexcel Professional Development Award in Communication Support Work with Deaf Learners.

BSL interpreters – are professionally qualified to translate between English and BSL. There are different levels that trainees can register with the Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI) based on the qualifications they have.

Level: Junior trainee interpreters must have a minimum of BSL Level 3. Trainee interpreters must have BSL Level 6 and to become a fully qualified interpreter must have completed additional qualifications.

It is important to establish the roles and boundaries with the communicator prior to them arriving. This is particularly important if they are a parent, guardian or volunteer. This includes setting out what you expect from them as a communicator using the tips below and informing them that they are there in a communication role. Often parents are not allowed to watch swimming sessions and it is important to be clear both with the communicator and with other parents why a communicator is present. The coach is ultimately responsible for the session and the duty of care while swimmers are in the water.

Tips for working with a communicator

- Make sure that you let the communicator know in advance what you plan to do during the session. You could hand them a copy of the session plan, agenda or other documentation. This will allow the communicator time to prepare and ask any questions about the session that they may not understand.
- Position yourself so the participants can see both you and the communicator clearly. Standing with the communicator side by side is usually the most effective way to do this. In a meeting the communicator is best placed opposite the chairperson of the meeting. In some instances the communicator may be in the water, should the parents request this.
- Talk to the deaf child directly rather than to the communicator, even if all the participants are deaf and all are looking at the communicator. You are there to coach the deaf children, not the communicator.
- Speak clearly and not too fast. It is hard work listening to someone speaking and then translating his or her words into BSL.
- Make sure that the communicator and the deaf child gets a break from watching. This could include scheduling regular drinks breaks or break out activities.
- If asking a question to a group and you want a response, wait until the communicator has finished signing before allowing a response. This gives both the deaf child the chance to respond and the communicator more time to interpret.
- You cannot look at two places at once so, when demonstrating or working from a whiteboard or flip-chart, build in a time lapse so that the deaf child can look at you and then turn their attention to the communicator, otherwise they will miss the explanation.
- Try and use basic BSL yourself, even if the communicator is present. This will help you communicate directly to the deaf child and help build a relationship with them as you would a hearing child.

Be aware that it is impossible to learn BSL just from this resource or from the internet. If you would like to learn BSL and communicate with BSL users then the best place to start is to take a course taught by a qualified sign language teacher.

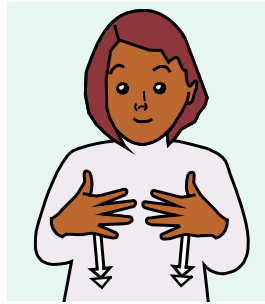
Contact Signature for more information on attending a BSL course yourself. Contact ASLI directly should you need to book an interpreter. See the 'Useful contacts' section at the back of this booklet.

Sign language for swimming

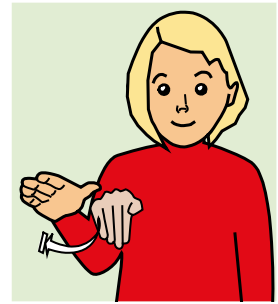
Use our sign language for swimming flipcard resource poolside with swimmers. You can also photocopy our illustrations and get the whole of your group, club or facility to learn them.



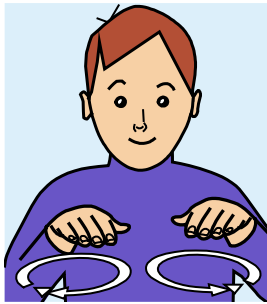
Sit



Get changed



Go



Breaststroke



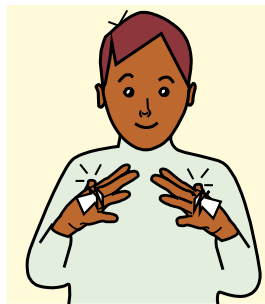
Shower



Float



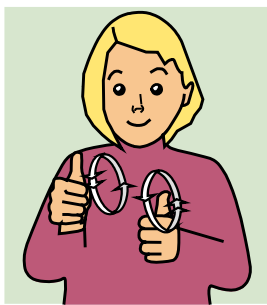
Front crawl



Ready



Watch



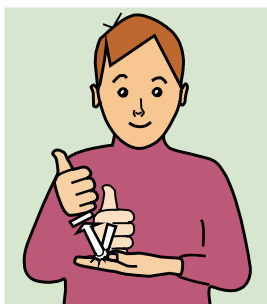
Well done



Jump in



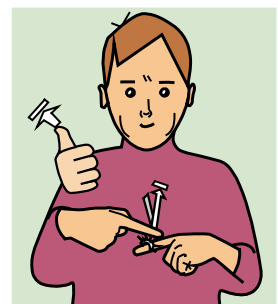
Use



Fantastic



Stand



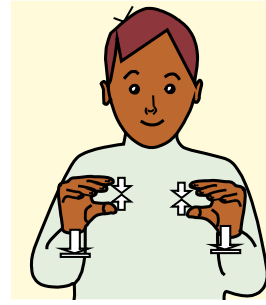
Out quick



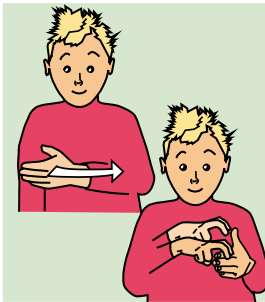
Dive in



Front



Stop



Sit down on the side



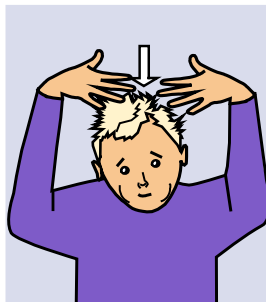
Back



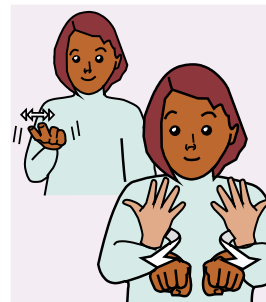
Rotate



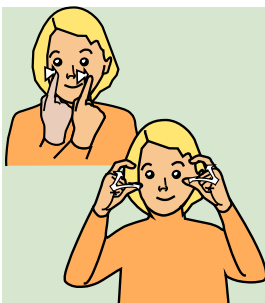
Face in



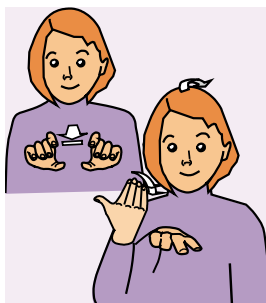
Under water



Two hand touch



Eyes open



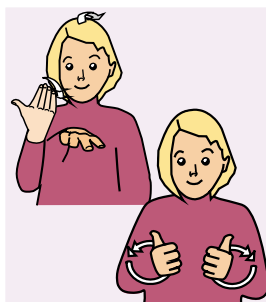
Stay on back



Breathe



Blow bubbles



Finish on back



Fire alarm

Useful contacts

The National Deaf Children's Society (NDCS)

NDCS is the leading charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people.

NDCS also runs the Me2 project, which helps mainstream clubs become accredited with Deaf-friendly Pledge status. It also has a national database of deaf-friendly clubs, coaches, officials and competitions.

37-45 Paul Street, London EC2A 4LS
NDCS Freephone Helpline: 0808 800 8880
(voice and text)

Fax: 020 7251 5020

Email: Me2@ndcs.org.uk for Me2 information or helpline@ndcs.org.uk for general information

www.ndcs.org.uk

Action on Hearing Loss (formerly known as RNID)

A national charity for deaf people that aims to achieve a better quality of life for deaf and hard of hearing people. It does this by campaigning, lobbying, raising awareness of deafness, providing services and through social, medical and technical research. It also runs Text Relay. (see below)

19-23 Featherstone Street, London EC1Y 8SL
RNID Freephone information line:
0808 808 0123

Email: informationline@hearingloss.org.uk

www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Action on Hearing Loss – Text Relay

A telephone relay service providing vital communication links for deaf and hard of hearing people.

Text Relay, PO Box 284, Liverpool L69 3UZ

Tel: 0800 7311 888

Textphone: 0800 500 888

Email: helpline@textrelay.org

www.textrelay.org

British Deaf Association (BDA)

The BDA is the largest Deaf organisation in the UK that is run by Deaf people. They represent the sign language community and are active campaigners in improving standards and rights for Deaf and hearing sign language users.

They also have an extensive online information database of organisations, groups and services for Deaf people throughout the UK.

18 Leather Lane, London EC1N 7SU

Tel: 020 7405 0090

Textphone: 020 7588 3529

Fax: 020 7588 3527

Email: bda@bda.org.uk

www.bda.org.uk

Association of Sign Language Interpreters (ASLI)

ASLI is the professional association and support network for sign language interpreters in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Its members include those who work as interpreters, and deaf and hearing people who support their aims. It also has an extensive database of qualified sign language interpreters from across the country.

Fortuna House, South Fifth Street, Milton Keynes MK9 2EU

Tel: 0871 474 0522

Textphone: 18001 0871 474 0522

Fax: 01908 32 52 59

Email: office@asli.org.uk

www.asli.org.uk

Amateur Swimming Association

The Amateur Swimming Association (ASA) has been in existence since 1869. It was the first governing body of swimming to be established in the world and today remains the English national governing body for swimming, diving, water polo, open water and synchronised swimming.

ASA, SportPark, Pavilion 3, 3 Oakwood Drive, Loughborough University LE11 3QF

Tel: 01509 618 700

Email: customerservices@swimming.org

www.swimming.org

Scottish Amateur Swimming Association

The Scottish Amateur Swimming Association Limited (known as Scottish Swimming) is the national governing body for swimming, masters, diving, water polo, open water and synchronised swimming in Scotland.

Scottish Swimming, National Swimming Academy, University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4LA

Tel: 01786 466520

Fax: 01786 466521

Email: info@scottishswimming.com

www.scottishswimming.com

Swim Wales

Swim Wales (formally known as Welsh Amateur Swimming Association) is the governing body for swimming, diving, water polo, open water and synchronised swimming in Wales, working across three regions: South East Wales, West Wales and North Wales.

Swim Wales, WNPS, Sketty Lane, Swansea SA2 8QG

Tel: 01792 513636

www.welshasa.co.uk

Swim Ireland

Swim Ireland is the national governing body for aquatics in Northern Ireland and Ireland. This includes swimming, water polo, diving, open water, masters and synchronised swimming. Swim Ulster is the regional branch of Swim Ireland and delivers the Swim Ireland Strategic Plan at a local level across Northern Ireland.

Sport HQ, Parkwest, Dublin 12

Tel: 028 9066 7546

Email: ruth@swimulster.net

www.swimireland.ie

UK Deaf Sport

UK Deaf Sport aims to encourage Deaf people to participate, to enjoy and to excel at sport. UK Deaf Sport was established in 2003 and has been a member of the International Committee of Sports for the Deaf (ICSD) since 2006.

www.ukdeafsport.org.uk

Great Britain Deaf Swimming Club (GBDSC)

GBDSC is the organising body for deaf swimming. GBDSC selects swimmers to represent Great Britain, organises meets and galas and can advise clubs regarding competitive swimming opportunities.

www.gbdsc.org.uk

Meaka Bears

Meaka Bears is an independent, community based organization in South London. They have provided deaf friendly swimming sessions for 6 years using local facilities for deaf children and their non-deaf siblings. Their sessions help the children build confidence, discipline, and improve overall health and life skills. Images of Meaka Bears swimming lessons are featured throughout this document.

Tel: 07507 107272

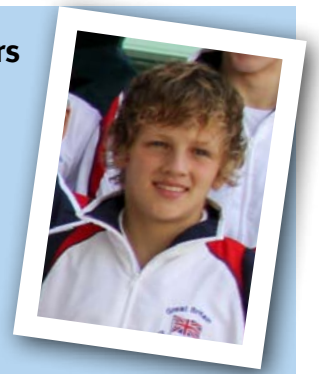
Email: drezar@icloud.com

www.meakabears.org

Oliver Kenny (14) is a deaf swimmer who has been competing for four years

Oliver was born profoundly deaf. He relies on lipreading and British Sign Language (BSL) to receive information.

For the first 3–4 years of his swimming training, Oliver’s mum was there to interpret for the coach every session by the pool. The local deaf association provided a short 10-hour deaf awareness and basic sign language course which was attended by several of the swimmers and the previous coach from West Norfolk Swimming Club (WNSC). Everyone was eager to learn and this enabled Oliver to gain independence and be fully included in the training sessions. WNSC uses a starting system with a strobe light which enables Oliver to start races independently with his hearing peers. When visiting venues that don’t have such facilities, Oliver gets a tap start either from his coach or a member of his team. Oliver was selected to swim for Great Britain in the World Deaf Swimming Championships in Portugal in 2011. His coach ensured that his training was specific for his needs and arranged for extra sessions to prepare him. At WNSC the swimmers, coaches, committee, parents and leisure centre staff all know Oliver well and they provide a friendly environment where he feels safe, confident and part of the team.



ASA Playground to Podium Officer

“When I first joined the Club the only reason I realised that Oliver had any sort of hearing difficulties was when I saw someone signing to him poolside. The other swimmers seemed to communicate with him as they did with everyone else. I now know the full facts and how the Club put in place measures to ensure that Oliver is fully included, by teaching swimmers British Sign Language (BSL) and deaf awareness, like making sure others face him when they talk to him.

Oliver swims with our top squad for training, which has a heavy training load. The majority of coaches at the Club are now well aware of Oliver’s particular requirements, but we take care to pass on this knowledge to new coaches.

The other swimmers know that Oliver needs to see the coach and training board. If someone forgets, a gentle reminder from either Oliver or another swimmer is all that’s required. People tend to assist him if they know he needs help.

Since his return from Portugal he has consistently set an excellent example for the other swimmers, works hard and sets high goals for himself. He is rightly proud of his achievements to date but remains eager to do much more. I know that all his peers at the Club were delighted for him and enjoy having a GB swimmer in their midst.

It’s my intention that we build on what we have learned to provide extra support wherever we can. I want more Club members to have some knowledge of BSL by running a course. These skills will serve members in their day to day lives and even after they leave the Club.

We’re also looking to appoint an officer who will coordinate specific training plans for those who require them. These plans will provide coaches with swimmer-specific information.

Oliver is one of our more cheerful teenage swimmers who is liked and respected by everyone who knows him. It’s a pleasure having him at the Club and I hope that we can help him fulfil his potential.”

NDCS provides the following services through our membership scheme. Registration is simple, fast and free to parents and carers of deaf children and professionals working with them. Contact the Freephone Helpline (see below) or register through www.ndcs.org.uk

- A Freephone Helpline 0808 800 8880 (voice and text) offering clear, balanced information on many issues relating to childhood deafness, including schooling and communication options.
- A range of publications for parents and professionals on areas such as audiology, parenting and financial support.
- A website at www.ndcs.org.uk with regularly updated information on all aspects of childhood deafness and access to all NDCS publications.
- A team of family officers who provide information and local support for families of deaf children across the UK.
- Specialist information, advice and support (including representation at hearings if needed) from one of our appeals advisers in relation to the following types of tribunal appeals: education (including disability discrimination, special educational needs (SEN) and, in Scotland, Additional Support for Learning (ASL)); and benefits.
- An audiologist and technology team to provide information about deafness and equipment that may help deaf children.
- Technology Test Drive – an equipment loan service that enables deaf children to try out equipment at home or school.
- Family weekends and special events for families of deaf children.
- Sports, arts and outdoor activities for deaf children and young people.
- A quarterly magazine and regular email updates.
- An online forum for parents and carers to share their experiences at www.ndcs.org.uk/parentplace.
- A website for deaf children and young people to get information, share their experiences and have fun at www.buzz.org.uk.

NDCS is the leading charity dedicated to creating a world without barriers for deaf children and young people.

**NDCS Freephone Helpline:
0808 800 8880 (voice and text)**

Email: helpline@ndcs.org.uk

www.ndcs.org.uk

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