Behaviour Change Research
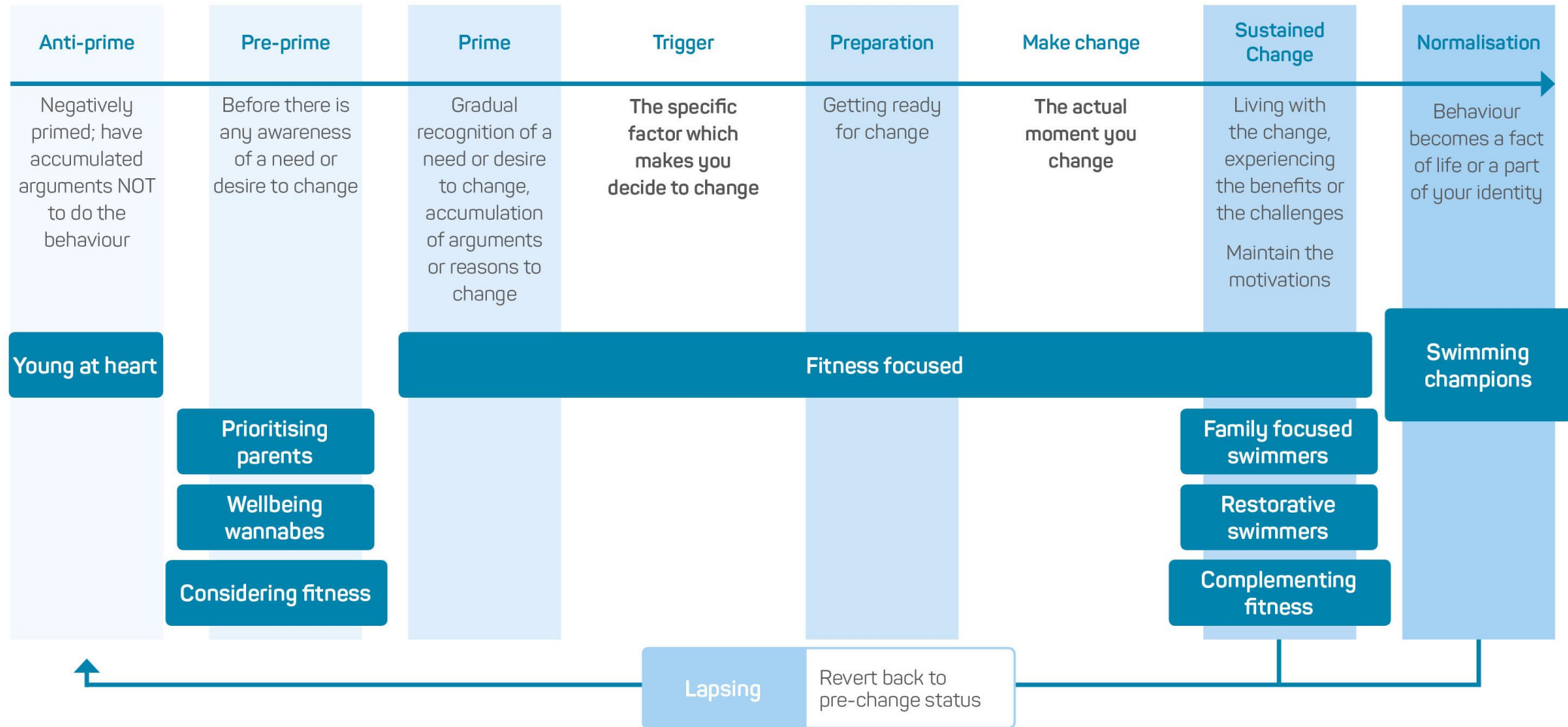
Swim England Insight

Swim England

Background

- Swim England is on a journey towards a greater understanding of the English population and their swimming habits – adults who are both swimmers and non-swimmers

- Swim England developed a segmentation across the 'marketplace' of consumer types based on different motivations and barriers to swimming, consulting 20,000 individuals

- As the next step, a piece of action-orientated research was required to understand how to move people along the swimming behaviour change journey

Swim England segmentation

Anti-prime	Pre-prime	Prime	Trigger	Preparation	Make change	Sustained Change	Normalisation
Negatively primed; have accumulated arguments NOT to do the behaviour	Before there is any awareness of a need or desire to change	Gradual recognition of a need or desire to change, accumulation of arguments or reasons to change	The specific factor which makes you decide to change	Getting ready for change	The actual moment you change	Living with the change, experiencing the benefits or the challenges Maintain the motivations	Behaviour becomes a fact of life or a part of your identity

Young at heart

Fitness focused

Swimming champions

Prioritising parents

Wellbeing wannabes

Considering fitness

Family focused swimmers

Restorative swimmers

Complementing fitness

Lapsing — Revert back to pre-change status

Influencing the behaviour change journey through insight towards advocacy

Methodology

Behavioural hypotheses development

- Review of previous research through a Behaviour Change lens

- 5 x stakeholder interviews gathering perspectives on challenges & opportunities faced by swimming

- Half day working session to collaboratively build a set of 'behavioural hypotheses' to be explored in primary research

Consumer missions

- Consumers from across Swim England segments recruited to complete missions via an online forum & paper scrapbook

- Swimming products ideas seeded with consumers – capturing instant vs. reflective responses & social dialogue

- Swimming missions to visit local pool

- Consumers map lifetime swimming experiences along a 'swimming behavioural journey'

Co-creation workshops

- Consumers selected from deep dive to take part in co-creation groups

- Sport England stakeholders, Swim England staff, pool providers & local authorities worked with consumers to collaboratively generate ideas for increasing swimming

Key behavioural challenges for growing swimming

5 Key behavioural challenges

1. Build confidence and swimming ability

2. Broaden relevance and appeal

3. Talk about the benefits of swimming

4. Priming people to swim

5. Strengthen the 'swimming habit'

1 – Build confidence and ability

Lack of skills
Swimming in childhood can stop before sufficient skills have been established

Low swimming fitness
People just assume they will maintain previous levels of swimming fitness after a break

Reduced confidence
When people re-engage they can have an unrewarding experience which works against future swimming

"I have become more self conscious, and lacking in ability, and so swimming has fallen off the radar."

A need to communicate easy & appealing ways to learn/brush up skills, improve swimming fitness & grow confidence

2 – Broaden relevance and appeal

1

Lanes:

the pool is for serious/fast swimmers – an intimidating environment for the less confident

2

Lessons:

memories of going swimming are also dominated by learning to swim in childhood & seeing children learning now

Also, swimming is seen as a 'solo' activity, which is not as fun for adults

A need to portray swimming away from lessons and lanes to broaden its appeal for adults

3 – Talk about benefits of swimming

Perceived benefits :

Generally 'good for you'	Key life skill for children	'Low impact'

Potential barriers :

How exactly is it good for me?	Not a progressive fitness activity	Less of a 'workout'

"It's weird because I have religiously taken my family to learn to swim and yet I have not considered it myself as an adult who is trying to be fit and healthy… It just hasn't come into my equation as something to consider."

Fitness & wellbeing benefits of other activities are more apparent

Relate swimming to tangible health, wellbeing & fitness benefits

4 – Priming people to swim

Swimming is more hidden than other sports
People express surprise that it is so popular!

Pool itself is behind closed doors vs. other activities seen in day-to-day life - e.g. cycling

Large-scale events are less known about = weaker social norms vs. non-swimming events (e.g. Race for Life)

Absence of apps to provide social proof and prompt swimming

"It's hidden away, you can't even see pool unless you pay and swim!"

4 – Priming people to swim

Swimming communications don't cut through

"*Swimming adverts are very generic, someone in a pool in a lane. It's just a lot of text, very wordy and never very personal so it just makes me switch off.*"

"*After being on the look out for some swimming related media and not finding any, it's no wonder I'm not a big fan of swimming when there is nothing out there to encourage me.*"

Less media coverage, advertising and social media sharing than other sports/fitness activities

Little/no promotion outside leisure centres; poorly promoted inside leisure centres (e.g. leaflets easy to miss)

What does exist reinforces 'lessons and lanes' so dismissed as not aimed at me

Can be hard to find all the important information or involves too many steps

Need to strengthen day to day primes to make swimming as visible as other activities

5 – Strengthen the 'swimming habit'

The swimming routine can involve too much hassle and complexity

BEFORE

DURING

AFTER

Information can be hard to decode / not all in one place - e.g. timetables or session details

Preparation beforehand: packing right kit – especially time consuming for families

Unspoken pool etiquette can be confusing and intimidating

Getting changed after also a 'hassle' e.g. drying long hair

"With the kids it's such a marathon getting ready, shouting, checking we've got everything, 4 swimming costumes, towels, goggles, hairbrush, armbands...!"

"Lane swimming – this puts me off. I imagine serious fast swimmers, I'd be too slow"

"It takes time for me to get ready after a swim, and my hair is a mess for the rest of the day!"

Important to simplify and facilitate the overall swimming experience

5 – Strengthen the 'swimming habit'

Swimming is weakened by a number of contextual & operational issues:

- Off-putting conditions in and around pool: dirty, poorly maintained facilities
- Lacking basic amenities: e.g. hair dryers/vanity area, drinking water
- Unfriendly/disinterested staff: Lack of customer service skills; only interact at poolside when enforcing rules
- A busy/crowded pool & competing interests: exacerbated by short opening hours at some pools
- Lack of culture/functional feel: nowhere healthy to eat/drink or socialise after swimming; lack of interaction or 'atmosphere' – music etc

These factors add up to create negative memories & uncertainty around the quality of the swimming experience

Despite these challenges, people are open to swimming more

- Many voice the potential to change if swimming is made relevant/ accessible to them

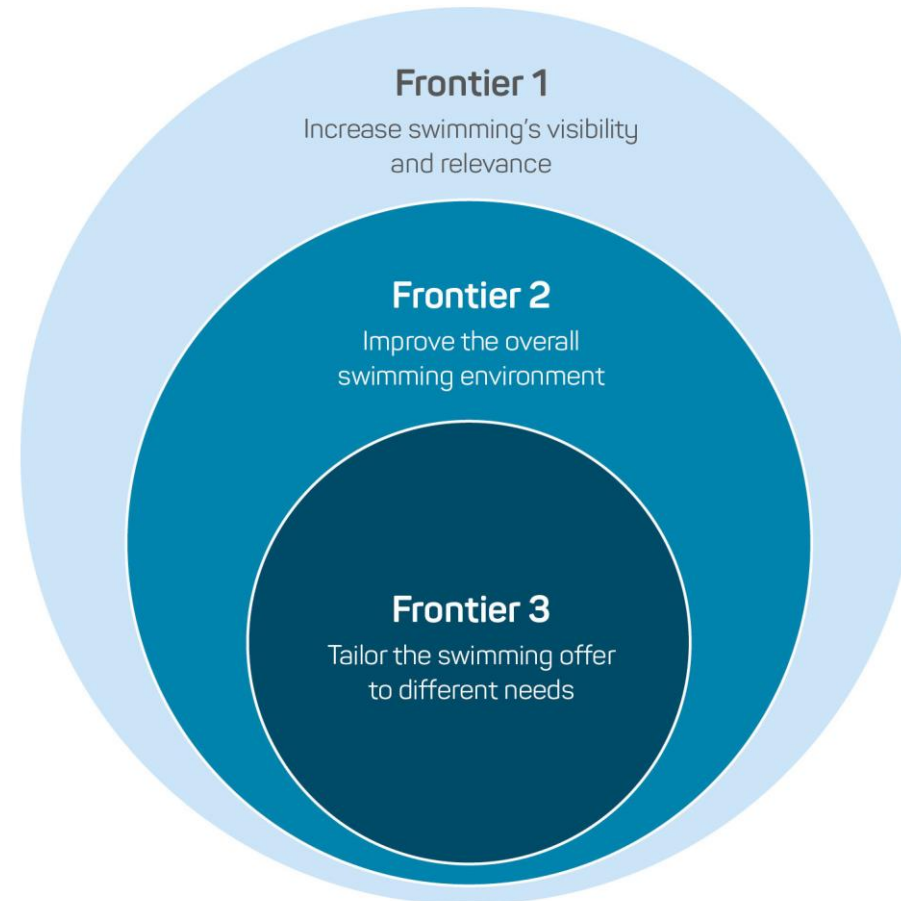- Huge opportunity to tap into latent enjoyment from childhood and holidays

"I think this research has made me think about swimming in a different way. I have not only realised my love of swimming but also the great potential it has in allowing people to feel better, release stress, get fit and just generally relax!"

"I always associated swimming with family and holidays, we always had fun. I do wish that I could swim more often. I definitely hope to change this in the future after being introduced to these ideas!"
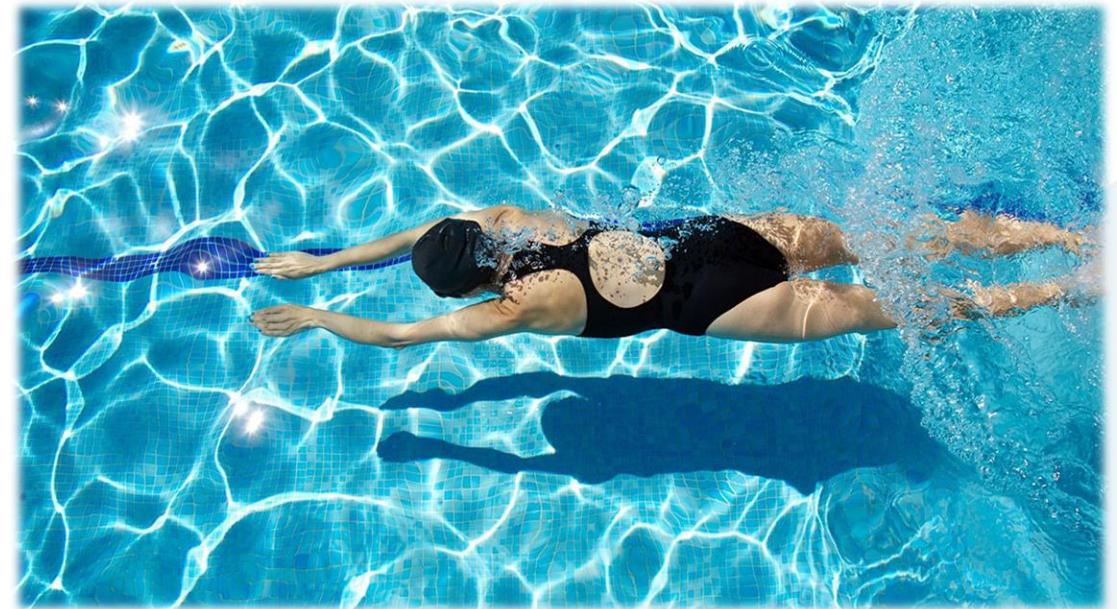
A framework for growing swimming

A framework for growing swimming

- Each frontier represents an opportunity to grow swimming

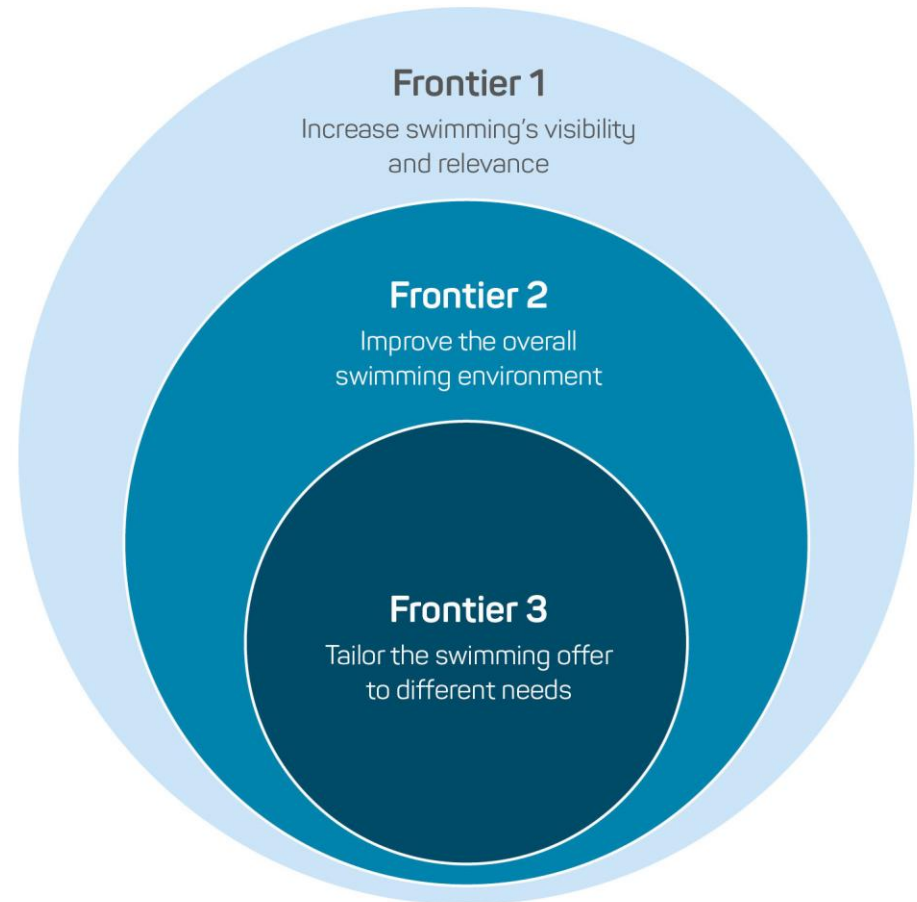- Critical to address ALL 3 FRONTIERS to bring in new audiences and retain existing audiences

Frontier 1
Increase swimming's visibility and relevance

Frontier 2
Improve the overall swimming environment

Frontier 3
Tailor the swimming offer to different needs

Frontier 1 – Swimming awareness and relevance

PRIME SWIMMING: More visible in people's everyday lives

INCREASE RELEVANCE: A new way of talking about swimming & how to promote it

REFRAME SWIMMING: Compelling and varied benefits; clearly 'for me'

Frontier 1
Increase swimming's visibility and relevance

Frontier 2
Improve the overall swimming environment

Frontier 3
Tailor the swimming offer to different needs

Thought-starters for increasing awareness

Swimming needs to be marketed and promoted *outside of* leisure centres to have a stronger presence in people's everyday lives

Live more within the community – e.g. supermarket community notice boards; promoted at or alongside adult evening classes

Use the outside of leisure centre as media space for swimming communications

Push social media presence through all channels & incentivise people to follow / like pages so they are regularly reminded about swimming from a *constantly refreshed* portal

Greater prominence of swimming communications *inside* centres - ensure people know what's already there!

Thought-starters for increasing relevance

Promotion around clear health and wellbeing benefits

Better understanding of motivating benefits, presented in familiar terms, i.e. calories burnt

Expert influencers strategy to increase authority: recommended through gym, PT, etc

Priming swimming is for people 'like me'

Imagery showing a diversity of people – ability levels, body shapes, ages, swimming attire; groups / friends going swimming together to show a social side to swimming

Priming varied ways to swim – beyond lessons and lanes

Strong imagery that shows people using the pool in different ways

Naming sessions on the programme to communicate a diversity of uses

Leveraging digital channels and content

Swimming's digital presence lags behind other sports. Give people new ways to hear, see & share swimming experiences through digital media - e.g. link social media pages to other mainstream media, inspirational bloggers etc. to keep content fresh
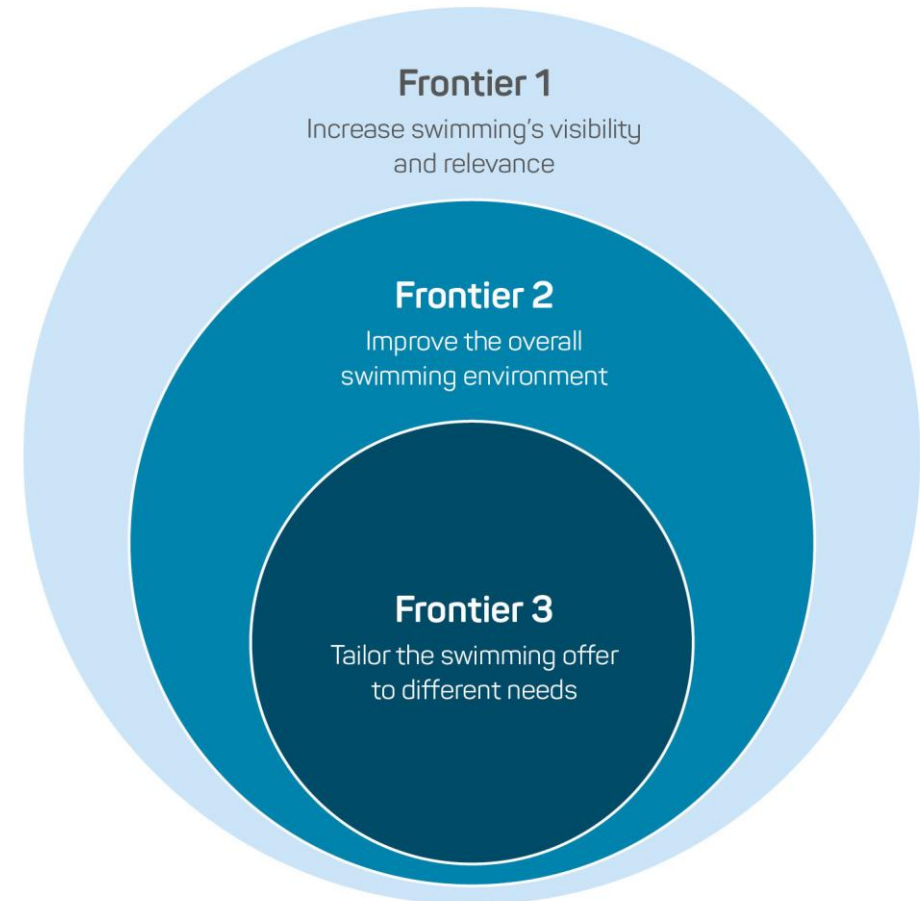
Frontier 2 – Improve overall environment

INVITING ENVIRONMENT: Cleanliness & Care - getting the basics right, essentials in place

UPSKILLED WORKFORCE: Personalising & humanising the swimming experience

TRANSFORMING THE CULTURE: A step change in overall swimming experience

Frontier 1
Increase swimming's visibility and relevance

Frontier 2
Improve the overall swimming environment

Frontier 3
Tailor the swimming offer to different needs

Thought-starters for an inviting environment

There are opportunities to improve both perceptions & reality

Responsive cleaning and maintenance
Ensuring cleaner schedule matches peak times, e.g. around busy family sessions

Priming a clean environment
Enhanced visibility of cleaners and pool staff, e.g. 'Clean Team' TShirts

Displaying Cleaning Schedule (as in Service Stations)

Small things can have a big impact on strengthening the swimming habit:

Working, powerful and free hairdryers – leave looking your best!

Poolside hooks for towels – permission to wear on poolside

Bigger, well maintained lockers – removes hassle

Drinking water at poolside/ changing rooms – piggybacking from gym

Longer shower times/ temperature controls on showers

Thought-starters for an upskilled workforce

Free individual inductions (gym equivalent)

Welcome induction for new / potential swimmers - walk round facilities, explaining timetable; exploring swimmer's aims, requirements etc. & recommending sessions/ideas to suit them.

A new 'Poolside Coach', beyond 'just a lifeguard'

Friendly face to offer help

Empathetic and equipped to support a broad range of swimmers

Clearly visible, e.g. 'here to help' t-shirt / 'station' poolside

Embodiment of positive pool culture - explains pool etiquette

"It's about someone with the softer skills to identify who needs help and when to approach them, making eye contact, thumbs up etc. It's about getting these skills for the aquatic team"
Sean McBurney, National Group Exercise & Swim Manager, Nuffield Health

Thought-starters for transforming the culture

FROM   **TO**

⚠️ **FUNCTIONAL** (for lessons & lanes): lacking in atmosphere, stark yet also frequently noisy ➤ **INSPIRING** (for range of uses): music, mood lighting, poolside gym equipment, floats etc.

⚠️ **SERVICE USER:** weak sense of ownership or contribution ➤ **CLUB MEMBER:** belonging to a supportive community; potential to make friends with staff, fellow swimmers

⚠️ **Staff only there to enforce RULES (1 way)** and life saving ➤ **Staff embody & reinforce CULTURE (2 way):** reciprocal consideration for others

⚠️ **RULES**: focus on what you *cannot* do ➤ **GUIDELINES**: focus on what you *can* do - e.g. ok to wear T-shirt in pool, take towel or dressing gown to poolside

⚠️ **SOLO:** relying on strong personal motivation vs. socially triggered, sometimes lonely & isolating ➤ **SOCIAL:** Price bundling & incentives nudging swimmers to bring a friend; encouraged socialising after group sessions
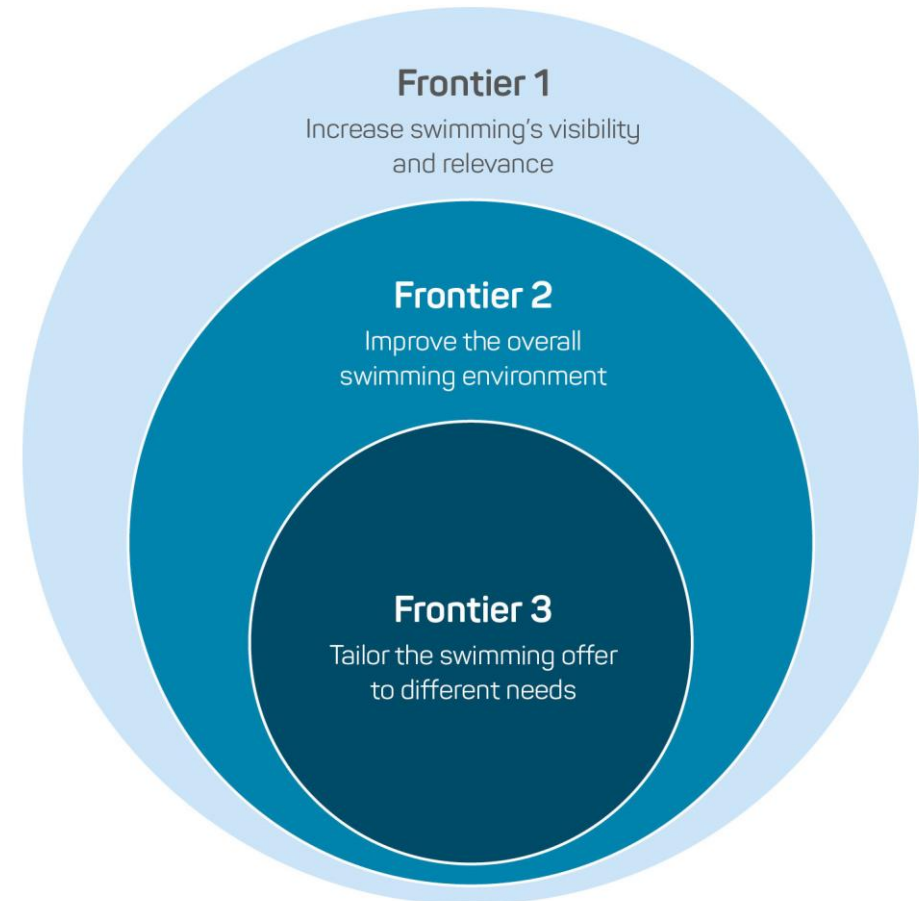
Frontier 3 – Tailoring the swimming offer

BE A BETTER SWIMMER (CONFIDENCE):
A 'gentle' (re)introduction to swimming

SWIMFIT GYM (SOCIAL FITNESS): Instructor-led circuits in water with some swimming

BE A BETTER SWIMMER (HONING TECHNIQUE): An 'MOT' for confident swimmers, with a coach

***ACROSS ALL 3 KEY OFFERS:* DIGITAL SELF TRACKING** to support sustained behaviour

Consumers identified 6 key characteristics that they would like to see across all potential product ideas

Innovative format

Clearly defined benefits

A social element

Tailored sessions

A clear instructor role

Progressive

Be a Better Swimmer: Confidence

A 'gentle' (re)introduction to swimming with a qualified, friendly instructor – building confidence in the pool in a supportive environment

Such a session will play a critical role in:

Relevance: normalising need to build up skills and swimming fitness

Relevance: priming that swimming *is* for unconfident adults 'like me'– not too late!

Developing a habit and building commitment

INNOVATIVE:
Needs-based instruction that moves away from traditional 'lesson' format

SOCIAL ELEMENT:
Small matched ability groups –
social support

INSTRUCTOR ROLE:
Highly approachable, experienced and empathetic instructor to provide encouragement and prescribe individual plan

TAILORED:
1 on 1 induction session to build trust, agree aims and allocate correct group - can be 'dry-side'. A highly personalised and structured plan dependent on individuals' ability & aims

PROGRESSIVE:
Review progress made after each session. Instructor to feed back/celebrate small personal achievements

BENEFITS:
Increased confidence in water, progressive never competitive

Swimfit Gym: Social Fitness

Instructor-led circuits in water with some swimming. A high energy group session to music, adapted for different fitness levels
Such a session will play a critical role in:
Relevance: variation for existing fitness-orientated swimmers
Visibility: increasing familiarity with the pool for current non-swimmers
Overall Experience: transforming the culture – more overtly social
Developing a habit and building commitment

INNOVATIVE:
Not lessons or lanes! Piggybacking the gym, swimming is secondary

SOCIAL ELEMENT:
Group session, informal 'competition' /group motivation; community exists beyond class (e.g. social media page; socials)

INSTRUCTOR ROLE:
Motivator; circulates to give individual tips, incl. around swimming technique

TAILORED:
Option of different levels;
Instructor adapts format to class make-up via initial inductions / questionnaire to assess water confidence & fitness

PROGRESSIVE:
Can progress to more challenging circuit / version of exercises

BENEFITS:
Clear fitness benefits; anchored in familiar metrics

Be a Better Swimmer: Honing Technique

An 'MOT' for confident swimmers with a trainer.
1 on 1 slots to get quick tips and help hone technique
Such a session will play a critical role in:
    Relevance: continual progression for confident swimmers – getting more from your swimming
    Reinforcing habit loops through feedback

INNOVATIVE:
Short 15 minute 1:1 sessions designed to tweak technique / brush up skills (vs. committing to series of lessons)

SOCIAL ELEMENT:
Building relationship with Swimming Personal Trainer / Poolside Coach

INSTRUCTOR ROLE:
Swimming Expert Personal Trainer / Poolside Coach – someone able to diagnose and give simple tips/exercises to go away and practice

TAILORED:
Highly personalised informal sessions, format dependent on specific needs/aims of swimmer

PROGRESSIVE:
Clear, motivating goals structured around technique improvement – target to be a more skilled and efficient swimmer

BENEFITS:
Improved fitness, efficiency and speed via improved ability