

11-17 years Behaviour Change Research

Swim England Insight

“Engagement in sport and physical activity by children and young people needs to be thought of as a journey. Throughout different stages of life, individuals will have different needs and require an offer which is tailored to these needs. What works for one individual may not work for another. These different offers need to complement one another, but also recognise the transitions that young people experience, physically, emotionally and structurally through the education system.”

Sporting Future, 2015

“My final thoughts of swimming are completely different to what I was thinking when I started this project, because before starting the project I was not comfortable swimming and all these ideas have given me a different perspective of it, its not just about if you can swim or what you look like, its about having fun and learning new things.”

Methodology

Consumer missions

- Young people aged 11-17 recruited to complete missions via an online forum/ mobile app & paper scrapbook
- Swimming products ideas seeded with consumers – capturing instant vs. reflective responses & social dialogue
- Swimming missions to visit local pool, capturing their before-during-after thoughts

Mini co-creation workshops

- Young people selected to take part in workshop style session with another 'unprimed' friend
- Explored recent swimming trip building on their 'in the moment' feedback as well as from online forum and scrapbooks and developed ideal swimming products and supporting comms

Expert interviews

- Interviews with professionals who's role included delivering recreational swimming for young people to check and challenge the emerging findings from research
- Discuss ideas for how to increase swimming participation for young people

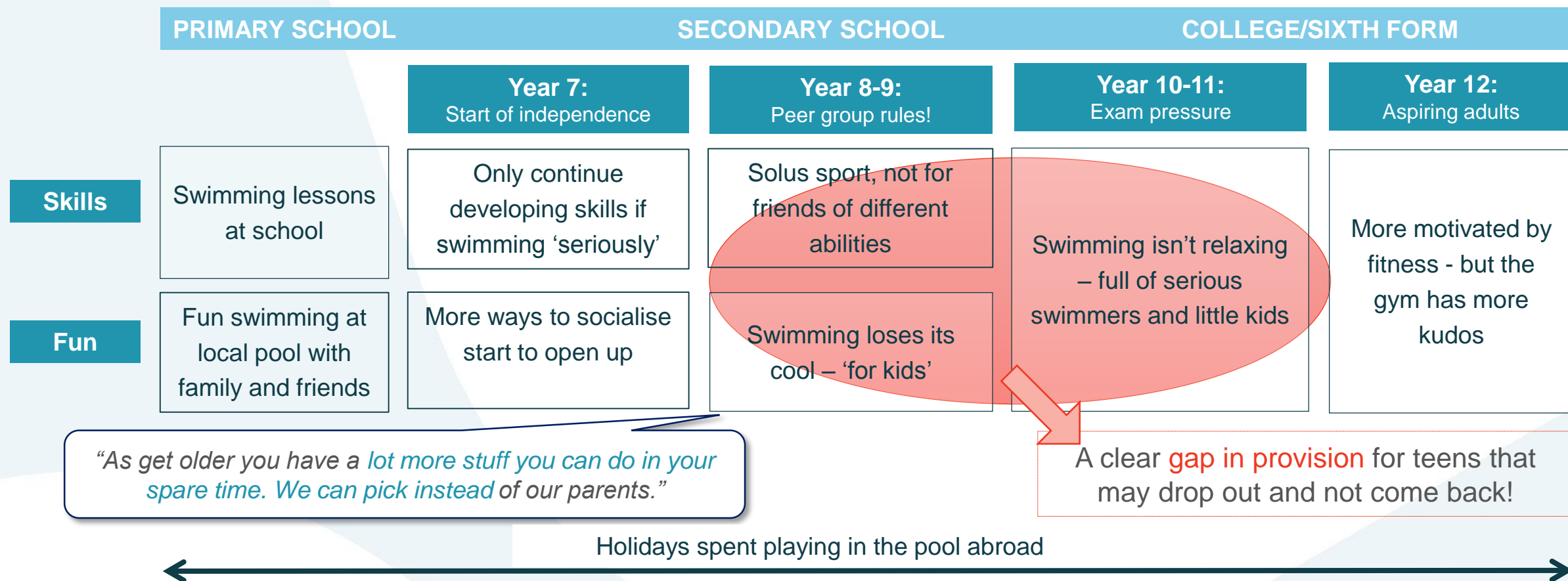
The opportunity for growing
swimming among young people

Swimming appeals, but not as they know it



The research shows that young people require a change from what they have historically known as swimming, to meet their needs as teenagers.

There is a space for swimming, as long as the offer shifts in line with transition points



As young people progress through their teens, their engagement in swimming changes, and specific barriers to swimming appear. Unless swimming can overcome these barriers and keep young people engaged, they may drop out of the sport and not return.

Key behavioural challenges for growing swimming

5 Key behavioural challenges

1. Finding 'space' in their lives for swimming

2. Connecting with teen identity and motivations

3. Fun first, fitness as an added benefit

4. Priming the peer group to swim

5. Strengthen the 'swimming habit'

1 – Finding space in their lives for swimming

- Life becomes more serious from year 7
- Young people have to choose what sports/ activities to focus on, typically only those they are 'good at'.
- A focus on ability makes swimming less inclusive and appealing for the friendship group
- As socialising becomes more important, young people tend to gravitate towards activities the friendship group want to do.

*"What with college, and working at Iceland most of the time, **I don't have much time to fit anything else in.**"*

Unfortunately I had to stop my swimming lessons because I had a lot of other out of school activities to do.



Take the focus off ability - an opportunity to separate serious swimming from fun in the water that friends of different abilities can enjoy together

2 - Connecting with teen identity and motivations

Young people's reference points for swimming them feeling that their local pool is not 'for them'

Serious sport

Not just for fun or relaxation

For kids

Not for my age group

Holiday fun

Not what my local pool is for

"It's what you do on holiday. Everyone is in the pool, it's hot. You can tread water, talk, splash about, throw a ball around."

They do not connect 'fun' swimming on holiday during their leisure centre experience:

Bright/vibrant/social

Place to tread water & hang out with friends

Pool 'equipment' and games

Noodles, balls, inflatables etc.

Freedom/no rules

Jumping in/bombing, splashing, unstructured 'play' etc.



Grey/clinical

Focus on solo fitness & skills

Prohibition



A need to broaden relevance and appeal - potential to promote the fun of holiday swimming – vibrant, social, freedom to play

3 - Fun first, fitness as an added benefit

Past-times young people value now offer clues for how best to position recreational swimming:

Serious sport and structured activities



Little room for swimming as **another commitment**

Gym and gym classes



Hard for swimming to compete: **more effort for less reward!**

"You can see more results from weights more quickly. You have to put a lot more effort into swimming."

Downtime at home
(on devices)



Position swimming as a **relaxing break from school/revision?**

"I spend a lot of time on my phone at home on social media. It's nice to chill in my room when I'm not doing homework."

Hanging out with friends
(KFC, cinema, shopping centres, etc.)



Swimming an opportunity for **independent socialising** with peers?



A need to reframe the benefits of swimming - potential for swimming to tap into latent dissatisfaction with how downtime is currently spent

4 - Priming the peer group to swim

It's easy for swimming to fall off young people's radar when it doesn't come into their worlds and lacks social currency

Absent from school and places teens hang out (fast food, bus journey, coffee shops, shopping centres)

Promoted inside leisure centres or generic Facebook pages that young people have **no reason to follow**

Existing comms lack relevance – aimed at younger kids or serious swimmers

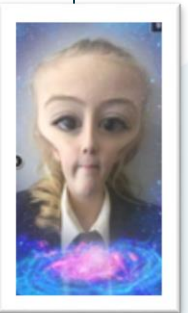
*"You **don't hear about it** - you wouldn't say 'I'm going swimming' but may say 'I'm going to the gym'."*

It's important for young people to have **something of value to share** – often funny, trending content



However, there's **heavy competition trying to get their attention in online space**, and what catches fire can be hard to predict

Impact is often also fleeting and does not translate into behaviour in the 'real world'



A need to make swimming top of mind – opportunity for targeted communications in young people's everyday lives and connecting swimming to trending content

5 – Strengthen the swimming habit

Getting ready made easy

Young people's plans to meet-up can be very loose, often not considering the details, relying on parents to ask these questions or help with basic information, esp. boys!

Tendency to default to familiar locations where minimal planning effort/coordination is required .



BEFORE

The planning and getting ready routine for swimming can involve too much effort.

Seeking group consensus can make planning activities more complicated

It can take just one friend to not be keen for the whole plan to fall apart!

"We didn't check times... expected to be able to swim."



"I forgot my towel! When I use the gym, I come straight home and shower so didn't think about a towel for swimming!"



Need to make preparatory stage as simple as possible, e.g. mental shortcuts around what to bring; relaxing rules around what to wear including t-shirts

5 – Strengthen the swimming habit

Belonging in the environment

When in the pool, young people can feel out of place- too big, too loud, too lively...

DURING

Issues navigating the environment, can feel awkward asking

Dirty facilities/changing rooms can negatively prime relaxing swimming experience

Unsure what to do in pool – can get bored

Can feel in the way, esp. in crowded pools

Lack of amenities make it hard to manage their 'look' – don't leave feeling good about themselves

"The receptionist didn't ask us anything. We went into the wrong changing room, had to go back out into reception in towels to get to pool."

"Changing rooms were muddy and wet..."



"Was full of kids so didn't want to do it. Could do 10 year old damage if we went on it too."

"The hairdryers didn't dry my hair, after 10 minutes gave up and left with a cold head."



Important for young people to feel welcomed and to minimise the challenges

5 – Strengthen the swimming habit

Variable rewards

AFTER

Young peoples **habits are constantly shifting** as they move through secondary schools.

Activities motivating repeat behaviour are often those that **evolve with young people**, provide freedom and **variable rewards**

*“I do horse-riding with my cousin, who is in year 6, but not so often now as I’ve **gone into year 7 so it’s a new start.** High school is totally new.”*

*“I now go to the gym once or twice a week at my local leisure centre. I started going at the **beginning of year 10** when a **few friends and I started talking about it.**”*

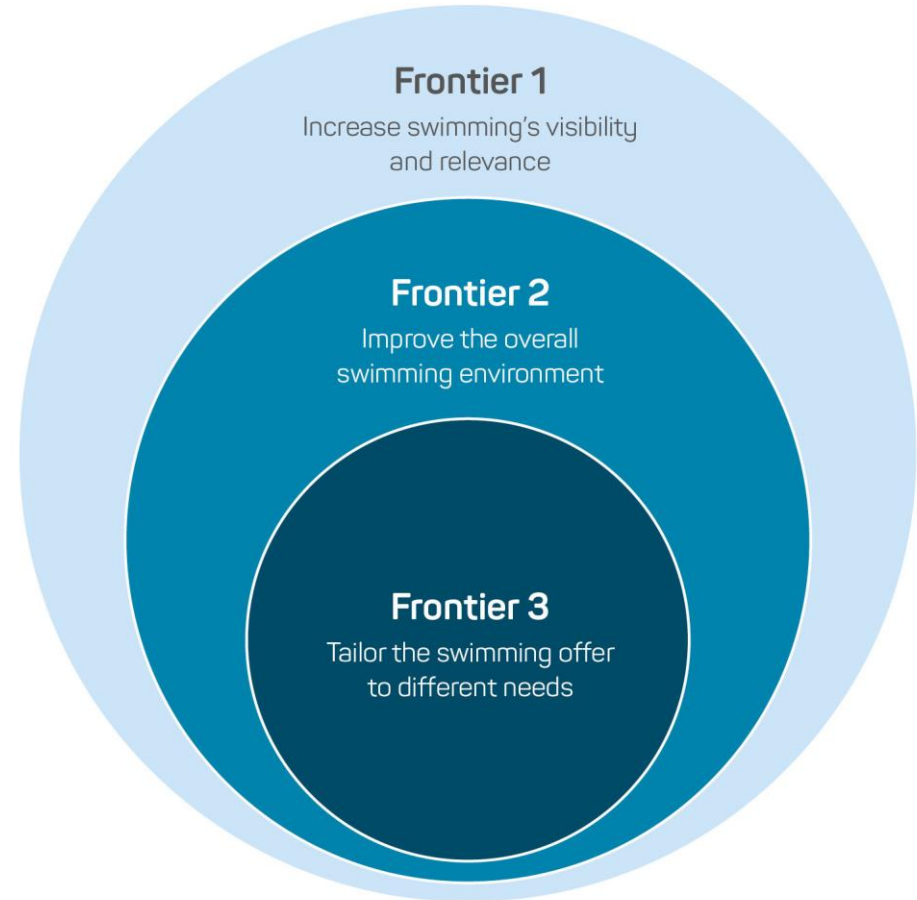


Flexible, varied sessions are likely to be important to keep young people coming back

A framework for growing swimming among young people

A framework for growing swimming

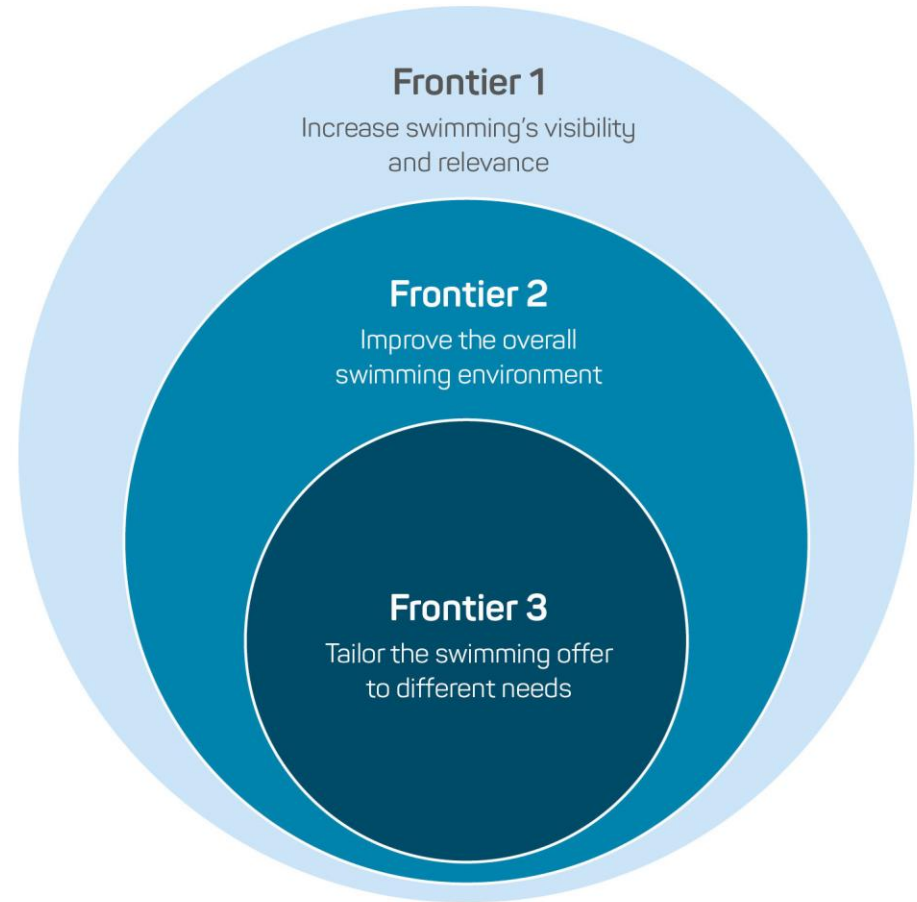
- Each frontier represents an opportunity to grow swimming
- Critical to address ALL 3 FRONTIERS to bring in new audiences and retain existing audiences



Frontier 1 – Swimming awareness and relevance

PRIME SWIMMING: More visible in young people's everyday lives when peers are together

REFRAME SWIMMING: social downtime; clearly for teens



Thought-starters for increasing awareness

PRIME swimming in peers' everyday places when they are together and can instantly start talking and planning

School/college:

- **School assemblies** – presentation from relatable young people
- **College TVs** – explore the use of advertising in common rooms, i.e. pop-up alerts on school/college Facebook group/ twitter feed

Proactive staff to push new/fun swim sessions (and any related social media groups) to **young people already using the leisure centre**, e.g. gym, zumba classes.

Promote around **popular, local teen hangouts at weekends**, e.g. shopping centre, fast food!

Link local to digital channels where young people put out ideas and make collective plans

- Funny content young people can share** to motivate the group via e.g. Whatsapp, Snapchat, SMS, etc. e.g.:
- Vines / **inspirational video clips** - linked to fun, teen sessions
 - Group swim selfies to **prime social swimming experience** (e.g. on site swim photo booth/cameras – upload selfie straight to social media to share
 - Popular vloggers **talking about fun (and added fitness) benefits**

Opportunity for **personalised text notifications to previous swimming lesson participants**

Thought-starters for increasing relevance

Push out via relevant identity group to prime

Encourage local clubs and sports teams **include swimming as part of their training or programme of activities**, e.g. rugby clubs, Girl Guiding, D of E

Partner with popular *teen* brands to increase relevance and **link this to local offer/swimming planning behaviours**.

Promote **through joint pupil-parents' channels** e.g. school news bulletins – priming parents to suggest swimming to bored/stressed teens

Frame teen needs in communication

Highlight **fun, social downtime** benefits

Have a well-deserved revision break

No rules, no boredom

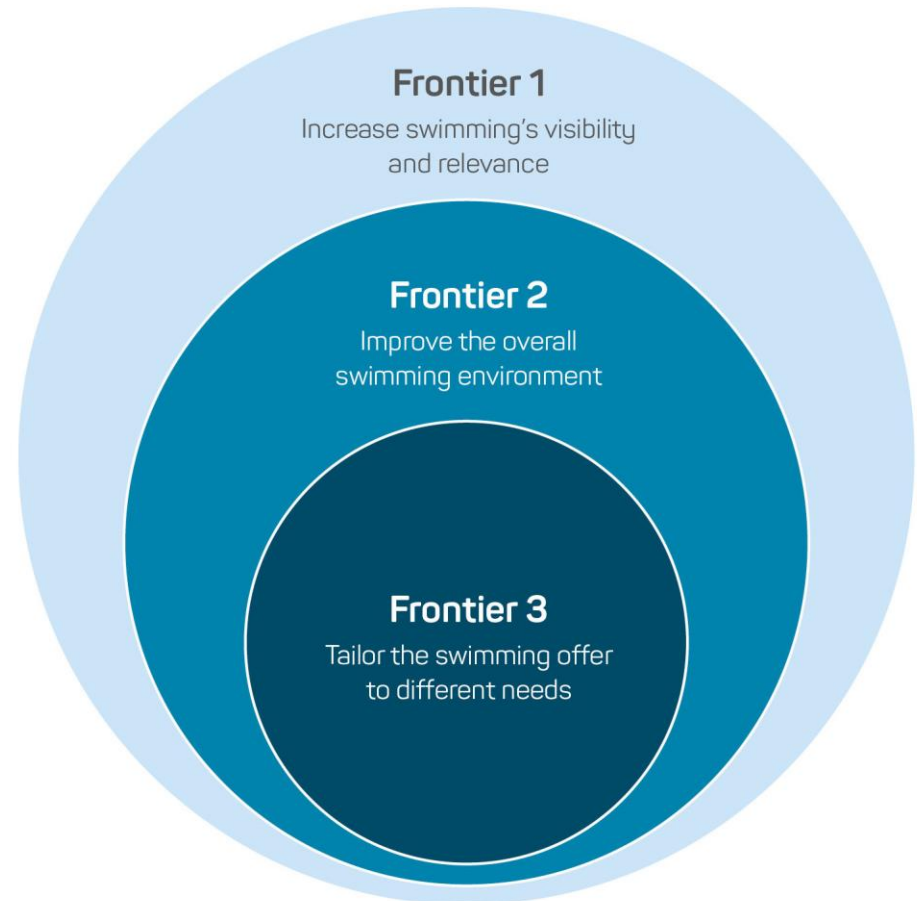
Use **clear language + visual imagery** to indicate what experience is like. Emphasise **variable rewards** in a single session




Frontier 2 – Improve overall environment

EASE THE ROUTINE: getting ready made easy

INCLUSIVE AND TEEN-FRIENDLY CULTURE: friendly and relatable staff; fun and vibrant look and feel. Include music; basics to help them manage their image




Thought-starters for easing the routine




Simple and relevant checklist (e.g. an online checklist) of what to bring on comms. e.g. towel, ball, hair products, etc.

'Don't forget any favourite hair products to leave looking your best!'




Images of clean changing rooms and vanity/grooming areas on comms. to reassure they will be able to manage their 'look' - e.g. working hairdryers, big mirrors etc.



Use simple humour and tone of voice that young people can relate to, creating an informal atmosphere.

Avoid using 'youth' speak and slang, risk of alienating



Link with apps young people currently use for real time information on relevant sessions, i.e. Google Now



Thought-starters for creating an inclusive and teen-friendly culture

IN & OUT THE POOL

PRIME a fun, holiday atmosphere

- Tropical décor around the pool
- Vibrant sounds and sights cueing **upbeat**, 'fresh' feel e.g. disco lights, chart music

Loyalty stamps where they can earn rewards with **teen appeal** – e.g. free/discounted snacks/drinks at leisure centre or nearby teen-friendly outlet

Leave pool equipment out / dotted around to cue permission to play



CAN VS. CAN'T DO

Normalise covering up for young people uncomfortable in swimming costumes

Poolside list of activities/ games they can do in the water - 'fun' things to do in the pool to prevent boredom i.e. see how far you can swim underwater



Thought-starters for creating an inclusive and teen-friendly culture

EMPOWER workforce to engage with young people and build rapport



Proactive, friendly and welcoming receptionist recommend sessions, offer assistance (don't assume/expect them to know where they're going, what's on, how things work etc.)

*"The receptionist was **really helpful** – we asked if we needed change for the locker and hair-dryer and she said no its free but you will need a key for the locker, but don't worry because you can wear it round your wrist whilst swimming. She seemed **very happy answering our questions**. Having the nice receptionist was a **great start to the swimming trip and made me very happy.**"*



Proactive staff poolside (Pool Walker) – offering floats/pool equipment; there to give ideas for games etc. to help young people feel they 'belong'

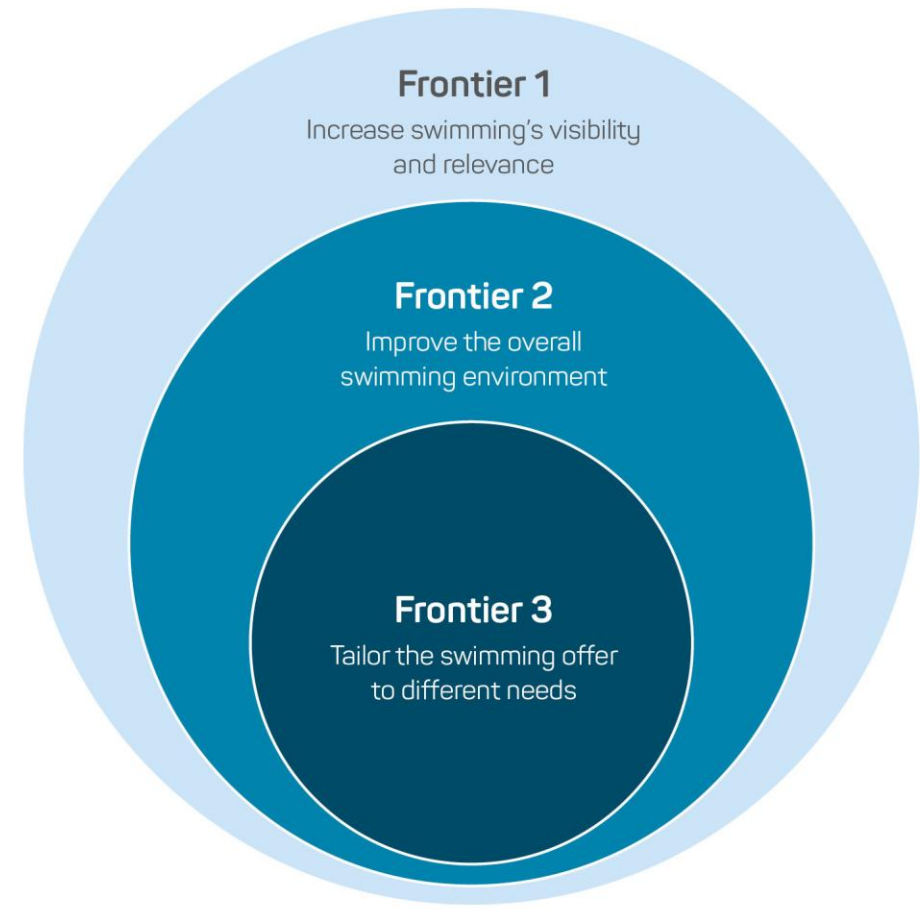


Frontier 3 – Tailoring the swimming offer

SOCIAL FUN: semi-structured sessions for teens, not for kids

RELAXATION: inclusive adult relaxed swimming

Both to include inspiration and stimulus beyond 'just swimming'



Consumers identified 7 key characteristics that they would like to see across all potential product ideas



Inspiration and stimulus beyond 'just swimming'



Mixed ability



Proactive and engaging staff



Laid back atmosphere

Social fun and relaxation



12+/under 18
'Not for kids'



Variable rewards



Social fun

INSPIRATION AND STIMULUS BEYOND 'JUST SWIMMING'

- Range of **semi and unstructured activities**, e.g. water polo/obstacle course with zone and floats for own games / chatting
- **Coloured water/lights** and **music**

ABILITY NEUTRAL

- Suitable for **friends of different swimming abilities**
- Competitive elements and challenges are **not focused on swimming skills**

PROACTIVE & ENGAGING STAFF

- **Relaxed, fun tone** and **create a community-feel**
- **Involve young people as 'creative collaborators'** e.g. letting young people choose what games to play / equipment they want to get out; encouraging them to make up new rules!

CLEARLY DEFINED BENEFITS

- ✓ **Fun first**, fitness as an added benefit
- ✓ **Hanging out** with friends
- ✓ **De-stressing** / revision break

NOT FOR KIDS

Clearly 'for them' – younger age limit, current chart music appealing to their age group

VARIABLE REWARDS

Rotating activities / equipment from one session to the next, to keep the **sessions fresh and exciting**

LAIID BACK ATMOSPHERE

- **Fun, holiday-feel**, – set by poolside staff!
- **Relaxed 'dress code'** - no need for cap and goggles; normal to wear T shirt

Social fun: how to ...

Frontier 1

Clearly for their age group, not younger kids – 12+ / under 18s

Use imagery of friends having fun together and show a range of activities

Easy language

Promote through everyday real world channels, esp. school/college where young people are together to make plans



Frontier 2

Relatable, proactive staff to set a relaxed tone and community-feel, e.g. welcoming young people on arrival; asking when they'll be coming back

Help them to plan and cue this is a fun session with a simple checklist of what to bring - e.g. towel, ball, hair products (not goggles and swimming cap!)

Try to create a fun, holiday look and feel, e.g.:

- Tropical décor around the pool
- Vibrant sounds and signage showing an upbeat, 'fresh' feel e.g. disco lights, coloured water, chart music
- A 'games/ideas board' poolside with 'fun' things to do in the pool

Frontier 3

Semi-structured session for young people

Pool divided into zones and/or different activities staggered during the session, e.g. water polo/obstacle course with zone and floats for own games / chatting

Involve young people as 'creative collaborators'

e.g. letting young people choose what games to play / equipment they want to get out; encouraging them to make up new rules

Programme for Friday evenings/Saturday afternoon – or Wednesday afternoon if targeting local 6th form/college

Inclusive relaxed swim

INSPIRATION AND STIMULUS BEYOND 'JUST SWIMMING'

Spa feel - dimmed lights, soothing music

Potential for underwater headphones

ABILITY NEUTRAL

Swim at your own pace – not intimidated by serious/fitness swimmers in lanes

PROACTIVE & ENGAGING STAFF

Set relaxed tone – friendly, offer noodles/headphones to support relaxation

CLEARLY DEFINED BENEFITS

- ✓ **De-stressing** / revision break
- ✓ **Unintimidating** (important for less socially confident young people)

NOT FOR KIDS

E.g. 12 years +

VARIABLE REWARDS

Changing **water colour** and **scents**

LAID BACK ATMOSPHERE

Driven by combination of elements!

Inclusive relaxed swim: how to ...

Frontier 1

Promote through **everyday real world channels**, esp. school/college & parent-pupil bulletins

Use teen-inclusive **imagery of that shows what the experience is like from start to finish – e.g. young people/adults** with headphones doing breaststroke, relaxing on a float; imagery of clean changing rooms and smiling staff to reassure.

Spell out relaxing benefits – de-stress from exams/revision, zone out. Highlight not for younger kids

Frontier 2

Friendly staff set relaxed tone, offer noodles/headphones etc.

Help them to plan and cue this is a relaxed session with a **simple checklist** of what to bring - e.g. towel, t-shirt/leggings if they prefer to cover up, favourite hair and beauty/grooming products (not goggles and swim cap!)

Try to create a tranquil spa-like feel, e.g.:

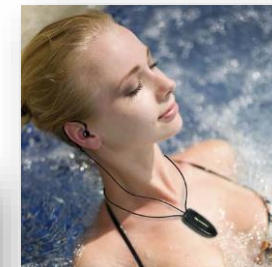
- Changing water colour and scents
- Dimmed lights
- Relaxing music

Frontier 3

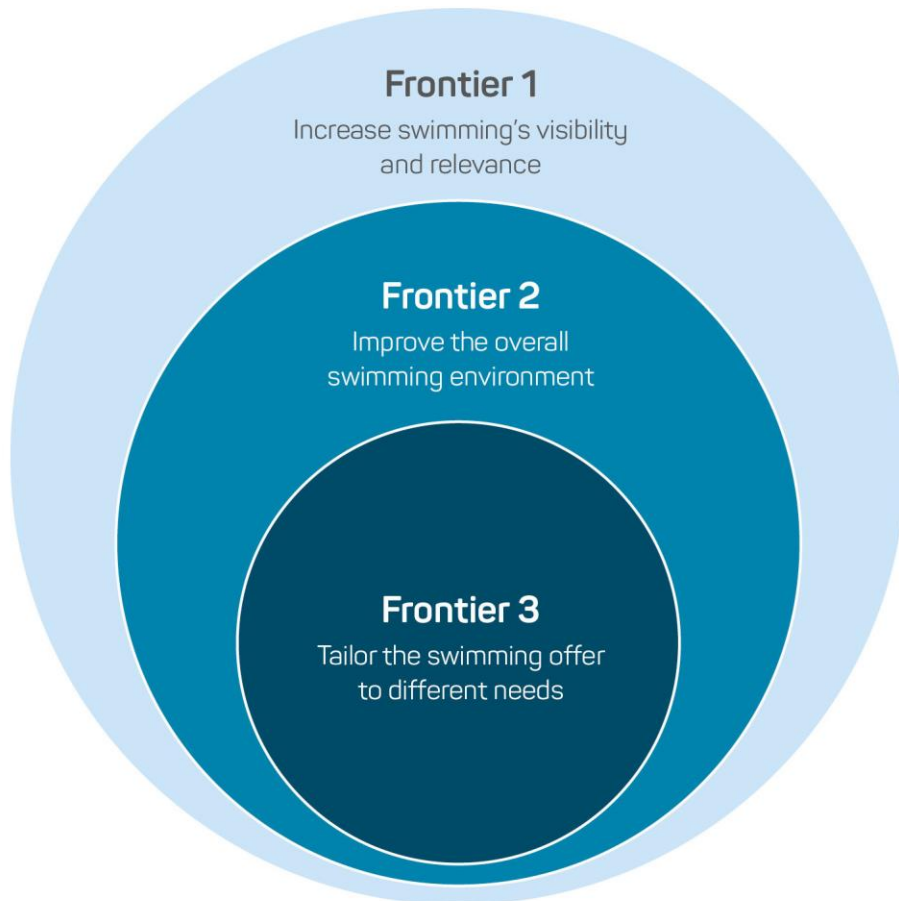
Inclusive adult swim session with no lanes, space to **tread water** or **swim at own pace** – not intimidated by serious/fitness lane swimmers

Underwater headphones to **zone out**, tune into favourite music

Programme for **weekday evenings** after school or during the day around **revision study leave**



Recommended priority actions across the 3 frontiers



FRONTIER 1

- Outreach to young people locally (school, college)
- Frame swimming in comms as social downtime versus skills/fitness

FRONTIER 2

- Create a fun, vibrant atmosphere (music, colour, inspiration for games etc.)
- Proactive staff to increase belonging in the environment

FRONTIER 3

- Social fun sessions for young people

