Pool lift / hoist support

Resource for pool owners/operators

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Purpose

This document has been created to support pool owners and operators who may be considering installing or seeking funding for a new pool lift or hoist. It is also relevant to those already with equipment seeking an increase in disabled participants and those with long term health conditions ("LTHC"). The content is not exhaustive but has been developed based on the findings from the London Marathon Charitable Trust ("LMCT") funded Poolpod project. An external evaluation of the project was completed by Continuum Sport and Leisure Ltd in 2022 and can be made available on request.

Background

There are 16.1 million disabled people living in the UK[1] and 39.5% of disabled adults in England are classified as physically inactive meaning they do fewer than 30 minutes of activity per week.[2] Swimming and aquatic activity is uniquely placed to support the health of the population with regular participants benefitting from reduced morbidity and a lower risk of heart disease.

The aquatic environment is particularly good for people that may otherwise find it challenging to be physically active on land (dry side). Aquatic activities place less stress on joints and therefore can help to meet the Chief Medical Officer for physical activity guidelines, i.e. at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous aerobic activity per week.

58% of people aged over 60 have a physical LTHC[3] and looking forward it is estimated that 26% of England's population will be 65 or older by 2065, a 7-percentage point increase from around 19% in 2025[4]

Swim England recognise that disabled people and those with a LTHC, or temporary mobility challenges can face multiple barriers to accessing swimming pools. Particularly, finding opportunities that meet their needs. Despite 83% of the population living within 2 miles of a swimming facility[5], these groups are often underserved by existing activities. The need for more accessible and inclusive pools is therefore clear.

LMCT Poolpod project objectives

Swim England led on the LMCT funded Poolpod project between 2019 – 2023. The intended short- and long-term outcomes of the LMCT Poolpod project were as follows.

Short Term Outcomes

- Enable pool facilities to assess their accessibility and identify ways to enhance the participant experience for the target audience.
- Create a suite of training and support materials to help sites to be more inclusive.
- Develop strong local partnerships and targeted marketing materials to help drive recruitment for activities.
- Upskill the staff team at each site so they have the appropriate knowledge and personal skills to meet the needs of the target audience.
- Encourage operators to provide a mix of tailored aquatic activities and inclusive options within their programmes of use.

Long Term Outcomes

- Increase in the number of disabled people, people with LTHCs and mobility challenges to self-refer or be referred / signposted to swimming and wider aquatic activities.
- Increase in the number of users from these audiences undertaking aquatic activity regularly.
- Create and share the resources developed to support this project at scale, across the industry, to broaden the support available for all aquatic sites.
- Test the cost effectiveness of the solutions tested as part of this project.
- Create a sustainable model with balanced operator costs and income.
- Create a bank of case studies to enable the sharing of good practices at scale.
- Collate learning of what works and what doesn't in relation to the intended outcomes of this project.

The pools involved in the project completed Swim England's **Water Wellbeing programme**. 94% of those operators agreed that "the Water Wellbeing Programme had improved their customer's experience"

Water Wellbeing Programme/Accreditation

"The ability to provide 'great experiences in water, for life, for all' is dependent on aquatic settings creating an inclusive culture where all groups feel welcome, accepted, confident that their needs can be catered for, and supported to thrive"

Swim England has a wealth of resources available to support. These can be found on the **Health and Wellbeing Hub**. It includes all the essential components to be able to offer the best possible experience for people who are inactive and/or have long term health conditions, to become physically active in the water, including;

- Completing environmental assessments and taking appropriate actions to remove the barriers identified.
- Supporting the workforce to be more aware of issues around accessibility and inclusion.
- Reviewing the development of appropriate marketing materials and approaches
- Identifying appropriate systems for data collection and evaluation of outcomes
- Developing and delivering personalised opportunities to be active in water, tailored to specific individuals and groups

Other supporting resources include qualifications and CPD around aquatic activity and swimming for health and wellbeing. Swim England have also developed a range of fact sheets on swimming with a range of long-term health conditions.

Considerations when choosing a pool lift/hoist

Learning from the project has helped when it comes to selecting the most suitable access systems for pools. When choosing a pool lift or hoist, it is important to consider a range of factors to ensure safety, accessibility, comfort and any relevant regulatory compliance.

Type of Pool Lift or Hoist

Fixed / Portable:

- Fixed lifts are permanently installed and generally offer more stability.
- Portable lifts can be moved between areas of the pool or multiple pools, providing flexibility.

Manual / Powered:
- Manual lifts may require physical effort to operate.
- Powered lifts offer ease of use and are generally better for independent operation.
- Manual lifts are usually less expensive.

User Needs and Comfort

Weight capacity:
- Ensure the lift supports the weight of a typical pool user, with a margin for safety.

Type of impairment or LTHC:
- Consider mobility challenges, need for assistance transferring to or from the lift or hoist, or reliance on caregiver operation.

Seat design:
- Look for padded, contoured and adjustable seats for comfort.

Ease of transfer:
- Side vs. front entry, armrests, footrests, and swing-away features which can improve accessibility.

Pool Type and Configuration

In-ground / above-ground pools:
- Some lifts are specifically designed for one or the other.

Deck height and width:
- The lift must accommodate the specific dimensions and allow safe operation.

Water depth and clearance:
- Ensure the lift can lower the user to the appropriate water level depending on to the type of pool and typical pool user.

Installation and Compatibility

Mounting requirements:
- Check whether the deck or surrounding structure is strong enough to support installation.

Space availability:
- Make sure there is enough space for clearance of the lift and user movement.

Power source:
- If powered, determine if there is safe access to electricity or if battery operation is required.

Safety Features

Stability and anti-tip design:
- Wide base and low centre of gravity prevents tipping during transfers.

- Counterweights or anchoring balances user load when extended over water.
- Outriggers and brakes: Extra arms and wheel locks stop forward/side tipping.
- Load geometry: Arm design keeps centre of gravity within safe zone.

Emergency stop or manual override:
- Should include both an emergency stop and a manual/emergency lowering override, ensuring user safety even during power or control failures.

Non-slip surfaces:
- Reduced risks during transfers between the deck and the water.
- Provide secure footing, especially for users with limited mobility or balance.
- Improve participant confidence especially in wet conditions.

Harnesses or seat belts:
- Prevent a participant slipping sideways or forward, particularly when wet.
- Particularly important for those with limited muscle control or poor balance.

Provides stability during transfer:
- The hoist movement, either lifting, rotating or lowering, can cause small jolts or sway.
- A harness or belt keeps the body centred and secure, reducing anxiety for the participant and workload for carers.
- For children or people with involuntary movements (e.g., due to spasticity or tremors), a multi-point harness provides additional control.

Maintaining dignity and comfort:
- Feeling secure during transfer prevents user discomfort or anxiety.
- Allows for relaxed posture, no need to manually hold the participant in place.

Maintenance and durability

Corrosion resistance:
- Especially important for chlorinated or saltwater pools.
- Corrosion can weaken metal parts, reducing load capacity and risking mechanical failure.
- Chlorinated water, humid air, and chemical vapours can compromise unprotected metals.
- In worst cases, structural failure could cause falls, injury, or drowning.

Longevity and reduced maintenance costs:
- Untreated steel can start to rust within weeks in pools with warm air, humidity and chlorinated splashes.
- A corrosion resistant hoist keeps its strength and function for years rather than months, avoiding costly repairs or replacements.
- Internal corrosion is invisible and can occur inside fixings e.g. joints, bolts.

Warranty and service support:
- Consider your priorities around length of warranty, quick maintenance and service coverage.

Budget and Funding

Initial cost:
- Balance between features and affordability.

Operational costs:

- Electricity costs, supply and cost of replacement parts and servicing.

Funding Options:

- Capital grants may be available for accessibility equipment.

Swimming pool hoists and lifts available in the UK

Summary and comparison

This section gives an overview of the main types of swimming pool lifts and hoists available in the UK, including both fixed and portable. The list is not exhaustive and indicative costs were correct at the end of 2025.

The Poolpod as a unique accessibility solution, will be highlighted first due to its distinctive approach to pool access.

Poolpod

The Poolpod offers an alternative to traditional hoists, providing independent, dignified access to the pool using a submersible wheelchair. Users can transfer privately into the submersible wheelchair, which then lowers into the water in around 20 seconds.

Weight limits up to 250 kg. Ideal for wheelchair users but also those who can stand, older adults, and individuals needing rehabilitation. Indicative costs £36k - £40k, including wheelchairs.

Non-portable (fixed / floor-mounted) pool lifts & hoists

Indicative costs Basic, from £.5k, Mid-range £5k - £7k, Premium £8k - £11k+

Oxford Dipper Pool Hoist:

- Fixed/floor-mounted, hydraulic-powered.
- 360° rotation.
- Common in public and therapy pools.

Power EZ2 Fixed Pool Lift
- Fixed, battery-operated with linear actuator, adjustable sling.
- 360° manual rotation.

Scout Excel Pool Lift:
- Fixed, automatic rotation.
- Adjustable seat height.

Revolution XL Pool Lift:
- Fixed, fully automatic.
- Includes 360° rotation.
- High weight capacity.

Admiral Pool Lift
- Fixed lift system.
- Fully automatic lowering/lifting.

F145 Floor Pod Pool Lift
- Battery-powered.
- Hoist adaptable to various pool designs.

Comparison Table

Model / Type	Mount Style	Operation	Capacity	Key Strengths
Poolpod	Fixed/stationary	Submersible wheelchair lift	~250 kg	Independent, dignified access without sling or chair transfer
Oxford Dipper	Fixed (floor)	Hydraulic, manual rotation	~140 kg	Strong, reliable, simple mechanics

Power EZ2	Fixed (floor)	Battery, manual rotation	~181 kg	Affordable, adaptable, quick install
Scout Excel	Fixed (floor)	Automatic rotation	~170 kg	Self-rotating, adjustable height
Revolution XL	Fixed (floor)	Fully automatic	~226 kg	High capacity, ease of use
Admiral	Fixed (floor)	Fully automatic	~204 kg	Strong build, wide accessibility
F145 Floor Pod	Fixed (floor)	Battery-powered	~140 kg	Versatile design for complex pool edges

Portable Swimming Pool Hoists

Indicative costs £5.5k - £9k

i-Swim 1 Portable Pool Lift

- Type: Attendant-operated, wheeled, portable lift
- Capacity: 136 kg
- Weight: ~140 kg
- Operation: Battery-powered (2×12 V, ~40 lifts per charge)
- Key Features: Aluminium & stainless frame, anti-tip stability, battery charger & load indicator included
- Pros: Sleek, durable, common in UK pools; no poolside fixings needed
- Cons: Cannot be self-operated without upgrading to i-Swim 2

i-Swim 2 Portable Pool Lift

- Type: Portable, independent-use capable
- Capacity: ~136 kg
- Operation: Battery-powered with user hand control
- Key Features: Builds on i-Swim 1 with self-operation capability
- Pros: Allows independent use while retaining portability
- Cons: Higher cost than i-Swim 1

PAL (Portable Aquatic Lift)

- Type: Fully portable, free-standing battery-powered lift
- Capacity: 131 kg
- Operation: User or attendant-controlled
- Key Features: No deck fixings, large wheelbase for stability, adaptable for spa and above-ground pools
- Pros: Excellent portability; suitable for varied pool designs

- Cons: Larger footprint may be tricky in tight poolside areas

Handi-Move Mobile Pool Lift

- Type: Mobile lift on wheeled frame; requires a poolside socket for use
- Capacity: 135 kg
- Operation: Battery-powered, 360° rotation, emergency stop/down
- Key Features: Removable from socket by one person; compact for storage
- Pros: Great for multi-pool sites; easy to remove/store
- Cons: Needs a fixed socket (110 mm diameter × 170 mm depth)

BluOne / BluPool / Panda (Heavy-Duty Portables)

- Type: Larger, wheeled portable hoists for busy/commercial settings
- Capacity: Up to ~145 kg
- Operation: Hydraulic or battery-powered
- Key Features: Extra reach for larger pool edges, robust build
- Pros: Suitable for high traffic & heavier users
- Cons: Bulkier; less easy to move than compact portables

Ecopool / aXs 2 (Budget Portables)

- Type: Simple, lower-cost portable pool lifts
- Capacity: Varies (~136 kg typical)
- Operation: Battery or manual
- Key Features: Basic lift/rotation functions; limited extras
- Pros: Affordable entry point for small facilities
- Cons: Fewer safety and convenience features

Comparison Table

Model	Capacity	Independence	Portability	Highlights
i-Swim 1	136 kg	Attendant only	No fixings required	Sleek, safe, popular
i-Swim 2	136 kg	Independent use	No fixings required	Adds self-operation to i-Swim 1
PAL	131 kg	Independent/assist	Fully portable	Versatile, no deck fixings
Handi-Move Mobile	135 kg	Independent/assist	Needs socket	Compact storage, easy removal
BluOne/BluPool/Panda	~145 kg	Attendant/assist	Heavy-duty portable	High capacity, robust for frequent use
Ecopool/aXs 2	~136 kg	Attendant only	Simple portable	Low-cost, basic design

NOTE: Once installed ensure that Swim England's Poolfinder search tool is updated to include the installation of your lift/hoist. This will then be visible to those seeking an appropriate pool to visit.

Poolpod case study

Bath Sport and Leisure Centre

Since the Poolpod has been installed at the leisure centre it has been warmly received by new and existing members. A range of local groups in the area have been contacted to promote the new addition to the facility and the barriers it can overcome. These include the St John Foundation, the Royal United Hospital, Age UK BANES, the Well Being College, Mencap, the Carer's Centre, Leonard Cheshire, and the NHS.

One customer whose disabled daughter uses the Poolpod says it "has changed her daughter's life".

The centre now hosts weekly Mencap sessions and uses the Poolpod to make them more accessible. Alongside this, the centre has made improvements to the user experience for disabled customers. Over £3,000 has been invested to develop ramp and lift access from the ground floor car park. Based on the impact of the Poolpod at this site, another local provider has ordered a Poolpod and is in the final stages of major refurbishment.

Site feedback

'It allows us to have a diverse accessibility offer so that people can choose how they'd like to enter the pool.'

'It has allowed us to cater… and provide access to customers who would not have used our pool in the past.'

'The Poolpod has helped those with very limited mobility to enter the water safely and take part in a class.'

'It allows for another pathway for our customers that isn't just the gym or a specialist class. It has allowed us to expand.'

'We've been able to offer a more inclusive programme of aquatic activities.'

'Having the Water Wellbeing Accreditation has given people referring into us confidence in what we're delivering.'

'The site has encouraged itself to seek new partnerships with local stakeholders who support the target group.'

'We have some very happy customers now in the water that maybe would never have considered the water as part of their rehabilitation.'

'Helped us have a better understanding of our customers and their needs.'

Key recommendations

The following recommendations arose from key learnings during the LMCT Poolpod project. This may help guide planning and investment around new or existing pool lift/hoist installations.

Incorporate relevant staff training around accessibility and inclusion, including the creation of supporting resources where possible. Ensure training is provided for all new and existing staff on a regular and ongoing basis to account for staff turnover. The LMCT project showed the value and importance of training frontline staff and the impact that good training can have on improving the customer experience and positively changing the culture of sites.

Recognise the value of relationships at a strategic and local level. Ensuring that pools can clearly identify the groups that they intend to attract, then working closely with partners to develop mechanisms to identify, promote and signpost potential users to pools with accessible systems in place.

Clear and appropriate marketing is key to ensuring existing and potential users know about the installation and understand what they can expect when they visit a site. Giving prominence to any new systems installed at facilities on pool owner/operators' websites is also important. Local level publicity of new installations through press releases etc and social media and their inclusion on search tools, such as Poolfinder (Swim England) and Active Places Power (Sport England) would also serve to help with identification of pools appropriate to individual need and boost local marketing efforts.

When looking to monitor the success of the installation.

- Have multiple methods for the collection of data and ensure the facility workforce understand the value and importance of this.
- Explore the use of collected data, for example helping to calculate the social value generated by installations and the opportunities made possible.
- Consider the potential to build in longitudinal (quantitative and qualitative) evaluation so that funders, partners, and participating pools have a comprehensive evidence base that can help them showcase the outcomes of investment projects.

Engage with complementary programmes such as the Water Wellbeing, to ensure that any investment acts as a catalyst for holistic change. The impact of Water Wellbeing accreditation was seen as extremely positive and has enabled pools to take a more holistic approach to understanding how accessible they are, how they can improve and work towards developing a more inclusive culture and greater opportunity for local residents.

References

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