



Energise Me & Portsmouth City Council

# SPLASH WITH THE YOUTH

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# PROJECT SUMMARY

A group of young people attending a youth club in central Portsmouth identified that they could not (and would like to) swim well. They attended 14 initial sessions, with top-up funding used to introduce basic lifeguarding skills for a further 14 planned sessions.

## Lead organisation and partners:

Portsmouth City Council (PCC) Youth Service and BH Live (leisure provider)

## Satellite Club activity and location:

Swimming in Portsmouth

## National Lottery investment provided:

Initial investment: £1,825

Top-up funding: £1,555

Total: £3,480

## Club start date:

22 February 2019

**OUTCOMES:**  
Enhancing physical wellbeing and individual development through swimming.

# INTRODUCTION

## Setting the scene and context

Portsmouth City Council youth services had been working with the young people across their four Portsmouth youth clubs around safety in the water throughout the summer months (due to tombstoning activity around the local Camber docks area). It became clear that most of them could not swim or did not feel confident in the water.

During ongoing discussions, the young people expressed an interest in learning to swim and learning to feel more confident in the water.

The group were also keen to maintain swimming as a regular activity in order to improve their health and wellbeing whilst having fun.

## Action taken

The young people from Buckland Youth Activities Centre had been meeting regularly as a youth club. They already engaged well with the council's youth workers, who they trusted to understand their needs so they were well-supported to learn whilst having fun.

The youth workers organised an introductory session at the leisure centre prior to the swimming sessions starting so the young people could get to know the facilities and staff before attending.

The group met at youth club and a minibus was put on for travel to and from the venue. After swimming the group returned to the youth club for some evaluation/feedback, with healthy snacks available.

**The young people took part in sessions that gave them time for structured learning and 'free play' – allowing them to build confidence in the water and to build positive experiences.**



# THE IMPACT

**The Splash with the Youth Project ran for 27 sessions from February 2019 to February 2020 and 15 different young people have attended at least one session. Of these 15, there were 11 regular participants in phase 1 and 12 regular participants in phase 2, as well as a few who attended less regularly.**

## **The importance of a supportive leader or youth worker**

Two young people who joined the project in week 11 (and now have an attendance rate of 76% and 82%) were asked why they joined the club:

“To improve [my] swimming”

“To make my friend better at swimming”

Both noted that the support of their youth worker helped them to attend. They said that they continue to go back “to be able to keep myself fit” and “[because I have] enjoyed learning new things.” One noted that it was sometimes a challenge “to be able to keep myself motivated to keep attending.” Both these participants self-assessed as being able to swim prior to joining the club, but their youth worker and instructors have noted huge improvements.

## **Consistent improvements**

Almost all participants noted an increase in their **activity levels**, and in their **confidence to take part in sport and physical activity**.

One young woman noted at the start of phase 1 (14 sessions) that she was “never active” and “[didn't] like physical activity.”

However, at the start of phase 2 she said she “enjoys physical activity” and fed back that she “enjoys the water and [her] swimming has improved with practice.”

After phase 1, 10 young people answered the question, “have you been inspired to become more active?” 8 said they were, with 4 specifically mentioning health as a motivator.

“Yes, to be more healthy and out the house more.”

Feedback from and about the young people during phase 2 (paused at 11 weeks due to COVID-19 restrictions) showed that both confidence and progress were important to the young people:

“K couldn't swim previously, really pleased to be able to now and enjoys achieving.”

“E could swim but lacked confidence and is pleased with the improvement.”

The youth worker noted that:

“The learning outcomes were very simple. We wanted the young people to learn to swim. We have been very pleased that some of the group have obtained their goals, and their confidence has risen. I have been so pleased with the outcome. They have achieved so much.”

# STEVE'S STORY

**For one young man, in particular, the club has led to incredible personal achievements:**

Steve is 17 years old, and part of a large family. He's one of nine children, including stepchildren. His school attendance has always been good, and he attends a special needs course at college regularly. His youth worker notes that:

“Steve sometimes lacks motivation to participate in anything physically or mentally challenging. Prior to the swimming lessons, Steve was unable to participate in any fun pool trip [with the youth club] because of his lack of swimming ability. His body language and behaviour showed how disappointed he was in these instances.”

At first, Steve said that he was “not very active” and, after attending for the first three weeks, considered dropping out of the club.

His youth worker was able to buoy him up:

“We had a conversation about all the time and effort he had put into the swimming lessons so far, and that staff had seen that he was enjoying himself, so we really wanted him to continue.”

“There was a two-week break in the sessions, but when swimming lessons resumed Steve attended every session. He learnt to swim the crawl and backstroke. The improvement in Steve's attitude to attend Splash with the Youth and his swimming ability have improved considerably.”

The youth worker also noted that Steve's new-found confidence has led to his communication skills improving.

Prior to the start of phase 2, Steve still said he did not enjoy physical activity. However, his attendance to date has been over 80% of sessions - the second highest in the group!





# LEARNING

The lead youth worker on this project noted:

“Undertaking this piece of work has given me a sense of professional achievement. To organise the practical side of the work and to have the added bonus of viewing the very positive outcomes is very satisfying.”

He went on to note that he would advise others to persevere. Some weeks there were few young people attending, and he doubted the club’s impact. However, there has been consistently good attendance, particularly from a core group of 11 or 12 participants.

This Satellite Club has allowed Energise Me to build stronger relationships with PCC, and with BH Live. This has led to an additional three Satellite Clubs in partnership with PCC, and the strong possibility of a social-prescribing model club with BH Live. PCC have improved their participation and feedback model, so that these new Satellite Clubs should deliver great feedback and stories.



Perseverance is essential



It’s worth the effort in the long-term



Investing time in relationships generates new opportunities





**Building confidence  
and changing  
attitudes towards  
physical activity**